

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL
MONDAY, 16 NOVEMBER 2015

Councillors: Kirsten Hearn (Chair), Mark Blake, Clive Carter, Toni Mallett, Reg Rice and Charles Wright

Co-opted Members: Chukweuma Ekeowa (Church representative)

CYPS5. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Morris, Mr Taye and Ms Denny.

CYPS6. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

CYPS7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mallett stated that she was a governor of Broadwaters and Chair of its Community Services Committee. Councillor Wright stated that he was Chair of Governors at Highgate Wood School.

CYPS8. DEPUTATIONS/ PETITIONS/ PRESENTATIONS/ QUESTIONS

None.

CYPS9. MINUTES

It was noted that the incorrect set of minutes had been included in the agenda pack and therefore agreed to defer approval of the minutes of the meeting of 9 July 2015 until the next meeting of the Panel.

CYPS10. SCHOOL PLACES

Eveleen Riordan, the Joint Interim Head of Education Services, reported that the birth rate in London had stabilised and was now predicted to fall. This would have an impact on future demand for school places and had been reflected in projections of demand for primary school places, especially in the Crouch End and Muswell Hill areas. However, there was still likely to be additional demand in areas of the borough where regeneration was taking place and there was also currently a need for additional capacity at secondary level.

Due to legislative changes, the only way that it was now possible for the Council to increase the supply of school places was through expansion of maintained schools or by facilitating the establishment of new free schools. In terms of post 16 provision, there were currently enough places to meet demand despite the increase in the participation age to 18. Following recent changes in the relationship between schools and local authorities, the majority of Haringey schools had chosen to maintain close ties with the Council. There were a number of different potential options for models of future provision. The most likely future model for Haringey would be a mix of maintained schools, academies, free schools, colleges and multi academy trusts.

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It was noted that if a higher percentage of Haringey young people stayed within the borough for post 16 provision it would be difficult for the borough to meet demand. It was considered that there were sufficient places to meet current and projected demand, although not all settings were currently operating at the optimum level. In respect of apprenticeships, it was felt that the potential of these had not yet been realised fully and the Council would be looking at how they could be better supported and supplemented. The quality and number of them needed to be improved and work was being undertaken in conjunction with colleagues in Regeneration to address how this might happen. It was important that there were more quality pathways available.

In response to a question on diagnosing autism, should a diagnosis be required it would be carried out by agencies outside of the school but with the school supporting the process and seeking an ECHP (Education and Health Care Plan) as required. There was a process for identifying special educational needs and determining any need for support. Of particular note was the current and future provision for autism that was being developed at Heartlands High. Numbers of children with special educational needs had increased, although some of this could be attributed to improved diagnosis. SEN numbers were on the rise across the capital.

It was noted that there were currently sufficient school places across all year groups and phases, including provision to meet demand from in year applications. Placements via primary and secondary were made to ensure that hard to place children were not all placed at the same schools but were shared equitably.

A Panel Member expressed concern that there were currently no schools with sixth forms in Tottenham. In addition, there was likely to be additional demand for places in the Tottenham area due to regeneration. It was noted that school based sixth forms in Tottenham had been removed a number of years ago with the establishment of the 6th Form Centre. Sixth form provision in the borough remained on the agenda. Research suggested that it was aspirational for schools to have 6th forms within their school as it enabled pupils and teachers to see the onwards progression. Specific consideration was being given to potential future provision in the Northumberland Park area.

It was noted that Haringey 6th Form Centre had not been the success in terms of place uptake that it could be. However, it had recently been inspected and categorised as "good" by OFSTED. The establishment of any sixth forms in Tottenham would now have to be funded from within the resources of schools there. They would also face a challenge in ensuring that they were able to provide sufficient breadth of curriculum. It was agreed that a paper on 6th form provision, including outcomes, be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel and that this be linked to its in-depth work on youth transition as the issues were closely related.

In respect of Harris Academy in Tottenham, it was noted that this was an all through school with an age range from 3 to 17. However, whilst Year 7 was currently full, there were a significant number of reception places available. There was a lack of evidence so far to support the effectiveness of all through schools in terms of outcomes.

