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**Service Director – Legal, Governance and
Commissioning**

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Thursday 6 March 2025

Notice of Meeting

Dear Member

Children's Scrutiny Panel

The **Children's Scrutiny Panel** will meet in the at **10.30 am** on **Friday 14 March 2025**.

This meeting will be webcast live and will be available to view via the Council's website.

The items which will be discussed are described in the agenda and there are reports attached which give more details.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S Lawton".

Samantha Lawton

Service Director – Legal, Governance and Commissioning

Kirklees Council advocates openness and transparency as part of its democratic processes. Anyone wishing to record (film or audio) the public parts of the meeting should inform the Chair/Clerk of their intentions prior to the meeting.

The Children's Scrutiny Panel members are:-

Member

Councillor Itrat Ali (Chair)

Councillor Ashleigh Robinson

Councillor Jane Rylah

Councillor Hannah McKerchar

Councillor Richard Smith

Councillor Tanisha Bramwell

Agenda

Reports or Explanatory Notes Attached

Pages

1: Membership of the Panel

To receive apologies for absence from those Members who are unable to attend the meeting.

2: Minutes of the Previous Meeting

1 - 10

To approve the Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on the 4th February 2025.

3: Declaration of Interests

11 - 12

Members will be asked to say if there are any items on the Agenda in which they have any disclosable pecuniary interests or any other interests, which may prevent them from participating in any discussion of the items or participating in any vote upon the items.

4: Admission of the Public

Most agenda items take place in public. This only changes where there is a need to consider exempt information, as contained at Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. You will be informed at this point which items are to be recommended for exclusion and to be resolved by the Committee.

5: Deputations/Petitions

The Panel will receive any petitions and/or deputations from members of the public. A deputation is where up to five people can attend the meeting and make a presentation on some particular issue of concern. A member of the public can also submit a petition at the meeting relating to a matter on which the body has powers and responsibilities.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10, Members of the Public must submit a deputation in writing, at least three clear working days in advance of the meeting and shall subsequently be notified if the deputation shall be heard. A maximum of four deputations shall be heard at any one meeting.

6: Public Question Time

To receive any public questions.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11, the period for the asking and answering of public questions shall not exceed 15 minutes.

Any questions must be submitted in writing at least three clear working days in advance of the meeting.

7: New initiatives of schools working in clusters

13 - 26

The Panel will consider a report providing an insight into the new initiatives of schools working in clusters.

Contact: Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director

8: Performance Data (Children's Services) - verbal update on highlights

The Panel will consider a verbal update on the performance highlights from the latest Children's Services data report covering period ending January 2025.

Contact: Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director
Vicky Metherringham, Service Director

9: Pre-decision scrutiny - Cabinet decisions on the horizon

The Panel will consider any potential areas of pre-decision scrutiny in accordance with any cabinet decisions relating to children and young people which are on the horizon and receive updates from senior officers in Children's Services.

Contact: Service Directors (Children's Services)

10: Feedback from Panel Members on issues considered by Kirklees Parenting Board

Panel Members who attend the Kirklees Parenting Board, will feedback on key areas of focus considered by the Board, which will be of interest to the Panel.

11: Work Programme and Agenda Plan for 2024/25

27 - 52

The Panel will consider the proposed areas of focus and activity for the 2024/25 municipal year and discuss the method and means to be used to continue the Panel's work going forward.

Contact: Helen Kilroy, Assistant Democracy Manager

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Contact Officer: Helen Kilroy

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY PANEL

Tuesday 4th February 2025

- Present: Councillor Itrat Ali (Chair)
Councillor Jane Rylah
Councillor Hannah McKerchar
Councillor Richard Smith
- In attendance: Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director - Learning and Early Support
Michelle Lister, Head of Service - Early Support and SENDACT
Emma Brayford, Senior Learning Partner - Kirklees Schools and Settings
Emma Salter, Kirklees SACRE
Ian Ross, Kirklees SACRE
Mark James, Kirklees SACRE
Joel Hanna, Head of Service - Corporate Parenting
Vicky Metheringham, Service Director - Child Protection and Family Support
- Apologies: Councillor Ashleigh Robinson
Councillor Tanisha Bramwell

- 1 Membership of the Panel**
Apologies were received from Cllr Tanisha Bramwell and Cllr Ashleigh Robinson.
- 2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**
That the minutes of the meetings held on the 22nd November 2024 be approved as a correct record.
- 3 Declaration of Interests**
Cllr Hannah McKerchar declared an interest as Vice-Chair of SACRE.
- 4 Admission of the Public**
All items were considered in public session.
- 5 Deputations/Petitions**
No deputations or petitions were received.
- 6 Public Question Time**
No public questions were received.

7 **Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) Annual Report**

The Panel considered an Annual Report from the Kirklees Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) by Emma Brayford, Senior Learning Partner, and presented by Mark James, Chair of SACRE. The Panel were advised that the SACRE Panel was formed from members of faith communities, councillors and teachers.

SACRE's key responsibilities were:

- To produce an agreed Religious Education (RE) syllabus.
- To monitor the delivery of RE and collective worship in Kirklees.
- To support the teaching of RE through teacher conferences.
- Determination where a parent requests that their child is withdrawn from RE.

Priorities from the last year were:

- To revise the locally agreed syllabus and provide support for teachers. The syllabus was built around six "Big Ideas" in RE, pathways that children follow throughout their school education, exploring the ideas in relationship to faith. This approach was compliant with the new non-statutory guidance from the RE Council, the National Content Standard.
- Kirklees was represented at the locally agreed syllabus conference on 12th March 2024, by Council Officers, and the launch and training event was attended on 18th April 100 teachers and Headteachers.
- There had also been a focus on the introduction of the new inclusive, Collective Worship Award for schools, working with school improvement partners to identify schools in need of support. Honley School, Crossley Fields Primary School and Netherton Infants School were successful in completing the Kirklees SACRE Award and were presented with awards at the RE Network.
- SACRE also monitored data, to see how well children were engaging with RE. Data indicated that there was a variety of engagement levels within schools in Kirklees.

SACRE advised the Panel that they were grateful for the funding from Kirklees Council, which enabled RE to be delivered well in schools, contributing to community and cohesion, giving children the opportunity to understand and practice empathy for people different to them, and providing opportunity for imagination and exploration of the world they lived in.

Ian Ross advised the Panel that RE was locally determined and not part of the National Curriculum, and was the only subject that the Council had any control over. SACRE was pleased with the uptake of the locally agreed syllabus within all schools in the Local Authority, including the Academies which had mostly adopted the syllabus. The RE syllabus was shared between 4 local authorities in West Yorkshire, which contributed to the bigger picture of West Yorkshire and provided economies of scale.

The Panel was informed that SACRE's recommendations were to review the annual funding, at 2% of the Central School Services Block (CSSB) National Funding and to ask that the Council help SACRE to review its membership to be representative of the local area. There were currently vacancies for Muslim representatives on the

Children's Scrutiny Panel - 4 February 2025

Board. The Panel were asked to consider and accept the report presented. Ian Ross asked the Panel for permission to investigate with Secondary Learning Partners and Emma Brayford the position for RE for non-examined students at Key Stage 4. Data suggested that 70% of students did not take a GCSE exam in RE and may not be receiving their statutory requirement of RE teaching. Permission was also sought to investigate how SACRE could work with the Communities Team to look at, and be an active member in, work around community cohesion.

In response to a question regarding inclusivity on the Board of SACRE, Ian Ross advised that SACRE worked with the Faith and Belief Forum for North and South Kirklees to encourage a breadth of representation on the board. Jewish, Sikh, Hindu, Bahai and Humanist representative Board Members shared their understanding of their faiths and non-religious world beliefs. The Panel was informed that successes included an online Interfaith Conference with Primary Schools which would be extended to Secondary next year. An online Interfaith Autumn Festivals event was also held in November 2024, with 2,000 pupils taking part in a question and answer session with faith and world belief representatives. More work was needed to enable pupils to access community events and for community members to visit schools to share their lived experience and promote community cohesion.

The Panel questioned how RE was taught in faith schools, whether the syllabus would ensure coverage of other religions and beliefs, and asked how RE was taught to children with no background of religious belief. Ian Ross advised that the syllabus had been revised from a traditional religious studies approach which centred on learning facts about each religion, to an approach of six conceptual pathways which are inclusive of all faiths and people of no faith. At each key stage, faiths and beliefs were recommended for each unit of work, which best demonstrated the concept, which gradually built a knowledge and understanding of a range of faiths and beliefs.

The Panel asked how the impact of inequality on community cohesion was addressed in the RE syllabus and Ian Ross advised that due to the range of world views across the 4 local authorities involved in creating the syllabus, all voices were represented in the syllabus, promoting equality. Lived experience was a key driver in the curriculum, with importance placed on children meeting people of faith and people of non-faith. Work had been done to quality assure visits and visitors, and this had now been passed on to RE Hubs, a national organisation.

RESOLVED –

- (1) The Panel noted the report and thanked Officers and the representatives of SACRE for their contributions.
- (2) The Panel gave their support to work which would be undertaken in the future, to investigate the position for RE for non-examined students at Key Stage 4, as those not taking an exam may not be receiving their statutory requirement of RE teaching.
- (3) The Panel also supported plans for SACRE to work with the Communities Team to be involved in work around community cohesion.

8 Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Overview

The Panel considered a report which provided an insight into the national and local challenges relating to Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), presented by Michelle Lister, Head of Service Early Support and SENDACT.

The Panel were advised that:

- Kirklees had set out its inclusive ambitions in its 'Big Plan', the SEN Transformation Plan, which included performance data of initial assessment for EHCP and final plan compliance.
- Challenges were being seen nationally in this area of performance.
- The service recognised the challenges that had built up and actions had been taken to address these, including taking a partnership approach, with Health, and PCAN.
- It was recognised how difficult these challenges had been for the families of Kirklees, who had demonstrated patience while improvements were being made.
- In addition to improving compliance, there had been a focus on ensuring quality of planned support.
- SENDACT were working hard to support the Cluster arrangements which would help provide the right support as early as possible, and a report on this progress would be considered by the Children's Scrutiny Panel at the next meeting in March 2025.
- There was the opportunity for the Panel to meet the SENDACT team.

The Panel asked if there was an expectation that more SEN children would attend mainstream school, and was this driven by funding? Michelle Lister explained that the service wanted to ensure that children were included in the right environment for their needs. Currently 4800 Kirklees young people, from Early Years to age 25, had EHCPs, with a significantly larger number accessing SEN support. Comparing data with other authorities, Kirklees schools were successful in including students with SEND. Some children needed additional support within mainstream schools, and investments had been made to create Additionally Resourced Provisions where specialist teaching could take place. The Panel was informed that independent provision was also sometimes required. Funding had to be considered and was monitored within the safety valve agreement to ensure a sustainable approach, but the priority was to ensure youngsters accessed education in suitable provision.

