

Contact Officer: Helen Kilroy

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY PANEL

Tuesday 12th July 2022

Present: Councillor Andrew Marchington (Chair)
Councillor Ammar Anwar
Councillor James Homewood
Councillor Richard Smith
Councillor Paul White

Co-optees Graeme Sunderland
Oliver Gibson

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

Observers:

Apologies: Councillor Elizabeth Reynolds
Toni Bromley (Co-Optee)

1 Membership of the Committee

Apologies were received from Councillor Elizabeth Reynolds and Toni Bromley.

The Panel noted the membership of the Panel for the 2022/23 municipal year and that Councillor Elizabeth Reynolds had replaced Councillor Jo Lawson on the Panel.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 30th March 2022 be approved as a correct record.

3 Interests

Graeme Sunderland, Co-optee, declared that he was a Trustee at Northorpe Hall Child and Family Trust.

4 Admission of the Public

All items were considered in public session.

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5 Deputations/Petitions

No petitions or deputations were received.

6 Public Question Time

No questions were received from members of the public.

7 Educational Outcomes - verbal update

The Panel considered a verbal update on Educational Outcomes presented by Chris Jessup, Head of Education Outcomes.

Chris Jessup outlined the following key areas:-

- A report was scheduled for consideration by Cabinet on the 26th July on Kirklees Annual Education Quality and Standards which encapsulated the educational outcomes and challenges during 2021/22 and showed how resilient schools were in providing the continuity of education during this time; the report to Cabinet in July will make reference to the ongoing work and next steps in place to further improve outcomes for learners across Kirklees;
- Panel gave comments on draft report to Cabinet in March 2022 on Educational Outcomes and were thanked for their help in shaping the report to Cabinet in July;
- At the heart of improving educational outcomes sat the Education Strategy referred to as the 'Our Kirklees Futures' which outlined 3 key obsessions – inclusion, resilience and equity which ran through the ambitions and vision;
- Held Kirklees Futures Summit on the 23rd June 2022 attended by a wide range of educational providers, local partners, local experts and speakers from the field of education and care, including voices from learners who brought the story of their learning experiences to the event;
- Key aim of Kirklees Futures Summit was to take the learning strategy from planning to first stages of implementation; the success of strategy relied on engagement from all parties across the district;
- Summit confirmed everyone had the same goal that learners could aspire, achieve and enjoy the very best start in life;
- Educational journey begins before school and beyond post 16 and it was important the summit covered learners of all ages,
- The Education Learning and Partnership Board has been asked to comment and feedback on the draft Implementation Plan;
- The momentum on the outcomes would continue through the summer break and officers aimed to have a prioritised and costed implementation plan ready for circulation at the start of the new academic year;
- Success of Summit had produced the momentum for the Learning Strategy throughout the district and will be the key vehicle for improving educational outcomes; conversations have taken place with school heads and schools forum and they provided feedback to officers;
- Reviewing Education and Learning Partnership Board to ensure it was able to hold the system to account for its actions;
- Planning already underway for next year's summit.

The Panel agreed that they would like to be involved in the restructuring and reshaping of the Education and Learning Partnership Board and asked officers to

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think about how scrutiny could contribute and scrutinise the educational outcomes. The Panel also agreed to consider longitudinal outcomes for the next 5-10 years including 16 plus and beyond to consider the short and long term impact. Chris Jessup advised that the Learning Strategy went to 2038 and that it was intended to have a longitudinal plan and analysis.

The Panel agreed to receive a copy of the Educational Outcomes report scheduled for consideration by Cabinet on the 26th July 2022 for information.

The Panel thanked Chris Jessup and other officers for all their hard work on the Learning Strategy and Educational Outcomes.

RESOLVED –

1. The Panel noted the verbal update on the Educational Outcomes and thanked Chris Jessup for his valued contributions.
2. That the Panel be given the opportunity to contribute to the restructuring and reshaping of the Education and Learning Partnership Board;
3. That the Panel receive future updates on how the Learning Service and Cabinet Members were scrutinising the educational outcomes;
4. That the Panel consider future information on longitudinal educational outcomes for the next 5 to 10 years, including 16+ and beyond;
5. That the Panel receive a copy for information of the Educational Outcomes report scheduled for consideration by Cabinet on the 26th July 2022.

