



## **People Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Date:** Friday, 5 January 2024

**Time:** 10.30 am

**Location:** Copeland Centre, Catherine Street,  
Whitehaven

**Present:** Cllr C Wills (Chair), Cllr J Whalen (Vice-Chair), Cllr M Eldon, Cllr L Jones-Bulman, Cllr S Pollen, Cllr A Pratt and Cllr H Tucker

**Also Present:** Cllr E Williamson and Cllr E Lynch

**In Attendance** Director of Children and Family Wellbeing  
Democratic Services Officer  
Policy and Scrutiny Advisor  
Public Health Consultant  
Senior Manager, Children and Families  
Virtual School Headteacher  
Senior Manager, Children and Family Wellbeing

### **PEOS.31/23 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor H Davison and Ms L Watson, Co-opted Member.

### **PEOS.32/23 Disclosures of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

### **PEOS.33/23 Exclusion of Press and Public**

**RESOLVED**, that the press and public be not excluded from the meeting during consideration of any item on the agenda.

### **PEOS.34/23 Minutes of Last Meeting**

**RESOLVED**, that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2023 be agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

### **PEOS.35/23 Family Wellbeing Programme Overview**

Members received a report from the Senior Manager, Early Years and the Consultant for Public Health advising that an ambitious Family Wellbeing Programme had been in development since September 2023. This was being developed to change the way that the Council delivers and commissions prevention and early help services for families. Members noted that effective early help services could prevent problems escalating when statutory interventions were required.

The officer advised that the re-design of the delivery of early help and prevention services provided a golden opportunity to deliver a Family Wellbeing Programme for children, young people and families in collaboration with Council Executive, Community Panels, communities and families.

The report set out work undertaken to progress the Programme from early 2024 onwards. The portfolio holders spoke passionately about the Programme, highlighting the fantastic opportunity to redesign services for Cumberland residents. It was noted that investment in enhancing the leadership team had been made and a Family Wellbeing Transformation Project Delivery Board had been established to provide strategic and operational oversight of the Programme. The establishment of the Family Hub programme was outlined.

Members, in discussion, welcomed the Programme. The negative impacts of the Covid pandemic, the rising demand on mental health services and the cost of living crisis were discussed at length. Officers acknowledged recruitment and retention pressures within services and in partner organisations. Joint working was taking place to address this. A member raised concerns that mandatory children's checks were not being undertaken. Officers acknowledged concerns and advised that there was a national shortage of health visitors. It was recognised that service improvement was needed.

The rurality of Cumberland and the difficulties this caused was highlighted. Transport and how some families may struggle to access services was discussed. Officers and the portfolio holder advised on outreach services that would be put in place to help with this.

Budget pressures and the cost of delivering the transformation programme were discussed. Officers and the portfolio holders reiterated the need for change, to prevent problems escalating to the point where statutory interventions was required. The portfolio holders and officers advised that the changes were achievable with commitment. Members were informed that Cumberland was the first council to auto enrol families for free school meals and this was welcomed by the Committee. Members were advised of engagement and their duty to drive the programme forward at a community level.

A member raised concerns on pressures placed on schools, especially in light of budget cuts. A member sought assurance on the oversight of home schooled children. Following a question on provision for teenagers, it was noted that Cumbria Youth Alliance provided programmes for this age group. A member was informed of a dedicated phone line for self-referrals and the vital role schools and family hubs play in service referrals was discussed..

The officers were thanked for their very informative report.

**RESOLVED, that**

- (1) that an evidence based report, to include case studies, status of health checks, family hub development, pressures and support for schools and evidence to show if the Programme had reduced the need for high level services, be received by the Committee in September;
- (2) a paper on workforce in the whole of Children's Services, including providers, be received by the Committee in September;
- (3) a paper on home schooling be placed on the Committee's work programme.

## **PEOS.36/23 Virtual School Annual Report**

Members received the Cumberland Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report which covered the academic year 2022-2023. The report outlined delivery and challenges from the past year as well as a detailed summary and analysis of education performance outcomes for Cared for Children for the last year. Members noted that the Corporate Parenting Board considered this report annually which allowed for a detailed understanding of children's performance and the extent to which the schools continued to deliver in their statutory duties relating to Personal Education Plans (PEPs).

Members noted the key priorities for 2023/24 and welcomed other key priorities including further development of the Virtual School training offer and recruitment of new roles to improve the offer to each of the different cohorts. It was noted that maths was the only subject where Cumberland did not outperform against national data. Members were advised that the group of children who were supported by the Virtual School Team had a high-quality Personal Education Plan (PEP) in place each term, effective targets and action plans, specifically for maths, together with the provision of additional pupil premium plus where necessary to support this subject.

Members noted the additional support provided through the Letterbox Scheme to promote reading and suggested that a similar approach be considered for older children. It was noted that the biggest challenge was for schools to meet the needs of pupils. A discussion took place around suspensions and exclusions and whether a comparison could be done with school figures. In answer to a member's question, the officer confirmed targeted support was offered to schools where possible if a pattern of suspensions or exclusions emerged. A member agreed to submit further questions by email to the officer.

The portfolio holder concluded the report by thanking the team for their hard work and detailed a virtual school case which showcased the work of the Team.

The officer was thanked for his report.

**RESOLVED**, that an annual update report be placed on the Committee's work programme.

## **PEOS.37/23 Outcomes from public examinations EY GLD, KS1 and KS2, GCSE, 'A' and Tech Level 2023**

Members received a report that gave an overview of educational outcomes in 2023 for early years good level of development (EY GLD), Key Stage 1 and 2 (KS1 and KS2), GCSE, A Level and Tech Level. Members noted that attainment measures EY GLD, KS1, KS2 and KS4 were improving against the national outcomes in 2019, achieved through improved focus on teaching, curriculum and school improvement through a cluster-based working and sharing in a system approach.

Members were informed as there were no national comparator for 2020 and 2021, the 2019 outcomes were used as a benchmark and the report focused on all pupil's outcomes. The officer outlined four key priority areas for improvement identified from the data. Members noted that an improvement had been achieved in a pilot scheme in Carlisle through a cluster-based working and sharing system approach

Members questioned benchmarking with similar geographical counties. In answer to a member's question on working relationships with Academies, the officer highlighted the importance of maintaining good relationships with the schools.

The officer was thanked for the informative report.

**RESOLVED**, that an annual report, including case studies, be placed on the Committee's work programme.

### **PEOS.38/23 Committee Update**

The Policy and Scrutiny Advisor presented an update report providing an overview of matters relating to the Committee's work, including the Forward Plan of Key Decisions. A new work programme for the Committee was being developed.

**RESOLVED**, that

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) the items on the Forward Plan be noted.

### **PEOS.39/23 Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee was scheduled for 1 March 2024 at 10.30 am in the Council Chamber, Allerdale House, Workington.

The meeting finished at 1.05 pm