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## KIRKLEES COUNCIL

### CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY PANEL

**Monday 5th March 2018**

Present: Councillor Cahal Burke (Chair)  
Councillor Donna Bellamy  
Councillor Paul Kane  
Councillor Robert Light  
Councillor Amanda Pinnock

Co-optees Dale O'Neill

In attendance: Joanne Bartholomew - Service Director, Commercial,  
Regulatory and Operational Services  
Mandy Cameron - Head of Service, Education  
Safeguarding and Inclusion  
Councillor Viv Kendrick - Cabinet Member for Children  
Jo-Anne Sanders - Acting Service Director-Learning and  
Early Support

Apologies: Councillor Fazila Loonat

**1 Membership of the Committee**

Apologies for absence were received by Councillor Fazila Loonat.

**2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2018 be approved as a correct record.

**3 Interests**

No interests were declared.

**4 Admission of the Public**

That all items be considered in public session.

**5 Proposals for changes to Home to School Transport Policy for children attending mainstream school**

The Panel welcomed Joanne Bartholomew, Service Director, Commercial, Regulatory and Operational Services to the meeting.

Ms Bartholomew explained that the Cabinet report followed consultation with schools, parents and other affected groups regarding school transport for mainstream children, which was generally referred to as 'bus pass children'. The report considered the application of the school transport policy along with the statutory guidance provided by the Government around home to school transport

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legislation. The criteria changed on a child's age and the distance from home to the child's nearest school. In essence an age criteria and distance criteria existed.

The Panel heard that one of the options for consideration by Cabinet was to remove the catchment criteria, and put in place the nearest geographic school as the criteria for a bus pass. This option had been implemented in a number of other local authorities. This would mean that in the process of selecting a preference for a high school or junior school, parents would need to be aware of the distance from their home to the nearest geographic school.

The report considered at Cabinet outlined that further work would need to be undertaken around the complex middle school system. However, Cabinet were made aware that moving to a geographic criteria would provide cost savings. The Panel heard that Cabinet accepted a move to geographical criteria but with the following decision:

- Children already in the system as at September 2018 should not have the decision to move to geographical criteria retrospectively applied to them. This would mean that if a child had been issued a bus pass, they would continue to benefit from that as long as they remained at that school and the same home address.

A new policy for mainstream home to school transport would be introduced to be implemented by September 2019. Officers would need to ensure that during the selection process for schools that parents were aware of what their preferences mean in terms of their eligibility for assistance with transport. The Panel requested that the report be brought back to scrutiny for consideration.

### **RESOLVED -**

- (1) That Joanne Bartholomew be thanked for attending the meeting.
- (2) That the Cabinet report relating to changes to transport for children attending mainstream school be received and noted.
- (3) That the proposed revised Home to School Transport Policy be brought back to a future meeting of the Children's Scrutiny Panel.

## **6 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities**

The Panel welcomed Mandy Cameron, Head of Service, Education Safeguarding and Inclusion and Councillor Viv Kendrick, Cabinet Member for Children to the meeting.

Ms Cameron explained that the report provided should be read in conjunction with the current High Needs Review which the Department of Education (DfE) required all local authorities to complete. £1.3m had been allocated to Kirklees and the local authority had inform the DfE how it intended to use those capital funds. A visioning day would take place in which all the information received through a recent consultation would be presented outlining the challenges that the local authority faced to meet an ever increasing need. The visioning day would include councillors, partners, parents and carers and would set out how to best meet the needs of children in their own community, without having to be educated out of Kirklees. The

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outcome of the visioning day would be a strategy and underpinning action plan and would feed into the Ofsted inspection.

The Panel heard that the Self Evaluation Form (SEF) used in preparation for the future Ofsted visit was a constantly changing document and collated information from agencies such as health, social care, education, young people, parents and carers. There had been some challenges in relation to changes in senior staff, and with each new appointment there needed to be work done to ensure that they were fully briefed on the current position within Kirklees and where it stood in relation to preparations for the Ofsted inspection.

Ms Cameron informed the Panel that the team had positive relationships with colleagues in health. Local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) had local champions, and worked around the Healthy Child Programme and the Transformation Programme had all fed into the SEND reforms. Progress was being made, but there was further work to do in some areas.

Another area Ms Cameron highlighted was the work being done with schools and settings. It was noted that in considering inspection results from other local authorities, it was apparent that schools and educational settings were the most prepared and up to date with the recent SEND reforms. However, health and social care were not as prepared as education, and that appeared to be a national trend.

The authority had a set of Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) champions who worked with all settings in developing strategies for working with children with SEN and that work is continuing. There was also collaborative work being done with Parents of Children with Additional Needs (PCAN) who had been involved in the development of the work from the outset. It was an absolute commitment that this group be fully involved in all areas of work and future strategies.

