

MINUTES OF THE Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel HELD ON Thursday, 26th February, 2026, 6.30 pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: Anna Lawton (Chair), Anna Abela, Kaushika Amin

ALSO ATTENDING: Amanda Bernard

52. 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'.

53. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Grosskopf and Cllr Dunstall. Apologies for absence were also received from Camilla Borwick-Fox.

54. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

55. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

56. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

57. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting on 15th January 2026 were agreed as a correct record.

58. HARINGEY AUTISM STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

The Panel received a report which provided an update on the implementation of Haringey's Autism strategy, which was a 10-year, all age strategy to improve outcomes, experience and inclusion for autistic people, and was agreed in 2021. The

report outlined the area of improvement to date and future improvement plans. The report was introduced by Tim Miller, Assistant Director of Place, Integration, Transformation and Delivery (Haringey), North Central London ICB, as set out in the agenda pack at pages 7-16. Ann Graham, Corporate Director of Children's Services, Jackie Difolco, Director Early Help, Prevention and SEND and Cllr Zena Brabazon were also present for this item. The following arose during the discussion of this item:

- a. The Panel welcomed the work that was being done to support young people in this cohort into paid employment, including supported internships. The Panel queried whether there was any data on the number of people in supported internships that go into employment. In response, the Panel noted that officers had supplied this information via email in January. In 2023/24 there were 34 people in supported internships, 12 of which ended up in employment. In 2024/25 there were 45 supported internships, 6 of which ended up with an employment outcome. The Chair sought clarification about the drop in the number of employment outcomes over the two years. In response officers commented that there had been a pre supported internship programme introduced in recognition that many of the young people were not quite ready to go on to employment., and that that this likely accounted for part of the reduction. Officers agreed to look into the reasons and provide a more detailed response in writing. **(Action: Jackie Difolco).**
- b. The Panel queried the extent to which the Council was able to offer supported internships in the employment pathway that the young person was interested in. It was suggested that this could be a contributing factor to the reduction in the number of employment outcomes. In response, officers acknowledged the importance of being able to offer the types of internships that young people wanted and that they had received specific feedback on this point from young people. Officers set out that a lot of work had already been done to offer internships in non-traditional sectors, such as the Youth Justice Service, at the local airport and placements in the arts. Officers commented that work would continue to expand on the type of internships available.
- c. The Panel sought clarification about the type of disparities identified at page 16 of the report, and the targeted interventions that were used to improve equity oversight. In response, Mr Miller set out that NCL had looked at ethnicity and deprivation groups and that some of the work done was to improve drop-in services and to develop different ways to access support. Mr Miller agreed to go back to colleagues and provide a more detailed response via email. **(Action: Tim Miller).**
- d. The Chair sought clarification about the report referencing the launch of a support line, querying who would be staffing the support line and what their level of expertise would be. In response, the Panel was advised that the line would be staffed by NHS providers' therapy teams that provided diagnostic services in NCL.

RESOLVED

Noted.

59. SEND AND ALTERNATIVE PROVISION STRATEGY 2026 - 2029: UPDATE ON CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

The Panel received a verbal update on consultation feedback for the SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy. The update was given by Jackie Difolco, Director of Early Help, Prevention and SEND. The consultation period for the strategy had recently closed, hence the verbal update. The Panel was advised that a full strategy and consultation report would be present to the next meeting of the Panel. A summary of the key points presented to the Panel is set out below:

- The SEND Executive agreed 5 priority areas to consult on: Early Intervention/ High quality Local Provision/ Responsive Local Offer/ Authentic coproduction/ Preparation for Adulthood
- Consultation ran from 8 Dec – 31 Jan, short extension on request of parent carers
- 1,400 unique visits to consultation pages on the website
- Approx 150 responses, 35% increase on 2021
- 193 new subscribers to the SEND newsletter, now approx. 4,000
- The Service are still going through printed responses from libraries
- Elevated Youth, SEND Power Steering Group, Parent Carers session, SENDIASS
- 45% Parent/Carers = 44% Professionals, 64% lived in Haringey
- Strong agreement across all 5 priority areas, most important 1 and 2, Early Intervention and High quality local provision, most valued was no 4 authentic co-production
- Summary of views:
 - more staff training, particularly in schools
 - more local provision
 - earlier support more support within mainstream schools
 - Inclusive practice within mainstream schools
 - specialist skilled staff
 - training
 - more waiting well services
 - reduce waiting times to access assessments and timelier access to therapies
 - clearer information and support on transitions and more respite
 - schools to do more co-production with children and parent carers
 - parent carers to be involved more in decisions, strategy and co-design of services across all services
 - more supportive pathways post 16 and focus on independence
 - need for clearer accountability, transparency, and follow-through
 - need for better coordination with Health services.
 - interest in movement-based, outdoor and activity-based support.
- Specific feedback from young people
 - earlier disability education in primary schools, improved teacher training on recognising SEND needs, and more specialist support within classrooms
 - ensuring EHCPs are followed in schools and clearer information *before* annual reviews so they know what will happen and when, and they want better guidance to ensure families are aware of the support that is available
 - help to understand and communicate their needs, clearer SEND pathways in schools, and more representative youth participation structures in their school councils.

