

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham
**Children and Education
Policy and Accountability
Committee
Minutes**



Tuesday 22 September 2020

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Sharon Holder (Chair), Alexandra Sanderson, Asif Siddique and Mark Loveday

Co-opted members: Eleanor Allen (London Diocesan Board for Schools), Nandini Ganesh (Parentsactive Representative), Matt Jenkins (Teacher Representative) and Nadia Taylor (Parent Governor Representative)

Other councillors

Councillor Larry Culhane (Cabinet Member for Children and Education)

Officers

Jacqui McShannon (Director of Children's Services)

Tony Burton (Head of Finance, Children's Services)

Mandy Lawson (AD SEND)

Jan Parnell (AD Education)

Bev Sharpe (AD Family Services)

Dr Nicola Lang (Director of Public Health)

Matthew Hooper (Chief Officer, Safer Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services)

Brenda Whinnett (Youth Voice Coordinator)

Gideon Springer (Strategic Lead for Safer Streets)

Ayesha Janju (Associate Director – Integration and Partnerships/Interim CCG

Children's Commissioning Manager)

Helen Green (Interim Head of Local Offer)

Satwinder Saraon (Head of SEND Development)

David Abbott (Head of Governance)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lucy Richardson.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Chair carried out a roll call to confirm attendance. Attendance is listed above. There were no declarations of interest.

3. **MINUTES**

Matters Arising

The Chair noted that updates on actions from the previous meeting had been circulated to members. Tony Burton then gave an update on the financial impact of Covid-19 on Children's Services.

Accuracy

Nandini Ganesh requested the following amendment to the minutes for item 3 (addition underlined):

"Nandini Ganesh noted that Parentsactive in partnership with the Local Authority ran remote sessions via Zoom with around 130 parents."

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 27th of July 2020 were approved as an accurate record.

4. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No public questions were received.

5. **THE FORMATION OF THE GANGS, VIOLENCE & EXPLOITATION UNIT**

Matthew Hooper introduced the report and noted that over the past 18 months the borough had seen an increase in serious youth violence, largely attributed to organised gang activity. In response to this, the Council made a decision in June 2020 to create a new gangs unit made up of gangs workers, anti-social behaviour coordinators, police officers, and analytical and research capacity.

Gideon Springer gave a presentation and the following key points were noted:

- The priorities for the unit were to keep people safe, prevent young people from being victimised and exploited by organised criminals, and tackle the fear of crime.
- H&F would fund Police Officers to work with specialist council staff to bring the full weight of criminal legislation to bear on gangs and gang leaders operating in the borough.
- The unit would deliver initiatives to engage with and divert vulnerable young people away from gangs, violence and exploitation.
- The unit consisted of 11 H&F employed officers and 6 Metropolitan Police Officers (17 FTEs). The total annual cost of the unit was £983,000.

Councillor Mark Loveday noted that the committee had held a meeting on serious youth violence in November 2018 and at that time members were told that the borough was ranked fairly low for serious youth violence in London. He asked if the picture had really changed so much in two years. Matthew Hooper explained that the killing of a young man in 2019 had led to a number of revenge attacks and killings between rival gangs.

Councillor Loveday asked what the 11 FTEs in the new gangs unit would be doing differently to what was being done before. Gideon Springer said it was more an issue of capacity. The Youth Offending team have had some challenges with the number of young people who are repeat offenders. The unit wanted to spend more time with them, work with them in a trauma informed way, and intervene earlier (at 11 or 12 years old).

Councillor Loveday asked officers to clarify if the gangs unit posts were entirely new posts or if they were posts transferred from the Youth Offending team. Matthew Hooper said the 11 new posts would be doing additional work over and above the statutory work of the Youth Offending team.

Councillor Loveday asked how the new posts were being funded. Matthew Hooper said funding for the team was from an aggregation of S106 funds allocated for community safety.

