

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIAL CARE AND SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL**

**A meeting of the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel was held on 25 January 2022.**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Davison (Chair), Councillor Mawston (Vice Chair); Councillors: Hellaoui, Higgins, Nugent, Uddin, and Wilson.

**OFFICERS:** C Breheny, S Butcher, J Dixon and R Farnham.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** H Insull – Youth Focus North East  
K Deen – Together Middlesbrough and Cleveland  
C Williams – North Ormesby Primary Academy

**PRESENT AS AN OBSERVER:** B Morley, Student Social Worker, Bungalow Project (in placement at North Ormesby Primary)

**An APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE** was submitted on behalf of Councillor J Walker.

**\*\* DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

| <b>Name of Member</b> | <b>Type of Interest</b> | <b>Item/Nature of Interest</b>   |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Councillor Davison    | Non-pecuniary           | Ag. Item 4 – Locality Working – Family members both work for organisations attending meeting – Thirteen & Together Middlesbrough and Cleveland |

**MINUTES – 13 DECEMBER 2021**

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel held on 13 December 2021 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

**LOCALITY WORKING FROM A CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERSPECTIVE – FURTHER INFORMATION**

The Chair welcomed those present and provided background in relation to the Panel's current scrutiny topic of Locality Working from a children's services perspective.

It was explained that the Panel had been provided with information in relation to various partners working within the locality pilot areas of Newport and North Ormesby and subsequently wished to invite some of those partners to discuss, with the Panel, their involvement in locality working in order to provide a better understanding of how the multi-agency approach was working to improve outcomes for children and families.

The following representatives were in attendance at the meeting:-

- H Insull – Youth Focus North East
- K Deen – Together Middlesbrough and Cleveland
- C Williams – North Ormesby Primary Academy

Youth Focus North East

H Insull, Youth Focus North East (YFNE), explained that YFNE was a young people's charity covering the north east, particularly East Middlesbrough, including North Ormesby. YFNE was currently funded through the Big Local lotto-funded initiative which was approximately half way through a 10-year funded period.

Youth provision operated on Mondays and Thursdays at North Ormesby Hub, Derwent Street, for young people aged 10 – 18 years.

YFNE participated in the weekly North Ormesby locality team meetings which had been helpful to enable young people's voices to be heard and to help them progress the things that they wanted to happen within their community. For example, YFNE were funded to create social action projects – this focused on ideas that would benefit the community and make it a nicer place to live.

YFNE had worked with the North Ormesby Locality Team in order to implement some of those ideas – such as recent community litter picks undertaken by young people and an art project with young people who had made boards to cover void property frontages within North Ormesby to improve their appearance. This work had been carried out in conjunction with the Council and Thirteen Housing. Also in conjunction with the Locality Team, a Community Awards event was organised to celebrate people within the community and a similar event had been held in Newport. The Panel was informed that YFNE found it beneficial to work with other organisations to strive for the same aims and objectives on a bigger scale.

YFNE was not directly funded by the Council for any youth provision, with all funding being generated from external sources, however, YFNE had excellent engagement with the local community and many of its staff lived within the community. YFNE felt that due to not being a Council funded service, it could sometimes be left out of the loop in terms of information sharing. For example, where other services were involved with young people and families in the community, YFNE was not always made aware from the start despite the fact that they may already be engaging with those young people on a twice weekly basis. It was felt that some issues might have been resolved more quickly had the information from other services been brought to the attention of YFNE much earlier, allowing collaborative working.

YFNE had attended some of the Children's Social Care locality meetings and found this to be very beneficial as it provided an opportunity to share any issues or concerns regarding young people they were engaging with and allowed liaison with the young person's social worker in order to determine whether there was any additional support that could be provided to that young person by YFNE. It also helped to avoid duplication of provision.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- In response to a query as to what activities YFNE provided for young people, it was explained that they tried to deliver provision where there was none, or very little, or where there had been no provision for a long time. The starting point would be to consult with young people in the area to find out what their aspirations were and what they would like to achieve and to instil that they were capable of achieving amazing things. Cooking was one of the weekly activities carried out with the young people, showing them how to cook healthy recipes from scratch that they could take home to their families. Other activities included arts-based activities, sports and local organisations were invited to undertake intervention based work where appropriate, such as substance misuse and sexual health. The young people were due to take part in positive graffiti art in North Ormesby Park which would include education around the difference between art and vandalism and that positive art in the right place, in the right way was a good thing.
- The Panel thanked YFNE for the excellent work that was being undertaken with lots of young people within the communities, including the fantastic community award ceremonies that had taken place.
- A Panel Member thanked the officer for her positive attitude towards the young people her organisation worked with and queried whether there were any issues in communicating with other partners within the locality project. It was stated that there were no particular problems and that the North Ormesby Neighbourhood Development Manager provided good oversight and did a great job to bring everyone together and do the best for the North Ormesby community. The team focusing on the North Ormesby area was doing the best that they could

to achieve the aims for the community.