Ms Cameron explained that it had become apparent that there was a capacity issue with the Special Educational Needs Commissioning Team (SENACT) given that the number of children with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) was increasing across the authority. Work was therefore being done around increasing capacity to ensure that responses to children and parents were completed in a timely fashion.

Overall there were areas of challenge and strength in relation to the future inspection.

Panel members were concerned about the lack of data within the report that was presented, and felt that it would be a challenge to draw any conclusion based on the information before them. Ms Cameron explained that the data pack was available via the report that was taken to Cabinet. That pack explained where the pressures were within Kirklees. Jo-Anne Sanders, Acting Service Director-Learning and Early Support felt that there was an opportunity for the Children's Scrutiny Panel to work to improve the preparations for the inspection.

Panel members commented that they would have preferred to see an honest and open approach from the service, detailing what the current situation was, and where

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they felt they would be in terms of the review. Ms Cameron offered to share the SEF with members of the Panel. She also explained that with the inspection, there was no 'judgement' as in 'good' or 'requires improvement', and the outcome would take the form of a letter – a narrative around where Ofsted thought the local authority's strengths and weaknesses laid. Around one third of local authorities already inspected were required to write an action plan. The Panel members requested that details of the themes from other inspections be provided for them, but also the Panel wanted to understand what 'good' looked like, and what the inspectors would say of a local authority that was doing a good job. Ms Cameron explained that would be a difficult thing to do as all the letters that came from the inspections were quite different. However, there were general themes following inspections, and details of those would be provided to the Panel.

Ms Cameron explained that some things were easier to quantify as good rather than others. Some of the issues that Ofsted would look at would be an analysis of data, such as the percentage of children moved from a Statement to the EHCP, or how many were done within the statutory timescales. However, some other areas were more difficult to quantify such as the effectiveness of the Local Offer, and could be subject to opinion.

The Panel questioned what areas the SEF highlighted as needing further improvement. Ms Cameron explained that by 31 March 2018, it was anticipated that all children would be moved from a Statement to the EHCP, but the focus was now on the quality of those plans. There was also work to be done around social care, their contribution to both the statutory process around EHCP, and the progression of children into adulthood.

The service was confident that schools and educational settings were well prepared for the inspection. Health were also prepared especially given that Kirklees had a designated medical officer and were fully engaged with the agenda, which had been a criticism from Ofsted in other local authority areas.

Ms Cameron offered to meet with members of the Panel to go through the SEF in detail, as she explained it was a complicated document that required some explanation. The Panel explained that as much information as possible should be provided for the public agenda for the next meeting, but any further discussion could take place at an informal meeting of the Panel.

### **RESOLVED -**

- (1) That Cllr Viv Kendrick and Mandy Cameron be thanked for attending the meeting.
- (2) That the report relating to the SEND Area Inspection be received and noted.
- (3) That the Self Evaluation Form be made available to the members of the Panel along with along with a summary of the form, outlining the strengths and weaknesses.
- (4) That a further report be brought to the next meeting.

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### 7 **Visit to Duty & Advice**

Cllr Burke explained that the visit to Duty and Advice had to be postponed due to the weather.

**RESOLVED** - That the item be deferred to a future meeting of the Panel.

### 8 **Visit to Woodlands, Lindley**

Panel members commented that it was an extremely valuable visit with officers at the children's home being open in their discussions. It was noted at the visit that when a child arrived at the home, a social worker would do an assessment of the needs of that child, before any therapeutic treatment would be put into place for that child. However, the Panel felt that a child who was placed in care was likely to need some form of therapeutic work and were concerned about the child having to wait until after an assessment before any work would take place. Officers at the home commented that it was one of the frustrating things around a child arriving at the home, and the length of time that it took for therapeutic work to be put in place and particular for CAMHS involvement.

The Panel felt it would be helpful to understand whether children in care had to wait the same length of time to access CAMHS, or whether there was processes in place to expedite that therapy. It was also considered that a named CAMHS worker would assist with the process, given that other partners had named workers. It was noted that a senior officer from Corporate Parenting would be briefed on these issues and prepare a report for a future meeting of the Panel.

**RESOLVED –**

(1) That officers be thanked for welcoming members of the Panel to the home.

(2) That officers investigate the issues identified at the visit and report back to the Panel at the next meeting.

### 9 **Children's Scrutiny Panel work programme**

That progress on the work programme for 2017/18 be noted.

### 10 **Future Meeting**

To note that the next meeting of the Panel will be Monday 16th April 2018 at 10am in the Council Chamber, Huddersfield Town Hall. The meeting will be webcast.