

MINUTES OF MEETING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON MONDAY 8TH MARCH 2021

PRESENT:

Councillors: Erdal Dogan (Chair), Dana Carlin, James Chiriyankandath, Josh Dixon, Tammy Palmer, Anne Stennett and Elin Weston

Co-opted Members: Yvonne Denny and Lourdes Keever (Church representatives) and KanuPriya Jhunhunwala (Parent Governor representative)

27. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred Members present to item one on the agenda in respect of filming at the meeting and Members noted the information contained therein.

28. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Ms Jakhu.

29. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

31. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

32. MINUTES

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of 17 December 2020 be approved.

33. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS - CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Councillor Kaushika Amin, the Cabinet Member for Children and Families, reported on key developments within her portfolio as follows;

- Children had returned to school following the recent lockdown. Schools had still been open during lockdown to accommodate vulnerable children, those without access to IT and children of key workers but now all other children were returning.

She had not yet received attendance figures but it was likely that they would follow a similar pattern to previous returns to school after lockdown, with attendance lower initially but picking up once parents and carers felt more confident;

- Work had been undertaken to look different ways of providing IT support to enable children and families to better access remote learning. A hardship fund had been developed to fund the purchase of laptops and the amount of equipment was slowly being built up. Haringey Giving had contributed £24,000 of funding to this.

In answer to a question regarding SEND provision and parent and carer involvement, she reported that an organisation called Amaze had undertaken a review and its report had been published in July last year and shared with parent carers. There were three key areas where improvements were recommended:

- Closer working relationships needed to be developed between professionals and parents and carers;
- A new parent/carer forum needed to be established; and
- The new parent/carer forum needed to be able to provide information, guidance and support.

Engagement had taken place with parents and carers following the publication of the report by Amaze, facilitated by an independent chair. Parents and carers had been very supportive of the proposals and opportunities had been provided for them to participate and contribute to their development. This included helping to design the new arrangements and developing the service specification. Co-production had also taken place on the design of a new after school club for SEND children between 5 and 8 years old. In addition, work was taking place to develop residential and non-residential respite for parents and carers.

In answer to a question regarding school funding, she stated that individual schools made their own arrangements for raising additional amounts and the Council was not party to information on how much they raised. She would investigate what figures were available on total income and expenditure of schools and whether it was possible to calculate expenditure per pupil based on this. Panel Members commented that the ability to raise additional funds was not equal. Some schools had access to large top ups to their funding whilst others did not and this impacted on the educational experience of children in individual schools. The Cabinet Member acknowledged that there was inequality between schools. Some were very good at raising additional money. The ways in which they raised and spent money varied. Money from fund raising was normally used to purchase things that schools would not otherwise receive. She would raise the issue with the Assistant Director for Schools and Learning and Headteachers and provide a written response to the Panel in due course.

In answer to a question regarding the reduction in school rolls, she stated that this was an issue across London. The birth rate had been falling for some time and a lot of families had also moved out of London since the start of the pandemic. A number of options were currently being considered to address the situation and efforts being made to avoid any school closures. Panel Members commented that current proposals involved seven schools and there had been very little engagement regarding them. Getting schools to reduce the number of forms would not necessarily resolve the matter. The Cabinet Member stated that this was not

something that the Council could resolve on its own and it was necessary to find an approach that worked for schools. Efforts were being made to ensure that what was proposed was sustainable.

A Panel Member reported that when some clinically extremely vulnerable parents had raised concerns about the rapid increase in Covid infection rates during the autumn, they had been informed that they should either send their children to school or withdraw them as they could otherwise face prosecution. Most parents who had subsequently withdrawn their children had since been vaccinated but had now been told that they would need to re-apply for school places and would not be given any priority. If their school was oversubscribed, they were unlikely to get a place. The Cabinet Member stated that home schooling had increased during the pandemic but was now going down. She agreed to look into this issue and respond to the Panel.

In respect of safeguarding, a Panel Member reported that Whittington Health had stated in a recent letter on how services were changing due to the pandemic that families who were reluctant to have a healthcare professional visit them at home or attend an appointment would not be seen face-to-face. Whilst it was important that children and families were kept safe, it was possible that some safeguarding concerns would escape scrutiny and this was therefore a matter of concern.

