
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel was held on Monday 20 June 2022.

PRESENT: Councillors D McCabe (Chair), M Saunders (Vice-Chair), A Hellaoui, T Higgins, C Hobson, D Jones, M Nugent and G Wilson

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor M Smiles (Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Children's Services)

OFFICERS: S Bonner, R Brown, S Butcher, C Cannon, T Dunn, G Moore and K Smith

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor P Storey

22/1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at this point in the meeting.

22/2 MINUTES - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL - 25 APRIL 2022

The minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel held on 25 April 2022 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

22/3 EDUCATION AND LEARNING - AN OVERVIEW

The Director of Education and Partnerships provided the scrutiny panel with information on the main service areas within its remit and an outline of priorities, key issues and challenges for the year ahead. The following information was provided:

- For a significant period of time there had been disruption for education, due to Covid-19. Infection rates had settled and schools were now undertaking 'business as usual' activities.
- In light of the impact of Covid-19, the Government had introduced a White Paper, which focussed on achievement and improving outcomes for children and young people. The paper set out plans to make sure every child could reach their potential. Middlesbrough would be provided with additional funding to deliver the Government's ambitions. The Local Authority would continue to ensure schools worked collectively to improve outcomes, provide high quality education and deliver the ambitions of the White Paper. Given the Government's plans, by 2030 it was anticipated that all schools would have become academies.
- To support the delivery of the White Paper, the Government was currently seeking views on its Green Paper about the changes it planned to make to the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and alternative provision (AP) system in England. The Government had recognised that although significant investment had been made in the SEND system, the system was financially unsustainable. The Green Paper aimed to tackle that by improving mainstream provision and ensuring settings offered early and accurate identification of needs, high-quality teaching, and prompt access to targeted support. The Green Paper aimed to improve mainstream provision, building on the ambitious of the White Paper reforms.
- The Local Authority was currently investigating the funding and opportunities available to develop multi-agency family hubs, focussing on school readiness.
- Given the impact of Covid-19 and the increase in demand, the issue of SEND sufficiency was highlighted and the importance of ensuring there was a sufficient number of places to educate children and young people with SEND and provide specialist provision.
- There had been recent changes in respect of attendance in schools. The importance

of school attendance was highlighted, as it provided reassurance that children/young people were benefiting from education and professionals were able to safeguard and promote their welfare. It was expected that, in future, there would be new duties placed on the Local Authority to improve attendance. The Local Authority's Vulnerable Children Attendance Project (VCAP) aimed to monitor and track the attendance of vulnerable children. The Department for Education (DfE) had selected Middlesbrough as a pilot area in respect of school attendance, building on the good work that had already been undertaken.

- Although the areas referenced were of national importance, the issues of SEND sufficiency and attendance were very specific to Middlesbrough's local needs.
- The issue of youth violence and the work undertaken with schools was highlighted as a priority for Education and Partnerships. Work in that area would continue via the delivery of the Youth Justice Plan.

A Member enquired about the relevance of SEND sufficiency to the scrutiny panel's recent review of SEND. The Director of Education and Partnerships explained that SEND sufficiency was specific to the free school wave and funding announced by Government to provide special and alternative provision free schools. The closing date to register an interest was July 2023. The issue was specific to sufficiency, rather than broader SEND provision.

In response to a Member's query regarding the locations of the proposed family hubs, the Director of Education and Partnerships advised that the funding planned to provide universal provision to those families in need. It was added that, in respect of developing the hubs, the scrutiny panel may wish to provide input.

A Member highlighted the importance of tackling youth violence and recommended that the topic be selected for the scrutiny panel's work programme for 2022/23.

A Member commented that, when agreeing its work programme, the scrutiny panel may wish to review the development of family hubs as part of a broader topic of early learning for young children.

