

## **Children, Education and Skills Sub Committee**

**Thursday, 12 September 2019**

Present:

Councillor M Thirlaway (Chair)  
Councillors T Brady, S Brockbank, N Huscroft,  
M Madden, A Newman, P Oliver, E Parker-Leonard, S  
Phillips and M Wilson

Mr S Fallon – Church representative

Apologies: Councillor J Cassidy, Rev M Vine, Church Representative  
and Mrs M Ord, Parent Governor Representative

### **CE08/09/19 Appointment of substitutes**

There were no substitutes reported.

### **CE/09/09/19 To receive any declarations of interest**

Councillor E Parker-Leonard declared a registerable personal interest in Item 8, Corporate Parenting Overview, as she was a foster carer with another local authority.

### **CE/10/09/19 Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 July 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **CE/11/09/19 Work Programme 2019-20**

The sub-committee received a report which asked Members to consider and agree a work programme for the municipal year 2019/20.

A proposed outline work programme was attached at Appendix 1. Members of the sub-committee were invited to raise any other topics relevant to the remit of the sub-committee that they thought should be included in the work programme. Additional topics raised would be scheduled accordingly in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair.

It was raised that, at the previous meeting, a suggestion had been put forward that the sub-committee look at skills shortages in the borough. It had since become apparent that this was to be looked at by Economic Prosperity Sub-committee and therefore the suggestion was withdrawn from the work programme.

It was highlighted that, in relation to topics for in-depth review, a suggestion had been put

forward to look at early intervention to help children be ready for school. It was agreed that this topic be included in the work programme and a sub-group be established to undertake this piece of work.

It was **agreed** 1) to establish a sub-group in relation to Early Intervention and 2) work with relevant officers to draft an appropriate scope for the study.

### **CE/12/09/19 Update on Behaviour Management and Exclusion Policies within the Borough**

The sub-committee received a report from officers in School Improvement which updated Members on the most recent information, patterns and trends in behaviour and exclusions of pupils.

Members were informed that the Keeping Children in School agenda had remained a focus for headteachers, school staff and local authority colleagues working with children and families. The number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions, including Looked After Children (LAC) and those with a special educational need or disability (SEND) continued to be well below the national average. It was noted that through the introduction of a graduated response, schools and settings have been supported to follow a common framework which provided appropriately staged support to pupils' individual needs.

The rate of fixed term exclusions in the most recent published data (2017-2018) were consistently better than the national average across all phases of education. In the primary phase the North East had a lower rate of fixed term exclusions than the national average and North Tyneside remained in the lowest 20% of local authorities for fixed term exclusions in primary schools. In the secondary phase of education, the rate of fixed term exclusions continued to increase nationally. The North East had shown the largest increase in fixed term exclusions by a region in the space of a year. However, North Tyneside's fixed term exclusion rate had decreased from the previous year and remained in the lowest 20% of local authorities.

It was explained that the rates of fixed term exclusions in special schools were falling, both nationally and in the North East. Rates in North Tyneside however, continued to rise for the third year and across local authority performance was in the second quintile. Provisional information for 2018-19 suggested that this trend had now been reversed. There were no permanent exclusions from special schools in the borough during 2017/18 and there had not been one since 2006.

The report highlighted that rates of permanent exclusions in primary schools were very low, 0.03%. During 2017/18 North Tyneside had two permanent exclusions from primary schools, which placed the local authority among the second quintile of local authorities nationally. In the secondary phase of education, rates of permanent exclusion had levelled off after four years of increase. Rates in the North East continued to rise and at an accelerating rate. North Tyneside's rate of permanent exclusion had increased from 2016/17 to 2017/18 but remained in the lowest 20% of local authorities for permanent exclusions.

The report detailed, on the basis of provisional information, the reasons for permanent exclusion during 2018-19. These included physical assault against a pupil; physical assault against an adult; persistent disruptive behaviour; drug and alcohol; and verbal abuse against an adult. When looking at schools by deprivation measures, it was noted that schools serving pupils from the 10% most deprived areas have an average fixed term exclusion rate of 16%, compared to 6% for the 10% least deprived areas.

