

MINUTES OF THE MEETING Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel HELD ON Monday, 13th January, 2025, 19:00

PRESENT:

Councillors: Makbule Gunes (Chair), Anna Lawton, George Dunstall & Mark Grosskopf

ALSO ATTENDING: Amanda Bernard

91. 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'.

92. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Abela.

93. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no Items of Urgent Business.

94. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

95. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

96. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting on 19th November were agreed as a correct record.

97. EVALUATION OF THE HARINGEY EARLY HELP STRATEGY 2021-2024

The Panel received a report which informed Panel members of the findings from the evaluation of the Early Help Strategy 2021-24, as well as the priorities for the revised strategy for 2024-2027. The report was introduced by Jackie Difolco, AD Early Help, Prevention and SEND, as well as Simone Common, Head of Service, Early Help &

Prevention, as set out at pages 9-60 of the published agenda pack. Cllr Brabazon, Cabinet Member for Children, Schools & Families was also present for this item. The following arose during the discussion of this item:

- a. The Panel sought assurances around the circa £550k payment by results grant (PBR) and the percentage of the overall budget that this comprised. In response, officers advised that the PBR was in addition to £1.1m of Supported Families grant, and that combined, the two made up roughly one-third of the Early Help budget. In response to a follow-up, the Panel was advised that the evaluation process was local, but that it drew down on robust sources such as case studies with partners, quality assurance, performance management, and conversations with parents.
- b. The Chair queried the reasons behind why the number of early help assessments had gradually declined. In response, officers advised that the numbers of assessments had dropped due to an improvement in supporting families to access universal services at an earlier stage. It was also commented that the organisation was seeing its partners be more confident in delivering help at the pre family support stage.
- c. The Chair queried the reasons why the early years assessments were concentrated in key areas in Tottenham, and the extent to which this was linked to deprivation. In response, officers advised that there was a significant correlation with deprivation and that prior to Covid, they were seeing a lot of families in acute financial stress. However, post Covid, there had been a significant increase of mental health support needs, and this tended to be cross-borough.
- d. The Chair also sought clarity around who the Council's voluntary sector partners were and which groups we offered training to. In response, officers advised that they were working in partnership with the Bridge Renewal Trust, and that they were looking to widen their training offer as wide as possible. The training would also be offered online and shared through the training academy
- e. The Panel requested figures for the numbers of households engaging with early help services who were either homeless or in TA, and any figures around the differences in outcomes for those families who were dealing with homelessness. The AD for Early Help, Prevention and SEND advised that she would provide a written response. **(Action: Jackie Difolco).**
- f. Officers advised that since the process of working with Housing colleagues around Council Tax arrears and rent arrears, the service had found that families were not disclosing their financial difficulties to Early Help, and that through sharing information between the two services, they had been able to prevent some families from being made homeless. It was added that through sharing information, the service was able to offer targeted support and that this approach had been rolled out across children's social care.
- g. The Panel commented that this seemed to build a case for early intervention within a housing context. The Director of Children's Services advised that linking in early intervention around housing with early help may not be the best approach as, in her experience, if a family had a housing need, they were unlikely to be receptive to discussing educational or early help needs. If a family were homeless this would be a far more immediate need than any support around early help.
- h. The Panel queried what additional support programmes were in place for families who had children with SEND. In response, officers advised that the

- service was working closely with the educational psychology team to develop specific programmes to support children with additional needs. The key programme was identified as Cygnet.
- i. The Panel enquired about what work was being done within family hubs to engage with fathers. In response, officers advised that a dad coordinator had just been recruited, through home start, to build up the work being done to provide support to dads. There was also an interactive tool, called Dad Pad, which supported dads around pregnancy and early parenting.
 - j. The Panel also highlighted the work of a Haringey based organisation called Father 2 Father which had recently received funding from City Hall. In response, officers advised that they had also received some funding from the Family Hubs in Haringey.
 - k. The Panel sought assurances around whether there were any plans to expand the number of Family Hubs. In response, officers advised that there were currently three in Haringey, with the most recent being located in Northumberland Park. It was noted that discussions were ongoing over a location of a fourth hub, but that it would be located centrally within the borough. The Council had received confirmation of continued funding for the hubs for next financial year. Further details on the funding would be known around February time.
 - l. In response to a question, officers acknowledged that the organisation could not deliver its early help offer without the support of the VCS. The Council engaged with both Public Voice and Bridge Renewal Trust and they advocated on behalf of LBH with other organisations across the borough, including around governance support and communications. It was noted that smaller groups were also funded through Family Hubs. Officers advised that training was open to everyone across the VCS.