NOTED

22/4

SETTING THE SCRUTINY PANEL'S WORK PROGRAMME - 2022/23

The Democratic Services Officer presented the submitted report. The following information was provided:

- At the start of every municipal year, panel members discussed the topics that they would like to review during the coming year.
- Work programmes were useful as they provided some structure to a scrutiny panel's activity and allowed for the effective planning and preparation of work.
- Referenced in the report was a list of topics which were anticipated to be of particular interest to the scrutiny panel.
- A topic that had been agreed last year, which had not been investigated was School Meals and Physical Education.
- The topical issues referenced in the report were - the impact of COVID on learning, every child deserves the best start in life, leading and delivering early childhood services, Pupil Premium and sexual abuse in schools and colleges.
- The suggestions received for the scrutiny panel's consideration were - air pollution outside schools and the impact on school attendance, teaching children about budgeting, digital inclusion for children and young people and children who struggle making friends at school.
- The Director of Education and Partnerships had suggested that it would be timely for the scrutiny panel to investigate the topics of youth violence and work undertaken with schools; SEND sufficiency and the free school wave.
- When considering its work programme, the scrutiny panel was asked to ensure that topics agreed for inclusion met the criteria detailed at paragraph 13 of the report.
- A prioritisation aid was included at Appendix 1 to enable Members to determine topics where scrutiny can make an impact, add value or contribute to policy development.
- It was recommended that the scrutiny panel identified two topics it would like to include in its work programme, those would then be submitted to the Overview and

Scrutiny Board for approval.

A Member made reference to the impact of Covid-19 on the learning of four and five-year-olds, ensuring every child deserves the best start in life and leading and delivering early childhood services. It was suggested that those issues could be considered collectively by investigating the topic of early learning for young children.

A Member commented that it would be beneficial for the scrutiny panel to look at Free School Meals (FSM) and the issue of school attendance.

A Member expressed a wish to investigate the topic of youth violence and its links to school exclusions and attendance. It was added that there had been an increase of serious youth violence across the Cleveland Police Force area.

A Member put forward a suggestion that the scrutiny panel investigated the topic of School Meals and Physical Education, which had been previously agreed for the work programme in 2021/22. The need for pupils to have access to healthy and nutritional meals was highlighted. It was added that data and information in respect of FSM could also be considered as part of the review.

Members were in an agreement that a short review of School Meals and Physical Education could be undertaken to look at healthy eating standards in schools, FSM data/figures and the physical education curriculum.

The Director of Education and Partnerships advised that work undertaken to address serious youth violence was primarily delivered by the Youth Offending Team and its partners (including schools). It was clarified that the topic had been suggested as the Local Authority worked in partnership with schools to deliver programmes aimed at addressing the issue of youth violence in the Middlesbrough area. It was therefore agreed that the scrutiny panel would investigate the topic of youth offending and partnership working with schools.

A discussion ensued and Members agreed topics for inclusion in the scrutiny panel's work programme for 2022/23.

AGREED

That the topics listed below be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Board for approval and inclusion in the work programme of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel for 2022/2023:

Short review

- **School Meals and Physical Education**

In-depth reviews

- **Youth Offending and Partnership Working with Schools; and**
- **Early Learning for Young Children.**

22/5

DRAFT FINAL REPORT - SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND)

The Democratic Services Officer presented a brief overview of the draft final report on the topic of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The following information was provided:

- The aim, terms of reference and background information were detailed on page 2 of the report.
- Information in respect of Term of Reference A was included on pages 3 through to 6 and included key data and graphs in respect of children and young people with SEND in Middlesbrough, including their individual characteristics and primary needs.
- Information in respect of Term of Reference B was included on pages 6 through to 8 and covered the range and impact of SEND, referencing the four main areas of need which were - Cognition and Learning; Communication and Interaction; Physical, Medical and Sensory and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH).

