

MINUTES OF THE MEETING Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel HELD ON Monday, 14th July, 2025, 7.10 pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: Anna Lawton (Chair), Anna Abela, Grosskopf,

ALSO ATTENDING: Christine Cordon (Co-Optee) and Borwick-Fox (Co-Optee)

1. 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'.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Amin, Isilar-Gosling & Dunstall.

3. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Urgent Business.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

5. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting on 13 February 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

7. MEMBERSHIP & TERMS OF REFERENCE

RESOLVED

That the Panel:

- I. Noted the terms of reference attached at Appendix A of the report and Protocol attached at Appendix B of the report, for the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and it's Panels.
- II. Noted the policy areas/remits and membership for each Scrutiny Panel for 2025/26, attached at Appendix C of the report.

8. APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS

RESOLVED

It was noted that:

- I. Amanda Bernard was appointed to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel as a non-voting co-opted member for the municipal year 2025/2026.
- II. That Camilla Borthwick-Fox and Christine Cordon were appointed as voting co-opted members to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, participating at meetings when educational matters are being considered.
- III. That Camilla Borthwick-Fox and Christine Cordon were appointed to the Children & Young People's Scrutiny Panel, as voting co-opted members, which has responsibility for considering educational matters

9. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS - CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, SCHOOLS & FAMILIES

The Panel received a verbal update from the Cabinet Member for Children, Schools & Families on developments within her portfolio, followed by a verbal question and answer session with the Cabinet Member. The following update was provided by the Cabinet Member:

- The Cabinet Member advised that Haringey had achieved the highest grade in relation to the recent local area Ofsted/CQC inspection and that this had been confirmed by the inspection body.
- The Council was moving forward with the Safety Valve programme and it was meeting most of its targets.
- The OSSME unit was open for children with autism. Similarly, the base at Earlsmead was open with four children attending. It was hoped that this would increase to 15. Work was underway at Alexandra Park primary for children with emotional, social, mental health support needs. Work was also starting at the Brook for children with additional complex needs. The Cabinet Member commented that the government seemed to be developing a more inclusive approach to SEND with provision through mainstream schools.
- The SEND white paper was expected in the autumn. It was commented that the organisation was lucky to have a DCS who was also vice-president of the association of Directors of Children's Services.
- The government has expanded Free School Meals but this won't happen until September 2026. A lot of work was being done to understand how this would be delivered. The government had extended eligibility to children whose parents were on Universal Credit and removing the current income cap of £7400.

- The Cabinet Member noted that there was also the Mayor's free school meals programme and that there was work to be done to get families to apply for it who were also eligible for FSM through the government scheme. The Cabinet Member commented that children would not be bringing their pupil premium with them. There was a working group in place to look at these type of issues.
- The Cabinet Member advised that she was hoping to convince schools to join a joint procurement exercise to reduce food costs to schools.
- The Cabinet Member advised that she had visited the three government funded pilot breakfast clubs in Haringey – Earlham, Holy Trinity, and St. Mary Priory. The service has produced a video of the visit and the Cabinet Member encouraged Members to watch it.
- The inaugural meeting of local authority governors took place and there were 15 governors in attendance. The Cabinet Member commented that there was work to be done to raise the level of knowledge of governors.
- The Cabinet Member advised that the Council had submitted a long submission to the Select Committee on special needs. The Cabinet Member advised that she would send this round to head teachers and the chairs of governors.

The following arose during the discussion of this item:

- a. The Panel sought clarification about how the government's announcement on Free School Meals (FSM) would interact with the Mayor of London's pledge on FSM. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that the government funded FSM for all KS1 pupils, but within that cohort some of those children would be eligible to receive the Pupil Premium based on their parents being in receipt of benefits and being below the income threshold. The Cabinet Member emphasised that for those children it was important that they were registered through the government scheme, so that the school could receive £1400 additional funding per pupil. For juniors, FSM was not universal and only children whose families were below the income threshold would receive them. The Mayor's scheme would fund the rest. The Cabinet Member set out that 26% of Haringey's school children were receiving FSM.
- b. In relation to a follow-up, the Cabinet Member advised that children would be receiving the exact same meal regardless of which scheme they were eligible for, however the Mayor's scheme actually paid more per head to the school than the government's scheme. However, it was important that those who were eligible for Pupil Premium to be registered under the government's scheme.
- c. The Panel sought the Cabinet Member's views in relation to the funding for the breakfast club trial, in light of concerns that the funding provided did not match the funding required for provision of healthy meals. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that she had met with the heads of the three schools and acknowledged that they had different experiences based on the size of the school and the number of pupils involved. The Cabinet Member advised that she got the impression that the heads of both Holy Trinity and St Mary's were determined to make it work. The Cabinet Member emphasised that she wanted schools to buy into joint procurement in order to maximise the economies of scale and reduce the cost of the food.
- d. The Director advised the Panel that the annual engagement meeting was part of the inspection framework for the Area SEND inspection and that as part of the follow-up to the inspection, they came back to speak to the Council annually about the progress made since the inspection. The Panel noted that

- there was annual submission compiled in response to this and that the inspection body did not have any concerns with the latest submission. The Corporate Director advised that there were still things that the service was not happy with, such the wait times for speech and language therapies.
- e. The Panel enquired about school closures. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that two schools were due close because of falling pupil numbers. These were Tiverton and St Peter's & Gildas. The Cabinet Member commented that it was regrettable and that nobody wanted schools to close, but that the numbers were the numbers. St Peter's & Gildas would have four pupils below Year 6 until the end of the term. In context, it was noted that Hackney has eight schools closing.
 - f. The Panel enquired about what could be done to support school provision in Haringey for the Jewish community, rather than attending education settings in Hackney. In response, officers advised that they worked closely with community leaders to find solutions, but that there were challenges related to the statutory requirements behind building schools.

