

Report for: Cabinet 17 July 2018
Item number:

Title: Scrutiny Review on Support to Children from Refugee Families –
Response to Cabinet

Report:



Authorised by: Ann Graham, Director, Children's Services

Lead Officer:

Ward(s) affected: ALL

**Report for Key/
Non Key Decision:** N/A

1. Describe the issue under consideration

1.1 Under the agreed terms of reference, scrutiny panels can assist the Council and the Cabinet in its budgetary and policy framework through conducting in-depth analysis of local policy issues and can make recommendations for service development or improvement. The panels may:

- Review the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or particular service areas;
- Conduct research to assist in specific investigations. This may involve surveys, focus groups, public meetings and/or site visits;
- Make reports and recommendations, on issues affecting the authority's area, to Full Council, its Committees or Sub-Committees, the Executive, or to other appropriate external bodies.

1.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 July 2017 agreed to set up a review project to look at Child Friendly Haringey and as part of this, at the support provided to refugee and asylum seeking children arriving in Haringey.

1.3 In doing this, it sought to identify areas where there were gaps, challenges and consider whether current arrangements could be enhanced, as well as risks and opportunities.

The areas that the review looked at included:

- Relationships with local community organisations and how they are involved;
- Support for children in schools as well as for schools themselves;
- Trauma and mental health issues and how these are addressed;
- What happens when refugee children reach the age of 18;
- Families with no recourse to public funds (NRPF);
- Resource implications; and

- How expertise and learning is shared.
- 1.4. In the UK, a person acquires refugee status when their claim for asylum is accepted by the Home Office. The UN Refugee Convention defines a refugee as someone who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality or membership of a particular social group or political opinion is outside the country of their nationality and is unable to avail themselves of the protections in that country. Children of refugees will not necessarily have the same immigration status as their parent(s)/carer(s).
 - 1.5 The issues under consideration in the report are those affecting families who have no recourse to public funds (NRPF) and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who seek services and support in the borough primarily from Children and Young People's Service. The panel considered the form of this support, the quality of support and whether these met the needs of those assessed as in need.
 - 1.6 The Assistant Directors of Children's Social Care and Schools and Learning gave written and verbal reports to the panel. Community groups who advocate for families with no recourse to public funds offered evidence of families' experiences of the service provision. Other local authorities were invited to speak about how they delivered services and how this differed from the provision in Haringey.
 - 1.7 The final report of the review is attached at Appendix 1. This outlines the conclusions and recommendations of the Panel, which were approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 26 March 2018.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

- 2.1 The proposals in this Cabinet report reinforce our commitment to providing the right support, at the right time to children, young people and families in Haringey.
- 2.2 The report highlights the many issues that affect NRPF families living in Haringey. It considers the current experience of children and families in light of the provision available, the support provided by the third sector and voluntary agencies in advocating for families and the interface with other government departments. In doing this, the report gives a clear account of the complexity and challenges involved in delivering services to families.
- 2.3 Haringey has been hit hard by the budget cuts imposed by central Government. Our borough, home to some of the most vulnerable families in the country has lost over 40% of its funding since 2010. One in three children in Haringey live in poverty, and NRPF families are disadvantaged further by being precluded from much of the welfare system and delays in Home Office decisions on their immigration status. In this context, we are keen to ensure that these children and families are supported, and will work with organisations like NELMA and Project 17 to achieve this.
- 2.4 I am sure you will all join me in agreeing this report and recommendations.

Recommendations

3.1 That Cabinet consider the Scrutiny Review Report in **Appendix 1** and approve the responses to the Scrutiny recommendations as outlined in **Appendix 2** of this report.

3. Reasons for decision

4.1 The evidence supporting the Panels' recommendations on the enhancements that could be made to the support provided to children from refugee families is at (**Appendix 1**).

4. Alternative options considered

5.1 The evidence supporting the Panels' recommendations is outlined in the main body of the report (**Appendix 1**). The Cabinet could choose not to accept the recommended response by officers to them as outlined in Appendix 3. The potential implications of alternative courses of action are referred to within this as appropriate.

5. Background information

6.1 The Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel 2017/18 work programme agreed its review of Support to Children from Refugee Families.

6.2 The review considered evidence from officers, from local charities providing support to families with no recourse to public funds and to unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

6.3 Local authorities have a general duty to provide assistance to families under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, where there is a child in need in its local area and it is the Local Authority's determination that it should use its power to provide accommodation and/or financial support to promote the well-being of that child. In exercising its duties, local authorities are required to promote the child's upbringing by their family, and consequently offer support to the whole family, where this is consistent with safeguarding and promoting the child's welfare.

6.4 The final report of the review is attached as Appendix 1 and outlines the outcome of the work and the findings, conclusions and recommendations that the Panel has made. These were approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 26 March 2018.

6. Contribution to strategic outcomes

7.1 The work undertaken by the Panel will contribute to Priority 1 of the Corporate Plan – "Enable every child and young person to have the best start in life, with high quality education". It is particularly relevant to Objective 5; "Children and families who need extra help will get the right support at the right time to tackle issues before they escalate".

8. Statutory Officers comments (Chief Finance Officer (including procurement), Assistant Director of Corporate Governance, Equalities)

8.1 Finance

The costs incurred by the service in making payments to service users with No Recourse to Public Funds, exceeds the budget set aside for discharging this responsibility. The planned review needs to identify mitigations, and any additional pressures identified through this review will need to be funded from existing resources.

8.2 Procurement

NA

8.3 Legal

Under Section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, there is a duty on cabinet to consider the report, recommendations and responses to recommendations and to respond to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee indicating what (if any) action Cabinet proposes to take within 2 months beginning with the date on which cabinet received the report and response to recommendations.

8.4 Equalities

- The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not
 - Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.
- The three parts of the duty applies to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty.
- The scrutiny review specially looked at support to children from refugee families.

BAME		
NRPF		
BAME	127	91%
Not recorded	5	4%
White	7	5%
NRPF Total	139	100%
UASC (Care Leavers)		
BAME	39	59%
White	27	41%
UASC (Care Leavers) Total	66	100%
UASC (LAC)		
BAME	37	73%
Not recorded	1	2%
White	13	25%
UASC (LAC) Total	51	100%

Disability		
NRPF		
Not disabled	135	97%
N	3	2%
Y	1	1%
NRPF Total	139	100%
UASC (Care Leavers)		
Not disabled	65	98%
Y	1	2%
UASC (Care Leavers) Total	66	100%
UASC (LAC)		
Disabled	0	0%

- We are accepting, or partially accepting, the majority of recommendations. This will improve the support provided to children from refugee families. As such, the response to the report is considered to be positive for groups with protected characteristics.

9. Use of Appendices

Appendix 1	Scrutiny Review: Support to Children from Refugee Families. March 2018.
Appendix 2	Report to CYPS Scrutiny Panel
Appendix 3	Response by the Children's Service to recommendations

10. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

NA