

Kirklees Council

Scrutiny Lead Member Report

Lead Member: Cllr Andrew Marchington : Children's Scrutiny Panel

Period of Update : From September 2019 – November 2019

Panel Highlights

Lead member briefings with:

- Strategic Director for Children's Services
- Service Director – Learning and Early Support
- Service Director – Family Support and Child Protection
- Service Director – Resources Improvement and Partnerships
- Cabinet Member – Children
- Cabinet Member – Learning Aspirations and Communities

Panel Activity and meetings -

- 23rd September 2019 – SEND progress on recommendations, New arrangements for Children's Safeguarding and the KSCB Business Plan and a verbal update on Almondbury Community School;
- 11th October 2019 – Update on Almondbury Community School – transitional arrangements and support to children with additional needs;
- 8th November 2019 - Update on repeat referrals and second time on Care Protection plan action, Update on Early Support Partnership and an update on the Almondbury Community School transition arrangements from September 2020.

Outcomes:

Almondbury Community School

Following the Children's Scrutiny Panel which took place on the 7th August 2019 to consider a Scrutiny Call-in in respect on the decision made by Cabinet on the 16th July 2019 on Future Options for Almondbury Community School, the Panel received a number of update reports from the Service Director for Learning and Early Support. In November 2019, the Panel was advised that an event for parents was held on the 24th October 2019 at Almondbury Community School and representatives from King James, Netherhall and Newsome High Schools attended so that they could explain their curriculum offer and other school arrangements about their Schools. Kirklees had worked with the local school partnership to ensure good transitions for those pupils affected by the proposals and gave parents the opportunity to express a school preference.

SEND progress update on Recommendations

At the Panel meeting in September, the Panel considered a report giving an update on the recommendations from the work that had previously been undertaken by the Panel relating to children with special educational needs. The Panel agreed that greater clarification had been given on the timescales outlined in the SENDACT action plan, but that the voice of young people should be captured and reflected in the work of SENDACT.

Partnership Visits

Multi-Agency meeting (Front Door Children's Services) on 2nd December 2019

The Scrutiny Panel agreed to scrutinise the current partnership arrangements between Children's Services and its partners and on the 2nd December 2019 attended a Front Door Multi Agency Meeting in Children's Services and observed Kirklees and partners (social workers, health, Police, etc) reviewing cases and the Panel were able to assess partnership working in action.

One Panel member said "I found it reassuring that all cases were reviewed so quickly after first contact, which must significantly reduce the risk of children slipping through the net, and I thought there was a refreshing willingness, rather than defensive reluctance, to revisit cases which the meeting thought may have been closed prematurely."

Another Panel member said "The interchange of information and opinion between the representatives of the different agencies was excellent. This led to enhanced decision making which took into account a broad spectrum of areas relevant to each case" and "There was a strong sense of self review and learning from past actions".

Single Point of Access at Northorpe Hall on 9th December 2019

Some Members of the Panel visited the Single Point of Access (SPOC) for Children and young people at Northorpe Hall, Mirfield, which was part of the Thriving Kirklees approach. Thriving Kirklees is a partnership of local health and wellbeing providers all working together to support children, young people and their families to thrive and be healthy. The Panel had a tour of the offices and spoke to members of staff who were responsible for dealing with the telephone enquiries that come in, undertaking assessments following referral and the Manager of the team explained how decisions were taken on each individual case.

One Panel Member said "There was clearly effective communication between teams, one effect of this was a reduction of duplication."

Another Panel Member said ". The individuals on duty took the responsibility of helping families and individuals even if there was no referral required to the services they covered. They signposted people to more appropriate services or provided them with practical guidance over the telephone. There was a real sense of care for those individuals contacting the centre." And "The review processes which are in place help ensure that Management can make swift decisions on further actions needed for a child. There is an open door policy so that staff have quick access to Management to help facilitate this."

Monitoring Work

The Ad-hoc Panel on Elective Home Education was currently ongoing and the Panel were compiling evidence to produce a final report which would be reported back to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee by March 2020.

Looking Ahead

At the meeting scheduled for the 16th December the Panel will consider a report on the Children's Service Improvement Journey during 2019 by the Director of Children's Services which was part of the "Annual Conversation" with Ofsted in November 2019, which covered progress and developments over the last year in three major areas of the improvement work in the Directorate.

A further update on the Almondbury Community School would be considered by the Panel on the 16th December 2019 which would outline the progress that had been made in terms of implementing the decision of Cabinet in July 2019 and most importantly the transition arrangements for current pupils of Almondbury Community School.

General Comments

Thank you to all those who have presented evidence and reports to the Panel this quarter and the ongoing work of panel members.

We are continuing our work to make the scrutiny we do as effective as possible including: Looking at how effective partnership working is; how data is collected and used to improve outcomes for children and young people; and making visits to observe frontline working to corroborate the information the panel has received.