Children and Young People Select Committee

A meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee was held on Wednesday 15th July 2026.

Present: Cllr Barbara Inman (Vice-Chair), Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr Jack Miller, Cllr Sally Ann Watson, Cllr Katie Zagoria and Cllr John Coulson

Officers: Majella McCarthy, Craig Taylor, Claire Tiffany and Gemma Jackson

Also in attendance: None

Apologies: Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Sufi Mubeen and Cllr Emily Tate

CYP/13/26 Livestreaming

The Chair announced to those present that the meeting would be live streamed.

CYP/14/26 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation procedure was noted.

CYP/15/26 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest recorded.

CYP/16/26 Minutes

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 May 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

CYP/17/26 The Annual Children's Services Complaints Report 2025/26

The Committee considered a report regarding Children's Services Complaints in 2025/26, prior to the information being published on the Council's website. It was proposed that this information would be reported to the committee on an annual basis. The key issues highlighted were:

- There had been an increase in complaints from the previous year (37%), which was comparable with increases at other Local Authorities, with the majority (65%) of complaints relating to the Social Work teams. There had also been an increase in the number of complaints that had processed to Stage 2, and it was possible that this was due to both the change in process to be in line with ombudsman expectations, therefore no longer asking for reasons why the wished to move to the next stage, along with dissatisfaction with early attempts of resolution.
- Communication and information sharing were the main themes within the complaints received. This could include minutes not sent on time or not being able to get hold of a social worker.

- Children's Services were examining the links between complaints and learning from those more to improve services. Work was also ongoing to develop a QA code to ensure better ways for people to give feedback and issues did not get to complaint stage.
- There was a more stable workforce within Social Care, with less agency workers and lower turnover as there had been historically, which it was hoped would improve communications and reduce complaints. However, sometimes the complaints received were due to parent/carers disagreeing with the difficult decisions made by the team.
- The main theme for SEND complaints was to access to service e.g. there may have been disagreement between the school that had been assessed as meeting the needs of a child and the school the parent/carer wished them to attend.
- A small number of complaints went overdue, and reasons for this included workload, time the complaints was received e.g. holiday period, or the complexity of the complaint. It was important to note that these complaints were overdue by days not weeks.
- There was a good relationship between the Council and the Ombudsmen, with the Council supporting their investigations and ensuring that they had all the information they needed.
- While there were a small number of complaints from children and young people themselves there were several routes for them to feedback and ensure that their voice was heard to improve services.

AGREED the report be noted.

CYP/18/26 Monitoring - Scrutiny Review of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment

The Committee received progress updates in relation to its previous review of Narrowing the Gap in educational Attainment. Updates were presented on Recommendation 4, Identify and support young carers and Recommendation 16, Strengthen support for parent/carer to develop language and reading skills. Both recommendations were assessed as on track/ongoing. The key issues highlighted and discussed were as follows:

- A Young Carers Card, coproduced with young carers, had been introduced to assist school staff to identify and understand the behaviour of young carers e.g. arriving at school late, which several schools had rolled out. The next step would be to track the impact this had had on young carers attendance and educational attainment.
- Approximately 320 young carers annually moved through Eastern Raven Trust services. Following the focused activity of carrying out school assemblies, holding drop-in sessions, and other engagement with schools, there had been a small increase in the numbers identified as young carers. However, there had been more awareness within schools of the need to support young carers, and an increase in interventions. Young carers had also been identified as vulnerable characteristic by Ofsted which was also increasing the involvement from schools.
- An online training course for Council staff had been produced to raise awareness of young carers.
- A range of courses were developed to support parents and carers with the aim to not only support literacy but also wider health, wellbeing and nutrition support to tackle pupil attendance and development. The courses gave participants the

skills that they needed to build stable homes and backgrounds to assist with their child's learning and wellbeing, as well as pass skills such as cooking on to their child. Popular courses included creating Christmas Eve Boxes, and "fakeaways".

- The majority of schools engaged with the support offer were Local Authority schools however there had been some engagement with Academy schools and the next step would be to continue to develop the engagement with these schools, rolling out the initiatives to more schools, and thereby more communities.
- The team were continuously building networks and targeting parents and carers to promote the support available. Collaboration with schools and Family Hubs were key to successfully engaging with those parents and carers that needed the support. Including arts and craft programmes was also found to be an effective way to connect with those parents and carers.

AGREED that the progress updates be noted and assessments of progress be confirmed.

CYP/19/26 Scrutiny Review of Additional Resourced SEND Provision

The Committee considered a report which outlined the evidence and key findings of the Scrutiny Review of Additional Resourced SEND Provision. The Committee commenced the review in July 2026 however this was superseded by the white paper on SEND reform. The report would therefore be presented to Cabinet to note.

AGREED the report be noted for submission to Cabinet.

CYP/20/26 Scrutiny Review of Alternative Provision

The Committee noted the scope and project plan for their next review, Alternative Provision (AP) and received a background presentation from the link officer. AP was education arranged by local authorities for children who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education. This included children on suspension and children directed to offsite provision to improve their behaviour. The review would not be including home and hospital in its scope. The issues highlighted and discussed included:

- Stockton-on-Tees were part of the Department for Education Change programme and developed a three-tiered approach to AP which included supporting pupils to remain in their school, short term placements for pupils who would then return to school, and short/long term placements for pupils who would then move to a new setting or post-16 provision.
- Day 6 provision described when a child was permanently excluded from school, and the local authority became responsible on the sixth day of that exclusion for their education.
- A new provision called Compass was being run in partnership with Stockton Sixth Form College for children that had social, emotional and mental health needs.
- There is a statutory duty to quality assure the AP that is being commissioned. This duty remained with the school if they were commissioning the provision.
- Non-school Alternative Provision were providers that had not hit the threshold to register as a school, and provided support in different ways e.g. face to face education, tuition within venues that comfortable for the child, tuition in family

hubs or libraries, online education, therapeutic support for neurodiverse children, and those offering physical activities. There were several of these providers on Stockton-on-Tees framework who supported children from key stage one through to post-16.

- The current framework was a 10-year framework which would be reopened annually for new providers to apply. There were currently 29 providers on the framework, with 31 new applications on the last round of tenders, therefore increasing the framework to allow for a broad range of provider to choose from. These applications would be reviewed and go through a moderation process before being quality assured to ensure they met the criteria.

AGREED that the information be noted and scope and project plan agreed.

CYP/21/26 Chair's Update and Select Committee Work Programme

AGREED that the work programme be noted.

Chair: .....