

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

AGENDA ITEM 9 (a)

<p>CHILDREN AND LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL PROGRESS REPORT</p>

3 March 2015

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To provide members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board with an update on the work of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel.

BACKGROUND

Safeguarding and Looked After Children

2. The last meeting was held on 4 February 2015. At the meeting, the Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Children's Care provided the scrutiny panel with:
 - Data and information, including comparisons with neighbouring authorities and statistical neighbours, pertaining to the number of:
 - Looked After Children.
 - Children requiring protection plans.
 - An outline of how the Local Authority supports Looked After Children and children requiring protection plans.
 - An overview of the actions in place to reduce the number of Looked After Children and children requiring protection plans.
 - An outline of the implications if the number of Looked After Children continues to increase.
 - Details of the measures in place to ensure there is adequate budget provision, to support Looked After Children and those children requiring protection plans, without resorting to contingencies.
3. On 4 February, the scrutiny panel was advised that Middlesbrough has a significantly higher rate of Looked After Children than its regional, national and statistical neighbour comparators. At the meeting, it was highlighted that Peopletoo had undertaken work to explore the reasons for this.
4. It was explained that Peopletoo recognised the contribution of high levels of poverty and social deprivation; however, it also observed that within Middlesbrough early help and early intervention are insufficiently developed to have an impact on the high numbers of Looked After Children.

5. The next meeting is scheduled to be held on 25 February 2015. At this meeting Richenda Broad (Executive Director for Wellbeing, Care and Learning) will provide the scrutiny panel with an overview of the work undertaken by Peopletoo, including:
 - Why the rates of Looked After Children are high and what is likely to happen in future to these rates.
 - Current trends in Middlesbrough's Looked After Children population.
 - Weaknesses in the current children's care system which may prevent or hinder a reduction in rates of Looked After Children.
6. The scrutiny panel will also receive an overview of the strategic recommendations, proposed by Peopletoo, that will reduce the numbers of Looked After Children.

RECOMMENDATION

7. That the Overview and Scrutiny Board notes the progress of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel.

COUNCILLOR JEANETTE WALKER

CHAIR OF THE CHILDREN AND LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

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