

# **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON MONDAY 6TH NOVEMBER 2017**

## **PRESENT:**

**Councillors: Kirsten Hearn (Chair), Mark Blake, Toni Mallett and Reg Rice**

**Co-opted Member: Luci Davin (Parent Governor representative)**

## **31. FILMING AT MEETINGS**

The Chair referred Members present to agenda Item one as shown on agenda in respect of filming at the meeting and Members noted the information contained therein.

## **32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Morris and Ms Denny and Ms Naseer.

## **33. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

## **34. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

## **35. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS**

None.

## **36. MINUTES**

In respect of the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph of page 3 (agenda item 23.; Review on Disproportionality within the Youth Justice System), Councillor Weston reported that the Black and Minority Ethnic Steering Group had been set up at her behest rather than by the Schools Forum. In respect the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph of page 6 (agenda item 24. Financial Monitoring/Budget Savings), Margaret Dennison, Interim Director of Children's Services, reported that the word "not" should be deleted.

## **AGREED:**

That, subject to the above mentioned amendments, the minutes of the meeting of 5 October 2017 be approved.

### **37. HARINGEY SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17**

Geraldine Gavin, Interim Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB), introduced the LSCB Annual Report. She had taken over from Sir Paul Ennals after he had departed in May. The report focused on what had been successful and what needed to be improved. Of greatest significance was the recent publication of the revised "Working Together to Safeguard Children" and child death review guidance and new regulations for consultation. These proposed some major changes.

From April 2019, LSCBs would cease to exist. Safeguarding would become the responsibility of three statutory partners; the local authority, CCG and Police. In respect of the proposals relating to serious case reviews, it was proposed that they would continue to be undertaken locally except where there were issues that might be of national interest, which would be dealt with by a national panel. New arrangements to review child deaths would need to be agreed locally. The proposed changes and transitional process carried some risks in their implementation and there was important work to do over the next 18 months to make sure the risks were well managed.

Since coming to Haringey, she had found an active partnership and good dialogue. She felt that the LSCB was keen and alert to bringing in changes where necessary. There had been an increasing amount of pressure to access services. There were currently too many cases being referred inwards and not enough early intervention. She highlighted a number of issues;

- The LSCB was giving particular attention to neglect;
- Gangs and serious youth violence were big issues. She noted that the borough's Youth Parliament had identified gangs and crime, mental health and having things to do as their top three priorities;
- In respect of mental health, a concordat had been signed to prevent young people in crisis being held temporarily in Police stations. Consideration was being given by the government to passing responsibility for this issue to local authorities; and
- The London Safeguarding Board continued to play a significant role. Issues of child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and the Prevent programme were three London wide priorities that all local LSCBs also needed to make progress on.

In answer to a question, she stated that funding for the LSCB was its biggest challenge. Partners made contributions to the LSCB but the bulk of the funding came from the local authority. Under the new arrangements, the costs were intended to be shared between the three statutory partners. Under the current system, the amount contributed by CCGs varied between areas and some other areas received more from their CCG than Haringey. She commented that the new arrangements would include provision for independent scrutiny, although how this was done would be a matter for local determination.

Ms Gavin commented that she had access to a spreadsheet on LSCB funding across London. Some boroughs received virtually nothing from external sources to fund their LSCB but payment in kind was sometimes offered instead. The new guidance stated

that all three statutory partners should jointly fund the LSCB. Serious case reviews could have significant financial implications, with each costing between £5-10,000, and there could be several of these each year. She felt that, at the very least, there needed to be some consistency between boroughs who were part of the Sustainability and Transformation Plan for north central London. There was a requirement for independent external scrutiny within the guidance but how this was achieved was not specified.

She stated that the purpose of the LSCB was to facilitate partnership and dialogue and hold partners to account for their contribution to keeping children and young people safe. There was a small business unit to support this in Haringey. New support arrangements would need to be determined as part of the local transitional arrangements. Although the aim of the new arrangements was to remove unnecessary bureaucracy, there was a need for a minimum level of administrative support.

