

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

AGENDA ITEM: 9 (a)

<p>CHILDREN AND LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL PROGRESS REPORT</p>

29 March 2016

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To provide members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board with an update on the work of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel.

BACKGROUND

Safeguarding and Children in Care

2. At the meeting held on 24 February 2016, the scrutiny panel continued to gather evidence in respect of its review of Safeguarding and Children in Care.
3. At the meeting, the scrutiny panel considered evidence in respect of Terms of Reference i) and j):
 - To examine the profile of the professional workforce of social workers and the effectiveness of care planning across the Local Authority.
 - To determine the responsibilities of corporate parents and how this role can be enhanced.
4. The Director of Wellbeing, Care and Learning, the Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Children's Care and Lead Executive Member for Children's Services were in attendance at the meeting.
5. The scrutiny panel found that the professional workforce of social workers is relatively stable and there are initiatives in place to retain staff. However, there is a requirement for the Local Authority to recruit to vacancies to alleviate current workload demands on staff, therefore improving capacity to undertake statutory visits within expected timescales. There is also a need for work to be undertaken to ensure all care plans are sufficiently specific and measurable.
6. From the evidence received the Local Authority recognises the importance of strong corporate parenting and embedding the voice of children in care in local practice. Middlesbrough's Pledge demonstrates the strong commitment to corporate parenting. However, it was recognised that Councillors would benefit from formal training that supports them to champion the needs and interests of children in care.

7. The last meeting was held on 16 March 2016. At the meeting, the scrutiny panel considered, discussed and agreed the final report on this topic and determined its conclusions and recommendations.

Substance Misuse Among Parents and Carers

8. In 2012, the scrutiny panel undertook a review of Substance Misuse Among Parents and Carers.
9. At the 16 March meeting, Members received an update/overview of the progress made with the implementation of the agreed actions, since the panel's report was submitted to the Executive.
10. The Risk and Reduction Manager, the Project Manager for Care Coordination and the Coordination and Development Officer were in attendance at the meeting.
11. Data demonstrates that there are a high proportion of substance users, in Middlesbrough, who have children or parenting responsibilities. Subsequently, the scrutiny panel received data and information on the key areas of work that are presently being delivered, or are being developed, to tackle the risk of substance misuse. Members heard that a new Integrated Drug and Alcohol Service is being developed. It was advised that the service will provide engagement, preventative and early intervention through to treatment and recovery support services for all individuals, irrespective of age or substance used.

RECOMMENDATION

12. That the Overview and Scrutiny Board notes the progress of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel.

COUNCILLOR JEANETTE WALKER

CHAIR OF THE CHILDREN AND LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

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