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KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday 23rd January 2023

Present: Councillor Andrew Marchington (Chair)
Councillor Elizabeth Reynolds
Councillor Paul White

Co-optees Oliver Gibson
Toni Bromley

In attendance: Mel Meggs, Strategic Director for Children's Services
Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnerships)
Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director - Learning & Early Support
Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection
Vicky Metheringham, Service Director – Child Protection and Family Support
Councillor Carole Pattison
Councillor Viv Kendrick

Apologies: Councillor James Homewood
Councillor Richard Smith

1 Membership of the Committee

Apologies were received from Councillor Richard Smith and Councillor James Homewood.

Councillor Marchington advised the Panel that Graeme Sunderland had resigned as a Co-optee and thanked him for his contribution to the Panel.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

That the minutes of the meeting held on 31st October 2022 be approved as a correct record.

3 Interests

No Interests were declared.

4 Admission of the Public

All items were considered in public session.

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5 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

6 Public Question Time

No questions were received from members of the public.

7 Performance Data (Children's Services) - update on highlights

The Panel received a verbal update on the performance data which was provided by the Service Directors in Children's Services and the following areas were highlighted:-

Exclusions

Joanne Sanders, Service Director of Learning and Early Support, explained that the ambition across Kirklees as part of 'our Kirklees futures' was to secure zero exclusions by 2030. It was important to find the right and most appropriate pathway for youngsters, by securing sufficient places that met the needs of learners.

The Panel agreed that an in-depth report would be provided at the next meeting in March 2023, which showed a breakdown of the key stages and how old the youngsters were that were subject to permanent exclusions and currently suspended. It was also agreed that deeper analysis would be provided which included the reasons for the exclusions and suspensions for children in Kirklees schools, along with youngsters who lived in Kirklees but were educated elsewhere. Joanne Sanders advised that the data looked at the characteristics of young people to show if any trends emerged, so that the correct resources could be directed as soon as possible.

Joanne Sanders provided the headlines of the data regarding permanent exclusions which were:

- There was an increase in permanent exclusions across key stages with the largest proportion at Key Stage 3 & 4,
- There was not a particular pattern emerging with regards to the types of schools that had permanent exclusions,
- There was a small number of schools involved that permanently excluded,
- The number of boys permanently excluded was a higher proportion than girls
- Physical assault was a prevalence in terms of reasons for exclusions,
- After consideration at meetings, some schools re-instated youngsters,
- Further analysis needed to be undertaken with regards to suspensions.

In response to a question from the Panel which asked how the figures for 2021 compared to pre Covid figures, around the long-term behavioural impacts with the removal of face-to-face teaching for pupils, Joanne Sanders advised that that it was important to look beyond when there was disruption to education, as young people were not in school the same way that they were prior to the pandemic. Schools and partners were inclusive and strong engagement had taken place across the system with school leaders which included the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities transformation plan that concentrated on reducing exclusions. A dashboard had been developed which would be shared with schools, and other professionals at specialist meetings. The Panel was informed that specialist teachers around Social, Emotional and Mental Health had been recruited who supported schools and

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learners at an earlier point, and that there was a tendering process in place for an alternative provision which allowed additional places and included medical teaching, a primary and secondary turnaround provision, along with alternative pathways.

Children's Mental Health

In response to a question from the Panel around Children's Mental Health, Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources, Improvement and Partnership) explained that there had been a reduction in waiting list times in July and August 2022 for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) due to urgent referrals where the waiting times were based upon contact to first appointment. In July and August, a number of urgent referrals were received by CAMHS where professionals prioritised the first assessments and worked flexibly to ensure that there were enough clinicians to meet the demand, and assess young people safely, which had resulted in a reduction in waiting times.

Tom Brailsford explained that there was a need for people in the school system to be aware of the pathways for immediate support, including not using accident and emergency for immediate support, but to go through the single point of access which enabled the crisis and home treatment teams to respond more appropriately, and to use mental health support teams in schools to better support school staff.

The Panel was informed that an in-depth report on CAMHS waiting times and models looked at would be presented to the Panel at the next Panel meeting in March 2023.