The timing and frequency of board meetings was a matter for it to decide and it currently met on a three monthly basis. Reducing the number of meetings and restricting attendance to just those who were essential helped make arrangements more cost effective. However, there was a risk though that the voluntary sector and schools would not be as well engaged with the LSCB as a result of this. Active lay members could add value to the work of the LSCB.

In answer to a question, Ms. Gavin stated that the LSCB got no money from central government. It was entirely funded by safeguarding partners. She reported that the first draft of the updated Working Together had contained no reference to schools. Of particular relevance was the fact they were not regarded as a statutory partner. Most LSCBs currently contained Headteacher representatives but some academies were less co-operative. Most Headteachers were nevertheless keen to assist. She stated that there were specific concerns in respect of home educated children that needed to be considered.

In response to a question, Ms. Gavin reported that there were good links with Adult Safeguarding but there was nevertheless a need for services to be joined up better. Whilst improvements had been made, more progress needed to be made.

In answer to a question regarding lay and community involvement, she reported that a newsletter had been produced for community and voluntary sector colleagues in order to generate awareness and interest. However, there were some difficulties due to lack of funding. She felt that practice could be better informed by engagement with the community. The Youth Council could provide a source of feedback but thought needed to be given on how best to engage with them.

She reported that there were around 600 serious case reviews that took place nationally in a year and they were all now required to be published. In practice, most LSCBs published executive summaries on their websites. There was one currently in progress in Haringey and there were currently around 1-2 per year. Cities such as Birmingham could have up to 8 at any one time.

They Panel thanked Ms. Gavin for her kind assistance.

### **38. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS; CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES**

Councillor Eugene Ayisi, the Cabinet Member for Communities, reported on current issues within his portfolio. In terms of youth services that were provided by the Council, he reported that current provision covered only a small number of young people within the borough. Schools and other organisations provided a certain amount in addition to this. A working group had been set up to consider youth provision, including a partnership with Onside to develop a Youth Zone for Haringey.

The ambition was to cater for 1500 young people and provide opportunities for 7 days per week.

In answer to a question regarding the voice of the child, he stated that it was often too late by the time engagement took place with those who came into contact with the Youth Justice Service. Interventions needed to take place at an earlier stage, before young people got into trouble. Risk factors could include young people becoming disillusioned with school and exposure to domestic violence. Although youth services could assist, they were not a silver bullet.

Gill Gibson, Assistant Director for Early Help and Prevention, reported that there were plans to deliver a 'Hackathon' participation event on addressing obesity and it was intended to follow this with a further participation event on the theme of knife crime. The Youth Council, who had strong links with schools and community groups, were on the steering group arranging these and so would be involved.

In answer to a question, the Cabinet Member stated that there was an awareness of what provision for young people existed across the borough that was provided by the community and voluntary sector. The Bridge Renewal Trust had assisted with this process. Onside would be utilised to help develop additional capacity. He would be happy to share details of current provision.

In answer to a question regarding Black History Month, he stated that a Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff network had been developed. He felt that staff were an excellent resource whose contribution could sometimes be overlooked. However, he felt that it was important that senior management within the Council were reflective of the borough's diversity.

In response to a question regarding knife crime, he stated that it was important that young people had confidence in the Police to protect them. However, confidence in the Police in Haringey was low and had been low historically. Police were now being assigned to primary schools so that relationships could be built up with children from an earlier age. He felt that there needed to be a dual approach, with enforcement for those who committed offences and support for those who needed it. Whilst it was necessary sometimes to have a robust approach to enforcement, he felt that there needed to be balance.

Councillor Weston, the Cabinet Member for Children and Families, responded to questions from the Panel. In respect of the Harris Academy, she stated that it was difficult to know what was behind their very good OFSTED inspection results.