8

Pre-decision Scrutiny - Cabinet decisions on the horizon

The Panel considered potential areas of pre-decision scrutiny in accordance with any cabinet decisions on the horizon relating to children and young people.

Jo-Anne Sanders advised the Panel that there would be periodic reports to Cabinet on the SEND Transformation Plan, and that officers were currently in the middle of consultation around provisionally resourced provisions working with mainstream schools to provide places. Jo-Anne Sanders further explained that coming forward in the autumn term would be some decision making for Cabinet where those schools which were maintained would be working with the Department for Education where some of that provision was with academy schools. The Panel was informed that officers would like to engage with the Children's Scrutiny Panel along the way.

The Panel agreed to consider a report on the SEND Inspection Outcomes at their meeting in September 2022 and asked that the Panel be involved in the development of the action plan and that officers think about how the Panel could scrutinise the outcomes.

Councillor Marchington advised that he had met with PCAN recently to discuss engaging with parents to seek feedback on their experience of accessing the SEND service and visits by the Panel to PCAN drop-in sessions with parents were scheduled to take place in September 2022.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Panel note the potential items for pre-decision scrutiny that would be considered by Cabinet during the 2022-23 municipal year.

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2. That the Panel consider a report on the SEND Inspection Outcomes in September 2022 and be involved in the development of the action plan which should include how the Panel could scrutinise the outcomes.

9 **Feedback from Panel Members on issues considered by Corporate Parenting Board**

Panel Members who had attended Corporate Parenting Board on the morning of the 12th July 2022 fed back on key issues considered by the Board.

Councillor Marchington highlighted the following key points:-

Number of looked after children

Panel members had over the last 2 years expressed concerns regarding the number of looked after children (LAC) in Kirklees as it had consistently been lower compared to our statistical neighbours. Ophelia Rix, Principal Social Worker (Children), had undertaken significant work on explaining why Kirklees LAC figures were lower than our statistical neighbours. The Panel was informed that special guardianship orders were used more in Kirklees than other local authority areas. The current number of LAC in Kirklees was 605 which was down from 650 in the last 12 months and was still on a downward trend. In the last accounting period, 75 children had still come into the care of Kirklees so children were not being missed, but at the same time 87 children were no longer looked after by the local authority.

Councillor Marchington further explained that the reasons why Kirklees LAC figures were lower than other areas was because some children had been placed under special guardianship orders which was where children were being looked after by grandparents or other family relatives. The Panel was informed that there were currently about 500 children in Kirklees under special guardianship orders and if these care orders were not in place, the children would be in the care of the local authority. Councillor Marchington advised that both Leeds and Bradford Council's also used special guardianship orders which helped to reduce their numbers of LAC children.

The Panel was informed that some children had been returned to their families where appropriate and that this was following intervention and prevention measures by the Children's Service which had made this possible.

Councillor Marchington advised that 6 children had been adopted. The Panel was informed that the Multi Systemic Therapies Team (MST) had been working with approximately 50 families of children and young people who had been looked after by the local authority and the Team had contributed to these children being able to return home to their parents.

The Panel noted that the information from officers on the reasons for the lower numbers of LAC in Kirklees was helpful and reassuring and recognised that the preventative measures being implemented within Children's Services was showing some positive results for children and families.

Councillor Marchington advised that other questions asked by Board Members were as follows:-

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- Children with more than one social worker and the reasons for this;
- Children placed outside of the Kirklees District was lower than other local authorities and this was due to the building of capacity and sufficiency within Kirklees so children could be placed within the district;
- Health and dentistry – concerns were raised about the lack of access in some areas of Kirklees to an NHS dentist and the panel were informed that when children were in need of a dentist, access to appropriate services could be found;
- Positive report from Virtual Schools Head Teacher which highlighted that KS4 (GCSEs) were in the upper quartile and the one area of concern was unauthorised absence, which was in the third quartile, flexible approaches were being implemented to look at why children were absent from school;
- Children in employment and training post 16 or when no longer in care - officers had asked both Board Members and other Councillors for ideas on how these young people could be supported, for example apprenticeship schemes, as these could have a positive impact on their life skills and future employment opportunities; the Panel noted that the Council needed to recognise that young people wanted to be in charge of their own pathways and choices and that Kirklees was in contact with around 90% of our care leavers to offer assistance and support in this area, but not all young people wished to continue the relationship with the local authority;
- Foster Carers and the staying put programme allowed children and young people to stay with foster carers post 18 and a lot of work was being carried out to allow this to happen and to ensure that the positive relationship between carers and the young people could continue;
- Ethnicity of LAC – quite a bit of work was being done around children of an Asian/British heritage and officers were working with extended families and special guardianship orders.