Councillor Loveday asked what the metrics for success were. Matthew Hooper said there were some metrics in 3.1 and 3.2 of the report. Councillor Loveday felt the targets were too broad and commented that without clear targets the Council couldn't effectively monitor the unit's performance.

Eleanor Allen asked how the Covid-19 pandemic had impacted the way they worked with young people. Gideon Springer said police statistics had shown that certain types of crimes had increased during the lockdown. Youth Offending Service and Children's Services colleagues had changed their operating model due to the pandemic.

Councillor Asif Siddique asked if it would be more cost effective to work across boroughs. Gideon Springer said he was keen to work with police colleagues across the Central West Basic Command Unit (BCU). The unit had links with other teams across borough boundaries. Matthew Hooper added that they would be working closely with Met Police. The Met had placed their gangs unit into a council office with a larger team of council officers to work productively with young people – 'a first for the borough' and a 'meaningful investment'.

Bev Sharpe said her team had worked closely with the unit too and she was positive about the impact it could have. The earlier we can intervene the better for their future. She added that while working during Covid-19 the Youth Offending service had maintained contact – with a mix of both in-person visits and remote check-ins.

Councillor Alexandra Sanderson said she was very pleased that the unit has been created – it was the Council's duty to protect young people. She asked if there was a way for communities and ward councillors to assist the unit. Gideon Springer said a

key part of their role was to work with communities and they intended to develop relationships to increase the offer for young people.

Councillor Larry Culhane (Cabinet Member for Children and Education) welcomed the creation of the Gangs, Violence & Exploitation and said the Council was committed to protecting the borough's young people. He thanked everyone involved for their efforts setting the unit up.

Councillor Sue Fennimore, Deputy Leader, addressed the committee and made the following points:

- The Council was proud to have Gideon Springer, who used to be Borough Commander, lead the unit.
- The fundamental challenge was to tackle organised drug gangs that subjected the borough's young people to coercion, grooming, and violence.
- The Council was committed to working closely with the police and was hugely grateful for their support.
- The primary goal was to make sure young people were kept safe – to do everything we can to divert them away from criminal activity and provide routes out of crime. The Council was also committed to going after the people who are responsible for the violence and exploitation.

Nandini Ganesh asked if the 'safe place' scheme was still in operation in the borough. Gideon Springer said he would speak to police colleagues and see if it was still in operation.

Summary

The Chair summarised the discussion and noted the following actions:

- Gideon Springer to circulate the presentation slides
- Gideon Springer to check whether the 'safe place' scheme was still in operation in the borough.
- The Chair to meet with the new team's leadership to discuss the recommendations and points raised at the public meeting in 2018.
- The Committee requested a progress update on the work of the unit and the impact they were having on serious youth violence in the borough (to be scheduled).

6. UPDATE ON THE SKIDS STUDY - COVID-19 IN SCHOOLS

Dr Nicola Lang, Director of Public Health, presented the report and the following points were noted:

- Five of the borough's primary schools took part in the study – selected because over three quarters of the pupils were BAME.
- Public Health England commended the borough on the speed that it signed up schools to the study.
- The testing consisted of a swab and blood test.
- At the time of reporting, all schools had negative tests.

Dr Lang informed the committee that taking part in the study contributed to the national evidence which informed the thinking of the National Medical Officer – specifically that schools were considered low risk settings. She added the caveat that schools mirrored community outcomes – so as cases rose in the community it followed that cases would rise in schools, but community outbreaks weren't driven by infections in schools.

Dr Lang noted that the borough had been offered places for secondary schools on 'sKIDS plus' with two schools already signed up.

Councillor Mark Loveday thanked Dr Lang for the excellent work that had been done over recent months. He asked if there had been any positive swabs since the study had concluded. Dr Lang said there had been a small number of positive tests which was to be expected as cases rose in the wider community. Schools reflected the national picture.

Councillor Larry Culhane (Cabinet Member for Children and Education) thanked Dr Lang and the Public Health team for being a 'huge friend to schools'. He noted that most schools in the borough had stayed open throughout the pandemic to educate the children of key workers and vulnerable children. The Public Health team had been a huge support to them and a credit to the borough.