In relation to prevention measures, there were two Going the Extra Mile conferences that were well attended in 2018. Best practice from advisers and schools included the widely adopted THRIVE approach to de-escalation, using sport to raise self-esteem, resilience for teachers and self-regulation methods for children in the early years. The Early Years and School Improvement Service had led the development of best practice guides to support schools to develop effective behaviour policies and pupils' social and emotional mental health. The Education Psychology Service had led the training and accreditation of nationally recognised THRIVE practitioners in many North Tyneside school. The THRIVE approach was research based and provided a powerful way of working that supported children's social and emotional wellbeing.

Members of the sub-committee commented that reports on exclusions never addressed potential victims and the support that they received. Members highlighted the balance between working with a disruptive child to improve behaviour and the right of other pupils to have an uninterrupted education. Officers explained that the purpose of the brief had been to focus on exclusions, but that further information in relation to support for victims could be presented at a future meeting. It was noted that all schools have bespoke behaviour and anti-bullying policies to protect students and that restorative work around reconciliation would take place. In determining whether an exclusion would be an appropriate measure, Head teachers must consider the safety of other students in the school.

In relation to exclusions in primary schools, a member of the sub-committee suggested that issues could have related to undiagnosed problems and asked what support was in place to identify educational or behavioural support needs. The support available was graduated, with needs initially identified and resourced within school. If this did not meet needs, a referral for further support would then be made to the school support team. The aim was to ensure that anybody with additional needs was identified by Year 4.

The Chair thanked the officers for the report and for the work that they undertook. It was noted that a reason why exclusions in North Tyneside were comparatively low to the national picture was the positive working relationships between schools in the borough and the local authority.

It was **agreed** to note the contents of the report.

### **CE/13/09/19 Special Educational Needs**

The Chair reported that this item had been deferred as the presenting officer was unable to attend. Disappointment was expressed that the item had been deferred at short notice and that there was nobody available to deputise

## **CE/14/09/19 Corporate Parenting Overview**

The sub-committee received a presentation from the Senior Manager, Safeguarding and Children's Services in relation to Corporate Parenting.

It was highlighted that all Councillors and Council Officers shared Corporate Parenting responsibility. This responsibility was also shared by partners, with the Clinical Commissioning Group needing to ensure the health needs of looked after children are promoted and Police Commissioners considering whether children in care are being supported to avoid offending. As a benchmark of what would be considered as good corporate parenting, Members and officers were encouraged to use the test 'would you consider it good enough for your own child'. It was important to get corporate parenting correct as children in care were already disadvantaged and it was essential for public care to compensate for this disadvantage rather than compound it.

The sub-committee was informed that there were 303 Looked After Children in North Tyneside. There were slightly more male than female children in care and 51 of the children were under the age of 5. Children may come into care for a number of reasons including abuse, neglect, complex disability needs or unaccompanied asylum seekers. Members were informed of the breakdown of where children in care were living, which included in a children's home, with foster carers or in supported accommodation. It was noted that there were currently not enough foster carers within the borough and work was taking place around improving recruitment.

The sub-committee was informed that an Ofsted inspection in 2017 found that services for looked after children were good and outstanding for care leavers and that children become looked after when it is in their best interests. Findings also demonstrated that educational progress for looked after children was positive and a significant majority of pupils made expected levels of progress.

A member of the sub-committee asked how services could go from being good to outstanding. It was acknowledged that there were too many changes in social workers and that foster carers did not always receive the level of training that they should. Improving in these areas could further improve the good service rating.

The sub-committee was informed that children in care had been consulted on what they would like to see from a corporate parent. This included getting involved in events that celebrate achievement for young people, keeping young people informed of the decisions made about them and arranging for young people to deliver tips or training.

It was **agreed** to note the content of the presentation.