

Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes

Monday 27 February 2017

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Caroline Needham (Chair), Alan De'Ath, Elaine Chumnerly, Caroline Ffiske (Vice-Chair) and Marcus Ginn

Co-opted members: Nadia Taylor (Parent Governor Representative) and Vic Daniels (Parent Governor Representative)

Other Councillors: Councillor Sue Fennimore (Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Acting Cabinet Member for Children and Education)

Officers: Steve Miley, Rachael Wright-Turner, Julia Woodman, Richard Stanley, Jenny Bax, Rupa Parmar, and David Abbott

1. MINUTES

Under Item 6, the Executive Director's Update, Vic Daniels asked for the following addition (in bold) to paragraph 10:

"Vic Daniels noted that **many** lower level clubs also took safeguarding very seriously and had done for years."

RESOLVED

That, with correction noted above, the minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2017 were agreed as an accurate record of the proceedings.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Philippa O'Driscoll, Nandini Ganesh, Matt Jenkins, and Eleanor Allen.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

4. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no public questions.

5. **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

Steve Miley (Director for Family Services) presented the Director's update report and highlighted the following items:

- **Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people** (section 4.1) – H&F had taken 32 young people so far and the Leader of the Council had made a commitment to extend that offer should the Home Office agree to full cost recovery.
- **Child protection** (section 4.4) – Child protection numbers remained stable and social workers had been improving engagement with families through Focus on Practice work.

Rachael Wright-Turner (Director for Commissioning, Children's Services) highlighted the development of a new placement strategy (section 5) – officers wanted to better understand the needs of children and young people to ensure that the right types of accommodation were available to fit their needs.

Councillor Marcus Ginn asked how the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people were accommodated in the borough – and whether there was capacity within the current foster carer network to support them. Steve Miley responded that the majority of the young people were placed out of borough and the impact on local provision was minimal.

Councillor Ginn asked if the age profile of the young people H&F had taken was representative of the camp in Calais. Steve Miley said it was difficult to say – the initial group of children that came to the UK (with relatives living in the country) were younger on average than the most recent cohort. Councillor Sue Fennimore noted that it was the Home Office that decided which children were brought over and where they were placed.

Nadia Taylor, referring to section 4.6 of the report, 'Signs of Safety', asked whether training had been made available to school governors. Steve Miley said that child protection training for governors should cover Signs of Safety as part of their case conference training.

6. CABINET MEMBERS UPDATE

Councillor Sue Fennimore reported on the following events since the previous meeting:

- Along with the Leader and senior officers from Children's Services, she had attended an urgent evidence session called by the Home Affairs Committee about unaccompanied child migrants. She said they had shared H&F's experiences supporting those vulnerable children and she hoped that the learning would be taken on-board by the Government.
- She attended a foster care workshop at the Lyric Theatre – congratulating the department for recruiting an additional 24 carers.
- She congratulated the winners of the Youth Mayoral and Youth Parliament elections.
- She attended the opening of the new sixth form provision at Queensmill School.
- West London College held a partnership programme with the police where young people could help develop initiatives that tackled their safety concerns.
- She attended the Heads Forum to discuss the new funding formula for schools. 47 local headteachers signed a letter of concern to the Government.

It was also noted that Councillor Sue Macmillan attended a market engagement event for the new Integrated Family Support Service. The event was held to encourage partners and providers to feedback on the new delivery model. Officers reported that it was very well attended and there was a good level of interest from both national and local social care providers.

Councillor Elaine Chumnerly reminded the committee that there was a public event on in the Town Hall on 28 February to inform residents about the impact of the new funding formula for schools. The Chair added that there were serious concerns about this topic across the borough and encouraged everyone to attend.

7. CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY

Julia Woodman (Strategy, Partnerships, and Workforce Development Officer) presented the report and noted that in 2014 H&F made a commitment to develop a strategy to promote early intervention and reduce child poverty. The strategy highlights the measures taken and those planned locally, to support families and their children facing difficult circumstances such as; low income, poverty, housing, and high levels of need. Using traditional measures, child poverty rates in the borough showed a slight increase from 2013 to 2016 – but some wards saw up to a five percent increase when housing costs were factored in.

All departments were consulted and commented on the strategy. The Youth Council were also consulted and they fed in priorities around giving more support in schools on money management and making sure there were local jobs and training available for residents.

The Chair suggested that the strategy should also include input from the third-sector advice organisations in the borough.

Councillor Elaine Chumnerly asked if residents had been consulted on the strategy. Julia Woodman responded that once the strategy was finalised it would be publicised and the Council would gather feedback from residents.

Councillor Chumnerly highlighted the section on family friendly jobs and said any effort to work with local businesses to expand this would be welcome. She also suggested that when commissioning services, the Council should think about how they can prioritise encouraging young people back into education, employment, or training.

Councillor Caroline Ffiske asked what definition of poverty was being used in the report. Julia Woodman responded that officers had used National Indicator 116 'Children in Poverty' as a general measure but the strategy suggested a range of new indicators to measure progress more accurately.

Nadia Taylor asked if the strategy addressed the children in families who were on the edge of poverty thresholds. Councillor Sue Fennimore said the Poverty and Worklessness Commission was also looking at those situations.

Nadia Taylor asked what the timeframe was for following up on the strategy. Julia Woodman said a progress report could be brought back in four months.

Councillor Alan De'Ath thanked officers for their work on the strategy. He noted that research gathered during his time chairing the mental health taskforce showed how important the mental health of a pregnant mother was for the outcomes of their child. Supporting new mothers was vital to improving children's life chances. He said he would be interested in some analysis of the impact of zero-hours contracts on families in the borough. In the school where he worked, many parents had jobs in service or retail and it changed the traditional structures of family life. He suggested lobbying the Government on this issue. Councillor Sue Fennimore noted that the Poverty and Worklessness Commission also had recommendations related to zero-hours contracts and the 'gig economy'.

