

## Children & Young People Select Committee

A meeting of Children & Young People Select Committee was held on Wednesday, 18th April, 2018.

**Present:** Cllr Carol Clark (Chairman), Cllr Evaline Cunningham, Cllr Elsi Hampton, Cllr Di Hewitt, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Paul Rowling, , Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Sally Ann Watson and Peter Snowden (Diocesan Representative).

**Officers:** Dianne McConnell, Joanne Mills (Children's Services) Jane Webb (HR Legal and Communications), Peter Mennear, Annette Sotheby (DCE)

**Also in attendance:** Cllr Ann McCoy (Cabinet Member), Member of the Press, Maisy Best (Member of Youth Parliament)

**Apologies:** Cllr Ross Patterson

### **CYP 1/18 Evacuation Procedure**

The evacuation procedure was noted.

### **CYP 2/18 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest noted.

### **CYP 3/18 Minutes of the Meeting Held on 24th January 2018**

Consideration was given to the draft minutes of the meeting held on 24th January 2018

AGREED that the minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### **CYP 4/18 Scrutiny Review of Inclusion in Schools**

The Committee had recently undertaken visits to Bishopton Pupil Referral Unit, Northfield School & Sports College and St John the Baptist Primary School and received feedback from those visits.

In addition, information was tabled from visits to Attendance and Safeguarding Team (Education Improvement Service) and the SEN Support and Advisory Team.

Comments and questions from Members could be summarised as follows:

-Members expressed frustration at the high number of pupils in elective home education, and felt powerless with regard to limited local authority powers to safeguard children who were in EHE.

-The impact of behaviour policies is resulting in a number of children failing which is unacceptable and is also costly to the local authority. It was noted that although the local authority do not manage academies, children with SEN and their parents can be supported by the local authority to challenge exclusions, including recourse to Disability Discrimination legislation where necessary. However, parents need to be empowered and feel able to submit the appeal themselves – the authority cannot do this for them.

- The Cabinet Member stressed the importance of prevention so that issues do not escalate to pupil exclusion.
- The importance of the role of Governors was highlighted, although it was accepted that they needed to operate within the policies set by a Trust.
- Discussion took place around contacting a higher level of authority such as the NSC and a possible meeting with local MPs (who are fully supportive) to further represent our young people of the borough. It was also noted that it would be important for the Committee to gather its evidence in order to present a strong case.
- Important for the Committee to evidence good practice when taking forward proposals. Need to gain a better understanding of our schools that have high number of exclusions and those that do not, and how they engage with support available. The Pupil Inclusion Panel is evidence of good practice, but problems arise when schools do not use the services available. It was hoped that no academy trust would be dismissive of best practice and could perhaps learn from other schools for the benefit of pupil education.
- Members noted the good practice they had found during the visits undertaken to date. It was noted that visits would be arranged for St Michael's, North Shore, and Bishopsgarth Academies.
- Members asked about recouping costs from schools when pupils are excluded. It was noted that a recent meeting with schools in Stockton had discussed the use of the High Needs Budget, which was also used to fund the Pupil Referral Unit. There was support for the notion of recovering the whole pupil cost for pupils placed in the PRU until they return to the mainstream school setting.
- Following feedback from the Committee's meeting with the Professional Adviser for SEND, it was worrying that, nationally, a high number of excluded children had been found to have speech and language difficulties. Members were informed that locally, this service had now been redesigned and improved following complaints from schools.

The Assistant Director of Children's Services advised Committee that Ofsted had recently written to schools to alert them of revised procedures with regard to scrutiny of exclusions. The authority could also request an inspection of a local school, however there could be associated risks in doing so.

**AGREED:**

- 1) That the information be noted.
- 2) A submission to the Department for Education's Call for Evidence on Exclusions be prepared and submitted.
- 3) Further contact be made with Ofsted in order to gain their input into the review.
- 4) Consideration be given to how the Committee could engage further with local MPs and the Schools Commissioner to take forward the outcomes from the review

Services by the Cabinet Member. The Director of Children's Services had submitted his apologies. The key issues were highlighted together with emerging issues as follows:-

- The Cabinet Member identified many positives in the report, although improvements were still required in some areas.
- National figures with regard to permanency had declined following the introduction of timescales to speed up adoption, and it was hoped that the consequences of acting quickly would be explored nationally.
- Children who attend a good or outstanding secondary school had now doubled since work to improve matters had begun (it was previously 47%), which is a real achievement.

The following points were raised by the Committee:-

- With regard to the number of children with a Good Level of Development in early years, why is Stockton still slightly lower than the national average? It was reported that this figure had increased year on year recently and progress was being made. It was reported that we are now up to almost 100% of all settings of early years providers including childminders being rated Good or Outstanding, and the Moving Forward transition resource linking early years settings with schools. It was pleasing to have won one of the national strategic school improvement fund bids to look at early years reading and literacy and hopefully that will improve - there has been a significant increase year-on-year, but is still a priority.
- Is there a reason for change of outcomes at St Patrick's College? It was reported that the Diocese now in process of changing the structure around the governance, as converting to academy has not brought any added value, with a decline in standards since previously being judged Good. Interface with the local authority diminished since Academy conversion which has been brought to attention of their Director.
- It was pleasing to note that 20 LAC were undertaking higher education, with 9 at university. Congratulations to all concerned, especially the youngsters to overcome their disadvantages.
- The Cabinet Member has asked the Regeneration Team to ascertain how many youngsters are using the apprentice levy. The Combined Authority are working to persuade businesses to look more favourably to our LAC who may not want to go to university but may want to take up other forms of training and employment.
- Members were pleased to note that all of the council residential homes were rated good or outstanding and expressed thanks to the staff who do an excellent job, often in challenging circumstances. The Spark of Genius Homes were rated Good. The Cabinet Member highlighted feedback from a visit to these homes where it was pleasing to hear from the children that they felt safe and it "felt like home".

AGREED that –

1. The information be noted.

2. The Committee's thanks and appreciation be forwarded to the Teams within Children's Services.

**CYP  
6/18**      **Work Programme**

Members were informed that Executive Scrutiny Committee had met to agree the work programme for 2018-19. The Children and Young People Committee, following the completion of the Inclusion review, would be undertaking a review of the Child's Journey, and there would be two officer-led reporting in reviews of Care Leavers, and Children in Need.

Next meeting to be held on 2nd May 2018

AGREED that the Work Programme be noted.

**CYP  
7/18**      **Chair's Update**

The Chair had nothing further to report.