

People Select Committee

A meeting of People Select Committee was held on Monday, 18th July, 2016.

Present: Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell(Chairman), Cllr Eileen Johnson(Vice-Chairman), Cllr Gillian Corr (Sub Cllr Kevin Faulks), Cllr Lisa Grainge, Cllr Di Hewitt, Cllr Maurice Perry (Sub Cllr Stefan Houghton)

Officers: Julie Nixon (Transformation Team), Tyla McGowan (Early Years Engagement Worker), Janet Marriot (Early Years Manager), Jane Smith (Early Interventions Manager), Jane Wright (Partnership and Planning), Peter Mennear (Scrutiny Officer), Jenna McDonald (Governance Officer)

Also in attendance: Lindsey Robertson (North Tees Trust), Chris Davis (Tees Esk and Wear Valleys Trust)

Apologies: Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr Stefan Houghton, Cllr Rachael Proud, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley

PEO 22/16 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

PEO 23/16 **Minutes of meeting held on 16th May 2016 - for signature**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 May 2016 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

AGREED that the minutes were signed as a correct record.

PEO 24/16 **Welfare Reform Monitoring Update**

Members were provided with an update on monitoring of the outcomes/impact of Welfare Reform and a summary of actions undertaken by the Council to mitigate against circumstances from the implementation of the changes.

Key points were highlighted as follows:

- Welfare Reform reports were regularly provided to the Council's Cabinet over the past three years which provided information on a range of indicators which demonstrated how Welfare Reform changes were impacting on residents and service provision across the Borough.
- It was noted that trends had been identified and monitored such as heightened activity around benefit sanctions, increases in the use of local food banks and shifts in the rented housing sector from social to private landlords.
- The Committee heard that at the end of the 2014/15 quarter, there was a review of the large range of information previously provided to ensure that it was more focussed and easy to follow.
- It was explained that the introduction of the Care Act 2014 placed a greater emphasis on local authorities to provide preventative services that helped to reduce or delay the need for other local authority support services. As a result of the emphasis placed on Local Authorities, a Benefit Take-Up Campaign was targeted at those households containing an over 85 year old who was not in receipt of Attendance Allowance, but who were in receipt of Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Support.

- With regard to the Over 85's Benefit Take-Up Campaign, it was noted that from the 160 responses received, home visits were organised for 117 households. As a result of the home visits, 48 households were found to have had their correct entitlement and no further action was taken on those cases.
- The Committee was provided with some examples of feedback from the households and their families included in the Campaign. It was noted that Stage Two of the Campaign would concentrate on nearly 800 households identified with an over 85 year old, that were currently on a pass-ported benefit.
- It was noted that Stockton and District Advice and Information Service (SDAIS) led a partnership of four voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations which had been successful in a bid to bring in significant new funding from the Big Lottery Fund to support vulnerable people in the Borough.
- With regard to supported accommodation it was noted that the Government had taken the decision to reduce rents in the social sector by 1% for the next four years to bring them back in line with the private rented sector.
- In relation to Universal Credit, it was explained that the full service was scheduled to be rolled out in stages beginning with five jobcentres per month, accelerating to 50 per month from the end of 2016.

Members raised the following points/questions:

- Members queried what was being done to tackle late benefit payments. The Council liaised with DWP in order to highlight unfair cases, but greater consistency was needed.
- With regard to Social Fund Crisis Loans, it was asked whether cash could be provided in circumstances where benefits were delayed or families were in need. In response, it was heard that cash was no longer generally an option and some people had withdrawn their claims once they had been advised of this, however in particular circumstances payments may be made in credits.
- It was noted that a book was recently published by a Durham University Student which focused on Welfare Reform and its impact on people was based on research on Newtown Food Bank.
- Members commended the idea of the Over 85 Benefit Take-Up Campaign.

AGREED that:

1. The report be noted.
2. The performance monitoring outcomes and observations be noted.

PEO 25/16 Scrutiny Review of Disadvantage in Early Years and School

Members were provided with a report which focussed on the Scrutiny Review of Disadvantage in Early Years and School.

Key points were highlighted as follows:

- The Committee was informed that the Council had contributed to an Ofsted Survey to gather information and good practice on disadvantage in early years. It was noted that the findings of the survey were to be published in the summer and would be used to inform and provide a framework for the review.

Members were briefed on engagement with early years services. It was noted that initially there had been a slow take up in the local area. A range of techniques had been used, recognising that word of mouth was seen as being a key communication route.

Despite a range of techniques being used, including using more informal letters and postcards, there was still a lack of engagement from some sections of community.

An Early Years Engagement Worker attended the meeting to provide the Committee with an insight into her role within the Council which was to tackle the remaining lack of engagement. The temporary post had now been made permanent, and the work had seen a 20 percentage point improvement in take up for 2 year olds. The following points were noted:

- The Early Years Engagement Worker attended community centres, libraries and a range of other public buildings in order to build relationships with the public and to identify barriers. The key messages were adapted to suit when engaging with different audiences.

- Members heard that in order to engage with the Muslim Community, the Council's services were advertised in mosques in addition to conversations which took place with the Council's Senior Cohesion and Diversity Officer.

- The worker sat with the Family Information Service team and worked closely with Children's Centres.

- The Committee was provided with anonymised letters that families had sent back to the service, detailing their personal experience of the 2 Year Free Child Care offer and their experience of working with the Early Years Engagement Worker.

