

Children and Young People Select Committee

A meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee was held on Wednesday 13th May 2026.

Present: Cllr Carol Clark (Chair), Cllr Barbara Inman (Vice-Chair), Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr Shakeel Hussain, Cllr Jack Miller, Cllr Emily Tate and Cllr Sally Ann Watson

Officers: Majella McCarthy, Elisha Dyball, Sharon Stevens and Judy Trainer

Also in attendance: Cllr Clare Besford

Apologies: Cllr Sufi Mubeen and Cllr Katie Weston

CYP/6/26 Livestreaming

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

CYP/7/26 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation procedure was noted.

CYP/8/26 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interests recorded.

CYP/9/26 Minutes

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 April 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

CYP/10/26 Scrutiny Review of Children Not in School

The Select Committee reviewed the draft final report following its review of Children Not in School.

The Cabinet Member and Director of Children's Services attended the meeting for the item and commended the Select Committee on its work.

AGREED that the final report be approved for submission to Cabinet.

CYP/11/26 Presentation - SEND Reform - Education White Paper

The Select Committee received a presentation on the recent White Paper on SEND reform.

The vision of the White Paper was summarised as:

- Inclusive Mainstream System
- Specialist Support for Children that need it

- Effective and efficient local delivery
- Stretching, enriching and inclusive school experience for all.
- North East Mission – emphasis on disadvantaged, white working-class children

The presentation covered the implications of the White Paper for:

- Curriculum
- Attendance and Suspensions
- School Governance
- Implications for the Council
- Consultation and Key Dates

Key issues highlighted and discussed were as follows:

- Members asked what provision was being made for rising SEND numbers - Officers advised that SEND numbers had been increasing and were forecasted to rise up to 2029. Stockton was projected to reach 19–20% SEND prevalence compared to approximately 15% nationally. This increase was driven by more complex needs, particularly speech, language and communication needs (which had doubled in three years) and autism (which had increased by 30%). Plans assumed continued growth
- Members asked what strategies would be implemented to achieve the 1.3% attendance improvement target or would this be on a school-by-school basis - Officers advised that the current focus had been on SEND reform deadlines, with attendance work to follow. It was anticipated that schools would be organised into clusters, enabling sharing of good practice and targeted support in areas with high absence. Work would commence once the wider framework was clearer
- Members asked whether there was any disparity between SEND levels in Stockton compared with other Councils - Officers explained that Stockton was not a significant outlier regionally, with similar levels observed across the Tees Valley and North East. While slightly above the national average, figures were consistent with statistical neighbours. Recognising the levels of deprivation and poverty within the region, a model and mission for the North East would be key. A particular focus on early intervention and prevention was important to support children and families who would potentially be at risk
- Members asked whether Individual Support Plans (ISPs) would be standardised across the Borough - Officers confirmed that a national digital template would be introduced by the Department for Education. There would likely be tighter guidelines for schools and a quality assurance framework
- Members asked whether sufficient funding would be available to support training, staffing and implementation - Officers acknowledged that funding was unlikely to fully meet demand given the scale of need and existing DSG deficit. While additional funding had been welcomed, the Council would still need to maximise investment through partnership working and balancing immediate support with early intervention and prevention
- Members asked whether an ongoing action plan would be made available to the Committee to review - Officers confirmed that a Local Area Reform Plan would be developed, approved and shared in due course. This would then be supported by a detailed project management plan

It was noted that under the proposals, schools would have their own inclusion hubs rather than SEND Units or Additionally Resourced Provision. Given the change, the Scrutiny Officer would collate the evidence gathered to date for the Select

Committee’s previous review of Additional Resourced SEND provision, which had been paused, and present to the Select Committee for consideration of the implications of the White Paper.

AGREED that the presentation be noted.

CYP/12/26 Chair’s Update and Select Committee Work Programme

AGREED that the work programme be noted.

Chair: