



North Tyneside Council

Overview, Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee

Monday, 25 January 2021

Tuesday, 2 February 2021 This meeting will be held remotely via Teams - Remote Meeting commencing at 6.00 pm.

Agenda Item	Page
1. Apologies for Absence To receive apologies for absence from the meeting.	
2. Appointment of Substitute Members To receive a report on the appointment of Substitute Members.	
3. Declarations of Interest and Dispensations You are invited to declare any registerable and/or non registerable interests in matters appearing on the agenda, and the nature of that interest. You are also invited to disclose any dispensation in relation to any registerable and/or non-registerable interests that have been granted to you in respect of any matters appearing on the agenda. Please complete the Declarations of Interests card available at the meeting and return it to the Democratic Services Officer before leaving the meeting.	
4. Minutes of the meeting 18 January 2021 To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2021.	5 - 12
5. Children and Young People's Plan 2021 - 2025 To consider the final proposals for the development of the Children and Young People's Plan for the Borough covering the period 2021-2025.	To Follow

Members of the public are entitled to attend this meeting and receive information about it. North Tyneside Council wants to make it easier for you to get hold of the information you need. We are able to provide our documents in alternative formats including Braille, audiotape, large print and alternative languages.

**Agenda
Item**

Page

6. Children's Readiness for School

13 - 26

To introduce the report of the Children's Readiness for School Sub-Group.

Circulation overleaf ...

Members of the Overview, Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee

Councillor Jim Allan (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Brian Burdis
Councillor Sandra Graham (Chair)
Councillor Janet Hunter
Councillor Andy Newman
Councillor Martin Rankin
Councillor Joe Kirwin

Councillor Alison Austin
Councillor Karen Clark
Councillor Muriel Green
Councillor Anthony McMullen
Councillor Pat Oliver
Councillor Debbie Cox
Councillor Willie Samuel

Mrs Michelle Ord, Parent Governor Representative
Rev Michael Vine, Church Representative
Mr Stephen Fallon, Church Representative

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Overview, Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee

Monday, 18 January 2021

Present: Councillor S Graham (Chair)
Councillors B Burdis, K Clark, M Green, Janet Hunter,
A McMullen, A Newman, P Oliver, M Rankin, M Ord,
Rev M Vine, D Cox, W Samuel and S Fallon

In attendance:
Councillors

Apologies: Councillors A Austin and J Kirwin

OV67/21 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Councillor P Oliver declared a non-registerable personal interest in item 6 Children and Young Peoples Plan 2021-2025. She has a family member in receipt of SEND services.

OV68/21 Minutes

Resolved that the minute of the meeting held on 9 November 2020 be confirmed.

OV69/21 Annual Report of the Elected Mayors

The Elected Mayor, Norma Redfearn, attended the meeting to share the Council's achievements in the past year and her priorities for the year ahead .

There was no doubt that the year had been different to anything that had been experienced. It had been a time of ambiguity and uncertainty both nationally and locally. The pandemic, which was once discussed and thought about in theoretical terms, had become a reality and one that had and will continue to deal with and manage

Responding the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic continued to make it an extremely busy time and many things had been done differently and with great speed.

The Mayor thanked her Cabinet colleagues, Council Members, Chief Executive, Senior Leadership Team and officers for their support and commitment.

Staff had continued to ensure that bins were emptied, that the most vulnerable residents were cared for and supported, that children were provided with a school meal. All staff rose to the challenge and at times risked their lives to ensure services were delivered and she praised their bravery.

The Good Neighbour Scheme in conjunction with North Tyneside VODA had also been a tremendous resource throughout the pandemic and she thanked the volunteers for the support they provided.

When the Covid-19 restrictions came into place, the regular Listening Events in Town

Centres on a Saturday morning were put on hold. Something which would return in the future when it is considered safe to do so.

Targeted engagement activity to seek the views of residents had continued to take place, with the feedback providing an opportunity to hear issues of real importance to residents and would be adapted for the borough accordingly.

The aim now, was to drive forward the recovery from Covid-19 through the Council Plan. While concentrating on managing local outbreaks and keeping people safe, the Council and partners were trying to continue to protect the recovery of North Tyneside.

She stated that there was real importance to make sure children and young people could stay in education and catch up.