Members raised the following points/questions:

- It was suggested that the Early Years Engagement Worker contacted the Senior Cohesion and Diversity Officer with regard to a Women's Group in order to advertise further.

- Members agreed that SBC would benefit from comparing models and approaches with other Local Authorities. It was noted that Middlesbrough's Golden Ticket initiative whereby families are opted in and provided with a voucher to use without needing to apply, using the information provided by DWP, would be trialled in Stockton.

- Positive feedback was noted from a Committee Members recent visit to Tilery Primary School. The school integrated 2 and 3 year olds to aid progression,

and also took a number of asylum seeker and refugee children.

- Members were keen to understand how the early years services was funded and whether the amount of funding was set by the Government. It was explained that the funding for 2 year olds was initially partly capital funding and was based on the number of places the local area had. Now funding for 2-4 year olds was based on participation rates and amended per term.

It was also noted that the funding amount of Government funding was set by the Government and was then passed on to the LA that would then decide on the amount of funding that would be passed on. It was highlighted that all LAs could top slice to fund the LA service; in Stockton for example a special needs fund had been created. Funding equivalent to £4.84 per hour was received from government in Stockton and the Council held back £26k which meant that £477k went to settings.

The Early Years Manager in attendance of the meeting provided members with a brief overview of the service which included:

- The service worked closely with partners including the 200 child-minders that were registered with the service.
- The age range of children accessing the service were between the ages of 0 - 4 years old or up until they were of school age.
- 96% of the child-minders registered with the service received a good or outstanding Ofsted rating. It was noted that it was important to maintain the standards. The Service has worked hard to improved quality. A Safeguarding Audit was used in all nurseries which helped to ensure that safeguarding procedures were followed at all times. Moving Forward was a new document that aimed to improve the transition from early years into school by ensuring key information about each child was recorded.
- Health indicators were included in the Moving Forward forms, and there was an intention to work more closely with health going forward. Each setting should have a health visitor attached to them.
- It was important to ensure that a focus remained on the most vulnerable children/families.
- -there was also a School Readiness Group which provided the school and early years provider interface.

The Committee was provided with a project update on A Fairer Start as per a report which was presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board in May 2016.

In recognition that the first few years of a child's life were crucial to their development, A Fairer Start aimed to ensure that every child had the best start in life. A Fairer Start recognised that each parent, child and family had a unique journey and the importance of understanding where they were on that journey.

The pilot was in place for 3 years and was currently funded by SBC Public Health and NHS Hartlepool & Stockton-On-Tees CCG. The project focussed on improving three key outcomes for 0-3 year olds living in the Stockton Town Centre Ward which included:

1. Social and Emotional Development
2. Speech & Language Development
3. Nutrition

Members were provided with information on the universal health visiting service and Family Nurse Partnership, commissioned by Public Health and provided by North Tees NHS Trust.

The Council had taken the time to undertake a review of the health visiting service and concluded that the service needed transformation and reform. It was a mandated service and should include five key contacts between health visitor (or designated health professional) and child. The final contact was usually at 2 ½ years but access was available up until age 4-5 when there was a handover to the school nurse.

The universal nature of the service was a significant burden to provide, but the challenging new specification would include a focus on more vulnerable families, and improved performance monitoring.

The Family Nurse Partnership was an evidence based programme for young mothers under 20. It was not a mandated service but research had shown good outcomes including increased attachment. The Council saw this as an opportunity to reduce disadvantage.

The two year contract up until March 2018 allowed the Council to have a longer term look at the provider.

Services which were home visit based such as these were helpful in enabling professionals to access families, and families were also more willing to open up in their own homes.

The Trust stated they believed there was a healthy partnership approach in the local area. The Trust has reviewed its approach which had seen health visitors with a case load of 500 in some areas, this had now been equalised across the Trust to ensure no more than 300 per visitors, with lower ratios in areas of disadvantage. The Trust was part of the Fairer Start project, and worked on Early Help Panels. Following the service review the Trust stated they would be able to focus on transformation of the service.

It was noted that for Looked After Children, there was a specialist nurse commissioned by CCG as well as the Council commissioned health visiting and school nurses, although the CCG was going to review the whole service to this group.

Members received information from a representative from Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV). The following points were raised:

- TEWV worked with children between the age of 0-18 years and had strong attachments with many families, although it predominantly worked with older children
- TEWV was keen to work with and support other agencies working with children. The Trust stressed the importance of social and emotional development to promote resilience. Early detection was seen as much better, and the Trust as able to provide training and help to organisations to support them with clients.
- There had been an increase in referrals from younger age groups. TEWV was starting to see children at age 3 referred to them, although the youngest had been 1 ½. Years. There was open access referral and the waiting list was under 27 days with the majority of people being seen in under two weeks. However, referrals at age four for example, may receive a diagnosis at age 6.
- Services were aligned with school clusters and work took place on behaviour, which was often a reason for referrals.
- It was noted that while TEWV worked with families to understanding behaviour, it also looked at other gathering information from other people and organisations in addition to accessing information from the beginning of the child's life.
- Referrals for autism assessments should take place within 6 months, however locally this was 18 months, and commissioners were seeking to look at this in more detail.

AGREED that the information be noted.

**PEO
26/16** **Work Programme**

Consideration was given to the Work Programme 2016-17.

AGREED that the Work Programme be noted.

**PEO
27/16** **Chair's Update**

The Chair provided no update.