

At a meeting of the CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in COMMITTEE ROOM NO. 1, CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on THURSDAY, 23rd FEBRUARY, 2012 at 5.30 pm.

Present:-

Councillor Stewart in the Chair

Councillors Bell, Bonallie, MacKnight, T. Martin, Morrissey, Oliver, D.Richardson, Scanlan, and Williams together with Ms. A. Blakey and Ms. R. Elliott

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor D. Smith, Mrs. S. Duncan and Mr. K. Morris

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 12th January, 2012

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 12th January, 2012 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

Policy Review – Update

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an update on the progress in relation to the policy review and related working groups, around Early Intervention, Teenage Pregnancy and the Corporate Parent.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Nigel Cummings presented the report advising Members that Councillor Tye was in attendance to discuss with the Committee his own experiences in relation to the use of the CAF process through his role as a volunteer qualified youth worker.

Councillor Tye shared his experiences of the CAF process with the Committee, advising that he had found the form very thorough, offering prompts and examples throughout to help the person filling it out think about the individual circumstances around the young person they were completing the form for. An issue he had come across had been around where documentation had to be returned once it was complete as recently he had received differing advice. He expressed that without his knowledge of the Council as a Member he may not have known who to approach and commented that during the transition to locality based services the service needed to ensure that all users, such as organisations from the voluntary sector, were advised of the changes and how they affected them.

He also commented that one of the processes had changed recently whereby the person or organisation completing the CAF and referring the young person may not be included as part of the team around the family. He advised that in the past the referral agency or individual would be included to allow information to be shared and discussed in detail and without their involvement he could not see how they would continue to feed into the process and receive feedback.

The Chairman asked if he felt some frustration at not being included following the referral process and Councillor Tye confirmed that at times he had been surprised to see the proposals the Panel had suggested and felt that if he had been involved earlier in the process he would better understand the reasoning behind proposals and suggestions for working with the young person and their family.

Ms. Boustead advised that at times there had been issues around the logistics of arranging for everyone involved with the family to attend the panels and that to some extent the panels had become victims of their own success. She agreed to take Councillor Tye's comments on board and feed them back to the CAF panels and coordinators as she could understand his frustrations and commented that reasons as to why some forms of action had been decided upon by the panels should be fed back to those who originally filled in the form,

Councillor Stewart commented that throughout the review they had found this had been an issue that had been raised and that it would be discussed as part of the policy review findings and recommendations.

Councillor MacKnight shared her own experiences in that they had requested, but not yet had, minutes from the panels for a number of months. She advised that the Governors had written to the area manager requesting information back on children that had been referred through the CAF process. Councillor Tye commented that this was a common occurrence he had encountered and having asked why this was he had been informed that the Social Workers now take their own notes.

Ms. Boustead informed Members that for regular meetings of the team around the family and child then minutes were still recorded but that there was also an expectation for the social worker to make a note to be recorded on the child's file at any other key meetings that were held.

Members of the Committee then gave an update on the findings of their visits to the XL youth villages commenting that they had improved youth work in areas and

raising concerns over other areas of the city where they appeared to be not as effective. Councillor Stewart commented that a report had been considered by the North Sunderland Area Committee recently around youth work and asked that the Scrutiny Officer circulate a copy to Members for their information.

Councillors also commented on how some schools were on board with youth provision and found that it worked well when it was based within the school grounds and yet they were finding it difficult to engage with other schools and young people, when asked, were saying they would not attend provision that was linked to the school and its premises and it may be worth Officers considering investigating if youth provisions proved to be more successful or not when assisted by the school.

The Chairman having thanked Mr. Cummings for his report, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that:-

- the Committee note the progress made in relation to the policy review into early intervention, including future evidence gathering activities as part of the review process; and
- the Committee agree to hold an additional meeting in March to discuss and reflect on the evidence gathered as part of the policy review into early intervention

Policy Review 2010/2011 : Update Report

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an update in relation to the Committee's 2010/2011 policy review 'Learning at Work; the role of work based learning and apprenticeships in tackling NEET's'.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer, presented the report advising that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee had attended the Department for Education offices in London on 17th January, 2012 to discuss the Committee's policy review into Learning at Work; the role of work based learning and apprenticeships in tackling NEET's. They had met with senior civil servants Jennifer Coupland, Deputy Director – Head of Participation and Flexible Resource Division and Nick Lawrence, Deputy Director Head of Vocational Qualifications.

