

CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

AGENDA

**Meeting to be held in the Civic Centre (Council Chamber) on Thursday
7th October, 2021 at 5.30 p.m.**

Membership

Cllrs Crosby, Dodds, Dunn, P.W.L. Gibson, S. Johnston, Mason-Gage, McKeith (Vice-Chairman), Noble, Samuels, Scanlan, P. Smith (Chairman) and Tye

Coopted Members – Mrs. A. Blakey and Ms. J. Graham

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E. WAUGH,
Assistant Director of Law and Governance,
Civic Centre,
SUNDERLAND.

29th September, 2021

At a meeting of the CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC CENTRE on THURSDAY 9th SEPTEMBER, 2021 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor P. Smith in the Chair

Councillors Crosby, Dodds, Dunn, P.W.L. Gibson, S. Johnston, Mason-Gage, McKeith, Samuels and Tye.

Also in attendance:-

Mr Martin Birch, Director of Children's Social Care, Together for Children
Ms Jill Colbert, Chief Executive, Together for Children
Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, Law and Governance, Corporate Services Directorate
Elaine Matterson, Attendance Manager Practitioner, Neighbourhoods Directorate
Mr David Noon, Principal Governance Services Officer, Law and Governance, Corporate Services Directorate
Ms Gillian Robinson, Scrutiny and Members Support Coordinator, Law and Governance, Corporate Services Directorate

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Noble and Scanlan and on behalf of Ms Anne Blakey.

Minutes of the last meeting of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee held on 10th June, 2021

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee held on 10th June, 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest made.

Ofsted Inspection of Children's Care Services - Feedback

The Chief Executive of Together for Children submitted a report (copy circulated) on the outcome of Ofsted's full Inspection of Children's Care Services in Sunderland undertaken between 28 June and 9 July 2021 and which presented the Ofsted letter

summarising the findings of the Inspection published on 20 August, a copy of which was appended to the report for information.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms Jill Colbert, Chief Executive of Together for Children, provided the Committee with an overview of the Inspection, placing it in context, and introduced Mr Martin Birch, Director of Children's Social Care, who briefed the Committee on the key aspects of the letter which rated Children's Services in Sunderland as outstanding.

Members were thanked for their many messages of congratulations and advised that TfC were overwhelmingly pleased with the contents of the Ofsted letter. The Letter had ranked Sunderland as outstanding in 3 categories, firstly, 'the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families', secondly, 'the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers' and thirdly, 'overall effectiveness'. The remaining category ('the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection') was ranked as good. Mr Birch informed members that the letter with regard to this category noted that Sunderland was not just good but "Solidly Good".

Mr Birch went on to highlight the many positive comments made by Ofsted in delivering their Outstanding judgement including:-

- "Early help provision is comprehensive and well embedded."
- "The vast majority of children and families get the appropriate level of help and support at the right time delivered by skilled professionals, which makes a difference to their day to-day lives."
- "Exemplary work by the pre-birth team is highly effective in helping and protecting vulnerable children either to remain safely in the care of their parents or to achieve permanence with extended family or by adoption."
- "An area of strength is workers' persistence in developing relationships, which becomes the means for positive change for children and families. Strenuous efforts have been made throughout the pandemic to visit children face to face."
- "Strong and effective partnership working helps to better protect children from harm."
- "Tenacious staff work tirelessly to ensure that children are at the centre of all work and interventions. Staff are strong advocates for their children."
- "High-quality and timely decisions are made to ensure that children become cared for at a time that is right for them..... feedback from the judiciary and the children and family court advisory and support service supported the view that the service improvements were benefiting children and families at this critical and important time."
- "Hearing the voice of the child is an exceptional strength in Sunderland. Cared for, and care experienced, children have a voice and they are encouraged to use it."
- "In the past year, impressive improvement in permanence planning means that many more children live with loving carers who are meeting their needs well."
- "There is highly effective recruitment, assessment and training of foster carers with a steady flow of prospective carers joining the fostering service."
- "Social workers and personal advisors (PAs) spoke knowledgeably and with affection for the care experienced young people that they are supporting."

- “There are now 27 care experienced young people at university, which is a high proportion of these young people and once again reflects the ambition of TfC and the council.”
- “highly impactful work has been facilitated by the robust support and the commitment of the Chief Executive of Sunderland City Council, the council members and staff across the council.”
- “Performance management information is of an exceptionally high quality.”
- “Listening to children is central to all the service improvements.”
- “the Change Council is a dedicated and influential group of young people who are having an extraordinarily positive impact on the delivery of services for children in Sunderland.”

Sunderland was now one of only eighteen Services within the country ranked as Outstanding and the first ever to move from Inadequate to Outstanding in a single inspection cycle. As an Outstanding Service this would be the first time in 6 years that it would not be the subject of a full inspection regime. The next full Inspection would be undertaken in 5 years time, however there would be check points during this period with short focused visits undertaken in respect of specific aspects of the Service.