Nadia Taylor, referring to the statistics on page 28, asked if the reasons behind the decrease in deprivation in certain areas was known. The Chair noted that some families had been priced out of London and the benefit cap meant some families had been moved to outer London. Richard Stanley added that schools had seen a change in demographic – there had been a decrease in the number of children eligible for the pupil premium.

Councillor Caroline Ffiske expressed concern about the strategy labelling a third of families in H&F as living in poverty. She felt that too broad a definition of poverty meant losing the ability to target resources where they were most needed. Julia Woodman said the idea behind the strategy was to have a broad suite of interventions that helped everyone.

Vic Daniels asked if there were any aspirational solutions or interventions to tackle intergenerational poverty in the borough. Julia Woodman responded that intervention in the early years was key to solving intergenerational poverty.

Councillor Marcus Ginn felt it was important to have an action plan that showed what action the Council was going to take to address the areas highlighted in the strategy.

The Chair noted that the Youth Council had highlighted the importance of opportunities to contact businesses and organisations at a young age. Some families had these connections already but many didn't and it was holding young people back. They had also stressed the need for paid work experience and internships.

The Chair asked that the above comments be sent to the Health and Wellbeing Board for their consideration and notify the Committee when the strategy was scheduled to be considered.

RESOLVED

That the committee's comments be sent to the Health and Wellbeing Board for their consideration and that the committee be notified when the strategy was scheduled to be considered by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

8. SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2017

Richard Stanley (Deputy Director of Education) and Jenny Bax (Principal Lead Adviser) presented the annual school performance report - informing the committee of the outcomes of the Summer 2016 assessments and examinations in the borough's primary and secondary schools. The report provided an overview of the outcomes and how they compared with the national picture.

Councillor Alan De'Ath, referring to 3.3 of the report, asked how the 'expected level' was determined for Key Stage 1. Richard Stanley responded that the curriculum was very clear about the standards expected for that age group. He added that while H&F had an average of 75% of children reaching their expected levels, that still left 25% who weren't. The Education Department was focused on the groups that needed to be supported to improve these figures further.

Councillor Elaine Chumney asked if schools were doing enough to support the 25% of children not meeting their expected levels. Richard Stanley said the Education Department put an emphasis on having strong leaders in schools and they had seen a general improvement in the quality of school leadership. Where his team had concerns about an individual school they would work with the leadership team to make improvements. Jenny Bax added that there was also a strong network of support for schools through both the West London Teaching Alliance and the cluster groups.

Councillor Caroline Ffiske asked if pupils were told their results at the primary level. Richard Stanley said they were. Councillor Ffiske worried that this put additional pressures on children – the tests at these levels were in place to test the school, not

the pupil. Richard Stanley agreed that there was a tension there and it came down to how the school managed that.

Councillor Alan De'Ath noted that a few years ago there was transition funding available for Summer Schools to prevent the drop-off in achievement between years 6 and 7. He asked if H&F could lobby for that to be reinstated - or put something similar in place. Richard Stanley said his team had been developing links between primary and secondary schools - encouraging exchanges so that secondary teachers knew the levels of pupils and could build on that once they started. Councillor De'Ath felt that was a positive step and said he would like to see it expanded across the borough.

The Chair noted that when moving from primary to secondary schools parents also needed support - knowing what to do and what's expected of them.

Councillor Elaine Chumney asked what the impact of the new funding formula would have on those schools that were already struggling. Richard Stanley said it would be a challenge for all schools. Every school had to make decisions about where to target resources.

Rachael Wright-Turner noted that schools needed to recognise they were commissioners and the opportunities available – thinking strategically, working in clusters to get economies of scale etc. H&F could provide commissioning support to develop that capacity within schools. Richard Stanley added that schools were already thinking about joint posts (e.g. SENCOs) and joint commissioning to get better value from contracts.

RESOLVED

1. That the committee reviewed and commented on the school performance details in the report and the school improvement priorities identified.
2. That the committee noted the main performance headlines.

9. CHILDCARE UPDATE

Rupa Parmar (Head of Commissioning) provided a verbal update on developments related to the childcare strategy. She reported that H&F had responded to the Government's consultation on the 30 hours free childcare offer. In addition, H&F had to provide a childcare sufficiency audit and to do this officers had requested further information on two, three, and four-year-old eligibility. Until that information had come through it wasn't possible to do the necessary analysis to understand where the shortfalls were. In the meantime, officers were working with childcare providers to help them understand the impact of the new funding formula and the upcoming 30 hour offer. Officers were also looking at how they could support smaller providers around business planning. The goal was to support the sector to ensure the borough had sustainable provision that could respond to the needs of parents.

Rupa Parmar also noted that H&F had scheduled a childcare provider conference for 25 April to share good practice from early implementers in other local authorities and hold business planning workshops.

Councillor Elaine Chumnerly said she would like to see a snapshot of what childcare schools provided now, how much they were charging, and case studies of typical families and their costs.

10. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair requested that the Youth Council were invited to the next meeting for the item on skills for young people to discuss their manifesto aspirations. Councillor Elaine Chumnerly asked that the current NEET re-engagement service provider be invited for that item.

Vic Daniels provided feedback on his visit to Centrepoint accommodation in the borough – he said it gave him a greater understanding of the issues discussed at committee.

The Chair asked officers to look at arranging a visit for the committee to a local children’s centre.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for 24 April 2017.

Meeting started: 7.00 pm
Meeting ended: 9.15 pm

Chair

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