#### K Deen – Together Middlesbrough and Cleveland

K Deen, Food Insecurity Project Officer, Together Middlesbrough and Cleveland (TM&C) advised the Panel that TM&C was responsible for co-ordinating programmes of fun activities and the provision of health meals across Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland during school holiday periods. This was known as 'Feast of Fun'. The aim of the project was to combat hunger during school holidays for vulnerable families who struggled to provide the cost of additional meals and entertainment for children outside of term time.

In order to fund the Feast of Fun provision, TM&C raised external funding each year to be able to support local organisations that they worked with in the form of small grants. TM&C worked with around 40 churches and community organisations in order to deliver Feast of Fun within their own communities.

TM&C provided central co-ordination of the programme across Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland during each school holiday. Additional resources were also secured for the groups that they worked with, for example, TM&C worked with Youth Focus North East who delivered Feast of Fun – this could be a face to face enrichment activities during school holidays for children and young people to enhance Youth Focus North East's offer and would also include a healthy meal.

TM&C also provided Feast of fun branding for the groups that they worked with to promote their activity in the community and also secured, co-ordinated and disseminated additional resources for groups to access, such as coach hire, free entry to tourist attractions, children's books, workshop providers, entertainers and healthy food ingredients.

In terms of the impact of Feast of Fun, during 2019, the organisations that participated, delivered 13,000 meals to children at a cost of £34,000. During 2020, Feast of Fun became Feast of Fun at Home due to the pandemic and 86,000 meals were delivered, costing around £82,000. During 2021, the provision was delivered both remotely and face to face and the number of meals delivered again increased to 117,000, requiring funding in the region of £117,000. Alongside those meals, organisations would include activities and activity packs were delivered together with the meals during periods of lockdown.

In terms of specific support for Feast of Fun via the locality model, the Panel was advised that TM&C attended both locality meetings in Newport and North Ormesby on a weekly basis with in-depth discussions around everything that was happening in those areas. The Panel heard that this was a great opportunity to find out what was going on across all organisations, for example, when Feast of Fun was coming up to the next delivery period, discussions could take place around organisations wishing to be involved and identifying possible funding streams. Where a family was in desperate need of support during the holidays, it enabled contact with other services and organisations to support them.

Some of the groups TM&C worked with to deliver Feast of Fun included:-

- Newport Hub
- Streets Ahead for Information
- Youth Focus North East
- Linx
- Trinity Young People and Children's Project
- Local Schools

During 2021 in Newport and North Ormesby, through the Feast of Fun, 1,292 children and young people were supported; 398 adults were supported and 10,441 meals were provided, as well as enrichment activities.

It was highlighted that last year the Holiday Activities Fund (HAF) was introduced and funded by the

Council. The HAF provision was very similar to what was delivered by Feast of Fun, however, it was only available to children in receipt of free school meals within school whereas Feast of Fun could support any family and many families were on the borderline of receiving support. In addition, Feast of Fun was available during all school holiday periods throughout the year, whereas HAF provision was available for one week of each of the Christmas and Easter holidays and four weeks of the summer holidays. Feast of Fun would be delivering provision during the February half term and as there would be no HAF provision during February, this placed additional demand on Feast of Fun provision. As the HAF was a new provision there had been initial difficulties in being kept informed, however, work was undertaken to co-ordinate delivery of Feast of Fun and HAF in parallel in order to try to avoid duplication for some and to ensure every young person had access to provision if needed.

The Panel was provided with a real-life case study of a family that had accessed the Feast of Fun provision. This highlighted how much the support had meant to the whole family and this was typical of the impact the provision had.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- The Panel expressed thanks at the great work that was being done to help children and their families.
- It was queried how the families requiring support were identified. The Panel was advised that the organisations that TM&C worked with already knew their families, as did the schools. For example an organisation, such as Youth Focus North East, would apply for a small grant from TM&C, or a school or organisation working in partnership with a school, would identify children/families requiring support and apply to TM&C for funding in order to support those families. Sometimes direct contact would be made by the family themselves. Locality working fitted in well as it allowed all of the agencies to liaise with each other in order to identify the right support and requirements of the family.
- It was queried whether TM&C experienced difficulties in securing funding. The Officer advised that it was becoming more and more difficult to access funding streams, however, one of their largest funding partners was Break, Meals and More who worked closely with TM&C on an annual basis so that the amount of funding available across Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland was known at the start of each year. TM&C had been fortunate to obtain some funding from the Council in the past but this had become more difficult due to the introduction of the HAF provision. This was why it was essential to work alongside HAF to ensure the right provision went to those who needed it most.
- A Member of the Panel commented that it was very sad that all of the provision was necessary in the first place and that there was a continuous growing need, particularly in certain areas of the town. The provision being delivered through the HAF and through TM&C was much needed and appreciated.

