

**At a meeting of the CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in COMMITTEE ROOM 1 of the CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on THURSDAY 28<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER, 2019 at 5.30 p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor P. Smith in the Chair

Councillors Crosby, Francis, Hunt, F. Miller, Rowntree, Tye and K. Wood.

**Also in attendance:-**

Ms Jill Colbert, Chief Executive Together for Children and Director of Children's Services, Sunderland City Council  
Karen Davison, Director of Early Help,  
Mr Jim Diamond Scrutiny Officer, Sunderland City Council  
Mr. David Noon, Principal Governance Services Officer, Sunderland City Council  
Ms Gillian Robinson, Scrutiny Officer, Sunderland City Council  
Ms Jane Wheeler, Participation and Engagement Lead, Together for Children

The Chairman opened the meeting and introductions were made.

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mann, McKeith, Samuels and Scanlan and on behalf of Anne Blakey, Jackie Graham and Luke Hall.

**Minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee held on 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2019**

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee held on 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2019 be confirmed as a correct record.

**Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)**

There were no declarations of interest made.

**Together for Children Performance Update**

The Chief Executive, Together for Children, submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided performance information in relation to Together for Children (TfC) in the context of the scope of service and performance indicators set out in the service contract with the Council.

(For copy report – see original minutes.)

Jill Colbert, Chief Executive Director of Corporate Services presented the report and together with Karen Davison, Director of Early Help, addressed questions and comments thereon.

Councillor Francis referred to KPI1 (% of Early Help cases that were closed with two or more successful outcomes) and asked if TfC were happy with the figure? Ms Davison replied that it was good news. The figure of 72.4% was above the target of 65% and that performance had remained consistently ahead of the target all year.

The Chair referred to the success of the Youth Offending Service over the years and believed there had been a number of changes to the service recently. With this in mind, she asked what was the current staffing position? Ms Colbert replied that the staffing structure had remained the same and advised that the service was commissioned through the Youth Justice Board.

Councillor Francis asked whether delays in the receipt of data from partner organisations had any impact on the performance figures. Ms Colbert replied that TfC worked closely with Northumbria Police and the NHS to ensure data transfers were as fast as possible. Delays generally revolved around access to GP records.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Crosby, Ms Davison confirmed that there would be children who had had more than 3 placements during the course of the 12 month period. What was important was being able to understand their experiences of those placements.

Councillor Francis referred to a wide disparity in the quality of PEPs and asked if this had been addressed. Ms Colbert replied that this was being addressed by the introduction of electronic PEPs (EPEPs) and their implementation had already seen performance improve in the October data. It was anticipated that as the roll out gathered pace, in conjunction with the Virtual School guidance, that performance would continue to improve. Ms Colbert advised that she would be happy to ask Linda Mason, Head Teacher of the Virtual School to discuss the effect of the EPEPs with the Committee.

There being no further questions for Ms Colbert or Ms Davison, Councillor Tye moved, and it was duly seconded, that the Committee establish a Task and Finish Group to review the governance and the scrutiny arrangements of Together for Children.

Accordingly it was:-

2. RESOLVED that:-

- i) the performance information provided to the Committee be received and noted, and
- ii) the Committee establish a Task and Finish Group to review the governance and the scrutiny arrangements of Together for Children.

## **Parenting Offer Update**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with an update on the parenting offer delivered by Together for Children including the staff training provided over the last 2.5 years.

(for copy report and presentation – see original minutes)

Ms Davison, Director of Early Help presented the report and addressed questions and comments thereon.

Councillor K. Wood welcomed the report and in particular the success of the Triple P Stepping Stone Programme.

Councillor Hunt commended the re-introduction of the concept of universal services which avoided the potential for parents to feel stigmatised.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Rowntree regarding engagement with and support for parents, Ms Davison advised that this would be undertaken by social workers and would involve active encouragement and practical assistance in arranging appointments etc for their children if required.

Councillor Francis referred to paragraph 2.8 in relation to parenting interventions delivered by partner agencies such as CAMHS and asked if the CAMHS performance had improved. Ms Davison replied that TfC did not have access to the data in respect of these interventions and advised that the question would need to be directed to CAMHS. Councillor Francis suggested that representatives from CAMHS were invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee. This was agreed accordingly.

There being no further questions for Ms Davison or Ms Colbert, it was:-

### **3. RESOLVED that:-**

- i) the report be received and noted,
- ii) a presentation on the city-wide parenting offer delivered by TfC and partners be considered at a future meeting of the Committee
- iii) representatives of CAMHS be invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee to discuss performance information

## **Together for Children Customer Feedback Six Monthly Report**

The Director of Quality and Performance, TfC submitted a report (copy circulated) attaching a copy of the TfC Customer Feedback Six Monthly Report for the period April to September 2019

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms Jane Wheeler, Participation and Engagement Lead, TfC presented the report in detail, highlighting the processes involved and any trends and themes arising.

The Chairman referred to paragraph 4.16 which detailed the main subject areas of elements upheld at stage two and stage three during the reporting period. She commented that a high percentage of the elements related to issues of communication. She suggested that this was something that shouldn't be hard to address and yet was appeared to become a trend.

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

4. RESOLVED that the information contained in the report be received and noted.

### **Annual Work Programme 2019/20**

The Director of People, Communications and Partnerships submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided members with details of the Committee's work programme for the municipal year 2019/20

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Councillor Tye referred to the decision of the Committee to establish a Task and Finish Group to review the governance and the scrutiny arrangements of Together for Children and suggested that an informal meeting of the Committee was held to determine the scope of the review and the membership of the Group. The Chairman noted that in the short term this may prove difficult given the impending election and the Christmas break however she would speak to the Officers of the Scrutiny team to discuss the practicalities.

5. RESOLVED that the work programme be received and noted.

### **Notice of Key Decisions**

The Director of People Communications and Partnerships submitted a report (copy circulated) providing Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions for the 28 day period from the 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2019.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

There being no questions or comments, it was:-

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

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked members and officers for their attendance and contributions.

(Signed) P. SMITH,  
Chairman.