RESOLVED

Noted

98. EDUCATION RESULTS IN HARINGEY SCHOOLS 2024

The Panel received a report which informed Members of the education results in Haringey in the summer of 2024. The report was introduced by Jane Edwards, AD for Schools and Learning, as well as James Page, Chief Executive of Haringey Learning Partnership, as set out in the agenda pack at pages 61-80. Zena Brabazon, Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families was also present for this item. A summary of the key points put forward as part of the introduction is set out below:

- The results for the summer 2024 were characterised as being the best results in Haringey's history. This extended all the way through early years to A-Levels
- Mr Page advised that it was important to recognise the incredible work being done by schools, with 98% of schools being rated good or outstanding. Nearly one-third of schools were rated outstanding by Ofsted.
- It was commented that this was partly a result of really close working between the local authority and HEP to provide support to schools. In many other authorities that support did not exist.

- It was suggested that the context was that the success had been achieved against a difficult backdrop, with schools recovering from Covid, and a disproportionate impact on the disadvantaged and racially minoritised. There was also a tightening financial envelope, with pupil numbers decreasing.
- At reception class level 74% of students achieved a good level of development, this was only 1% below the pre-Covid position and was ranked 8th in England. Phonics screening test at Year One scores were at 84%, which was back to pre-Covid levels.
- At KS2, the combined score for reading, writing and maths had seen Haringey move from the bottom 5 in London to close to the London average, at 68%. SEND and Black Caribbean cohorts did particularly well in comparison to nationally.
- At GCSE level for attainment, the average grade was 4.8 with a national average of 4.6. Students made an average of one-third of grade progression above the national cohort.
- At A-Level the average points score had risen from 50th nationally in 2019 to 13th nationally in 2024
- Overall, there had been strong outcomes across the board for disadvantaged students and SEND pupils at all phases. There had been a big improvement at primary level for Black Caribbean students, and a more modest improvement at primary level for Turkish/Kurdish students.
- Mr Page advised that HEP was not yet where they wanted it to be and the hope was that Haringey could push on to the next level and that children in Haringey achieved as well as anywhere in the country.
- In recognition of areas where improvements were required, it was noted that outcomes for Black Caribbean pupils at secondary stood out and that this needed to be the number one focus going forward. Similarly, results for Turkish/Kurdish students in Early Years and primary also required improvement. Further focus on reading and writing at primary level was also required, as well as closing gaps for disadvantaged pupils.

The following arose as part of the discussion of this report:

- a. In response to a request for clarification, officers advised that the gap between disadvantaged students and other children was 11.5 points in Haringey, which was narrower than London at 13 points and the national average of 15 points.
- b. The Panel sought assurances about the tangible improvements being made to improve outcomes for Black Caribbean secondary school children, given the historical under-performance in this area. In response, officers advised that the report focused on attainment and that outside of this there was work being done to address disproportionality of Black Caribbean children in exclusions. It was recognised that all parts of the system needed to be working towards closing that gap. HEP acknowledged that the low outcomes for Black Caribbean children had proven to be stubborn and difficult to make real improvements. HEP advised that they had tried a variety of interventions such as training, talking to secondary head and developing partnerships. It was acknowledged that there was more to be done in this area.

- c. The Panel sought assurances about what good looked like in terms of education results. In response, Mr Page advised that HEP would like to get to the top quartile, in outcomes where Haringey was already above the London average. In cases where Haringey was not at the London average, he would like to see Haringey get to the London average.
- d. The Panel sought assurances around the intersection of underperforming cohorts and those with a disproportionate representation of SEND students. In response, officers advised that they collected the data and could cut it using multiple characteristics in order to identify trends, and that this would feed into the Early Year's strategy. It was noted that head teachers tended to look at children at an individual level, rather than cohorts, to measure the progress of children individually.
- e. In response to concerns raised around the gap in attainment scores for Turkish/Kurdish children, officers acknowledged that it was a complex problem and that there were no easy answers. Mr Page set out that that much greater than average improvements had been seen at primary and that at secondary level, improvements in Haringey were 0.25 grade points higher than the national average. It was acknowledged that whilst there was progress being made, there was definitely more to do. With schools, it was noted that there had been a lot of work done with parents, and around community engagement. There was also a conference being set up across Haringey and Enfield to look at the underlying issues. Work had also been undertaken on the curriculum at KS2 to improve representation.
- f. The Panel queried the reasons behind a drop off in performance when Caribbean children transitioned from primary to secondary. In response, Mr Page commented that this was a complex issue and he didn't want to oversimplify it with generalisations. It was commented that the cohort who were doing well at KS2 had not gone through secondary school yet. and it was hoped that scores at GCSE would improve for this cohort. In relation to the transition, it was acknowledged that there was something happening and it was speculated that this was likely to be related to support structures and not being know by their new teachers. Mr Page also highlighted cultural literacy and the overrepresentation of Black Caribbean children in suspensions.
- g. The Panel sought clarification about whether home-schooled children sat under HEP. In response the Panel was advised that they did not, instead the Schools and Learning service was responsible for the registration and monitoring of those children that were electively home educated. In relation to exam results, the authority had no powers to collect data from parents. The service had established links with an exam centre for parents who home schooled their children to use.
- h. In response to a question, officers advised that HEP worked with all schools not just maintained schools.
- i. The Panel sought clarification about differences in attainment and exclusions between maintained schools and academies. In response, the Panel was advised that in relation to attainment there was not a great deal of difference. In relation to exclusions, officers advised that the local authority was active in engaging on both good and bad practice, and that a case study had been

