

Children and Young People Select Committee

A meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee was held on Wednesday 16th September 2026.

Present: Cllr Carol Clark (Chair), Cllr Barbara Inman (Vice-Chair), Cllr Robert Cook, Cllr John Coulson (sub for Cllr Sally Ann Watson), Cllr Jack Miller, Cllr Sufi Mubeen, Cllr Emily Tate and Cllr Katie Zagoria

Officers: Majella McCarthy, Louise Hollick, Edwin Squire, Vanessa Housley, Sharon Stevens, Amit Law, Paul Wilson, Kate Jackson-Sedgewick and Judy Trainer

Also in attendance: Cllr Clare Besford

Apologies: Cllr Ray Godwin and Cllr Sally Ann Watson

CYP/22/26 Livestreaming

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

CYP/23/26 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation procedure was noted.

CYP/24/26 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest recorded.

CYP/25/26 Minutes

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

CYP/26/26 Children's Social Care Overview Report

The Select Committee received an overview report from the Director of Children's Services, the Assistant Director of Early Help, Safeguarding and Children in Our Care and the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People in relation to Children's Social Care.

Key Achievements included:

- The Family Help point now embedded into the service and demonstrating improved outcomes for children and families
- Workforce stability and reduced use of agency staff
- Launch of a place-based Family Help Pilot in Billingham Family Hub, bringing together Social Workers and Senior Family Workers within a single locality team

Challenges included:

- Complexity of the national reform policies
- Sufficiency of local, appropriate and cost-effective care arrangements
- Serious youth violence and criminal exploitation

Emerging Issues included:

- The Department for Education's reforms to establish Regional Care Cooperatives (RCCs) and strengthen regional fostering hubs representing a significant shift toward coordinated, end-to-end regional delivery models

The report also set out Tier 2 performance measures in relation to Children's Social Care highlighting where performance was strong and known areas of challenge.

Key issues highlighted and discussed by Members included:

- Members praised the reduction in the use of agency workers
- Preventative measures to address anti-social behaviour, exploitation and serious youth violence were delivered through strong multi agency working. A dedicated Early Help Youth Support Team provided early intervention, carried out return home interviews for missing children to identify exploitation risks, supported families affected by anti-social behaviour, and directed children and families to the most appropriate services
- Work on the programme of reforms was carefully project managed with corporate cross cutting support
- The Youth Justice Plan included a strategy focused on reducing re-offending, particularly amongst a small group of persistent offenders, through a multi-agency partnership approach
- Attendance had improved for Children in Need and Children in Care and ongoing challenges were being addressed through a wider attendance strategy
- Reducing re-referrals was a priority, with a focus on earlier intervention, ensuring families received support from the most appropriate service, and delivering an action plan to reduce repeat referrals.

AGREED that the report be noted.

CYP/27/26 Education, Inclusion and Achievement Overview Report

The Select Committee received an overview report from the Director of Children's Services, the Assistant Director for Education, Inclusion and Achievement and the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People in relation to Education, Inclusion and Achievement.

Key Achievements included:

- Consistent academic results across education and very strong within the Tees Valley
- Clear positive impacts of the "Skills for Success" programme and "Stockton Post 16 Partnership"
- Positive Impact of "Be Kind to Your Mind" programme
- The ASEND report acknowledges many effective areas and areas to be proud of within the service. Although the report states that there are "inconsistent experiences and outcomes" for children with SEND

Challenged included:

- Fully understanding the implications of the Council's financial settlement and continuing academisation within the schools' sector
- Delivering the full Local Authority Reform Plan (LARP) programme
- The number of young people becoming NEET within the Borough
- Inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children with SEND

Emerging Issues included:

- A low proportion of young people achieving higher grades or achievement measures in national testing when compared to National Averages

The report also set out Tier 2 performance measures in relation to Education, Inclusion and Achievement highlighting where performance was strong and known areas of challenge.

Key issues highlighted and discussed by Members included:

- It was difficult to identify specific services most vulnerable to funding pressures because statutory duties existed across all service areas. In addition, whilst statutory duties needed be protected, it was important to balance resources appropriately with other important work such as addressing NEETs and transition support and investing in early help and prevention
- Inconsistencies between academies and mainstream schools were addressed through strong partnership arrangements. SEND reforms, shared challenge and support, and the development of local area and cluster-based working were helping to address inconsistencies and spread effective practice across schools

AGREED that the report be noted.

CYP/28/26 Scrutiny Review of Children Not in School - Action Plan

The Select Committee received an action plan in respect of their previous review recommendations which had been approved by Cabinet.

Officers undertook to explore whether the 15 day absence trigger discussions with schools could be reduced to 10 days in respect of SEND children.

In respect of support for children undertaking their GCSEs, schools will have individual programmes of support and the Council's Health Education and Relationships Manager also highlights all the support available with primary and secondary networks.

AGREED that the Action Plan be approved and a progress update be submitted in due course.

CYP/29/26 Monitoring - Scrutiny Review of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment

The Select Committee received a progress update in relation to recommendation 12 of the Select Committee's appreciative inquiry into Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment:

Strengthen transition arrangements

Ensure that transition arrangements better fits bespoke pupil needs, with specific reference to vulnerable pupils:

- Ensure plans are put in place well in advance of any transition
- Consider transition to post-16 and post-18/19 as well as primary and secondary and school readiness
- Consider transition between year groups as appropriate

Progress outlined included:

- Establishment of a dedicated Transitions Team
- Introduction of earlier transition planning
- Appointment of an Education Transitions Planning Coordinator to improve transitions between education settings
- A combined Young Person's Health and Care Lead role to improve partnership working between education, health and social care
- Improved early intervention through the new SEND Front Door
- A more person-centred and proactive approach to meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND

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

CYP/30/26 Chair's Update and Select Committee Work Programme

AGREED that the Work Programme be noted.

Chair: