

## Kirklees Council

### Scrutiny Lead Member Report

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

Period of Update : From July 2022 – September 2022

#### Panel Highlights

##### Bi-monthly Lead member briefings with:

Senior Officers in Children's Services

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

Cabinet Members

- Children (Statutory responsibility for Children)
- Learning, Aspiration and Communities

##### Panel Activity and meetings -

- Panel meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2022 – Educational Outcomes
- Panel meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2022 – Changes to the Young People's Activity Team (YPAT) Provision; and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Inspection – Action Plan and Inspection Outcomes
- Visits to PCAN Social events in September 2022
- SEND Transformation and Commissioning Team meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 2022

#### Outcomes:

##### **Educational Outcomes**

In July 2022, the Panel considered a verbal update on Educational Outcomes which highlighted the following key points-

- That a report was scheduled for Cabinet in July 2022 which encapsulated the educational outcomes and challenges during 2021/22 and showed how resilient schools were in providing the continuity of education during this time. The Panel had commented on the draft report at their panel meeting in March 2022 and were thanked for their help in shaping the report to Cabinet in July 2022 on Educational outcomes;
- The Education Strategy referred to as 'Our Kirklees Futures' outlined 3 key obsessions – inclusion, resilience and equity and these obsessions ran through the ambitions and vision;
- Kirklees Futures Summit held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June, the key aim of which was to take the learning strategy from planning to first stages of implementation;
- The success of the Summit had produced the momentum for the Learning Strategy throughout the district and would be the key vehicle for improving educational outcomes;
- Reviewing Education and Learning Partnership Board to ensure it was able to hold the system to account for its actions;

The Panel agreed that they would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the restructuring and reshaping of the Education and Learning Partnership Board; receive future updates on how the Learning Service and Cabinet Members were scrutinising the educational outcomes, consider future information on longitudinal educational outcomes for the next 5 to 10 years (including 16+ and beyond) and receive a copy for information of the Educational Outcomes report scheduled for consideration by Cabinet on the 26<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

### **Number of looked after children**

Panel Members who had attended Corporate Parenting Board in July 2022 fed back on key issues considered by the Board. The Panel had over the last 2 years expressed concerns regarding the number of looked after children (LAC) in Kirklees as it had consistently been lower compared to our statistical neighbours. Officers advised that Special Guardianship Orders were used in Kirklees significantly more than in other local authority areas. There were about 500 children in Kirklees under such orders and in the care of grandparents or other family relatives. The Panel were informed that if these orders were not in place, the children would be in the care of the local authority.

### **Changes to the Young People's Activity Team (YPAT) Provision**

In September 2022, the Panel received an update on the ongoing changes to the Young Peoples Activity Team (YPAT) provision as part of the ongoing SEND Transformation Programme and the ongoing development of the Short Breaks Offer.

The short breaks service supported disabled children and young people aged 5 to 18 with profound and complex needs. The service comprised of out of school clubs, weekend and holiday sessions, community sessions which ran from a large council owned building in Ravensthorpe. The building was shared with Adult Services and required significant investment. A need for new premises had been identified several years ago.

The Panel agreed to arrange a visit to the new premises at the Children's Place Nursery in Ravensthorpe when fully operational.

### **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Inspection – Action Plan and Inspection Outcome**

In September 2022, the Panel considered the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Inspection – Action Plan and Inspection Outcomes and was informed that in May 2022 the Ofsted inspection report for Kirklees had been published. The report included a copy of the Transformation Plan. The main weaknesses identified were the poor delivery of the Healthy Child Programme (HCP) and the area's ability across services and within settings to identify and meet the needs of children and young people with SEND who were in mainstream settings.

The Healthy Child Programme was being reviewed and would be a priority incorporated into the Transformation Plan as a key workstream going forward. An annual review of the transformation plan was taking place and some examples of what would need to be addressed would be how schools identified children early, to ensure schools had good Mental Health support teams and about making sure schools had a good Healthy Child Programme with a mandate of contacts and early intervention. A broad group of professionals would contribute to the outcomes. The

Panel acknowledged the passion that officers were demonstrating to improve families lives and that the improvement journey was a high priority for the Council's Administration.