- Information in respect of Term of Reference C was included on pages 9 through to 17 and provided details of how the Local Authority worked with early years providers, schools and colleges to identify and support children and young people with SEND. The section of the report included evidence received from the Early Years and Primary Support Service, Green Lane Primary Academy, Caldicotes Primary Academy, Rosedene Easterside, Discovery Primary Academy, Ayresome Primary School and Middlesbrough College.
- Information on Term of Reference D was included on pages 17 through to 20 and provided details of how Education, Social Care and Health worked collectively to deliver SEND provision at a local level and referenced Education, Health and Care Plans, the SEND Strategic Group and its workstreams and key developments.
- Information on Term of Reference E was included on pages 21 through to 24 and covered how the views, wishes and feelings of the child/young person and their parents were gained and the section referenced coproduction and the evidence received from Parents4Change.
- Information on Term of Reference F was included on pages 24 through to 28 and covered best practice strategies in supporting children and young people with SEND and referenced guidance published by the Education Endowment Fund and the Local Government Association.
- There was a section of the report covering information that had come to light throughout the investigation, which, while not directly covered by the terms of reference, was relevant to the work of the panel on the topic. Pages 28 through to 31 referenced the increasing demand in the local area and the fact schools and settings were under pressure to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND and those who were at risk of exclusion.
- The conclusions were detailed on pages 31 through to 33, a) through to k). The conclusions summarised the main points of the report and identified key areas for further consideration.

Draft recommendations were presented for the scrutiny panel's consideration.

A Member commented on the importance of the scrutiny panel receiving regular updates on the implementation of the proposed recommendations and the work undertaken to develop and sustain an effective local SEND system. The inclusion of a recommendation, requesting updates on a six-monthly basis, was agreed.

A Member commented that it would be useful to provide further clarification in respect of the data included at paragraph 13 of the submitted report. The Strategic Lead for the Inclusion and Specialist Support Service advised that of the 4800 children and young people classed as SEND in Middlesbrough, 1300 had an EHCP and 3500 did not require an EHCP. It was commented that the Local Authority's Inclusion, Assessment and Review Service and Model provided targeted inclusion support, which had impacted on the number of children and young people requiring an EHCP. It was agreed that the report would be updated accordingly to outline the information provided.

Following discussion, the following recommendations were agreed for inclusion in the final report:

- a) That awareness raising activities are undertaken to ensure that all of Middlesbrough's schools and settings are aware of the Local Authority's explicit offer of targeted inclusion support. There is a need for schools and settings to receive clear and concise information on what targeted support can be accessed, what is part of the "core" offer open to all schools and settings (without requiring a statutory assessment and plan), and the additional offer that settings and schools can tap into by using their own resources.***
- b) That work is undertaken with Legal Services and the Data Protection Officer to develop an effective transition planning process for all stages of education, which addresses the restrictions associated with GDPR. For example, Durham County Council has developed an electronic process for primary school headteachers to share the names of students who may require additional transition support into secondary education. Wording, informing parents that information will be shared to support transition, has been included in the admissions brochure, on Durham County Council's website and in secondary application forms and offer letters.***

- c) ***That the Local Authority links up with Middlesbrough College to provide placements for the college's supported internships programme. Supported internships have been introduced at Middlesbrough College to give a greater focus on preparing young people with special educational needs and disabilities with the skills needed for adulthood and employment.***
- d) ***That, to support continuous improvement, a regular cycle of SEND reviews takes place across all educational settings and outcomes are reported to the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel.***
- e) ***That SEND annual reports are published to demonstrate how data, intelligence and feedback has been used to support strategic planning arrangements and ensure that there is sufficient local provision and support.***
- f) ***That work is undertaken with the Integrated Transport Service to explore and identify solutions to ensure children and young people with SEND are provided with travel assistance to enable them to access respite care.***
- g) ***That, to further promote effective partnership working, a local area partnership agreement is developed, which outlines how partners will work together and sets out responsibilities and agreed working arrangements. Investing time in fostering relationships and partnerships, given their importance to the local SEND system, is highly important - as there is a risk that those relationships can change very quickly.***
- h) ***That the collaborative work undertaken by Education, Social Care and Health is commended and continues to drive further improvement in the SEND system. Given the increasing demand for provision to support those children and young people with SEND, it is vital that work continues to expand specialist provision and enable mainstream settings to provide support.***
- i) ***That data/intelligence is collected, analysed and reported on to demonstrate the specific strategic approaches and practices that have been effective in supporting children and young people with SEND, enabling them to achieve the best possible educational outcomes and preparing them effectively for adulthood.***
- j) ***That regular updates are reported to the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel, on a six monthly basis, in respect of the progress made with implementing the above recommendations and the work undertaken to develop and sustain an effective local SEND system.***

