

At a meeting of the CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in COMMITTEE ROOM NO. 1, CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on THURSDAY, 12th JANUARY, 2012 at 5.30 pm.

Present:-

Councillor Stewart in the Chair

Councillors Bell, Bonallie, MacKnight, Morrissey, Oliver, D.Richardson, Scanlan, and Williams together with Ms. A. Blakey, Mr. H. Brown, Ms. R. Elliott and Ms. C. Hutchinson

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Mrs. S. Duncan Mrs. M. Harrop and Mr. K. Morris

Chairman's Announcement

The Chairman advised Members of the Committee that Ms. Christine Hutchinson was retiring as the Free Churches' Council representative and thanked her for the dedication and contribution she had shown during her years of service. Ms. Hutchinson commented that it had been a privilege to serve on the Committee and felt that when scrutiny worked well it was inspirational. She wished the Committee and its Members every success for future years.

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 8th December, 2011

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 8th December, 2011 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

Change in Order of Business

At this juncture the Chairman proposed that Item 5 – Review of Acute Special Paediatric Service be heard first on the agenda as there were external partners in attendance for the item.

Review of Acute Special Paediatric Service

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an overview of a programme of reform work related to the pathway for acutely sick and injured children.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

To complement the report, Ms. Sue Winfield and Dr. David Hambleton, provided Members with a comprehensive powerpoint presentation on the process together with Dr. Geoff Lawson who provided the Committee with a clinical perspective.

Members were advised of:-

- (i) the following two options for change

Option One:

Implementation of a range of service developments including:

- walk-in services available to children of all ages
- children's community nursing team support for acutely ill and injured children and young people
- children's short-stay assessment units in hospitals in Gateshead, Sunderland and South Tyneside, available for limited hours, eg 8.00am - 10.00pm
- inpatient care available at Sunderland Royal Hospital and the Great North Children's Hospital at the Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle.

Option Two:

Implementation of a range of service developments including:

- walk-in services available to children of all ages
- children's community nursing team support for acutely ill and injured children and young people
- children's short-stay assessment units in hospitals in Gateshead, Sunderland and South Tyneside, available for 24 hours each day
- inpatient care available at Sunderland Royal Hospital and the Great North Children's Hospital at the Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle.

- (ii) the drivers for change,

- (iii) the engagement work carried out with parents and young people together with the feedback received,
- (iv) the data reviews undertaken in Sunderland, South Tyneside and Gateshead,
- (v) financial support provided by the PCT to support services for children,
- (vi) the clinical evidence base for change including illustrative case studies showing how care would be provided following the reforms,
- (vii) the next steps in the review process.

Dr. Hambleton and Dr. Lawson proceeded to address questions and comments from Members and consideration having been given to the matter, Members indicated that they would be minded to support Option 2 with regard to the proposed reform of acute health services for children and young people.

The Chairman having thanked, Dr. Hambleton, Dr. Lawson and Ms. Winfield for their report and presentation, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee endorsed Option 2 as detailed in 'Getting Better Together' the NHS South of Tyne and Wear public consultation document on acute health services for children and young people.

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, Scrutiny Officer, presented the report advising that a visit had been arranged to Durham County Council on Thursday, 1st March, 2012 to discuss their approach to early intervention and how they monitored outcomes and more detail would be forwarded to Members in due course.

Councillor Stewart referred to the recent peer review carried out at Telford and Wrekin Council where they had been highlighted as an authority showing areas of good practice in relation to the CAF process and asked that Mr. Cummings contact them to gather further information on their procedures and standards to see how they differed to those carried out in Sunderland.

Ms. Boustead, Head of Safeguarding, advised Members that Officers were making a visit to Hertfordshire Council on Tuesday, 31st January, 2012 and opened the invitation to any Member of the Committee who wished to join them. Any Member wishing to attend the visit to Hertfordshire was asked to advise Mr. Cummings accordingly.

2. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) The Committee note the progress made in relation to the policy review into early intervention; and
- (ii) The Committee note the future evidence gathering activities arranged as part of the review process.

Outcomes from Annual Unannounced Inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment Arrangements

The Executive Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide a summary of the outcomes from the Annual Unannounced Inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment Arrangements in Children's Services, which took place on 18th and 19th October, 2011.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Meg Boustead, Head of Safeguarding, presented the report advising Members that following the inspections in October, 2011 the Executive Director of Children's Services received the letter from Ofsted confirming the outcome of the inspections which identified an area of strength, many areas of practice which met requirement and some areas for development.

Ms. Boustead then took the Committee through each of the areas highlighted for development and explained how Children's Services were addressing the issues and advised that these would be included in all plans associated with the priorities which had been confirmed for the next three years, which were:-

- New relationship with schools;
- Early Intervention / Review of Early Years / Children's Centres;
- Safeguarding - an improving story which includes...; and
- Whole family, whole community responsive service approach.