- Less waits for NHS CAMHS and SEND-friendly community health spaces in Haringey
- Clearer information about work experience opportunities, and better education on career paths.
- Next steps: detailed analysis of responses, going to our SEND Exec Board Away Day April, full report to Scrutiny in June for comment/ endorsement prior to publication.

RESOLVED

Noted.

60. HEALTHY WEIGHT STRATEGY: PROGRESS ON TACKLING UNHEALTHY WEIGHT IN CHILDHOOD

The Panel received a presentation and covering report which provided an update on the implementation of the Healthy Weight Strategy 2022-2025 and progress on tackling unhealthy weight in childhood. The presentation was introduced by Linda Edward, Senior Commissioner Public Health and Benjamin Seifert, Public Health Officer as set out in the agenda pack at pages 17-46. Maria Ahmed, Public Health Officer was present for this item. Ann Graham, Corporate Director of Children's Services was also present for this item along with Cllr Zena Brabazon, Cabinet Member for Children Families and Schools. The following arose as part of the discussion of this item:

- a. The Panel commented that listing the wards with children that were most unhealthy could lead to negative connotations and suggested that future reports should focus on characteristics rather than whole wards. In response, officer acknowledged this feedback and advised that there were trying to illustrate the areas that needed extra support.
- b. The Panel queried the impact that the introduction of free school meals had on healthy weights in children. In response, officers advised that no outcome change had been seen yet, but cautioned that they wouldn't have expected to have seen a difference for a number of years yet, given that the children in the first cohort would need to get to Year 6 before any comparison could be made.
- c. The Panel queried the extent to which healthy weight was being captured in the Council's licensing and planning policies and requested some examples of this. In response, officers advised that there was a team in the Council that worked to ensure that health was reflected in all policies across the Council. The team had been able to affect the new Local Plan for instance, including making amendments to allocations of fast food outlets in the borough. Officers acknowledged that licensing policy could be tricky as it was set by national government and that there was a 'duty to permit' in the legislation. It was also commented that the community impact policy had a very high evidence threshold. Officers also set out that part of the solution was to lobby for national change to things like labelling of food and nutrition standards.
- d. The Panel commented about the role played by ultra processed foods and the fact that less people cooked at home. The Panel also commented on the lack of affordable high quality/fresh food and the fact that unhealthy foods tended to be cheaper and more prevalent in deprived areas. The Panel also referred to cultural factors in relation to food and the fact that some traditional foods could

- be high in carbohydrates but not necessarily unhealthy. In response, officers acknowledged these comments and advised that BMI was a useful measure for looking at broad trends. However, officers set out that they were aware that it was not a perfect measure and that children's weights could fluctuate. Officers provided assurances that they tried to be careful and measured in the language that was used in letters sent out to parents and carers.
- e. The Chair queried the provision of fresh fruit and vegetables at KS1 and whether there was a conversation to be had about rolling this out to younger children. The Chair commented that in her experience younger children tended to be more likely to eat what they were given. In response, officers commented that the [provision of free fresh fruit tended to be a school led approach, but that the general position was that it was available at KS1 but not KS2.
 - f. The Chair queried whether it was known what proportion of children abstained from involvement in the healthy weight programme and whether this was more prevalent in certain parts of the borough. The Chair commented that in general, she found that the breakdown by wards to be useful in relation to the correlation with deprivation levels. In response, officers advised that they would come back with further information in writing. Officers commented that it tended to be schools rather than individuals that opted out and that currently there were currently two primary schools that had opted out. **(Action: Benjamin Seifert).**
 - g. The Chair emphasised the importance of coproduction with young people and the fact that there was a significant fitness trend on social media. The Chair suggested that the Council should be doing more to utilise the general fitness trend among young people, including using older teenagers to influence younger children. In response, officers acknowledged that they would like to see more coproduction with young people. The Corporate Director highlighted the fact that there was also a Leisure Strategy and that this worked in tandem with the Healthy Weight Strategy. It was suggested that the links could be signposted more clearly in the Healthy Weight Strategy.
 - h. The Panel requested that they receive an update on leisure provision for young people at a future meeting. **(Action: Philip).**
 - i. The Chair welcomed the strategy and commended the aims behind it. However, the Chair raised concerns that for all of the good work that had been done, the numbers had not improved and the three year trend was essentially flat. The Chair sought assurances about what could be done to prevent a similar outcome happening in three years' time. In response, officers from Public Health advised that they had been evaluating the figures as part of the review of the strategy and that it was recognised that that the figures had plateaued for not just the three years of the strategy, but over the last ten years. Officers set out that there was a recognition that there needed to be a more concerted effort to try and strengthen the partnership approach and to try to tackle the issue from a variety of different service areas and partners. Officers acknowledged that there was a significant space for lobbying and national legislative changes in relation to tackling unhealthy weight in childhood, given that this was a national/international issue.