The Chair thanked Ms Colbert and Mr Birch for their report, adding her own congratulations to the Team, and invited questions and comments from Members.

Councillor Alex Samuels offered a huge congratulations to everybody at TfC stating that to achieve something so unprecedented would have been fantastic in its own right but to do it against the backdrop of a global pandemic was such a huge achievement.

Councillor Crosby congratulated Ms Colbert on an excellent report and asked her to comment on paragraph 27 of the letter regarding support for young people with ‘complex histories’. Ms Colbert replied that the paragraph referred to the older ‘Care Experienced’ young people. It highlighted the high quality of work undertaken by TfC’s staff who were tenacious at maintaining contact with the young people and were aspirational for them to achieve and do well. A lot of this was sensitive relationship-based work which supported and challenged the young person and in many cases enabled stays in further and higher education.

Councillor P.W.L. Gibson commented that it was a truly excellent report and the workers deserved a “hats off”. The journey from Inadequate to Outstanding in six years was remarkable and given that most of the work had been done in the last three years, it was even more remarkable. In response to enquiries from Councillor Gibson, Mr Birch agreed that work was still required to improve the quality of assessments with the ultimate aim of ensuring 100% of all assessments were ‘comprehensive and analytical.’ To this end the Service was in the process of implementing a 5 year programme based around a new assessment model and was now much closer to achieving that figure than previously anticipated. With regard to being able to liaise with Adult Services to secure additional funding, he informed Councillor Gibson that some of the young care leavers retained a personal advisor until the age of 25. With regard to Ofsted giving TfC more space, Mr Birch advised that while the next full Inspection was now 5 years away, short, focused visits undertaken in respect of specific aspects of the Service would remain. Ofsted

inspections were imminent in relation to Fostering and Adoption and the 6 monthly inspection regime in relation to Children's homes would continue.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor S. Johnston regarding paragraph 12 of the letter regarding an observation that an earlier and more robust intervention may have prevented a small number of children coming into care, Mr Birch advised that this referred to an incident that occurred three years ago. He advised that a new social work model had been introduced and assured Councillor Johnston that the Service was now much more proactive.

Councillor Tye stated that he was over the moon with the report and believed it was important to reflect on the journey having sat on the Committee from the time of the first inadequate rating and the imposition of special measures to the present. He stated that a Scrutiny Committee was not the place to make political statements and he would try not to do so. He recalled his feelings of devastation at the Inadequate rating, given that he'd become an elected member not to put children's lives at risk but to make a positive difference.

He stated that when you're working with children, young people and families in the city you're collectively doing a job to make improvements. It was found that the Council were failing and he believed it took brave people to put their hands up and say 'we got that wrong'. He also believed that equally, when the Council was in the position it was in now it should also be able to say, collectively, this is what we have done as a team, we have done this as elected members setting strategy and appointing the right people to get where we are today. To this end he highlighted statements from the letter which noted the "unstinting commitment" of senior leaders and members of the council to "improving children's outcomes with sustained and significant investment in children's services." "The strong focused work by the highly committed Chief Executive of TfC, the Director of Social Care and the senior management team has resulted in exceptional improvements being made... to the quality of social work support to children and families in Sunderland... This highly impactful work has been facilitated by the robust support and the commitment of the Chief Executive of Sunderland City Council, the Council Members and staff across the council."

In conclusion Councillor Tye stated that absolutely none of this would have been achieved without the children and young people of the city who had been absolutely phenomenal in their support during the process.

Councillor Dunn welcomed the report stating that he had been blown away by the letter and offered his congratulations to all concerned. He referred to the reference in the letter detailed on page 9 of the agenda papers that stated "Leaders have a comprehensive understanding of the quality of practice through strong management oversight..." and asked how that would be maintained going forward? Mr Birch replied that this reference highlighted the strength of TfC's managerial oversight which had been massively turned around. The Service now had a very reflective managerial oversight with some files being reviewed up to 3 times a day.

Councillor McKeith stated that every staff member at TfC was a credit to the children in Sunderland. He referred to the relaxation of the Ofsted inspection regime as a result of the Outstanding rating and asked what mechanisms would be used to ensure standards were maintained. Ms Colbert informed the Committee that Local

Authority Children's Services worked together on a regional basis with regard to peer reviews and that TfC was also subject to the Council's internal quality assurance which sat outside of TfC. Mr Birch added that TfC had cohorts of managers looking at each others work which replaced the system were managers 'marked their own homework.' He assured the Committee that while Ofsted would be relaxing its full inspection regime with regard to TfC, it would by no means, be leaving it alone.

