

At a meeting of the CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, CITY HALL on THURSDAY 3 MARCH 2022 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor P. Smith in the Chair

Councillors Crosby, Dodds, P.W.L. Gibson, S. Johnston, Mason-Gauge, McKeith and Tye together with Ms A. Blakey.

Also in attendance:-

Ms Jill Colbert, Chief Executive, Together for Children

Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, Law and Governance, Corporate Services Directorate

Ms Stacy Hodgkinson, Service Manager - CIRT, Performance, Customer Feedback & Planning, Together for Children

Ms Linda Mason, Service Manager, Targeted Youth Services, Together for Children

Mr David Noon, Principal Governance Services Officer, Law and Governance, Corporate Services Directorate

Ms Emma Owens, Substance Misuse Worker, YOS, Together for Children

Ms Gillian Robinson, Scrutiny and Members Support Coordinator, Law and Governance, Corporate Services Directorate

Ms Jane Wheeler, Service Manager Early Help – Prevention and Innovation, Together for Children

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Dunn and Noble.

Minutes of the last Ordinary meeting of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee held on 3 February 2022 and of the Extraordinary meeting held on 9 February 2022

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last Ordinary meeting of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee held on 3 February 2022 and of the Extraordinary meeting held on 9 February 2022 be confirmed as correct records.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest made.

Youth Offending Service - Update

The Service Manager Targeted Youth Service submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with an update on the action being taken to prevent offending and reoffending by children and young people.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Linda Mason (Service Manager) presented the report advising Members of the complexity of the young people known to the Youth Offending Service and the work undertaken by Together for Children in working with and supporting young people at risk. Members were informed that the Sunderland Youth Offending Service (YOS) was a multi-agency service comprising the four statutory agencies of police, probation, health and the Council. The service worked in partnership with other key agencies such as the area courts and specialist service providers, including child mental health. The Targeted Youth Services included several more specialised services which comprise Youth Offending Service (YOS), Return Home Interviews with young people reported missing, the Youth Drug and Alcohol Project (YDAP) and Wear Kids which engaged young people identified as at risk of entering the Criminal Justice System.

In response to an enquiry from the Chair, Ms Mason advised that she felt the Service's biggest achievement over the last year was to massively reduce the rate of first-time entrants into the Youth Justice System. From January to December 2021 the figure for Sunderland was 122. This compared with an average figure of 162 among Sunderland's family group of local authorities and the National average of 170.

Councillor Crosby referred to paragraph 3.2 of the report and asked if the reason for the lack of richness in data for YDAP was because of the low number of referrals? Ms Mason replied that it was because the case management system was still relatively new. Previously YDAP relied on an entirely paper-based system. The new system allowed the Team to drill down and get better data across cohorts rather than just individuals.

Councillor Paul Gibson welcomed the report and referred to paragraph 2.6 regarding the Missing, Slavery Exploited and Trafficked (MSET). He congratulated the Team on the partnership working that was being undertaken to help mitigate the risks of exploitation. He believed parents needed to show greater awareness of their children's on-line presence and suggested that training was made available for parents to educate them on the responsible use of the inter-net. In addition, Councillor Gibson referred to the impressive set of statistics detailed in the report and asked if they could be broken down to the ward level. Ms Mason replied that because of the nature of the Service it would be very difficult to do so without skewing the data as the young persons' residences may well be in a different ward to where they carried out their offences.

There being no further questions on that section of the report, Ms Mason introduced Ms Emma Owens, who provided the Committee with a comprehensive verbal report which fleshed out the history of the support provided by YDAP in respect of 'Young Person A' highlighted in Appendix 1 of the report.

The Chairman then invited further questions from the Committee.

Councillor Mason-Gauge congratulated Ms Owens and the work of her team at YDAP. She asked how much of the work was focused on the family in addition to the young person concerned. Ms Owen replied that this would vary from case to case. In some instances, it could be the parents who were also using drugs which negatively impacted on the young person's efforts to stop using. In other cases, parents could be a valuable source of support for the young person.

The Chairman stated that Ms Mason was an experienced Officer who had worked for the Council for a number of years. She asked her with regards to the issue of drug use, was it presently worse than it had been in past? She stated that her reason for asking was that it appeared to have moved from a situation where it was not acceptable and not noticeable to one where people were happy to openly use drugs in public. Ms Colbert replied that it was probably a question for the Council's wider partners as the YOS saw only a tiny fraction of the problem.

Councillor McKeith referred to the steep reduction in the rate of first-time entrants into the Youth Justice System and asked if it was down to the work of the service or a side-effect of the pandemic. Ms Mason replied that it was the former. The groundwork had been put in place well before the pandemic via an initiative undertaken with Northumbria Police. She advised that it was still too early to accurately assess the impact Covid had played on the service.

