

At an Extraordinary meeting of the CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, CITY HALL on WEDNESDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2022 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor P. Smith in the Chair

Councillors Crosby, Dodds, Dunn, P.W.L. Gibson, S. Johnston, Mason-Gauge and, Noble, 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
Ann Fox, Executive Director of Nursing Quality and Safety, Sunderland CCG
Mr Simon Marshall, Director of Education, Together for Children
Mr David Noon, Principal Governance Services Officer, Law and Governance, Corporate Services Directorate
Ms Pamela Robertson, Strategic SEND Lead, Together for Children

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors McKeith, Scanlan and Tye.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest made.

Child Mental Health Services – Update

The Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group submitted a report (copy circulated) which updated the Committee on the delivery of the Child Mental Health Service in Sunderland.

(For report – see original minutes)

The Chairman welcomed and introduced Ann Fox, Executive Director of Nursing Quality and Safety, Sunderland CCG who was present to brief members on the current position and challenges facing child mental services in the city. Ms Fox advised that it had been intended that Kimm Lawson (Head of Integration for Children's Commissioning) would also attend but she had been unable to do so because of illness and apologies were submitted on her behalf.

Ms Fox provided the Committee with a detailed presentation which included :-

- The increase in the number of Referrals into the CAMHS and CYPS Services and an analysis of waiting times
- What had been happening in the Service since February 2021 eg the launch of the Healthy Heads, increased funding into services for recruitment and capacity issues, the funding secured for a Social Prescribing Pilot for CYP, extra funding in to support groups in TfC and the development of a Single Point of Access for Mental Health in Sunderland.
- The Children and Young People's Mental Health Service Redesign based on the i-THRIVE needs led framework.

The Chairman thanked Ms Fox for her presentation and invited questions from members.

Councillor Crosby offered her congratulations to Ms Fox on the reductions in waiting times and asked if it was in part down to people accessing out of area services. She also asked if someone on the waiting list reached the age of 18 prior to accessing a service would they need to start the process all over again via adult services. Ms Fox replied that she would very much doubt many people were accessing out of area services however she would double check and report back. With regard to the transition at 18 she acknowledged there was still some work to do with respect to SEND however a lot of work had been put into the Adult Mental Health Strategy and the aim was to ensure it linked into that for children. In response to a further question from Councillor Crosby, Ms Fox confirmed that the IT systems in respect of the Children and Adults services linked up.

Councillor Noble thanked Ms Fox for the work being undertaken in respect of the CAMHS service and welcomed the proposals in respect of the service redesign. She asked how long would it be until the anticipated improvements were seen? Ms Fox advised that it was a question that she couldn't give an answer to as the timeline wouldn't really start until the necessary recruitment had been made. Councillor Noble thanked Ms Fox stating that she did not envy her and that she agreed 100% on the desirability of establishing a Single Point of Access for Mental Health in Sunderland.

Councillor S. Johnston echoed Councillor Noble's sentiments and asked Ms Fox to keep up the good work. He believed the emphasis on social prescribing was an excellent way forward and asked if anything could be learned from pilot schemes elsewhere in the country. Ms Colbert stated that it was a constructive and helpful question. The proposals were still in the early stages of development some of the work had already been scoped by Public Health and the NHS working together. It was something that would certainly be reported back to the Committee once all the proposals had been fully fleshed out. She was a huge supporter of Social Prescribing and it was something the Council already did a lot of via its Area Committees. There was a need however to take a helicopter view to understand where and how it was taking place. Mr Marshall confirmed the need for a helicopter approach to establish, understand and map what was actually happening. In many cases people were actually using social prescribing without knowing they were doing so.

The Chairman asked Ms Fox knowing what she knew, and where she wanted to be, what was her greatest concern? Ms Fox replied that this centred on the workforce.

To mitigate gaps, the service would always try to work smarter but ultimately the service still required people with specific clinical skills. The Chairman noted that as it was a problem facing the NHS nationwide it would be a difficult problem to address.

Councillor Noble asked Ms Fox if she believed that there was a need to up skill people and find a solution through investing in Sunderland's residents by providing appropriate training. Ms Fox confirmed that perhaps there was a lot that could be done in this regard.

There being no further questions or comments the Chair thanked Ms Fox for her presentation and it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted;

Joint Area Send Inspection in Sunderland – Update

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which briefed members on the progress being made following the Joint Area Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) inspection undertaken between 21 - 25 June 2021 the findings of which were published on 28 September 2021 and considered by this Committee on 7 October 2021.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

The Chairman welcomed and introduced Pamela Robertson, Strategic SEND Lead, Together for Children who provided the Committee with a comprehensive presentation detailing:-

- Joint Commissioning Progress made since the inspection together with the next steps
- Progress made in respect of Transitions following the inspection together with the next steps
- Proposed changes to the Sunderland Local Area SEND governance structure
- The data accelerator project - Working in collaboration with South Tyneside and the University of Sunderland to create data dashboard for joint SEND data (Health, Education and Social Care)
- The Purple Book project, - working in partnership with NHS England and Microsoft to produce a parent focused App to hold key SEND data with a view to empower families to digitally navigate the complex world of SEND.

The Chairman thanked Ms Robertson for her presentation and invited questions from Members.

The Chairman referred to the issue of data and the fact that historically the availability of the right data in various areas had been a problem. She asked if the service was receiving the data it required? Ms Robertson replied that the situation was definitely improving but sometimes it remained difficult to identify the specific data sets for Health, Social Care and Education. The SEND JSNA update would help in this regard. Ms Colbert advised that if anything the service was drowning in data but the intelligence to interpretate it was lacking.

Mr Marshall believed that the direction of the JSNA strategic commissioning was something that could be scheduled into the Committee's work programme on an annual basis.

Ms Robertson advised that SEND was a broad cohort and it was about making sure the right offer was in place to reflect the diversity of need.

Mr Marshall believed that the pathway to adulthood was the key. This generally started at 15 but in the SEND world it needed to begin much earlier, engaging with families and young people to offer as many options as possible. It needed to be a co-production and never something that was 'done' to families.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Noble, Ms Robertson confirmed that the Project Choice model as operated in Gateshead was now also to be based in Sunderland and was looking for a big employer to get on board. Sunderland currently had 10 young people on the programme but it needed to expand the range of employers involved. It was not simply about offering apprenticeships or work experience it was also about providing longer term internships.

Councillor Noble thanked Ms Robertson for her work in this regard and stated that she was really pleased to see Project arrive in Sunderland.

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

3. RESOLVED that the 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)

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 10 January, 2021.

(for copy report – see original minutes)

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.