

## **REPORT OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL THURSDAY, 14 MARCH**

The draft minutes of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel are herewith attached. Key items discussed were as follows:

### **1. YOUTH OFFER**

The Panel considered a report outlining the Youth Offer and questioned the Cabinet Member for Finance and Carbon reduction on issues arising from it. The Chair reported that he had received a publication entitled "Misspent Youth" regarding youth services from a local group as well as some questions that they had suggested that Panel Members might wish to ask. At his request, these had been circulated to Panel Members as well as relevant officers and the Cabinet Member. He requested that a written response be provided to the issues raised in the publication together with answers to the questions that had been submitted.. The Cabinet Member stated that this had only very recently come to his attention.

The Cabinet Member stated that the budget for youth services had been subject to large reductions in recent years. In the light of this, a new delivery model had been developed which was based on having a joined up approach and moving away from providing a universal service. The cuts that had been made were in addition to those that had been made necessary as a result of cuts to Area Based Grant (ABG), which had been used to fund some core services. As a result of the changes, all of the services relating to young people had been integrated.

He had nevertheless been concerned that there were not the resources in place to deliver the Youth Strategy and, as a result of this, a three year virement of £400,000 per annum had been made. One key target had involved addressing involvement in gangs. Services had also focused upon expanding their remit down to 8 year olds and working with NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training). In addition, it had also recently been possible to provide the service with an additional £200,000 per annum to fund action to prevent children coming into care. It was nevertheless difficult to make comparisons of the service as it existed now and as it was before the budget reductions.

The Lead Member stressed that it was very important that services reflected what young people wanted and adapted to current trends. The service was in competition with gang culture and needed to provide a viable alternative.

A range of activities had been provided for young people as part of the summer programme in 2012 which had been very popular, with 1500 attending. Panel Members requested further details of levels of participation as well as evaluations and outcomes. The Director of Children's Services stated that a framework would be developed to improve the quality of information. The summer programme had needed to be developed quickly but had nevertheless been very successful. She reported that plans were currently being made for the extension of the age range that was catered for, including ensuring that staff had the necessary skills. The service was currently looking at children who had been excluded in order to target effectively.

The Panel were of the view that it was essential for there to be rigorous monitoring of provision to ensure that it was value for money. They requested details of the specific targets within the Youth Strategy and how they would be monitored.

The Cabinet Member stated that, as the offer for the summer programme had been universal, the number of attendees was therefore an appropriate measure. Data collected needed to be

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of real value. The Director of Children's Services reported that proper registers of attendance were kept but these were paper ones. Analysis of data had a cost but the service was nevertheless addressing this issue.

In respect of the Bruce Grove Youth Centre, it was noted that it was currently open four times per week, with one of these sessions open to all. Other activities were targeted at particular groups. Activities were also offered at Muswell Hill and Wood Green. In Wood Green, the majority of these were provided by Tottenham Hotspur and the Boxing Academy. He acknowledged that Bruce Grove Youth Centre was no longer open for five days per week but it had not closed although it was being run on a different basis to how it had before the budget reductions. Extension of provision would have cost implications but officers had been asked to explore this. However, consideration would have to be given to how many additional young people the centre was likely to be able to serve and how cost effective provision it would be.

### **We AGREED:**

1. To recommend that the Children and Young People's Service develop a more rigorous system of monitoring the effectiveness of services provided as part of the youth offer;
2. That a written response be provided to the issues and recommendations raised in the publication "Misspent Youth";
3. To request that the Cabinet Member for Finance and Carbon Reduction provide a written response to the questions submitted to Panel Members by local residents regarding the youth offer;
4. To request that the following further information from the Children and Young People's Service:
  - A breakdown of the budget for youth services for the last two years; and
  - Key targets, monitoring details and performance data;
5. That the film regarding gangs commissioned from Exposure in 2012 be taken forward and developed as learning response for use in schools etc.
6. That the Children and Young People's Service provide Panel Members with details of the "offer" at Muswell Hill.