There being no further questions for Ms Colbert and Mr Birch, the Chair thanked them for their report and drew the debate to a close highlighting the two comments in the letter that pleased her in particular. Firstly that "...a new and vibrant culture is now widespread across children's services in Sunderland" and secondly "Senior managers have focused on the right things. They have been decisive in recruiting a permanent and excellent set of social workers to replace the short-term and agency staff that were previously in post."

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Elective Home Education

The Executive Director of Neighbourhoods submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided members with an overview of the statutory requirements regarding elective home education together with information regarding the number of children who are home educated in Sunderland .

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms Elaine Matterson, Attendance Manager Practitioner, Neighbourhoods Directorate presented the report and addressed questions and comments thereon. She advised Members that whilst education was compulsory, attending school was not. Elective Home Education offered families and carers the opportunity to provide education for children and young people in their care that was independent from the Local Authority or establish school provision. The law stated that the responsibility for a child's education rested with their parents.

Members were informed that the legislation associated with elective home education was not a framework for the regulation of elective home education rather it was a system for identifying children and ensuring they are receiving a 'suitable' education. There was currently no national framework in place for local authorities to work to in relation to elective home education. Between April 2019 to 24 June 2019 the government held a consultation that sought views on proposed legislation to establish:-

- A duty on local authorities to maintain a register of children of compulsory school age who are not registered at a state-funded or registered independent school.
- A duty on parents to provide information to their local authority if their child is within scope of the register.
- A duty on education settings attended by children on the register to respond to enquiries from local authorities about the education provided to individual children.
- A duty on local authorities to provide support to home educated families if requested by such families.

The outcomes of that consultation had not yet been published and therefore no changes to legislation had been made.

Councillor Samuels asked if there was any information in relation to why parents decided to deregister their children and if this was quantified on the basis of equalities. Ms Matterson replied that the majority of parents would only say that it's because they want to home educate. The Local Authority could ask for the reason why, but parents were under no obligation to reply and many chose not to do so. The Local Authority tried to obtain as much information as possible. It would look for trends to see if the issue related to a particular school but this was not the case as the de-registrations were occurring randomly across the city.

Councillor Crosby asked if parents were obliged to provide details of the home education being provided if asked? Ms Matterson replied that they were in the form of an education plan. If parents who had deregistered their child failed to respond to the informal enquiries of the Council's Attendance Manager regarding their plan, there was a clear route to escalate this to a formal enquiry which could ultimately lead to the issue of a School Attendance Order.

In response to an enquiry from the Chair regarding how schools coped with the management of pupils de-registering only to re-register further down the line, Ms Matterson replied that it was something they just did as part of their normal duties in the course of the day to day management of any school.

Councillor P.W. Gibson thanked Ms Matterson for her clear explanation of the legal position regarding Elective Home Education and he highlighted the following extracts from the report as particularly worrying:-

- The Council has no statutory duties in relation to monitoring the quality of home education on a routine basis. Nor does it have a right of entry to the family homes of children who are home educated in order to assess the education being provided.
- Parents are under no obligation to meet with the Council to discuss the education being provided with or without their child being present.
- Although local authorities have no statutory duties in relation to monitoring the quality of home education on a routine basis, under Section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996, local authorities shall intervene if it appears that parents are not providing a suitable education. Government guidance encourages Local Authorities to address the issue informally before serving statutory enforcement notices

He believed the legal situation made it very difficult for local authorities to take action if it believed a child was not receiving an appropriate education.

Councillor Mason-Gage noted that the refusal of a parent to grant the attendance officer access to a child could be seen as a 'red flag' and asked what happened if concerns were raised. Ms Matterson replied that if an attendance officer had any safeguarding concerns, there were specific procedures to follow with which staff were well versed.

There being no further questions or comments, the Chair thanked Ms Matterson for her report, and asked that the Committee was kept updated regarding the issue.

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted and that an update report be submitted to the Committee in due course.

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 draft copy of the programme for Members' consideration.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Mr Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, presented the report and advised that the work programme was a 'living' document that could be amended throughout the course of the municipal year as circumstances dictated or issues arose. Any Elected Member could add an item of business to an agenda for consideration as detailed under Protocol 1 within the Overview and Scrutiny Handbook. The Chair added that anyone wishing to do so should contact her or Mr Diamond in the first instance

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 16th August, 2021.

(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, they should contact Mr Diamond, Scrutiny Officer for initial assistance.

Councillor S. Johnston having sought further information in respect of item 21058/601 – ('To consider the establishment of a Bus Enhanced Partnership') 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.

Item 4

7 OCTOBER 2021

CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Report of the Director of Children Services

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to meet with young people from range of participation and engagement groups to discuss their views on the key issues facing young people in the city.

2 Current Position

- 2.1 In setting its work programme for the year, the Committee agreed to meet with representatives from local participation and engagement groups to hear more about the issues facing young people in the city and their priorities for the future.
- 2.2 It is intended that the issues raised during the discussion will help feed into the Committees work programme for the year and provide an opportunity for the Committee to undertake further work with young people.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Members are asked to consider the issues raised during the discussion and how best to take them forward.