There are several ambitious plans for changing North Tyneside and investing in the borough.

In looking to the future, it was important to evaluate and analyse what can be done differently, to help and reshape services in the future, with continuous development of plans to make North Tyneside an even greater place to live, work and visit.

The focus would continue to be on three key priorities – our people, our place, and our economy with the aim of delivering positive opportunities for everyone in the borough.

Children & Young People

The plan ensures that the Council works better for residents by improving how it does things and allowing more opportunities to volunteer, be more independent and do more for local communities. Something that had clearly been demonstrated during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Covid-19 Support Hub, set up in March with VODA to help protect the most vulnerable residents and several other wonderful community and voluntary organisations, businesses and many, many volunteers had helped fulfil requests into the hub. This included picking up prescriptions, household supplies and grocery shopping, as well as making regular welfare calls, checking people had food and spending time talking to them. This had become a lifeline for many, and she stated she was overwhelmed by the generosity of others and the unity shown by the community.

Despite the challenges of Covid-19, schools, colleges and training providers continued to work hard to carefully manage their robust safety measures, giving parents the confidence to return their children to the classroom to progress their education, wellbeing and wider development.

She praised parents and carers for the fantastic job in home schooling during lockdown and recognised that they were doing so whilst juggling their day-to-day commitments.

She stated that the gap between the have and have nots had become more apparent and there was a need to look to what could be done to reduce that.

Earlier in the year, Children's Services were rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted, following rigorous

inspection of its Children's Social Care Services. Inspectors assessed the Council and its partners on the effectiveness of services to help and protect children, the experiences and progress of children in care, including adoption, fostering and the use of residential care and care leavers.

The inspectors report described North Tyneside social work as 'thriving' and 'transformational'. They reported that the children and families who need extra support were "really benefiting" from the services. In addition, that the "impressive level of investment in participation and engagement was empowering children and young people".

It had been a difficult year for A level students in North Tyneside and across the country. Not only had they missed school because of the pandemic they also had significant disruption in receiving their exam results.

However, the young people in North Tyneside were resilient and the Council would continue to give them and their schools all the support they need.

The GCSE results day was very different to the experience to that in the past and the Mayor wrote to government to express her feelings about the injustice of how the A-Level and GCSE results situation had been dealt with.

Older People

In relation to our older people of the borough. Throughout the pandemic the Council continued to provide comprehensive support to care homes and new ways of accessing services included virtual face to face sessions. This had continued to promote the health and wellbeing of the most vulnerable residents.

Poverty Intervention Fund

The Mayor reported that children, older people, and low-income families were benefitting from a new £1 million poverty intervention fund. The fund aims were to help reduce the impacts of poverty on families and individuals and address the many ways living in poverty can affect residents.

Additionally, families who were entitled to free school meals would receive help with the cost of school clothing, including winter coats and shoes, as well as free food and meals during school holidays.

The fund also aimed to improve older people's quality of life by supporting them to access their benefit entitlements. As Older people were often impacted by poverty more than they need to be and this was simply because they are not taking up their full benefit entitlement. To address this the fund would deliver an end-to-end benefit take up campaign, providing advice and worker support to those who need help to make a claim.

Spirit of North Tyneside

During the pandemic the 'Spirit of North Tyneside' programme was created to acknowledge and celebrate all of the people who helped to make a difference, whether that is going the extra mile to support vulnerable residents or a community effort, whether it be an act of kindness, signing up to volunteer, or developing a new scheme to support people who were shielding. The Spirit of North Tyneside recognition scheme now incorporates many of our

annual awards including the Chair's Commendation Scheme and the Young Mayor's Award.

BAME Task Group

The Mayor established the BAME Task Group and at the first meeting there was representation from a number of different organisations including; Walking with; Show Racism the Red Card; Radeem Church, RCCG; New to UK; Representative Council of North East Jewry; Whitley Bay Islam Cultural Centre; Trade Union Committee; DWP ; Tyneside CCG and VODA.

As well as discussing its membership the group considered information about the different ethnic groups which make up our community in North Tyneside and agreed to focus on hate crime; recruitment; training for staff; learning English as a second language; engagement and support networks in the community; cultural events; education; health and employment and skills.

