

(Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting of the sub-committee scheduled to be held on 21 March 2016)

Children, Education and Skills Sub-Committee

15 February 2016

Present: Councillor M Madden (Chair)
Councillors, P Brooks, K Clark, C Davis, M A Green,
D Lilly, G Madden, P Oliver and M Thirlaway.
Mrs M Ord Parent Governor Representative
Mrs J Little Parent Governor Representative
Rev. M Vine Church Representative

CES41/02/16 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Bolger, P McIntyre and J Munby.

CES42/02/16 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

CES43/02/16 Declarations of Interest

Councillor K Clark declared a registerable personal interest in relation to Minute CES47/02/16, Transforming Children and Young People's Services in North Tyneside, as she was Director and Chief Executive Officer of Justice Prince Community Interest Company.

CES44/02/16 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 January 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

CES45/02/16 Young Women and STEM Update (Previous Minute CES43/03/15)

The sub-committee received a report which provided details of work undertaken by the Council and its partners to increase the uptake of STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) particularly by girls in schools with the aim of improving access to STEM related jobs. The sub-committee had previously undertaken a study of this topic and had presented a report with recommendations to Cabinet. At that time the sub-committee had concluded that although there were many activities to support the uptake of STEM subjects in schools there was still a significant gap in terms of girls taking up these subjects at GCSE, A level and in further education.

The sub-committee was presented with a table setting out the recommendations made to Cabinet, the action Cabinet had agreed to take in response to them and details of the progress that had been made in implementing the recommendations.

The Council's Principal Manager: Employment and Skills, Shona Duncan, commented that schools were committed to delivering activities that raised awareness and encouraged the take up of STEM subjects, including many that were targeted at girls. The sub-committee were presented with examples of some of the current initiatives in schools, often supported by the North Tyneside Learning Trust, such as girls from Monkseaton Middle School attending the Big Bang Fair and schools working with Northumbria University as part of the Think Physics Programme. In addition, the Council planned to deliver 28 STEM events to over 1200 students in schools during 2015-16, involving 35 employers.

Despite these good examples it was acknowledged that schools faced a challenge in dedicating resources to this area of work and in prioritising girls. From the available data the gender gap in STEM subjects in North Tyneside continued to be of concern, although a fresh data review of A level take up and attainment was about to be undertaken.

Tyne Metropolitan College was a key partner in promoting the take up of STEM subjects at sixth form and in further and higher education pathways. The college had recently opened the Ignite Centre for Engineering and Innovation. Michael Burton, the college's Head of Engineering Construction and Information Technology attended the meeting to describe the purpose and operation of the Ignite Centre. The Centre delivered a comprehensive range of training solutions in engineering and STEM disciplines to increase local skills for the manufacturing sectors. The Centre also sought to engage with primary and secondary school pupils to raise awareness of exciting career options in engineering and STEM to inspire young minds and develop STEM careers opportunities. For this purpose the centre included a facility specifically designed to provide school children with a safe engineering experience. The room was based on a timeline beginning with engineering techniques used on ships and in mines a century ago and ending with the modern, clean, digital and technological solutions now used in industries such as the wind turbine sector. Members of the sub-committee were invited to visit the centre.

It was reported that the vast majority of engineering and STEM learners at the college continued to be male. The college had sought to recruit female staff to act as role models but they still only represented 14% of the workforce. There was however optimism that the numbers of girls studying STEM subjects would increase as their understanding of the job opportunities available in the increasingly digital and technological sector replaced the deep cultural preconceptions of engineering.

Members discussed with Michael Burton the barriers they had identified to girls and young women studying STEM subjects including the influence of grandparents and parents on the attitudes of girls towards a career in engineering and peer pressure among girls which tended to emerge in Years 6 and 7. Members discussed the merits of providing STEM activities exclusively for girls and highlighted the importance of obtaining and analysing data in relation to the socio-economic backgrounds of those young people who do take up STEM subjects to gain a better understanding of who did and did not choose this pathway.

