

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes



Monday 19 September 2016

PRESENT

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

Co-opted members: Nandini Ganesh (Parentsactive Representative), Philippa O'Driscoll (Westminster Diocesan Education Service Representative) and Nadia Taylor (Parent Governor Representative)

Officers: Steve Miley, Director for Family Services, Rachael Wright-turner, Director of Commissioning for Children's Services, Mandy Lawson, Assistant Director, Special Educational Needs, Fiona Phelps, Head of Special Educational Needs, Rosemary Salliss, Social Worker, Health, Bathsheba Mall, Committee Coordinator

External Guests: Nahar Chowdhury, Head of Housing Support, Centrepoint, Anji McCormick, Head of Property Management, Centrepoint

1. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

The minutes of the meeting of the Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee held on 13th June 2016 be confirmed and signed as an accurate record of the proceedings.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Elaine Chumnerly.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

4. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no public questions.

5. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Ian Heggs, Director of Schools and Commissioning, submitted apologies on behalf of Executive Director For Schools, Claire Chamberlain, as she had been unable to attend this meeting. He provided an update to the meeting, beginning with the news that the provisional test results across all key stages indicated a good performance, despite statutory changes, in particular to Key Stage 1. Support to prepare for the new testing regimes had been put in place and he was particularly pleased with the performance of secondary schools, which had shown fantastic improvement.

Full details of the results will be set out in a report to the Committee, once the results had been confirmed, hopefully in time for the November meeting. He expressed his thanks to the support provided by the Cabinet Member for Children and Education, Councillor Sue Macmillan, in protecting resources for schools, enabling that improvement to continue. It was explained that the results would be shown by individual school on the LBHF website, once the Department for Education (DfE) had formally published the results. The individual results will highlight particular achievements but this will not be until November.

Nadia Taylor, Parent Governor Representative, highlighted on-going concerns regarding the provision of school meals in at least two LBHF schools that she was aware of. Complaints about the service provider, Eden Foodservice, ranged from the lack of variety, nutritiously balanced meals and food served cold. A working group had investigated this issue previously and it was disappointing that there remained further issues to address. Rachael Wright-Turner, Director of Children's Commissioning, expressed disappointment and concern, particularly since the feedback that she had received had been positive. The two schools referred to, each had different issues that they were trying to deal with. Councillor Caroline Needham, Chair, commented that the Committee was happy to channel complaints from the schools so that the contracts with the schools can be closely monitored. The Schools Contract Monitoring Team would investigate further and it was agreed that officers would produce a report for the Committee to consider.

ACTION: Children's Service

6. CABINET MEMBERS UPDATE

Councillor Sue Macmillan, Cabinet Member for Children and Education, informed the Committee that since the previous meeting, she had undertaken a number of visits around the borough. Most recently, she had visited the home of a family, where a child protection plan was in place. She had been very impressed and encouraged by the work of social care officers. Councillor Macmillan had met with Action for Change, an organisation that worked with women whose children had previously been removed from their care. She had also met with social workers from the referral service. More recently, she had attended the foster carers awards ceremony, recognising the significant contribution made by carers over three boroughs. Finally, she reported that

she had also spent some time visiting Lady Margaret School, in Parsons Green, Fulham.

7. THE IMPACT OF RECENT 'SEN' POLICY CHANGES

Ian Heggs introduced two officers to the Committee who would be integral to delivering the requirements of the service changes to special educational needs (SEN) provision within the borough. He welcomed Mandy Lawson, Assistant Director, Special Educational Needs. A decision had been taken that Children's Services be integrated with the specialised, disabled service, reflecting the spirit of the new Children and Families Act 2014 (CFA). He also welcomed Fiona Phelps, Head of Special Educational Needs, a strategic role, encompassing every aspect of SEN.

Fiona Phelps began by outlining the initial progress that had been made to implement the changes to the new service. The key element here was co-production, drawing to together expertise. Historically, reports focused on the right placement but had moved to conjoined working, supporting children by developing holistic outcomes to meet special educational needs. The CFA stipulated that a local offer was made and that to achieve, officers worked closely with parents and young people. A local offer was also about finding what can be delivered in the community that will best meet need.