Each of these important issues will be considered at future meetings of the Task Group.

Our place

For the South West

Swan Hunters

Following the Cabinet's decision, the sale of the former Swan Hunter site was completed, bringing the site back into beneficial economic use which meets the Council's (and funders) objectives around job creation and economic growth.

Centre for Innovation

The second phase of the Centre for Innovation was completed which provides floorspace for businesses and will build on the success of the first phase of the scheme which is occupied by a range of companies related to the offshore/energy sectors.

Segedunum

Work had been completed for a new vision for Segedunum with Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums. This was now being developed into a comprehensive 15 Year Master Plan and investment programme for the site which would underpin future business planning and help grow the visitor offer making it more sustainable.

Charlotte Street

Following the acquisition of 11 residential properties in Charlotte Street, Wallsend, which were in a poor condition and poorly managed would be refurbished and converted from flats to family housing.

New Healthcare Facilities

The Council continued to work with New River Retail and healthcare providers to deliver new healthcare facilities in the heart of Wallsend Town Centre as part of the regeneration of the town centre.

Civic Hall

Work continues with the current operator of Wallsend Civic Hall exploring future opportunities for the wider site.

Former Buddle Arts Centre

Pre-renovation works had been completed for the former Buddle Arts Centre to bring the building back into use as serviced office accommodation and conferencing/events space.

For the North West

Killingworth

A new 3G pitch has been developed at Killingworth Young People's Club which improved the facility for its users.

Killingworth Lake

A major flood alleviation project had been delivered by the Council and the Environment Agency at Killingworth Lake. Further investment was planned to build on the investment in Flood Defences and broaden and expand the area for visitors by further developing facilities including a Multi-Use Games Area, a new café opportunity and a health and fitness trail.

Forest Hall

Forest Hall Shopping Centre was completed last year. Working with the community and businesses, the scheme had transformed the appearance of the centre and had acted as a catalyst for further private sector investment into commercial properties.

Burradon

Improvements were planned to the bowling green, grass pitches and artificial grass mini soccer pitch at Burradon Welfare.

West Moor

Work had been completed to add a new bus lane and improve access for cyclists and pedestrians along Salters' Lane between Haddrick's Mill and West Moor.

Killingworth Moor

Work continued at Killingworth Moor to deliver on the Council's plans for new housing in the borough.

For the North East

Whitley Bay

There had been significant investment at the coast which was encouraging visitors to the

area and helping to support the local economy. The Spanish City regeneration and continued investment in the coastal infrastructure follows the investment in the Central Lower Promenade and the southern portion of the Northern Promenade and Watts Slope WC's.

For the South East

North Shields

Work continued towards the regeneration of North Shields Town Centre and connecting it to the Fish Quay.

The North Shields Master Plan was presented to Cabinet on 3 August 2020. The Master Plan contained a broad range of projects that would develop North Tyneside as a place.

North Tyneside is nothing without its people and it's the businesses and shoppers that make the town centres, bring to life the attractions and visit the parks.

The management of the beaches and open spaces, which during the pandemic, had been more popular than ever. The Council had carried out enforcement to keep residents safe and environment clean and tidy.

Our Economy

The Capacity Fund in response to Covid-19 was launched where funding, which had been secured through the North of Tyne Combined Authority, supported a raft of measures the Council are introducing to support the recovery of the borough and businesses, and ensure the safety of residents.

Manufacturing businesses working on products for the NHS Supply Chain directly linked to Covid-19, which were unable to access NHS Supplier Relief funds, can apply for funding through the new grant scheme.

There is also funded support and consultancy in a range of areas to help businesses during lockdown and into recovery. This included helping identify new markets for existing products, skills or equipment; providing business and financial advice to assist companies to trade out of difficulty; resilience planning to ensure businesses are ready for future disruptions; and ensuring retailers and other businesses are set up to trade online.

In addition, the funding would provide a full range of marketing activities and events to support high street businesses and boost economic growth by encouraging residents to shop locally and attracting new visitors to the borough.

Grants were also be distributed to community groups, particularly important to those who live and work in areas which had suffered most during the Coronavirus crisis.