The Panel agreed to receive updates on the improvement journey of the Transformation Plan and that officers in Children's Service would provide the Panel with details of partners involved in the Transformation Plan that they can meet with or visit as part of the Panel's scrutiny work. The Panel also agreed to receive further information on the increased number of pupils in Kirklees local authority schools and academies with an Education Health and Care Plan since January 2015 to January 2021.

### **Partnership Visits**

#### **SEND Transformation and Commissioning Team**

The Panel attended the SEND Transformation and Commissioning Team meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 2022 as part of the work programme to enable the Panel to be involved in the discussion on the SEND written statement of action following the recent inspection. The main points considered at the meeting were the SEND Inspection and action plan and outcomes of the Inspection.

#### **Parents of children with additional needs (PCAN)**

Some members of the Panel attended PCAN Social meetings in September at The Zone in Huddersfield and Thornhill Lees Community Centre. Panel members met with parents to seek feedback on their experiences of accessing and engaging with the service and to ask what their experience had been like since the Adhoc Panel report on SENDACT, which had been approved by Cabinet in February 2019 and whether parents felt that anything had improved. Most of the PCAN parents involved in the consultation with the Adhoc Panel in 2018 were no longer attending the group, so the Panel spoke to parents about their experiences and whether the SEND Transformation Plan was making a difference.

The main findings from the visits to the PCAN Social meetings were:-

- Lack of specialist resources both in the SEND Teams but also schools
- SENDACT do not follow up with schools after an EHCP has been issued
- Long waiting times to get a diagnosis or support
- No single point of contact for parents to get access to all the support and information they need
- Parents and children are not asked for their feedback
- Parent's were not aware of the SEND Transformation Plan or how to access it.

Panel Members agreed to talk to officers about how parents could influence the transformation, how they would engage with parents and measure success of the plan and whether a comprehensive single point of contact and/or guide could be provided for parents of children with SEND. Councillor Marchington agreed to drop-in to future PCAN Social meetings and would arrange a more formal visit with PCAN in December 2022 and invite other Panel Members and the Head of Inclusion and Educational Safeguarding to attend the session. To raise awareness amongst parents, the report on the SEND Inspection and Outcomes considered by the Panel

in September 2022 was shared with PCAN following the visits and included a copy of the Transformation Plan. PCAN shared this information with parents on their Facebook pages.

Some quotes from parents were –

“You can’t force children to be square pegs when they are round”

“The distance between getting a diagnosis and receiving medication is how many temporary and permanent exclusions your child will have from school”

“The professionals don’t know about the things that can help parents and they should make it their job to do so”

“They said – no decision about you, without you”

### **Looking Ahead**

At the meeting scheduled for the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022, the Panel will consider a report on the Outcomes of the Joint Area Targeted multi-agency Inspection.

An Informal Session of the Panel on the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022 will consider a report on Educational Outcomes and GCSE results.

The Panel have been invited to attend the Homestart Kirklees Annual General Meeting on the 13.10.22 and an event regarding Families Together Model of Integrated Early Support at John Smith’s Stadium on the 28<sup>th</sup> November 2022

Members of the Panel will visit the Dewsbury Children’s Social Work Team on the 14<sup>th</sup> October 2022 at Empire House.

The Chair of the Panel will drop-in to PCAN Social meetings in Huddersfield and Dewsbury during October and November 2022, to continue to engage with parents of children with SEND.

### **General Comments**

The visits that panel members have made, to talk to staff working with children and young people, have provided added depth to our scrutiny. The visits showed positive partnership working and dedicated teams seeking to achieve the best for those in their care. Informative responses to questions about how data is being used to improve outcomes has been helpful. I would particularly like to thank those who have welcomed us on visits and for their efficient organisation.

Our developing relationship with the Corporate Parenting Board is leading to more effective scrutiny of service performance. Being able to ask questions at the same time as Board Members has reduced some of the duplication that was taking place.

We look forward to seeing how our engagement with the SEND Transformation Programme, using the principles of pre-decision scrutiny, works out. So far it has been very positive.

Again, thank you to everyone for their contributions and hard work.

Cllr Andrew Marchington  
Lead Member for Children’s Scrutiny Panel