It was important to distinguish the new report, the Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) from what was previously known as the SEN assessment. The transfer review team undertook an 18 week process to produce the EHCP. To be clear, this was a reassessment, looking at the holistic need of each child. She expressed her thanks for the extra resources allocated to this important area of work which included 1.6 managers, 5 key workers and additional administrative support.

Mandy Lawson briefly outlined the CFA movement from SEN to EHCP and that broadly, it was about understanding the journey from the first diagnosis, through designated services in a coordinated way, delivered through children's centres, schools and into young adulthood. The aim was to work closely with parent groups and service providers to understand this journey. She welcomed the decision to provide funding for dedicated resource centre for special needs to be located at Queens Manor Primary School. This would offer local provision for children with complex needs. In improving the transition from post 16 to adulthood, the new service also brought together SEN and adult disability services and was a key element of this work. This was an innovative and interesting area of work, particularly with the recent placement developed for post 16 young adults with learning disabilities, who had just begun their internships with the Council.

Vic Daniels, Parent Governor Representative, enquired about the correlation between the amount by which resources had been increased and the added value achieved. Ian Heggs confirmed that the changes in service provision were welcome but no local authority had received extra or additional funding and additionally, a noticeable increase in the requests for assessment. It was

explained that an SEN Burden Grant had been granted to fund the completion of the transfer reviews. Dave McNamara, Director of Finance & Resources, Children's Services confirmed that no additional funding had been received to resource the implementation of the new service requirements.

Nandini Ganesh, Parentsactive Representative, expressed interest in the criteria by which the new service would be measured and the mechanism for this. Mandy Lawson explained that the mechanism for measuring service performance was envisaged to be the benefits to families. Whilst the service was still developing a framework for this, it was still too early to say. The EHCPs would be very outcome driven and have to be agreed with families. It was anticipated however that they look at the experience of schools, colleges and service providers to establish performance criteria, in addition to peer challenge, Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspections. It was also anticipated that a new inspection framework will be coordinated and rolled out to see how effective the service was.

In response to a further question from Vic Daniels, Fiona Phelps clarified that they had begun to undertake the EHCP reassessments approximately 18 months previously. There were significant difference between this and the SEN report. The latter was retrospective whereas the EHCP was intended to forward facing, looking at what was needed now, what progress had been made and where did we want them to be in the next year, i.e., what has been achieved. At the time of the meeting, approximately 25 EHCPs had been completed but this would be need confirmation.

ACTION: Children's Services

Councillor Needham sought clarification about the 17 families which had gone to mediation. Fiona Phelps responded that mediation was a welcomed facet of the process and entered into for a whole range of reasons. Viewed positively, this development allowed for a structured conversation and framework to help resolve issues, to engage and draw out resolutions.

Nandini Ganesh raised a specific concern regarding gaps in the provision of plans for 19-24 year olds. There was a lack of clarity as to whether provision would be made, to illustrate, if a student sought a level 2 plan, an EHCP was required. She continued, referring to the use of parent advocacy at panels and enquired when this would happen. Fiona Phelps explained that for post 16, they had previously used "Learning Disabled Assessments" or LDA. This was used to fund post 16+ students going into further education and would also be transferred into EHCPs. LDAs were due to end in September 2016 but most of these are yet to be completed, despite the deadline having been extended. She confirmed that a student may not require an LDA and in such cases, there may be limited funding for maybe one year, taking into account improvements. If further support was required then this would be reviewed. Referring to parents on panels, it was explained that they had been in contact with counterparts in the London Borough of Wandsworth and were planning a visit for early October. It was understood that membership of a panel, precluded those resident within the borough, to avoid conflicts of interest. It was hoped that a framework could be developed at a workshop (early

October) to address these issues. Councillor Macmillan added that this approach also ensured that we would be aware of what was involved and commended Parentsactive for drawing attention to the issue.

Former Committee member Dennis Jarman, commented that plans should follow through from childhood, crossing the threshold to adulthood. In response to his query, it was noted that the process of getting support will eventually accelerate from the current average of 20 to 26 weeks. Converting SEN statements and LDAs entailed a significant resource requirement. Plans could not be signed off without clinical input, however, health colleagues were still getting to grips with the requirements. Contingency funding was hopefully in place or available until an EHCP was completed. It was suggested that the Health and Wellbeing Board be asked consider how health colleagues can be best supported in adapting to the new requirements and how officers can assist with this.