It was noted that there would be changes in the National Funding Formula for schools from 2016/17, which would mean that some schools were likely to receive less funding. There was a local agreement of 27 in place in respect of class sizes of for

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secondary schools in the borough. To ensure adequate funding continued, consideration was being given to entering into negotiations for this to be increased to class sizes of 30. If class sizes were increased, the number of additional year 7 places created suggests that there would be continued place sufficiency to meet future demand.

It was noted that demand for and supply of primary school places fluctuated across the borough and current projections indicated that there might be an excess of places in Crouch End in the future that equated to approximately 4 classes whilst in Muswell Hill this was likely to be 3 classes.

There had been some volatility in projections for demand for both reception and in year places in recent years. This was affected by, among other things, migration and changes to benefits. As part of their work, Education Services liaised with town planners regarding potential demand for additional places arising from housing developments in the borough and these were factored into the borough's school roll projections. However, projections was not an exact science and demand for and supply of places was continually monitored to ensure sufficiency.

It was noted that half of surplus school places in the borough were concentrated in two new free schools. Parents could be reticent to apply to new schools because of a lack of a track record in terms of attainment and other factors.

AGREED:

1. That educational outcome data be shared with the Panel on young people who are educated out of borough; and
2. That a report on 6th form provision, including outcomes, be submitted to the Panel and that this be linked to its in-depth work on youth transition.

CYPS11. CHILD OBESITY

The Panel received a report outlining measures to address child obesity within the borough. In answer to questions, they noted the following;

- The target that had been set by partners who were addressing the issue was to halt the increase in obesity;
- Levels of child obesity were 23% in reception but for children in Year 6 the figure was nearly 37%;
- There were a wide range of causes of obesity. These included children having the money to buy snacks and participating in lower levels of physical activity;
- Data on levels of obesity was not kept for children in secondary schools. However, action was still being taken to address the issue amongst older children such as improving access to healthy food and providing a range of exercise choices. Action was being taken in line with current evidence but there was no single thing that was likely to make a difference on its own.

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- Local plans were intended to complement London wide and national programmes. Work was being undertaken with local communities and groups of parents. It was being approached in a structured way, with regular reviews being built into the process.
- The Obesity Alliance reported to the Health and Well Being Board and was one of three priorities in its current strategy. It was chaired by the Councillor Morton, the Cabinet Member for Health and Well-Being. Its plans for addressing the issue were currently in the process of being developed and were expected to be completed early in the new year.
- In answer to a question, it was noted that there was a link with ethnicity. However, a focussed piece of research involving boroughs with similar demographics would be required to determine the extent of this.

Panel Members raised the issue of the lack of play space that there was in some areas of the borough, particularly in some regeneration areas. It was noted that partners wished to promote safe play. As part of this, play streets were being established within the borough. Work was also being undertaken with regeneration teams to ensure that there was provision for play within new developments. The planning and regulatory process also had the potential to assist the Council in ensuring that play was taken into account and efforts were being made to influence developers accordingly.

It was noted that the evidence suggested that food was a bigger factor in obesity than lack of physical activity. However, action to address obesity normally focussed on both issues. There were also other benefits to be gained from physical activity, aside from weight control, including improved mental health and well-being.

AGREED:

That an update on progress with the work being undertaken be provided to the Panel when relevant performance information becomes available.

CYPS12. CABINET MEMBERS QUESTIONS

Councillor Waters, the Cabinet Member for Children and Families, reported that there was still an overspend within Children and Young People's services. This was, to a large extent, demand led. Savings were now being made and there was now a better grip on expenditure. There would still be an overspend at the end of the year but it would be lower than previously anticipated. The service was still spending less than the amount that was in the budget for last year. The anticipated overspend would be £5 million without management action. The action that was being taken would reduce this to £4 million. There were 439 Looked After Children (LAC) at the moment, which was the lowest number since 2011. This compared with a number of 514 at the end of last year.

