

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

A meeting of Children and Young People Select Committee was held on Wednesday 13 November 2024.

Present: Cllr Carol Clark (Chair), Cllr Ray Godwin, Cllr Stephen Richardson, Cllr Paul Rowling, Cllr Sally Ann Watson and Cllr Katie Weston.

Officers: Vanessa Housley, Eddie Huntington, Gill McCleave, Mandie Rowlands, Jane Williams (Children's Services) and Haleem Ghafoor (AH&W) and Michelle Gunn (CS)

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr Barbara Inman (Vice-Chair), Cllr David Reynard and Cllr Emily Tate.

CYP/21/24 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation procedure was noted.

CYP/22/24 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

CYP/23/24 Minutes

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held don 25 September 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

CYP/24/24 Monitoring of Recommendations - Scrutiny Review of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment

The Committee received a presentation regarding actions taken following the agreement of the Final Report, and proposed method of monitoring implementation of recommendations.

Lead officers had been identified to take forward each of the recommendations, as well as lead partners and partner organisations, and an updated list of partners was circulated. It was noted that the Committee's report had been shared with the LGA and the Department for Education, who were interested in the impact of the review.

Meetings would take place bi-monthly with all leads and it was proposed that a rolling programme of monitoring be implemented, with leads bringing action plans and updates in turn to each Committee meeting. Members considered action plans for recommendations 6, 7, and 13 and officers noted that the challenge for implementation was working in partnership with schools, who decided their curriculum. However, when contacting schools with the recommendations they found that they were very receptive to the proposals.

The existing Stockton-on-Tees Talks programme was highlighted. This was run in association with Speech & Language UK and focussed on supporting speech and language skills, where children and young people had recognised difficulties. The programme was being expanded from early years into primary and secondary. Members requested further details of this programme.

The action to create a Borough wide debate competition was also highlighted and it was noted that developing debating skills had a positive impact on reading and writing skills. Members discussed the need to consider different personality types such as introverts and how different strategies such as coaching, relationship building, and small group discussions were important to encourage those who were not comfortable with speaking in public. The importance of being able to speak confidently and express yourself, and the need to build these skills early in life, was noted. Members suggested that the Council Chamber be utilised for the final of the debating competition, as well as involving local MP's.

When considering the action plan for recommendation 13, Officers noted that there was a high percentage of young people with SEND who were not in employment, education or training (NEET). Members requested information be shared on funding for SEND. Discussion took place regarding the importance of vocational education for those who were not academic.

AGREED that the update for recommendations 6, 7 and 13 be approved and the rolling programme of monitoring be implemented.

CYP/25/24 Scrutiny Review of Holiday Activities and Food Programme known locally as Holidays are Fun (HAF)

The Committee received a background presentation and considered the draft scope and project plan for the Scrutiny Review of Holidays are Fun (HAF). The presentation outlined the programme, who was eligible, the activities offered, how the programme was promoted, and feedback from the young people who had attended. The programme was run in partnership with Catalyst and they had two members of staff working on HAF. The contract with Catalyst was due to end in February 2025. Members were interested in the relationship with Catalyst and it was noted that the scope included inviting them to a Committee meeting.

It was clarified that there were more spaces than children and young people accessing the programme identified in the presentation as they were able to book more than one space. The majority of spaces were taken.

Funding for the programme came from both the Department for Education (DfE) and Public Health. There were strict criteria from the DfE that 85% of places must go to those children and young people in receipt of free school meals, and that the prime objective was to ensure that they received a meal each day during school holidays. The funding from the DfE was due to end in February 2025 and an announcement regarding future funding was expected shortly with new criteria. Details of this would be shared with the committee once announced.

The funding from public health stipulated that there should be a focus on providing places for those in the top 10 most deprived wards and it was recognised that the programme did not reach all geographical areas of the borough. Members noted that there were children living in more affluent wards that would be described as deprived

and a discussion took place on how to include children from families that may not be covered by the criteria but were struggling. The Committee requested a geographical breakdown of the children that took up the discretion places as well as the number of children who were eligible. They also requested to include in the scope exploring the possibility of extending the programme to those not currently eligible, e.g. working with partners to provide extra or discounted places.

An update was given regarding the reintroduction of Equality Poverty Impact Assessments, which ensured that any decisions and/or new policies implemented by the Council considered the impact they would have on individuals with characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010 and also wider groups including poverty, substance misuse, care leavers etc. Members split into two groups to consider the purpose of the HAF programme, how it was delivered and the barriers, and what groups might be positively and negatively impacted upon.

The Committee requested information on referrals to the new multibank be shared with all Council Members.

AGREED that the presentation be noted and the scope and project plan be approved, subject to the above comments

CYP/26/24 Chair's Update and Select Committee Work Programme

The Chair highlighted that a further update on Narrowing the Gap in Educational Achievement recommendations would be presented at the next meeting and will be added to the work programme.

AGREED that the work programme be updated to include the item above and noted.