

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, 13 September 2018

PRESENT: Councillor B Oliphant (Chair)

Councillor(s): M Hall, L Caffrey, B Clelland, S Craig, L Kirton, K McCartney, R Mullen, P Craig, M Ord, C McHugh and N Weatherley

F66 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor G Haley, Councillor D Bradford, Councillor E McMaster and Maveen Pereira.

F67 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting held on 14 June 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

F68 REVIEW OF OBESITY (ACROSS THE LIFE COURSE) - EVIDENCE GATHERING

The Committee received a report and presentation providing details of the evidence gathering session that will take place on the review of obesity across the life course. It was highlighted that the review will help the Committee to consider and understand the complexity of the obesity agenda.

From the presentation it was noted that there are several major challenges in regard to obesity, these include:

- Obesity is considered to be one of the most serious public health challenges of the 21st century
- Associated with a wide range of health conditions, including type 2 diabetes, cancer, musculoskeletal disease, and other chronic diseases
- 69% of adults in Gateshead are classed as overweight or obese (North East 66%, England 61%)
- Public health is about promoting health and wellbeing, preventing ill health and prolonging life through the organised efforts of society
- This has a whole range of effects, health and wellbeing being the most obvious, but there are others

It was further noted that the annual cost of obesity to the wider economy amounts to £27bn, this figure was broken down to £13.3bn for obesity medication, £5.1 in costs to the NHS, £352m in social care costs and £16m in obesity attributed days sickness.

The Committee were then provided a summary of the complexity of issues relating to obesity with reference to food production, consumption, societal influences, psychological influences, activity environments and biology. In addition to this information, the influence of a variety of food production companies was highlighted. Companies such as Nestle, Coca-Cola and Unilever were noted to be amongst the biggest 10 companies that generate revenues of more than \$1.1bn per day.

From the presentation an overview of the challenges faced in tackling obesity was noted. It was further noted that there is a lack of evidence as to what works in addition to combatting ingrained attitudes to social norms.

Information was then presented to the Committee illustrating the prevalence of obesity in reception ages children in the North East and in children at Year 6 of school. Additionally, it was noted that across Gateshead, areas of the highest deprivation showed the largely prevalence of obesity in children.

The Committee received information relating to the key findings within adults. It was noted that nationally, 58% of women and 68% of men are overweight or obese. It was then highlighted that within Gateshead 69% of adults have excess weight which is significantly worse than the England average of 61.3% and the regional average of 66.3%.

An overview of potential interventions was provided highlighting that a multi-level, multi-strand approach would be required. It was also noted that this is a long-term goal given the complexity of the issue and the varying factors that influence weight over the life course. It was further noted that opportunities exist currently within the Council's Thrive agenda in addition to a system approach that aligns to health in all policies.

It was asked which of the multiple influences on weight across the life course the Council could influence. It was noted this could be done via planning policy, highlighting the changes to the Council's hot food takeaway rules. Additionally, it was noted that the Council can have influence in town planning and infrastructure to provide more open spaces and play areas. It was also noted that tackling the problem would require joint working with Council partners such as the NHS.

A question was raised on what schools are doing to combat obesity in school age children. It was noted that schools will promote healthy options within their canteens and the 'Healthy School Award' is now back despite this being voluntary. It was further noted that the Schools Sports Partnership will promote physical education in activity in school. It was asked whether the 'Daily Mile' programme could be rolled out to all schools – it was noted that some schools do this and have seen the benefits but that this is a voluntary scheme.

A comment was made that the impact of food bank supplied foods to families may also have impacted on healthy weights across Gateshead noting that items supplied from food banks are not fresh and can be highly processed.

It was noted that the information supplied within the report and presentation was disappointing. It was further stated that more support from Central Government was

needed nationally to provide interventions to prevent unhealthy lifestyles.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the approach and content set out in the report and agreed to receive additional updates on the work being done at future meetings.

F69

ANNUAL REPORT ON COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS - CHILDREN

The Committee received a report on the Children and Families Service complaints, compliments and representations from April 2017 to March 2018.

From the report it was highlighted that the number of formal contacts received, which includes compliments had increased by 20% compared with the number of contacts received during 2016/17. It was further highlighted that 48% of all Children's Services contacts were compliments.