CHILDREN EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7 OCTOBER 2021

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

JOINT AREA SEND INSPECTION IN SUNDERLAND – FEEDBACK

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To report on the outcome of the recent Joint Area Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) inspection.

2. Background

- 2.1 Between 21 June 2021 and 25 June 2021, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Sunderland to judge the effectiveness of the area in implementing the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014.
- 2.2 The letter setting out the inspection findings of the visit was published on 28 September 2021. A copy of the letter is attached for information.

3. Current Position

- 3.1 Jill Colbert (Director of Children's Services) will be in attendance to report on the feedback.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 The Scrutiny Committee is requested to consider and comment on the report.

5 Background Papers

Inspection Letter regarding SEND Services in Sunderland

21 September 2021

Jill Colbert
Director of Children's Services
Sunderland City Council
Civic Centre
Burdon Road
Sunderland
Tyne and Wear
SR2 7DN

Dave Chandler, Chief Executive, NHS Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group
Pam Robertson, Local Area Nominated Officer, Sunderland City Council

Dear Ms Colbert and Mr Chandler

Joint area SEND inspection in Sunderland

Between 21 June 2021 and 25 June 2021, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Sunderland to judge the effectiveness of the area in implementing the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014.

The inspection was led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors from Ofsted, with a team of inspectors including a Children's Services Inspector from the CQC.

Inspectors spoke with children and young people with SEND, parents and carers, and local authority and National Health Service (NHS) officers. They visited a range of providers and spoke to leaders, staff and governors about how they are implementing the SEND reforms. Inspectors looked at a range of information about the performance of the area, including the area's self-evaluation. Inspectors met with leaders from the area for health, social care and education. They reviewed performance data and evidence about the local offer and joint commissioning.

As a result of the findings of this inspection and in accordance with the Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) has determined that a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) is required because of significant areas of weakness in the area's practice. HMCI has also determined that the local authority and the area's clinical commissioning group are jointly responsible for submitting the written statement to Ofsted.

In reaching their judgements, inspectors took account of the impact of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic on SEND arrangements in the area. Inspectors considered a range of information about the impact of the pandemic and explored how the area's plans and actions had been adapted as a result.

This letter outlines our findings from the inspection, including some strengths and areas for further improvement.

Main Findings

- There have been significant developments since Together for Children started to work on behalf of Sunderland City Council to deliver children's services in April 2017. The number of specialist education settings for children and young people with SEND has increased. New schools have opened, and more additionally resourced provision (ARP) has been developed. Area leaders now have a clear ambition for children and young people with SEND in Sunderland.
- Some aspects of health provision have been developed even more recently. The recruitment of a new designated clinical officer has increased capacity within health provision. However, several health pathways and processes are still being formalised and occupational therapy services are disjointed.
- Leaders have a realistic picture of the area's effectiveness in identifying, assessing and meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND. The area's self-evaluation clearly identifies what needs to be done. Improvement plans are in place that are designed to further improve the area's effectiveness.
- However, over time, area leaders have not ensured that the 2014 reforms have had the necessary impact on improving provision and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- Leaders are not jointly planning, commissioning and providing education, health and care services in a way that is improving the outcomes achieved by children and young people with SEND rapidly enough. Leaders acknowledge that there is work to do to ensure that joint commissioning helps the area to meet the education, health and care needs of children and young people with SEND more effectively.
- Leaders have not ensured that information and data about children and young people's needs are comprehensive enough to support improvement in area SEND arrangements in Sunderland. For example, in relation to children and young people's emotional well-being and associated mental health services, there is a gap between children and young people's experience and what leaders think that they have been offered.
- The quality of support for children and young people at times of transition across all services and age ranges is too variable. For example, planning for transition to adult services starts too late and is not explained well to families. This problem

was exemplified by one parent who said, 'Everything goes at 18.' Many parents and carers feel that they need to find out everything themselves without sufficient or timely support.

- Co-production (where children and young people, families and those who provide services work together to decide or create a service which works for them all) is not consistent within the area. Area leaders do not always involve children and young people and their families when making decisions about how best to meet their needs. Although several parents who contacted inspectors were happy with much of the support that their children were receiving, others talked of the need to 'fight' to have their children's needs identified and met.
- Leaders have developed a 'SEND ranges' document. These ranges are descriptions of need and how best to meet them. They were co-produced effectively. Substantial training and sharing of information took place to support the implementation of the SEND ranges. There is now a 'shared language' and understanding, between parents and education, health and care professionals, about children and young people's needs and how this links to their educational provision.
- The virtual school provides effective support for children and young people with SEND who are looked after by the local authority. This includes children and young people who are educated outside of the area. Headteachers are positive about the support that they receive from the virtual school when supporting those with SEND.
- There are several strengths in the way that health professionals identify the needs of children under two years old. For example, specialist physiotherapists regularly screen new-born children who are at risk of not meeting the developmental milestones. Also, speech and language therapists provide a communication assessment for all children aged between three and five years old in education settings. This is an additional opportunity to identify any young children with speech, language or communication needs.

