

## **Children and Young People Select Committee**

A meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee was held on Wednesday 11th June 2025.

**Present:** Cllr Carol Clark (Chair), Cllr Barbara Inman (Vice-Chair), Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr John Coulson (sub for Cllr Stephen Richardson), Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr Sally Ann Watson and Cllr Katie Weston

**Officers:** Majella McCarthy, Mandie Rowlands, Kellie Wigley, Elisha Dyball and Judy Trainer

**Also in attendance:** Cllr Clare Besford

**Apologies:** Cllr David Reynard, Cllr Stephen Richardson and Cllr Emily Tate

### **CYP/7/25 Evacuation Procedure**

The evacuation procedure was noted.

### **CYP/8/25 Declarations of Interest**

For transparency purposes, Councillor Bob Cook declared an interest in Item 7 – Scrutiny Review of Additionally Resourced SEND provision, as a Governor at Billingham South Community Primary School.

### **CYP/9/25 Minutes**

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **CYP/10/25 Monitoring of Recommendations - Scrutiny Review of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment**

The Select Committee received action plans in respect of:

#### **Recommendation 3 - Improve communication**

Design, deliver and support parent/carers communication strategies:

- Use new technologies and apps.
- Implement communication strategies early ensuring that good communication is embedded across the school community.
- Consider single points of contact and how best to communicate (not relying on technology alone).
- Offer parent/ carer engagement training for all staff.

#### **Recommendation 4 - Identify and support young carers**

Raise awareness of young carer identification and support for pupils.

Extend the range of opportunities for young carers to link with others socially.

**Recommendation 8 - Extend enrichment offer**

Strengthen and extend curriculum enrichment offer which better matches pupils needs and interests:

- Extend enrichment to include kick-boxing; boxing; coding; cooking clubs; sports clubs and story.
- Extend and promote the Tees Active Offer to include First Aid, paddle boards (team building) and extend offer within school holidays.
- Engage with the Healthy Schools Programme and Healthy Settings Programme

**Recommendation 9 - Celebrate achievement**

Extend the range of opportunities to celebrate achievement including recognition for out of school activities and engagement with local, regional and national awards and competitions.

The lead officers for implementing the recommendations attended the meeting outlining planned actions and progress to date.

AGREED that the action plans be approved.

**CYP/11/25 Scrutiny Review of Holidays are Fun - Action Plan**

The Select Committee received an action plan in respect of its previous review of Holidays are Fun.

A presentation was also given which provided an update on progress to date. The presentation outlined:

- The Team
- Funding
- Latest booking data
- Update on the new booking system, including a demonstration at the meeting
- Plans for the summer programme

Key issues highlighted and discussed included:

- Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility had increased year on year in England although Government funding had reduced slightly. If the funding remained the same, there would be less funding for each Local Authority
- Stockton undertook an auto enrolment exercise in Autum 2024 and identified over 300 children that were eligible for free school meals, taking Stockton's total to over 9,000 eligible children
- In Easter, there were 6,042 universal spaces and 267 dedicated SEND spaces. 1345 unique children booked 5,500 spaces, broken down into 1100 primary and 245 secondary aged children, equating to approx. 4 places per child. There were over 40 different activities across the borough through 28 individual providers
- In Easter, there were a few new providers including Stockton Libraries and Stockton Sixth Form College bringing new activities such as Lego @ the Library
- The new booking system had been extremely well received with positive feedback from parents and providers. The booking system was accessible on different devices and also sent reminders about bookings which had made a huge impact on reducing non-attendance. Within the booking system, it would be possible to identify and target children who lived in the 10 most deprived wards

- Rules could be applied to the booking system for example to limit the number of places that could be applied for a particular child. The system also prioritised FSM children and sent details to providers to ensure that they were equipped to meet the needs of individual children. The system also flagged up clashes and identified immediately when a child did not attend a session
- Bookings for summer were opening on 4 July but interest could be registered a week before
- As well as making bookings through the new booking system, the website provided details on how to speak to a member of the team
- Members commented that there needed to be improved visibility of the programme and booking system on the Council website
- For summer, around 50 providers had applied, creating over 17,000 spaces. Based on suggestions from young people, new providers are offering:
  - Cycling
  - Tees Active gym passes
  - Football School
  - 3D pen project
  - Storytelling and games for the 5-8 at the libraries
- Members acknowledged the need to lobby the government for continued funding. One lobbying route was through the CYP Board of the LGA

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People was in attendance for this item. She highlighted the significant improvements to the booking process due to the new booking system and the variety and quality of provision. She also placed on record her thanks to the team.

