

Children, Education and Skills Sub-committee

19 September 2016

Present: Councillor M Thirlaway (In the Chair)
Councillors K Bolger, P Brooks, J Cassidy,
T Mulvenna, J O'Shea and M Rankin.

Mr G O'Hanlon Church Representative
Mrs J Little Parent Governor Representative

CES18/09/16 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Austin, K Clark, M A Green, M Madden, A Newman and J Walker and Rev. M Vine, a Church Representative and Mrs M Ord, Parent Governor Representative.

CES19/09/16 Substitute Members

Pursuant to the Council's Constitution the appointment of the following substitute members was reported:

Councillor J O'Shea for Councillor K Clark.
Councillor T Mulvenna for Councillor M Madden.

CES20/09/16 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made or dispensations reported.

CES21/09/16 Minutes

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

CES22/09/16 Provision of Careers Education in Schools

The sub-committee received a report from the Health, Education, Care and Safeguarding Service on the provision of careers education in schools. Tim Downing, from Connexions, and Mark Barrett from the Education and Employment team attended the meeting to present the report and answer questions.

The sub-committee was informed that there was a number of statutory requirements and conditions that both the local authority and schools were expected to meet in relation to careers guidance and there was a degree of inter-dependence between schools and local authorities in meeting those commitments. These commitments included a duty to secure careers guidance for pupils in years 8 to 13 which is independent and impartial; the offer of

a full range of post-16 education or training options, including apprenticeships; and that the guidance promotes the best interests of the pupil to whom it is given. In addition the service provided intelligence about the future ambitions of young people and the choices they are making and how this equated with the Employment and Skills demands within the borough and the region.

Ofsted report that only 1 in 5 schools were effective in providing appropriate Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) and government had set a challenge to schools to improve pupil's career-learning through a combination of activities which: developed character attributes; were available in school; provided 'real-life' contact with the 'world of work'; and also to create a school strategy that had learning outcomes. The government has also commissioned a Careers Enterprise Company to oversee the investment of £70m of funding in ventures that enabled schools to deliver those activities and a national pilot, which Churchill Community College was participating in, testing eight benchmarks for Good Careers Guidance developed by the Gatsby Foundation.

Connexions provided an independent and impartial Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) and support service to young people aged 13-19 years (up to the age of 25 for young people with special educational needs) to enable schools to meet their statutory responsibilities. Connexions had achieved the nationally recognised award, the Matrix Standard, for the quality of its advice and guidance with all its advisors qualified to level 6 and above. In 2016 they had delivered 250 class based sessions and also the required face to face interview with each school leaver.

The sub-committee was informed that direct government funding for Connexions and related careers guidance support for young people had ceased in 2010 and since then the local authority had continued to fund a service for young people but in a different format by introducing a service level agreement (SLA) to off-set some of the cost of delivering the service. From April 2017 the full cost of providing the service would need to be recouped from schools through a SLA.

Under the Education and Skills Act 2008, local authorities had a duty to track the activity, circumstance, situations and destinations of young people from age 16 to their 20th birth date (from September 2016 this has been reduced to their 18th birth date) and report this on a monthly basis to the Department for Education. Currently North Tyneside had a NEET (not in education, employment or training) school leaver rate of 0.9% and for 16-18 year olds a NEET rate of 3.8% and a participation in learning rate of 83.9%.

Beyond the work of Connexions, the Education and Skills service also engaged with schools to support a wide range of career-learning both in school and beyond and included the delivery of a Schools into Work Programme which engaged over 85 businesses in a range of activities to raise awareness of work in primary and secondary schools; delivery of an alternative education programme supporting 125 young people each year at risk of disengaging from the curriculum; and the development of a suite of 'Get Into' courses that provided young people with an introduction to a range of sectors (including retail, construction, energy and offshore, care, hospitality, IT and Contact Centres) to see whether that sector really did interest them.