Housing

The Council had continued to deliver on its promise of accelerating the delivery of affordable homes across the borough. In the last 12 months saw delivery of a further 180 affordable homes. In total, since the launch of the Affordable Homes Programme, nearly 1,600 new

affordable homes had been delivered in North Tyneside.

The Elected Mayor thanked the Committee and stated that the Council would not be beaten by the Covid-19 virus, but all Elected Members and staff would work together and offer hope back to our residents and build back better.

Agreed that the Annual Report from the Elected Mayor be noted.

OV70/21 Children and Young People's Plan 2021 - 2025

The Senior Manager – Transformation Health, Education, Care & Safeguarding and Improvement Manager Planning and Business Transformation attended the meeting to present the draft Children and Young People's Plan 2021-2025.

The Plan was developed by the Children and Young People's Partnership, which is part of the North Tyneside Strategic Partnership.

Although many significant achievements had been delivered in recent years, there remained many challenges that the partnership had continued focus.

The draft of the Children and Young People's Plan 2021-25 appended to the report set out the priorities and deliverables that were aligned to the five strategic outcomes based on what children and young people had informed what was important to them, and were:

Outcome 1: I am Safe

Priority 1.1: Ensure children and young people are living safely

Outcome 2: I am Healthy

Priority 2.1: Support children to have a healthy early childhood

Outcome 3: I have Opportunities

Priority 3.1: Narrow the gap in educational outcomes

Priority 3.2: Ensure the right support for children and young people with disabilities and additional needs

Outcome 4: I have a Voice

Priority 4.1: Support children to be active citizens

Outcome 5: I am Happy

Priority 5.1: Develop resilience, confidence and independence in children and young people

The Committee took the opportunity to question officers and raised concerns in relation to:

The 16- and 17-year olds who were Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) it was stated that the effect of Covid would have had an impact on continuity of help for this group. It was stated that it was a concern however the connexions team had a good digital engagement offer that enabled continued contact with individuals and would be considered further.

With children with SEND needs and resources within the borough to accommodate them. It

was stated that some children continued to access some educational provision outside the borough, but it was a focus within the plan. A member asked the number of children receiving out of borough provision. In response it was stated that this information would be provided at the meeting on the 2 February 2021.

A Member requested and it was stated further information to the new Autism Strategy would be provided to the next meeting on 2 February 2021.

Agreed that the draft Children and Young People's Plan 2021-2025.

OV71/21 2021/22 Budget sub-group report

The Committee received the report of the Budget Sub-group that detailed the scrutiny into the Cabinet's initial 2021/25 Financial Planning and Budget proposals.

The group met on 17 December 2020 and 12 January 2021, where officers presented the position of the Authority budget, the Initial budget proposals to deliver a balanced budget.

The Committee was informed that there would be a further meeting of the Budget Sub-group, where it would scrutinise the Cabinets Final Budget Proposals and this would take place on the 2 February 2021. The Committee agreed to delegate the sub-group responsibility to make further comment and any recommendations to Cabinet following this meeting.

There were two themes that the Committee considered needed to be emphasised further, and made recommendations to Cabinet in relation to;

1. The level of strategic reserve where it recommended that the strategic reserve be more widely explained to the public; and
2. A simple graphical representation of the funding received by North Tyneside Council from Central Government be made available to provide a greater understanding to the public.

Agreed that (1) the Budget Sub-Group report detailing comments be referred to Cabinet; (2) delegate responsibility to the Budget Sub-group to make further comment and any recommendations to Cabinet following scrutiny of Cabinets 2021/22 Final Budget Proposals; and (3) further views and recommendations by Overview, Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee be referred to Cabinet for consideration.

Meeting: Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

Date: 2 February 2021

Title: Children's Readiness for School

Author: Children's Readiness for School Sub-Group Tel: 643 5030

Service: Law and Governance

Wards affected: All

1. Purpose of Report

To introduce the report of the Children's Readiness for School Sub-Group.

2. Recommendations

The Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee is recommended to refer the Report with its recommendations as set out in the report to Cabinet for consideration.

3. Details

At its meeting in September 2019, the Children, Education and Skills Sub-Committee agreed to review the early intervention support available for parents in North Tyneside to enable children to be ready for school and identify if any improvements could be made to the support available to ensure the outcomes were improved for their children and families. At this meeting it was decided that a Sub-Group be established to carry out a review during the 2019/20 municipal year.