The effectiveness of the area in identifying children and young people's special educational needs and/or disabilities

Strengths

- The support that education professionals receive from the local authority's SEND team is effective. This is helping more individual schools and special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) to correctly identify children's and young people's additional needs. Teachers and school leaders appreciate the advice that they are given.

- The SEND ranges document helps teachers and education, health and care professionals to identify and describe any additional needs that children and young people may have.
- School health profiling helps the 0 to 19 service to tailor the support that is offered. For example, the school health team supports children and young people with safe online access, friendships, emotional health and well-being.
- Digital developments over the last three years have helped public health staff to make sure that families only tell their story once. For example, electronic records are safely and easily accessed by health professionals to support multi-disciplinary working. Information stored using a single online platform can be easily accessed by professionals.
- In addition to five universal health visiting contacts for families (contacts with health visitors from 28 weeks of pregnancy up until the age of two and a half as part of the Healthy Child Programme), Sunderland offers an additional two contacts with families. This means that there are increased opportunities for professionals to identify children's needs.
- The timeliness of completing education, health and care (EHC) plans is above the national average. The newly formed 'SEND panel' is increasingly effective at administering applications for EHC plans. Area leaders are confident about the quality of evidence that is gathered for EHC assessments.
- New assessment hubs in schools for children and young people with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs have contributed strongly to timely identification of their needs. Here, children and young people attend a hub for a specific period of time in order that their exact needs are identified.

Areas for development

- Leaders do not have a clear enough picture of children and young people's current and future needs in order to commission the right education, health and care services.
- Health data has not been used effectively in order to identify children's needs in the early years. Too many children enter school with unidentified additional needs despite additional contacts with families by public health teams. This trend has continued for many years without being understood.
- Integrated therapeutic services and their partner specialist agencies in education work well with individual children and young people who meet the threshold for accessing a service. However, these services are not routinely contributing to the identification of children and young people's emerging needs. This is limiting schools' and families' access to early intervention. For example, staff in settings see a need for sensory profiling, but they struggle to access this specialist assessment.

- Links between public health nurses and nursery settings are not consistently strong. Consequently, health visitor support is not always effective in identifying and reviewing needs.

The effectiveness of the area in meeting the needs of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities

Strengths

- There has been significant investment in increasing specialist provision for children and young people with SEND. New schools have been opened and there has been an increase in the number of ARPs within schools. Some of these settings have been opened in response to the growing number of children and young people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and those with SEMH difficulties in the area.
- ARPs provide effective support for children and young people who access them. Staff working in the ARPs are well trained to support individual children and young people, and to meet their additional needs.
- Area leaders work well in partnership with schools. Meetings for SENCOs provide schools with timely and relevant information. Training is appreciated by school staff. School improvement partners include a focus on children and young people with SEND during their visits to schools.
- Generally, practitioners in SEND services, school improvement, social care and health are knowledgeable and skilful. Once deployed, they make a positive difference to the children, young people and families they are supporting.
- Partnership working through the vulnerable pupil panel and the behaviour and attendance panel helps to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. School leaders told inspectors that they feel involved in local decisions because of these panels. Special school leaders say that the area is quick to respond when a child or young person's needs escalate quickly, or they are in crisis.
- Services for children and young people who have a hearing or visual impairment support families well. These services help settings to meet the needs of children and young people, once they are known to professionals.
- The autism outreach service is well regarded by parents. Support for individual parents and carers of children with ASD, when this is accessed, is strong.
- The parent carer forum is active and influential. Parents and carers who access the group and the forum's services are highly appreciative of its work. The forum has worked proactively with the area during the pandemic. Surveys led by the forum were used to develop services and support at that

time. The special educational needs and disability information, advice and support service (SENDIASS) provides valuable help and support for families. Parents and carers who have accessed this service have positive views about the support they received.

- Area leaders have renewed the format of EHC plans. A more accurate needs assessment is now shared with families and professionals. Therapists receive copies of draft EHC plans so they can check that advice has been correctly included. Social workers from the disabilities team contact the families of each child or young person as part of the statutory assessment process. This has strengthened the social care contribution to the EHC assessment and planning.
- The school health team meets the needs of school-aged children in Sunderland well. For example, SEND nurse services are in place. Here, practitioners support families when additional needs have been identified. Sleep and positive parenting programmes are two examples of support they provide.
- Young people with SEND who are known to the youth justice service or are vulnerable to criminal exploitation are supported effectively through the work of the service.