#### North Ormesby Primary Academy

C Williams, Designated Safeguarding Lead, North Ormesby Primary Academy was welcomed to the meeting and advised that she was in attendance mainly for information purposes as she was largely unaware of the locality working model in North Ormesby.

The Panel heard that the school currently had 278 children on roll and that approximately 20% of those children were in receipt of level four Children's Services as well as many more children engaging at levels two and three.

The officer stated that she was aware of some fantastic work going on within the area and that the school had advertised some of the events that they were aware of, however, they had not been involved in any of the locality area meetings or been involved in the project and had not been made aware of the various services/agencies that families within the school could be referred to for help.

In response as to whether the school had access to the HAF provision during the summer and Christmas holidays, it was stated that an external HAF used the school building during Christmas but this had been the first time that children at the school were able to access this provision, however, it was primarily for children in receipt of free school meals and those able to pay to attend. There was a large proportion of the community who were not able to access public funds or claim free school meals but lived on low incomes and would welcome such provision.

The Executive Director of Children's Services expressed concern that the school had no knowledge of the locality working project and acknowledged that North Ormesby Primary had been working more closely with Children's Services. The Director stated that she would undertake to ensure that the relevant information was provided to the Safeguarding Lead and her colleagues as soon as possible.

A Member of the Panel expressed concern that the school had been excluded from the locality project and commented that he had assumed that the pilot projects in Newport and North Ormesby operated on an identical basis so was surprised that the school had not been included from the start of the project but felt reassured that the necessary information would now be provided.

A Panel Member stated that a list of all the services and organisations available to support families within the locality should be made available or be available via a co-ordinator. It was stated that the North Ormesby Neighbourhood Development Manager would have this information.

#### North Ormesby Neighbourhood Development Manager

Unfortunately the North Ormesby Neighbourhood Development Manager was unexpectedly unavailable to attend the meeting. The Chair requested that she be invited to attend the Panel's next meeting and that should she be unable to do so, an appropriate representative should attend on her behalf.

The Chair thanked all of the attendees for attending the meeting and for their valuable contributions and suggested that the locality street wardens and police be invited to attend the next meeting if available.

### **COVID RECOVERY IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

The Executive Director of Children's Services advised that staff attendance was monitored across the whole of Children's Services and, to date, the following numbers of staff were absent due to Covid/self-isolation:-

- Total staff (across whole service) – 24 (equating to 8%)
- Children's Social Care – 14 (6 of which were within Children's homes)
- Education and Partnerships - 10

The Panel was advised that the levels of staff absence had remained fairly steady, peaking at around 10%, meaning that there had been no requirement to report to the DfE which was required if 20% or higher absences were reached.

It was reported that there had been some disruption with school transport meaning that some children had not been able to get to school or get to school in time. Transport had been cancelled due to staff shortages within the Integrated Transport Unit and also some transport was cancelled by schools due to staff availability. These issues were now improving and beginning to resolve.

School absences were being monitored by Public Health. Schools had been significantly impacted by Covid in terms of staff shortages and pupil absences, but managed to ensure teaching was delivered in schools through the use of higher level teaching assistants where necessary. These issues were again beginning to ease.

In summary, it was an improving picture and it was hoped that this would continue, particularly the pressures on staff in schools who had carried out a sterling job in managing staff and pupil absences.

On behalf of the Panel, the Chair wished to thank staff in schools and also those staff working in children's homes who had been under immense pressure in relation to Covid. The Director of Children's Care highlighted that some Children's Home staff had chosen to self-isolate and live in the homes to ensure that they remained staffed.

**AGREED** that the information provided be noted.

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD UPDATE**

A verbal update was provided in relation to the business conducted at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 18 January 2022, namely:-

- Executive forward work programme
- Chief Executive's Update
- Scrutiny Panels' Chair's Updates
- Final Report of the Adult Social Care & Services Scrutiny Panel – Recruitment and Retention of Staff within Adult Social Care
- Medium Term Financial Plan/Budget Consultation
- Corporate Performance Report - Quarter Two
- Next OSB meeting – 22 February 2022 at 10.00am

A Member of the Panel expressed concern that those Executive Members whose portfolios had changed, and the portfolios of the two new Executive Members, had not yet been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board. It was incumbent on the Executive to provide a retrospective report on the work that had been undertaken within the respective Executive portfolios since they had last reported to OSB and to also report on the transitional arrangements whilst portfolios transferred from one Executive Member to another.

The Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Panel, who was also the Vice Chair of OSB, assured the Panel that the Member's comments were actively taken on board at the OSB meeting and had been actioned.

The Democratic Services Officer highlighted that the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board had requested that the new Executive Member for Education be invited to the next meeting of OSB to provide a retrospective update on the Education portfolio.

## **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel was scheduled for Monday, 21 February 2022 at 4.00pm.