

Children & Young People Select Committee

A meeting of Children & Young People Select Committee was held on Wednesday 8 September 2021.

Present: Cllr Carol Clark (Chair), Cllr Barbara Inman (Vice Chair), Cllr Dan Fagan, Cllr Clare Gamble, Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr Lauriane Povey, Cllr Stephen Richardson, Cllr Sally Ann Watson.

Officers: Martin Gray, David Willingham, Ian Caley, Mandie Rowlands (CS), Haleem Ghafoor (Comms), Judy Trainer (DS)

Also in attendance: Ian Bartlett, Janine Browne (SDAIS)

Apologies: Cllr Andrew Sherris

1 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Sally Ann Watson declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in item 6 owing to having a child in Year 11.

2 Minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2021

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 Scrutiny Review of Child Poverty

Ian Bartlett and Janine Browne (Stockton and District Advice and Information Service (SDAIS)) gave a presentation covering the following areas:

- SDAIS Services and Work
- Clients and enquiries in 2020/21:
 - **8702** Clients and **38,933** enquiries
 - 16% - Single Parents with Dependent Children (9%)
 - 16% - Couples with Dependent Children (20%)
 - 68% - No Dependent Children (71%)
- Households with Dependent Children – Enquiry Type
- Lone Parent Families – Enquiry Type, Types of Debt
- Food Bank Services – Adult and Child Food Parcels by Year, Clients by Household Type, First Time Food Bank Clients by Household Type
- Case Studies
- Future Risks and Actions

Risks

- Benefit changes-UC uplift
- Welfare problems and mental ill health
- Increasing costs-energy up £139pa
- Employment security
- Housing security

Actions

- Infinity: Co-ordinating activities
Promoting access to advice
- Targeted Work: Community Partnerships
People with mental ill-health
- Maximise family income long term- £409,469 in Central Partnership area
- Maintain face-to-face welfare benefits and debt advice services

The key issues highlighted and discussed were as follows:

- Members commented on the outstanding service provided by SDAIS and noted the increasing demand for advice and support and the impact of benefit changes which was anticipated to add significantly more demand on services
- The importance of face-to-face contact and flexibility to offer appointments outside of office hours for working families
- The contract for nationally funded debt advice services was being tendered and this was likely to reduce funding for face-to-face provision. Members felt it would be necessary to explore a range of options to bridge the gap
- Recognition that COVID had opened up new channels of communication and new ways of working
- Local Authority funding made up 25 – 30% of the CABs funding; additional Local Authority funding had also facilitated the Warm Homes; Healthy People scheme
- Fuel poverty was a growing problem particularly for lone parent families although it was positive that Stockton had the highest numbers of switchers in the country
- Work to maximising family income was critical as unclaimed benefits was a huge problem
- The Infinity Partnership had received national recognition for its partnership work by the Institute of Money Advisors

Martin Gray (Director of Children's Services) gave a presentation on a new approach which was being developed to tackle inequality in the Borough. The work complemented the scrutiny review which was highlighted an element of the work. The presentation covered the following:

- The challenge – Council Plan 2021 – 2024: Key Priority
- What does inequalities mean? Key drivers in Stockton-on-Tees
- Positive things already being done
- The process
- Strategic Framework
- Borough Wide Action
 - Income maximization through benefit take up and opportunities for good work
 - Poverty reduction through a specific focus on child poverty. This strand will be addressed through the Children and Young People Select Committee's work on child poverty in 2021
 - A renewed emphasis on the best start for children and a specific

- focus on speech, language and communication issues
- Debt management and credit schemes, which tackle the issues faced by those most impacted by lack of credit, debt and economic exclusion
- Local supply chain development to support local enterprise
- Local co-production, engagement and decision making
- Local control over assets, building on previous experiences through asset transfer to progressively shift the opportunities for local communities to own, control and maximize the potential of community assets
- Disadvantaged Communities
- Deprived Areas
- Key Gaps
 - good and stable jobs
 - learning and skills development
 - housing and physical environment
 - family, social and cultural networks
 - health outcomes
 - access to services
- The most marginalised
- The Council's role as an organisation
- What does success look like?
- Engagement Plan
- Next Steps
 - Agree actions/measure to be used and where in the Borough
 - Agree capacity and resources to deliver
 - Finalize framework
 - Business planning
 - Regular updates on progress – impact of actions will be measured

Members commended officers on the framework and work taking place to address this important issue.

AGREED that the information be noted.

4 Scrutiny Review of Care Leavers EET – Action Plan

The Select Committee were presented with the Action Plan setting out how the agreed recommendation from the Scrutiny Review of Care Leavers EET would be implemented and target dates for completion.

AGREED that the Action Plan be approved.

5 Scrutiny Review of Careers Provision – Progress Update

The Select Committee considered a progress update including assessments of progress following implementation of the recommendation from the Scrutiny Review of Careers Provision.

Members commented on the positive progress made despite the impact of Covid restrictions and in particular the significant increases in schools meeting

the Gatsby Benchmarks.

The Director of Children's Services paid tribute to the work of Ian and his team.

AGREED that the Progress Update be noted and assessments of progress be confirmed.

6 Select Committee Work Programme and Chair's Update

AGREED that the Work Programme be noted.