

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

12 September 2023

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Jim Lindridge (In the Chair)

Councillors: Councillors, Brian Cowie, Brenda Harrison, Sue Little and Shane Moore

Co-opted Members:

Adam Palmer, Secondary Head Representative
Sue Sharpe, Primary Head Representative
Jo Wilson, CE Diocese Representative
Tracey Gibson, RC Diocese Representative

Also Present:

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.2 Councillor Tom Feeney was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Cameron Sharp and Councillor Rachel Creevy as substitute for Councillor Philip Holbrook

Louise Addison, Adoption Tees Valley

Officers:

Sally Robinson, Executive Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services
Jane Young, Assistant Director, Children and Families
Roni Checksfield, Team Manager, Youth Offending Service
Julian Heward and Ellen Fallow, Communications and Marketing Team
Denise Wimpenny, Democratic Services Team

12. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Philip Holbrook, Cameron Sharp, Bob Buchan, Chair of Adult and Community Based Services, Zoe Westley, Special School Head Representative and Martin Pout, Primary Parent Governor Representative.

13. Declarations of Interest

None.

14. Minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2023

Received.

15. Youth Justice Strategic Plan (*Executive Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services*)

Type of decision

Budget and Policy Framework

Purpose of report

To seek approval from the Committee to begin a consultation process for the approval of the Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2023/24

Issue(s) for consideration

A copy of the draft Hartlepool Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan 2023/2024 was appended to the report. The report set out the process which would be followed with a further report being submitted to this Committee on 14 November prior to submission to Full Council on 30 November to seek adoption of the Plan. The final Plan would also be sent to the National Youth Justice Board.

The Committee was advised that the Youth Justice Plan provided an overview of how the Youth Justice Service, the Youth Justice Service Strategic Management Board and wider partnership would ensure that the service had sufficient resources and infrastructure to deliver youth justice services in its area in line with the requirements of the National Standards for Youth Justice Services.

It was proposed that the Youth Justice Service and broader Youth Justice Partnership focus on key strategic objectives, during 2023/24, as set out in the report.

In the lengthy discussion that followed presentation of the report, officers responded to issues arising from the report. Clarification was provided in relation to targeted intervention and prevention measures in relation to youth justice services. Concerns were expressed in relation to substance misuse issues and criminal activity witnessed outside school gates and examples of the difficulties experienced by teaching staff when reporting such activity to

the police were shared with Members. The Assistant Director outlined the support mechanisms in place to assist schools in this regard and placed emphasis upon the need to complete the relevant paperwork, which would be shared with the multi-agency child exploitation team whereupon a location assessment would be undertaken. Members commented on the benefits of sharing concerns with neighbourhood inspectors, utilising PCSO's and working together in terms of sharing information to address such issues. Reference was made to the increasing prevalence of vaping in schools and the challenges for schools in terms of managing this. The need to include the risks associated with such activity in education and lifestyle briefings in schools was suggested.

Following further discussion in relation to the importance of the escalation process and limited powers of intervention, the Executive Director commented on the option for the Committee to receive further information on the MACE arrangements to include the links to partnership working. It was therefore agreed that a report be provided to a future meeting of this Committee.

Decision

- (i) The Committee noted the progress made against the local Youth Justice Plan (2022/2023) and approved the required process of consultation.
- (ii) That a report be provided to a future meeting of this Committee in relation to the MACE arrangements.

16. 2022/23 Annual Report of Adoption Tees Valley *(Executive Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

For information

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to provide Children Service's Committee with information relating to the activity of the Adoption Service for the period April 2022- March 2023 (**Appendix 1**).

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided background information in relation to the adoption service being ran by Adoption Tees Valley Regional Agency. The aim of Adoption Tees Valley (ATV) was to recruit, train and support adopters within the region to ensure children could live locally with families who understand the children's individual backgrounds and provide a good quality of life for children which was achieved through objectives set out in the Committee

report. Members were referred to the annual report, attached as an appendix which provided a comprehensive overview of the work of ATV throughout 2022/23.

In support of the report, a representative from Adoption Tees Valley, who was in attendance at the meeting, outlined the salient points in the annual report which included information on adoption activity across the Tees Valley as well as Hartlepool as a comparator with the previous year, adoption placements, the child's adoption journey, adoption timescales, national and regional trends, benchmarking information including number of adopter approvals, key priorities and achievements.

In the discussion that followed the Committee welcomed the report and commented on the positive outcomes of the regional adoption agency arrangements to date and expressed appreciation to those involved.

The representative responded to issues raised arising from the report. Clarification was provided in relation to disrupted placement arrangements and the challenges in relation to recruitment, placing children with complex needs and the impact of delays with the health system. The ongoing work and measures in place to address these challenges were outlined.

Decision

The Committee noted the annual report in relation to the work of the Adoption Tees Valley Service during 2022/23.

17. Staying Close *(Executive Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

For information

Purpose of report

To provide information regarding the successful bid to delivery Staying Close for young people leaving our care.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided background information in relation to the Staying Close model which provided an enhanced support package for young people leaving care from children's homes and was designed to be a comparable offer to the option to Stay Put, which supported young people in foster care to remain with their foster carers until 21. Staying Close provided an offer of move-on accommodation, alongside a package of practical and emotional

support, provided by a member of staff from their former children's home or from someone who they know and trust.

The Council's bid to join the Staying Close pilot had been successful which would reach 25 care leavers in 2023/24 and a further 10 young people would join this group in 2024/25. The Staying Close model would consist of a number of components, the detail of which was currently being co-produced with our Staying Close cohort and would include a place to call home and developing life skills, building trusting relationships and tackling loneliness, learning and working, details of which were provided as set out in the report.

Following presentation of the report, the Chair together with Members of the Committee welcomed the initiative and commented on the benefits of initiatives of this type. Officers responded to issues raised arising from the report. Members were keen to receive further updates on outcomes and see the initiative continue. In concluding the debate Members commented on the challenges around funding, the importance of member support and the need to strengthen the offer to young people.

Decision

The Committee noted the participation of the Council in the DfE Staying Close Programme and the strengthened support and services this would provide for those leaving residential care and supported accommodation.

18. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

The Chairman ruled that the following item of business should be considered by the Committee as a matter of urgency in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(B) (4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 in order that the matter could be dealt with without delay.

19. SEND Budget

In response to a query raised regarding the impact of reductions in central government cuts to the SEND budget, Members were advised that whilst there had been an increase in SEND in response to demand, details of which had been reported to a previous meeting, further information in relation to transformation and investment would be available in due course.

20. Date and Time of Next Meeting

It was reported that the next meeting would be held on 14 November at 4.00 pm.

The meeting concluded at 5.10 pm.

H MARTIN

DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND HR

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