Clarification was sought on the role of the service for 18 and 19 year olds if they 'dropped out'. It was acknowledged that there were rising numbers of 18/19 year olds reassessing their choices and that it did become more difficult after 18 as if they were in receipt of unemployment benefit they had to undertake certain tasks which might not necessarily lead into something they wanted to do as a career. The sub-committee was assured that young

people up to 20 could be seen by Connexions, after that they were referred to the National Careers Service; there was also Generation NE which was for longer term unemployed people between 18-24 years old which gave advice, guidance and practical support including grants for work clothing and transport passes.

The support offered to looked after children was also explained. An advisor had been embedded with the looked after children team to get to know the young people in a meaningful way, most looked after children were in mainstream school but received early support to build the relationship and identify what plans and ambitions they might have. In relation to special schools the sub-committee was informed time was allocated to special schools however it was acknowledged that it took more time to deliver the same amount of support. No special school had volunteered for the pilot on the Quality Award for their Careers in School programme which meant that how it applied to special schools had not been tested. However it was considered that with some adjustments to the measures it would be possible. In addition, the Connexion team would examine how some of the courses they delivered could be revised for special schools.

A Member asked whether it was known what proportion of the £70m of funding from the Careers Enterprise Company was spent in North Tyneside and on what. The role of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership in co-ordinating the funding and what bidding processes could be undertaken was explained and the manager from Education to Employment undertook to enquire whether it was possible to break down the spend on a borough basis.

The Chair thanked Mr Downing and Mr Barrett for their attendance and presentation.

It was **agreed** to (1) note the information contained in the report; and (2) to request that the Education and Employment team enquire whether it was possible to establish how much of the £70m funding from the Careers Enterprise Company has been invested in North Tyneside and if so, what the total for North Tyneside was and where it had been invested and provide the answer to the sub-committee before the next meeting.

CES23/09/16 Principal Social Worker's report

The sub-committee received a report from the Children's Principal Social Worker (PSW) Kevin Buck, who was also the senior manager in the Safeguarding and Placement Service. The Children's Principal Social Worker role had been active for 3½ years throughout England and was intended to provide a link between social work practice and high level management within the local authority and to ensure there was frequent engagement between teams, opportunities for one-to-one's and also to be actively involved in the delivery of social work. Mr Buck attended the meeting to present the report and answer questions.

The report provided information on the role within North Tyneside; what the role had achieved; the implications of the Children Social Work Bill; the Annual Health Check; Workforce issues; Retention; Recruitment issues; caseloads; and feedback from two independent peer reviews.

The sub-committee was informed that there was a good understanding of the function of social work within the senior leadership team. Areas where social work had greatest impact had been identified and also areas of development to ensure better outcomes for all children; consideration had also been given to how the role fitted into the various projects

across the local authority.

In North Tyneside there was recruitment and retention difficulties which related to caseloads, work/life balance and the higher salaries being offered by other local authorities. To manage caseloads a workload weighting system (which created a score by measuring the number of cases and taking into account their complexity) was being used and the aim was to maintain an average of 24. At the end of August 2016 the average across the teams was 26. In relation to recruitment and retention, innovative solutions were being considered. The local authority had engaged with the Firstline leadership programme which was designed to develop good Social Work Managers into high performing, considered and influential leaders. The programme was funded by the Department for Education's Innovation Programme from September 2015 to January 2016 and three managers and one team manager had successfully completed the course. The local authority had also committed to one unit of Frontline, a graduate programme for high achieving university leavers and career changers. The unit hosted four students for 12 months from September 2016 and these had also been employed as an AYSE (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment). The course offered intensive, practical and academic training tailored to the needs of the students. It is anticipated that in November 2016 all posts, including maternity cover, will be filled and that the new training programmes will give the service a boost.

In answer to questions, Members were informed about how the number of hours worked by individual social workers was managed and the overall management process; the salaries being offered by other local authorities in the region; how knowledge of the roles of other services and the thresholds for support could be used to ensure social workers are only working with families for as long as needed; and the support and skills provided to social workers to ensure the initial plan for each family is accurate and robust to avoid unnecessary work. It was that the service was focussed on maintaining and motivating staff and reducing the caseload score to an average of 18.

The Chair thanked Mr Buck for his attendance and presentation.

It was **agreed** to note the information presented by the Children's Principal Social Worker.