

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

# Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes



Tuesday 19 July 2022

## **PRESENT**

**Committee members:** Councillors Helen Rowbottom (Chair), Daryl Brown, Mercy Umeh, Lucy Richardson and Aliya Afzal-Khan

**Co-opted members:** Eleanor Allen (London Diocesan Board for Schools) and Nandini Ganesh (Parentsactive Representative)

### **Other Councillors:**

Councillor Alexandra Sanderson (Cabinet Member for Children and Education)

### **Officers:**

Jacqui McShannon (Strategic Director of Children's Services)

Amana Gordon (Operational Director, Children and Young Peoples Service)

Peter Haylock (Director of Education)

Marcus Robinson (Programme Lead, Children's Services)

Sarah Bright (Assistant Director – Children's Commissioning)

Brenda Whinnett (Youth Voice Coordinator)

Jo Pymont (Assistant Director, Performance and Improvement)

Tony Burton (Head of Finance for Children's Services and Education)

Rhea Gardener (Clerk)

## **1. APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS**

### **RESOLVED**

The Committee agreed the appointment of Eleanor Allen, Nandini Ganesh, Nadia Taylor, and Matt Jenkins as co-opted members for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

## **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Nadia Taylor and Matt Jenkins.

### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **4. MINUTES**

#### **RESOLVED**

The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 31 January 2022 as an accurate record.

### **5. COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE (TO NOTE)**

The Committee noted the terms of reference.

### **6. YOUTH VOICE UPDATE - JULY 2022**

Brenda Whinnett (Youth Voice Coordinator) presented the Youth Voice update report. She informed members there had been a newly elected Youth Cabinet following elections in March. She gave an overview of the work of the Youth Cabinet and Youth Council. She noted that they had identified four areas of focus for their manifesto:

- Staying Safe
- Life-skills
- Work experience and employment opportunities
- Mental health and emotional wellbeing.

The Youth Council would be working with a range of professionals to take their priorities forward over the year.

Brenda Whinnett informed members of the planned Takeover Challenge Day scheduled for November 2022. The event would give young people a wide range of different challenges and opportunities to give their views, ideas, and feedback in fun and creative ways. Young people's views would then be fed into the policies and practices within Children Services and the wider Council.

Nandini Ganesh asked if the Youth Council meetings would be accessible for those with special educational needs and disabilities. Brenda Whinnett said the meetings would continue to be accessible. They had done training with young people on inclusion to ensure their meetings and events were accessible to as many people as possible. Brenda Whinnett added that she had been working closely with special schools in the borough, holding sessions with young people there to ensure they felt comfortable engaging with Youth Council meetings.

Brenda Whinnett said she would share the Youth Council's draft manifesto with members and a more detailed plan at the end of September 2022.

**ACTION: Brenda Whinnett**

The Chair and members thanked Brenda Whinnett for her work with the Youth Council.

## **7. OFSTED FOCUSED VISIT - JANUARY 2022**

Amana Gordon (Operational Director, Children and Young Peoples Service) presented the item on the Ofsted focused visit that took place on 19 and 20 January 2022. The visit focused on the effectiveness of the Council's services and arrangements of the Front Door including:

- Arrangements of Early Help
- Contact and referrals
- Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and shared services
- Thresholds for statutory interventions
- Effectiveness of supervision and management oversight
- Quality assurance and performance management

Amana Gordon said the inspectors felt the visit had been overwhelmingly positive with many strengths and some exemplary practice displayed. The main area of improvement related to social work caseloads in the child assessment service. In response to this the services had put together a business case for additional resource to address capacity and ensure more effective service delivery. Support had already been secured for significant additional resource and preparations for recruitment of a fourth Front Door team were underway.

Nandini Ganesh asked if the inspectors had spoken with families and children and if so, what process was followed to select those families. Amana Gordon said the inspectors were given a list of all Front Door cases and they selected a sample to evaluate. The service would then arrange sessions for the families to meet with inspectors and provide feedback.

Nandini Ganesh and Councillor Mercy Umeh asked for more information on the fourth Front Door team and the impact on casework. Amana Gordon said the addition of a fourth team would reduce the number of cases for each social worker and allow them to be more effective.

Councillor Umeh asked how families were supported through the assessment process. Amana Gordon said it could be difficult for families to recognise they needed social work intervention and there were statutory processes the service had to follow. Social workers did their best to explain the process and options to families, but families also had the option to request independent advocacy.

Councillor Aliya Afzal-Khan asked what additional resources had been identified and what support was available to social workers when under pressure. Amana Gordon said support for social workers was given by senior management through supervision and there was a clinical team that provided support and practice workshops.

The Chair asked how recruitment for the new Front Door team would be managed considering shortages in the sector. Amana Gordon said recruiting social workers was a challenge, but she said it was beneficial to be able to recruit the whole team at once – it showed significant investment by the Council and a commitment to reducing caseloads. The goal was to recruit permanently rather than rely on short-term locums. The Chair suggested officers work with the Business Intelligence team on predictive modelling to support recruitment and caseload management.

**ACTION: Amana Gordon**

Councillor Afzal-Khan asked what percentage of H&F's social workers lived in the borough. Jacqui McShannon (Strategic Director of Children's Services) said there was a West London Step Up to social work programme which encouraged social workers to train with West London authorities and then apply for jobs in West London authorities.

Councillor Afzal-Khan asked what percentage of the services were delivered remotely. Amana Gordon said the nature of social work services meant they couldn't be delivered remotely. Some check-ins between visits could be done online but that hadn't replaced in-person contact.

The Chair summed up the discussion and thanked officers for their report.

## **8. SUMMER IN THE CITY 2022 - SUMMER ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

Peter Haylock (Director of Education) and Marcus Robinson (Programme Lead, Children's Services) presented the item on the Summer in the City programme. Peter Haylock noted that it was the second year of the programme that provided free holiday activities and events for children aged 4 to 18 (and up to 25 years for those with additional needs) during the summer holidays.

Marcus Robinson gave an overview of last year's programme. It had covered five weeks and during that time around 16,000 meals were served and over 70% of children eligible for free school meals attended. 439 hours of food and nutrition education had been provided and 2293 hours of activities had been delivered.

Marcus Robinson then gave an overview of the 2022 delivery plan. He noted that over 16,000 sessions were planned across five weeks. The programme had been promoted through the Council's website, online advertisements, social media, banners displayed around the borough, video screens, and targeted promotion through schools and Council teams. The providers delivering the sessions had also done their own direct promotion and engagement with families.

Marcus Robinson noted that in addition to the Summer in the City programme, the Council would be working with schools to distribute grocery vouchers worth £45 each for children eligible for free school meals and other vulnerable children. Through the Council's partnership with Magic Breakfast, officers were also working with primary schools and nurseries to provide deliveries of breakfast boxes to vulnerable families.

Councillor Lucy Richardson welcomed the programme and asked how officers ensured it didn't go over capacity. Marcus Robinson said a smaller programme of events had been run during previous school holidays to which gave an insight into the level of demand. There were also some contingencies in place if there is a sudden increase in demand.

The Chair thanked officers for their work on the programme. She thought it would be valuable for some elements of the programme to run throughout the year and suggested officers look into corporate sponsorships to support it.

**ACTION: Peter Haylock / Marcus Robinson**

**9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The Committee noted the following dates of future meetings:

- 21 November 2022
- 30 January 2023
- 27 March 2023

Meeting started: 7.00 pm  
Meeting ended: 8.45 pm

**Chair** .....

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