ACTION: Children's Services / HWB

A member of the public voiced concerns about the pressure on financial resources and how the impact of increased numbers of children would add further pressure. It was suggested that a better understanding of the issues would explain the cost and that it was unclear whether the figures presented in this way, helped in terms of understanding the wider debate. Ian Heggs referred to a previous report (which he offered to re-circulate) considered by the Committee detailing the increased pressure on funding and clarifying variations in figures, with notional and contingency funding from the CFA, with the majority of changes on the way in which schools were funded being applied two years previously.

ACTION: Children's Services

Matthew Jenkins, a member of the public (and the new Committee Teacher Representative) enquired whether officers thought that the service was sufficiently well resourced and how assured they felt about the quality of the process. Fiona Phelps explained that there were inherent challenges in moving from the old to the new process, requiring new links and the development of new working partnerships. A staff restructure had allowed the service to move forward, and, in adapting to the new structure, some staff had moved on, others had retrained and new additions to the team had brought with them fresh enthusiasm, new expertise and innovative ideas. This, together with understanding the nuances of new laws and a significant quantity of the work, have collectively presented a significant challenge. The new staff had ensured that they now had the critical mass of people within the team who collectively understood the CFA 2014 and the Education Act 1996. They were fortunate to have had the additional transfer funding but even though the balance of knowledge was good, it remained to be seen as to whether this would be sufficient.

Ian Heggs continued, the transition from statements and LDAs to EHCPs were required to be completed by April 2018. There was a fantastic service in place and it was important that it was well staffed. Both parents and teachers had been included on the recruitment panel. The service was very clear

about the transition statement work and were keen for schools to engage with the services available. A trialed offer had been developed and 95% of schools had bought into this.

Nandini Ganesh enquired how quickly were resources put in place, in particular for children aged up to 5 years. She explained that parents had been advised that Educational Psychologists will not be involved unless a statement was in place. It appeared to be harder to evidence need than previously. Fiona Phelps clarified that historically, there was an expectation that Educational Psychologists were involved but this was no longer a requirement. The key point now was to identify what they see as the need and what can be done to address it, for example, specific interventions that can be put in place, and, evaluate the outcome.

Ian Heggs acknowledged that more work was required to identify need in the 0-5 age group and this was currently on-going. Mandy Lawson confirmed that they were about to launch a significant plan to identify early pathways. Early support was a key factor and there would be joint funding between education and health providers to draw it together. This would target psychologist resources, impacting on how Children's Services were coordinated.

The Early Years enhanced offers had included various bids for further funds and it was noted that both voluntary and independent nurseries had requested support. The focus here was to try to ease the transition to school and a good way to use funding, and to reach more children. It was further noted that the needs of nurseries were not being identified and that they lacked support. Ian Heggs acknowledged that there was considerable work to be undertaken in delivering a three year work programme. Updated training take up was increasing and formed part of the contingency fund bid. Help was available to complete forms and officers would aim to ensure that this was provided as needed. Fiona Phelps explained that support in completing forms was available of over the phone, if contingency funding was being sought. However, a governance framework was important, in order to demonstrate clearly why funds had been identified and allocated.

ACTION: Children's Services

In response to a query about adding value to the agenda from Councillor Marcus Ginn, Mandy Lawson clarified that social care, housing and education, were all different elements to consider, to formulate a EHCP. The improved structure implementation plan for Children's Services was necessary. It amended the way they worked in terms of tracking those pathways.

Councillor Needham enquired whether childminders, who had identified needs of children in their care, were eligible. Ian Heggs confirmed that the Early Years Enhanced Offer was accessible to Childminders and that he would check to see what the take up had been. It was noted that previously, the advice and guidance given to childminders was that they had to identify need, in order to trigger a referral to providers.

ACTION: Children's Services

Nandini Ganesh enquired whether the law firm, Baker Small were receiving instructions from LBHF. Ian Heggs confirmed that they had suspended work with them immediately, as soon as the issues had come to light. The work was currently being handled by an in-house legal team and part of the workload had been absorbed from within the SEN team. The aim was to work increasingly more closely with parents through mediation and dispute resolution stage.