The Cabinet Member stated that she was very worried that not all children were currently being seen, especially the very young. She had asked for data relating to this but the extent of engagement by health services with parents and families that had taken place had not been entirely clear from this. She had asked for a report on health services for children and families to come to the Health and Well-Being Board and would share this with the Panel when it was available. She understood the concerns and welcomed them being raised by the Panel.

Panel Members welcomed the Cabinet Member's response. It was felt that the response to the pandemic had led to an increase in risk levels for some children from their families. The lack of access to education and a safe place for children to disclose safeguarding matters could have serious long term implications. It was important that the report to the Health and Well-Being Board did not only cover what health services were currently doing but also looked at where there were risks and contained details of children who had not been seen and why.

In answer to a question regarding how children and young people would be able to catch up on education that had been lost during lockdowns, the Cabinet Member reported that plans were being developed and discussions taking place with headteachers and trade unions. The government had suggested that longer school terms could be used to enable children to catch up. This would need to be subject to negotiation though and an approach was required that worked for children and schools. One option that could be considered was the use of supplementary schools, which had been active in many communities. She agreed to report back to the Panel when plans had been developed.

AGREED:

1. That the Cabinet Member be requested to provide a written response to the Panel to the question regarding the total amount of income and expenditure of schools across the borough, including that from fund raising activities, and how this may impact on per pupil expenditure;
2. That the Cabinet Member be requested to report back to the Panel on the issue of children of clinically extremely vulnerable parents who had withdrawn their children from school due to the pandemic and were now being required to re-apply for school places;
3. That the concerns of the Panel regarding the safeguarding implications of the reduced face-to-face contact between children at risk and healthcare professionals be noted and that the Cabinet Member be requested to share the forthcoming report to the Health and Well-Being Board on health services for children with Panel Members; and
4. That a report be submitted to the Panel on plans to enable children and young people to catch up on education missed due to the pandemic once these have been further developed.

34. HARINGEY SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S PARTNERSHIP

David Archibald, Independent Chair of Haringey Safeguarding Partnership, reported that its first annual report was due in June 2021 and would cover the first 18 months of the new arrangements, which had begun in September 2019. The key aspect of the new arrangements was the joint and equal responsibility of the three statutory partners, which were the Council, the Clinical Commissioning Group and the Police.

Strategic partners met regularly. The Safeguarding Board had been retained but was now called the Leadership Group. This was working well and partnership working had improved. Due to the pandemic, there had been more regular meetings of the Leadership Group to enable partners to update each other on matters such as staff absences, temporary measures, managing demand and referral sources. The partnership was keen to ensure that safeguarding remained effective despite the impact of the pandemic. There had been a particular focus on unseen children and a lot of work undertaken on monitoring.

The partnership included a number of sub-groups and efforts had been made to keep these going during the pandemic as they made an important contribution. Business continuity plans of partners had been shared and the partnership had developed its own overall plan. Partners had written to all front line staff emphasising the importance of continuity and of seeing children. Training had been moved on-line and Section 11 audits had been completed as required. He felt that a good balance had been achieved between business as usual and responding to the challenges of the pandemic. There was an expectation that there would be additional demand coming out of lockdown. The effectiveness of the new safeguarding arrangements was being reviewed by the government and he felt that the partnership would be in a good position to respond to any recommendations. It had a strong action plan and continued to work effectively.

In answer to a question, Mr Archibald stated that safeguarding partners everywhere were concerned about the impact of lockdown on unseen children. The Safeguarding Partnership had been able to respond rapidly to the changing circumstances and make suitable adjustments. There had been some positives that had come from the use of virtual meeting technology though. The relaxing of lockdown restrictions provided an opportunity not only to resume many things that had not been possible but to also keep the best parts of what had worked during lockdown. It was likely that interactions would take place both face-to-face and virtually in the future.

35. HARINGEY COMMUNITY GOLD; PROGRESS AND EVALUATION

Eduardo Araujo, Senior Tottenham Community Safety Manager, reported on progress with the Haringey Community Gold initiative.

