

At a meeting of the CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in COMMITTEE ROOM 1 of the CIVIC CENTRE, SUNDERLAND on THURSDAY 4th APRIL, 2019 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor P. Smith in the Chair

Councillors Francis, Hunt, Rowntree, Samuels, Scullion, Tye and K. Wood together with Mrs. J. Graham

Also in attendance:-

Ms. Daisy Barnetson, Senior Reform Manager, Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group

Mr. Chris Binding, Sunderland Echo

Ms. Jill Colbert, Chief Executive of Together for Children and Director of Children's Services, Sunderland City Council

Mr. James Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, Sunderland City Council

Mr. Simon Marshall, Director of Education, Together for Children

Mr. Joshua McKeith, Sunderland Youth Council

Ms. Gillian Robinson, Area Coordinator, Sunderland City Council

Ms. Joanne Stewart, Principal Governance Services Officer, Sunderland City Council

The Chairman opened the meeting and introductions were made.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Hodson and also on behalf of Mrs. A. Blakey

Minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee held on 7th March, 2019

Subject to the inclusion of Councillor Rowntree in the attendance and the recording of Mrs. A. Blakey's apologies for absence and not Mrs. J. Graham's, it was:-

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last ordinary meeting of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee held on 7th March, 2019 be confirmed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest made.

Children and Young People's Mental health and Wellbeing Transformational Plan 2015-2020: 2019 Refresh

The Chief Officer of the Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group submitted a report (copy circulated) which presented the final version of the refreshed Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Transformational Plan 2015-2020: 2019 refresh, including the agreed priorities for delivery in 2019/20.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Daisy Barnetson, Senior Reform Manager, Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group (SCCG), presented the report advising Members that the Plan was originally wrote in 2015 with updates having been made annually. The refresh involved summarising the work undertaken to date, the outcomes that had been achieved and the setting out of the priorities for the forthcoming year.

Ms. Barnetson advised the Committee that the annually refreshed document was then required to be signed off by the Health and Wellbeing Board prior to being submitted to NHS England and then published on the CCG website. Members were informed that an executive summary to the document would be prepared following the document having been signed off by the Health and Wellbeing Board to make the information more user friendly for the public to understand.

Councillor Tye referred to paragraph 7.1 of the plan, advising that there were no youth services commissioned by the local authority as part of the local offer and Ms. Barnetson thanked him for the information and agreed to update the plan accordingly.

Councillor Smith referred to paragraph 3.6 of the report and commented that she was pleased to see that there was a proposal to have a designated senior lead for mental health in every school and college and Mr. Marshall advised that they currently promoted the Sunderland Mental Health Chartermark, so the city already had school trained and assessed against the Chartermark which was a real positive approach.

Mrs. Graham commented, that from a school's point of view, they were seeing a vast reduction in the waiting times for young people to access services in relation to mental health now than they had previously.

There being no further questions or comments the Chairman thanked Ms. Barnetson for the report and it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Children and Young People's Mental Health Update

The Senior Reform Manager, Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group submitted a report (copy circulated) which gave Members an update of work undertaken since the presentation given to the Committee at a meeting in November, 2018.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Barnetson, Senior Reform Manager, Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group (SCCG), took Members through the report, advising that SCCG had provided the Committee with an infographic of the work underway as well as a breakdown of the 362 children and young people which were seen in the Emergency Department for mental health issues. Further work had been undertaken to understand the attendances at the Emergency Department and an analysis of the data provided by the Northumberland, Tyne and Wear Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust was provided at appendix two to the report.

Councillor Tye commented that credit should be given where due and both this report and the first report on the agenda showed that Together for Children and SCCG were pushing partnership working and that this was the only way they could expect to see Children's Services continue to improve. He added that it showed that all partners were taking the issues seriously and felt that they should be commended for their work to date.

Councillor Hunt referred to the number of admissions to the Emergency Department and asked if there was a designated member of staff to support the young people and was advised by Ms. Barnetson that there was.

With regards to the table at paragraph 4.0 of the report, Councillor Francis raised concerns over the number of children and young people who had waited longer than eighteen weeks and asked what was being done to reduce this figure. Ms. Barnetson advised that it was a priority of the NHS Foundation Trust and providers to focus on reducing waiting times for children and young people and informed Members that there was a whole programme of works such as working to address the number of non-attenders at appointments and the introduction of a text reminder service which were already having an impact. They would continue to roll out a whole range of initiatives to continue service improvements and she was happy to bring more information on these to a future meeting of the Committee should Members request it.

Ms. Colbert commented that she felt it was recognised by all agencies that the figures were not acceptable and that they were all working towards reducing waiting times but felt the data did not provide enough detail for Members as it was not clear if any of those young people who were waiting at 7th November, 2018 were also included within the data of those waiting longer than eighteen weeks at February, 2019. She informed the Committee that Together for Children needed to work closely with the NHS Foundation Trust and providers to understand the issues they were facing and help support initiatives to drive forward further improvements.