Jon Abbey, the Director of Children's Services reported that the cost of provision for LAC varied depending on the requirements of individual children. Moving young people out of placements could not be done without proper planning and all cases were gone through thoroughly with a very clear plan developed for each of them. Haringey had challenging demographics and OFSTED would challenge the local

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authority if budgetary levels were deemed unsafe. It was not currently possible to recruit permanent staff for the First Response team and agency staff made up 10% of the workforce at the moment.

Neelam Bhardwaja, Assistant Director for Children's Services (Safeguarding and Support), reported that these were common issues across local authorities. The overall reduction in the number of LAC was very positive. In particular, some young people were being adopted whilst a number had turned 18. Although there were lower numbers, there were still significant costs associated with LAC. There were a number of ways that young people were referred to them and these were often not possible to control.

Mr Abbey commented that the overall overspend this year was lower than last year and the service had better control over the number of LAC. They were nevertheless challenged by reduced financial resources and high levels of demand. The budget had been £112 million 4 years ago and was £50 million now. The pressures on the service were caused by demand compounded by austerity.

In answer to a question, the Cabinet Member reported that it was too early for interventions by the new Early Help service to have made an impact on the numbers of LAC.

A Panel Member commented that there needed to be a balanced approach to risk. It was preferable to have an overspend than compromise on quality and safety.

In answer to a question, the Cabinet Member stated that permanence was the best outcome for children and young people. Outcomes for LAC were not as good as for other children and young people. 90% of LAC went back to their family of origin and the service tried to support young people in families and communities. The quality of staff was very important and continuity with social workers assisted with this process.

In respect of Children's Centres, the Cabinet Member reported that the Cabinet report on this issue had set out the impact of the proposed closures. The Centres had provided access to individuals who were able to refer them onto a range of services. This might become more difficult following the closures but there had been a focus on ensuring that access was maintained in developing the new model.

A lot of consultation had been undertaken, including some that had taken place prior to statutory consultation. There had been 480 responses by e-mail to the consultation. No one had wanted the closures. It had been clear from responses to the consultation that there was a lack of understanding of community access points. Many of the former Children's Centres would be used by schools and work was being done to develop this. As a result of the changes, there would no longer be a Children's Centre in the west of the borough but work would nevertheless be undertaken to commission one. Expressions of interest for this would be invited. There was a minimum service offer that included Health Visiting.

It was noted that the saving that would be made from the closures was £1.4 million of a pre-reduction budget of £4.145 million. The Cabinet Member commented that the closures were as a direct result of the cuts and that they would not have taken place otherwise. There were no plans to re-open centres that had been closed for the time being. The closures would take effect from the end of the current financial year.

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Discussions were taking place with trade unions, staff and governing bodies about the implementation.

Panel Members requested assurances that each case would be reviewed. It was noted that individual cases would be moved rather than closed. Jon Abbey, the Director of Children's Services, reported risks arising from the closures were being managed through the Early Help service. Each case required a detailed review and discussion about how support could now be provided.

AGREED:

1. That the Panel be provided with statistics on the number of young people currently on the child protection register, how many were under the age of 5, how many were under the age of 1 and which wards they came from;
2. That comparative information on outcomes elsewhere for LAC be shared with the Panel;
3. That, in respect of Children's Centres:
 - (a). The Panel be provided with details of the cost of the proposed closures;
 - (b). An update on progress with the proposed closures be provided by the Cabinet Member to the March meeting of the Panel; and
 - (c). A full report be made to the Panel in a years time on the impact of the closures.

CYPS13. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Panel noted that although it had been agreed previously that reviews would be undertaken on Early Years and Early Help, there were issues with the timing of these which meant that it would be preferable to defer their start. In the meantime, it had been proposed that the Panel undertake a short piece of in-depth work on the issue of disproportionality in the youth justice system. It was agreed that this would be prioritised and that work be undertaken to develop its scope and terms of reference.

AGREED:

1. That an in-depth piece of work be commissioned by the Panel into disproportionality within the youth justice system and that work on this be prioritised ahead of the previously agreed reviews on Early Help and Early Years; and
2. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be requested to endorse the above-mentioned amendment.

CIr Kirsten Hearn
Chair