## **2. CHILDREN'S CENTRES**

The Panel welcomed Peter Catling and Renata Bailey from Woodlands Park Children's Centre Noel Park and Woon' Centre, who had been invited along to the meeting give their views. In respect of the review, Mr Catling felt that it was useful to have an external view on how provision was progressing. The current model was now in its second year and it was now possible to see its impact. He felt that a more participatory approach could have been adopted for the review. Ms Bailey also felt that the external perspective was welcome in helping to refocus the service.

The Deputy Director reported that significant sums of money had been taken out of the service two years ago and the review would look at the impact of these. Efforts had been made to re-balance service provision in favour of early intervention. The review would look at how effective current provision for Children's Centres was. Even if it confirmed that the service was the best that could currently be aspired to, this would be of value.

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Mr Catling felt that the provision of effective leadership should be added to the principles underpinning the service. It was noted that delivering child care was an expensive element. The Head of Early Years reported that comparisons would be made with other local authorities and consideration given to how services could be delivered in the most cost effective way. The service wished to ensure that it was delivered to those that needed it most. Mr Catling stated that childcare was part of an effective early intervention strategy. Children's Centres were one stop shops and were able to support families very well. Childcare needed to be seen as part of a bigger picture and not separate.

In respect of the Haringey 54000 project, the Panel noted the importance of having good preventative services in order to avoid issues escalating. The vast majority of the resources within C&YPS were currently focussed on either looked after children (LAC) or safeguarding. The service was probably intervening in cases which other local authorities would not act upon. 80% of resources were currently spent on either LAC or safeguarding. The service would be aiming to reduce this to 60% through delivering further savings in future years. The budget was being re-profiled to see how resources might best be re-invested in areas which would deliver the most impact. Early years services delivered a particularly major impact.

It was noted that the service would only develop services for two year olds within provision that was already rated as either good or outstanding. There were currently set staffing ratios but these could be subject to change as a result of proposals by the government. The new ratios were discretionary but had the potential to seriously impact on the quality of work undertaken as the new ratios were nearly double the current ones.

Mr Catling stated that a lot of children who attended Children's Centres had higher levels of need. Services currently aimed to support families at the highest levels of risk but the current changes were more focussed on getting people into work. The Council would need to take a position on the future direction of the service. It was also important that services knitted together well at a strategic level. Ms Bailey stated that not all services currently appeared to be working to the same outcomes and further work was needed to remedy this. The Director of Children's Services reported that there was a need to consider shared outcomes and how services could work more smartly together and this would also be considered as part of the review process.

### **We AGREED:**

1. That the final report of the review of Children's Centres be submitted to the Panel when available; and
2. That further information be provided to the Panel on the potential use of public health funding for Children's Centres.

### **3. OUTSTANDING FOR ALL" - REPORT OF THE HARINGEY EDUCATION COMMISSION**

The Director of Children's Services reported that work of the Education Commission had constituted a very helpful intervention. The report had focused on how the service could regain the progress that it had previously made. Plans were currently being formulated on taking forward the outcomes of the review. Recommendations would be produced by July and these would include improving support for school governors as well as better information flows.

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A voluntary sector partner was being commissioned to look at the role of parents. It was accepted that the service had not always been good at asking parents for their views but the service was now committed to address this. A parents reference group was being set up and co-opted Members of the Panel would be very welcome to become involved in this. It was noted that criticism within the report was not of governors but of the support that had been offered to them. A new head of governors had been recruited and would be looking at making the improvements required.

The Director of Children's Services and the Cabinet Member confirmed that all the recommendations of the Commission's report had been agreed. The Panel also endorsed the recommendations.

We **AGREED**:

1. That the Panel note that the recommendations in the report of the Education Commission had been agreed and add their own endorsement of the report and its recommendations; and
2. That a further report be made to the Panel on the proposed action plan for implementing the recommendations of the report.

**Cllr Martin Newton**  
**Chair**