

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel was held on 17 December 2018.

PRESENT: Councillors A Hellaoui (Chair), T Higgins (Vice-Chair), J A Walker and V Walkington and M Walters

OFFICERS: B Bradshaw, S Chouhan and G Moore

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Councillors J Goodchild, J McGee, L McGloin and J Young.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no Declarations of Interest made by the Members at this point in the meeting.

1 **MINUTES - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL - 19 NOVEMBER 2018**

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel, held on 19 November 2018, were submitted and approved as a correct record.

2 **LISTENING TO THE VOICE OF THE CHILD - AN UPDATE**

In respect of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel's 2017/18 review of Listening to the Voice of the Child, the scrutiny panel considered an update from the Head of Strategic Services and the Voice of the Child Practitioner.

Children's Services had submitted a written briefing/update in respect of the department's action plan, which was prepared in response to the scrutiny panel's recommendations. The written briefing/update was submitted for the panel's consideration and provided a detailed account of the work/actions that had been undertaken to implement each recommendation.

Following a request from a Member for further information on the role of the Voice of the Child Practitioner, it was explained that the purpose of the post was to gather, disseminate and integrate the voice and views of children and their families and ensure opportunities for involvement in planning, design and delivery of services. Furthermore, the role involved monitoring service compliance and responding to children, young people and families to ensure increased participation and improved outcomes. The Voice of the Child Practitioner liaised with officers across Children's Services, schools, looked-after children, care leavers, children with disabilities and youth groups. The Voice of the Child Practitioner had been in post for a year.

In respect of recommendation a), the Voice of the Child Practitioner explained that work had been undertaken with Rose Croft, Gleneagles and Holly Lodge residential homes, the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) and Hart Gables (LGBT+ service). With support from those organisations, Top Tips posters had been developed, which provided key information, advice and guidance for those working with children and young people. Posters had been specifically developed for working with different age groups, those with autism and for trans, lesbian, gay, bisexual children and young people. Positive feedback had been received and the posters were seen as a valuable resource for those working with children and young people.

The Voice of the Child Practitioner advised that all of the posters had been circulated to Heads of Service and team managers with the incentive of a competition for the best notice board to receive a prize.

A Member commented that it would be beneficial if the Top Tips posters were distributed to all schools to provide teachers with a useful resource in engaging with children and young people who access Children's Services. The Voice of the Child Practitioner advised that the proposal could be progressed with the Director of Education through the Head Teacher briefings and

the development of the Inclusion Strategy.

In respect of recommendation b) the Voice of the Child Practitioner advised the scrutiny panel that the first draft of the e-learning module had been created. The module focussed on the voice and influence of children and young people and the importance of child participation. Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation was also referenced in the module to provide background on children's participation in projects. Members heard that the module would be piloted by a social work team to check the level of understanding and its suitability, the deadline for feedback was January 2019. The e-learning module would be mandatory and would be accessed and monitored through Middlesbrough Learns.

Members were also informed that a conference had been organised, which would take place on 18 February 2019 in the Crypt, Town Hall. The first planning meeting had been held with 7 members of the Children in Care Council. Those members would agree the focus, content and format of the conference. All key professionals, who work with children and young people, would be invited to attend the conference. It was also highlighted that members the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel would be welcome to attend.

Members were advised that a Bright Spots survey (Your Life, Your Care) had also been undertaken. The survey aimed to measure the wellbeing of looked-after children/young people and care leavers. The scrutiny panel was informed that feedback obtained from the survey would be communicated at the conference.

In respect of recommendation c), the scrutiny panel was advised that young people were currently involved with interviews for the Virtual School, Heads of Service and the young ambassador's position. It was also highlighted that the Pathways Team worked with Teesside University to enable young people to become involved in selecting suitable candidates for the social work course.

Members heard that Human Resources (HR) had recently reviewed the Recruitment and Selection Policy and had incorporated an additional step within the policy, which considered the involvement of young people in recruitment.

Due to recent changes in management, work was currently ongoing in respect of developing a Young Recruiters Panel. The panel would consist of young people who would be involved in recruitment and selection processes. The panel would ensure that the views of young people were taken into account when considering the qualities/attributes and skills of candidates. As members of the panel, young people would be trained and supported by HR to gain knowledge of the interview process and develop interview skills. It was conveyed that the young people would be recruited and appointed to the panel early next year.

In respect of recommendation d) the Voice of the Child Practitioner had created a leaflet advertising yourvoiceyourmiddlesbrough@middlesbrough.gov. The purpose of the leaflet was to enable children, young people, parents and carers to become involved in decisions about Middlesbrough. It was highlighted that the leaflet had been distributed to over 200 families and had been added to the local offer.

Members heard that work was currently being undertaken to establish a group/forum for younger looked-after children, aged between 7 and 13. Once established, the group would work with the Children in Care Council.

The scrutiny panel was also informed that with the support of Priory Woods, a youth forum would be established for children and young people with special educational needs.

The Voice of the Child Practitioner advised Members that, in partnership with Beverley School, an annual consultation pack was currently being created. The pack would include questionnaires on topics such as transitions, work readiness, safe in the community, preparing for adulthood and leisure and activities. The consultation pack would be offered to all schools and would provide SENCO's with termly consultation sessions and a clear feedback loop to the relevant teams. Receipt of feedback from young people would be collated and analysed to identify how services could be improved and developed. It was highlighted that it would be

beneficial if the positive outcomes generated by feedback were communicated to young people. It was envisaged that Beverley School would pilot the pack in January and provide feedback and comments on its content.

A parent consultation e-mail group had been created and 86 members had signed up. Members were informed that the email-group would consult on the same topics as the SENCO pack.