In response to a question regarding the availability of support required and outlined in the EHCPs, Michelle Lister explained that the EHCP Team would co-ordinate professionals to deliver support (Speech and Language Therapists, Educational Psychologists etc) and recognised that additional numbers of EHCPs would put pressure on those professionals. The Panel noted that there were further pressures, including 4,800 annual reviews being required, but were assured that all these issues were in view. Ambitions had been shared with key partners such as the Integrated Care Board (ICB), on how best to commission the professionals needed.

The Panel asked how the voice of the parent was included within the EHCPs, and was advised by Michelle Lister that in wider terms, PCAN had been involved in the quality compliance group and had been involved with recruitment to the team.

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Communication with parents was an area for improvement, and changes had been made to the communication system, with calls being put through more effectively. Jo-Anne Sanders advised that EHCPs should be co-produced with parents, and the Service was committed to providing a better experience. Where parents and carers were not satisfied, they could ask to meet with Senior Officers or Cabinet Portfolio Holders, or contact Kirklees Information and Advice Service, who could advocate for parents. The Panel was informed that PCAN offered challenge as well as support and brought experiences of parents and carers to the attention of the service. Investment had been made in a new IT system with a parent and partner portal, where parents would be able to see progress made by logging in, also allowing the team to concentrate on casework.

The Chair of the Panel commented that nationally there were challenges due to the rise in EHCP numbers, but that it was evident from the report that the service was working in partnership, using a systems-based approach, and focusing on quality, and thanked the Officers for their work.

RESOLVED –

- (1) The Panel welcomed the opportunity to meet the SENDACT Team and noted that this visit would be arranged.
- (2) The Panel noted the report and thanked Officers for their contributions.

9 Review of Children's Residential Homes and Fostering Provision

The Panel considered a report, which provided assurance and information on Residential Children's Homes and Fostering Services in Kirklees presented by Joel Hanna, Head of Service for Corporate Parenting.

The Panel were advised that:

- The majority of children in care in Kirklees were in family settings, with Foster Carers or Kinship/Connected Carers. A small number of children lived in residential, small group homes.
- Placements were also commissioned from independent fostering agencies and independent care homes where necessary.
- There was a national deficit in placements available for children; local and national campaigns had been launched to recruit foster carers.
- The report set out the position for recruiting Foster Carers.
- A team was working to recruit Foster Carers, and advertising on Kirklees vehicles was planned.
- All independent Care Homes and the six Kirklees Care Homes were subject to Ofsted inspections, regulations and standards.
- At the time of writing the report, 34 young people were living in externally commissioned provision, and 16 in Kirklees Care Homes.
- Some young people living in Care Homes could have been suited to Foster Care, however suitable provision had not been available. Placements may be short-term while foster provision was found for these young people, however they may settle and the residential placement may then become the most suitable placement for them.

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- The Service had sought to expand provision and last year opened a sixth Children's Home which had not yet been assessed by Ofsted but was settled and stable and would be inspected by the end of March 2025.
- Existing Children's Homes were in the process of being refurbished as the young people living there moved on.

In answer to a question about the decrease of Foster Carers, and whether there was a shift toward carers choosing to work for private fostering agencies, Joel Hanna explained that the ten year low in the number of Foster Carers applied to both private agencies and local authorities. The trend in recent years had been that more Foster Carers were leaving than joining. As a result, the DfE were working with local authorities on regional campaigns. Foster Carers in Kirklees received remuneration for their work, and received a skills level payment, which allowed Foster Caring to be an alternative to other paid work. The Panel was informed that there was a drive to increase the number of Kirklees Foster Carers, as agency fees doubled the cost of placing children through a private fostering agency.

The Panel asked how confident the Service was that the residential homes would improve their Ofsted judgements on the next cycle of inspection, and whether good practice was shared across the homes. Joel Hanna advised that several activities had led to improvements, including:

- Creating a progression route and enhanced leadership capacity for residential practitioners.
- Recruiting residential practitioners internally from Family Time Team.
- Moving residential staff around homes to share good practice.
- Making improvements to the building at a home currently at Requires Improvement.
- Monitoring visits ensuring that the other home at Requires Improvement is on a positive trajectory.

The Chair advised that she had visited the Kirklees Fostering Network in September 2024, where she had met with Foster Carers to hear their first-hand experiences and challenges and also to meet a number of foster babies.

RESOLVED –

The Panel noted the report and thanked the Officers for their contributions.

10

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

Vicky Metheringham, Service Director for Child Protection and Family Support and Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director for Learning and Early Support, presented highlights from the Performance Data.

Vicky Metheringham highlighted the following key points:-

Assessment and Intervention Teams

- High caseloads were being experienced for Social Work Practitioners and Personal Advisors, and this, as well as vacancies, was impacting on data reporting, meaning that the some of the data presented was showing a position worse than the reality.

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- There was weekly oversight of Social Work Practitioner and Personal Advisor caseloads and they were being offered management support.
- Checks were made to ensure children's visits were being undertaken and risk was being appropriately managed.
- There were currently vacancies for new Social Workers, but there was confidence that if retention was to remain strong, the vacancy situation would be much improved by late summer.
- 10 Frontline Practitioners were due to move to permanent Social Work posts later this year; this had been a successful recruitment strategy as all were indicating their intention to remain at Kirklees.
- Student Social Workers, apprenticeship and Step-Up to Social Work students would also qualify later in the year.

Children in Care

- Checks were made to ensure Looked After Children's plans were reviewed, that they were seen frequently and that they were optimising their health opportunities.
- Looked After Children's dental check data looked lower than the reality. Dental checks for children in care was currently 90%, meaning that 90% of children in care had seen a dentist in the last year.
- Through the Kirklees Parenting Board, a positive relationship had been built with the designated nurse for safeguarding children and there was the opportunity for a multi-agency data performance meeting to ensure the data aligned.

Child Protection

- Social worker assessments should take place within 45 days for Children in Need, however this had been impacted by caseloads and vacancies. It had been identified that some cases should be closed because families were not in agreement for the assessment to continue.
- Child Protection Plan assessments were completed in a timely manner.
- The number of children at risk of exploitation increased in November, which could be due to a rise in reporting as partners worked with Social Workers to share information. All children at risk of exploitation's plans were reviewed weekly to ensure timely intervention.
- Re-referrals – there had been a small rise in the number of children who have been on a Child Protection Plan in the previous 2 years. A deep dive was planned in March 2025 to ensure an understanding of the reasons why children were on repeat plans.
- Visits to children on a Child Protection Plan – data suggested visits within 15 days had dropped, however this was a reporting issue and did not reflect the actual picture.

Care Leavers

- Care Leavers seen within 8 weeks and Care Leavers with an updated pathway plan – these numbers had dropped according to data. This was related to the number of Care Leavers increasing, due to the drive for contact with care leavers aged 21 -25, and a number of unaccompanied asylum seekers making contact. There were 2 Hubs, in Dewsbury and in Huddersfield, where Care Leavers were supported, however attendance at the Hubs was not recorded as contact.

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- Pathway Plans – Completion rates had dropped as the new My Pathway Plan had been introduced. Training was being rolled out and the quality of plans, co-produced and owned by Care Leavers, was improving.

Children and Adolescent Mental Health services

- Waiting list for CAMHS – there was a rise in November which was within the normal range and was not anticipated to be an ongoing trend.

Children Going Missing

- Return interviews – the drop of 10% after missing children episodes was due to a small but significant number of young people having multiple episodes of going missing, covered by one interview, which impacted on the data. There was an ongoing review of the quality of those interviews.

In response to a question by the Panel as to whether there was a method to record visits by Care Leavers to the Hubs, Joel Hanna advised that after an increase in services offered at the Hubs, specifically work on isolation and loneliness carried out in partnership with Fresh Futures, footfall at the Hubs had increased. Visitors to the Hubs were encouraged to sign in, however not all visits were being captured. The 8 week measure was being reviewed, as Care Leavers might have contact with a wider variety of support than Personal Advisors only.

The Chair of the Panel advised that the Panel had visited the No 12 Dewsbury Hub on the 12th December 2024 following a meeting with the Children in Care and Care Leavers Team and seen how successfully it was set up, and acknowledged that there was still potential work to be done to ensure Care Leavers knew how to access the offer.

Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director, Learning and Early Support highlighted the following key points, focusing on exclusions and performance:

- In November 2024 there was an increase in the number of permanent exclusions. This was typical of the trend for spikes in exclusions during November and January.
- The number of children excluded permanently this academic year to date was 21, 0.3% of the school population.
- The same figure last year was 34 exclusions at 0.5% of the school population, which meant that numbers were moving in the right direction, with the ambition of a 0% exclusion rate.
- The hard work of schools to be inclusive, and the increase in access to services was having a positive impact.
- The Inclusion Multi-Agency Panel was available to support schools and parents and was seeing a huge take-up of people asking for help and support.
- The largest year group for exclusion was Year 10, followed by Year 9 and Year 11. There was a need to support these older children to ensure there was a post-16 pathway for them into Year 12.
- There were a number of children with EHCPs who had been permanently excluded in November.

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- Work was ongoing in the SEND assessment and commissioning team (soon to be renamed the EHCP team) to ensure a smooth transition into alternative provision.
- Work had been undertaken to join services together however there was still more to do.

RESOLVED –

The Panel noted the report and thanked the Officers for their contributions.

11 Pre-decision scrutiny - Cabinet decisions on the horizon

Jo-Anne Sanders advised that in the November Scrutiny meeting it had been brought to the Panel's attention that a report regarding school admission arrangements would be brought to Cabinet in early 2025. The report entitled 'Determination of School Admission Arrangements for 2025/2026' was scheduled for Cabinet on 11th February and had been circulated to members of the Panel for information. Questions and comments were invited from the Panel, which Jo-Anne Sanders would respond to.

RESOLVED -

That the pre-scrutiny updates be noted and that Members of the Panel submit any questions and comments to officers for response.

12 Feedback from Panel Members on issues considered by Kirklees Parenting Board

Joel Hanna provided feedback from the last meeting of the Kirklees Parenting Board as Members of the Panel who attended the Board meetings had been unable to attend. The January meeting had focused on health priorities for Looked After Children and Care Leavers, including the recording of and reporting of dental health checks. The Panel was informed that it was a positive meeting with the partnership being extended to include representatives from Kirklees College and Huddersfield University. This had led to links being made between their services and the emotional health and wellbeing teams to see how access to counselling services could be increased. The Board had also welcomed two new Care-experienced Board Members with another due to join in March, to provide valuable input and lived experience to the Board.

The Chair of the Panel remarked on the efforts she had observed at previous meetings of the Kirklees Parenting Board to engage with young people, using their language and putting young people at the heart of the conversation.

RESOLVED -

That the updates from the Kirklees Parenting Board be noted.