Nationally, 57% of their academies were classified as outstanding. Of the three Harris Academies in Haringey, two were rated as outstanding and one rated as good. However, 99% of all schools in Haringey were rated as either good or outstanding.

There was no evidence of looked after children having difficulty in gaining admission to schools within the borough, including academies. Broadly speaking, there were no differences in the way that academies dealt with admissions. Looked after children were offered places within the time limit in virtually all cases. Looked after children also had access to the borough's Virtual School, which was very highly rated. She agreed to find out how many looked after children attended academies within the borough and report back.

In respect of Education, Health and Social Care assessments, these were still comparatively new. There was a 20-week completion target, which was challenging. Haringey had used trained staff to coordinate plans and were seeking to commission additional days. There were currently vacant posts within the service but she was confident that all of the assessments would be dealt with within the 20-week time limit once these were filled. 30% were currently completed within the time limit.

She was aware that changes to the SEN transport had caused difficulties for some families as there was no longer a door-to-door service. Some families had contacted her with concerns regarding this and work had taken place to find a solution. She was happy to consider the arrangements for other families if they contacted her. Gill Gibson, Assistant Director for Early Help and Prevention, reported that changes had been made to accommodate particular children if necessary. As agreed at the last Panel meeting, she would circulate a briefing on the changes shortly. The number of routes had been reduced from 151 to 108 in order to make savings. The service was nevertheless mindful of the needs of children.

The Chair reported that Panel Members had submitted a number of questions to the Cabinet Member regarding concerns that had been raised in respect of support offered to families with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) and it had been agreed that a fuller response would be made to these in due course.

Panel Members expressed concern at the evidence that they had received from community and voluntary sector organisations regarding the service provided by the no recourse to public funds (NRPF) team. The Cabinet Member stated that the concerns raised had been on board. Ms Alexander reported that some of the concerns had been shared by management and two audits had been commissioned in response to them in order to obtain a clearer picture of practice. The most recent one had shown practice to be compliant but had also made some recommendations for improvement.

The Cabinet Member reported that families who were NRPF came under a number of different categories. Such assistance that could be required focussed on the needs of children. Training was provided for relevant staff on a regular basis and this included specific sessions on issues such as human rights.

In respect of the amount of subsistence that was provided, Sarah Alexander, Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Social Care, reported that the amount payable was

£65.75 per family but this did not include housing. There was no set amount and what was currently paid was lower than the £73.90 that advice suggested was appropriate. She was not aware as to why this level had been set. Whilst it would be possible to review the amount payable, any increase would have a significant impact on the budget and there was no provision for this.

The Cabinet Member reported that a member of staff had been commissioned from the Home Office to undertake immigration tests, support social work staff and analyse data. Consideration was currently being given to whether this support should be re-commissioned. In terms of safeguarding, Ms Alexander reported that victims from NRPF families received the same service as any other child.

In answer to a question regarding whether austerity had led to more children being taken into care, the Cabinet Member reported that it was not possible to be certain whether this was the case in Haringey. The number of looked after children had fallen since its peak but there had been an increase recently. It was possible that this was due to there being more unaccompanied asylum seekers.

In respect of the free childcare offer for 3 and 4 year olds, she reported that it had been estimated that there were 1710 children in Haringey that were entitled to the offer. The projected number of places was 1419 and considered sufficient to meet demand. However, there had been problems with the HMRC system that was intended to support provision. Webpages to promote take up had been updated and parent champions were being recruited to encourage take up. There had been a negative impact on some childcare settings and a review of progress was planned. The borough was funded according to the level of take up.

The Panel thanked the Cabinet Members for their kind assistance.

**AGREED:**

That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families be requested to circulate details to the Panel on the number of looked after children attending academies in the borough.

**39. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

**AGREED:**

That the work plan be approved.

CHAIR: Councillor Kirsten Hearn

Signed by Chair .....

Date .....