

Friday, 18 October 2024

CHILDREN & FAMILIES SCRUTINY & IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Children & Families Scrutiny & Improvement Committee was held on Friday, 18 October 2024 at the Civic Centre, Redcar.

PRESENT Councillor K Evans (Chair)
Councillors K King (Vice-Chair), C Curr,
P Grogan, C Hannaway, N Hargreaves and
D Powlay.

OFFICIALS C Leng, N Henry and C Mahoney.

IN ATTENDANCE

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Clark, J Craven, M Fairley, J Joy and L White.

46 **TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 SEPTEMBER 2024 AND NOTE THE ATTENDANCE MATRIX**

RECOMMENDED that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2024 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record and the attendance Matrix be noted.

47 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

There were no declarations of interest; noted.

48 **SAFE AND SHIFT UPDATE**

The Service Manager for Vulnerable Adolescents and Independent Review presented an update on SAFE and SHiFT Vulnerable Adolescents and Independent Review Service - Contextual Safeguarding in Redcar & Cleveland.

Areas highlighted within the update included:

- A progress update noting the 2021 partnership with the DfE and No Wrong Door, 2023 funding obtained from external partners to create the SAFE team through to 2024 securing Department for Levelling Up funding to launch SHiFT.

SAFE Team Update:

- Team compositions, how work is case loaded amongst the team and how the team manages the intervention work.
- Savings this quarter equating to £22,023 and a projected saving

Friday, 18 October 2024

next year of £17,923, these figures are taken from what services would have been commissioned without the intervention work of the team.

- Missing from home reduction of episodes and reduction in convictions.
- VEMPT Data and disruption evidence data in partnership with Community Safety Partnership and police.
- Communication-based events and meetings that had taken place.
- Work within the education sector delivering training to over 1500 Members of staff.
- Data analysis included data regarding the young person from 12 months prior to any intervention and then quarterly data monitoring once the programme has commenced.

SHiFT Team Update:

- The remit of SHiFT is to have a significant focus upon crime reduction and exists to break the destructive cycle of children and young people caught up in, or at risk of, crime.
- SAFE and SHiFT Teams work together and some young people working with SAFE Members had since been transferred to the SHiFT Team.
- SHiFT is a national initiative working in local authority areas, including Redcar and Cleveland.
- SHiFT structure is different to that of the SAFE Team. SHiFT has a Board of Trustees, strategic Leads and Partnership and Operational Managers who lead the various teams.
- Concerns regarding the young people within the SHiFT agenda include; previous arrests, Youth Justice work, history of going missing and being victims of crime.
- Next steps for SHiFT include, being allocated partnership nominations, intensive and flexible working, child and family practice discussions, strategic evaluation and child and young person's resource.

As part of the ensuing discussion the following questions/comments were made:

- A Member requested examples of case studies be shared with the committee with example of interventions and outcomes. Officers raised concerns regarding anonymity of young people. Members discussed having a closed session for the presentation of case studies at a future meeting.
- A Member asked if partnership working is effective. Members were advised that partnerships for example with the police were very positive and attendance at meetings is consistent and active.
- A Member asked for more information regarding work taking place with schools. Members were advised that a training programme was being devised for staff and students however this was labour intensive due to the most impactful training includes demographic

Friday, 18 October 2024

information, therefore any training package needs to include bespoke sections.

- A Member queried if partnership working included Tees Valley Combined Local Authority (TVCA) and access to its data banks. Members were advised that the TVCA priorities were skills and development, therefore the data collated isn't always relevant at a local level. The Assistant Director would investigate if they can obtain TVCA intelligence data.
- A Member queried the funding of each initiative and future plans. Members were advised that SHiFT is funded for 3 years. The team plan to evidence the positive impact of the work including cost savings in the hope it will be extended.
- A Member asked for feedback from young people and their families with regards to accessing the service. Members were informed that feedback on the whole was positive because SHiFT was not a statutory service and purposefully uses different language and approaches compared to what most young people and their families had received previously.
- A Member queried feedback relating to knife crime being a factor why young people do not feel safe. Officers recommended bringing the results of a survey undertaken by CURV 2 years ago to share with scrutiny.

RECOMMENDED that:

1. The information in the report be noted; and,
2. Case studies be presented at a closed future meeting,
3. The Assistant Director would investigate if they can obtain TVCA intelligence data; and,
4. The CURV2 survey results be presented at a future meeting.

49 **CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES' STRATEGY**

Members were informed that meeting correspondence and papers were sent centrally via the 'Democracy' email and calendar.