Areas for development

- Joint commissioning is underdeveloped in Sunderland. Leaders do not have enough up-to-date and relevant information to ensure that they are commissioning and providing the right services for children and young people with SEND. As a result, children and young people with SEND do not benefit from a cohesive approach to the organisation of support across the area in order to meet their needs.
- There is too much variability in the experience of children and young people who access neurodevelopmental pathways. Work is underway to support a review of the services involved to ensure that children and young people's needs are met at the earliest stage and without a diagnosis. Staff from the services involved are positive about the support they are receiving from commissioners to review these pathways.
- Children's emotional well-being and mental health services are fragmented and difficult to understand for parents and professionals. This means that some children and young people wait too long for their needs to be assessed and met.
- Occupational therapy (OT) services are disjointed. Only certain professionals can refer families to the service. Some parts of the service are only accessible

to a small number of children with specific needs. Consequently, some schools have bought in their own OT support.

- Parents of children and young people with SEND do not have access to sufficient short break provision. Parents say that they struggle to find appropriate community activities and groups for their children.
- Some children, young people and families do not have good enough access to the equipment and personal care products they need, such as pads from the incontinence service and suitable wheelchairs. Some families report that access to these essential products is a continuous struggle and a cause of significant distress.
- Education, health and care practitioners know about the online local offer and help parents and carers to access it when needed. However, many parents are unaware of the range of services available for children and young people with SEND and their families. Many have not heard of the local offer or SENDIASS.

The effectiveness of the area in improving outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities

Strengths

- Partnership work between the education team and headteachers is beginning to have a positive impact on outcomes for children and young people with SEND. For example, the proportions of children and young people with SEND who are subject to fixed-term or permanent exclusion are decreasing. The attendance of children and young people with SEND is improving and the proportion who are persistently absent is decreasing. The virtual school, the behaviour and attendance team, and the vulnerable pupil panel have made a strong contribution to this improvement.
- Overall, academic outcomes for children and young people with SEND are improving, especially in the early years and in primary schools. This is partly as a result of the increasingly ambitious and varied offer for children and young people across the area. The education team is on the front foot in this regard. A current focus on literacy in early years and staff training within nursery settings is contributing to this improvement.
- There has been a reduction in the number of appeals to the SEND tribunal. Leaders say that a more proactive approach and stronger relationships between parents and professionals have led to this decrease.
- The proportion of young people not in education, employment or training when they leave school at 16 is improving, specifically for those with SEND

receiving support without an EHC plan. The work of the virtual school is having a positive impact here.

- Young people with SEND who are known to the youth justice service or are vulnerable to criminal exploitation are supported effectively through the work of the service. As a result, fewer young people are subject to custodial sentences.

Areas for improvement

- Area leaders accept that they need better and more accurate data and information to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The use of outcome measures across health services is underdeveloped.
- Leaders are building a more detailed picture of children and young people's current and future needs, but this work is at an early stage. The collection of information from children, young people and their families is varied in quality. The monitoring of this information is weak. It is not being used consistently well to support strategic or operational decisions.
- The take up of personal budgets is low. Some practitioners do not know how to help families access information about personal budgets. Parents and carers do not have easy access to information about how they can apply for financial support for leisure and community-based placements or personal health budgets.
- Although academic outcomes for children and young people with SEND are improving, they remain too low at key stage 4. The progress that key stage 4 pupils make and the standards that they reach are not strong enough. This is the case for those requiring SEND support as well as those with an EHC plan. Also, there is too much variation in the standards that young people with SEND reach on 16 to 19 study programmes.
- Transitions across all services and age ranges are too variable. Much of the support for families at times of transition is driven by individual schools. This is variable across Sunderland. In addition, parents feel that there is a 'cliff edge' when their children reach the age of 18. They do not feel supported and say that they do not have access to enough information.

The inspection raises significant concerns about the effectiveness of the area.

The area is required to produce and submit a Written Statement of Action to Ofsted that explains how it will tackle the following areas of significant weakness:

- Joint commissioning, in a way that demonstrably and quickly improves provision and outcomes for children and young people, is not fully embedded.

The information used to inform this process is not comprehensive, and co-production with children, young people and families is inconsistent.

- The support for children and young people at times of transition across all services and age ranges is too variable in quality.

Yours sincerely

Michael Wardle
Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted	Care Quality Commission
Emma Ing, HMI Regional Director	Victoria Watkins Deputy Chief Inspector, Primary Medical Services, Children Health and Justice
Michael Wardle, HMI Lead Inspector	Lucy Harte CQC Inspector
Patricia Head, HMI Team Inspector	

cc: DfE Department for Education
Clinical commissioning group(s)
Director Public Health for the local area
Department of Health
NHS England

CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 7 OCTOBER 2021

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2021-2022

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY AND MEMBERS' SUPPORT COORDINATOR

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The report sets out for members' consideration the work programme of the Committee for the 2021/22 municipal year.

