

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL
THURSDAY, 27 FEBRUARY 2014**

Councillors Brabazon, Bull, Christophides, Engert and Newton (Chair)
Co-opted Members Ms Y Denny (Church representative) and Mr E Reid (Parent Governor representative)

CYPS109. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

CYPS110. URGENT BUSINESS

See item CYP 115 (Hartsbrook – E-Act).

CYPS111. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

CYPS112. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

CYPS113. MINUTES

In respect of the meeting of 18 December, the Panel noted that Lisa Redfern, Director of Children Services (Acting), was now meeting regularly with a group of young people, as discussed at the meeting. The issue of the quality of careers guidance had also been raised at the meeting. Ms Redfern reported that clear evidence of the need for improvements was needed in order to challenge effectively the Headteachers. Whilst there was some anecdotal evidence of the need for improvements, this needed to be collected in a more structured way. The Year 11 to post 16 data from schools regarding the destination of school leavers was the best in 3 years, which implied that they were providing better advice and guidance. However, it appeared the picture in schools was nevertheless patchy but probably better than most boroughs. In particular, many schools in the borough had dedicated careers staff. One possible option would be to develop a careers co-ordinator network to share practice and highlight resources. A free "light touch" review to all schools. A more detailed and costed review could also be offered.

Jon Abbey, Assistant Director for School Improvement, stated that there was a need to improve the tracking of young people and a youth worker would be assigned to undertake work on this area. The Panel noted that £300k had been obtained from the Mayors Fund to increase the number of young people from Haringey going to Russell Group universities.

It was also noted that links with Highgate School had been maintained and, in particular, they were continuing to assist with helping to encourage and prepare pupils who might wish to apply for the most selective universities. In addition, Highgate parents were also assisting on Haringey school governing bodies.

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AGREED:

That the minutes of the meetings of 12 November, 5 December (budget) and 18 December 2013 and 3 February 2014 (evidence session) be approved.

CYPS114. FOSTERING SERVICE REVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION

Ms Redfern reported that the recommendations of the review were now being actively by Impower. The Council wished to have high quality foster carers as well as those with appropriate skills. It was essential that the service was both responsive and efficient and offered high quality outcomes. There was a need for carers to deal with a wide range of children and young people – from babies to adolescents. Good carers could help turn children's lives round. The Panel noted that there were currently only 23 children in residential care. The remainder and vast majority were all being cared for by foster carers.

Paul McCarthy, Interim Head of Service (Commissioning and Placements), stated that the service wished to carry staff and carers with them in making improvements. Although a very high proportion of looked after children were fostered, only a minority were actually placed within Haringey. Addressing this would mean that children were closer to their birth families and have greater continuity in their education.

Ambitious objectives had been set. This year, 17 new foster carers had been recruited but 10 had ceased to be carers. The target for the New Year was to recruit 45 and research suggested that this was achievable, especially as it had been done elsewhere. The service wanted all people using the service to receive a prompt and friendly response to their enquiries. The aim was that everyone would receive a visit within five days and have their assessment completed within 16 weeks. The assessment could take up to 11 months at the moment. There appeared to be a high level of interest at becoming Haringey foster parents. The prospective provider had a good track record in recruiting foster parents, with around 100 taken in Lewisham over 18 months and 40 new carers heading towards approval in Southwark.

There could be misconceptions about barriers to fostering and it was important that a consistent understanding was developed. There were a diverse range of foster carers and all enquiries were welcome. Full time employment was not a barrier as there were some children who could be left alone at home for short periods of time. He was confident that targets could be achieved and that this would lead to a transformation of the service. Collaborative work was being undertaken with neighbouring boroughs, particularly in respect of specialist foster carers. It was expected that the contract with the provider would be signed next week.

The Panel noted that it was aimed to have 60% of foster carers in-house. The median age of carers was mid 40s and significantly higher than elsewhere. However, the majority of people recruited were also likely to be in their 40s. In terms of ethnicity, the service had become less dogmatic on matching children to carers of similar ethnic background. The most important thing was that a carer could provide suitable support for the individual child. Adolescents could be very clear about their identity and were therefore less likely to become

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confused. There was now greater emphasis on the skills set of carers. The Panel also noted that there was now greater clarity on the issue of personal allowances for children and their apportionment.

AGREED:

That regular updates on progress with the achievement of targets be reported to the Panel and that the first of these be submitted to the Panel in six months time.

CYPS115. HARTSBROOK SCHOOL - E-ACT

At the request of the Chair and as a late item of urgent business, Jon Abbey, Assistant Director for School Improvement, reported on the current position of Hartsbrook School in the light of recent developments in relation to their sponsor, E-Act.