Addressing youth violence and reducing the number of young people entering the criminal justice system were key parts of the Borough Plan and the Young People at Risk strategy. The initiative had received approval for grant funding from the Greater London Authority in November 2018. It supported young people at risk of exclusion and those involved in or on the periphery of criminality. The programme aimed to create a network of community organisations, support existing schemes and promote new initiatives. There was a tailor made dedicated outreach service and a range of community based agencies that aimed to engage disenfranchised youth in a range of settings. The strengths based approach aimed to create practical pathways and maximise opportunities for young people to achieve their potential.

Performance in 2020 had proven to be reasonably successful. There had been a target of 2000 for engagement and 2119 had been achieved. 809 individuals had completed activities against a target of 500. 209 young people had completed employability training. There had been an increase in demand for mental health support, with the number of young people accessing services increasing from 14 to 41. 18 young people had become involved in the Youth Advisory Board, who was now meeting virtually and on a weekly basis. Three quarters of young people that the initiative had engaged with were young black males between the ages of 14 and 18. They came from all wards of the borough, with the largest number coming from Northumberland Park. Some participants had also come from other boroughs due to the work that had taken place with the College of North East London (CoNEL), with the largest percentage coming from Enfield. Referrals came from a wide range of sources and included several looked after children.

Moving forward, the initiative was looking to refresh its look and provide a clearer image. Much of the work had moved on-line during the pandemic and there was a need to ensure that the initiative caught the attention of young people. The programme had originally been designed to operate on a face-to-face basis and work had continued with schools during lockdown as well as outreach. Evaluation of the first year of the initiative had given it bronze status and it was intended to achieve silver status for future years.

In answer to a question, Eubert Malcolm (Assistant Director for Safer and Stronger Communities) stated that the Council's Young People at Risk strategy sought to keep young people safe and out of criminality. This was through early intervention and

diversionary activities. A whole systems approach was being adopted and initiatives involved working with community groups, parents and young people. The causes of serious youth violence were complex though and there were no easy answers. Criminality had dropped by 14% in Haringey in the last year, which was one of the biggest reductions in London. This included robbery and violent crimes. A careful eye was kept on statistics. Discussions had taken place across the Council and with partners on how this could be maintained. Despite the progress that had been made, there had still been some sad and unfortunate incidents though.

In answer to a question regarding involvement of girls and young women in Haringey Gold initiatives, Mr. Araujo reported that the first year of the initiative had been male dominated but action had been taken since then to address this. This included workshops for girls that had been organised through Exodus. The initiative was currently in the process of re-entering primary schools and would be undertaking work with children in Year 6. The focus of work would be on the transition to secondary school and developing healthy relationships. Data on disability was picked up and, in particular, special educational needs.

In answer to another question, he stated that the initiative was happy to work with groups of young people from eastern Europe. In addition, they had already been working with young refugees. Consideration was being given to extending provision for children with disabilities. The 193 young people who had improved well-being came from two projects. 629 had improved behaviour and attainment at school. 37 young people had gained employment. 450 had stated that they wanted help with finding a job though and the support that had been provided had focussed on improving their confidence. Support had been provided to enable the 41 young people that had requested help to access mental health services. Mr Malcolm commented that support for young people who had gained employment needed to be ongoing to ensure that they stayed in work.

36. HARINGEY CHILD & ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

The Panel received a presentation on child and adolescent mental health from:

- Kathryn Collin, Head of Children's Commissioning, Haringey, North Central London (NCL) Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG);
- Michele Guimarin, Joint Commissioning Manager for Vulnerable Children, LBH and NCL CCG; and
- Andrew Smith, Project Manager for Children's Mental Health, Haringey, NCL CCG.

Ms Collin reported that CAMHS delivered a wide variety of services that ranged from universal to targeted and specialist interventions. The Trailblazer project was very important as it filled a gap in early help. The prevalence of mental ill health was growing. Services had remained open during lockdowns and the needs of the most vulnerable had been prioritised. There had been a need to undertake work virtually and services had done their best to adapt. Inequalities in access had nevertheless become apparent. Trailblazer staff had been redeployed and worked on a new mental health and well-being help line for families that operated during the day from Monday to Friday.

A One Stop Shop for help and advice had been created. This included a web page covering the SEND Local Offer that had everything in one place. There had been 428 webpage hits in September 2020 and an average of 250 hits per month. Kooth was a national digital support service that had been commissioned in Haringey. There had been wider promotion of it in the borough and this had led to a large increase in young people accessing the service. It had a key role in providing support for children not accessing support through traditional therapy services and was especially well used by boys.

