

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

Report Title: Listening to the Voice of the Child – Scrutiny Response

LMT Lead: Rob Brown

Date: 2 October 2018

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To set out an action plan responding to the key recommendations outlined in the Scrutiny report. The action plan demonstrates how Children's Services are supporting children and young people to influence those decisions that affect their lives.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the evidence received, and based on the above conclusions, the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel made the following recommendations for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Board:-

- a) The Panel feels that a "Top Tips" for Working with Children/Young People should be developed in conjunction with children/young people. This should then be embedded in all departments that work with children and young people.
- b) An e-learning module on the importance of child participation is developed or alternatively a conference is held for staff to attend to ensure that all relevant Council staff understand the importance of child participation.
- c) Young people should be involved in the recruitment process of staff who will be working with children and young people. This will ensure that the views of young people are taken into account on what qualities and skills they feel individuals should possess.
- d) The number of forums in Middlesbrough for children/young people who are not currently engaged in statutory services to express their views is limited. The Panel recommends that an annual conference is held for all youth groups to come together to discuss current issues and express their views.
- e) The Panel recommends that the Member of Youth Parliament is supported to develop a Youth Council. All schools and academies should be invited to become active members on the Youth Council. The Panel also strongly agreed that once the Youth Council is established it should be provided with its own budget to be used to support campaigns, training, activities and participation and is to be used at the sole discretion of the Youth Council. The Panel also recommended that the Voice of the Child Participation Coordinator be awarded a budget to support the work around child participation.

- f) Once a Youth Council is established, its Chair or Vice Chair should be invited to attend Full Council. The Panel recommended that the Youth Council have a standing item on its agenda to provide updates on its work that can be fed back to Middlesbrough Council.
- g) To ensure that all children and young people in Middlesbrough are aware of their rights, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (child friendly) poster is displayed in all Council buildings that are accessed by children/young people. All schools in Middlesbrough should also be encouraged to display the poster. It was recommended that a mapping exercise is carried out as to where information can be accessed on children's rights and emailed to all schools and academies.
- h) As well as displaying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child poster it is also recommended that a child friendly leaflet "Do you know your rights?" is produced and given to all children/young people accessing Middlesbrough Council services.
- i) A young person should become a co-opted member on the Children and Young People's Trust to ensure that the voice of the child is embedded into the aims and values of the Trust and that it is reflected in plans and strategies developed by the Children and Young People's Trust.
- j) That a child friendly version of the Scrutiny Report on Listening to the Voice of the Child is produced and posted on the Children's Services section of the Middlesbrough Council website.
- k) The use of Social Media to engage with children/young people should be explored.

These recommendations have been addressed in full and an action plan (Appendix A) and Participation Strategy (Appendix B) are attached outlining the Council's response.

THE IMPACT

The recommendations from the report have been developed into an action plan. This is being driven by the Senior Leadership Team in Children's Services and will be strengthened with by the Partnership via the Children's Trust Board.

In addition this work has supported the development of a structure and culture in Children's Services which seeks to listen to the child's voice in the development of key strategic plans such the Children and Young Peoples Plan and influencing the appointment of key senior appointments in Children's Services via the Young Recruiters panel (i.e. the recent Virtual School Head Teacher). This will continue to be further strengthened through the creation of the Young Commissioners Panel and the Young Inspectors programme.

Via the use of feedback mechanisms from children and young people, our understanding of how thoughts and feelings are placed at the centre of the interventions provided and the plans produced has improved. This work will continue and will be supported by the Bright Spots survey for Looked After Children and the Voice of the Child Conference scheduled for the Children's Services workforce in January 2019.

Also the launch of the e-learning module, top tips, communication improvements and the direct working toolkits influenced by this work are driving the quality of practice and evidencing the voice of the child in the work we do.