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## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel was held on Monday 16 January 2023.

**PRESENT:** Councillors D McCabe (Chair), A Hellaoui, C Hobson, D Jones, M Nugent and G Wilson

**OFFICERS:** R Brown, C Cannon, K Dargue, T Dunn, I Hanif, G Moore and K Smith

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillors M Saunders and T Higgins

### 22/36 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

### 22/37 **MINUTES - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL - 12 DECEMBER 2022**

The minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel held on 12 December 2022 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

### 22/38 **YOUTH OFFENDING AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING WITH SCHOOLS - FURTHER EVIDENCE**

The South Tees Youth Justice Service's (STYJS) Education, Training and Employment (ETE) Specialist was in attendance to provide information on the STYJS Inclusion Pathway and to demonstrate how the STYJS worked with schools in Middlesbrough to:

- react swiftly and firmly to early signs of criminal behaviour;
- promote engagement in the education system;
- improve attendance;
- prevent exclusions;
- improve attainment; and
- deliver well-targeted educational support.

The ETE Specialist explained that following the endorsement received from the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel, the STYJS Inclusion Pathway had been implemented in mid-December (2022). It was added that, since its introduction, 25 referrals had been received.

The new STYJS Inclusion Pathway had created a mechanism which enabled Case Managers to access support for young people who were at risk of disengagement from education. The pathway had been designed to promote engagement in the education system, improve attendance, prevent exclusions (fixed-term and permanent), improve attainment and deliver well-targeted educational support.

Members heard that training had been delivered for Case Managers, which had included information on the importance of the STYJS Inclusion Pathway and the reason for its development.

The introduction of the STYJS Inclusion Pathway demonstrated effective practice in respect of partnership arrangements with schools, colleges and training providers to actively support the delivery of education.

Members heard that in terms of the process followed, Case Managers contacted schools, colleges and training providers to collect the following information:

- the young person's up-to-date attendance record;

- information about the young person's behaviour in school/training;
- the young person's academic levels/achievements;
- the young person's risks and concerns in respect of ETE;
- any services or support provided/not provided in response to the young person's special educational needs and whether a SEN Plan or EHCP was in place; and
- the young person's attitude to ETE.

It was advised that gathering information from schools, colleges and training providers planned to provide a holistic picture of the young person.

The scrutiny panel heard that Case Managers recorded attendance and suspensions. When assessing the young person, a referral was made to the STYJS ETE Team if the young person's attendance record was lower than 75% and/or the young person had been suspended more than 10 times during a term.

It was explained that the referral mechanism in respect of attendance levels reflected the national average for young people attending school and did not take into account those attending alternative provision or pupil referral units.

With regards to the support provided by the STYJS ETE Team, the ETE Specialist and the ETE Support Worker would complete checks on Capita and consult with Case Managers and other education teams. Following those checks, if it was determined that support was required, the case would be allocated to the ETE Specialist.

It was explained that, to provide support, the ETE Specialist would link in with other education teams, such as the Virtual School, the SEN Team and the Inclusion and Outreach Service. It was also advised that the ETE Specialist attended Pupil Inclusion Panel (PIP) meetings, Inclusion Triage meetings and ETE Risk meetings.

Members heard that, if necessary, a school education plan would be developed. To develop the plan, the STYJS ETE Team would meet with the young person, their family and the school. It was explained that a restorative approach would be taken to discuss, assess and determine how the necessary support could be provided. The work undertaken planned to capture the voice of the young person and their parents and address any barriers.

In terms of caseload, all young people who were at risk of exclusion would be monitored and tracked by the ETE Specialist. It was added that those cases would be discussed in supervision sessions with the ETE Support Worker.

The importance of effective communication and partnership working was highlighted. Members heard that collaborative relationships had been established to ensure that packages of support complemented and reinforced the approaches taken by other statutory services and agencies involved with the young person.

It was advised that both qualitative and quantitative data would be collected and analysed to demonstrate the impact of the STYJS Inclusion Pathway, specifically the improvements that had been secured as a result of its implementation.

In terms of communication and partnership working with schools, the STYJS had undertaken work to improve links between schools and Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) and neighbourhood policing teams. For example, with regards to a particular school's concerns in respect of one pupil potentially engaging in criminal activity, the STYJS had contacted the PCSO and linked in with the school to ensure essential information was shared. Consequently, the sharing of information had enabled the school to submit a Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing, Trafficked (VEMT) referral. The importance of sharing information and reacting swiftly and firmly to early signs of criminal behaviour was conveyed.

Members heard that the STYJS had been working to develop a directory of year leaders and senior leadership teams in schools. To effectively share and gather information, the directory planned to improve communication and enable the STYJS to contact the most relevant professionals.

Members heard that in respect of one young person, the STYJS ETE Team's involvement had:

- improved relationships between the young person's family and the school;
- facilitated the gathering and sharing of information;
- enabled education to be delivered in a hybrid manner, i.e. in school over 3 days and in alternative provision over 2 days.