Councillors Stewart and Morrissey gave a brief synopsis of the discussions they had undertaken with the Officers around the withdrawal of the EMA and the impact it could have, vocational qualifications and how they would be measured in relation to academic qualifications and payments by results. They commented that a lot of the discussions had been around areas that were still work in progress and it was not clearly defined how proposals would work in practice but the Committee would continue to be advised as developments progressed.

4. RESOLVED that the Committee note the information contained within the report and given by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

National Curriculum Final Results 2011

The Executive Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to update Member on final, validated 2011 national curriculum results, including published individual school and college results.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Mike Foster, Deputy Director of Children's Services, presented the report advising that the final results as set out in the report had been very similar to the provisional results which had been submitted to the Committee in September, 2011, showing significant improvements across the board and a good picture nationally.

Councillor Oliver referred to the move by schools towards the English Baccalaureate and asked if this had had any impact on subject choices. Mr. Foster advised that as of this year schools would be shifting their focus to determine if the English Baccalaureate was appropriate for pupils and making a move towards that route for them. The challenge for schools would be around how to organise a relevant curriculum for those pupils who the English Baccalaureate may not be appropriate for.

With regards to languages, Councillor Oliver asked if any of the schools were proposing to offer old languages and Mr. Foster advised that they would be mainly offering modern languages but he was aware of some schools that were offering Latin as an extra curricular subject to be taken by pupils if they wished.

Councillor Williams commented that it was important that schools looked at the capacity of students and focus on the success of their pupils through the right processes for them. She advised that it would take time to get numbers of pupils through the new English Baccalaureate system and felt concerned that the goalposts for young people kept moving, when they should be getting offered the best chance of success at school that they could be given.

Councillor Stewart referred to the floor targets set for secondary schools and asked if or how the introduction of new weighting for vocational qualifications would be taken into account in relation to the targets. Mr. Foster advised that floor targets would remain the same and in fact increase in some regards. He explained that some analysis had been undertaken of certain schools in detail, as where schools have students who have secured 4-7 GCSE's with some of the being vocational qualifications it could be a problem as the new weighting would now see them being the equivalent to only one GCSE and not the four as they were previously.

Councillor Stewart asked if Officers could prepare a report indicating how vulnerable schools in the city may be and the proposals to help and support schools who may find themselves adversely affected by the new weightings.

In relation to the ten primary schools who were identified within the report as being below their floor target, Councillor Stewart asked if Members could be provided with further information as to the kinds of support schools were putting in place to help them improve the situation and get above floor targets. Mr. Foster agreed to provide this information and advised that it would include information on how they were using local and national leaders, which was working well at the moment but a true reflection of how successful they were would hopefully be seen in the results for the schools in the future.

Councillor Stewart went on to ask what happened in the instance of an Academy School falling below floor targets and was advised that technically the duty could fall to the Secretary of State but with regards to Red House Academy Mr. Foster advised that the Academy were working with the Local Authority to improve their situation and he had faith in the management to rectify their position.

With regards to the average point score (APS) per examination entry at Key Stage 5, Councillor Stewart commented that Sunderland being ranked the 18th highest local authority in England for that measure suggested that there were a number of students at an average level and asked if Members could have more detail on the breakdown of Sunderland's ranking. Mr. Foster agreed to provide that information to Members, and it was:-

5. RESOLVED that the performance on Sunderland national curriculum results be received and noted, and the further information as requested by Members be circulated in due course.

The Education Act 2011

The Executive Director Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) informing the Committee of the significant changes in the Education Act 2011 and their implications for education in Sunderland.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Mike Foster, Deputy Director of Children's Services, gave a presentation to the Committee (copy circulated) which concentrated on the following ten main areas within the new Act:-

- Early Years Provision;
- Discipline;
- School Workforce;
- Qualifications and Curriculum;
- Educational Institutions;
- Academies;
- Post-16 Education and Training;
- Direct Payments;
- Student Finance; and
- General – Supplementary Orders and Regulations.