There had been a number of training exercises and events, including bereavement training. Schools were being supported, including through the provision of a “one-stop” referrals. There had been increased one-off investment into Educational Psychology, Hope in Tottenham and Open Door counselling to make sure there was an expanded offer to meet growing demand. There had also been investment in mental health crisis and liaison support at the North Middlesex Hospital. There was also now a 24/7 crisis helpline for professionals as well as a Crisis Line for families and Out-of-Hours nursing support. Unnecessary hospital admissions had been reduced by 75%.

Services were working towards a four week waiting time and there was an Access Team providing triage and a single point of entry. There was now a need to monitor waiting time for interventions and treatments after referral. Most referrals were from professionals but self-referral was also possible. Waiting times had reduced considerably, with Open Door seeing 75% of referrals within four weeks and Haringey CAMHS increasing the number it saw within four weeks from 25% to 55%. People were currently more likely to keep appointments. Demand for services was greatest in the most deprived areas of the borough. 52% of CAMHS service users were BAME and 75% of those who used the Trailblazer service. 88% of those who used the Crisis Service and 100% of Trailblazer service users had stated that they would recommend it.

Ms. Guimarin reported on progress with the Trailblazer initiative. It was part of a national pilot scheme and involved 34 schools in the east of the borough. The initiative was a partnership between the CCG, Council and a range of partners. Schools also had significant input. The pandemic had made it necessary to transfer most work on-line, with only the most vulnerable children being seen face-to-face. Work had been undertaken directly with parents and children. Schools has asked for additional support and efforts had been made to respond to this. It had been a very challenging time and the number of children supported in the second quarter of the year had dropped significantly. Interventions were delivered using a range of methods, including evidence-based workshops/interventions, whole school systemic work and the provision of advice for children, young people and their families. Priorities for next year included improving joint working, extending the Trailblazer initiative to cover the whole of the borough, stabilising and sustaining the crisis pathway, improving access to support for eating disorders and developing further the all age autism strategic plan.

In answer to a question regarding challenges for the forthcoming year, Ms. Guimarin stated that working closely with schools to address Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) was the priority. Approximately one in six children now had a mental health need. Thought needed to be given to how to support children returning to

school and to build their resilience. Some children had flourished during the period when they were not in school due to the absence of peer pressure and bullying but others had struggled.

In answer to a question regarding virtual appointments, Ms. Collin stated that quick progress had been made with its introduction. Lots of young people were very IT literate and not all wanted face-to-face appointments. However, virtual appointments did not suit everyone. Staff also found them more tiring and they could also be adversely affected by technical issues. Face-to-face appointments were still wanted by many people and worked better for some sorts of intervention. The learning from working virtually would be considered but the intention was to revert back to face-to-face working as much as possible. In respect of eating disorders, Ms. Guimarin commented that a lot of parent education could be undertaken effectively on-line with small groups. Training and professional development could be delivered this way and at a time that was convenient for professionals.

In respect of autism, Ms. Collin stated that there was a borough wide strategic plan as well as specific services that supported young people and adults and suggested that a specific discussion on this be arranged for a future meeting of the Panel. Investment had been expanded and additional needs were being identified so that support could be provided. Particular efforts were being made to keep people in the borough but this could be difficult past the age of 18. Some young people with autism could fall through the net though and there had been a number of admissions to CAMHS tier 4 services. It was agreed that a visit be arranged to the Grove School for children with autism be arranged for the Panel once lockdown restrictions are relaxed.

Ms. Guimarin reported that the Council's language and autism team had undertaken specific support work with the Tottenham Hotspur Foundation. In addition, the Trailblazer initiative was working with children in schools through the provision of after school youth services. Work had also been undertaken with staff in CAMHS and the Eating Disorder service to develop a better understanding of autism amongst them.

In answer to a question, Ms. Guimarin reported that the CAMHS workforce was very diverse with over 50% coming from BAME backgrounds, including many team leaders. Success was measured through a number of different ways, including outcome measures, strength and difficult questionnaires and benchmarking against comparable services elsewhere. Satisfaction levels with Open Door were currently average compared against similar services but it aspired to be a top performer.

