

**At a meeting of the CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC CENTRE on THURSDAY 2 DECEMBER, 2021 at 5.30 p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor P. Smith in the Chair

Councillors Crosby, Dodds, P.W.L. Gibson, S. Johnston and McKeith, 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  
Wendy Mitchell, Public Health Lead, Public Health and Integrated Commissioning  
Mr David Noon, Principal Governance Services Officer, Law and Governance, Corporate Services Directorate  
Ms Jane Wheeler, Service Manager Early Help, Prevention and Innovation Together for Children

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Dunn, Mason-Gauge, Samuels, Scanlon and Tye.

**Minutes of the last meeting of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee held on 4 November 2021**

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee held on 4 November 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

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

There were no declarations of interest made.

**Health Related Behaviour Survey Findings–Academic Year 2020/21**

The Executive Director of Public Health and Integrated Commissioning submitted a report (copy circulated) which shared an overview of the findings of the recent Health Related Behaviour Survey conducted in the summer term of 2021 which provided a baseline for schools about the health-related behaviour of their children and young people and an ideal needs analysis for Healthy School work and strong evaluation of existing Relationship, Sex, Health and Education.

(For report – see original minutes)

Ms Wendy Mitchell, Public Health Lead presented the report together with a complementary presentation which placed in context, the key findings arising from the survey. In concluding Ms Mitchell asked the Committee to:-

- Receive the update, published report and presentation on the findings of the health related behaviour survey.
- Endorse the key priorities identified, and
- Endorse the ongoing work of sharing information with key stakeholders to inform and influence our approaches and plans to improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people in Sunderland

The Chairman thanked Ms Mitchell for her report and presentation and with regard to her recommendations, asked that the findings were reported to the Council's Area Committees.

Councillor Crosby referred to page 16 of the agenda which noted that 64% (66%) of pupils said they 'never or almost never' wear a safety helmet when cycling; and asked if training was provided to try and improve this figure. Ms Mitchell advised that accident prevention workshops were held and that the data from the survey would help inform the action plan going forward.

Councillor Paul Gibson stated that the survey data represented a very impressive set of statistics. He referred to paragraph 2.9 of the report which stated that Sunderland City Council received the combined results of all schools and asked if it also received the data broken down by individual school. Councillor Gibson also referred to paragraph 2.10 regarding the ability to provide further insight in relation to health inequalities in relation to Secondary schools at Ward level and asked if this could also be done for Primary Schools. In conclusion he referred to paragraphs 3.2 and 4.2 which centred on poverty with children worrying about 'having enough money in the family' and 'having enough food to eat.' He asked if anything could be done to tackle this.

Ms Mitchell replied that the Council did receive a breakdown, but each school owned its own data and used it to inform their response. She would love to be able to have the ward level data in respect of the primary schools regarding inequalities, however the school and pupil participation needed to be at a sufficient level and currently because of the low numbers of primary schools partaking, the figures were lacking in the richness of data required. With regard to the issue of poverty, she would need to take this away. There was however a whole plan around the issue and to this end a post of Food Partnership Coordinator within the Public Health Team had just gone out to advert. The role would involve developing a public health approach to improving the food system of the city as well as developing and implementing a food action plan and long term strategy for food poverty and security, as part of the Healthy City Plan.

Councillor Gibson thanked Ms Mitchell and advised that his question around poverty and inequalities had been motivated by the recent Council notice of motion on the issue.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor McKeith, Ms Mitchell confirmed that schools had already begun to provide feedback on their individual reports. This was fed into the Healthy Settings Framework which enabled support to be provided in response to the identified need. School health profiles are also updated using this information to enhance the support from Growing Healthy Sunderland (school nursing services).

In response to questions from the Chair, Ms Wheeler confirmed that the Council still operated an anti-bullying team and it was based within TfC's Early Help Service. With regard to Internet Safety, sexting, talking to strangers, etc this was covered by TfC's Relationship, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) service which worked with young people aged 8 to 18.