(for copy presentation – see original minutes)

Councillor Williams referred to permanent exclusions of pupils from school and asked where the responsibility for the pupil lay. Mr. Foster advised that the local authority would be responsible for providing alternative school places or the equivalent for the pupil but the funding of that place would remain the responsibility of the school with any qualifications being recorded in the statistics of the results for that school.

Councillor Oliver referred to the power of staff to search pupils without consent for any dangerous or banned items and asked if there were guidelines set out for schools to refer to. Mr. Foster advised that these were not available but there would be items that were fairly obvious dangerous and when others were less clear it would be sensible for the school to seek further advice.

With regards to schools securing independent and impartial careers guidance, Councillor Oliver was advised that the local authority would still have a duty to oversee that guidance was being provided but the duty to commission the service would fall to the school. He advised that he would gather further information for Members and circulate it directly, and it was:-

6. RESOLVED that the content of the presentation be received and noted.

Specialist Community Children and Young People's Service - Presentation

The NHS South of Tyne and Wear submitted a report (copy circulated) providing Members with an overview of the development and reformed of CAMH (Child and Adolescent Mental Health) Services in Sunderland, South Tyneside and Gateshead.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Janette Sherratt, Children's Lead for Commissioning and Ms. Jan Brown, Service Manager, Sunderland PCT, gave a presentation on the service development and reform of the CAMH Services, outlining the need for change and key main features of the service.

Ms. Brown advised that the service had 'inherited' a waiting list of 4,500 cases of those waiting up to one year and they intended to look at each case individually to assess them to ensure they were ranked correctly and in the most relevant position and those that should not be on the waiting list were referred to the correct partner organisations if necessary.

In response to a query from Councillor Williams regarding the aim for future waiting times, Ms. Sherratt advised that they would not know with current cases until they had all been reviewed but that they trust that by 2013 the maximum wait for any service provision would be six weeks from the receipt of referral. Where a critical case was raised they would not be placed on the waiting list by be separated out so a rapid response could be initiated.

With regards to questions from Councillor Stewart around young people on the waiting list and significant differences in the procedures for the future, Ms. Brown advised that the review of the list would ensure that those on the list were being dealt with effectively and appropriately to be moved through the system at the right pace. Ms. Sherratt advised that there had been huge duplications undertaken in the past whereas in the future staff would be pooled to help bring those services needed by the child to them as quickly as possible to reach an agreed outcome for them.

Councillor Stewart asked if the majority of young people had been referred directly or through the CAF process and was advised that there had been a combination but Ms. Boustead informed the committee that the new function would allow a more specific service to be provided. Most young people would meet with their team around the family or child and the other groups or professional with more specialism to the issues would be introduced allowing it to take a more systematic approach. It would be a fully multi-discipline team to support the family and young person working together on one approach.

In closing, Ms. Sherratt advised that there would be a full plan in place from April, 2012 which would then turn into a Service Development Plan to be carried forward and monitored, and it was:-

7. RESOLVED that the information within the presentation be received and noted.

Corporate Parenting Annual Report

The Executive Director Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which informed Members of the current position of the Council as 'Corporate Parent and provides an update on the current performance of the Council in meeting this responsibility.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Boustead presented the report advising that there would be some exciting new projects in the future, including a partnership with SAFC Football Foundation to work jointly in promoting fostering. She advised that there had been 45 adoptions this year, which was above national figures, and, it was:-

8. RESOLVED that:-

- the information within the report be received and noted;
- given the performance reporting year the Committee change the timetable for this report to June in future years so that the full performance can be considered; and
- should Member wish to request more regular or in depth reports on aspects of Corporate Parenting these could be provided.

Work Programme 2011-12

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) appending the current work programme for the Committee's information.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

9. RESOLVED that the information contained within the work programme be received and noted and reports be added, with the agreement of the Chairman, as discussed during the meeting.

Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1st March, 2012 – 30th June, 2012

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with an opportunity to consider the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1st March, 2012 to 30th June, 2012.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

10. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked Members and Officers for their attendance.

(Signed) P. STEWART,
Chairman.