- developed from outstanding practice that had been implemented around attendance in one of the academies.
- j. The Panel commended the progress that had been made around education results in recent years.

RESOLVED

Noted

99. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS: CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, SCHOOLS & FAMILIES

The Panel received a verbal update from the Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families on recent developments within her portfolio. This was followed by a question and answer session. The Cabinet Member advised that:

- A Youth Justice inspection took place just before Christmas. It was commented that overall, it went well and that the full report would be available in due course.
- One of Haringey's primary schools has been renamed from Seven Sisters Primary to South Grove Primary.
- The Council was consulting on the future of Tiverton Primary, and there would be a report to Cabinet detailing the outcome of that consultation in due course. It was noted that the wider context to this was an ongoing school funding crisis, precipitated by falling pupil numbers. Haringey was in the middle for London for percentage of vacant school places.
- The October Budget allocated additional funding for SEND, with an uplift in the High Needs Block of 7.4%. There was an increase in funding for all blocks but this would be mitigated by school numbers being down across the board.
- There was also an uplift in Early Year's with an increase in the rates for every age group.
- The Children's Wellbeing Bill received its second reading in Parliament. It was noted that the Bill would give local authorities much greater powers around school place planning and over academies. The Bill also included provisions around children's social care, particularly in terms of looking at the relationship with private providers. The Cabinet Member cautioned that there would be no quick fixes in terms of managing the mixed economy of schools.
- The Education Committee in Parliament was holding an inquiry into solving the SEND crisis. They were requesting evidence and were looking for examples of good practice and proposals for change.

The following arose during the discussion of this item:

- a. The Co-opted member of the Panel advised that, SEND Power had been invited to provide evidence to the inquiry. The DCS advised that she hoped the local authority and SEND Power could work together to amplify their voice. The Chair welcomed the fact that Haringey would be contributing to the inquiry.
- b. The Panel sought clarification about the proposed change in the Children's Wellbeing Bill that gave local authorities the power to intervene for children who were home schooled, and whether this related to safeguarding or quality of provision. In response, officers advised that in addition to compulsory registration, where the local authority had safeguarding concerns, it could require children to be educated in school. In response to a follow up, the Cabinet Member advised that no announcement had been made about whether there would be additional funding in support of this provision.
- c. The Panel raised the recent high profile case of Sara Sharif and queried what the Council was doing to safeguard home schooled children. In response, officers advised that Surrey Council was undertaking a serious case review and that once that was published, Haringey would review it and respond accordingly. It was noted that the existing framework for intervening was through education welfare support and children missing from education. In Haringey, the numbers of home schooled children was going up.
- d. The Panel sought clarification on the impact of Covid on home schooling numbers. In response, it was noted that the numbers went up post Covid, then declined and now they were on the rise again. The Council tracked these numbers, including children with SEN and the reasons for being home schooled. Officers agreed to provide a written response with the figures.
(Action: Jane Edwards).
- e. The Panel contended that the level of support available to parents pre-2010 was greater and that there was a robust pathway for young people with SEND who were home schooled, to be reintegrated into formal education. The Panel commented that they would like to see this level of support return, notwithstanding the fact that budgets had been dramatically reduced.

RESOLVED

Noted

100. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

13th February 2025

101. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

N/A

CHAIR: Councillor Makbule Gunes

Signed by Chair

Date