Councillor Alexandra Sanderson said it was humbling to see how many people have worked so hard to make sure children could get their education. She asked if officers were anticipating a lag in testing in October. Dr Lang said there shouldn't be a lag as they had moved to a new digital system.

Matt Jenkins asked if the Council had any way to provide PPE to disadvantaged students given schools didn't have the budget for it. Dr Lang said there wasn't a need for children to wear PPE in schools, unless they had certain specific needs, due to the social distancing measures in place. She regularly met with headteachers and said they hadn't raised it as an issue.

Mandy Lawson noted that the SEND team had been working very closely with schools since the beginning of the pandemic. They have provided guidance to schools and worked with special schools on PPE requirements as they required an enhanced level of PPE. She added that the Council did have a mechanism to support schools with PPE through its supply chains if required.

Summary

The Chair thanked Dr Lang and the Public Health team for their hard work.

7. SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE'S EMOTIONAL WELLBEING IN H&F DURING LOCKDOWN AND BEYOND

Mandy Lawson (AD SEND) presented the report with Ayesha Janju (CCG, Children's Commissioning) and Satwinder Saraon (SEND Development) and the following points were noted:

- National data from ‘Young Minds’ showed that the pandemic had a significant impact on young people’s mental health.
- Hammersmith and Fulham had a multi-tiered set of services that catered to young people with a variety of needs. Some of these services were delivered through community grants, some were paid for by the Council, some were commissioned jointly, and some were delivered or commissioned by the NHS.
- Through the pandemic, mental health services had been prioritising higher priority urgent referrals – managing those young people deemed most at risk.
- The Youth Council had been producing youth focused communications on Covid-19.
- Services were now focused on normalising delivery as much as possible, using a mix of remote technology and in-person contacts.

Mandy Lawson noted that the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) taking place at the moment would provide a much richer set of data about the borough’s mental health needs.

Nandini Ganesh asked if most of the services went up to 18. Mandy Lawson said most went to 18. There was a Mencap transition worker to resolve issues in transition from Children’s Services to Adult Social Care.

Nandini Ganesh asked if the programmes highlighted, like Trailblazers, were time limited. Ayesha Janju said Trailblazers had only been running for a short while and the Covid-19 pandemic had delayed some of their plans to expand. But they wanted to improve access to these programmes – they were running seminars with GPs to increase awareness. A plan was in action to help them meet their targets.

Nandini Ganesh made the point that after the pandemic is over, support for mental health will be key. She asked if Family Support and H&F Mind had the requisite expertise in SEN. Ayesha Janju said, currently, the mental health support teams didn’t have enough SEN experience. They have requested that NHS England put workers in place to tackle more specialisms though like neuro-divergent people and SEN. Mandy Lawson added that a complex behaviour support service was being developed for children with autism and learning disabilities.

Councillor Mark Loveday, noting some of the concerns around H&F Mind’s performance, asked if officers had considered splitting contracts with other providers like OCD Action. Ayesha Janju said they weren’t worried about Mind’s performance - it was felt they were doing quite well given the circumstances. They faced significant recruitment challenges – but that was an issue for providers across the sector. Mind had a ‘solid’ plan to address these issues but they would be interested in linking up with other organisations like OCD Action.

Councillor Alexandra Sanderson requested an explainer of mental health provision aimed at councillors.

ACTION: Mandy Lawson / Satwinder Saraon

Councillor Sanderson asked if there were particular demographics that were harder to reach or promote services to. Mandy Lawson said that information wasn’t currently being collated in one place – but the JSNA would provide that data. She added that if

officers thought a particular group was underrepresented then they would try to reach out and redress the balance.

Councillor Sanderson said it would be good to understand what happened to people after they were seen. She had received casework where people were discharged too early, or had needs that couldn't be addressed etc. Ayesha Janju said the providers would have that information.

