

Contact Officer: Helen Kilroy

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday 1st April 2019

Present: Councillor Cahal Burke (Chair)
Councillor Lisa Holmes
Councillor Darren O'Donovan
Councillor Sheikh Ullah

Co-optees Dale O'Neill

In attendance: Steve Comb
Elaine McShane
Jo-Anne Sanders
Harkireet Sohel
Michelle Wheatcroft

Observers: Councillor Viv Kendrick, Cabinet Member - Children
(Statutory responsibility for Children)

1 Membership of the Committee

No apologies for absence were received.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on the 25 February 2019 be agreed.

3 Interests

No interests were declared.

4 Admission of the Public

All items were considered in public session.

5 Number of Children in Care

The Panel considered the latest data showing the number of children in care presented by Steve Comb, Head of Corporate Parenting (Sufficiency).

Steve Comb advised the Panel that the information regarding statistical neighbours had been included in the report as requested by the Panel at a previous meeting.

Steve Comb highlighted the following key points:-

- There had been a slight decline in numbers of children placed more than 20 miles outside of Kirklees to 104 in February 2019; the Panel was assured that a great deal of resources were put into considering all aspects of each individual case to check what was in the best interests of the child, including monitoring and reviewing each individual case;

Children's Scrutiny Panel - 1 April 2019

- Meetings took place with multi agencies to try and find longer term solutions for children in terms of foster carers.

The Panel agreed to consider a more detailed report on children in care living outside Kirklees with some case studies showing the case history and the challenges involved, including financial demand on Kirklees and different types of placements. The Panel agreed that the report should also include the number of children who could not be placed in Kirklees and the reasons why.

In response to a question from the Panel relating to whether the child living outside the District had a social worker and what links were made between social care departments in the different local authorities, Steve Comb responded to advise that firstly Kirklees would inform the other Local Authority and Virtual School Team that a child would be placed in their area. The Board was informed that the support to the child would stay the same as if they were placed in Kirklees and if there were health issues for the child, Kirklees would contact health colleagues in the other local authority to address these.

In response to a question from the Panel relating to the numbers of children placed outside of Kirklees due to lack of foster carers, Steve Comb advised the Panel that all children in care had regular childcare reviews and every 6 months their case would be reviewed by an independent reviewing officer. The Panel was informed that one of the biggest issues was trying to keep communications going between the virtual schools and health colleagues.

Steve Comb advised the Panel that he had previously provided a map of where children were placed outside the district and agreed that this could be provided again if required. Kirklees would prefer to have children stay within the district, but it had to be the right placement for the child.

Elaine McShane advised the Panel that the Children's Service would keep monitoring the progress of children in care living outside the district and would continue to explore what type of placements were available to provide the best outcome for the child.

RESOLVED -

- (1) The Panel noted the report on the Number of Children in Care showing the latest data and thanked Steve Comb for his contributions.
- (2) The Panel agreed to consider a more detailed report on children in care living outside Kirklees with some case studies showing the case history, challenges involved including financial demand on Kirklees and different types of placements. The report should also include the number of children who could not be placed in Kirklees and the reasons why.

6 Kirklees Learning Strategy

The Panel considered a report providing an outline of key areas of the Kirklees Learning Strategy, which was borne out of the latest educational outcomes report, presented by Harkireet Sohel, Head of Educational Outcomes for Young People.

Children's Scrutiny Panel - 1 April 2019

Harkireet advised the Panel on the 5 key strands of the strategy as outlined within the report and that a joined up Strategy was needed that worked with partners and services, which had a measured approach over time and sustainable solutions.

Harkireet advised the Panel that a range of Local Authority services were working collaboratively with secondary Head Teachers on an action research project to review curriculum, behaviour management and pupil placement protocols. The Panel agreed to consider a report on the work currently being undertaken with Secondary Head Teachers regarding attendance and exclusions.

Harkireet advised the Panel that the Service was committed to improving leadership, management, governance and recruitment and selection within schools to make sure it was fit for purpose. The Service were also keen to develop the voice of the young person within the strategy and ensure that they had a key say in helping to shape the key Strategy.

In response to a question from the Panel relating to inconsistencies, Harkireet advised that an inspection had found that pupil premium was being used ineffectively and that there were some inconsistencies across schools in Kirklees. The Inspector had found that the Council was not holding schools to account for how they were using the money.

In response to a question from the Panel relating to staff turnover in Kirklees compared to other local authorities, Harkireet advised that the Service was going to commission work around recruitment and retention as the full picture was not currently known and that further analysis would reveal the position in Kirklees. The Panel was advised that the Service would find out where the key vacancies were so that these areas could be targeted where needed.