RESOLVED:

1. That an item on the all age Autism Strategic Plan be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel; and
2. That a visit be arranged for Panel Members to the Grove School when the relaxation of Covid restrictions allow.

37. EARLY YEARS, CHILDCARE AND EDUCATION; KEY CURRENT ISSUES

Ngozi Anuforo, Head of Strategic Commissioning for Early Help and Culture, reported on current issues affecting early years education and childcare in the borough. Local provision was diverse. The sector had remained stable and had not suffered many closures following Covid so far. There had been a greater reliance on childminders to provide the necessary provision in the earlier part of last year.

The Council had a statutory duty to ensure that there was enough childcare in the borough and required to undertake a childcare sufficiency assessment every three years, with an update provided to the Cabinet Member each year. The impact of the pandemic on the sector had been huge. During 2020, the importance of childcare provision had been highlighted through its prioritisation for re-opening. Funding to local authorities for free early education had continued and this was expected to be passed on by the Council to providers in the sector. Provision had continued to be available during the summer for children of key workers and of those who were vulnerable. During the autumn, the expectation had been that all provision would be open but it was recognised that there were likely to be fewer children attending than normal due to parental concerns and the re-opening of schools. A stocktake had been undertaken to gain an understanding of the impact of Covid on the sector and there was also an ongoing conversation taking place with providers. It was known that there were less children participating in the free early education offer. Providers had also highlighted a decrease in the demand for paid for provision. It appeared that there had been a change in the profile and needs of parents and that greater flexibility was now required.

Many providers were concerned about the economic viability of their businesses. They had needed to make adaptations in order ensure safety. Their capacity had shrunk to meet social distancing requirements, which had a financial impact on them. There had also been staffing impacts due to sickness, self-isolation or vulnerability. Providers who were maintained or voluntary or community sector did not meet the necessary profile to access government support. A number had needed to close for periods or reduce capacity and had struggled to find the resources to pay for agency staff.

Some parents were reluctant to take up nursery places and this was more common in the disadvantaged areas of the community so could therefore include some of the children that the Council most wanted to support. There was a need to build confidence amongst parents and alleviate their fears. Some parents were now asking for funded provision only and not paid for services. This was linked to changing work patterns, furlough and redundancies. There was a particular challenge in provision for children with SEND, where there had been a significant reduction in access. The Council was looking to increase SEND capacity across the borough. There was a clear need for more flexible childcare to respond to changing work patterns. It was also important to gain an understanding of where the most vulnerable children in the borough were located. There had been changes in demographics as well, which needed to be taken into consideration. Work was planned to address the drop in

participation levels and this would be particularly focussed on younger children, especially two year olds. Targeted work was planned to support providers most at risk of failure. This would look at their viability and stability as well as market model. There was a specific need to ensure that there were sufficient places in area of deprivation. Consideration would need to be given to how providers in such areas could best be supported, including access to government help. There were two categories of provider where there were particular concerns:

- There were three maintained nursery schools in the borough. These were not funded in the same way as schools with nurseries and had been significantly impacted by Covid. Details regarding the Department for Education's long term funding plans for them were awaited; and
- There were twelve community providers. These tended to charge lower rates and attract a higher proportion of children taking up free provision. They had suffered from limited access to government support.

Work would be undertaken with both of categories of providers to ensure that the Council was able to maintain a diverse range of provision.

38. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Panel noted that the meeting was the last scheduled one of the current year. The Panel's review on schools required completion though and an informal meeting would be arranged to consider appropriate conclusions and recommendations. The workplan for 2021/22 was currently under development. A consultation meeting with representatives of the local community would be taking place on 16th March to obtain their views, including on what the Panel's priorities should be and the suggestions that had so far been received. Following this, an informal Panel meeting would be arranged with officers from the Children and Young People's Service to obtain their input. Specific consideration would need to be given to items for the first Panel meeting of 2021/22 and to the selection of a suitable issue to undertake an in-depth review.

It was noted that inspections by OFSTED had not taken place during lockdown. An adapted methodology had been adopted when they had resumed in the autumn in order to address the challenges posed by Covid. Inspection reports for individual schools and the local authority were available on the Ofsted website and a link to this would be circulated to Panel Members.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel notes the work programme for 2020-21 and the process for developing the work plan for 2021-22.

CHAIR: Councillor Erdal Dogan

Signed by Chair

Date