

Scrutiny Annual Report: April 2013 to March 2014

Select Committee: Children and Young People

Report of Chairman: Councillor Ray Bolton

Reviews undertaken / outcomes being monitored: In considering the budget proposals for 2015/16, the committee expressed concern about the proposed reduction in funding for short breaks for disabled children. The committee established a Task and Finish Group to understand the Short Breaks Service and its budgetary framework in the context of the service budget for Children with Disabilities, to consider the possible effect of the proposed cut on parents and the children that use the Short Breaks Service, to explore what alternatives are available for families and how the service could be managed more efficiently. The Group has met a number of times to gather evidence from County Council officers, service providers and service users and intends to prepare its report for Select Committee consideration in the summer of 2014.

Call-in of Significant Executive Decisions: None in this period

Scrutiny of Budgets and Performance: The committee has continued to monitor the 2013/14 revenue budget over the period and considered the Children's Services revenue budget for 2014/15, recommending approval by the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services. In considering the reduced funding proposals for some services, it was agreed that a Task and Finish Group regarding short breaks for disabled children be established, as detailed above.

The committee has monitored school performance, in particular educational attainment in Hampshire for 2013 was in line with or above the national average, including those receiving free school meals and children for whom English was an additional language. There has also been a continuing improvement in the attainment of children in care.

Questioning and exploring areas of interest and concern: The Committee has received a report on the outcomes of the Supporting (Troubled) Families in Hampshire programme and welcomed the successes of the scheme during its first year, which included 79 positive outcomes reported to the DCLG by the end of July 2013. The committee will continue to monitor progress on an ongoing basis.

The Committee also received an update on the performance of Children's Centres which, following a year of changes, were in a period of stability. The Committee heard about the links with partners in health and social care, in particular the integrated work of health visitors and midwives which had seen some health based services transfer to the Children's Centres.

Upcoming topics: The work programme for the forthcoming municipal year is being developed for consideration at the next meeting of the Select Committee.