In response to a question from the Panel regarding isolations and how many hours of teaching were lost and how these were being managed by schools, Harkireet agreed to add this matter to the agenda for future discussion with secondary Head Teachers. The Panel agreed to consider a report relating to isolations, how these were being managed within secondary schools and what the planned approach was for the future.

The Panel agreed to consider a future report on the work currently being undertaken with Secondary Head Teachers on attendance and exclusions.

The Panel discussed facilities for children with disabilities who did not fit into the mainstream educational system and agreed to consider a future report on what alternative provisions were available for children with different needs and abilities who were not able to attend mainstream education.

In response to a question from the Panel regarding what was being done for the emotional and wellbeing needs of young people, Harkireet advised that the Review of the SEND process would help inform what more could be done as a Local Authority and that good practice needed to be shared.

Jo-Anne Sanders advised the Panel that Kirklees was fortunate in that schools in Kirklees were child and family focussed and keen to get young people ready to

Children's Scrutiny Panel - 1 April 2019

learn, which had been evidenced in the educational outcomes report. Jo-Anne Sanders went on to explain that the home to school relationship was crucial and that parents were the first educators of young children and that this would figure as a key part of the Strategy.

The Panel agreed to consider a draft of the Learning Strategy early in the 2019/20 municipal year.

RESOLVED -

- (1) The Panel noted the report providing an outline of key areas of the Kirklees Learning Strategy, which was borne out of the latest educational outcomes report and thanked Harkireet Sohel for his contributions.
- (2) That a future report be considered on the work currently being undertaken with Secondary Head Teachers on attendance and exclusions.
- (3) That a future report be considered on what alternative provisions were available for children with different needs and abilities who are not able to attend mainstream education.
- (4) That a report be considered by the Panel relating to isolations, how these are being managed within secondary schools and what the planned approach is for the future.
- (5) That the draft Learning Strategy be considered by the Panel early in the 2019/20 municipal year.

7 Early Support Partnership

The Panel considered an update on the development on the three programmes funded through the Department for Education (DFE) Innovation Funding, presented by Michelle Wheatcroft, Head of Service (Early Support).

Michelle Wheatcroft highlighted the following key points:-

- the Early Support Partnership had been implemented from April 2018 and offered non-statutory services to children, young people and their families in line with the Kirklees Early Support Strategy;
- early support for children was more effective and less expensive than intervening when problems became entrenched and that the 2016 Ofsted inspection had highlighted that Kirklees needed to develop edge of care services and ensure that timely support was available in a crisis;
- the primary focus of the work on early support had been around strengthening the early support partnership through a number of engagement events;
- the Early Support Partnership was launched in January 2019 and around 200 partner delegates came together to demonstrate their commitment to the Kirklees vision that all children, young people and vulnerable learners should have an opportunity to reach their full potential and achieve their ambitions;
- The Family Mental Health Service (FMH) was bridging the gap between child and adult mental health services.

The Panel was advised that the Early Intervention and targeted support service was renamed the Family Support Service, which more accurately reflected what was on offer in terms of support for families.

Children's Scrutiny Panel - 1 April 2019

The Panel agreed to consider data and statistics on the Early Support partnership when the practices had time to develop further.

The Panel agreed that the outcomes and achievements were very positive in terms of the Early Support Partnership.

RESOLVED -

- (1) The Panel noted the update on the development of the three programmes funded through the Department for Education (DFE) Innovation Funding and thanked Michelle Wheatcroft for her contributions.
- (2) That the Panel will consider arranging a visit to the Early Support Teams to gain a better understanding of the work that was being undertaken and the impact it was having and that this be considered as part the Panel's work programme for the 2019/20.
- (3) That the Panel consider data and statistics on the Early Support partnership when the practices have had time to develop further.

8 Review of the 2018/19 work programme and consider items for 2019/20

The Panel considered the progress on the work programme during the 2018/19 municipal year and considered issues for inclusion in the Panel's work programme during the 2019/20 municipal year.

The Chair of the Panel advised that he would be meeting with the Director of Children's Services and Cabinet members to discuss the Panel's work programme for the 2019/20 municipal year.

The Panel agreed to consider future updates on the progress of the review of the SENDACT service which demonstrated continuous improvement. The Panel agreed that PECAN should be consulted to check if the changes made had been affective on families and that the findings be fed back to the Panel.

The Panel agreed to discuss sufficiency of secondary school places at a future meeting.

RESOLVED -

- (1) That following the review of the Work Programme those issues highlighted as ongoing work be carried forward for inclusion in the 2019/20 Work Programme.
- (2) That the Panel consider the proposed work programme and agenda plan at the first meeting of the Panel in the 2019/20 municipal year.