With reference to Recommendation 3 of the sub-committee's report on Young Women and STEM, members noted that most secondary and middle schools had designated a STEM lead and they asked to what extent primary schools had done so. Officers indicated that the Council in conjunction with the Learning Trust needed to do more work to identify those primary schools who had not yet designated a STEM lead and to provide those schools with further support.

The sub-committee also considered the role of school governors in challenging what was being done in their own schools to promote STEM subject among girls and to encourage their schools to engage with organisations like TyneMet College and the Learning Trust. The Chair thanked Shona Duncan and Michael Burton for their contributions. She commented that following its study the sub-committee felt particularly strongly about the need to support girls to take up STEM subjects and she was pleased that the work had led to some positive action and a wider debate. The Chair thanked Michael Burton for his invitation to visit the Ignite Centre and she hoped this could be arranged in the near future.

It was **agreed** that (1) the work undertaken by the Council and its partners in response to the report and recommendations of the sub-committee to increase the uptake of STEM subjects, particularly by girls in schools, be noted;
(2) a visit to the Ignite Centre for Engineering and Innovation be arranged for members of the sub-committee.

CES46/02/16 Creating a Brighter Future Programme (Previous Minute CES25/10/15)

The sub-committee considered a report which provided an update on the Creating a Brighter Future (CBF) Programme in relation to projects associated with Children, Education and Skills for 2015/16.

The report outlined the status in November 2015 of the projects and associated actions in relation to the themes of the CBF programme which connected to the Commissioning and Investment and the Children, Young People and Learning service areas, namely elements of Ready for School; Ready for Work and Life; and Cared For, Safeguarded and Healthy.

Of the nine projects contained within the report, five were complete, three were on track and one, in relation to the restructuring of services to support looked after children, was not expected to achieve the anticipated savings within the financial year 2015/16. It was reported that proposals in relation to Edwin Gove (a small home for younger adults who needed care and support to live independently) had been put on hold to ensure that they complemented the long term model for looked after children services. Consequently it was estimated that there would be a £190,000 shortfall in savings achieved.

The sub-committee examined with officers the perennial financial pressures in relation to looked after children, particularly when children were subject to out of borough placements. The sub-committee were assured that individual case decisions were not taken on financial grounds but consideration was being given to how prevention and early intervention could deliver better outcomes for children and young people and deliver financial savings. It was also stated that where a pattern of need emerged for out of borough placements consideration was given to whether a more cost effective solution could be provided either locally or with other neighbouring authorities on a sub-regional basis.

It was suggested that the out of borough placement of looked after children be subject to further detailed investigation by the sub-committee although members acknowledged that the topic had previously been subject to detailed scrutiny.

It was **agreed** that the progress made in relation to the Creating a Brighter Future Programme be noted.

CES47/02/16 Transforming Children and Young People's Services in North Tyneside

(Councillor K Clark declared a registerable personal interest in this item as she was Director and Chief Executive Officer of Justice Prince Community Interest Company.) Russell Pilling, the Council's Safeguarding Operations Manager attended the meeting to outline details of the proposed transformation of services for children and young people (aged 0-19) which would involve the creation of a new prevention and early intervention model.

All local authorities were facing the challenge of balancing unprecedented financial constraints with the need to keep children and young people safe and improve their life chances. In this context a formal review of North Tyneside's prevention and early intervention provision for children, young people and their families had been undertaken which sought to deliver sustainable improvements in health and wellbeing outcomes. It had focussed on preventing family breakdown, tackling duplication of roles, addressing demand for high cost specialist services and safely reducing the number of children becoming looked after. The review encompassed services not only provided by the Council but also some commissioned from Northumbria Healthcare Foundation Trust.

