

MINUTES OF MEETING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON TUESDAY, 4TH JANUARY 2022

PRESENT:

Councillors: Makbule Gunes (Chair), Josh Dixon, Emine Ibrahim, and Tammy Palmer

Co-opted Members: Lourdes Keever (Church representative), Anita Jakhu and KanuPriya Jhunjhunwala (Parent Governor representatives)

36. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred Members present to agenda item 1 in respect of filming at this meeting. Members noted the information contained therein.

37. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chiriyankandath and James and Ms Denny.

38. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

39. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

40. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

41. MINUTES

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of 18 November 2021 be noted.

42. HARINGEY SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S PARTNERSHIP - ANNUAL REPORT

David Archibald, the Independent Chair, reported on the progress made by Haringey Safeguarding Children's Partnership since its inception. The new arrangements had been implemented from September 2019. There were now three agencies that were equally accountable for safeguarding children. These were the Council, the Police and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). This was a significant change and a lot of

preparatory work had been necessary, including publication of what the new arrangements were. There was a requirement for them to include independent scrutiny.

The partnership was required to produce an annual report. This was being prepared and would be available in due course. It would cover the eighteen month period between the implementation of the new arrangements and March 2021. The partnership had been developing well but the Covid pandemic had had a severe impact. The partnership had responded strongly to it and increased the frequency of its meetings to ensure that safeguarding was maintained and temporary arrangements put in place by agencies were shared with partners.

The partnership aimed to promote excellent joint working between partners and inspire public confidence. There was joint and equal accountability between statutory partners. The Council provided 80% of the budget. In addition to the amounts in the budget, contributions in kind were also received from agencies. There had been 10,700 contacts in the previous year. The highest number of these had come from the Police. There had been 2,877 referrals, compared to 3,612 in the year before. Performance data was monitored to identify patterns and regular audits undertaken to promote challenge and learning. National guidelines were followed in respect of serious incidents. There were currently two Serious Case Reviews in progress. Reviews such as these were now to be replaced by Practice Reviews. When the Covid-19 pandemic had started, business continuity plans had been developed to ensure that children remained safeguarded. Major efforts were made to ensure that children were still seen. 33 multi-agency training events had been held during the year and the feedback from these had been positive.

There were three specific themes within the priorities for the forthcoming year. These were:

- Children living with mental health issues;
- Prevention and early intervention; and
- Older children in need of help and protection and contextual safeguarding, including exploitation.

The partnership would also be looking at the following with other strategic partnership boards:

- Transitional Safeguarding with the Safeguarding Adults Board;
- Neglect with the Early Help and Health & Wellbeing Boards; and
- Stop and Search with the Community Safety Partnership.

In answer to a question regarding whether the new arrangements were sufficiently robust yet to safeguard children effectively, Mr Archibald stated that the three strategic partners were now working more closely together than in the past. There was always room for improvement though. It was widely accepted that the best systems protected children by reducing levels of harm done but it was not possible to reduce this to zero. The partnership was learning from audits and feedback. The Covid-19 pandemic had proven to be a particularly challenging time as many children were not being seen in school due to lockdowns and some families were resistant to children being seen elsewhere.

In answer to another question, he stated that it had been suggested that schools should also be strategic partners. However, others had stated that it would be impossible to engage with them all. Sir Alan Wood had undertaken a review on this issue a year ago and had found that whilst schools had a crucial role to play, it was not possible for them all to be partners. Further consideration was nevertheless taking place on how best to involve schools.

Ann Graham, the Director of Children's Services, commented that this had been an issue that partners had grappled with for a long time. There were nevertheless strong structures within the Council for engaging with schools. These had been weekly at one stage but were now fortnightly. In addition, there were Headteacher representatives on the Safeguarding Board. It was accepted that more could be done to engage with school governing bodies and this was something that the Partnership would continue to look at. It was noted that school governing body chairs were now beginning to work more closely together.

In answer to a question regarding training for people working in the voluntary sector, Beverley Hendricks (Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Social Care) reported that the partnership provided a range of courses that were open to all. A number of these were targeted at the voluntary sector and the Council did not charge for these. She was happy to share further details of these.

The Panel thanked Mr Archibald for attending and his contribution.