The Panel considered receiving further information by way of a visit or presentation to look at the working arrangements of the Virtual School and Governing Body.

The Panel expressed thanks to all the foster carers in Kirklees for the important work they carried out and noted that two members of the Kirklees Fostering Network were now members of the Corporate Parenting Board.

RESOLVED –

That the feedback from the Corporate Parenting Board be noted.

10 Children's Scrutiny Work Programme 2022-23

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

Pre-decision scrutiny

Councillor Marchington advised that pre-decision scrutiny would be discussed at every meeting and updates given by Senior Officers or Cabinet Members on items on the horizon for decision by Cabinet.

Performance

The Panel noted that slides and data on performance from the Ambition Board would be considered by the Panel as a standard item and that questions on the data

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would be sought from Panel Members prior to the meetings of the Panel and that these questions could also be submitted to the Corporate Parenting Board for consideration.

Sufficiency for Children's Service

The Panel had noted in some visits to social care teams that there was a shortage of social workers at both a local and national level and Kirklees had made a decision not to use agency staff at the moment. Elaine McShane advised that different options were being looked at with Jo-Anne Sanders as an interim solution, for example, different types of practitioners could work with families not just social workers and officers would be looking at roles within teams to test some of this out. The Panel agreed to consider further information on the different approaches being considered regarding improving sufficiency and resources for children's social care and also retention packages for social workers. The Panel also agreed that they could monitor this issue during visits and ask appropriate questions.

Elaine McShane advised that since 2016 there had been a significant improvement to stability in the management part of the workforce and that the right wrap around support was in place in terms of development opportunities and supervision. The Panel was advised that the average casework for social workers was now around 17 cases and 4 to 5 years ago caseloads were at an average of 35. Elaine McShane further explained that it was important that social workers felt supported and wanted to stay at Kirklees.

The Panel noted that a visit would be arranged to the Healds Road Children's Home during the 22-23 municipal year.

Changes to YPAT

Panel Members noted that further information would be brought to the Panel planned for September 2022 on the changes to the Young Peoples Activity Team (YPAT) and asked that Members of the Panel report back on what was happening in their wards on this. A question was raised by the Panel relating to the lack of after school activities in some wards and how quickly this would come into practice and who would govern this, would it be the local communities, schools or the Council. The Panel noted that a report would be submitted for consideration at their September meeting and asked that it include details of what was happening in the local wards on after school activities.

SEND and High Needs

Councillor Marchington advised that he had recently met with PCAN to discuss opportunities to meet with parents to seek feedback on their experiences of accessing the service. The Panel noted that visits to drop-in sessions with parents at PCAN had been scheduled to take place in September 2022 and information had been circulated to members of the Panel.

Outcome of SEND Inspection

The Panel noted that a report would be scheduled for consideration in September 2022.

Outcome of the Joint Area Targeted Inspection

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The Panel agreed to consider a report on the Outcome of the Multi-Agency Joint Area Targeted Inspection to the September or October Panel meeting. Elaine McShane advised the Panel that the inspection had covered sexual and criminal exploitation and that the Ofsted letter was due to be published at end of August 2022.

RESOLVED –

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

1. That the Panel submit questions on the performance information prior to Panel meetings which could be shared with officers beforehand;
2. That the Panel agreed to consider further information on the different approaches being considered regarding improving sufficiency and resources for children's social care and also retention packages for social workers.
3. That the Panel consider a report on the changes to the YPAT provision in September 2022 that would include an update on what was happening in the local wards on after school activities.
4. That Members of the Panel try and attend one of the drop-in sessions at PCAN in September and notify the Governance Officer which date they wished to attend.
5. That the Panel consider a report in either September or October 2022 on the outcome of the Multi-Agency Joint Area Targeted Inspection.