

## **Portfolio holder briefing Childrens Services**

**Current Cabinet role:** As well as Childrens services I am responsible for education (including SEND generally and DBV specifically), skills (apprenticeships) etc. adult learning, SACRE, Youth Justice, Youth services (made statutory by government on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2023).

Staffing has been a concern throughout the LGR process and we have been fortunate in whom we were able to appoint. It was good to see that recruitment to our new council was popular. I meet regularly with the Director of Children's Services and the Assistant Directors the last of whom began in January. We have continued to deliver good services including the government SEND Delivering Better Value programme. We retain good relationships with schools and have our alternative Wednesday meeting with them which is still well attended as well as formal meetings. We have begun to expand our specialist provision through offering resourced provision in specific schools, expanding special school staff and equipment into mainstream secondary e.g. Sandgate. We continue to develop specialist provision in Barrow (alternative provision).

Within Childrens services we were awarded a grant for the development of a family hub in Barrow and subsequently another in Dalton. Events have been held with foster carers and cared for children which are always enjoyable and enabled us to hear what the children wanted to say. The Corporate Parenting Board has met and will be involved in a development programme supported by the LGA with dates agreed. It has been agreed recently that Early Help is going to include youth services and work will continue led by Lorraine Hopkins.

I am assured of progress across Social Care, attending meetings with the Director of Children Services and AD Children and Families where data on performance is shared and issues raised as appropriate. I am pleased to say that investment in key areas

continues to support families and prevent children coming into our care, with the number of cared for children having fallen since the last quarter.

I meet monthly with the Director for Thriving Communities, Assistant Director and Senior Manager about Adult Learning. It is providing good quality learning. It is agreed that it will be jointly run by both Councils, but it is hosted by Westmorland and Furness. Some elements of Childrens' Services are also run jointly but hosted by Cumberland e.g. Fostering and Adoption. These will continue but a review is taking place.