

MINUTES OF MEETING Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel HELD ON Monday, 13th November, 2023, 7.00 - 9.10 pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: Makbule Gunes (Chair), Anna Abela, Gina Adamou, Lotte Collett and Sue Jameson

ALSO ATTENDING: Cllr Isilar-Gosling (Online) & Lourdes Keever (Online).

13. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred Members present to agenda Item 1 as shown on the agenda in respect of filming at this meeting, and Members noted the information contained therein'.

14. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence were received from Cllr Mark Blake.

15. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

17. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None

18. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting on 21st September were agreed as a correct record.

19. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS - CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND FAMILIES

The Panel received a short verbal update from the Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Families on developments within her portfolio. The Cabinet Member

then undertook a question and answer session with the Panel. The following key points were noted in relation to the verbal update:

- The Cabinet Member set out that the overspend position within the service of less than £1m was significant but was on an improving trajectory and it was hoped this position would improve further.
- The service launched the Early Years Strategy last week.
- A key development was around the government increasing amount allocated for each two-year old from £6 per hour to £9 per hour
- The government was looking to expand 15 hours of free nursery for children from 9 months old from September 2025. Early Years was going to be an increasingly key service in that context.
- Haringey had launched its first family hub, with a commitment to launch a further 3 hubs using the £3.8m funding allocation over 3 years from the government.
- The Turnaround project at Woodside High was underway. This is an early intervention scheme and links up with the very successful programme of having social workers in schools.
- The Cabinet Member advised that Ann Graham and her team were up for a national award for social workers in schools. The ceremony was on 23rd November.
- 97% of Haringey schools were Ofsted rated good or outstanding.
- The Cabinet Member set out that there had been a meeting with school governors to push the Council to take a greater role in working with schools around issues such as governance, school finance, safeguarding and cyber security.
- There was also an event with parents/carers and Council representatives, around housing and children with special educational needs.

The following arose during the discussion of this agenda item:

- a. The Panel welcomed the portfolio update from the Cabinet Member and some of the positive news contained therein.
- b. The Panel sought clarification around the Council's policy to offer Council tax reduction to care leavers up to the age of 25 and whether there were reciprocal arrangements in place for Haringey care leavers who lived in other boroughs to receive a reduction. The Panel advocated that the Council should be lobbying for this to happen. In response, the Panel was advised that the lobbying for this had been led by the London Directors of Children's Services, who were pushing London boroughs to have a joint approach, which included reciprocal arrangements around council tax discounts. Other authorities outside of London were facing pressure to also offer something similar.
- c. The Panel sought clarification about the extent to which there was a social worker in every school. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that there was not enough money to do this for every school. Secondary schools had access to a social worker in schools and that this was jointly funded by the government, the Council and the schools themselves. Officers set out that every school had a dedicated safeguarding lead and that the safeguarding partnership board could undertake visits and offer advice if schools requested it.

- d. The Panel relayed concerns from primary schools, that they found it difficult to contact social workers. In response officers asked members to pass on the details of these conversations and advised that their needed to be clear lines of communication with schools. Officers advised that there had been a realignment of family support services into three localities, each with a cluster of schools. There were nominated leads for each cluster and key information had been shared with them about management structure and who to contact. Officers clarified that there were 64 primary and early years settings in the borough, and the Council had a firm relationship with 58 of them. Of the 18 schools in the borough, the local authority had a firm relationship with 15 of these.
- e. In response to a question about recent world events and the impact on children, the Cabinet Member advised that the DfE wrote to all schools on this matter and this was followed up by a letter from the Council, setting out what was being done to support schools, to promote the Council's values around diversity, and to support schools to be impartial. A number of resources had been provided to schools and the Cabinet Member recently attended a model lesson given to Hornsey School for Girls on this issue.
- f. In regards to a follow-up question around whether there was any trauma informed work taking place in schools, especially given the access children had to graphic imagery through social media. In response, the Panel was advised that the only way for the authority to know about specific cases was through a referral. There was an education psychology service available to schools upon request. Officers also highlighted the Anchor approach, which was trauma informed training offered by the Council, which had been in place for a number of years. Assurances were given that using the right language in schools had been deeply embedded.
- g. The Panel sought clarification about the disability facilities grant and further information about eligibility and confirmation it was available to Council tenants. In response, Panel members were advised that it was managed by Adult Social Services as it was not a child specific grant, although children were eligible. Officers set out that the funding was provided by central government. Council tenants were eligible but problems existed around the length of time it took to get a resolution as it required an inspection by a surveyor. The Cabinet Member advised that she would like to have a paediatric occupational therapy specialist within Children's Services.
- h. A co-opted member of the Panel emphasised some of the terrible housing conditions that came to light during the meeting around housing and children with SEND. It was noted that some families had been waiting years.
- i. In relation to eligibility for the dedicated facilities grant, officers advised that it was available to home-owners, as well as tenants or landlords. The person had to reside in the property for the life-time of the grant that was awarded. It was a means-tested benefit for adults, but that didn't apply to children under 19 years of age. Within the SEND pages of the website, this information was available to residents.
- j. The Panel requested a written update on how decisions are made on disabled facilities grants, how child specific needs were supported and the split between children and adults in these grants. **(Action: Clerk).**