Recruitment and retention of staff in Children's Services

The Panel acknowledged that there was a shortage of child protection staff nationally and asked what Kirklees was doing to recruit and retain staff. Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and Child Protection advised that Kirklees no longer used agency Social Workers. To support development, Kirklees introduced a 'step up' training programme for Social Workers and a front-line training programme for Social Workers who were graduates that had taken a previous degree and applied specifically for this type of programme. The Panel was informed that Kirklees also had students from universities across the region who had made a positive choice to come into Kirklees as part of starting their social work career. The Panel noted that practitioners who had completed their training made a positive choice to remain in Kirklees. Elaine McShane advised the Panel that Social Workers were also recruited internally, to move into advanced practitioner posts and team manager posts and that Kirklees had introduced apprenticeships which were aimed at practitioners who worked in services within Kirklees who had skilled knowledge and wanted to do an apprenticeship as a pathway to becoming a Social Worker.

Elaine McShane advised that due to vacancies and slight increase in workload for Social Workers, Kirklees had looked to introduce family support workers and contact and liaison officers into Social Teams to do the day-to-day work which allowed Social Workers to concentrate on their statutory duties. In the Children and Looked after teams, Kirklees had introduced Youth Engagement Workers that linked with the Youth Engagement Service, who worked with vulnerable young people who needed additional support on a day-to-day basis.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the update be noted.
- (ii) That a report on permanent and fixed term exclusions (suspensions) would be presented to the Panel at the next meeting in March 2023.
- (iii) That a report on CAMHS waiting times would be presented to the Panel at the next meeting in March 2023.

8 Budget process - Children's Services

The Panel received an update on the Budget process from Mel Meggs, Strategic Director for Children's Services.

Mel Meggs advised the Panel on proposals of the budget for the Council and Children's Services, which was being prepared for 2023/24. The Panel was informed that there were some significant gaps in the amount of money Kirklees had to spend, versus the amount of money Kirklees had planned to spend. Monitoring of the budget led to two actions earlier in the financial year that looked across the council to areas where money could be saved. The Council had imposed an overall recruitment freeze where a People Panel had been set up to decide upon requests to recruit. The focus in children's services was that front line staff services could keep going, and to a high standard, and in certain roles, where possible recruitment should be delayed. There had also been changes around buildings used, and how staff were deployed. The priority for savings and investment was around growth and demand, for example SEND. Mel Meggs explained that there was an increase in demand and costs in school transport. The aim was to ensure that there were no barriers for youngsters attending school, therefore a proposed uplift into school transport had been put forward.

Mel Meggs advised the Panel on the saving proposals for 2024, which focused on prioritising front line services ensuring there was early help. There were proposals on how things could be done differently, including different ways of working, integrating work within teams, and identifying funding streams and investing to save, for example providing sufficient homes for children where they needed to go into care or children with special education needs.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the update on the budget proposals be noted
- (ii) That a report on the budget proposals be presented to the Panel post publication of the proposals.

9 Pre-decision Scrutiny - Cabinet decisions on the horizon

The Panel noted there were no new areas of pre-decision scrutiny on the horizon relating to children and young people. Councillor Marchington advised the Panel that he had attended a Cabinet meeting in December 2022, where the alternative provision for SEND was considered. It was noted that the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Panel on the alternative provision had been considered as part of that decision by Cabinet.

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RESOLVED: That the update on pre-decision scrutiny be noted.

10 Feedback from Panel Members on issues considered by Corporate Parenting Board

Councillor Marchington advised the Panel that a Corporate Parenting Board meeting had not taken place since the last meeting of the Children's Scrutiny Panel on 31st October 2022. The next Corporate Parenting Board was scheduled to take place on 24th January 2023 and Panel members would feedback to the Panel in March 2023 on any key areas of focus.

RESOLVED:

That, following Corporate Parenting Board in January 2023, Panel Members feedback on any key issues to the March Panel meeting-

11 Children's Scrutiny Panel Work Programme 2022-23

The Panel considered the work programme for the 2022-23 municipal year.

Councillor Marchington advised that a summary of the visits which had taken place since the last Panel meeting had been added to the work programme and that further visits were scheduled to take place during the next 3 months.

RESOLVED-

The Panel noted the Work Programme and agenda plan for 2022-23.