The scrutiny panel was provided with an example of an education plan that had been developed for a particular young person, which included objectives and rules aiming to promote the young person's engagement with education. The plan had been developed with the young person, in consultation with the school, and mutually agreed objectives/rules had been identified as outlined below:

- *I will follow the rules of the school and attend my lessons.*
- *When I get upset, I will attend the office of the Year 11 Learning Manager to collect my thoughts. I will do this by alerting school staff.*
- *All staff will be informed so they are aware if I need a break.*
- *I will not wander around school and will speak to staff if I need a break.*
- *My MIND worker will speak to school with regards to the support I am receiving. Therefore, school staff are aware when they are communicating with me.*
- *I will make the best out of the situation in school by attending my lessons.*
- *School staff will contact my Mum if there is an issue.*
- *If I don't agree with staff, I will speak to the Year 11 Learning Manager.*

Members heard that the school was made aware that the young person had been severely bullied in the past and became anxious when in the presence of large crowds. It was therefore agreed with the school that the young person would be allocated an additional 5 minutes to arrive at the classroom. In addition, the Year 11 Learning Manager had been identified as having a positive influence on the young person and was able to offer comfort and support.

It was highlighted that a referral to MIND had been made and the young person had received support in respect of conflict resolution and techniques to manage anxiety. The school education plan highlighted the importance of the school being regularly updated in respect of the support being delivered by MIND, including the different coping mechanisms and techniques being applied by the young person.

Members heard how the mother of the young person had lost confidence in the school, due to the lack of communication and engagement experienced when the young person had been suspended. The STYJS ETE Team had provided a restorative forum that identified and addressed the communication barriers. The school subsequently apologised to the young person's mother and communication and engagement improved.

It was highlighted that since the implementation of the school education plan, the young person had not been suspended or been absent from school. It was added that plans were reviewed on a 6 weekly basis.

A Member commented on the importance of young people having direct access to a school professional who listened and offered support, such as the Year 11 Learning Manager. In response, the ETE Specialist advised that building trusting relationships was crucial to gaining buy-in from the young person, their family and the school. It was added that any lack of engagement was challenged.

In response to a Member's query regarding data, the ETE Specialist advised that 45 young people were involved with the STYJS and 25 of those had been referred for support via the STYJS Inclusion Pathway. Of those 25, 12 were female and 10 had SEN. It was anticipated that the rate of referrals would increase over time and a request for additional resources, to cope with future demand, had been made.

A Member raised a query in respect of the young person being permitted to arrive at class later and enquired whether the option should be made available to other pupils suffering from anxiety. In response, the ETE Specialist advised that a young person's needs, and the effective strategies to support those needs, were determined on a case-by-case basis. Members heard that the plan would identify the most appropriate way of delivering effective teaching and learning for that child.

In terms of the criteria for STYJS Inclusion Pathway referrals, a Member queried the reason for the lower than 75% attendance threshold. In response, the ETE Specialist advised that 75% reflected the national average. The Head of Access to Education and Alternative Provision advised that the local average for children and young people attending school in Middlesbrough was currently 89%. The Director of Education and Partnerships added that the figure of 75% reflected the nature of the cohort. Members were advised that work would be undertaken to review attendance data of the STYJS cohort and the attendance threshold currently applied would be revisited.

A Member raised a query about the process that would need to be followed if there was a concern regarding the welfare of a particular child or young person. In response, the Director of Education and Partnerships advised that it would depend on the nature of the concern, however, typically a safeguarding referral would need to be made via Middlesbrough's Multi-Agency Children's Hub.

A Member raised a query with regards to the approach taken when responding to a parent's negative views of a school. The ETE Specialist advised that when developing a plan, parents were consulted and the reasons for any negative views were considered and discussed. In respect of the case study, it had been established that, given the lack of communication, the mother had lost faith in the school. The school subsequently apologised and improved communication/engagement had assisted in re-building trust. Members heard that a restorative approach had been taken, which had led to a more positive relationship between the mother and the school.

In terms of the criteria for STYJS Inclusion Pathway referrals, a Member queried the reason for the level of suspensions being 10. The ETE Specialist explained that at present, some exclusion teams in the Tees Valley became involved if a young person had reached the threshold of 20 suspensions during one term. By lowering that threshold to 10, a preventative approach had been adopted.

A Member raised a query in respect of the work undertaken by the STYJS's ETE Team. In response, the ETE Specialist advised that the team had established links with schools, colleges, training providers and the Work Readiness Team. The STYJS ETE Team worked in a collaborative way to provide advice, information, guidance, monitoring and oversight in respect of a young person's education, training and employment.

A discussion ensued and Members commented on the importance of receiving a future update on the work of the STYJS ETE Team, which demonstrated the impact of the STYJS Inclusion Pathway.

## **AGREED**

**That the information presented at the meeting be considered in the context of the scrutiny panel's investigation.**

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## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - AN UPDATE**

The Chair advised that on 13 December 2022, the Overview and Scrutiny Board had considered:

- the Executive Forward Work Programme;
- an update on ongoing work and current key issues from the Executive Member for Regeneration;
- the Revenue and Capital Budget Projected Outturn Position as at Quarter Two;
- the Corporate Performance Update as at Quarter Two 2022/2023; and
- updates from the scrutiny chairs.

## **NOTED**