

FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 20TH JUNE, 2024

Present: Councillor(s): J Green (Chair), P Burns (Vice Chair), B Clelland, L-A Moir, D Weatherley, I Patterson, P Craig, K McCartney.

Apologies: Councillor(s): M Ord, H Kelly, A Ord, J Mohammed, E McMaster, K Henderson, R Hart.

135 Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held of 18 April 2024 were approved as an accurate record with no matters arising.

136 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

137 Performance Management & Improvement Framework - Year End Performance 2023/24 - Richard Hall/Chloe Finn

Purpose of the Performance Management and Improvement Framework

1. The Performance Management and Improvement Framework (PMIF) enables the Council to know how it is delivering against the Thrive agenda. It has a clear focus on priorities, delivery, measurement, and analysis of impact. It is based on Thrive and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and incorporates an organisational 'health check' balanced scorecard.

The report was presented. Over the coming twelve-month period the current PMIF will undergo a review to ensure that the information provided by the framework continues to add value to decision making process and reflects advancements in technology and the introduction of the Office for Local Government.

Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- Comment on the year-end report at Appendix 1 and identify any areas for further scrutiny.
- Recommend the performance report to Cabinet for consideration in July 2024.

The committee raised a question in relation to 'School readiness: % of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception' and why it is at a baseline of 73.4% and not 100%. This was addressed by the explanation that this baseline is dependent on achieving a good foundation of development which may not always be attainable due to the requirement of SEND etc. Benchmarking is required and opportunities are needed by nurseries to build on foundations of children going into primary school. The impact of the COVID pandemic was raised and the affects it had in relation to children's experiences such as socialising.

Noted – Supplementary information is required to track the progress of school readiness.

The committee clarified the council's level of control over aspects such as exclusions and the ability to influence the related figures. Suzanne Dunn, Service Director of Education, Schools and Inclusion, works closely with academies in offering support and involvement in what is wanted to be seen in terms of foundation levels, education and attendance.

The committee raised the need to include schools in need of improvement within the scope of the committee. The School Improvement Service is managed through the Council via trade services. The ambition is for all children to attend good or outstanding schools. The School Improvement Service is due to be discussed in future Families OSC.

RESOLVED

The committee noted and agreed the above report and recommendations.

138 LADO Annual Report - Sharon Davey/Heather Jenkins

Purpose of the Report

1. To update on the progress from LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) throughout the year of 2023/2024.
2. Collate themes and learning for the service and partners for 2024/2025.

The report was presented. Areas of success were discussed, highlighting the increase of positive activity reflecting the ongoing work as detailed on p.3 of the report.

There has been an increase in referrals from schools and children's homes due to increased volume of awareness sessions, an improved referral process and ongoing training.

Timeliness of LADO meetings has improved from 72% to 90%.

In response to training sessions and working with the LADO, positive feedback has been received from professionals writing in to praise the ongoing work and improvements. This feedback was also presented to the committee.

The ongoing work moves onwards to strengthen training and guidance to be applied in service and across the entire partnership.

Addressing the question asking if there is any geographic area of concern, it was clarified that the LADO's services are provided across the region to ensure appropriate information is communicate effectively via local authorities.

139 Corporate Parenting Board Annual Update - Lesley Thompson/Josh Barr

The role of the board is to consistently challenge and ask:

- If this were my child, would it be good enough for them?
- If I were that child, would it have been good enough for me?
- How could I make it even better?

The following four themes of the report were presented and detailed to the committee.

- Theme 1: How are we supporting children and young people to remain safely at home with families/extended families; what is the evidence; what progress are we making and what are the outcomes?
- Theme 2: How are we meeting children's needs and improving outcomes; what is the evidence; what progress are we making and what are the outcomes?
- Theme 3: How are we ensuring that there are sufficient homes for our children in care and care experienced young people; what is the evidence; what progress are we making and what are the outcomes?
- Theme 4: How are we improving outcomes for care experienced young people; what is the evidence; what progress are we making and what are the outcomes?

In addressing the question relating to the number of foster carers being recruited, the committee discussed kinship and how outcomes are statistically better with family involvement

Thursday, 20th June, 2024

due to the level of intervention required. Family Hubs are being used for this process. The advisory group will ascertain what level of training is required with kinship carers available to support and train.

The region as a whole is working to recruit foster carers with Gateshead Councils support package being available to all across the region. There is a positive drive to recruit younger carers who have the opportunity to see the role as a career.

Kinship care sees Gateshead Council provide a dedicated team that can support carers, resulting in far fewer breakdowns of extended family arrangements.

RESOLVED

The committee noted and agreed the above report.

140 Independent Reviewing Officer's Annual Report - Sharon Davey/Heather Jenkins

Purpose of the Report

1. To update on the progress from IRO (Independent Reviewing Officer) Service throughout the year of 2023/2024.
2. Collate themes and learning for the service and partners for 2024/2025.

The above report was delivered to the committee.

The IRO service has delivered narrative training – ‘writing with and for the child’ – to promote the voices of children and families, therefore, exposing learning opportunities to improve the service. This has been well received and is now considered a strength of the service.

Training is being delivered to the wider service to ensure strengths and tools of the service are provided and utilised at the earliest opportunity.

Quality Assurance is being addressed regarding systemic and resource issues in order to deliver the best outcome for children and young people. A Quality Assurance clinic has been set up to improve the service going forward - Strategic Quality Assurance Group (SQAG).

Achievements from report were highlighted such as the good feedback received from the IRO service.

The service continues to upskill IRO's in relation to good practice, staying current both regionally and nationally.

Referencing Para. 10, p.78 of the report, the committee discussed children's views and concerns with attendance of reviews. It was discussed that it would be helpful to clarify actual numbers of children, as opposed to percentages. Furthermore, it was clarified that children might not attend to speak for themselves due to feeling nervous etc, however, the advocacy service available is offered to all children. Some children prefer to hold their own presentation or play games to communicate. To open up in communication, children are encouraged and facilitated to do so in whatever way they choose. Family are encouraged too, as they are key support for their child.

All staff at the conferences have iPad's to anonymously submit details should anyone need technology related support. Paper forms are also available to gain the views of parents and children. These packs are in the process of being reviewed to ensure this key information is obtained at the soonest opportunity and in the best way.

RESOLVED

The committee noted and agreed the above report.

141 Work Programme 2024/25 - Emma Fagan

Summary

This report details the draft work programme for the Families OSC for the 2024-25 municipal year and sets out the role and remit of the Committee.

Recommendations

1. The Committee is asked to:-
 - a) Approve the draft work programme as set out at Appendix 1; and
 - b) Highlight any additional priority areas that Members feel it is important for the Committee to consider.

The principles at centre of governance and scrutiny were clarified – Para. 10 covers Statutory Guidance for scrutiny activity.

The remit of the committee, as set out in constitution, was clarified.

RESOLVED

The committee noted and agreed the above Terms of Reference, Work Programme and recommendations.

142 Any other business

It was clarified that the Work Programme is scheduled to discuss the School Improvement Service.

No further business.

Date and time of the next meeting

The next Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be held on 5th September 2024, 1.30pm in the Bridges room, Gateshead Civic Centre.

Chairman at the meeting on
Thursday, 20 June 2024