The following Members volunteered to serve on the group:

- Councillor Matthew Thirlaway (Chair)
- Councillor Pat Oliver (Vice-Chair)
- Rev Michael Vine

- 3.1 The Sub-Group felt that it was important to consult directly with schools and a questionnaire was circulated to all First and Primary Schools in North Tyneside. The Group met with officers in the Early Help Services Team and the Health Visiting and School Nurse Service to gather information on the role that the Council has in relation to Children's Readiness for School. The Sub-group also met with staff in Private Nurseries in North Tyneside. Further consultation was deferred due to Covid restrictions.
- 3.2 The Sub-Group wish to make six recommendations to Cabinet.
- 3.3 The Committee is recommended to refer the Report with its recommendations as set out in the report to Cabinet for consideration.

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Overview and Scrutiny Report

Children's Readiness for School

November 2020



2. Reason for the study

- 2.1 At its meeting in September 2019, the Children, Education and Skills Subcommittee agreed to review the early intervention support available for parents in North Tyneside to enable children to be ready for school and identify if any improvements could be made to the support available to ensure the outcomes were improved for their children and families.

2.2 The topic linked to the Be Ready for School Priority of the North Tyneside Plan – “Giving our children and their families the best start in life”.

3. Remit and method

3.1 At a Scoping meeting the Sub-group agreed to consult with First and Primary Schools and ask the following questions:

- What is your understanding of “being ready for school”?
- What is involved in developing children’s school readiness including for example self care, literacy, language and socialisation?
- What are the reasons for children not being ready for school?
- What is your approach to children being ready for school?
- How do you engage with parents/carers?
- Have you seen an improvement in children being ready for school?
- Who is involved in improving children’s school readiness and do you work together to achieve this aim?
- Would you be interested in providing information/speaking to the Sub Group?

3.2 The following Members volunteered to serve on the group:

- Councillor Matthew Thirlaway (Chair)
- Councillor Pat Oliver (Vice-Chair)
- Rev Michael Vine

3.3 The Sub-group felt that it was important to consult directly with schools and a questionnaire was circulated to all First and Primary Schools in North Tyneside. The Group met with officers in the Early Help Services Team and the Health Visiting and School Nurse Service to gather information on the role that the Council has in relation to Children’s Readiness for School. The Sub-group also met with staff in Private Nurseries in North Tyneside.

4. Findings and evidence

4.1 Consultation with Schools

4.1.1 A number of Primary Schools reported that they were seeing an increasing number of children who were not ready for school with children not being toilet trained, the over use of dummies and nappies and children being transported in buggies, poor speech acquisition and inability to interact with others, child protection issues, poor social skills, poor language and communication skills, children allowed unlimited access to electronic devices and children with low literacy skills and no knowledge of stories and rhymes.

- 4.1.2 A number of reasons cited were parents with a lack of skills, knowledge and vocabulary/academic ability, parents with social issues not parenting appropriately, working parents being too busy, helicopter parenting with parents doing everything for their child, lowering their child's self help skills and sense of independence
- 4.1.3 A school in Benton noted that toilet issues took staff away from teaching and they reported that they were completing more referrals for speech and language therapy which added to staff workload.
- 4.1.4 Schools had different approaches to improving children's readiness for school. One school in Howdon offered pre start toileting sessions and shared expectations and support in the school's induction pack.
- 4.1.5 Another school in Longbenton had opened up two year old provision to allow children an even earlier chance to receive care and instruction from qualified staff. They completed Early Help Assessments with families entering two year old provision as a means of identifying and offering support as quickly as possible. They employed a school nurse one day per week to support parents and offered workshops, drop ins and appointments across the whole school. However the Workshops had not been well attended despite being timetabled to coincide with school drop off and pick up times.

The children who had attended the two year old provision were much more settled on entry to nursery and children attending the nursery transition into reception class had increased communication and social skills compared to those who had not.