He stated that he had met with the Chief Executive and Deputy Director of E-Act regarding concerns about performance. Hartsbrook were one of 16 schools that E-Act were responsible for and had been inspected by OFSTED at the same time. The issue of safeguarding was of particular concern as absences had not always been followed up by the school, according to the inspection. Reviews on governance and operational issues had been instigated by the local authority. It had been made clear that the local authority was not happy with the level of engagement that there had been. A letter to the school outlining the authority's concerns regarding performance was being drafted and this would also be sent to E-Act, the Department for Education and Ofsted. The letter would make clear the desire of the authority to support and engage with the school. He was not aware yet whether Hartsbrook were one of the ten schools that had been removed from E-Act's control.

The Panel noted that the local authority did not have a specific role in respect of the performance of academies. Ofsted had advised that it was nevertheless possible for authorities to send warning notices to such schools. E-Act had indicated that they were prepared to attend a Panel meeting if invited. There was currently no information about possible replacements for E-Act should there be a need for the contract to be re-brokered. However, all providers needed to be mindful of avoiding overstressing themselves and due diligence would be insisted upon by the authority.

The Panel noted that the authority would have to continue to admit children to the school despite its vulnerable status. Consideration was being given to how challenge could be factored into school admissions criteria so such schools were not overburdened. It was agreed that any further information about developments would be shared with the Panel.

CYPS116. EARLY HELP OFFER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Ms Redfern reported that a dedicated team had been put together to assist with piloting the early help approach and were being supported by Impower, who were the Council's strategic partner. The full strategy would be put in place

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after the pilot. Delivery and outcomes would be monitored so that the success of the initiative could be evaluated.

The Panel noted that an Early Help Summit was being held on 4 March and Ms Redfern agreed to check to see if Councillors had been included in the arrangements for this. Panel Members stated that the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee had been involved in earlier discussions regarding this issue and were of the view that Members of the Committee should have been asked for their input. It was also felt that the aspiration of the initiative might be incompatible with the need to focus work on available funding streams.

AGREED:

That further consideration be given to providing an opportunity for Members to feed into the development of the initiative.

**CYPS117. EARLY YEARS REVIEW (CORPORATE DELIVERY UNIT) AND UPDATE
ON WORK TO DATE**

Ms Redfern reported that the review was comprehensive and clarified clearly the issues that needed to be addressed.

The Panel noted that Waltham Forest had provided grant funding for some premises so that they could be developed to enable them to deliver the two-year-old early entitlement. Jon Abbey, Assistant Director (School Improvement), reported that the service had been tasked to undertake a similar process in Haringey. However, all potential providers would need to be either rated as good or outstanding. It was also noted that the Early Years Project Board was currently being reconfigured. In respect of management costs, it was noted that these could appear to be high if Headteachers salaries were included and there was a danger that this could provide a misleading impression.

Mr Abbey reported that the review had given the service the evidence base that had previously been lacking. It was important that Children's Centres developed further. An infrastructure needed to be put in place to support them as well as a strategy that underpinned financing. The service was committed to drafting a strategy by the end of March and engaging on it with a wide range of stakeholders.

Panel Members commented that, in the light of the budget reductions that they had faced, Children's Centres were performing well. They indicated that they would welcome a presentation on the Early Years review.

Panel Members also stated that governors had not been interviewed as part of the review process. In addition, some of the comparisons that had been made between provision had not been comparing like with like. Schools were the biggest providers of childcare and the challenge was the support and develop provision. The lack of protocols with the NHS had not helped with the progress of services. It was important that there was a strategic document to guide the development of services. The development of the strategy needed to include opportunities for input from a range of people, including Members.

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AGREED:

1. That the completed draft Early Years Strategy comes to a future meeting of the Panel; and
2. That, following the local government elections, a presentation of the Early Year Review be arranged for Members of the new Panel.

CYPS118. MULTI-AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB (MASH) AND FIRST RESPONSE SERVICE INFORMATION SHARING - OUTCOME OF AUDIT

AGREED:

That the report be noted.

CYPS119. TWO-YEAR-OLD EARLY ENTITLEMENT - CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL PROJECT

AGREED:

That the recommendations of the report be approved and submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for endorsement.

CYPS120. WORK PLAN

AGREED:

That the following issues be added to the future work plan;

- Academies and that Academy sponsors be invited to attend; and
- 6th Form College – update.

CYPS121. VOTE OF THANKS

It being the last meeting of the Panel for the current Municipal Year, the Chair was thanked by the Panel for his work as Chair. The Chair thanked Members and officers for their kind assistance and co-operation.

**Cllr Martin Newton
Chair**