13 Work Programme and Agenda Plan for 2024/25

The Panel had attended a joint meeting with the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel on the 16th January 2025 and considered a report on the work on the children and adults immunisation programme.

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The Panel was informed that there would be an additional Joint Panel meeting in May 2025 between the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel and the Children's Scrutiny Panel to consider Children's Dentistry.

Panel Members had attended the Youth Engagement Team Practice Learning Day on 10th January 2025 in Dewsbury and met with the team to find out more about their role and challenges.

The Panel were advised that a summary of all the visits which had so far taken place had been included in the work programme.

RESOLVED -

That the progress on the Work Programme and Agenda Plan for 2024-25 and the updates on recent visits be noted.

| KIRKLEES COUNCIL | | | |
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| COUNCIL/CABINET/COMMITTEE MEETINGS ETC | | | |
| DECLARATION OF INTERESTS | | | |
| Childrens Scrutiny Panel | | | |
| Name of Councillor | | | |
| Item in which you have an interest | Type of interest (eg a disclosable pecuniary interest or an "Other Interest") | Does the nature of the interest require you to withdraw from the meeting while the item in which you have an interest is under consideration? [Y/N] | Brief description of your interest |
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Signed: Dated:

NOTES

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

If you have any of the following pecuniary interests, they are your disclosable pecuniary interests under the new national rules. Any reference to spouse or civil partner includes any person with whom you are living as husband or wife, or as if they were your civil partner.

Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain, which you, or your spouse or civil partner, undertakes.

Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from your council or authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by you in carrying out duties as a member, or towards your election expenses.

Any contract which is made between you, or your spouse or your civil partner (or a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest) and your council or authority -

- under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and
- which has not been fully discharged.

Any beneficial interest in land which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, have and which is within the area of your council or authority.

Any licence (alone or jointly with others) which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, holds to occupy land in the area of your council or authority for a month or longer.

Any tenancy where (to your knowledge) - the landlord is your council or authority; and the tenant is a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest.

Any beneficial interest which you, or your spouse or your civil partner has in securities of a body where -

(a) that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of your council or authority; and

(b) either -

the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or

if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.



REPORT TITLE: New Initiative of schools working in clusters

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| Meeting: | Children’s Scrutiny Panel |
| Date: | 14/03/25 |
| Cabinet Member (if applicable) | Cllr Amanda Pinnock & Cllr Viv Kendrick |
| Key Decision Eligible for Call In | No N/A |
| Purpose of Report To provide insight into the new initiative of schools working in clusters. | |
| Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the report is noted. • Scrutiny support is requested moving forward on delivering cultural change including Cluster working. | |
| Reasons for Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SEND programme is complex, extensive and has a range of projects at various stages of maturity. Cluster working is critical project to Kirklees ambition. Scrutiny Panel have had the opportunity to observe the SEND Transformation and Commissioning Group, further oversight by scrutiny would provide added value. | |
| Resource Implications: Capacity of officers/partners. | |
| Date signed off by <u>Executive Director</u> & name | Jo-Anne Sanders (for Tom Brailsford) 26/02/25 |
| Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance? | Shared for info 27/02/25 |
| Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal and Commissioning (Monitoring Officer)? | Shared for info 27/02/25 |

Electoral wards affected: All

Ward councillors consulted: Portfolio Holders and Cabinet

Public or private: Public

Has GDPR been considered? Yes

1. Executive Summary

Kirklees is ambitious for local children and families and has a focus on improving outcomes and making a difference for and with our communities.

Support for children and young people with SEND is a national issue for every Local Authority with demand, complexity and increasing costs providing major challenges. National reports have confirmed 'the system is broken', but this has not stopped Kirklees from undertaking a variety of actions to improve outcomes and make a difference for and with our communities.

To deliver both the Kirklees ambitions and Safety Valve requirements, a comprehensive SEND transformation strategy and plan has been formulated and commenced and this has been published as 'The Big Plan'. [SEND - The Big Plan! | How we plan for SEND | Kirklees SEND Local Offer \(kirkleeslocaloffer.org.uk\)](https://www.kirkleeslocaloffer.org.uk)

It should be noted that to achieve the changes required for a sustainable system, Kirklees must be brave and a whole system approach is required which relies on each partner playing their part. A key component of this is cluster working which aims to create the environment for sustainable change and sits alongside the work being undertaken on Quality and Compliance and Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs).

Clusters are groups of mainstream schools that work together to share resources and expertise at a local level and capitalise on existing structures. This means thinking differently so more young people can get the support they need at the earliest opportunity.

Kirklees is looking to ensure resources and expertise are maximised around the needs of young people. To do this, each cluster of schools has access to 'wrap around support' from a team of professionals, for example from Early Support and Educational Psychology. Working in this way will help schools and the system to support each other by sharing how to do things in the best way possible with an ever-changing cohort.

Cluster working went live in September 2024 in Kirklees, was informed by a pathfinder approach, and will keep developing. The approach is evolution not revolution and lessons have been learned from the approaches other Authorities have taken. Kirklees Council has worked closely with schools and early years providers and have also been supported by our local parent & carer group (PCAN) to develop cluster working together.

Despite how new the approach is, there are positive examples for our children, families as well as our schools. The absolute commitment of partners such as schools (including cluster leads, SENDCos) and PCAN has been pivotal to progress so far. Clusters have started to identify common themes and training needs that can be addressed more effectively and efficiently as a cluster group and have started to discuss or implement approaches that can build capacity and expertise across all their schools. As with any new way of working, there are challenges, but we are listening to feedback and shaping the model together. There is a long way to go, but Kirklees is confident that together as a partnership, these can be overcome.

The approach gives schools more flexibility and support to meet the needs of children and young people at the earliest opportunity. Importantly, an Education Health Care & Plan (EHCP) is not needed to benefit from the new approach.

2. Information required to take a decision

What are clusters

Clusters are groups of mainstream schools that work together to share resources and expertise at a local level and capitalise on existing structures. This means more young people can get the support they need at the earliest opportunity.

Cluster working started in September 2024 in Kirklees and will keep developing. The approach is about thinking differently and evolution not revolution. Close work with schools has been undertaken and the support of our local parent & carer group (PCAN) to develop cluster working is noted. We have also looked at other councils that work in this way to learn from them and then adapt for Kirklees.

There are 17 clusters in Kirklees which are based on location, covering all the mainstream schools in the district. This means that schools in a cluster are all close to each other.

Key principles drive the approach:

Principles - What makes a good funding system

- Achieves better outcomes for children and young people
- Improves capacity of schools
- Supports greater consistency and quality in the mainstreams/special school offer
- Equity vs 'who shouts loudest'
- Targets those who are most in need
- Avoids 'perverse incentives'
- Avoids unnecessary bureaucracy
- Financially sustainable

Cluster working principles

- Commitment to meeting needs in the area and achieving best possible pupil outcomes
- Prioritising the greatest need vs advocating for own school
- Willingness to support and challenge (and be supported and challenged)
- Recognition of the impact of contextual factors not just levels of pupil need
- Active participation even when schools don't have immediate need for support
- Effective use of all available budgets (delegated and devolved)
- Commitment to reducing reliance on additional resources wherever possible (so that these can be reallocated)
- Recognition of the need to respond to contingencies as they arise (and ensure capacity available for this)
- Willingness to share good practice with/learn from other clusters
- Commitment to equity/positive outcomes across the area/county as a whole

Why are Kirklees taking this approach?

Support for children and young people with SEND is a national issue for every Local Authority with demand, complexity and increasing costs providing major challenges.

National reports have confirmed 'the system is broken', but this has not stopped Kirklees from undertaking a variety of actions to improve outcomes and make a difference for and with our communities. Cluster working is a fundamental component of the SEND

transformation programme outlined in our 'Big Plan' [SEND - The Big Plan! | How we plan for SEND | Kirklees SEND Local Offer \(kirkleeslocaloffer.org.uk\)](https://www.kirkleeslocaloffer.org.uk)

It should be noted that to achieve the changes required, Kirklees must be brave, a high profile/a whole system approach is required and relies on each partner playing their part. To support this, we have strong system governance in place which includes quarterly monitoring to the Councils Executive Team and monthly monitoring to the SEND Programme Board. This is supported by operational projects, task and finish groups along with engagement from our Department for Education advisers through a variety of mechanisms on an ongoing basis.

What does it mean for children and families in Kirklees?

We are passionate about children and young people in Kirklees and we want them to be the best they can be. We believe in nurturing an inclusive school system which is as creative as possible in supporting young people who have SEND in a range of different ways that meet their needs.

The approach gives schools more flexibility to meet the needs of children and young people. Importantly, an Education Health Care & Plan (EHCP) is not needed to benefit from the new approach. To do this, we are changing the way funding is provided to support young people with additional needs in a way which will increase the number of those who may receive support. This means that more young people with additional needs can benefit from funding, not those solely with an EHCP.

Schools are working together to share resources, expertise and good practice with an ever changing cohort of pupils and their needs. This is used to support our young people as early as possible to ensure their needs are being met so that they are able to make progress and achieve their best possible outcomes.

Kirklees is looking to ensure resources and expertise are maximised and support is coordinated around the needs of young people. To do this, each cluster of schools has access to a team of professionals, for example from Early Support and Educational Psychology. Working in this way will help schools and the system to support each other by sharing how to do things in the best way possible.

What it definitely does not mean?

This initiative sits alongside the work being undertaken on Quality and Compliance and Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) and does not affect the right to request an EHCP, nor the right to have one if needed. For those young people who currently have an EHCP, these will continue to be reviewed on an annual basis as per statutory requirements. This way of working helps to identify and secure support flexibly to make sure that young people can have their needs met in the most appropriate way.

What's already happened?

Whilst the implementation phase of the cluster work is new, significant work over time has already occurred to reach this point. The overview of this is the Schools Forum and the Local Authority jointly commissioned a review; Review undertaken; Partnership task & finish group established; Pathfinder cluster in place; leading to Cabinet decision in July 2024 to implement recommendations.

In April 2023, the Schools Forum and Local Authority recognised the challenges in the system and jointly commissioned a review of mainstream high needs funding. This review was undertaken by a consultant, Peter Gray an acknowledged expert in this field, who brought with him his previous experience as well as knowledge from other Local Authorities.

This review and analysis of SEND provision in Kirklees at the time, helped to identify the opportunities for systemic change that could enable improve SEND provision for young people in Kirklees. The recommendations from the review were for Kirklees to explore a new mainstream SEND funding model that is based on the concepts of “predictable and exceptional need”. This is the level of need that is a predictable part of school cohorts and is best funded at school level rather than individually. The purpose of this is to enable a more consistent mainstream offer, with more capacity/flexibility to meet children's needs, resulting in less demand further up the system.