Mr Diamond advised that Councillor Noble was unable to attend the meeting but had submitted a question via email. Ms Colbert asked Mr Diamond to forward the email to her and she would ensure Councillor Noble received a reply.

There being no further questions or comments the Chairman thanked Ms Mason, Ms Owens and Ms Colbert for their report and it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted;

Wear Here 4 You – Prevention Bus

The Director of Children Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which briefed members on the Mobile Prevention Bus known as 'Wear Here 4 YOU', which offered a recognisable point of information, support and contact for the city's children and young people.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Jane Wheeler, Service Manager Early Help – Prevention and Innovation, presented the report informing Members that the Wear Here 4 You bus was a pilot project launched on 16th October 2021, which would deliver across the city for a 12 month period.

The Bus was a partnership enterprise offering support to children and young people in Sunderland. It was staffed by representatives from Together for Children, Growing Healthy, Northumbria Police, Youth Consortium and other partners who engage with children and young people on issues that matter to them, offer light refreshments

and give advice, support and signposting to other agencies. Its aim was to support the Sunderland Healthy City Plan vision to enable children and young people in Sunderland to have healthy, happy lives, with no one left behind. The bus would be visible in schools and community settings and would also support children and young people to recover from the impact of Covid 19 which had widened health inequalities in the city and had impacted on the access to services to support children and young people.

To complement the report, Ms Wheeler provided the Committee with a comprehensive presentation detailing the impact of the project to date.

Councillor Tye stated that a wider discussion was required around the whole Youth Strategy to assess where everything fitted in. He believed that in the long term something like the bus should probably sit with the VCS.

Councillor Gibson commended the excellent results achieved by the bus to date but expressed fears about the future availability of funding. The Chair added that the former Excel Villages had performed a similar service and had had a proven track record in being able to engage with hard to reach young people however they had fallen victim to the need to find savings.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Mason-Gauge, Ms Wheeler confirmed that all the material distributed from the bus was age appropriate. The service had a strategic partnership group which undertook a mapping exercise which used area profiling data to plot services.

Councillor McKeith asked if it was possible that the presentation could be provided to the Area Committees. Ms Wheeler replied that the service was already scheduled in to attend all the Local Area Boards in April.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Dodds, Ms Wheeler advised that the location of the bus and the dates and times were publicised via TfC's social media platforms and in the regular Head Teachers Briefings.

There being no further questions or comments, the Chairman thanked Ms Wheeler for her report and presentation, and it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted

Together for Children Performance Update

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with an overview of performance against TfC's contractual indicators with Sunderland City Council based on performance data as at January 2022 and which set out the:-

- TfC Contractual Key performance indicators (KPI) reported to the Council;
- TfC Supporting measures (SM) reported to the Council, and
- TfC Measures included within Sunderland Council's City Plan.

and provided a high-level summary of performance for each measure together with a service commentary for any rated amber or red.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms Stacy Hodgkinson, Service Manager presented the report and together with Ms Colbert, addressed questions and comments from Members thereon.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor McKeith, regarding how many Education Health Care Plans were over the 20 week limit, and by how many weeks, Ms Hodgkinson advised that she did not have that information to hand but would reply to Councillor McKeith via email following the meeting. Ms Colbert advised that it averaged around 45 – 60% with delays being caused by the delays in medical assessments.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor S. Johnston regarding the circulation of the 4 to 9 Maths and English results, Ms Colbert advised that this was publicly available data and would be published as a matter of course.

Councillor Tye commended TfC on the excellent performance report. He added that the Committee and others were quick to criticise when things weren't going well so it was only right that they were also quick to praise and offer congratulations when it was due.

There being no further questions or comments, the Chairman thanked Ms Hodgkinson for her report and it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the performance report be received and noted.

Annual Work Programme 2021/22

The Scrutiny and Members' Support Co-ordinator submitted a report (copy circulated) which briefed members on the developed of the Committee's work programme for the municipal year 2021/22 and appended a copy of the programme for Members' consideration.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Mr Diamond presented the report and advised the Committee that its next meeting would feature items in respect Elective Home Education and an update on Apprenticeships.

There being no questions or comments, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Notice of Key Decisions

The Scrutiny and Members' Support Co-ordinator submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an opportunity to consider those items on

the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions for the 28 day period from the 21 February, 2022.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

The Committee was advised that if Members had any issues to raise or required further detail on any of the items included in the notice that were within the purview of the Committee, they should contact Mr Diamond, Scrutiny Officer for initial assistance.

Members having requested further information in respect of the following items:-

- i) 220210/696 – Pupil Referral Unit (Cllrs S. Johnston and P. Smith)
- ii) 220210/697 – Maintained school admission arrangements for the academic year September 2023-2024 (Cllr P. Smith)

it was:-

5. RESOLVED that the Notice of Key Decisions be received and noted.

There being no further items of business, the Chair closed the meeting having thanked members and officers for their attendance and contributions

Signed) P. SMITH,
Chairman.