The Committee were then provided with a breakdown of key points of interest, these were:

- Forty-nine Stage 1 complaints were received regarding Children's Services. This is a 53% increase on complaints received during 2016/17, (32).
- The number of complaints, (49), represents 23% of all formal contacts received about Children's Services during 2017/18, (212).
- Stage 1 Complaints increased by 53% since 2016/17.
- The number of complaint related queries (low level issues not requiring a written response), received decreased by 8% (35) compared to the number received during 2016/17 (38).
- The decrease in complaint related queries may partly be responsible for the increase in formal complaints received, with complainants now preferring a written response to their concerns.
- 23% (8) of the complaint related queries received were regarding the quality of the social work support offered to families of children receiving a service and 14% (5) were disputes to information within social work reports.
- As in previous years, the main theme of concern raised within complaint related queries was about the quality of the support provided by either the individual worker or by the service.
- All of the low-level issues received were dealt with directly by either the team manager of the service complained about or by the Complaints Section after prior discussion with the worker concerned.

The Committee were then provided with an overview of key themes of complaint.

These included quality of service (quality of worker support/involvement) and quality of service (communication issues). A breakdown of specific areas of complaint was also provided which included teams such as Children with Disabilities, Looked After Children Team and Family Group Conference.

It was highlighted that it is often the case that parents misunderstand the role of the child's social worker and believe the social worker is for the whole family. It was noted that this misinterpretation can lead to complaints; particularly when the social worker will make a decision on behalf of a child that the parents/family do not agree with.

A further breakdown of complaints and investigations was provided in addition to a summary of service compliments. It was also noted that compliments amounted to 48% of representations about Children Services.

It was asked what the cost of completing a complaints investigation was. It was noted that there is a dedicated internal team who will investigate complaints up to Stage 2, it was further noted that the Council procure someone to shadow investigations at Stage 2 but this cost is relatively low (less than £4,000 was spent last year).

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the contents of the report.

F70 OFSTED INSPECTIONS / SCHOOL DATA - PROGRESS UPDATE

The Committee received a report detailing the position of Gateshead schools in relation to Ofsted Inspection findings for the spring and summer terms of 2018.

From the report it was highlighted that the school inspection framework gives an overall effectiveness grade based on effectiveness of leadership and management, quality of teaching, learning and assessment, personal development, behaviour and welfare as well as outcomes for pupils. It was further noted that the quality of Early Years for 6th Forms are also assessed.

A summary of Ofsted's grading system was provided from the report as follows:

- 1 – Outstanding
- 2 – Good
- 3 – Requires Improvement
- 4 – Inadequate

The Committee were advised of the outcomes for each school – from the report it was highlighted that South Street Primary received a rating of 'requires improvement'. It was noted that this outcome was disappointing but that the appropriate support will be provided to the school to improve. Additionally, it was also highlighted that St Wilfrid's Catholic Primary Highfield improved its previous inspection rating from 'requires improvement' to 'good'.

It was noted from the report that of the secondary schools inspected Joseph Swan Academy was rated inadequate, a fall down from the previous rating of 'requires improvement'. It was further noted that whilst the Council have limited influence on academies it is likely that the school would become part of an academy trust to improve.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the contents of the report.

F71 MONITORING REPORT - OSC REVIEW OF CHILDREN ON THE EDGE OF CARE

The Committee received a report outlining the challenges facing services for adolescents and to consider the key ingredients of successful approaches to support young people and their families with complex needs on the edge of care.

An overview of the team was provided highlighting that the team is staffed by nine social workers and two family advocates overseen by the Senior Practise Supervisor, the Practise Supervisor and the Service Manager/Principal Social Worker. It was also confirmed that the service work with children from the age of eleven.

From the report a summary of the characteristics of children in care was provided in addition to an overview of the methodology and approaches used to build effective relationships with the children and their family.

Committee were provided with information on the cohorts of looked after children that have been seen by the service. It was noted that the figures show that at the end of the first six months there were 22 which is the lowest in the last eight years. It was further highlighted that since January 2018 the Complex CIN team have worked with a total of 39 families, comprising of 87 children.

Within the report the Committee were also provided with a full evaluation report on the Complex Child in Need and Rapid Response Team.

A comment was made that there is often a blame culture applied to children and young adults with complex needs without looking at the eternal influences on their lives. It was further noted that there is a culture shift to be seen nationally but there is still a lot of work to do.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the contents of the report.

F72 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received the Work Programme report which sets out the provisional programme for this Committee for the municipal year 2018/19.

RESOLVED:

- (i) The Committee noted the contents of the Work Programme report and appendix.

Chair.....