

CABINET – 27 NOVEMBER 2012

Progress Report on Children In and Leaving care

On Wednesday, the 14th of November 2012, the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee met to discuss the draft cabinet report 'Progress Report on Children In and Leaving Care'.

As a result, the committee would like the Cabinet to consider the outcomes of that discussion as part of its agenda item on this topic in their meeting on Tuesday the 27th of November. This includes the following:

Cabinet Report on Children in and Leaving Care- Committee Recommendations

The committee commended officers on the outcomes of the report and the good, committed work that is being done. There was a lengthy discussion on the report and the committee emphasised the following key areas:

Prevention

The committee noted that the second highest reason for entering care was family dysfunction and believe this highlights the importance of keeping the Thriving Families project central to the work of the Early Intervention Service through the hubs in order to early identify and take decisions on struggling families.

Getting children into care earlier

Whilst the committee discussed the challenges involved in choosing the appropriate time to put children into care, following the Parliamentary Select Committee view that more children should be brought into care, they are confident that the difficult decisions being made are the right ones and that the approach is sound.

Changes to the adoption/fostering process

The committee welcomed news that the government is simplifying the fostering and adoption process and introducing a new fostering to adopt scheme but emphasised that the focus should remain on achieving the right outcomes for the children.

Kinship

The committee discussed that children are usually better off with their family and welcomed the assurance that risk assessments consider appropriate context when assessing family members' eligibility for fostering when they may have previous background issues.

Fostering Recruitment

The committee raised concern that there are hotspots in the county with a lack of foster families leading to children being fostered away from where they live, causing

disruption. However, they are satisfied that targeted campaigns and good links with the media are working to increase numbers in these areas.

Education

The committee emphasised that Ofsted performance data shows clear evidence that one to one tuition improves educational outcomes for children in care up to and above that of children not in care. The committee recommends that all schools are made aware of the increased benefits of individual tuition for children in care and that this can be funded through the pupil premiums.

Corporate Parenting Review

The committee welcomed the upcoming Corporate Parenting Review, especially in regards to the joint working with Councillors.

Children in Education, Employment and/or Training (EET)

The committee was pleased with the high performance levels in both EET and living accommodation (above the national average). Officers described the pathway that is developed for each child and the need to take a flexible approach to timing of services as maturity levels may differ.

Children under Custodial Sentences to become 'In Care'

There is a concern that proposed changes (December 2012) to status of young people in remand could have a financial impact on the council.

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