- 4.1.6 A school in Shiremoor with a two year old and a rising three nursery prior to nursery immersed children in vocabulary, stories, songs, experiences and development in all areas and ensured that they learned boundaries. They kept parents well-informed and engaged with parents/carers by organising lessons with the children, singing events, wellie walks, performances, visits out of school to a farm and the beach. They also tweeted books of the week and daily learning. They held book bonanza or pyjama story days and sessions to learn about how to share stories and they gave out packs with ideas for learning

The School noted that 88% of the children lived in the four most deprived areas and engagement with parents was an on-going challenge.

- 4.1.7 Another School in North Shields encouraged children to develop key attributes and attitudes and develop a sense of self as 'a positive learner' with an 'I can do' approach and involved parents to increase their own confidence. They stated that they did not have a problem with children being ready for school who had been through the 2 and 3 year old Nursery. However, there was a difference with those children who had attended other childcare providers.

4.2 Meeting with **Early Help Services**

4.2.1 At the service based at Riverside, the staff worked with parents to assist them to prepare children for school as schools in the Riverside area had raised that this was a problem. Family Partners in the Early Help Service undertook one to one work, early help assessments and whole family partnership work.

4.2.2 Health Visitors and School nurses would go out to families if health was an issue and issues would be picked up by Health Visitors at clinics to support parents.

4.2.3 Schools who had raised readiness for school as an issue could log with the early help pathway and start early help assessments.

4.2.4 Early Help had an approach to engage with families with ready for school workshops and they undertook door knocking to encourage parents to take up the 2 year old offer. The Service also organised stay and play drop ins. The approach was to encourage parents to participate and not be judgemental. At these sessions, the team discussed the importance of morning and bed time routines and story time and song time and reinforcing positive messages.

Some parents used ipads instead of traditional toys and intensive work was undertaken to involve families in learning and fun days and the importance of talking to children.

A Parenting course had been held at a School in North Shields which had been well attended and the intention was to run another course.

The Early Help Service worked with the Children, Adolescent and Mental Health Services Team and families were referred to Early Help to see what level of support they needed and to upskill and the Team supported the parents in the family home.

4.2.5 Members asked how many early years children there were in the Borough who were not ready for school and where there were development issues and neglect was raised as an issue

The Team said that the neglect referrals they received were not solely down to children not being ready for school, as the neglect category covered a much broader remit/range of issues.

4.2.6 In terms of hotspot areas where there were higher numbers of children who were not ready for school these were mainly in areas of multiple deprivation.

4.2.7 The tables below show the percentage number of parents who accessed the 2 year old offer and 3 and 4 year old offer in 2019:

Take up of 2 Year Old entitlement – Early Years Census

	2019
North Tyneside	84%
North East	82%
National	68%

There was a very high take up, and those who did not take up the offer at 2 years, did by 3 years

Take up of 3 and 4 Year old entitlement – Early Years Census

	2019
North Tyneside	101%
North East	99%
National	94%

The take up was 101% as children from other Local Authorities accessed the provision also

The Sub-Group recognised the work that was being done in North Tyneside to achieve the high take up of the Early Years offer.

4.3 Health Visiting and School Nurses Service

4.3.1 The Service provided support to parents. Readiness for school started very early and the Service supported mums during the ante natal period and all women were offered an ante natal contact and a very early health needs assessment. Dads were encouraged to be present so the Team could build up a relationship with the family. The mums who did not engage were either still at work or had to cancel their appointment which was re arranged or mums were contacted by telephone to go through ante natal information and information was sent out in the post.

4.3.2 All families had universal contact including ante natal contact, new baby visit, assessment at 6-8 weeks, one year old assessment and 24-28 month assessment. There was 98% compliance within North Tyneside for the new birth visit by Health Visitors to families and non compliance was usually due to baby being in special care.

Under the Healthy Child Programme children had a development review at two years however the Service offered advice up until the age of five years. The National Child Measurement Programme was for children in reception class.

4.3.3 The Service had seen a rise in children who had not been toilet trained as using nappies was convenient and it was not always a priority for parents. The Service had offered a drop in session to help with toilet training at a Primary school in North Shields in April 2019 in order for children to be trained before the beginning of the school term in September, however the take up for the session had been low. Engagement with parents was sometimes difficult, and the Service had recruited community nursery nurses and it was hoped they could assist in readiness for school support.

4.3.4 There were higher levels of children not meeting assessment thresholds in the Riverside and Howdon areas and the vulnerable parent pathway pilot would target resources to parents in these areas and then be introduced to other areas where there were pockets of deprivation.