2. Background

- 2.1 The work programme is designed to set out the key issues to be addressed by the Committee during the year and provide it with a timetable of work. The Committee itself is responsible for setting its own work programme, subject to the coordinating role of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee.
- 2.2 The work programme is intended to be a working document which Committee can develop throughout the year, allowing it to maintain an overview of work planned and undertaken during the Council year.
- 2.3 In order to ensure that the Committee is able to undertake all of its business and respond to emerging issues, there will be scope for additional meetings or visits not detailed in the work programme.
- 2.4 In delivering its work programme the Committee will support the Council in achieving its corporate outcomes.

3. Current position

- 3.1 The current work programme is attached as an appendix to this report.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The work programme is intended to be a flexible mechanism for managing the work of the Committee in 2021-22.

5 Recommendation

- 5.1 That Members note the information contained in the work programme.

Contact: Gillian Robinson, Scrutiny and Members' Support Co-ordinator

REASON FOR INCLUSION	JUNE 21	JULY 21 (CANCELLED)	9 TH SEPT 21	7 TH OCT 21	4 TH NOV 21	2 ND DEC 21	6 TH JAN 22	3 RD FEB 22	3 RD MARCH 22	31 ST MARCH 22
Policy Framework/ Cabinet Referrals and Responses									Scrutiny Annual Report – 21/22	
Scrutiny Business	Corporate Parenting Review			Engagement and Participation with Young People (Jane Wheeler)	Domestic Violence Update	Welfare inequalities	Impact of Covid 19 on Child Mental and Physical Health	Youth Offending and Anti Social Behaviour	Apprenticeships and Employment opportunities	
Performance / Service Improvement	Ofsted Focused visit to Childrens Services - Feedback		Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services – Feedback (Jill Colbert)	Inspection of SEND - Feedback (Jill Colbert)	Together for Children – Performance Monitoring Report (Jill Colbert) Children Services Complaints				Together for Children – Performance Monitoring Report (Jill Colbert)	
Consultation / Awareness Raising	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22	Notice of Key Decisions Work Programme 21-22	

CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

NOTICE OF KEY DECISIONS

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY AND MEMBERS' SUPPORT CO-ORDINATOR

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Members with an opportunity to consider the items on the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Holding the Executive to account is one of the main functions of Scrutiny. One of the ways that this can be achieved is by considering the forthcoming decisions of the Executive (as outlined in the Notice of Key Decisions) and deciding whether Scrutiny can add value in advance of the decision being made. This does not negate Non-Executive Members ability to call-in a decision after it has been made.
- 2.2 To this end, the most recent version of the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions is included on the agenda of this Committee. The Notice of Key Decisions is attached marked **Appendix 1**.

3. CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 In considering the Notice of Key Decisions, Members are asked to consider only those issues where the Scrutiny Committee or relevant Scrutiny Panel could make a contribution which would add value prior to the decision being taken.
- 3.2 In the event of Members having any queries that cannot be dealt with directly in the meeting, a response will be sought from the relevant Directorate.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 To consider the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions at the Scrutiny Committee meeting.

5. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Cabinet Agenda

The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

Notice is given of the following proposed Key Decisions (whether proposed to be taken in public or in private) and of Executive Decisions including key decisions) intended to be considered in a private meeting:-

Item no.	Matter in respect of which a decision is to be made	Decision-maker (if individual, name and title, if body, its name and see below for list of members)	Key Decision Y/N	Anticipated date of decision/ period in which the decision is to be taken	Private meeting Y/N	Reasons for the meeting to be held in private	Documents submitted to the decision-maker in relation to the matter*	Address to obtain further information
210510/588	To approve the receipt of external funding for the public sector decarbonisation scheme and green homes grant local programme and the procurement of the necessary contractors to deliver the schemes.	Cabinet	Y	12 October 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
170927/212	To approve in principle the establishment of a new police led Road Safety Partnership (Northumbria Road Safety Partnership) embracing the Northumbria Force Area.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 12 October to 30 November 2021.	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

Item no.	Matter in respect of which a decision is to be made	Decision-maker (if individual, name and title, if body, its name and see below for list of members)	Key Decision Y/N	Anticipated date of decision/ period in which the decision is to be taken	Private meeting Y/N	Reasons for the meeting to be held in private	Documents submitted to the decision-maker in relation to the matter*	Address to obtain further information
210419/577	To approve the dilapidation settlement figure and the procurement of the dilapidation works in respect of the CESAM building.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 14 October to 30 November 2021	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210528/601	To consider the establishment of a Bus Enhanced Partnership.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 14 October to 30 November 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210602/603	To commence the procurement process and subsequently award a concession contract for the installation, maintenance, and management of advertising for Large Digital Media Advertising (LDMA) Screens in the City.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 14 October to 30 November 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