RESOLVED

Noted

20. CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The Panel received a report and accompanying presentation on work that is being done to support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people in Haringey, in the context of the post-pandemic period. The report was included in the agenda pack at page 9. The presentation slides were tabled at the meeting and are published in the tabled papers agenda pack at page 1. The report and presentation was introduced by Tim Miller, North Central London Integrated Care Board. Also present for this agenda item were Clive Blackwood, from Barnet, Enfield & Haringey Mental Health Trust; and Karel Stevens-Lee, North Central London Integrated Care Board. The following arose during the discussion of this agenda item:

- a. The Chair emphasised the impact that undiagnosed autism could have on people as they grew into adulthood and highlighted the importance of autism assessments within an early years setting. In response, health colleagues advised that there were 0-5 autism diagnostic services in place, and that there was a lot of autism support in schools and early years settings.
- b. The Chair queried whether there had been new services commissioned in the sector since Covid. In response, officers advised that all the services referred to in the presentation were new and that there had been significant growth in crisis and community mental health services. The Panel was advised that the mental health standard mandated that Integrated Care Boards had to invest more in mental health services than in other services. It was cautioned that it could take some time for the investment to feed through and to overcome the long-term structural underinvestment in these services.
- c. The Panel queried the information in the slides that 0.2% of cases in Haringey were eating disorders, suggesting that seemed very low. In response, health colleagues advised that they were cognisant that this seemed quite low and that there had been growth in service provision in this area. Health colleagues were also looking at how well they were informing families about the services and support on offer. It was also noted that the figures represent cases where an eating disorder had been diagnosed, and that there were probably a lot of young people who went undiagnosed. There were also young people with problems around eating that fell below the threshold of an eating disorder.
- d. In terms of numbers and provision for young people with eating disorders, the Panel was advised that there were a number of different providers. There were 50 children from the specialist community outpatient facility at the Royal Free and these cases represented quite a high threshold in terms of the severity of their illness. There was also investment being put in place around early intervention services, including a specialist provision for NCL at the Tavistock.
- e. A Panel member advised that in the past the Tavistock offered a range of services for children and their families with ASD, including youth clubs, therapeutic sessions, and sibling sessions. The Panel queried whether this broad range of services was still available. In response, health colleagues advised that they were still available but that they may be available through different providers.

- f. The Panel sought assurances that when young people went for help because they were in crisis, that there would be someone there who was mindful and compassionate of SEND specific needs. Health colleagues advised that there was specialists in place to support both SEND and neurodiversity and that acute training was undertaken with a range of providers. Health colleagues emphasised the importance of a services user's experience the first time they present when in crisis.
- g. The Chair sought clarification about the 53.3% of the caseload marked as 'other'. The Panel was advised that this was the initial referral information from the partnership and that one reason they were listed as 'other' maybe because the illness was not yet diagnosed. It was noted that it was important to view the breakdown in conjunction with wider social conditions set out in the Open Door column. The diagnostic information could be quite transitional and people's conditions could change and/or they could improve.

RESOLVED

Noted

21. CHILDREN IN CARE - PERFORMANCE UPDATE

The Panel received a report which provided key performance data relating to Looked After Children. The report was introduced by Bev Hendricks, Assistant Director for Safeguarding & Social Care, as set out in the agenda pack at pages 17 to 24. The Panel was advised that at the start of August 2023, there were 373 children in care. This represented an increase of five since March. The number of unaccompanied asylum seeker children had increased to 35, still some 20 below the national transfer scheme threshold. Family in acute stress being the reason for children coming into care had reduced to 21% down from 25%.

The following arose during the discussion of this report:

- a. The Panel thanked officers for the report. The Chair asked whether the Panel could be supplied with more information relation to employment, education and training outcomes for CIC. Officers advised that this was reported to CPAC and that information on NEETS could be brought to the panel at a future meeting, but that it would require a qualitative response, rather than just giving figures in a report.
- b. In regards to permanency of staff, officers advised that this data was monitored closely by the service and could be included in a future CIC performance update to the Panel.
- c. Officers provided assurances to Members that they were maintaining focus on ensuring that there was a stable and permanent staffing structure in place. It was noted that there had been a stable permanent structure of Heads of Service and Team Managers over the past four years. Officers advised that the agency rates within Children in Care fluctuated throughout the year.
- d. The Head of the YAS advised that her service was stable and that there were few agency staff. Officers flagged up that a huge amount of effort was put into staying with young people from when they went into the YAS at 16 until they left on their 25th birthday.

- e. Officers set out that they worked with the Civil Service and currently had 7 care leavers in apprenticeships there. There was also 3 care leavers employed at Haringey Council.
- f. 50 of Haringey's care leavers were currently in university across a range of different courses. There was also a care leaver who was expected to represent the UK at a future Olympics in the marathon event

RESOLVED

Noted

22. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Panel agreed to undertake a scrutiny review on the housing allocation policy and children with SEND. It was agreed that the review would also set out possible areas for further scrutiny work around the broader subject area of housing and children.

RESOLVED

That the work programme was noted

23. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

N/A

24. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

4th January 2024
20th February 2024

CHAIR: Councillor Makbule Gunes

Signed by Chair

Date