

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

AGENDA ITEM 14 (a)

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

13 OCTOBER 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. A meeting was held on 9 September 2015. The purpose of the meeting was to consider evidence in respect of:
 - a) How the Local Authority commissions services that reflect the needs of children in care.
 - b) The quality of placements, how stable they are and whether they work well for children.
3. Neil Pocklington (Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Children's Care) and Rachel Mawer (Commissioning Manager) were in attendance to provide Members with information in respect of commissioning services, the quality of placements, budget pressures, the profile of children in care, maintaining relationships, the views of children in care and placement stability.
4. The last meeting was held on 30 September 2015. At this meeting, the scrutiny panel considered evidence pertaining to how well children in care do at school, how this is monitored and whether there is sufficient support to raise aspirations and educational outcomes.
5. Julie Bunn (Virtual School Head) and Chris Fallon (Head of Achievement) were in attendance, at the meeting, to provide the scrutiny panel with information on the Virtual School and educational attainment in 2014/15.
6. Members heard that the virtual school approach is to work with children in care - as if they were in a single school, liaising with the schools they attend, tracking the progress they make and supporting them to achieve as well as possible.

7. The scrutiny panel heard that although, overall, Middlesbrough's children in care achieve broadly as well as children in care across the country, the gap between Middlesbrough's children in care and their peers - based in Middlesbrough's schools, remains. It was also conveyed that although it is currently less pronounced than in some years, the trend remains and the gap widens as children get older.
8. On 30 September, Members also agreed the membership, purpose and remit of the panel's sub-group. The group will meet with Head Teachers and/or designated teachers who champion the educational attainment of children in care. It is envisaged that secondary school visits will be undertaken in October/ early November.

RECOMMENDATION

9. 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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