

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel was held on Monday 21 February 2022.

PRESENT: Councillors D McCabe (Chair), M Saunders (Vice-Chair), A Hellaoui, T Mawston, G Wilson and S Dean (Substitute) (Substitute for P Storey)

OFFICERS: S Bonner, S Butcher, C Cannon, E Cowley, C Kemp, G Moore and K Smith

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors D Jones, M Nugent and P Storey

21/43 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Name of Member	Type of Interest	Item/Nature of Interest
Councillor A Hellaoui	Non-Pecuniary	Items 4 and 5, member of two governing bodies

21/44 **MINUTES - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL - 17 JANUARY 2022**

The minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel held on 17 January 2022 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

21/45 **POST-16 EDUCATION**

At its meeting on 28 June 2021, when considering its work programme, the scrutiny panel had previously agreed to hold a one-off meeting on the topic of post-16 education.

The Council's Head of Achievement and the Head of Community Learning and Employability were in attendance to provide:

- information on the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill; and
- an overview of the post-16 education landscape in Middlesbrough and the range of opportunities currently provided.

The Head of Achievement advised that in line with the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill, many providers were reviewing the provision on offer in the local area to ensure post-16 education and training was more responsive to employers' needs. Previously, the provision available did not necessary match the needs of local labour markets.

Locally, the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill aimed to:

- develop local skills improvement plans;
- make provision relating to further education to ensure it was fit for purpose;
- make provision about the functions of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, relating to technical education qualifications, to assist in meeting the needs and demands of local labour markets;
- make provision regarding student finance and fees to narrow any inequality gaps;
- make provision regarding assessments by the Office for Students; and
- make provision regarding the funding of certain post-16 education or training providers.

It was explained that Government action/intervention was required as:

- too many individuals were leaving full-time education with low skills and too few had higher technical skills (i.e. level 4-5);
- participation in lifelong learning was low and declining; and

- too much learning was done in subjects with relatively low economic value.

In terms of post-16 education, Middlesbrough had the following providers:

- Macmillan Academy post-16;
- Middlesbrough Community Learning;
- Kings Academy Sixth Form;
- Trinity Sixth Form; and
- Middlesbrough College.

In terms of post-16 education in Middlesbrough:

- All Middlesbrough's providers had been inspected by Ofsted and were graded as good.
- In 2019, over 2200 apprentices had found employment across Teesside and the North East.
- Last year, 1300 students had applied to university.
- At least 97% of Middlesbrough's students progressed to positive destinations when they had completed their college course, including higher education, apprenticeships or employment.
- The quality of education meant that there had been a 99.6% overall pass rate for A Level subjects.

In terms of what was on offer in Middlesbrough, there was a suite of academic, vocational and apprenticeships available across multiple colleges and sixth forms.

Given Middlesbrough's high levels of deprivation, there was financial assistance available for families, which could be accessed through a bursary scheme. Each of Middlesbrough's post-16 educational settings provided bursary schemes.

In 2020 a new T Level qualification was created, which was an alternative to A Levels. T Levels focused on vocational skills and could help students into skilled employment, higher study or apprenticeships. In Middlesbrough, T Levels focussed on areas such as Childcare, Construction, Digital and Healthcare.

Members were advised that Middlesbrough Community Learning was the Council's adult learning, skills, apprenticeship and employability service. The service worked in partnership with local charities, colleges and sixth forms to provide a range of support and opportunities to long-term unemployed adults.

In terms of the Council's offer, the Head of Community Learning and Employability advised that the apprenticeship opportunities focused on employer needs. The Council offered apprenticeships up to level 5 in Customer Service, Business Administration, Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools and Leadership and Management. It was commented that during 2020/21, the service had engaged with 84 apprentices across the Council and 90% of those apprentices had moved into positive destinations e.g. progressed to the next level of an apprenticeship, higher education or employment. The Council's apprenticeships were tailored to meet demand and address the needs of the workforce.

The Council worked closely with other providers to ensure duplication was kept to a minimum. The service also worked closely with schools and hosted career events across the town, which training providers and employers were invited to attend.

The Council also offered the Lingfield Choosing Pathways 16+ Study Programme and Supported Internship Programme, which was aimed at supporting young people with special educational needs or Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). The programme offered vocational qualifications that were linked to career paths and work experience opportunities. Many of the opportunities offered by Lingfield Choosing Pathways were accessed from the Council's 50 Futures programme. The 50 Futures programme provided a variety of high quality work experience placements, with the Council and its trusted partners, to people in the local community who found it difficult to gain employment. It was commented that, prior to the pandemic, 53 internal placements had been offered. In terms of Lingfield Choosing Pathways, of the 19 learners that had accessed the programme in 2020/21, 86.6% of young people were

achieving, 84.2% of learners had moved to positive destinations and 92% were from deprived areas.

It was commented that Council had an adult education programme, providing support for those over the age of 19. Approximately 4,000 individuals per year engaged with the programme. The programme offered a range of learning support for those who had achieved level 2 or below, to assist with building skills. Last year, 74% of adults engaging with the programme were from deprived areas.

