

Contact Officer: Leigh Webb

## KIRKLEES COUNCIL

### CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY PANEL

**Thursday 13th August 2020**

Present: Councillor Andrew Marchington (Chair)  
Councillor Paul Davies  
Councillor Paul White

Co-optees Toni Bromley  
Dale O'Neill  
Linda Summers

In attendance: Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships)  
Ronnie Hartley, Head of Service Education Safeguarding and Inclusion  
Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection  
Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director - Learning & Early Support

Observers:

Apologies: Councillor Amanda Pinnock  
Councillor Richard Smith

**1 Membership of the Committee**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Amanda Pinnock and Cllr Richard Smith.

**2 Interests**

No interests were declared

**3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meetings of the Panel held on the 2 July 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

**4 Admission of the Public**

All items were considered in public session.

**5 Deputations/Petitions**

No deputations or petitions were received.

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### 6 Public Question Time

No questions were received from the public.

### 7 SEND Update

The Panel received an update report in respect of the impact on children and families with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) of the Covid 19 public health pandemic. The report also provided an update on progress in relation to the SEND Improvement Plan.

The report set out the challenges faced with regard to increased demand for Education, Health and Care Plans and the subsequent rise in costs. This has led to significant pressure on the 'High Needs Block', which can only be tackled collectively across the whole SEND system. To ensure that needs, provision and spend are tightly interlinked the Council need to ensure the SEND system is joined up and easier to navigate for everyone. Kirklees is fully committed to implementing the SEND Reforms and has support from Kirklees Council Cabinet and all partners in the SEND system. It was reported that Kirklees has also invested in the right support to progress the improvement journey at pace, this has included commissioning Impower as an improvement partner to support us in clarifying our collective ambition for children and young people with SEND and appointing a range of professionals who bring a wealth of experience and skills in improving the SEND system and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

As a result of the pandemic, changes to Section 24 of the Children and Families Act had been made by Government which resulted in the Local Authority and commissioning health bodies still being required to carry out Education Health and Care Assessments, undertake Annual Reviews and finalise plans, however if the statutory process takes longer as a direct result of Covid 19, the statutory timescales can be extended to take this into account, but this must be actioned as soon as reasonably practical.

Covid 19 Risk Assessments were required for all children with an EHCP and the report provided an analysis of the risk assessments returned to the Local Authority.

With regard to the SEND 10-point improvement plan which had been developed in October 2019, it was reported that progress had been achieved across all areas. Details of key updates from the improvement plan were set out in the report.

Questions and comments were invited from Panel Members and the following issues were raised:

- In response to a question concerning EHCA requests, Ronnie Hartley acknowledged that the initial lockdown period had allowed for more resource to be allocated to annual reviews. It was explained however that when comparing data over the years in respect of this issue, there is a pattern to how resource is utilised.
- With regard to the threshold for assessment, an undertaking was given to include an analysis of the reasons not to assess as part of a future update report.

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- With regard to the issue of children with SEND attending school, it was acknowledged that parents are anxious about the risks of sending children to school. Work is ongoing on a case by case basis with parents to re-assure parents and build confidence to support an effective transition back into a school setting.
- In response to a question about how schools will deal with risk assessments, Jo-Anne Sanders referred to recently received revised guidance which is being worked through with school staff, Corporate Health and Safety and the Trade Unions. Collaborative work with neighbouring authorities is also being undertaken in respect of this issue.
- Ronnie Hartley provided examples of improvements enacted as a result of better strategic decision making, which included sufficiency in respect of data to inform forward planning and analysis of funding bands.
- In response to a question from Linda Summers, Tom Brailsford confirmed that the voice of parents and carers was integral to the empower work being undertaken to look at outcomes and interventions.

### **RESOLVED –**

The Panel noted the report requested that a future update report include an analysis of figures relating to assessments.

## **8 Exploitation Strategy Update**

The Panel received a report providing an update in respect of the Kirklees Exploitation Safeguarding Strategy 2019 -2021, which was launched earlier this year. The strategy provides the strategic framework to develop and strengthen the response in the identification, assessment and intervention with children, and young people, through the implementation of a contextual safeguarding approach. The approach provides an understanding of, and response to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It extends the focus of support and intervention from the individual child and their family to their wider social context; working with young people, families, organisations, services, communities and others to increase the ability of parents, carers, communities and services to prevent and protect.

The report set out the current picture which includes the development of the Children's Services Risk and Vulnerabilities team, which operates with partnership involvement in the Front door of Children's Social Care has enabled a more coordinated approach and delivery of services to children vulnerable to, at risk of exploitation and their families. It was reported that all child exploitation and children missing from home or care cases are discussed daily in the multi-agency meetings and further explored and actioned at weekly Exploitation Screening Panels. Alongside these MACE meetings (multi agency Child Exploitation Meetings are embedded) and work is ongoing to further develop partnership information sharing pathways. The multi-agency approach to safeguarding children vulnerable to, at risk of exploitation will be further strengthened through the implementation of the Youth Engagement Service (YES)

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During discussion of this item, Members of the Panel supported the development of an overarching strategy in respect of exploitation, acknowledging that the issue does not sit in isolation and overlaps into distinct areas such as Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and criminal exploitation, which require a multi agency partnership approach.

### **RESOLVED-**

The Panel noted the report and highlighted the work of the Practice Learning Review as a means of informing the work of scrutiny in this area

## **9 Children's Scrutiny Work Programme 2020/21**

The Panel considered the progress on the work programme during the 2020/21 municipal year and considered issues for inclusion.

### **RESOLVED –**

1. That the progress on the 2019/20 work programme for the Children's Scrutiny Panel be noted.
2. That following the end of the Autumn term, the Panel receive a report setting out analysis of examination results; and a report on the social and emotional wellbeing of pupils as a result of missing school.