Members queried accessing Modern.Gov application and requested training.

The Assistant Director for Education and Skills presented the suite of strategies within Children's and Families Directorate which included:

- Children, Young people and Families Strategy which overarches the
 - Early Help Strategy
 - Education Improvement Strategy
 - SEND Strategy

Areas highlighted within the Children, Young people and Families

Friday, 18 October 2024

Strategy included:

- The 5 priorities had been aligned with the Council overarching policies as follows:
 - Priority 1 Children grow up safe loved and happy
 - Priority 2 – Children had a healthy childhood
 - Priority 3 – Children achieve well
 - Priority 4 – Children are ready and ambitious for their future
 - Priority 5 Children are listened to, and people care about what they say
- Many of the priorities had been devised alongside external partnerships therefore to achieve the desired outcomes, timescales and costs, may be changeable within partnership working agreements.
- All priorities and targets were smart targets and believed to be achievable within the Directorate. There were actions plans and strategies with key performance indicators (KPIs) that sit behind these overarching strategies which could be brought to subsequent committee meetings.

As part of the ensuing discussion the following questions/comments were made:

- Members stated the strategy was brief and didn't include much detail. Members were informed that each Directorate were asked to produce short top-level strategies, around 2-3 pages, some of which overarch other strategies, policies and KPIs.
- Members noted the role of scrutiny was to monitor strategies alongside performance measures, targets and data, which was not included. Officers stated that when performance data is being presented there will be reference to how this shows progress towards the outcomes in the strategies.

RECOMMENDED that:

1. The information in the strategies be noted,
2. Training be given to Members on the Modern.Gov Application,
3. Performance data to be presented at future meetings referencing how progress towards the outcomes in the strategies was achieved.

50

EARLY HELP STRATEGY

The Assistant Director for Education and Skills presented the Early Help Strategy.

Areas highlighted within the Early Help Strategy included:

- The policy was derived alongside partners who tried to identify what would make a difference and who would need to be involved to ensure it was achieved. The 3 key priorities were:

Friday, 18 October 2024

- Priority 1 - Developing a preventative culture and practice across the system.
- Priority 2 - Making smarter use of information for better outcomes for families.
- Priority 3 - Ensuring children and young people had access to support and resources in their community.
- Research indicated that when a child was deemed 'ready' at five years old, it significantly increased their life chances including being able to succeed at GCSE (age 15-16) and was an indicator regarding having better job prospects by the age of 26 years old.

RECOMMENDED that the information in the strategy be noted.

51

EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

The Assistant Director for Education and Skills presented the Education Improvement Strategy.

Areas highlighted within the Education Improvement Strategy included:

- There were 5 key priorities which were:
 - Priority 1 - To raise awareness of the impact of poverty on educational outcomes
 - Priority 2 - To ensure Children and Young People had their emotional and mental health needs met
 - Priority 3 - To ensure that Children and Young People with special educational needs and disabilities are supported well and had their needs well met
 - Priority 4 - To support schools to ensure that Children and Young People are kept safe from contextual safeguarding issues.
 - Priority 5 - To improve attendance and reduce suspensions and permanent exclusions
- A key area of research was childhood poverty. There was a research partnership which brings together 8 universities to look at many issues which included childhood poverty, [Child of the North - N8 Research Partnership](#).

As part of the ensuing discussion the following questions/comments were made:

- Members queried the remit of the local Mental Health Board. Members were informed that it does not include seeking lived experiences and children's voice within its decision making. However, the Directorate does seek this and noted that support from external providers is paramount to support young people and their families to thrive, but many organisations were experiencing a high volume of demand and significantly high waiting lists.
- Members queried when the under-riding strategies and actions

Friday, 18 October 2024

plans would be received at Scrutiny. Members were informed that there is a suite of information behind each strategy which might be unyielding to present in its entirety for effective review and scrutiny. Officers to consider how best to present this to Members.

- Members noted that many strategies crossover more than one directorate and asked how was this managed. Members were informed that Children's Directorate were asked to review the Poverty Strategy but noted it isn't restricted to Child Poverty, therefore it was a Corporate Strategy overarching all Directorates.
- Ofsted Inspections new inspection framework included 'inclusion' as a monitoring factor and single judgements would no longer be given at the end of inspections. The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned research across the North East to review data within schools to seek to address exclusions nationally.
- Members were informed all strategies aim to be completed or updated by December 2024 and the Summer 2024 Examination Data would be presented to scrutiny in January after the verified report was released.