The outcomes of the review were presented to school leaders, SENDCOs, parent and carers and it was agreed to establish a ‘task and finish group’ with representatives from across the system to adapt and devise a bespoke model of cluster working for Kirklees. Several key principles of a good funding system, and also cluster working in Kirklees, were identified as described earlier in this report. Contact was made with other local authorities who had already implemented cluster working in order to understand their approaches and learn lessons.

As well as co-designing the recommended model, officers attended Schools Forum, Primary, Secondary and Special School Heads meetings, Education and Learning Partnership Board and SENDCo Network. Sessions for schools were held in Huddersfield, Dewsbury and online to present the proposed model and senior managers also regularly engaged with PCAN.

The approach built upon existing strengths and 17 Clusters were created. A geographical approach was taken to ensure that both the place-based support afforded by this organisation and the continuity for children provided as they move between schools at points of transition operated within the best interests of the children and families.

A pathfinder cluster was established in April 2024. This consisted of a group of school SENDCOs, a ‘Cluster Lead’ (SENDCo from a school within the cluster), and a ‘Team around the Cluster’ of professionals including Educational Psychologists, Early Help Consultants, Specialist Outreach, and a team leader from the SEND Assessment and Commissioning Team (now known as the EHCP Team). This cluster began to put the principles and structures of cluster working into practise and the learning from this continued to define and develop the model which then informed recommendations to Cabinet who endorsed the approach in July last year.

Each cluster was visited in May 2024 to provide updated information to school leaders (Headteachers and SENDCOs) and to define a more specific structure around the cluster working model, including recruiting a Cluster Lead for each cluster.

Cluster Leads were appointed in the summer term of 2023-24 and cluster meetings commenced in September 2024. Cluster Leads have been supported in their role through half termly Cluster Lead meetings and additional training sessions, as well as a Cluster Handbook.

The size of the challenge was noted and the need for capacity to support and drive change was identified. An investment for success was made and 2 Area Cluster (Strategic) Leads were appointed and commenced work in November 2024. Their previous experience working as teachers in leadership positions (including SENDCo) supports them in having oversight, building key relationships and working on the strategic development and implementation of cluster working.

All clusters have now had at least 3 meetings, focussing on developing good working relationships, creating an environment that enables open discussion and building an understanding of their community and the common needs within it. Meetings provide an opportunity to think differently; present and discuss individual; group and whole school cases; as well as sharing advice and good practice to support each other in identifying opportunities to better meet need at the earliest possible point. Some clusters have allocated funding to cases, resources or training opportunities and there is good evidence of clusters demonstrating a clear ability to build and strengthen SEND capacity in mainstream schools.

There is a recognition that communication is a challenge and it is vital that a range of key stakeholders are engaged, involved and help to drive progress. To further support clusters, a range of communication methods are being used to help ensure information is received by the range of key stakeholders. Further information can be found later in this document.

Initial impacts

The absolute commitment of partners such as cluster leads and SENDCos has been pivotal to progress so far. They are invested in developing inclusion in mainstream schools and improving SEND provision for young people across Kirklees and their efforts should be noted.

SENDCos have expressed the benefits of attending cluster meetings. This includes receiving the advice and support that is shared in the course of case discussions and have benefitted from the guidance both where they are, and where they are not, specifically about their school or one of their pupils. A number of Cluster Leads have voiced how cluster working has enabled schools to identify a variety of next steps and solutions to support young people. It is acknowledged that creative solutions can be found without the need for additional funding.

There has been a strong focus on structured solution focused discussions and Cluster Leads have attended training delivered by the Educational Psychology team to develop and support this. This has enabled SENDCos and members of the Team Around the Cluster to take a more considered and objective approach to finding solutions to support young people in mainstream schools. This has also supported the work on embedding the Graduated Approach. The graduated approach for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities is a systematic method used by schools to identify and meet the needs of children with SEND. This approach follows a continuous four-part cycle: Assess, Plan, Do, Review - [The Graduated Approach - Assess, Plan, Do, Review | Graduated Approach | Kirklees SEND Local Offer](#)) and become a real strength of cluster working.

Clusters have started to identify common themes and training needs that can be addressed more effectively and efficiently as a cluster group and have started to discuss or implement approaches that can build capacity across all their schools.

Kirklees is at the early stages of implementing the cluster approach, but already some good news stories are emerging.

Example 1

What was the presenting situation?

A school brought to the cluster meeting the case of a student who had experienced a challenging home life and was subsequently experiencing difficulties with their mental health. The school were unsure how best to support the pupil (and the staff working with them) or where to go for more specific advice and support. The student's grades were beginning to suffer and, as a very able pupil with high expectations of their own achievement as well as high expectations from family members, this was adding to the complexity and challenge of their negative feelings. The pupil was reluctant to engage in specific counselling or therapy but had close, trusting relationships with some key members of staff who were keen to, but not always available to, support when required.

What happened?

The cluster were able to ask questions which enabled a better understanding of the needs of the young person and the current situation, including what life was now like for them at home.

The SENDCos and Team Around the Cluster were able to recommend a range of agencies, websites and resources to support the school in developing their understanding and support structures that might support the young person. They also suggested strategies that might support the pupil to manage the challenges they face, including difficult feelings around academic attainment.

What difference did it make?

The school left the meeting with a clear action plan and a number of resources to investigate. The case will be reviewed at the next meeting and additional guidance given based on the progress so far.

Example 2

What was the presenting issue?

A group of schools, through discussion of several cases brought to the cluster meeting, identified that they would all benefit from training in the social intervention 'Circle of Friends'.

What happened?

As a result, it was agreed that the training would be delivered to the cluster as a whole by the Educational Psychologist through the Kirklees Keep in Mind offer. One school has been able to provide a space for the training to take place and all schools, including the high school, selected 2-3 members of staff to attend the training during the school day. During a cluster meeting, 4 desired outcomes of the training were identified and these were 'scaled' in terms of each school's current practise.

What difference did it make?

The training will take place during the Spring Term and will be evaluated during a cluster meeting in the Summer Term.

The training has had no cost attached but will build capacity in all cluster schools, have a positive impact on many children, improve the schools' mainstream provision. It will also provide a shared understanding of the provision and expectation that the intervention will be used by the schools to support pupils throughout their educational journey.

Example 3

What was the presenting issue?

A primary school brought to the cluster meeting the case of a child with complex communication and interaction needs, working below age related expectations in Reading, Writing and Maths.

What happened?

There was a recognition from the school that the pupil had the potential to achieve more with the right provision and structures around them. The school had put a lot of support in place already and the child was described as being happy at school, but they were aware that there was more that they could be doing to enable the child to work more independently, make better academic progress and develop their social interactions. They just weren't sure exactly what, or in what order, to try.

What difference did it make?

As a result of the case discussion, the child's situation both at home and school was better understood and a range of suggestions for the school were made, including some short term and longer-term actions. The SENDCo described that they 'knew we weren't there yet, but weren't sure where to go next' but, following the advice and support received they left 'skipping out of the meeting' excited to go and implement the cluster's advice and support.

Example 4

What was the presenting situation?

A cluster identified during a meeting that all schools within the cluster needed additional support and resources to address speech and language needs for multiple students.

What happened?

The cluster were informed of a speech and language programme that had been used successfully by other schools called 'See and Learn'. The cluster agreed to purchase the resources as a group and plan to support each other with the use and implementation of the resources and recommended strategies.

What difference did it make?

This approach has supported all schools within the cluster to address a speech and language gap in provision and build capacity in their schools for this area of need. As the cluster model has review points for cases discussed there will be opportunities for peer support and challenge in the way the schools use and deliver the resources. As all the schools will have used the resources, they will all have a good understanding of how the programme works and be able to help each other to get the most out of this investment.

Example of key feedback received

It is noted that some sessions have been quite challenging and that, as with any new group/approach, the natural forming, norming and storming stages would, and have, been occurring.

- *'I'll be honest there are not many things that impress me anymore, but I'll tell you what - it was superb'.*
- *'The preparation/way it was chaired/and the preparation that had gone into present cases'.*
- *'Education are doing a superb job. Covered every base. Really impressed.'*
- *'Attended first cluster today. Group of SENCo's have been meeting like this over years and had good relationships, but felt this has strengthened with 'team around the cluster'.*
- *'Sharing of good practice across SENCo's has been good'. Offer made to other SENCos to see what it 'looks like/come & have a look at how we do things in our school (so much has happened in isolation)'*
- *'It's been quite positive'; 'Just had our cluster meeting and found we didn't talk about money at all. SENDACT rep was great and it was all about finding solutions from the start. Looking back at the issues, money wouldn't have solved the problems';*

Cluster Leads:

- *'Good support from the Area Lead. If you have an issue she is very quick to respond and help.'*
- *'Having Anna available has been a huge help to me, she is doing an amazing job'*

Cluster Leads were asked to provide feedback in relation to cluster working in general:

- *'Some excellent sharing of ideas/resources/guidance during the cluster meeting'*
- *'Sharing of knowledge to support our young people. A whole team approach'*
- *'The solution focussed approach when discussing cases'*
- *'Sharing good practice within our cluster'*
- *'The opportunities to come together in a supportive capacity'.*
- *'The creative use of what is available, rather than a focus on what is not'*
- *'Great conversations around good practise in terms of transition, starting earlier and taking guidance from high school about what would support (in their view) in terms of transition'*
- *'Shared training needs identified, and training now planned as a cluster'*
- *'Support and good advice and guidance from the Educational Psychologist and Team Around the Cluster'*

Challenges

Communication

In order to deliver the change needed, systemic change is required. This means a significant number of people are involved across a range of different organisations which increases the challenges relating to communication. One example of this is the need to communicate progress in a timely and appropriate manner at various stages.

A range of mitigation is in place, but we understand there are still opportunities to further improve. A strategic 'waterfall' approach to communication has been undertaken, starting with critical stakeholders. It is acknowledged and understood that this provides challenges with ensuring consistency once messages are relayed so further efforts are being made to support stakeholders in this area. Examples include, but are not limited to, FAQs have/are being developed and 2 way channels have been created and are being strengthened which includes feedback forms; Meeting with Kirklees Primary, Secondary Heads, Governors and School Business Managers; Area Strategic Leads already meet with Cluster leads, SENDConet; Clusters feature in new SENDCo training and head teacher induction. Review meetings are also planned to identify challenges and opportunities.

Capacity

There are 2 key elements of this challenge:

- a. As the system often requires partners to work at a fast pace, work can often result in a lack of time and space to fully explore and understand the issue, which can limit the options and opportunities considered.

The approach taken within clusters provides space and time to understand the range of specific issues for the individual child, peer challenge, professional support with different perspectives, encourages innovation/finding best practice leading to improved/bespoke solutions.

- b. Capacity for change – there is an understanding of the multiple pressures within the system including time.

This has led to a focus on ensuring sustainable change and an approach of evolution, not revolution and that how partners work together is vital. Each phase of the work features a review stage to enable lessons to be learned, challenges acknowledged along with success, and for the next phase to be planned with capacity in view.