- j. The Corporate Director cautioned that there was a degree of likelihood that the figures would not change significantly in three years' time. It was suggested that many of the contributing factors were outside of Haringey's direct control. Haringey could set the conditions, raise awareness and engage with young people and with schools, but that change needed to happen at the national level in order to improve the availability of healthy food.
- k. The Panel emphasised the potential impact on young people's mental health from being considered overweight and stressed the importance of listening to young people themselves about what works for them. Officers acknowledged this and stressed the impact mental health could have on physical health.

RESOLVED

That the report was noted.

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

The Panel received an update from the Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families on developments within her portfolio, which was followed by questions from the Panel. As part of this item, the Panel received a tabled set of slides which provided an update on the outcome of a recent Ofsted inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) which took place between 12-16th January. The slides were introduced by Cllr Brabazon, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Schools and are published on the website as part of the agenda papers for this meeting. Ann Graham, Corporate Director of Children's Services was also present for this item.

- The Panel was advised that Children's Services had achieved an Outstanding rating from Ofsted for the first time. The authority had gone from a 2017 Joint Targeted Area Inspection which had resulted in the award of a 'Requires Improvement' rating, through the 2023 rating of 'Good' to achieving an Outstanding rating in January.
- During the inspection in January, Ofsted reviewed the experiences of children and young people across Children's Services. The Ofsted inspectors commented on several areas of excellence, including:
 - Skilled and dedicated social workers who benefited from strong training and support, helping them stay focused on the lived experiences of children.
 - Effective early help services that ensured families could access the right support quickly.
 - Outstanding support for care leavers from highly experienced and committed practitioners.
 - Robust safeguarding arrangements, including a highly effective multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH).
 - Strong strategic leadership that drove consistently good or outstanding practice across services, supported by political leaders who prioritised children's social care despite financial pressures.

- The Cabinet Member commended the dedication and hard work of staff across Children's Services and highlighted the consistent and outstanding leadership of the Corporate Director and her team.
- Officers advised the Panel that the framework was changing and that from 1st April 2026, authorities would no longer receive a single word judgement, instead there would be five criteria. Haringey would retain its one word judgement until another full inspection was carried out. It was suggested that this would likely be in three to four years.
- The inspection raised one area for improvement around the assessments carried out by the disabled children's team; 'management oversight was not always clearly recorded, and for a small number of children, safety planning and partner communication is not always sufficiently timely when significant harm is suspected'.
- Officers set out that the Youth Justice Service had a good with outstanding award, the SEND service had been awarded outstanding and now Children's Services had been awarded an outstanding rating.

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

- a. Panel members paid tribute to officers across the service and to the Cabinet Member for achieving an award of outstanding. The Panel commented on the quality of leadership shown by senior managers.
- b. The Panel highlighted the inspection outcome's emphasis on Haringey's organisational culture within Children's Services and the skills of the staff that work there.
- c. In response to a question around what some of the key factors were from the Corporate Director's perspective, the Panel was advised that a key part of this was around having the support of the Council's political leadership, as well as corporate support from across the Council. The Corporate Director highlighted the financial challenges facing the service when she joined the organisation and the strong financial support she received corporately in terms of funding the service.
- d. Officers acknowledged that they didn't get it right every time and that there were children who the service hadn't gotten it right for. Officers highlighted another example of the corporate support they received around the provision of housing units for care leavers and the fact that when they wanted more they received them.
- e. Officers highlighted the fact that the service worked well and the fact that the staff were trusted to carry out their roles. Similarly, it was felt that the leaders of the service were trusted by corporate leadership. Officer commented on the fact that there was a high accountability culture within the service and that staff were also encouraged to come forward with ideas.
- f. The Cabinet Member emphasised the need for to have strong systems in place, strong leadership, but also the need for imagination and the need to be creative.
- g. On behalf of the Members who were unable to be at the meeting, as well as herself, the Chair passed on her thanks and appreciation to everyone in the service for their hard work.

RESOLVED

Noted.

62. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

RESOLVED

The Panel noted the work programme.

63. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

N/A

64. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

N/A

CHAIR: Councillor Anna Lawton

Signed by Chair

Date