

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

AGENDA ITEM 7 (a)

<p style="margin: 0;">CHILDREN AND LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL PROGRESS REPORT</p>
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18 August 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 Children in Care

2. The last meeting of the scrutiny panel was held on 5 August 2015. At the meeting, Neil Pocklington (Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Children's Care) was in attendance to provide the panel with:
 - A brief overview of the evidence submitted to the scrutiny panel on 4 February and 25 February, including updates on the information previously conveyed.
 - An outline of Middlesbrough's children in care in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, religious or cultural background, disabilities, and what needs and challenges this profile presents.
3. Following receipt of this evidence, the panel agreed the aim and terms of reference for the review, which are outlined below:

Aim

To review the impact of services for children in care, both in terms of what is working well and any gaps and barriers, whilst ensuring the needs of each child are paramount.

Terms of Reference

- a) To examine how the Local Authority commissions services that reflect the needs of children in care.
- b) To assess the quality of placements, how stable they are and whether they work well for children.
- c) To determine how well children in care do at school, how this is monitored and whether there is sufficient support to raise aspirations and educational outcomes.
- d) To identify how the Local Authority:
 - Promotes physical, emotional and mental health of children in care.
 - Acts on any early signs of health issues.
- e) To examine the performance of the Local Authority in finding appropriate adoptive families and establish how outcomes of local adoption processes are monitored.
- f) To identify how the Local Authority promotes an effective local fostering service.

- g) To assess the quality and standard of residential care provided/used by the Local Authority.
 - h) To determine the range of support that the Local Authority provides to assist young people leaving care with the transition to independent living.
 - i) To examine the profile of the professional workforce of social workers and the effectiveness of care planning across the Local Authority.
 - j) To determine the responsibilities of corporate parents and how the role can be enhanced.
4. On 5 August, the panel also agreed:
- That, as listening to children and placing them at the centre of the review is of the utmost importance, the Children in Care Council (CICC) will be approached and asked to nominate the appropriate representative/s to become added members of the scrutiny panel, for the duration of the review.
 - That a sub-group of the panel meets with school-based representatives, to determine what support is provided to children in care.
5. The next meeting of the panel will be held on 9 September 2015. At this meeting it is envisaged that the panel will receive information on the commissioning of services and the quality of placements for children in care.

RECOMMENDATION

6. 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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