Interdependencies

Due to the number of partners involved in cluster working, as well as in SEND in general across Kirklees, for clusters to succeed and reach its full potential, all parties need to commit to the process and play their part. Challenges relating to capacity exist for a number of partners. We have looked to mitigate this by investing in capacity e.g. paid release time 1 day a week for Cluster Leads. This supports schools' quality CPD and a network of support enabling us as a system to meet need and respond to emerging needs. It is recognised that committing time and resources to cluster working is the most efficient use of the partnership resources. The delivery of advice and guidance to multiple

schools at cluster meetings has a wider impact than individual partners working with each school directly.

The national challenges in relation to SEND and in education means that schools are already under a great deal of pressure and can struggle with capacity in both time and resources. These ongoing pressures could impact on each school's ability to engage with clusters. Kirklees recognise the importance of continuing to support schools to overcome these challenges and to contribute to finding solutions.

The graduated approach is a key focus of clusters to improve the quality of mainstream SEND education and provision. Kirklees recognise the ongoing need to continue its work with schools in relation to the graduated approach and to support and drive forward the implementation of this work to provide the best possible outcomes for children and young people. Quality and consistency of the implementation of the graduated approach is key to achieving equity of provision, inclusivity, building capacity and achieving culture change in mainstream schools. This is a key focus of cluster working.

What's next?

Kirklees recognise that fresh and new approaches to SEND, including funding and improving the quality of mainstream SEND provision, are crucial to improve outcomes for young people across Kirklees and ensuring a sustainable future.

To make this happen, a considered approach is being taken. Reviews have been built in to ensure we understand what's working well, where are the challenges and how we will jointly move forward.

As part of this, some key themes will be consistent e.g. communication, embedding of the graduated approach and quality assurance. We will continue to look outside Kirklees in order to identify innovation, learning and opportunities.

3. Implications for the Council

3.1 Council Plan

The work described fully supports, and is featured in, the Council plan.

3.2 Financial Implications

Funding has been enabled to support cluster working. We have issued a financial statement to each cluster to show transparently on where schools budgets and High Needs funding is being spent.

The Council is currently involved in the High Needs Block Safety Valve Programme and has been successful in securing £33.5m of revenue funding and £8.2m of capital funding. This proposal supports the ambitions of the Programme.

As noted, £16m or 21% of overall spend from the High Needs Block was attributable to mainstream top ups for EHC plans in 2023/24, supporting 1600 pupils. For the new model, we have done detailed work to look at how this funding is currently distributed across each proposed cluster, alongside the notional funding already in school budgets and delegated elements agreed as part of the top up funding review that was subject of the March 2021 Cabinet Decision. This provides the basis for funding the cluster working.

Over time, it is anticipated that by resourcing support at the earliest opportunity from within a cluster budget would enable a more sustainable system. To be clear, this proposal does not include children being educated in one of our Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs) as this is financed separately and in addition.

3.3 Legal Implications

The work supports our legislative requirements, including timeliness of response.

3.8 Other (e.g. Risk, Integrated Impact Assessment or Human Resources)

Key risks include:

- a. Sufficiency of SEND provision. Failure to meet the needs of the SEND community, due to increases in demand and complexity of need, insufficient capacity within services/partnership and a lack of existing local provision leading to missing statutory deadlines and associated financial and reputational consequences.
- b. Safety valve commitments not delivered leading to negative impact on Service users, non-receipt of significant finances and reputational damage.
- c. System ownership and engagement within services/partners is not achieved. Partners do not prioritise the project which means work not undertaken and outputs/outcomes not achieved.

Addressing inequalities is at the very heart of the programme and is a core ethic. Integrated Impact Assessments have been undertaken on specific elements of the programme to ensure opportunities are in view and there are no accidental adverse implications.

4. Consultation/Engagement

As confirmed already in this report, the SEND programme has co-production and engagement as a core value and approach. Young people, Parent and Carer Forum (PCAN), Health and Schools have been integral to creating and implementing strategic approaches. For example, as outlined above, schools and PCAN have been integral to creating the Kirklees 'Cluster' approach; and young people/partners including PCAN have coproduced our 'Big Plan'.

Engagement with our Schools is crucial, and to support this, Schools Forum and our Education and Learning Partnership Board are key partners to enable support and challenge regarding spend on our High Needs Block.

5. Options

5.1 Options considered

The SEND programme constantly scans the national picture for innovation and opportunities.

This intelligence is further supported by the DfE via the recently completed Written Statement of Action quarterly meetings.

It is noted the intelligence from the above sources, and the DfE via the Safety Valve agreement, has confirmed there are currently no areas of innovation that Kirklees has not considered or is not already implementing.

Kirklees has also been recognised as being leaders/a source of best practice e.g. receiving national recognition at awards and being invited to share with other Local Authorities our learning and approach. However, Kirklees will still continue to search for innovation opportunities to make a difference for and with the people of Kirklees.

5.2 Reasons for recommended option

The SEND programme is complex, extensive and has a range of projects at various stages of maturity. Cluster working is critical project to Kirklees ambition. The Children's Scrutiny Panel have had the opportunity to observe the SEND Transformation and Commissioning Group, further oversight by scrutiny would provide added value.

The recommendation is that the report is noted and Scrutiny support is requested moving forward on delivering cultural change including Cluster working.

6. Next steps and timelines

Scrutiny feedback received and incorporated into planning.

7. Contact officer

Jo-Anne Sanders Service Director – Learning and Early Support
Jo-Anne.Sanders@kirklees.gov.uk

8. Background Papers and History of Decisions

[SEND - The Big Plan! | How we plan for SEND | Kirklees SEND Local Offer \(kirkleeslocaloffer.org.uk\)](#)

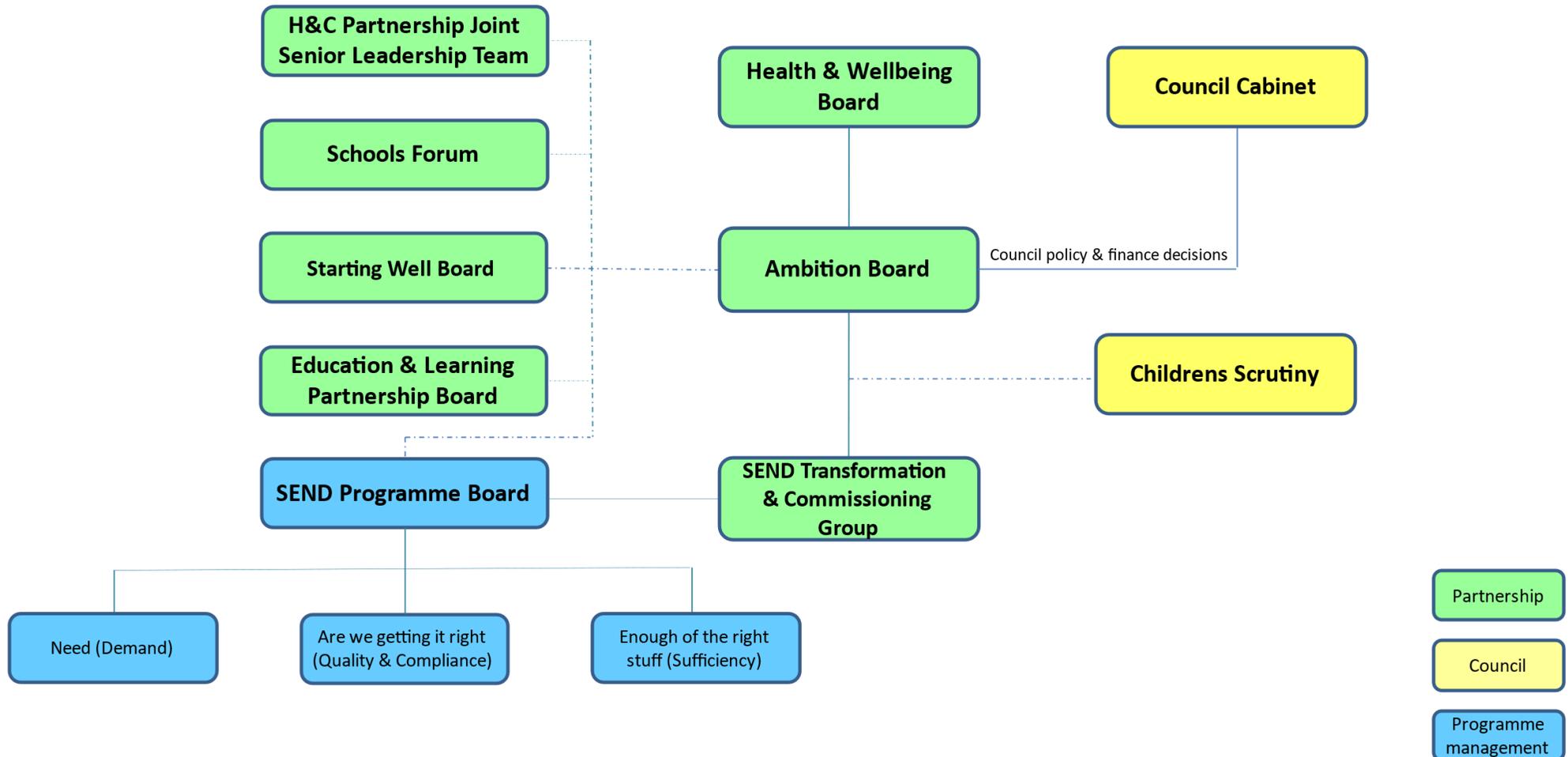
9. Appendices

Appendix 1 – SEND programme governance

10. Service Director responsible

Jo-Anne Sanders Service Director – Learning and Early Support.
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SEND Programme Governance



CHILDREN’S SCRUTINY PANEL – WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25

MEMBERS: Cllr Itrat Ali, Cllr Richard Smith, Cllr Jane Rylah, Cllr Ashleigh Robinson, Cllr Hannah McKerchar, Cllr Tanisha Bramwell