AGREED

That, subject to the inclusion of the agreed recommendations, the final report on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) be approved and submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Board for consideration.

22/6

EDUCATION AND COVID-19 RECOVERY

The Director of Education and Partnerships advised that there had been a period of significant disruption for education, due to Covid-19, however, infection rates had reduced and schools were now undertaking 'business as usual' activities.

It was added that there had been a slight increase in Covid-19 infection rates and subsequently there had been an increase in staff and pupil absences. It was advised that rates were being closely monitored and the Local Authority continued to work with schools to ensure all children had access to education, through the delivery of remote learning. It was also added that attendance and oversight of vulnerable children remained a high priority.

NOTED

22/7

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - AN UPDATE

The Chair advised that at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, held on 27 April 2022, the Board had considered:

- the Executive Forward Work Programme;
- the topic of school exclusions with the Principal at Unity City Academy and the Regional Head Teacher at River Tees Multi Academy Trust;
- an update from the Chief Executive;
- the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel's final report on the Green Strategy; and
- updates from the scrutiny chairs.

Members were informed that at the last meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, held on the 11 May 2022, the Board had considered:

- the Executive Forward Work Programme;
- an update from the Executive Member for Neighbourhood Safety and the Executive Member for Young Adults and Political Engagement;
- an update from the Chief Executive;
- information on school exclusions gathered from school visits;
- the Children and Young People's Social Care Scrutiny Panel's final report on Sufficiency and Permanency; and
- the Children and Young People's Social Care Scrutiny Panel final report on Locality Working from a Children's Services Perspective.

A Member commented that the Board had undertaken visits to Outwood Academy Ormesby and Kings Academy, which had provided reassurance that good work was being undertaken to avoid exclusions. It was added, however, that it would be beneficial for additional visits to be scheduled to enable Members to gain assurances that all secondary schools in Middlesbrough were doing everything possible to support children and young people to remain in school and achieve their full potential.

The scrutiny panel's Democratic Services Officer would liaise with the Overview and Scrutiny Board's Democratic Services Officer to coordinate/arrange future visits to schools during the new academic year.

NOTED

22/8

PROPOSED MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2022/23

A proposed meeting schedule, for the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel, was submitted for the scrutiny panel's consideration.

AGREED

That the proposed meeting schedule, for 2022/23, be approved.

22/9

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

As the pandemic internal safety restrictions had now been lifted in the Council, a Member raised the issue of whether future meetings of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panels would be held virtually or face-to-face.

Each Member of the scrutiny panel was asked to state their preference in respect of virtual or face-to-face meetings. In conclusion, 4 of the 8 members indicated a preference for virtual meetings and 4 indicated a preference for face-to-face meetings. Several members indicated that a combination of both virtual and face-to-face meetings would be preferable.

A Member commented that virtual meetings offered increased inclusivity and flexibility.

The Chair proposed a cycle of three meetings being held virtually and the fourth taking place

20 June 2022

face-to-face in the Town Hall. However, the scheduling of face-to-face meetings would need to take into consideration the items scheduled for discussion and the availability of those officers and witnesses submitting evidence.

The Democratic Services Officer advised that the preferences indicated by panel members would be fed back to the Head of Democratic Services and further clarification on future working would be sought.

A Member commented that it was important that hybrid meetings could be facilitated and work was being undertaken to purchase audio visual equipment.

NOTED