Councillor Francis requested to know how many of the children and young people recorded in the data were from Sunderland and Ms. Barnetson advised she could look to circulate the trend data as this would be more informative for Members.

In relation to a query as to why Sunderland Counselling Service (SCS) agreed to forego the non-recurrent funding to reduce longer waiting times, Ms. Barnetson explained that providers worked closely together and that initially SCS had requested an amount of funding. When it had become clear that they were to receive a lot less funding than expected the providers had held a pragmatic discussion as to which

organisations were more in need of the funding, such as those with longer waiting times to reduce and at this point SCS had agreed to forego a proportion of the funding.

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

3. RESOLVED that the report and information within it be received and noted.

Strategy to Reduce the Number of Children Looked After, Leaving Care and with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities who are not in Education, Employment or Training

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided for Members an update on the strategy to reduce the number of children looked after, leaving care and with Special Educational Needs and disabilities (SEND) who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Mr. Simon Marshall, Director of Education, Together for Children presented the report advising that this was a piece of work which had come out of a key priority which had emerged from the inspection of Children's Services in 2018 around the need to reduce the number of children looked after and those leaving care who were not in education, employment or training. Mr. Marshall explained that whilst the figures for children in the 16 to 18 years category were relatively low at levels, the key issue was for young people in the 19 to 21 age group where there were significant numbers of NEETs at a figure well above national average.

Councillor Wood commented that she had been involved with this piece of work from the beginning and could already see results from it. She commented that there was quick progression for young people and she was excited to continue to see the difference it could make to some of the most vulnerable young people.

Mr. Marshall thanked Members for their positive comments and added that they would hope that as the piece of work builds momentum they would continue to drive it forward and see further improvements.

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

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

Consultation with Staff from Early Help Team

The Head of Member Support and Community Partnerships submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided feedback from the Committee's visit to meet with staff from the Early Help Team.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

The Chairman presented the report advising that those Members who had attended had found the visit very valuable and had picked up a number of issues which staff felt were facing the service and explained that a summary of these were contained within the report.

Ms. Colbert commented that it had been enormously helpful to have the views of the Scrutiny Committee and added that nothing that Members had identified had come as a surprise to Officers. The Early Help team were running with a high level of referrals and partners were working together to provide a range of services that families could look to access and connect with for support.

The Committee were advised that there was a lot of work underway in relation to the Early Help services and how they could make a big difference to families in the city so there was a need to continue to encourage families to work with the Early Help team and normalise engagement with them to remove any stigmas there may have been in the past.

Members commented that they had been involved in conversations with staff who had raised concerns and issues in areas that Members had raised previously and were concerned where shortfalls had been identified. Members asked if there was a way of monitoring those issues that had been raised at the visit and drawing up action plans to allow the Committee to see what Together for Children were putting in place and the timescales against these. Ms. Colbert commented that she understood Member's frustrations around the issues which had been discussed but explained that to write another action plan to monitor the issues of the Scrutiny Committee would mean duplicating data which was already captured in other plans, many of which were presented to the Committee through their workplan.

Further, Ms. Colbert commented that moving forward it was about how to work collectively to influence change and that a lot of activity to address the issues raised already existed in current plans and it was about ensuring that they were built into the Committee's workplan to ensure that Members were able to consider them and monitor progress.

Where there were areas of significant concerns, such as in relation to Domestic Violence, then they could look to have a specific item on the workplan and invite key officers from relevant agencies and with the correct level of expertise to update Members accordingly and answer questions.

There being no further comments or questions, it was:-

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

Annual Report

The Head of Member Support and Community Partnerships submitted a report (copy circulated) attaching for Members' information, the work programme for the Committee's work for the 2018/19 municipal year.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Mr. James Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, presented the report, advising Members that as in previous year's the annual report will be a single combined report of all four Scrutiny Committees. The report would outline the development in the scrutiny function and provide a snapshot of their work during the last twelve months.

There being no further comment or questions, it was:-

6. RESOLVED that the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee Annual Report be approved and included within the Scrutiny Annual Report for 2018/19.

Notice of Key Decisions

The Head of Member Support and Community 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 26th March, 2019.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

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

Annual Work Programme 2018/19

The Head of Member Support and Community Partnerships submitted a report (copy circulated) attaching for Members' information, the work programme for the Committee's work for the 2018/19 municipal year.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

8. RESOLVED that the information contained in the work programme be received and noted.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked Members and Officers for their attendance and contributions to the meeting and for the hard work they had undertaken throughout the municipal year. The Chairman added that Councillor Bell was retiring from the Council and thanked him for his years of commitment to the Committee and wished him well for the future.

(Signed) P. SMITH,
Chairman.