In relation to a query from Councillor Oliver regarding the employment of Social Workers from the US, Ms. Boustead advised that at the time they had applied there had been a national shortage of social workers making it difficult to appoint staff and fill vacancies. She advised that the service currently had only one vacancy which was expected to be filled by another member of Council staff and the service were intent on continuing to train up their own staff to allow them to move forward and fill any future vacancies.

Councillor Williams referred to paragraph 5.2 of the report and the Strategic Thresholds document which had been agreed to be established by the SSCB and commented that she would like to see a copy of the document as it was an area where she felt that there always be some issues and concerns. Ms. Boustead agreed to circulate the information to Members of the Committee.

In response to a question from Councillor Stewart in relation to the improved system to address the variable quality of assessments, Ms. Boustead advised that the new system would see managers driving the improvement of the quality of assessments in the future. A training and development need had been identified to understand what was required and needed to write a good solid plan following the child's assessments and managers high expectations would ensure assessments met the required standards set.

Councillor Bell commented that it may be beneficial for one or two of the Social Workers from the United States to attend a future meeting of the Committee to share their views and opinions and to hear of their experiences from other workplaces in comparison to Sunderland. Ms. Boustead agreed to liaise with Mr. Cummings and arrange their attendance at a future meeting, and it was:-

3. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) The Committee note the content of the report and associated appendix and agree to receive regular process reports regarding the actions identified to ensure that the areas for development are addressed and that outcomes for the City's most vulnerable children and young people continue to improve;
- (ii) The Scrutiny Officer and Head of Safeguarding invite the international social workers, working in Sunderland to a future meeting of the Committee; and
- (iii) The Head of Safeguarding provide Members with a copy of the Strategic Thresholds Document.

Early Intervention Core Offer : A Continuum of Support

The Executive Director Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided an overview and sought comments on the proposed Early Intervention Core Offer and the next steps in developing and promoting the Core Offer.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Lynn Fletcher, Locality Team Manager (North) and PEP, presented the report advising the Committee of the current position with regards to the five locality based interegrated team which included practitioners from attendance, Children's Centre, Connexions, Educational Psychology, Risk and Resilience(Teenage Pregnancy, Substance Misuse and Crime Prevention) and Youth Development and the specialist city-wide Council teams that could be drawn on by the CAF Panel.

She advised that evaluating the impacts of interventions on outcomes for children, young people and their families was done through the use of the 'Outcomes Star' which measured improvement. Analysis of data from the 'Outcomes Star' was used to identify both service contribution to positive outcome and any gaps in services being provided.

The Committee were advised of the areas for development and next steps and were advised that in responding to feedback from the recent Peer Review exercise, it had been highlighted that there was a need to gain more active involvement of partners in the use of CAF as an assessment tool and in the TAC/TAF process

In response to a question from Councillor Williams around the steering group membership and who would undertake the chairing roles of the panels and what qualifications and was advised that as the CAF's were being relaunched they were aiming to have a more extensive membership. The original lists were being reviewed and invitations would be distributed from the Executive Director of Children's Services once the final decisions on who should be included was decided upon.

With regards to the chairing role, Ms. Fletcher advised that each may be different as the team would look at the needs around the individual child and decide which professional was the most relevant to that case. She explained that it would vary much around the general working of the group with the family, being sensitive to their needs whilst identifying what was working with them, acknowledging any difficulties there may be with any individual and making focussed solutions and clear plans.

Councillor Williams referred to the range of services as set out in appendix A to the report and noted that the Youth Villages had been placed into the 'Targeted Services' category, raising concerns that it should be included as a 'Universal Service' as if it was highlighted as targeted it may prevent some young people from using it. Ms. Fletcher commented that although the XL Youth Villages were open to all young people they did have a targeted group in mind and that was the reasoning behind its allocation to that group.

In response to a query from Councillor Stewart regarding the 'Outcomes Star' evaluations, Ms. Fletcher referred to paragraph 3.5 of the report whereby it stated that parental perception of the young person from a number of dimensions was measured at the initial meeting and then revisited further during other meetings around the family. She advised that it allowed progress to be measured, recognised and celebrated.

Councillor Stewart asked if it would be possible for the Committee to have an anonymised real life example of a case to allow Members to have further understanding of the procedure, Ms. Fletcher having agreed, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the content of the report and particularly the Core Offer at Appendix A be received and noted; and
- (ii) the Committee agree to receive an anonymised copy of an 'Outcomes Star' evaluation.

Sunderland Libraries Service Overview

The Executive Director of City Services submitted a report (copy circulated) providing Members with an overview of library activities, programme and performance for the last full year of 2010/2011.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Jane Hall, Assistant Head of Culture and Tourism, Ms. Allison Clarke, Library Manager and Ms. Julie McCann, Library Operations Manager were in attendance to present the report and answer Members questions.