RECOMMENDED that,

1. The information in the strategy be noted,
2. Information and action plans underpinning the main strategies to be presented at a future meeting.
3. Summer 2024 examination data to be presented to February Scrutiny.

52

SEND STRATEGY

The Assistant Director for Education and Skills presented the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy.

Areas highlighted within the Education Improvement Strategy included:

- There were 6 key priorities:
 - Priority 1 - Develop skills of workforce to identify and meet the needs of children at the earliest opportunity
 - Priority 2 - Work with mainstream schools to develop inclusive practice.
 - Priority 3 - Embed effective transitions for children with additional need so their needs continue to be met appropriately
 - Priority 4 - Develop provision in our local area to meet the needs of children with SEND
 - Priority 5 - PFA (Preparing for Adulthood) outcomes are embedded in all practice across the partnership
 - Priority 6 - Develop robust quality assurance processes to understand if children's needs are being met, transitions are effective, and their outcomes are improving

Friday, 18 October 2024

- Priorities should be aspirational as well as addressing needs, and lots of work had taken place to support SEN students with transitional needs for September 2024 start of the school year.
- Schools were consulted to consider opening SEN Bases with an aspiration for 3 to 5 additional bases opening for September 2026. The Local Authority were offering bespoke support including training for staff to better understand how to support students with SEN and quality assurance checks.
- Commissioning an educational psychologist's service was being considered to reduce waiting lists. This would be costly however the lack of educational psychologist was a national shortage issue.
- The Directorate was working tirelessly to address overspends including liaison with other local authorities to share best practice.

As part of the ensuing discussion the following questions/comments were made:

- Members asked if the intention was to ensure more SEN students could remain in mainstream schools. Members were informed that was the intention therefore, the Directorate had offered additional support and guidance to schools who wish to participate.
- Members asked how a SEN Base would work in practice. Members were informed that the local authority plan to commission each SEN Base and the school would manage the day to day running.
- School SENDCo's received training earlier this year and feedback was very positive. A SENDCo would be invited to scrutiny in February 2025, this was on the work programme.

RECOMMENDED that the information in the strategy be noted.

53

TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR CARERS TASK & FINISH GROUP

The Transitional Arrangements for Parents and Carers Task & Finish Group took place last week.

The group agreed the scope which would focus on what support parents and carers received when their child or young person was going through transitional arrangements between Children's and Adult's social services.

Members were encouraged to attend the next meeting whereby each directorate will present information regarding what was the current offer and external guests from Carers Together would present alongside parents and carers who had lived experience. An invitation to the next meeting would be circulated in due course.

RECOMMENDED that:

1. The information be noted; and,

Friday, 18 October 2024

2. Members were encouraged to attend the next Transitional Arrangements Meeting.

54 **ROTA VISITS FEEDBACK**

There were no updates received, noted.

55 **OUTSIDE BODIES UPDATE**

A Member presented an update on the South Tees Youth Justice meeting.

Officers stated it was difficult to access speech and language therapy services, the Local Authority delivered early talk boost training and considered purchasing diagnostic tools for schools.

As part of the ensuing discussion the following questions/comments were made:

- Members queried if students with speech and language difficulties would be expected to attend modern foreign language (MFL) lessons in schools. Members were informed that that MFL was a part of secondary education curriculum. The Department for Education (DfE) was consulting with Assistant Directors in education across the country to undertake a curriculum review. It was hoped that considerations would be included for schools to have flexibility within the curriculum, which currently they do not, particularly in respect of reasonable adjustments for students and where Ofsted judgements are made.

RECOMMENDED that the information be noted.

56 **WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25**

Members attention was drawn to the Cabinet paper items that had been confirmed within the work programme. Members were informed that actions for future meetings would be added to the work programme in discussion with Lead Officers and approval from the Chair.

RECOMMENDED that the information be noted.

57 **ACTION UPDATE**

The action log was presented to Members noting two the items which would be removed due to completion. The actions from the meeting would be added and presented at the next meeting.

RECOMMENDED that:

1. The information in the Action Plan be noted; and,

Friday, 18 October 2024

2. Officers review individual actions and send updates to the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer.

58 **ANY ITEMS THE CHAIR CERTIFIES AS URGENT.**

The Chair agreed that the following item would be certified as urgent.

#project2999 DISPLAY INVITATION

Members were reminded to attend #project2999 which raises awareness of the impact of exclusion and suspension on children and families in the UK, or which 2999 young people were excluded or suspended from school on any given day in 2021. This event is taking place at Redcar Civic Centre on Thursday 24 October at 1.30 pm.

RECOMMENDED that the information be noted.