SUPPORT: Helen Kilroy (Assistant Democracy Manager), Claire Gardiner (Democracy Officer)

| Agenda item/area of focus | Lead Officer | Areas of Scrutiny carried forward from 24-25 | Comments |
|--|---|---|---|
| <p>Standard items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-decision scrutiny (decisions by Cabinet) • Performance Information (Children’s Service) – Informal meeting • Feedback from Panel Members on issues considered by Kirklees Parenting Board • Ambition Board Minutes | <p>Cabinet Members/Senior Officers (Children’s Service)</p> <p>Presented by Service Directors (produced by Paul Caladine)</p> <p>Panel Members who attend Kirklees Parenting Board</p> <p>Senior Officers and Cabinet Members</p> | <p>Panel will check at each meeting with Cabinet Members and Senior Officers from Children’s Service if there are any potential areas of pre-decision scrutiny they need to consider at future meetings.</p> <p>The Panel will continue to monitor the performance of the Learning Early Support Service and Child Protection & Family Support (written report in informal session and verbal update on key issues in public meeting). Panel will be asked for questions prior to the Panel meeting so that these can be shared with Senior Officers and Cabinet Members in advance of the Informal meeting.</p> <p>Members of the Panel who attend the Kirklees Parenting Board will feedback on key issues to the Scrutiny Panel as appropriate.</p> <p>The Panel will receive for information the minutes from the Ambition Board meetings which are held quarterly.</p> | <p>Every meeting</p> <p>Every meeting</p> <p>Every meeting</p> <p>Quarterly</p> |
| <p>Review of the Improvement Journey – Ofsted Inspection</p> | <p>Tom Brailsford/Vicky Metherringham</p> | <p>The Panel will continue to review the Improvement Journey of Children’s Services and receive regular updates following Ofsted Inspections.</p> | <p>Immediate and ongoing</p> |

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| | | <p>The Panel will visit Children’s Social Care Teams, Children with Disabilities Team and the Front Door during the 2024/25 municipal year.</p> <p>Training on Corporate Parenting The Panel received a training presentation on Corporate Parenting on the 30th August 2024 and will consider regular updates on issues considered by the Kirklees Parenting Board at each Panel meeting.</p> <p>Visit to No 11 and No 12 hubs The Panel visited No 11 and No 12 hubs and observed the services on offer and being accessed by young people.</p> <p>Care Leavers Month – October 2024 The Panel were invited to events that took place during Care Leavers Month (October 2024) and details were shared with Members of the Panel.</p> <p>Visit to Care Leavers Achievement Awards on 30.10.24 Members of the Panel attended the Care Leavers Achievement Awards Event at Huddersfield Town Hall, it was a celebratory event held for Care Leavers. The evening was inspirational, with speeches from the Mayor, Councillor Viv Kendrick (Cabinet Member for Children) and very bravely from some of the young people. The atmosphere in the room was supportive throughout, particularly as the students came on stage to receive their awards. The awards ceremony was followed by a buffet, a magician and an unplanned performance of Kurdish dancing.</p> <p>Visit to the Takeover Event – Care Leavers Forum 24.10.24 The Chair of the Panel attended the Takeover event on the 24th October 2024 which was facilitated by the Care Leavers Forum, supported by the Our Voice Team and Children’s Rights Team. There was attendance across the board from all different providers of children’s services and representatives from the Integrated Care System (ICS) healthcare, housing</p> | <p>30.10.24</p> <p>24.10.2024</p> |
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| | | <p>as well as Cabinet Members. The meeting was very interactive and following the introductions there was an ice breaker, the presentations and group exercises facilitated by the care leavers. A great amount of work had gone into preparing the event. Three videos of the care leavers were shared outlining their journey, the challenges they faced and the support they received.</p> <p>The agenda included young people and Kirklees Parenting Board member discussion on the topics of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Things to do • Homes for children • Health and wellbeing • Voice, influence and participation • Learning <p>The session ended with a quiz, and a recital of a poem written by one of the care leavers.</p> <p>Panel meeting on 11th October 2024 – Outcome of the Children’s Services Ofsted Inspection</p> <p>The Panel considered the outcome and recommendations of the Children’s Services Ofsted Inspection report, which was published on the 27th August 2024 and highlighted the key areas of improvement for the Service. The Ofsted Inspection covered all areas of the Children’s Service but focussed on children in need, children in care and care leavers. The Panel agreed that the Ofsted report was very positive and that it was encouraging to see the significant improvements that had been made since the last Ofsted report in 2019. The Panel asked that their thanks and congratulations be passed onto the Teams within Children’s Services for their hard work and commitment to improving the delivery of services and support to children and young people in Kirklees.</p> | <p>11.10.24</p> |
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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Team will assess referrals at the front door and make a decision on what service was required. • Domestic abuse case consultants will take some of the early support and preventative work, for example around young people’s housing and trying to prevent homelessness. • Front Door had received 19,000 phone calls since 1.4.24 and all the enquiries have to be turned round in a 24 hour window. It was essential to get the timescales and right decision for families, seeking consent etc and it was a big challenge to meet the timescales. • The team worked with multi agency partners, for example, probation, youth engagement service, and the drug and alcohol service. Practice learning days were held and partners were invited to come and look at the work of the Team. A monthly meeting was held with partners to discuss anything that was not working and training was given to partners to help them understand the referral process. • A weekly Referral meeting was held to look at cases and review decisions where appropriate, this meeting was also attended by partners such as health and the police. The Panel agreed to attend and observe one of the Referral meetings. • Quote “The Front Door is engaged with young people, the child was at the heart of the conversation, high on the agenda and was the heart of everything we do”. • The Team were ‘growing their own’ staff and people were stepping up into roles. <p>Visit to the Children with Disabilities (CWD) and Access and Intervention Teams on 25th February 2025</p> <p>Members of the Panel met with the CWD and Access and Intervention Teams on the 25th February 2025 and the following key points were discussed –</p> | |
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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CWD Team support children with disabilities who have complex health and physical needs, autistic children and some with behavioural needs. • Support to children did not tend to reduce over time, but instead would usually increase as the child got older. There was an Adult Pathway Team to support the young person once they turned 18, and from 16+ there would be joined up working to help prepare them for adulthood. • The caseloads in the CWD Team were manageable and weekly supervision took place with Social Workers and the team worked closely with Assessment and Intervention. • The CWD Team worked closely with the EHCP Team in Education, Adults Social Care, Youth Engagement Service, other services within Children’s and the police. • Communication with a large number of children being supported by the CWD Team was non-verbal. Social Workers would use pictures and story boards to communicate with children or speak to the child’s school or family to find out the best way to communicate with the young person. The Panel agreed to see some examples of the story boards. • The Team would often struggle to find a placement for some children with disabilities as their needs could be very complex and not all foster carers were skilled enough in this area to care for them. • There were waiting lists for home adaptation referrals which could cause frustration to families. | |
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| <p>Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Transformation Plan and</p> <p>Sufficiency of SEND and Mainstream capacity</p> | <p>Jo-Anne Sanders Michelle Lister</p> | <p>The Panel will scrutinise the SEND Transformation Plan and will focus on the following areas –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety Valve - Oversight of the Government Safety Valve Agreement and the current profile of spend across the High Needs Blocks | |
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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality and Compliance - Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) Overview of volume processes – quality and compliance (including Annual Reviews) • Graduated Approach – Mainstream Schools organised in Clusters - New initiative of schools working in clusters • Specialist places (Sufficiency) - Special Schools – overview of provision and two new school rebuilds <p>The Panel will consider sufficiency across Learning places and focus on the following areas –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decline of the cohort of children in primary schools in Kirklees - Needs and capacity around the teacher workforce - Opportunities for extensions to entitlements for wrap around care and childcare <p>To support this work, the Panel will take advantage of opportunities throughout the 24/25 municipal year to observe partnership meetings when these issues were discussed including –</p> <p>Visit to SEND Transformation and Commissioning Group on 3rd October 2024</p> <p>The Panel attended and observed the SEND Transformation and Commissioning Group on the 3rd October 2024 to gain a better understanding of the SEND transformation work. A presentation was carried out sharing reflections, impacts and progress on the programme and clusters and explained the “why, approach and roles”. Break out groups were asked to discuss challenges to SEND, areas of strength, hopes and worries for cluster model.</p> | <p>3.10.24</p> |
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| | | <p>Panel meeting on 22nd November 2024 – Safety Valve Agreement for High Needs Block The Panel considered a report providing an insight into the Council’s ‘Safety Valve’ agreement with the Department for Education in relation to the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant. The Panel gave their support for the report and asked that officers consider and take on board any questions and comments raised by the Panel in future reports.</p> <p>Panel meeting on 4th February 2025 – Education Health and Care Plan Overview The Panel considered a report which provided an insight into the national and local challenges relating to Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). The Panel recognised that there were local and national challenges due to the rise in EHCP numbers, but noted that it was evident from the report that the service was working in partnership, using a systems-based approach, and focusing on quality.</p> <p>Panel meeting on 14th March 2025 – New initiatives in schools working in clusters The Panel will consider a report giving an insight into the new initiatives in schools that are working in clusters.</p> <p>Panel meeting on 28th April 2025 – Decline of the cohort of children in primary schools in Kirklees The Panel will consider a report on the decline of the cohort of children in primary schools in Kirklees.</p> <p>Panel meeting on 28th April 2025 – Overview of provision and 2 new school rebuilds The Panel will consider a report on Special Schools giving an overview of provision and 2 new school rebuilds – Joseph Norton and Woodley.</p> | <p>22.11.24</p> <p>4.2.25</p> <p>14.3.25</p> <p>28.4.25</p> <p>28.4.25</p> |
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| | | <p>Visit to an Education and Learning Partnership Board (ELPB) meeting – date to be arranged</p> <p>A Visit to the Places Access and Inclusion Committee of the Education and Learning Partnership Board (ELPB) The Panel will visit the Places, Access and Inclusion Meeting of the ELPB to observe the discussions around needs and capacity relating to the teacher workforce – date to be arranged.</p> | <p>To be arranged</p> <p>To be arranged</p> |
| <p>Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA)</p> | <p>Vicky Metheringham/Jo-Anne Sanders/Jill Greenfield and Sara Miles</p> <p>Patrick Boosey (NHS)</p> | <p>The Panel will scrutinise the multi-agency partnership arrangements as part of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) and consider the changes which have been implemented.</p> <p>Visit to Kirklees Safeguarding Partnership Board (KSPB) on 10th February 2025 The Panel will visit the Kirklees Safeguarding Partnership Board meeting as part of their scrutiny on the working together action plan and achieving outcomes for the children across Kirklees.</p> <p>Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) Action Plan The Panel will consider the changes implemented in the Working Together Action Plan and the multi-agency partnership arrangements. Julie Sykes, the Independent Scrutineer of the Kirklees Safeguarding Children’s Partnerships (KSCP) will be invited to attend the Panel meeting – to be arranged.</p> <p>Visit to Starting Well Board on 9th May 2025 The Panel will visit the Starting Well Board on the 9th May 2025 as part of their scrutiny on achieving outcomes for children across Kirklees.</p> | <p>10.2.25</p> <p>To be carried forward to 2025/26 municipal year</p> <p>9.5.25</p> |