The review had found that:

- North Tyneside's looked after population was significantly higher than the average;
- Those entering care were mainly children aged under 1 year and adolescents;
- Domestic violence and substance misuse were key factors in children becoming looked after;
- The majority of looked after children were from Riverside, Howdon and Wallsend wards; and
- just under half of the looked after children cases examined could 'definitely' or 'possibly' have been prevented.

The review had concluded that a fundamental redesign of preventative and early intervention services was required. Practitioners from the Council and its partners had subsequently been engaged in the re-design of the service in a series of workshops which had resulted in a proposal to create an integrated prevention and early intervention service for children and young people aged 0-19 years. The service would comprise of four locality based teams, delivering universal and targeted services to children, young people and their families, with a strong focus on prevention and early intervention. The teams would bring together a range of existing practitioners into a simpler, integrated service with a clear aim of preventing family breakdown. The universal offer would comprise information, advice and guidance for children and young people, universal midwifery, the 0-5 Healthy Child Programme, the mandated universal children's centre offer and the 5-19 Healthy Child Programme. The four teams would cover geographical areas based on the coast, the north west of the borough, Howdon and Wallsend and Chirton and Riverside wards. The teams would operate from community based settings and the size of the team would reflect the level of demand that existed within each area.

It was anticipated that the integrated service would deliver the right support to families at the earliest opportunity. Families would develop the knowledge and skills to enable them to be independent, healthy and more able to stay together safely. Employees would be empowered to work in more creative ways with families and they would be supported in their own development. Over time the service would help to manage demand for specialist and high level interventions and teams would be able to provide more focus to those with the highest level of need. Financial savings would be achieved through the integration of services and it would contribute to potential avoidance of placement costs in the future.

The proposals were to be presented to Cabinet in March and, subject to approval, implementation was planned to commence on 1 April 2016.

During the sub-committee's examination of the proposal it was confirmed that the existing Front Door Service for referrals would not be altered. The new model would seek to build upon the learning gained through delivery of the Troubled Families Programme, particularly in terms of performance data being used to direct delivery of the service and the service adopting an assertive approach to families who may not wish to engage. The Troubled Families Programme would continue to operate, funded on a payment by results basis.

The sub-committee noted with concern that none of the looked after children cases examined as part of the review had received an early help intervention before they had entered care but they had been known to other agencies and they were experiencing issues that required multi-agency support. This had clearly demonstrated that the existing early intervention and prevention services had not been functioning effectively and that the co-location and integration of relevant practitioners would improve communication and help build relationships, particularly with schools and within each geographical area.

The sub-committee recognised that to continue to keep children and young people safe and to improve their life chances at a time of unprecedented financial constraints the Council would need to work more closely with the third sector. Whilst there was to be discussion on the proposal with the North Tyneside Voluntary and Community Sector Chief Officers' Forum members commented that the forum did not represent the whole of the third sector and that the Council should seek to ensure that it makes the best use of all existing community resources including social enterprises.

Existing staff were to be re-deployed into the locality teams and the Council's Organisation & Workforce Development team would support the development of the required skills and culture within the teams. Members highlighted the importance of a practitioner building a good working relationship with families in each case and that practitioner being empowered to overcome barriers to other services such as housing and benefits.

It was **agreed** that (1) the proposed transformation of services for children and young people and the creation of a new prevention and early intervention model be noted; and (2) the sub-committee's comments be taken into account in the development of the new service.

CES48/02/16 Child Sexual Exploitation Sub Group Report (Previous Minute CES33/11/15)

At its meeting on 8 February 2016 the Cabinet had considered the report and recommendations arising from the work of the sub-committee's Child Sexual Exploitation Sub Group. The Cabinet had agreed to accept all eleven recommendations and had agreed to take various actions in response. The Chair welcomed the response from Cabinet and she envisaged that the sub-committee would include a review of the progress made in implementing the recommendations at a future meeting.

It was **agreed** that the Cabinet's response to the report and recommendations of the Child Sexual Exploitation Sub Group be noted.