In response to an enquiry from the Chair as to whether schools had adequate resources to tackle issues arising from the survey, Ms Colbert advised that it wasn't a question she could provide a fair answer to. She believed that each school would have their own ideas regarding the needs of their children and how to allocate resources. There was no doubt however that in dealing with the effects of Covid, there was a huge need for local authorities to wrap their arms around and support schools. Ms Blakey added that the best investment that schools could receive was an ability to create time to deal with the effects of Covid. There were so many nuances with Covid to unpick and investigate and schools would do their best however time was a scarce resource. There needed to be significant investment and resources to deal with it.

Councillor S. Johnston expressed disappointment with the survey's methodology in respect of the lack of representation from Primary Schools north of the river. The negative impact of Covid on the mental health of pupils in secondary school was also quite concerning. He asked what could be done to support pupils if new restrictions were implemented and believed that the next survey should be used to assess the extent to which the negative impacts had been addressed. He also expressed concern that anti bully assemblies were only undertaken in 80% of schools and believed that all schools should provide them. He felt there was also scope for further research into the shockingly low levels of self-esteem among pupils and that there was a need to develop an action plan to increase the confidence of the city's young people.

Ms Mitchell advised that the survey was a sample at a particular point in time but it was not viewed in isolation. It was shared with range of partnerships focusing on children and young people and used to assess the effectiveness of current provision, identify any unmet need or gaps in provision, and inform service reviews and delivery. There was a challenge around primary school participation and work to be done to understand the barriers preventing them from taking part.

Councillor Crosby referred to the statistic that 31% of pupils were worried about safety after dark and asked if the data was available broken down by gender and also whether any reasons were given eg lack of street lighting or low levels of policing. Ms Mitchell advised that she did not have the information to hand but would provide a response following the meeting.

Councillor Dodds referred to the Covid related questions in the survey and asked if they would be followed up in the next survey especially those related to poverty. She found it concerning that so many young children were worried about poverty and stated that as a six year her parents had shielded her from those worries. Ms Mitchell confirmed that the Covid questions would be followed up in the next survey.

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

2. RESOLVED that:-

- i) the report be received and noted;
- ii) the key priorities identified be endorsed, and
- iii) the ongoing work of sharing information with key stakeholders to inform and influence the approaches and plans to improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people in Sunderland be endorsed.

### **Holiday Activity and Food Programme Summer Evaluation - Together for Children**

The Early Help Service Manager Prevention and Innovation, submitted a report (copy circulated) which briefed the Committee on the delivery of Sunderland's Holiday Activity and Food Programme Wear here 4 you

(For copy report – see original minutes)

In addition it had been intended to provide members with a video presentation which showed the programme in action however a wifi failure in the Council Chamber prevented this. Mr Diamond advised that he would forward Members a link to the video following the meeting.

Jane Wheeler presented the report providing members with an overview of the Summer Programme, the highlights, details of the activities, the benefits of the programme, learning for the future and Christmas provision.

The Chair thanked Ms Wheeler for her presentation and invited questions and comments from Members.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Keith regarding figure 3 in the report, Ms Wheeler confirmed that the darker the colour equalled the higher the population in that particular cohort.

Councillor McKeith welcomed the outcomes of the programme and in particular the success of the activity bus which was an excellent way to engage with young people right across the City. The Chair recalled the former Excell Villages as having been really important in their ability to attract the older cohort of young people.

Councillor Samuels being unable to attend the meeting submitted a statement read out by Mr Diamond in which she welcomed the programme, thanked the TfC and

VCS for their hard work, shared her experiences of attending some of the events with her family and her hope that the best practice arising from the programme was widely shared.

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

3. RESOLVED that the report and presentation be received and noted;

### **Annual Work Programme 2021/22**

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

(for copy report – see original minutes)

Mr Diamond presented the report and informed the Committee that he had been contacted by the CCG earlier that day to advise that their report in respect of Child Mental and Physical Health would not be available in time for the January meeting and would therefore be deferred to a later a date.

The Chair added that 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 and that anyone wishing to do so should contact her or Mr Diamond in the first instance.

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

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

### **Notice of Key Decisions**

The Scrutiny and Members' Support Co-ordinator submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive's Notice of Key Decisions for the 28 day period from the 8<sup>th</sup> November, 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 that were within the purview of the Committee, they should contact Mr Diamond, Scrutiny Officer for initial assistance.

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 and offered her best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

(Signed) P. SMITH,  
Chairman.