RESOLVED

Noted.

10. CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE PERFORMANCE Q1 TO JUNE 2025

The Panel received a cover report and an accompanying presentation that provided an analysis of the performance data and trends for a set of performance measures relating to Looked After Children (LAC), Children on Child Protection Plans (CPP) and Children in Need (CIN). The presentation was introduced by Richard Hutton, Performance, Data and Analytics Manager as set out in the report at pages 39-52. Ann Graham, Corporate Director of Children's Services was also present for this item, along with Cllr Brabazon, Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families. In addition, the Director of Early Help, Prevention and SEND, as well as the Director for Safeguarding and Social Care were also present for this agenda item. The following arose as part of the discussion of this item:

- a. The Panel sought clarification about what was being done to investigate the reasons behind a drop in referrals from schools to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). In response, officers advised that the data was heavily scrutinised and cross referenced with other data from the Early Help service. The Director commented that a drop in referrals wasn't necessarily celebrated, Instead it was about having the right referrals into the system at the right time. The Corporate Director advised that they monitored referrals and the wider system very closely. The Panel was advised that there was a triangulation between an increase in the uptake of Early Help services and a decrease in referrals to the MASH. The Family Hub model used in Early Years allowed the service to identify needs much earlier and this reduced referrals to the MASH.
- b. In relation to a questions about Education Health & Care Plans (EHCPs), officers advised that performance for timeliness was very highly a couple of years ago at 97%, this had dropped slightly to 86%, however the national

- average was around forty percent. Officers acknowledged that the number of EHCPs was increasing, but it was commented that the census data showed that Haringey had seen a slower rate in increase at 4.7% than the London average (7.5%) and the national average at 10%. Officers attributed this slower rate of increase to the early intervention model and that fact that children were seen at a much earlier point in the system and this reduced the number who required an EHCP.
- c. In response to a follow up question, officers acknowledged that they were seeing an increase in complexity, despite the fact that overall school numbers were down slightly.
 - d. The Panel queried the decreasing trend of immunisation figures and questioned why Haringey was performing worse than the national average. In response, officers advised that the figures related specifically to LAC and so it wasn't influenced by families being sceptical of vaccinations or different take-up levels within different communities. It was often the older children within the LAC cohort who less likely to take up the offer of vaccination. Officers also noted that the LAC Nurse at Bounds Green Health Centre had recently retired and that there had been a decrease in take-up while a permanent replacement was found. Officers advised that they were working with Public Health colleagues and were doing everything they could to ensure LAC were being immunised, including looking at their immunisation records at both the child's first health assessment and their first LAC review.
 - e. The Panel queried the reasons behind a drop in the numbers of care leavers who were in education, employment or training. In response, officers acknowledged that there had been a two-year period where the figures had dropped, but that they were starting to increase again. Officers commented that they were unsure of the specific reasons behind this. It was noted that Haringey had around 10% of its care leavers who were in higher education and that this compared favourably with other boroughs.

RESOLVED

Noted

11. PRIVATE FOSTERING ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

The Panel received a report which provided an overview of activity in regard to private fostering for the municipal year 2024/25. The report was introduced by Sandy Bansil, Head of Children in Care and Placements as set out in the agenda pack at pages 53-68. Ann Graham, Corporate Director of Children's Services was also present for this item, along with Cllr Brabazon, Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families. In addition, the Director of Early Help, Prevention and SEND, as well as the Director for Safeguarding and Social Care were also present for this agenda item. The following arose as part of the discussion of this item:

- a. The Panel noted that a privately fostered child was defined as a child who was under the age of 16, or 18 if the child had a disability, and was placed for 28 consecutive days or more with an adult who was not a relative. A relative in this

- situation was defined as either a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt, and also included stepparents.
- b. The Panel welcomed the fact that the report included the voice of the child. Officers acknowledged that this was important, as it gave reassurance about the experience of children directly from the children themselves.
 - c. In relation to numbers, officers advised that there were five children in private fostering arrangements in Haringey, with a further two notifications having been received which would require assessment. The Cabinet Member commented that this was an area that involved small numbers of children, but one that was difficult to regulate.

RESOLVED

Noted.

12. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

RESOLVED

- I. That the current work programme for the Children & Young People's Scrutiny Panel was noted.
- II. That the Panel gave consideration to the items and reports required for its meetings in 2025/26.

13. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

N/A

14. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

9 September 2025
18 November 2025
15 January 2026
26 February 2026

CHAIR: Councillor Anna Lawton

Signed by Chair

Date