The scrutiny panel heard that a closed Facebook account was being developed for those accessing Middlesbrough's local offer of support and services for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities. It was also conveyed that work was being undertaken with the Communications Team to develop a live consultation page on the Middlesbrough Council website.

In respect of recommendation e and f) the scrutiny panel was informed that due to school commitments and exams, Middlesbrough's Member of Youth Parliament (MYP) had to step down from current activities but would remain as MYP until 2020. The Head of Strategic Services advised that the current MYP was looking to appoint a Deputy to assist with MYP activities. A young person had recently expressed an interest in supporting the role of the MYP and becoming a representative for the Youth Council (once established). A meeting with the young person, a Democratic Services Officer and the Voice of the Child Practitioner would take place in January to discuss aspirations and clarify involvement. It was also envisaged that the meeting would assist in determining the processes that would need to be followed to appoint a Deputy MYP and establish a Youth Council for Middlesbrough.

In respect of recommendation g) and h) to ensure that all children and young people in Middlesbrough were aware of their rights, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (child friendly) poster and leaflet were developed and circulated to all Heads of Service along with the Top Tips posters. Heads of Service had been asked to make sure frontline staff had access to the leaflet, to ensure copies could be disseminated to all children and young people accessing Middlesbrough Council services. The posters were currently being displayed in all Council buildings that were accessed by children and young people.

In respect of recommendation i) the scrutiny panel was advised that the group/forum for younger looked-after children would be launched in January 2019. Following the launch of the group, it was envisaged that a representative from that group and a representative from the Children in Care Council would attend meetings of the Children's Trust Board and the Corporate Parenting Board. However, it was highlighted that the format and content of meetings would need to be revised to ensure that they were appropriate for the representatives attending.

In respect of recommendation j, a one-sided child friendly version of the scrutiny report, Listening to the Voice of the Child, had been produced. An objective of the conference would be to seek approval for the document from children and young people. Once the content had been approved, the document would be published on the Council's website.

In respect of recommendation k), the Voice of the Child Practitioner had been working with the Council's Marketing and Communications Manager to develop a communications plan, which would suit the needs of children and young people. The work that was being undertaken included the development of the closed Facebook groups for both those accessing Middlesbrough's local offer and care leavers accessing services via the Pathways Team. Following a consultation exercise with care leavers, Facebook had been identified as the most preferable social media platform. It was commented that the newly developed Facebook groups would be regularly monitored, maintained and updated.

The Voice of the Child Practitioner confirmed that the Mind of My Own (MOMO) apps were launched in October 2018 and training had been provided on their use. The purpose of the apps was to improve engagement and consultation with children and young people. The apps enabled young people to have their voices heard and to participate in decisions about their lives. The two apps available were:

- **MOMO One** - an app that helped young people communicate their views in a way that suited them. Young people created their own account, which could be used on any device at any time. That meant that young people could use the app to say how they were feeling, what support they needed and tell their worker about things that were important to them.
- **MOMO Express** - an app designed especially for those with a learning disability and younger children. The innovative and user-friendly app helped children express their views, wishes and feelings in a fun digital way that was easy for workers to understand and evidence. The app was the perfect way to gather children's views for their Education, Health and Care plans.

Since its launch in October, 48 young people and 51 workers had created their own MOMO accounts.

The Head of Strategic Services advised that quality assurance processes would be followed to assess whether the MOMO apps were achieving positive outcomes for children and young people.

The scrutiny panel was in agreement that a further update would be required from the officers in April 2019.

AGREED as follows:

1. **That the Top Tips posters be distributed, by the Voice of the Child Practitioner, to all schools to provide teachers with a useful resource in engaging with children and young people who access Children's Services.**
2. **That a further update on the progress made with the implementation of agreed recommendations/actions be submitted to the scrutiny panel's meeting in April 2019.**

3 **FOCUS OF NEW SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION**

The Democratic Services Officer advised that, at its first meeting of the municipal year, the scrutiny panel had agreed its work programme for the current year. It was conveyed that one of the items agreed was Emotional Health and Wellbeing for Children and Young People. As the agreed topic was so broad, Members were in agreement that it would be prudent to narrow the focus of the investigation and review mental health in schools, specifically how schools promote emotional resilience and positive mental health among their pupils.

The proposed draft aim and terms of reference for the review were tabled at the meeting for Members' consideration.

A discussion ensued regarding the focus of the new investigation and the format of future meetings.

AGREED:

1. **That the scrutiny panel's next review investigated mental health in schools, specifically how schools promoted emotional resilience and positive mental health amongst their pupils**
2. **That the terms of reference for the review be approved as follows:**
 - a) **to examine schools' responsibilities in relation to mental health**
 - b) **to determine how schools identify and assess mental health needs (e.g. effective use of data, an effective pastoral system etc.)**
 - c) **to examine how schools raise awareness of mental health and promote wellbeing via in-school universal and targeted support, which is specifically tailored to the needs of their pupils**
 - d) **to identify any challenges that schools encounter when seeking to promote emotional resilience and positive mental health among their pupils**
3. **That an introduction/overview of the topic be submitted to the next meeting for the scrutiny panel's consideration.**

4 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - AN UPDATE

The Chair presented an update on the matters that were considered at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 4 December 2018. The Chair provided the scrutiny panel with information in respect of the following items:

- Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board - Annual Report and Strategic Business Plan
- Budget and Balanced Scorecards - Position at Quarter 2 2018/19
- Executive Update
- Executive Forward Work Programme
- Scrutiny Panel Progress Updates

AGREED as follows:

That the update be noted.

5 ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.**Final Report - School Holiday Provision**

The scrutiny panel was advised that the final report, in respect of School Holiday Provision, would be submitted 'to follow' for the next meeting (14 January 2018).