Councillor Sanderson asked if support was in place for families where a parent was in crisis. Bev Sharpe said there were a number of agencies to refer on to in those cases and staff knew how to access that support.

Councillor Asif Siddique asked if these services were properly resourced and if the services could cope with an increase after the pandemic.

Mandy Lawson said it was recognised that young people had been affected by the pandemic. She felt there was a good amount of services in place but the way they worked together could be improved. The key going forward would be targeting support in the right places and the JSNA would help with that.

Eleanor Allen asked what arts and leisure activities were on offer and if they needed to be expanded. Mandy Lawson said there was a wide range of services but she would come back with the exact offer. The challenge through the pandemic was adapting services to work with the restrictions imposed.

ACTION: Mandy Lawson

The Chair asked if there were plans to promote the offer. Mandy Lawson said the offer was promoted through the local offer platform, the H&F website, and other venues – but it would be further developed and promoted using the data from the JSNA.

Summary

The Chair summarised the discussion and requested an update on the learning outcomes from the JSNA in the new year.

8. YOUTH COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT

Jan Parnell (AD Education), Brenda Whinnett (Youth Voice Coordinator), and Helen Green (Interim Head of Local Offer) gave a presentation and the following points were noted:

- At the start of the year there had been a major Youth Council recruitment drive and they were gearing up for elections when the pandemic hit.
- Despite the restrictions imposed by the pandemic the Youth Council have remained active. They have focused on getting information relevant to young people out in an accessible way and have made videos on impact of Covid-19 on young people and their mental health.
- They have also been working to make the Youth Council more inclusive and have a big event planned for next week involving the Youth Council, the

Children in Care Council, the Young H&F Foundation, Health Watch and other youth focused services.

Nandini Ganesh said she was pleased to see the SEND work the Youth Council had been doing – her son was taking part and very happy to be involved in the Council.

Councillor Larry Culhane (Cabinet Member for Children and Education) thanked Brenda Whinnett and Helen Green for their hard work – ensuring that a wide range of young people were playing an active role in shaping the borough. The Chair echoed the Cabinet Member's remarks and asked to continue to be involved in the Youth Council's work going forward.

9. RETURN TO SCHOOL UPDATE

Jan Parnell gave a short update on the return to school following the lockdown.

She highlighted the tremendous amount of work that took place ahead of schools going back – from teachers and school staff, the Council's education team, and volunteers from the civic response. The borough had provided a wide range of activities to over 3000 children and young people over the summer. The activities were targeted to the most vulnerable children to get them ready to come back to school in September. She reported that all schools in the borough were now fully open.

The Education team had been in regular communication with headteachers throughout the pandemic. They had supported them with guidance, interpreting the 292 separate documents schools had received from the Department for Education since March. Despite major challenge over the Summer, testing was now in place for teachers and young adults. The team had also worked with schools to put a recovery curriculum in place which focused on reading and helped schools adapt to a new world of blended learning – incorporating online and face-to-face teaching.

Jan Parnell reported that H&F remained a popular location for newly qualified teachers and the team had been hosting networking events for them.

Councillor Mark Loveday asked for more information on the recent outbreak at Queens Manor School. Jan Parnell said there had been some small outbreaks – a single positive case in a secondary school and now three primaries each had a single child testing positive. Schools had been very good at containing the spread of the virus.

Councillor Loveday asked how many cases would trigger the closing of a school. Jan Parnell said the goal was to keep all schools open. They were already working in bubbles as per the guidance from the DfE. The DfE had a helpline to give guidance to teachers and provide advice on who to send home etc. There was also support available from Public Health and an online system was in place to track cases.

Councillor Larry Culhane gave his thanks to Jan Parnell for her team's support to schools, to schools themselves for their 'Herculean' effort over recent months, and to parents and families who played a huge role in that success.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for the 9th of November 2020.

Meeting started: 6.30 pm
Meeting ended: 9.00 pm

Chair

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