Social media would be used more regularly to promote health messages to parents and young people.

- 4.3.5 Baby clinics were held in libraries and leisure centres and Bounce and Rhythm and Stay and Play sessions were promoted together with peer support sessions for breast feeding.
Parents in the coastal area had set up a social media group to offer support and continued to meet to support each other.
- 4.3.6 In families where there was a drug or alcohol problem and a chaotic lifestyle there was an impact on the development of a child and any safeguarding concerns would be escalated and parental support offered.
- 4.3.7 The School nurse team was small and undertook a whole system approach. A pilot was being undertaken by school nurses to give out a toothbrush and toothpaste kit to parents to roll out the cleaning teeth public health message. A chat health online forum had been introduced for young people to email questions to a school nurse and young people were signposted or referred for support.
- A safety equipment pilot had been introduced in the North Shields locality to reduce childhood accidents and the impact would be shared with other wards in the Borough.
- 4.3.8 The move from the NHS to the Council's Public Health Team had enabled the Team to improve links with the Special Educational Needs Team and to provide advice to parents whose children had special educational needs and a market place event at the Parks had enabled the Team to build links and partnerships with the community and voluntary sector.
- 4.3.9 During discussions with the Health Visiting Service the Sub-Group asked if schools flagged the issue of children not being toilet trained with the Service and it was noted that few cases had been reported to the Service.
The Sub-Group noted that in schools, there was an impact on the child and other children in the class.
The Sub-Group recognised the need to strengthen communication between Schools and the Health Visiting Service and acknowledged that it was the responsibility of many services for children's readiness for school.

4.4 **Private Nurseries**

- 4.4.1 The Sub-Group met with representatives from private nursery providers in Tynemouth, Wallsend and North Shields
- 4.4.2 The representative from the Nursery in Tynemouth discussed how the Nursery had a Pre School Room and how they supported the childrens' social and emotional development and prepared children for transition to school and learning.
- 4.4.3 The representative from Wallsend stated that some children were not emotionally or socially ready for school and an example was highlighted where some children at the Wallsend Nursery could not sit still at the table at

meal times. The Nursery had children with toileting and behaviour problems and had applied for Leaps funding.

- 4.4.4 The representative from North Shields advised that the Nursery worked with children from deprived areas whose parents were out of work and also with children whose parents had busy working lifestyles who did not invest time with their children.

In Wallsend the deprivation issues were related to parenting and some unemployed parents did not appreciate the value of early education and it was about cultural change.

- 4.4.5 Links with reception classes

The representative from Tynemouth Nursery confirmed that the links with the reception classes and Nursery schools were very positive in North Tyneside.

- 4.4.6 Readiness for school Initiatives

It was acknowledged that preventative measures undertaken by Sure Start were a big miss such as free childcare courses undertaken by the Adult Learning Alliance which built a relationship with the community and were not seen as a threat.

Families had engaged with projects which included cooking and reading with children and clothes exchanges and the children flourished.

The Nurseries stated that they offered elements from Sure Start such as “Stay and Play” for parents but funding was tight.

- 4.4.7 The representative from North Shields stated that they used the Solihull Parenting Programme “Cool for Schools” where parents were trained to be buddies and which included useful activities.

- 4.4.8 The North Shields representative stated that the Nursery had invested in an online learning journal to send out tips and relevant literature and this was a useful way to engage parents.

- 4.4.9 The Tynemouth representative noted that the online learning book was a useful way to engage with parents and presentations to parents at a parents evening were beneficial.

- 4.4.10 The Nursery in Tynemouth undertook some home visits.

- 4.4.11 The Wallsend representative noted that the Nursery had previously given out written newsletters but they now used Facebook to engage with parents and post information and this was a useful platform to use for the community.

- 4.4.12 The Nursery representatives discussed the support offered from the Council.

The representatives noted that additional support for an individual child via Early Years Inclusive Funding or Leaps funding involved a huge amount of paperwork which was time consuming and difficult to navigate.