43. SCRUTINY OF THE 2022/23 DRAFT BUDGET/5 YEAR MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (2022/23-2026/27)

Josephine Lyseight, Head of Finance (People), reported that the budget proposals for 2022/23 included growth spending of £11.8 million across the Council. There were also existing savings plans of £12 million, including £4.72 that concerned children and young people. Short term use of reserves had made the growth proposals possible. They assumed a Council Tax increase of 1.99% plus a 1% Adult Social Care precept. The funding for children and young people included social care grant funding.

The Quarter Two financial position showed a Council wide overspend of £23 million, £12.87 million of which was Covid related. The respective figures for Children and Young People (C&YP) were an overspend of £7 million, £3 million of which was from Covid. The Dedicated Schools Grant showed an overspend of £6.3 million. This key driver for this was the increased number of children with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans. The proposals provided growth funding for C&YP of £4.172 million in 2022/23 and £5.376 million during the MTFS period. There were also savings of £1.679 million in 2022/23 and £2.039 million for the period as a whole. The capital budget included £92.9 for C&YP services during the MTFS period, which was funded by government grant and borrowing. There was one new scheme included within this, which was for a new in-borough residential care home, which would provide high quality provision at a lower cost. The projected year end deficit of the DSG was £23.9 million. The total within the DSG for the forthcoming year was £288.34 million.

Panel Members commented that the language that was used in the report to describe the reasons for the overspend in the High Needs Block of the DSG could be open to

the misinterpretation that children with EHC plans were being blamed. An overspend was inevitable as SEN was inadequately funded by central government. It was demanded and the Council had a responsibility to deliver services.

Councillor Zena Brabazon, the Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children and Families, stated that the cause of the overspend was that there was insufficient funding from the government and there was no intention to blame families. The responsibility for providing support had been extended until the age of 25 for some young people but no additional funding had been provided. Families had a legal right to support and it was a demand led service. It was welcome that families had rights and the Council wished to avoid cases being referred to a tribunal. The government had pledged to review special needs funding but this had yet to happen. The issue was not unique to Haringey as every other local authority was in a similar position. Ann Graham, the Director of Children's Services, stated that she would see if alternative language could be used in future regarding this. She reported that there was also an overspend in the budget for looked after children but there was no blame attached to them either. Although the service was given a specific budget, this did not mean that it could neglect to provide a service for such children once it was exceeded. Legal requirements would be fulfilled. The Council was now taking action to support the budget.

Panel Members noted that there was a commitment by the Council to consult. However, the documentation was not easy to understand and needed to be made more accessible to members of the community. Other local authorities had addressed this issue and an option that could be explored was the provision of an easy to read version.

The Panel also requested more information on the budget engagement process. It was agreed that a briefing would be provided on the outcome of this, including which stakeholders were involved and their responses to the budget proposals.

AGREED:

1. That the language used in describing the reasons for the overspend in the High Needs Block in future documentation be modified in order to avoid the possibility of it being misinterpreted as apportioning blame on SEND families;
2. That work be undertaken to improve the accessibility of the MTFS documentation to promote more effective engagement with the local community; and
3. That a briefing be provided to the Panel on the outcome of the engagement undertaken as part of the MTFS process, including which stakeholders were involved and their responses to the proposals.

44. CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE: ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Beverly Hendricks, Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Social Care, stated that the report covered improvements that had taken place as well as areas where further development was required. There had been considerable work undertaken to stabilise the workforce as this had been a cause for concern, with an excessively high percentage of agency staff within the service. This had now been brought down to 23%. A number of initiatives had been undertaken to achieve this, including the relaunch of

the recruitment and retention strategy. Specific work had also been undertaken to support the emotional resilience of staff. There was strong collaboration between the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Early Help and this had been commented on by Ofsted. All 12 partners worked well together and not merely the three statutory ones. The National Panel had commented that the decision making of the MASH was timely, appropriate and strong following its recent visit. It had also been identified as a significant strength by Ofsted during its visit in 2019. There had also been continued good performance on assessments, with consistent timelines. Audits on quality had taken place and the learning from these had been incorporated into training. The stability of placements had been maintained. Children were in stable foster care placements and assessments for adoption were undertaken in a timely manner. In addition, the range of placements that were offered was being widened.