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| <p>Quality Assurance – impact of auditing the Children’s Service</p> | <p>Vicky Metherringham/Robert Fordyce</p> | <p>The Panel will scrutinise the Quality Assurance impact of auditing the Children’s Service and what difference it was making to children’s lives.</p> <p>The Panel will be invited to observe appropriate forums on Quality Assurance, including the Practice Learning days and Quality Learning Events taking place within the Children’s Service.</p> <p>Panel Meeting on 11th October 2024 – Annual Report on Quality Assurance</p> <p>The Panel considered the Annual Report on Quality Assurance. The report provided an overview of audit and learning processes for the last 12 months for consideration and discussion. It was noted that Members of the Panel would attend some of the forthcoming Practice Learning Days with Teams across the Children’s Service and report back with updates to future Panel Meetings.</p> <p>Visits to Practice Learning Day (PLD) for Care Leavers on 29.11.24</p> <p>Members of the Panel attended the Practice Learning Day for Care Leavers on the 29th November 2024. During the day, a presentation was given by Lauren James, the specialist from the Adult Pathway Team. An overview of “My Housing Plan” was provided and the Panel Members present had the opportunity to observe the valuable peer review process. Discussion took place around the themes of preparing for adulthood, front door entry and access to health and adult social care. The Panel felt that the Care Leavers input into their own planning pathways was positive. Issues regarding the complexity of the recruitment processes for Personal Assistants in Kirklees were raised.</p> <p>Key issues discussed at the meeting included the challenges faced by Personal Assistants and were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication and engagement at visits, and with adult social care teams (the joint working process) | <p>11.10.24</p> <p>29.11.24</p> |
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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear defining of the role of the Personal Assistant for children with additional needs • Shared lives/young people starting out and the adult social care review to include this group and communication with this group • Drug users and related services • Parents understanding the child’s needs and capacity • Making the young person's voice heard (not just the carer’s) • Having the time to build relationships when caseload was high • The amount of people involved in care and their differing roles, making sure everyone keeps up with new information eg Mental Health Act • Access to Care First - adult social workers appeared to be unsure of the role of the Personal Assistant • Care plans in adult services were too big and need to be comprehensive • Autism, more training was needed around mental health or disability <p>Overall, it was a great opportunity to engage with the group and deepen the understanding of the service they provided.</p> <p>Visit to Practice Learning Day (PLD) for Youth Engagement Team on 10.01.25</p> <p>The Chair of the Panel attended this meeting with the Youth Engagement Team, which consisted of 15 youth engagement officers, 3 team leaders and a coordination manager. There was introduction about the service, the work they undertake and some of the challenges they faced. Key information from the meeting was as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance updates were held weekly by the team, and data and outcomes were captured. Quality assurance meetings were held every 2 weeks. | <p>10.01.25</p> |
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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team worked with multi-agency teams including police, schools, health, and council officers as well as youth clubs, volunteer groups and child vulnerability teams. The team also worked with charities, in particular post-18 charitable organisations, and housing. <p>The team faced challenges in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of resources and services available for young people locally, especially sports and recreation. • Assisting young people with specialist needs and the health services to address those needs. • Resources for those children who struggled with education and the need for specialist skills-based learning for them. • The gap for children once they reached 18 and the service could no longer support them, there was a need for something to bridge the gap so the support could continue. Charities were often relied upon to take on the work. • The voice of the young person was a focus, to ensure it was heard, especially in the language used with young people and their families. | |
| <p>Educational Outcomes</p> | <p>Jo-Anne Sanders/Emma Brayford (key lead)</p> | <p>The Panel will scrutinise the educational outcomes of children and young people in Kirklees.</p> <p>Informal Panel Meeting on 11th October 2024 – Overview of outcomes achieved – attainment and progress during 2023-24</p> <p>The Panel considered an overview of the statutory outcomes achieved (attainment and progress) by learners who took assessments in Kirklees during the academic year 2023-2024. The report covered outcomes at the end of the Foundation Stage, Phonics (Year 1), Key Stage 2 (Year 6), Key Stage 4 (GCSE) and Key Stage 5 (Post-16). The results and national comparisons provided in this report were subject to validation and the</p> | <p>11.10.24</p> |

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| | | <p>report aimed to offer preliminary insights into the educational outcomes in Kirklees, pending the release of the comprehensive Kirklees Annual Educational Outcomes report.</p> <p>Elective Home Education – visit to meet with Strategic Leads The Panel received data provided by Jo-Anne Sanders in September 2024 on Elective Home Education (EHE), which had been shared with Ofsted during the inspection.</p> <p>The Panel will also meet with Strategic Leads early in 2025 when narrative was available for further consideration and scrutiny by the Panel.</p> | <p>To be arranged</p> |
| <p>Partnership Arrangements</p> | <p>Vicky Metheringham/Jo-Anne Sanders</p> | <p>The Panel will continue to scrutinise partnerships and boards during the 2024/25 municipal year, for example, Kirklees Parenting Board and Health and Wellbeing Board, visits to internal teams and partners and the Panel can look at how data was collected and used to improve outcomes. The Panel can be represented at meetings, events and visits to internal teams and external providers and agree to focus on the following areas:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection • Partnership working • Is the voice of the young person being heard? (as below) • Good practice • Delivery of quality service <p>The Panel have been invited to attend the Home-Start Kirklees Annual General Meeting and 25th Anniversary celebration on the 26th September 2024 where there will be a showcase of work from families, volunteers and staff.</p> | |

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| <p>Voice of the Young Person</p> | <p>Tom Brailsford/Service Directors (Children’s Service)</p> | <p>The Panel will keep a watching brief on all areas of scrutiny by the Panel and explore whether the voice of the child was being heard, whether they are empowered to speak up and ensure that lessons have and are being learned.</p> | |
| <p>Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)</p> | <p>Jo-Anne Sanders/Emma Brayford/Mark Janes (Chair of SACRE)</p> | <p>The Panel will scrutinise the work of the Kirklees Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) which includes partnership working with other regional local authorities.</p> <p>Panel meeting 4th February 2025 – Annual Report from the Kirklees Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)</p> <p>The Panel considered the Annual Report from the Kirklees Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE). Successes this year included the revision of the locally agreed syllabus, well-attended training for teachers, and the introduction of a new inclusive Collective Worship Award. The Panel gave their support to work which would be undertaken in the future, to investigate the position for RE for non-examined students at Key Stage 4, as those not taking an exam may not be receiving their statutory requirement of RE teaching. The Panel also supported plans for SACRE to work with the Communities Team to be involved in work around community cohesion.</p> | <p>4th February 2025</p> |
| <p>Health Provision for Children and Young People</p> | <p>Jane McDonnell (Head of Health Protection in Public Health)</p> | <p>The Panel will scrutinise the health provision for Children and Young People in Kirklees with a particular focus on dental care, babies and immunisations.</p> <p>Joint Informal meeting of the Children’s Scrutiny Panel and the Health and Adult Social Care Panel - 16th January 2025) – Children’s Immunisations</p> <p>The Panel attended a Joint Informal meeting of the Children’s Scrutiny Panel and the Health and Adult Social Care Panel on the 16th January 2025 and received an update giving the latest children’s and young people’s and</p> | <p>16th January 2025</p> |

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| | | <p>adults vaccinations uptake data for Kirklees and an overview of the collaborative working with partners to maximise uptake of all vaccinations; including communications and engagement work. A number of areas were focussed on by the Panel Members and questions were asked in connection with the following areas –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistics of the number of healthy children admitted to hospital with Influenza before the vaccine programme was introduced and the number of pregnant women admitted with Pneumonia before the vaccine programme was introduced. • How Locala funded for the school vaccination programme • Payment made to Locala for vaccines • Partnerships between Kirklees and the community hub co-ordinators • Could any child advocate for themselves as to whether they have a vaccine or not or if below 18 does the parent have the final say • Resources available to Members on vaccinations to share within communities and help to spread the message <p>Joint discussion at Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel on 26th February 2025 – Healthy Child Programme</p> <p>The Panel was invited to attend the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel on the 26th February 2025 for a joint discussion on the Healthy Child Programme as part of pre-decision scrutiny in advance of the report being considered by Cabinet on the 6th May 2025.</p> <p>The report gave an overview of the Healthy Child Programme (HCP) and the background to the HCP contract with key milestones for the competitive tender process for the HCP. Also known as the 0-19 service, the HCP aims to improve the health and well-being of children through –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and development reviews • Health promotion • Parenting support • Screening and immunisation programmes. | <p>26th February 2025</p> |
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| | | <p>The programme integrates health, education, and other key partners to provide comprehensive support for children and their families and is a mandated service as part of the Public Health Grant conditions.</p> <p>Joint discussion at Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel on 9.4.25 - Dentistry The Panel has been invited to attend the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel on the 22nd January 2025 for a joint discussion on Dentistry. Representatives from the Integrated Care Board (ICB) will give a report on access to dentistry for Adults and Children.</p> <p>Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Vaccination Programme The Panel will have a Joint meeting with the Health and Adult Social Care Panel in 2025/26 to discuss the Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccination programme, aimed at adults over 75 and babies/pregnant women when data will be available for consideration.</p> | <p>9th April 2025</p> <p>2025/26 municipal year</p> |
| <p>Emotional Wellbeing Provision for children in Kirklees and Mental Health in Schools - Keep in mind</p> | <p>Jo-Anne Sanders/Stewart Horn</p> | <p>The Panel will scrutinise the experience verses the provision of service and seek feedback from service users on their perception on using the service. The Panel will also consider the fluctuation in the waiting times and trends for children’s emotional health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Emotional Wellbeing Provision in Kirklees – “Keep in Mind” The Panel will consider an update on the implementation of the new “Keep in Mind” Service, which was launched in April 2024. The Panel will particularly focus on how the service is working in practice and this may include a visit to the service or attendance at appropriate meetings to understand how it is being implemented.</p> | <p>To be carried forward – July 2025</p> |