The scrutiny panel was shown a diagram illustrating the provision and adjustments that settings had taken to ensure that courses and qualifications met the demand and needs of local labour markets

Members heard that enrichment was an important and integral part of post-16 life and all students were encouraged to participate. It was commented that after school, a range of activities were offered including sports, art, drama, technology etc. Settings also encouraged feedback from pupils to introduce new activities. In addition, sports fixtures were played at district, county and national levels.

The scrutiny panel was advised that Macmillan Academy encouraged pupils to broaden their experiences by assisting with the development of life-long skills. The support offered enabled pupils to equip themselves for later life, including community work, opportunities for work experience and visits to events. It was commented that each setting had a prospectus, which detailed the enrichment activities offered to young people.

Members were advised that the Duke of Edinburgh's Award was an internationally recognised scheme that enabled young people to push themselves personally and physically to achieve more than they thought was possible. The scheme was promoted in settings to encourage pupils to build skills, increase confidence and gain independence.

At King's Academy, pupils were encouraged to pursue other interests alongside their academic studies, a balance sought by employers and universities. Opportunities to develop leadership skills were also provided by enabling pupils to take part in team-building activities and to complete charity work in the local area and abroad. The sixth form's enrichment programme offered students the chance to choose from many diverse activities ranging from work placements to rock climbing and surfing.

A Member commented that although Nunthorpe Academy was not located within Middlesbrough's boundary, the setting did provide education and support to a high number of Middlesbrough's residents.

A Member raised a query regarding financial support for pupils living in deprived areas. In response, the Head of Achievement explained that grants were available and could be accessed via the providers/settings. It was also commented that the grants were means-tested.

In response to a Member's query, the Head of Achievement advised that enrichment activities had continued throughout the pandemic and residential trips and sporting events had now resumed.

In response to a Member's query regarding motor vehicle experience, the Head of Achievement advised that in Middlesbrough, apprenticeship take-up was at 76.2%, which was above national benchmark of 64.7%. It was added that a wide range of apprenticeships were on offer and, through vocational pathways, Middlesbrough Community Learning offered placements covering areas such as construction and motor vehicles. It was also commented that an in-depth review of provision was being conducted and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects were being promoted in colleges and sixth forms. It was highlighted that all students undertaking T Levels at Middlesbrough College were provided with an industry placement that lasted at least 45 days. Those placements helped students gain valuable experience in the workplace and allowed employers to meet the new talent in their industry. Work experience was now integral to a pupil's learning experience.

The Head of Community Learning and Employability advised that the Council was proactive in promoting work experience opportunities and that was reflected by the number of

apprenticeships offered by the organisation and its 50 Futures programme, which provided work experience placements to the people in the local area who found it most difficult to get a job. It was commented that 157 individuals had successfully completed placements and approximately 35% of those individuals had secured employment since completion. In addition, 54% were still working for the Council. It was commented that work was being undertaken to expand the number of placements currently available.

In response to a Member's query regarding recruitment to the armed forces, the Head of Achievement advised that secondary schools ran a Combined Cadet Force (CCF) programme. It was commented that evidence suggested that those pupils who engage with the programme, increased their outcomes by 70%.

A Member expressed concern in respect of the costs associated with attending university. There were also concerns in respect of the low numbers of young people from deprived backgrounds attending university and the large socio-economic gaps in participation. The Head of Achievement acknowledged the comments made and advised that there were alternative routes available to secure employment. It was advised that the apprenticeship route did enable pupils to achieve qualifications, gain skills, gain experience and earn a wage. It was also added that a financial incentive of £1000 could be accessed by employers who trained young people in the workplace.

The Executive Director advised that as part of the Middlesbrough Children Matter work that was being undertaken, there was a focus on encouraging all Council's directorates to provide a significant number of work experience placements and apprenticeships. It was also commented that Members, as Corporate Parents, should be championing apprenticeships for looked after children.

A Member raised a query in respect of apprenticeships offered by small businesses. In response, the Head of Community Learning and Employability advised that Middlesbrough Community Learning worked with businesses to determine their needs and provide links to post-16 settings.

Members were advised that briefing sessions were scheduled to take place, across the Council, to raise the profile of internal apprenticeships.

NOTED

21/46

EDUCATION AND COVID-19 RECOVERY

The Executive Director for Children's Services explained that:

- Covid-19 rates continued to decrease in the lead up to the half-term break;
- schools were now focussing their efforts on the determining the impact of the disruption to learning, which had been caused by the pandemic;
- attendance and oversight of vulnerable children remained a high priority;
- the Safeguarding Children Partnership was continuing to address the challenges that were outlined in a letter received from the Department for Education (DfE), entitled 'Keeping Children Safe in Winter';
- overall attendance in school was good and improving; and
- the trend for vulnerable children attending school was improving.

NOTED

21/47

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - AN UPDATE

The Chair advised that on 18 January 2022, the Overview and Scrutiny Board had considered:

- the Executive Forward Work Programme;
- an update from the Chief Executive;
- updates from the Scrutiny Chairs;
- the Adult Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel's Final Report on The Recruitment and Retention of Staff within Adult Social Care;

- the Medium Term Financial Plan and Budget Consultation; and
- the Corporate Performance Report at Quarter 2.

NOTED

21/48

ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.

Updates on Key Developments

A Member requested that updates on key and significant developments in the town, in respect of education and learning, be reported to future meetings of the scrutiny panel.

NOTED