With reference to section 7 of the report, a member of the public sought clarity about the SEN information in the report. Ian Heggs clarified that the college offer would be different to a local offer. The different requirements were published on the website. There were examples of good practice and these would be looked at first during inspections. Referring again to the report and section 8, a member of the public asked how schools were being kept informed and Ian Heggs responded that a broad-brush letter was circulated to schools.

Fiona Phelps explained that a they were having conversations with key workers though emails and that they were also considering how to put information about the local offer up on the website. She went on to explain that there were complications about how to keep the information updated and that Richard Martin, was looking into options as to how to get it on the web and welcomed suggestions as to how this could be achieved.

Councillor Needham noted that there was health input into producing the EHCP and that health colleagues had not received the same access to training. She enquired how the issue about relationships with parents could be raised, and the lack of understanding about what need there was. Additionally, she asked how much more work was there to be done and were we doing it. Fiona Phelps responded that the process of being proactive has been challenging. The team included a clinical officer whose role was to support and health colleagues understand the requirements of the CFA. They were currently working with three CCGs and there remained a continuous need to remind them of what was needed. It was suggested that the Health and Wellbeing Board be approached to find a way to address this.

ACTION: CEPAC / HWB

Rachael Wright-Turner explained that it was not just about diagnosis or about helping health colleagues to understand and having that conversation with providers, which entailed a whole system change. Councillor Needham thanked officers for the report and commended the work under taken to date. She also suggested that a report should be provided addressing early years provision to the 0-5 years age group and to add this to the work program for next year.

ACTION: CEPAC

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

8. CARE-LEAVER ACCOMMODATION

Councillor Needham welcomed Nahar Chowdhury, Head of Housing Support and Anji McCormick, Head of Property Management, from Centrepont. Rachael Wright-Turner presented the report, setting out ambitions for semi-independent living (SIL) and the objectives (within budget and cost effective) that the service had to improve accommodation for young people. It had been a year into delivery with the provider, Centrepont, and contract mobilisation. Generally, they had been satisfied with the support Centrepont provided but there was clear evidence that work still needs to be done to manage repairs. It was explained that they were working closely with them redress performance indicators and identify new priorities.

Councillor Needham reported that , together with Nadia Taylor, had visited accommodation at two different sites, meeting with team workers and residents. Nahar Chowdhury explained that she was very positive about the improvement plan that had been agreed, acknowledging the complicated start to the contract, and which had been overcome with the actions being addressed. Generally positive feedback had been received but it was accepted that there were a number of areas to focus on. There were a number of added value services and service level agreement had been established on leaving care contracts.

Referring to the report, Andy Sutton, Looked after Children, Service Manager, highlighted fact that the addresses of the accommodation sites had been included in the report. Steve Miley, Director for Family Services, concurred that that the details be removed from report, as this had been made available in the public domain. Andy Sutton asked what arrangements were in place to hand off between Centrepont and other providers. Additionally, Councillor Caroline Ffiske enquired who was the landlord and owner of the building, and, who was the provider. It was clarified that in this instance, Centrepont was both the building owner and service provider. It was noted that the previous provider, Notting Hill Housing Association, had also owned the buildings, which they had managed and made repairs to, in addition to being the support provider. This was the contract that had been taken over by Centrepont.

Councillor Alan D'Ath congratulated Centrepont on the fact that they had recognised and responded to the concerns raised. It was very positive that young people were being actively encouraged to become involved and he anticipated that this would continue to be monitored. Rachael Wright-Turner welcomed the positive comments and commended Centrepont for the way in which they had responded.

Councillor Needham commented that the site visit had highlighted the issue of contact with the LBHF Youth Council and the 'Make Your Mark' consultation. The survey of youth hostels and venues within the care systems that were accessible for young people, was to be included in the consultation. Nadia Taylor thanked officers for arranging the visit, observing that this was very different from reading a report. Nahar Chowdhury responded that the provision was personalised service and that young adults were encouraged

to access. There were a number of different interventions, which, together with key workers, offered an added value service addressing a range of needs including health, education, training and employment.