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| | | <p>Panel meeting on 22nd November 2024 – Performance updates Panel Members discussed the teaching of mental health strategies for young people in schools and agreed to consider a future update on the range of strategies currently being implemented and resources available within schools to provide mental health support to young people.</p> <p>Panel Members agreed that they could contribute their ideas on supporting the mental health of young people in schools to the National Curriculum and Assessment Review that was taking place nationally.</p> | 22.11.24 |
| Review of the Provision of Short Breaks and Respite Care for Parents and Carers | Jo-Anne Sanders/Vicky Metheringham/Stewart Horn | The Panel will consider the review of the provision of short breaks and respite care for parents and carers in Kirklees. | To be carried forward – July 2025 |
| Review of Children’s Residential Homes and Foster Care Placements | Vicky Metheringham/Anna Gledhill/Joel Hanna | <p>The Panel will consider an update on the Review of Children’s Residential Homes and Foster Care Placements in Kirklees to ensure that children were living in the right home and environment.</p> <p>Panel meeting on 4th February 2025 – Review of Children’s Residential Homes and Foster Care Placements in Kirklees The Panel considered a report, which provided assurance and information on Residential Children’s Homes and Fostering Services in Kirklees which highlighted the following key points:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of children in care in Kirklees were in family settings, with Foster Carers or Kinship/Connected Carers. A small number of children lived in residential, small group homes. • Placements were also commissioned from independent fostering agencies and independent care homes. • At the time of writing the report, 34 young people were living in externally commissioned provision, and 16 in Kirklees Care Homes. | 4.2.25 |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a national deficit in placements available for children; local and national campaigns had been launched to recruit foster carers. • The report set out the position for recruiting Foster Carers in Kirklees; a team was working to recruit Foster Carers, and advertising on Kirklees vehicles was planned. • The Service had sought to expand provision and last year opened a sixth Children’s Home. <p>Visit to Kirklees Fostering Network 26th September 2024 Members of the Panel attended a visit to meet with carers at the Kirklees Fostering Network meeting on the 26th September 2024 and key issues discussed at the meeting included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Collection – performance data available at the Kirklees Parenting board did not correspond with the paper. • Shortage of Foster Carers – numbers had halved, they cited the economic climate and families being put into poverty. • Older children needing foster care, and asylum-seeking children using the service. • Partnership working • Challenges of attending PPS meetings when children cannot attend with them. • Voice of the Young Person and how it was acted on. • Cllr Kendrick held in high esteem as a source of support. • Discrepancies between what the Personal Assistants do and the support that needs to start at 15 rather than 16. • The rewarding nature of Foster Care and the support between the Foster Carers and their families. <p>Visit to Home-Start AGM on 26.9.24 Members of the Panel attended the Home-Start AGM on the 26th September 2024. Home-Start were celebrating 25 years, and the meeting</p> | <p>26.9.24</p> <p>26.9.24</p> |
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| | | <p>showcased the value of the service Home-Start provide to its service users. Background was provided into the service and the families they helped, and long service awards were presented to volunteers. A volunteer presented on the work that they do and an update on the social media platform was also given. Three service users explained how Home-Start had helped them and their children. Testimonials from service users stated that they regarded Home-Start as their second family and would not be where they were without them. Some said that Home-Start provided a lifeline for their family. The staff and volunteers were working hard to ensure the service would continue to provide and improve its offer in the future.</p> <p>Visit to Mocking Bird and Special Guardianship Orders carers and representatives The Panel will meet with appropriate representatives from the Mocking Bird Support Meeting and Special Guardianship Order carers (dates to be arranged).</p> <p>Visit to drop-in session to celebrate National Kinship Week on 9th October 2024 The Panel were also invited to attend an informal drop-in session on Wednesday 9th October to celebrate National Kinship Week. The Connected Persons Support Team hosted the session, staff from the Connected Persons assessment team attended along with some of our carers from the constitution. The drop in session had been organised to improve knowledge of the Connected Persons Team (CSP). Special Guardianship Order (SGO) carers were invited, along with colleagues from other services. Feedback from the carers about the team was positive. SGO carers supported the move towards using different language, reporting how it was dehumanising to be referred to in meetings and on paper as “the Carer”. There was also a recurring theme of the discrepancy between financial support given to SGOs and Foster Carers. It was</p> | <p>To be arranged</p> <p>9th October 2024</p> |
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| | | recognised by the Panel that the financial discrepancy was less than in other local authorities, but the Panel asked whether other ways of supporting these families could be looked at. | |
| <p>Lead Member Briefings (Bi-monthly LM Briefings with Cabinet Members for Learning and Children’s; and Strategic Director/Service Directors in Children’s Services during 24/25) – Actions from these meetings will be included within the Panel’s Work Programme where appropriate</p> | | | |
| Manchester Road – Asylum Seekers | | The Lead Member will review any impact on Children’s Service of the housing of asylum seekers on Manchester Road. | |

Children's Scrutiny Panel

Agenda Plan 2024/25

| Date of Meeting | Issues for Consideration | Officer Contact |
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| <p>24th July 2024</p> <p>Workshop - Informal Meeting</p> | <p>(with Panel, Officers and Cabinet Members)</p> <p>To consider potential areas of focus for the Panel during 2024/25 municipal year which will include the Council's key priorities for the children's service.</p> | <p>Helen Kilroy</p> |
| <p>30th August 2024</p> <p>Informal meeting 9.30am-10.30am</p> <p>Public meeting 10.30am</p> <p>Hybrid meeting</p> <p>Council Chamber HTH</p> <p>Report deadline: 16.8.24</p> <p>(Apol: V Metheringham)</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Informal items:-</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ambition Board Minutes – 18.3.24 and 24.6.24</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Performance Report</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Public Items:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Minutes of meeting on 26.3.24</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Performance Highlights (verbal)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Pre-decision Scrutiny – Cabinet decisions on the horizon</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Feedback from Panel Members on issues considered by Kirklees Parenting Board</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Work Programme and Agenda Plan for 24/25</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">W Harris to provide</p> <p style="text-align: center;">J Sanders/A Gledhill/J Hanna to present</p> <p style="text-align: center;">H Kilroy</p> <p style="text-align: center;">J Sanders/A Gledhill/J Hanna to present</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Senior Officers/Cabinet Members</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Panel Members</p> <p style="text-align: center;">H Kilroy</p> |

| Date of Meeting | Issues for Consideration | Officer Contact |
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| <p>11th October 2024</p> <p>Informal meeting 9.30am-10.30am</p> <p>Public meeting 10.30am</p> <p>Hybrid meeting Council Chamber HTH</p> <p>Report deadline: 27.9.24</p> | <p>Informal items:-</p> <p>Ambition Board Minutes – 16.9.24</p> <p>Performance Report</p> <p>2023-24 Kirklees Annual Education Quality and Standards Report</p> <p>Public Items:</p> <p>Quality Assurance Annual Report</p> <p>Ofsted Inspection of Children’s Services – outcome and recommendations</p> <p>Performance Highlights (verbal)</p> <p>Pre-decision Scrutiny – Cabinet decisions on the horizon</p> <p>Feedback from Panel Members on issues considered by Kirklees Parenting Board</p> <p>Work Programme and Agenda Plan for 24/25</p> | <p>W Harris to provide</p> <p>Service Directors to present</p> <p>Jo-Anne Sanders/Emma Brayford</p> <p>V Metheringham/R Fordyce</p> <p>V Metheringham</p> <p>J Sanders/V Metheringham to present</p> <p>Senior Officers/Cabinet Members</p> <p>Panel Members</p> <p>H Kilroy</p> |
| <p>22nd November 2024</p> <p>Informal meeting 9.30am-10.30am</p> <p>Public meeting 10.30am</p> <p>Hybrid meeting Council Chamber HTH</p> <p>Report deadline:</p> | <p>Informal items:-</p> <p>Performance Report</p> <p>Public Items:</p> <p>SEND – Oversight of the Government Safety Valve Agreement and current profile of spend across High Needs Block</p> | <p>J Sanders/V Metheringham to present</p> <p>J Sanders</p> |

| Date of Meeting | Issues for Consideration | Officer Contact |
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| 8.11.24 | <p>Performance Highlights (verbal)</p> <p>Pre-decision Scrutiny – Cabinet decisions on the horizon</p> <p>Feedback from Panel Members on issues considered by Kirklees Parenting Board</p> <p>Work Programme and Agenda Plan for 24/25</p> | <p>J Sanders/V Metheringham</p> <p>Senior Officers/Cabinet Members</p> <p>Panel Members</p> <p>H Kilroy</p> |
| <p>4th February 2025</p> <p>Informal meeting 9.30am-10.30am</p> <p>Public meeting 10.30am</p> <p>Hybrid meeting Council Chamber HTH</p> <p>Report deadline: 23.1.25</p> | <p>Informal items:-</p> <p>Ambition Board Minutes – 19.12.24</p> <p>Performance Report</p> <p>Public Items:</p> <p>Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) Annual Report</p> <p>Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Overview of volume process – quality and compliance</p> <p>Review of Children’s Residential Homes and Foster Care Placements</p> <p>Performance Highlights (verbal)</p> <p>Pre-decision Scrutiny – Cabinet decisions on the horizon</p> <p>Feedback from Panel Members on issues considered by Kirklees Parenting Board</p> <p>Work Programme and Agenda Plan for 24/25</p> | <p>W Harris to provide</p> <p>J Sanders/V Metheringham</p> <p>J Sanders/Michelle Lister/Paul Calendine</p> <p>J Sanders/E Brayford/Pennine Learning</p> <p>V Metheringham/A Gledhill/ J Hanna</p> <p>J Sanders/V Metheringham</p> <p>Senior Officers/Cabinet Members</p> <p>Panel Members</p> <p>H Kilroy</p> |

| Date of Meeting | Issues for Consideration | Officer Contact |
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| <p>14th March 2025</p> <p>10am-11am Informal meeting 11am-12.30pm Public meeting</p> <p>Hybrid Meeting Council Chamber, HTH</p> <p>Report deadline: 27.2.25</p> | <p>Informal items:-</p> <p>Performance Report</p> <p>Public Items:</p> <p>New initiatives of schools working in clusters</p> <p>Performance Highlights (verbal)</p> <p>Pre-decision Scrutiny – Cabinet decisions on the horizon</p> <p>Feedback from Panel Members on issues considered by Kirklees Parenting Board</p> <p>Work Programme and Agenda Plan for 24/25</p> | <p>J Sanders/V Metheringham to present – P Caladine to provide report</p> <p>J Sanders/M Lister/Jayne Whitton/A Wisniewski</p> <p>J Sanders/V Metheringham to present</p> <p>Senior Officers/Cabinet Members</p> <p>Panel Members</p> <p>H Kilroy</p> |
| <p>28th April 2025</p> <p>10.30 am – 11 am Pre-meeting 11am – 1pm Public Meeting</p> <p>Hybrid Meeting Council Chamber, HTH</p> <p>Report deadline: 16.4.25</p> | <p>Pre-meeting items:-</p> <p>Panel Preparation for Public Meeting</p> <p>Public items:</p> <p>Special Schools – overview of provision and 2 new school rebuilds – Joseph Norton and Woodley</p> <p>Decline of the cohort of children in primary schools in Kirklees</p> <p>Pre-decision Scrutiny – Cabinet decisions on the horizon</p> | <p>Panel Members</p> <p>M Wilby/S Horn/J Sanders</p> <p>M Wilby/J Sanders</p> <p>Senior Officers/Cabinet Members</p> |

| Date of Meeting | Issues for Consideration | Officer Contact |
|-----------------|---|-------------------------------|
| | Feedback from Panel Members on issues considered by Kirklees Parenting Board Work Programme and Agenda Plan for 24/25 (progress and items to roll forward to 25/26) | Panel Members H Kilroy |

Future agenda items

1. SEND Sufficiency Strategy for Kirklees (2025-2028) – 25th July 2025
2. The role of the health visitor in the health landscape in terms of ante natal care – joint scrutiny with the Health and Adult Social Care Panel
3. SACRE Annual Report – late Jan/early Feb each year
4. Review of the provision of short breaks and respite care for parents and carers

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