In relation to a question from Councillor Williams regarding Kindles and e-books, Ms. Hall commented that there had been a increase in the uptake of people accessing e-books through portable devices but advised that it was not an easy process to start an e-lending system and that the USA were much more advanced. She explained that in the UK the e-books were only available through a third party and therefore there were restrictions as to how much could be done at this time.

She commented that the service were taking a cautious approach to it but were mindfully watching other authorities to see what was developing in the same area and advised that there was an indication that a national agreement on the e-lending of books may be reached.

Ms. McCann also explained that there may be some issues around compatibility of e-books between different devices, for example, e-books for a Kindle were available through Amazon only. She explained that there were also issues around the different publishers and copyright laws and discussions would have to be held as to how e-books were loaned out – would it be one book loaned a number of set times, or would only one copy of each e-book be loaned out at one time.

Councillor Oliver asked what the definition of an active borrower was and was advised it was a DCMS standard definition of any person who had taken out a book at least once in the last year.

With regards to a question from Councillor Oliver around the ordering of library stock and whether it was proactive or reactive, Ms. Hall advised it could be a mixture. The library service understood what were popular choices for readers and therefore pre-ordered new titles from those authors, whilst also promoting books from new authors being published. She explained that the service looked at every request to stock a book that was submitted and obtained it from the British Library if possible.

Councillor Stewart asked how much of the information in the Local Studies Unit was available digitally or online and was advised that a lot of the information stored was in photograph form and there was currently a project ongoing to upload these to the 'Sunderland – Then and Now' website. Not all of the information the unit had was digitised but it was an area the service were constantly monitoring.

The Chairman asked that any further information regarding e-books, following the Officers next meetings, be provided to the Scrutiny Officer for circulation to the Committee, and it was:-

5. RESOLVED that the information within the report be received and noted.

Hasting Hill Primary School – Monitoring Inspection

The Executive Director Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) following a request from Councillor Oliver, in agreement with the Chairman, on the latest monitoring inspection report on the progress of Hasting Hill Primary School.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Mike Foster, Deputy Executive Director of Children's Services and Ms. Sue Morgan, Senior Support and Intervention Officer presented the report which provided an update for Members on the progress of Hastings Hill Primary School following the school being placed in special measures after an inspection in March, 2011.

Ms. Morgan advised that the School had been placed in special measures in March 2011 with two further monitoring visits having been made since that time. She advised that at the time the school was placed into special measures it had not been of any concern to the local authority. The school had seen their performance data reduce in 2007 so the local authority had intervened and worked with them, and the performance had been on an upward trend since, giving the local authority no indication of any issues.

Following the first monitoring visit the local authority had requested the services of the National Leader for Education to support the school in helping it to emerge from the difficulties it was facing. They had also felt it appropriate to ask members of staff to work with peer schools i.e. on a teacher to teacher basis, but some staff had struggled to understand the reasons for being given the special measures and evaluations showed that the pace of improvement was far too slow.

Conversations had been held with senior officers at the school and the Chair of the Governing Body and decisive actions had been taken with regards to allowing the acting headteacher to return to her substantive post as deputy and appointing a temporary executive headteacher and with this support in place with the National Education Leader, governing body and the local authority they could see changes and improvements being made. From September, 2011 the local authority had noted there had been significant change and felt that the supporting teams and staff should be commended.

Ms. Morgan advised that since the publication of the report the Executive Head Teacher role that had been in place had ended and the National Leader for Education had a more significant role and was spending a larger proportion of her time with the school each week. With ongoing support and increased changes being made at the school the local authority were confident that they would see much more positive comments from the next monitoring visit report.

Mr. Foster and Ms. Morgan proceeded to address some challenging questions and comments from the Committee in relation to:-

- (i) the additional costs involved in providing the extra support to the school, and who would cover these costs if an Academy was in a similar situation;
- (ii) refuting comments around staff involvement and engagement;
- (iii) the level of engagement and support offered by the local authority;
- (iv) a number of actions that were to be taken and were found ineffective;
- (v) the fact that parent's continued to have a positive view of the school, regardless of the special measures; and
- (vi) there being no inadequate teaching and a lot of progression being made by children.

Consideration having fully been given to the matter, Mr. Foster advised that it would be inappropriate for them to comment in any further detail until discussions had been held with the school and staff.

The Chairman asked that following the meeting improvement plans and further detail be provided to the Scrutiny Officer for circulation to the Committee, and having thanked Mr. Foster and Ms. Morgan for their report, it was:-

6. RESOLVED that the information within the Section 8 inspection report be received and noted and further information be circulated to the Committee once available.

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).

7. 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 January, 2012 to 30th April, 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 December, 2011 to 31st March, 2012.

(for copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Cummings, Scrutiny Officer, having presented the report advising that there were no items in the current Forward Plan relating to the remit of this Committee, it was;-

8. 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.