Item no.	Matter in respect of which a decision is to be made	Decision-maker (if individual, name and title, if body, its name and see below for list of members)	Key Decision Y/N	Anticipated date of decision/ period in which the decision is to be taken	Private meeting Y/N	Reasons for the meeting to be held in private	Documents submitted to the decision-maker in relation to the matter*	Address to obtain further information
210505/587	To approve the procurement of a Contractor for the Repair Works at Hendon Foreshore Barrier, Port of Sunderland.	Cabinet	Y	12 October 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210607/608	To seek approval to proposed funding arrangements with Siglion Investments LLP.	Cabinet	Y	12 October 2021	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210623/610	In respect of the Gambling Act 2005, to review of Statement of Principles.	Cabinet	Y	12 October 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

Item no.	Matter in respect of which a decision is to be made	Decision-maker (if individual, name and title, if body, its name and see below for list of members)	Key Decision Y/N	Anticipated date of decision/ period in which the decision is to be taken	Private meeting Y/N	Reasons for the meeting to be held in private	Documents submitted to the decision-maker in relation to the matter*	Address to obtain further information
210805/621	To consider potential financing proposals in respect of a regional organisation	Cabinet	Y	12 October 2021	Y	This report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210817/631	To seek approval for the payment of financial assistance to a business in relation to the company's own investment plans in Sunderland.	Cabinet	Yes	12 October 2021	Yes	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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210823/632	To seek approval to the letting of office space in City Hall.	Cabinet	Y	12 October 2021	Y	The report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraphs 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report will contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210902/633	To approve the Capital Programme Second Review 2021/2022 (including Treasury Management).	Cabinet	Y	12 October 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210902/634	To approve the Second Revenue Budget Second Review 2021/2022.	Cabinet	Y	12 October 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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210902/635	To approve the Budget Planning Framework and Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2025/26	Cabinet	Y	12 October 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210906/636	To seek approval for a Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation and Support Services strategy for Sunderland.	Cabinet	Y	12 October 2021	N	Not applicable	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210906/637	To approve the procurement of care and support services within an extra care accommodation setting.	Cabinet	Y	12 October 2021	N	Not applicable	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210906/638	To seek approval to progress with the procurement of a Construction Contractor for the Elemore Park Regeneration Project.	Cabinet	Y	12 October 2021	N	Not applicable	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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210906/639	To seek approval for the procurement of a works contract to develop a lodge café in Herrington Country Park.	Cabinet	Y	12 October 2021	N	Not applicable	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210909/640	To approve the extension of participation in regional contract for alcohol and tobacco denormalisation (FRESH and BALANCE).	Cabinet	Y	12 October 2021	N	Not applicable	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
200813/494	To approve funding mechanisms for the acquisition of residential properties.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 12 October to 31 st December 2021	Y	This report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

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210709/612	To authorise the Executive Director of City Development to deliver the Washington F-Pit Museum Heritage Visitor Centre and Albany Park Improvement project, including to procuring of consultants and contractors.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 12 October to 31 st December 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet Report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210728/613	To seek approval for strategic land acquisitions in Sunnyside, Sunderland.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 12 October to 31 st December 2021	Y	This report is one which relates to an item during the consideration of which by Cabinet the public are likely to be excluded under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, as the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk
210729/617	To approve the International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP) Interim Planning Policy Statement for adoption.	Cabinet	Y	During the period 12 October to 31 st December 2021	N	Not applicable.	Cabinet report	Governance Services Civic Centre PO BOX 100 Sunderland SR2 7DN committees@sunderland.gov.uk

Note; Some of the documents listed may not be available if they are subject to an exemption, prohibition or restriction on disclosure.

Further documents relevant to the matters to be decided can be submitted to the decision-maker. If you wish to request details of those documents (if any) as they become available, or to submit representations about a proposal to hold a meeting in private, you should contact Governance Services at the address below.

Subject to any prohibition or restriction on their disclosure, copies of documents submitted to the decision-maker can also be obtained from the Governance Services team PO Box 100, Civic Centre, Sunderland, or by email to committees@sunderland.gov.uk

***Other documents relevant to the matter may be submitted to the decision maker and requests for details of these documents should be submitted to Governance Services at the address given above.**

Who will decide;

Councillor Graeme Miller – Leader; Councillor Claire Rowntree – Deputy Leader; Councillor Paul Stewart - Cabinet Secretary; Councillor Louise Farthing – Children, Learning and Skills; Councillor Kelly Chequer – Healthy City; Councillor Linda Williams – Vibrant City; Councillor Kevin Johnston – Dynamic City.

This is the membership of Cabinet as at the date of this notice. Any changes will be specified on a supplementary notice.

Elaine Waugh,
Assistant Director of Law and Governance

13 September 2021