Steve Miley commented that the Council would always seek to avoid locating young people in bed and breakfast accommodation whenever possible, with the intention to provide, safe, independent accommodation with adult supervision. It was acknowledged that this was not always possible, particularly where children had been excluded or could not safely interact with other young people. Steve Miley commented that this was about quality of support provided to young people and confirmed that currently, there were no young people housed in bed and breakfast accommodation. Councillor Needham observed that were there were young people with challenging behavior and that staff had exceeded their remit in identifying the right resources to support them.

Nadia Taylor referred to young people who could be identified as “Neets” (not in education, employment or training) and asked how they were identified. Steve Miley explained that 55% of young people in the borough were in either education or were employed and that part of the improvement plan was to identify ways with Centrepoint in which this could be increased. Nahar Chowdhury confirmed that there were a number of local activities but they were trying to improve figures against a background of complex and challenging factors. This was not dissimilar to the national picture. Additionally, they had also tried to improve the take up of virtual school. Each young person could have a learning assessment to establish learning levels, functional skills and the support required. This was all provided by Centrepoint as part of the added value service. Andy Sutton commented that having a list of accommodation addresses helped identify local support providers and that further work could be done in identifying them. Nahar Chowdhury commented that Centrepoint was not an inward facing organisation. They were nationally resourced and confirmed that they would be doing more to identify local providers. Councillor Needham commented that the virtual school contact was very positive and thanked officers for the report.

ACTION: CEPAC / Children’s Services / Centrepoint

RESOLVED

1. That the outlined Semi Independent living Accommodation provision for care leavers in Hammersmith and Fulham, be noted;
2. That the summarised headlines from Centrepoint’s annual Contract Performance Review, be noted; and
3. That the outlined future direction for the continued improvement of the delivery of the service and the proposed contract management process, be noted.

9. CHILDCARE TASK GROUP - FINAL UPDATE

Councillor Needham reiterated apologies on behalf of Councillor Elaine Chumnerly, Chair of the Childcare Task Group, who due to illness, was unable to attend the meeting and present the report herself. Councillor Needham invited Rosemarie Lawrence to present the report. As a Social Worker, she explained that she had moved from Family Services (Children Youth & Community) to health in April. They had been working with Open Objects, a local provider of digital service to the public health sector, specialising in social care and health. She outlined how they had already been working around the local offer to produce an easily identifiable and navigable website. The main priority was to identify what was already in the system. They were currently working to certify the accuracy of the information on the site and were confident as to how well this work was progressing. To illustrate, it was confirmed that there were 196 childminders registered within the borough. The aim was to work with providers to help maintain their own accounts online, which they could update themselves. There was also a forum planned for October which would include training opportunities. It was noted that Ofsted would also feed into the process so that this information could also be included in the site. It was thought to be working well but there was still some way to go.

Phillippa O'Driscoll, Westminster Diocesan Education Service Representative enquired what the future vision was for early years mental health provision. Rachael Wright-Turner explained that they were working with the CCGs to look at early intervention for mental health needs.

Councillor Ffiske enquired about integrated family support work and if this was a standalone area of work. Rachael Wright-Turner responded that they were looking at support services beneath underpinning family support, such as children's centres, youth centres, school nurseries and health visitors. They were seeking to move away from how services, comprising of numerous elements, were currently being delivered. The aim was to develop a more integrated system, to identify need early on, with less need for complicated elements. It was noted that there would be a Cabinet report available in early autumn on this.

Andy Sutton observed that the report covered a large number of areas but was good starting point from which to develop services in an open discussion. Councillor Needham thanked members of the task group for their valuable contribution and participation. She also thanked officers for supporting the task group in their work. The scope of the task groups remit was broad and a further update would be added to the work programme for a meeting in Autumn 2017.

ACTION: CEPAC

Councillor Needham noted that the June meeting would be considering a report on holiday play provision in the Borough. The provision of play schemes on estates this summer at short notice was commended and the intention to continue this provision during holiday periods was noted, with the possibility of extending this to include teens and adolescents.

ACTION: CEPAC / CHILDREN'S SERVICES

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on 21st November 2016.

Meeting started: 7.00 pm
Meeting ended: 8.51 pm

Chair

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