AGREED that the action plan be approved.

## **CYP/12/25 Scrutiny Review of Additionally Resourced SEND Provision**

The Select Committee received an introductory presentation setting out background and context for the review.

Key issues highlighted and discussed were as follows:

- The responsibilities of the SEND (Special Educational needs and (Special Educational Needs and Disability) and Additional Resourced Provision (ARP) Service. The Service was responsible for executing the duties laid out in The Children and Families Act 2014 which stated that Councils were responsible for:
  - Identification, Assessment and Planning for Children and Young People 0-25 with SEND
  - Ensuring sufficient and suitable SEND and AP placements
  - Coordinate statutory EHC Needs Assessments, ensuring compliance with legal duty
  - Work with health, social care and parents collaboratively to co-produce services that meet the needs of the local area
  - Ensure that services are accessible to families, publishing a clear and informative local offer
- The SEND and AP Service Structure
- The review of ARPS in 2017 replaced the Enhanced Mainstream Schools (EMS) model owing to sufficiency issues, increasing demand and changes in need post COVID

- 4,216 children aged 3 – 16 were registered as SEND support and were largely educated in mainstream schools
- 2,650 children had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and required statutory interventions over and above what was available in mainstream schools
- The introduction of ARP and SEND Units was part of strategic outcome 3 of the Local Area Inclusion Plan. The data revealed that too many children and young people were in specialist provision, some of which was out of the local area and the demand for this provision far outweighed availability. These placements were at exceptionally high costs and children and young people did not always meet their outcomes and expected progress. The reduction in the reliance of out of area placements would ensure cost savings on both high needs revenue and Council funds for community transport. This would ensure efficient use of high needs block funding that could be utilised locally to ensure that there were targeted investments and that this funding was being used to implement a preventative approach, such as CPD and capacity building in mainstream schools through the introduction of SEND units
- The EMS review revealed that EMS was oversubscribed, the admissions criteria was not reflective of current cohort, funding was not enough to meet needs, the framework was too rigid in meeting needs and children were being placed incorrectly
- In October 2024 consultation took place on increasing capacity in mainstream schools by transferring current EMS to ARP and SEN units. The proposals were well received with 64% of responses strongly agreeing with the proposals and 19% of responses agreeing. In January 2025 Cabinet agreed to the transfer of provision
- In December 2024, The Department for Education (DfE) announced a £740 million investment to create 10,000 new specialist places for pupils with SEND, focusing on mainstream schools. This funding would help create more inclusive environments and address the gap in provision, with a particular focus on SEN units and resourced provisions within mainstream schools. The Council received a proportion of this capital funding although there had not been a need for capital investment in the schools that had applied for ARP
- Details of the primary and secondary schools that had come forward were presented. Although there had been a lot of interest from the primary sector, interest from secondary schools had been disappointing. Currently there were only five secondary schools on board for September and no secondary schools had expressed an interest in having a SEN unit
- ARP provision would cater for additional needs and a turnaround speech and language ARP would be available at one primary schools
- SEN units would cater for mixed and significant learning needs
- Placements were opening in September 2025:
  - Children had to have an EHC Plan to access
  - Places were additional to school's PAN (Pupil Agreed Number)
  - Parents were able to preference the provision
  - Funding was in additional to the recommended funding from DfE
  - The admissions criteria was co-produced with schools

Following the presentation and discussion, the Select Committee reviewed the scope and project plan for the review. The purpose of this scrutiny would be to receive an update on the implementation of the transfer from September 2025 and engage with the secondary schools to secure additional applications from the secondary sector and fully understand the barriers to the schools becoming ARPS, identifying ways in which we might overcome this to secure the provision required for children and young people in the borough.

AGREED that the presentation be noted and scope and project plan for the review be agreed.

**CYP/13/25    Chair's Update and Select Committee Work Programme**

The Scrutiny Officer advised that the action plan for recommendation 16 of the previous scrutiny review of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment would now be presented to the September meeting.

AGREED that the work programme be noted.

Chair: .....