

Contact Officer: Leigh Webb

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday 9 November 2020

Present: Councillor Andrew Marchington (Chair)
Councillor Paul Davies
Councillor Yusra Hussain
Councillor Richard Smith
Councillor Amanda Pinnock
Councillor Paul White

Co-optees Linda Summers

In attendance Tom Brailsford, Service Director (Resources,
Improvement and Partnerships)
Julie Bragg, Head of Corporate Parenting
Elaine McShane, Service Director - Family Support and
Child Protection
Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director - Learning & Early
Support

Observers:

Apologies: Councillor Kendrick and Councillor Pattison

1 Membership of the Committee

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kendrick and Pattison.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on the 1 October 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

3 Interests

No interests were declared.

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 questions were received from the public.

7 Number and Age of Children in Care

The Panel received a report providing an update relating to the number and profile of children in our care, including information related to the number placed outside of the District. The report also set out comparative data with statistical neighbours

The current number of children in care currently stands at 687, 2 less than the number included in the report, which equates to a rate per 10,000 population aged 0-17 of 68.8. This compares to a statistical neighbour average of 91.6 and a national average of 65.0 based on recently published data for March 2019. With regard to breakdown by age and gender of the children in care it was reported that the largest age group for boys is 10 - 15 years with 153 children and the largest age group for girls is 10 - 15 years with 127 children.

It was reported that the number of looked after children placed outside Kirklees District and 20 plus miles from their home address was 81 on 31 August 2020. This follows a continuum of decline from 127 in 2017. The majority of our children and young people placed out of area are placed in foster care, the remainder are placed in children's homes, semi-independent homes, a small number in youth custody or other specialist settings.

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

- In response to a question from Councillor White relating to comparisons with statistical neighbours, Julie Bragg explained that Kirklees figures were lower as a result of good oversight and checks and measures in place to ensure that those in care are those who need to be in the care of the local authority.
- In response to a question concerning those placed outside of the District, it was explained that robust processes are in place to support local placements, through measures such as the Mockingbird initiative. However it was acknowledged that in some instances there is value in maintaining settled placements which are out of the District.

RESOLVED-The Panel noted the report and the updated number of children in care provided.

9 Learning Strategy

The Panel received a report setting out an update about the development of the Kirklees Council Learning Strategy and the proposed approach and timeline. It was reported that the council and its partners are ambitious that many more children and young people across Kirklees achieve more success. Analysis indicates that the children and young people most likely not to achieve at the highest levels are those that suffer some form of disadvantage. A successful and thriving education and skills system across Kirklees will drive both social and economic development through a reduction in public sector spend on remedial health care and crime whilst promoting inward investment. Above all it will improve the life chances of children, young people and communities making Kirklees a better place to live, work and visit for everyone.

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The report set out details of the many organisations that have a vested interest in the achievement of children, young people and communities the local authority. It was highlighted that the Education and Learning Partnership Board, is uniquely positioned in that it has a holistic ambition for every child, every young person and every community in Kirklees. With that in mind it also is unique in that it is the one strategic leadership organisation that has a statutory responsibility to all its people. Jo-Anne Sanders explained that at a local level Kirklees Council is also unique in having both a comprehensive and a holistic overview of population outcomes (economic, environmental, social, health and educational) which provides both a mandate and a responsibility for the Local Authority, working in partnership, to lead a cohesive strategy for education.

The report outlined proposals for a co-produced strategy to address the following key points:

- Building upon the existing strengths and expertise in Kirklees
- Addressing the issues that face the children, young people and communities of Kirklees
- Bring together the entire community of Kirklees
- Enable the LA to clarify and fulfil its role and meet both its moral and statutory duties
- Learn from best practice both within the district and elsewhere
- Develop policy and strategy that is informed by the voice of children, young people and
- Communities
- Science: the evidence from both research and data

With regard to the proposed approach, the report outlined a draft development timetable.

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

- Members highlighted the importance of developing resilience and self-esteem in Kirklees children in addition to academic success.
- Members welcomed the planned holistic approach and living nature of the proposed strategy to develop and work with schools and colleges across the district
- In response to a question concerning evaluation and monitoring, Jo-Anne Sanders explained that a measurable action plan will sit alongside the strategy. The Chair highlighted the role of the Scrutiny Panel in monitoring outcomes from the Learning Strategy when it is introduced.
- Councillor Pinnock highlighted the importance of ensuring that the strategy acts as a bridge to build skills for local young people to meet the needs for future local employment in Kirklees.
- Members identified that happiness, kindness and valuing diversity were all key to the development of a successful learning strategy.

RESOLVED-

1. That the report be noted.
2. That future reports be submitted to this Panel as the draft Strategy develops.

10

Work Programme for 2020/21 municipal year

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

RESOLVED –

1. That the Learning Strategy be added to the Panel's Work Programme as a means of feeding into the overarching Education Outcomes item
2. That details of the timeline for Cabinet consideration of the Elective Home Education report be provided to the Panel.
3. That an update on the Covid Catch-up Fund, including details of how the funds have been spent by local schools, be submitted to the next meeting of this Panel.