

EXECUTIVE MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Deputy Mayor & Lead Member for Children's Services

DATE OF MEETING: 18 January 2023

This report aims to provide an update to members on activity within my portfolio and performance against the strategic priorities I either lead on or am involved with.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Consolidate and build on recent children's services progress to improve Ofsted rating.

WHAT I HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN:

I wish to put on record my thanks to our previous director of children's services Sue Butcher.

I know that my fellow councillors had great respect for Sue and are thankful for the progress that she guided.

I also want to express gratitude to Rachel Farnham, our previous director of children's care, who has now moved to Durham County Council. I wish them both the best of luck for the future.

I am delighted to welcome our new interim director for children's services Sue Myers. We have also appointed Claire Sowerby as interim director of children's care.

Sue was previously a consultant practice improvement lead in the service. I feel she has brought a fresh perspective to the role whilst also providing continuity.

As well as continuing our improvement journey, Sue is very much focusing on the budget challenges that children's services face across the country. These pressures are caused by a number of factors such as the cost of external residential placements, the need for agency staff and a drop in foster carers. We are developing a plan to deal with these issues with urgency.

I am sure you will join me in giving the new leadership team our full support.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Consolidate and build on recent children's services progress to improve Ofsted rating

Children's services received its sixth monitoring visit from Ofsted focusing on older children in care and care leavers in early November.

There was a two week lead in period and two inspectors Jan Edwards and Jo Warburton were with us for two days. As well as staff the inspectors interviewed me as lead member for children's services and the chair of corporate parenting Chris Hobson.

Jan was the lead inspector for our original inspection in November/December 2019 - so was able to gauge the progress we have made in this area since that time.

Since the last inspection, services for older children in care and care leavers has started to improve. Most older children who are approaching leaving care are supported to develop the necessary independence skills needed to live alone.

There was lots of positive feedback – and there were also areas for improvement. The whole findings can be read here: <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50201203>

One piece of feedback was that care leavers told inspectors that most of them had experienced a positive transition from care and that they had been well supported by their social workers and their personal advisors.

However, a small number of care leavers described feeling rushed when moving out of care and some young people said they needed more financial support to enable them to buy food and pay their energy bills.

We have now got an action plan in place tackle any weaknesses ahead of the full Ofsted inspection, which we believe will take place early this year.

DIRECTORATE PRIORITY: Deliver the Learning and Education Strategy to help school improvement and support educational outcomes in Middlesbrough.

WHAT I HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN:

It was a delight to visit young people at Outwood Academy Ormesby to hear about their work with The Talent Foundry and global finance business M&G.

The aim of the project is to deliver inspirational workshops and mentoring to the town's young people - helping them discover what they are amazing at, develop valuable employment skills and prepare them for the world of work.

The group of young people I met were selected for a workshop that really got their creativity flowing and helped them think about career paths they might not have otherwise considered.

The Year 7 and 8 students took part in role playing as event organisers, arranging their own music festivals for thousands of people by using numeracy skills to make decisions on artist bookings, site layout and catering.



The first three Enterprise Challenge workshops have taken place with students from Outwood Academy Ormesby, Outwood Academy Acklam and Acklam Grange School providing brilliant feedback.

Comments from students included:

“It helped me to get more confident in speaking in front of people.”

“I had the chance to be creative and solve problems at the same time.”

“I learnt that maths is involved in most jobs and I had lots of fun”.

DIRECTORATE PRIORITY: Deliver the Pupil Place Strategy, to ensure sufficient appropriate, high-quality school place are available for children and young people now in the future.

WHAT I HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN:

Middlesbrough’s newest secondary school is now expected to move to its new home in September 2025.

The Department for Education (DfE) is leading the project to build Outwood Riverside’s permanent base on land near Middlesbrough College and whilst the DfE had confirmed an opening date of September 2023 in September 2021, its latest update has stated 2025. This is in the main due to building setbacks.

It’s hoped Outwood Riverside will be able to provide additional places at Russell Street for future years whilst other options within the town are also being pursued.

Outwood Riverside continues delivering excellent education at its temporary home in the town centre and - having visited and been in contact with the school regularly - it is clear the students and staff are enthusiastic and committed and the school continues to deliver brilliant education.

The council has been assured by the DfE that a slightly longer stay in the temporary accommodation is the best course of action.