There had been an adverse court judgement in respect of the disabled children's team last year. In response to this, three independent experts had been commissioned to undertake a thorough review. Their report to Haringey Safeguarding Children's Partnership had stated that there were no systemic practice issues. Data also showed that there continued to be a proportionate response to concerns. Caseloads were complex but manageable. The service had development strong links with special schools. In addition, it sought the views of parents and this included an annual survey of them.

The Panel commended the service for the progress made in improving the stability of the workforce and training. This was especially commendable in view of the difficulties that there were in recruiting staff at the current time.

45. HMIP THEMATIC INSPECTION ON "THE EXPERIENCES OF BLACK AND MIXED HERITAGE BOYS IN THE YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM"

Jackie Difolco, Assistant Director: Early Help, Prevention and SEND, reported on the outcome of the HMIP Thematic Inspection of "The experiences of black and mixed heritage boys in the youth justice system". Haringey was one of nine local authorities looked at and one of three in London.

The report highlighted a number of issues, including:

- Multiple adverse childhood experiences;
- High levels of need, such as special educational needs (SEN) and mental health difficulties;
- High rates of school exclusion, poor attainment and evidence of SEN not being fully addressed;
- Exploitation - almost a third had been victims of child criminal exploitation;
- Evidence of racial discrimination;
- A third of the boys had been subject to Child in Need or Child Protection plans;
- In over a quarter of cases, the child had a disability; and
- Economic deprivation.

There were 18 recommendations, including four that were aimed at local authorities. There had been positive feedback regarding Haringey. This included:

- Support for cultural change;
- Utilising a "child first" approach;

- Work to address disproportionality;
- Interventions to improve the experience and outcomes for the black and mixed heritage boys; and
- High levels of motivation amongst staff.

Haringey had also been identified as an example of good practice in a case study. There were four areas that were flagged up as requiring improvement though and work was taking place to address these.

- An in-depth partnership plan was being developed which would expect partners to use their own data to help inform work and better understand how individual improvements could be made to address disproportionality;
- A new quality assurance tool had been developed;
- A “temperature check” had been conducted with staff to explore how many were in touch with and or actively seeking out fathers;
- Where young people had been stopped and searched by the Police, this was being added to their assessment as a “significant life event”; and
- More mental health and speech and language support was being provided.

The Panel commended the service for the good work that had been highlighted in the report. Members commented that reports were not always shared with parents. Stop and Search had also been a big issue in the past but the situation may have deteriorated so needed to be addressed. It was also felt important that data was not only kept but acted upon. The importance of diversionary projects was also highlighted.

Ms DiFolco reported that reports were routinely shared with parents in Haringey. There were a number of strands of work aimed at addressing stop and search through the Youth Justice Service. These included young people being used to train Police officers. The service was also looking at how data was used to inform strategic issues. In respect of diversionary projects, these were not restricted to just those already in the system but were being extended to those with out-of-court settlements and to siblings.

Ms Hendricks reported that work was being undertaken with the Police regarding the Stop and Search and this involved looking at it from a safeguarding perspective. The service wished to use data to influence change within the system. It was agreed that she would report back in due course and when the work had been further developed.

In respect of the collection of ethnic monitoring data, Ms DiFolco reported that this was collected and was based on how people identified themselves. It was therefore possible to break data down into different demographics. In answer to a question, she stated that the Youth Justice Service’s workforce was representative of the young people that it dealt with as were the panels that considered individual cases. The issue of whether the workforce of the partnership as a whole was representative was something that could be looked at. Over half of the young people that came into contact with the service were young black men and a smaller proportion were mixed race. Inspectors had highlighted the bespoke interventions in Haringey that were targeted at young black men.

The Panel requested that a report be made to the Panel in due course regarding the outcome of the work that was being undertaken by the C&YP Service and the Police on Stop and Search. In addition, they requested a report to a future meeting regarding the

interventions undertaken by the Youth Offending Service with young people and their effectiveness.

AGREED:

1. That a report be made to the Panel in due course regarding the outcome of the work that was being undertaken by the C&YP Service and the Police on Stop and Search; and
2. That a report be submitted to a future meeting regarding the interventions undertaken by the Youth Offending Service with young people and the effectiveness of these.

46. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

AGREED:

That the work plan and the proposed items for the next meeting be noted.

CHAIR: Councillor Makbule Gunes

Signed by Chair

Date