- 4.4.13 The North Shields Representative noted that the Council's ready for school offer was very useful and a mock Ofsted and checking of Policies and Procedures was undertaken but sometimes disheartening when the recommendations were not always affordable. The Nursery had a service level agreement with the Council for training. It was noted that this training was optional for Nurseries to buy into and that unless the Nursery had a child with special needs there would be very little communication with the Early Years team. They stated that the early help assessment was a lengthy process in order to coordinate speech and language, physiotherapy and childcare specialisms.
- 4.4.14 It was acknowledged that the training sessions undertaken by the Council's Commissioning Team were very worthwhile.
- 4.4.15 During discussions with Private Nurseries it was highlighted that the early help assessment process was very lengthy and bureaucratic and applying for additional support for an individual child via Early Years Inclusion or Leaps funding involved a huge amount of paperwork which was time consuming and difficult to navigate.
The Sub-Group felt that the Local Authority should consider simplifying the early help assessment process.
Nursery Representatives commented that further support from Health Visitors on toilet training would be beneficial.

5 Conclusion

When we came to the end of our evidence gathering for this piece of investigatory work, the coronavirus outbreak was only just in its infancy. Words like "lockdown" and "social distancing" were not yet a part of our vocabulary. Ironically, this piece of work focuses on an issue that can only have been worsened by the pandemic. Ensuring young children are ready for school is vital to their development and has an impact throughout their life.

During this piece of work, we were adamant in our belief that parents and carers are, first and foremost, responsible for ensuring their child is ready for school. We acknowledged, however, that most parents will want or need additional support. North Tyneside Council, and other agencies, therefore, have an important role in supporting parents and carers so that all children in the borough have a good start in life. The Council also has a distinct duty towards our looked after children.

Concerns were raised at several meetings of the Children, Education, and Skills Sub-Committee about reports in the national media about children not being ready for school because of issues such as poor language development and the lack of toilet training. The Sub-Committee established an investigation into the size of the problem in North Tyneside.

The Sub-Group began by sending a questionnaire to all First and Primary Schools in North Tyneside about their experiences, however, we received a very small return. While the feedback was consistent the Sub-Group felt the amount of evidence prevented us from drawing any conclusions about the size of the problem in North Tyneside. We, therefore, believe it is crucial that the Council consults with parents, schools, and private nurseries about

children being ready for school with a focus on the size and distribution of the problem in North Tyneside.

The Sub-Group also met with staff from private nursery providers, council officers, and health workers. It became clear during these meetings that there was a problem with some children not being ready for school. While we were impressed with the support available to parents and carers, the Sub-Group agreed on a number of important recommendations.

We would like to thank all those people who assisted us during this piece of work as well as those Council staff who help, support, and protect children in North Tyneside on a daily basis throughout the year.

6 Recommendations

The Sub-Group makes the following recommendations:

6.1 Recommendation :

Cabinet requests that the Director of Children's and Adult Services considers improving communication between the Council, schools, and private nurseries in relation to early help and being ready for school.

6.2 Recommendation :

Cabinet requests the Director of Children's and Adult Services to consider simplifying the early help assessment process, so it is less time consuming and bureaucratic for schools and private nurseries or provides adequate help to schools and private nurseries in completing the early help assessment process.

6.3 Recommendation :

Cabinet requests that the Director of Children's and Adult Services provides more help to schools and private nurseries for toilet training, including for children without special needs.

6.4 Recommendation :

Cabinet requests that the Director of Children's and Adult Services provides more help and encouragement for parents and carers in accessing early help information and services, including help for toilet training, language development, and accessing online educational material for children.

6.5 Recommendation :

Cabinet requests that the Director of Children's and Adult Services consults with parents, schools, and private nurseries about early help and being ready for school, including a focus on the size and distribution of any problems in North Tyneside. The findings of this consultation are to be shared with Cabinet and all Elected Members.

6.6 Recommendation :

Cabinet requests that the Elected Mayor writes to the Secretary of State for Education asking for more funding and resources for local government for early help to ensure all children are ready for school.

7.0 Acknowledgements

The Sub Group would like to place on record its thanks and appreciation to those officers and representatives of external organisations for their assistance in providing the evidence on which this report is based. A full list of all those individuals who helped the Sub Group with its work is set out in Appendix 1.

8.0 Background Information

Our North Tyneside Plan

North Tyneside Council

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