

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes



Monday 21 November 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), Nandini Ganesh (Parentsactive Representative) and Nadia Taylor (Parent Governor Representative)

Officers

Jacqui McShannon (Strategic Director of Children's Services)
Amana Gordon (Operational Director, Children and Young Peoples Service)
Peter Haylock (Operational Director for Education and SEND)
David Abbott (Head of Governance)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Matt Jenkins and Alex Sanderson (Cabinet Member for Children and Education).

Councillor Aliya Afzal-Khan, Eleanor Allen, and Nandini Ganesh attended the meeting remotely.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

Councillor Aliya Afzal-Khan requested the following addition to the minutes under Item 8:

“Councillor Afzal-Khan observed that a majority of the 16,000 summer activity sessions were planned in the North and central part of the borough despite the fact that South Fulham had many young families and housing estates, as well as schools, parks, and the Sands End Art & Community Centre as possible venues where sessions could be delivered. Marcus Robinson accepted there were good venues in South Fulham, made a note of the discrepancy and said that future plans would ensure a more equitable distribution of session venues across the Borough.”

Members agreed the amendment.

Peter Haylock (Operational Director for Education and SEND) noted that officers were working on the winter school holidays programme and had secured 3690 places, with 41% in the south of borough. Councillor Aliya Afzal-Khan thanked officers for the update.

RESOLVED

The minutes of the previous meeting, with the amendment noted above, were agreed as an accurate record.

4. YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE INSPECTION OUTCOME

The Chair congratulated the team for their work delivering, what the inspectors judged to be, a ‘confident and capable service’.

Jacqui McShannon (Strategic Director of Children’s Services) introduced the item on the inspection of the Youth Justice Service. She said the Council welcomed the positive outcome and noted that it was a credit to the frontline professionals in the service and their skill, expertise, and perseverance. She also paid tribute to the service’s community partners who enabled a rich extended offer. She added that Hammersmith & Fulham was one of only two local authorities in London with an overall rating of ‘outstanding’ and that should be celebrated.

Amana Gordon (Operational Director, Children and Young Peoples Service) presented the report and discussed the inspections recommendations. One area for improvement was around volunteer training. During Covid it was done online but there were plans in place to return to a hybrid model and improve engagement.

Councillors congratulated officers on the inspection outcome.

Councillor Aliya Afzal-Khan, in reference to recommendation 3, asked for more information about the disproportionality mentioned. She also asked what was being done to address diversity needs. Amana Gordon said there was an over-representation of black and mixed-heritage boys in the service, though it was broadly in line with the general population going by the latest census data. There were also a significant number of young people with special educational needs and disabilities. Officers were working on that area with the Education team.

The Chair asked what data other than stop-and-search data was being used to determine over-representation and how it compared with other areas. Amana

Gordon said stop-and-search data was difficult to work with because it wasn't broken down in the right way. It was a priority for the partnership though and officers were working with police colleagues to resolve this problem. Jacqui McShannon added that, through the Community Safety Partnership, officers had challenged the police to provide that data.

The Chair asked how Councillors could support officers to move this forward – and suggested a note from the Committee. Amana Gordon said that would be helpful. She added that officers were also working with community voice on the impact of stop-and-search and how traumatic it was for children. She said it was effective for police officers and children to speak to each other about their experiences.

The Chair, in reference to recommendation 2, asked if the Youth Justice service had benchmarking data. Amana Gordon felt the inspection didn't reflect the service as well as it should have. The inspectors were specifically looking for data analysis, but practice had moved on. Officers were planning to reflect this back to them.

Councillor Lucy Richardson asked if the mentors were in house or agency. Amana Gordon said they used a range of third sector organisations to serve different needs like education or criminal exploitation.

Councillor Richardson asked if the issue with volunteer training staff was purely due to Covid or if there were other issues. Amana Gordon said it was to do with Covid. The volunteers wanted to get back to face-to-face meetings. The training record before Covid was strong and officers were confident it had already been addressed.

The Chair asked if the gangs unit was new since the previous inspection. Jacqui McShannon said it was and it worked closely with the service and community-based partners. It was focused on developing community resilience and capacity.

A resident attending the meeting noted that she had picked up a lot of initiatives in the report that she wasn't previously aware of. The Chair asked officers to think about how to disseminate this work to community leaders – in residents' meetings for example.

ACTION: Jacqui McShannon / Amana Gordon

Councillor Daryl Brown asked about the age range of the young people in the service. Jacqui McShannon said it ranged from 10 to 18 years old, the national criminal age of responsibility.

Councillor Mercy Umeh congratulated officers for their hard work and said she was happy to see co-production pay off.

Councillor Richardson discussed signposting young people at risk and suggested putting materials on the Council's website for parents or teachers who were worried about someone. Amana Gordon said there were resources on the website already and she offered to share them with the Committee.

ACTION: Amana Gordon

Nandini Ganesh asked if the inspection looked at the role of schools. Amana Gordon said it looked at education routes for children. Amana Gordon and Peter Haylock (Director of Education) worked closely to ensure there was a good education offer available – and alternative provision when necessary.

Nadia Taylor asked about peer mentoring and if there were any opportunities for the Youth Council or Youth Parliament to mentor young people.

Jacqui McShannon said mentoring was a rich offer – the service tried to ensure it was listening to young people. She said it might not be appropriate to match them with the Youth Council. They were mainly interested in people who had been through the system themselves.

RESOLVED

1. The Committee noted the outcome of the inspection and the five recommendations made by HMIP to support continuous improvement of our delivery.
2. The Committee asked officers to consider how they could disseminate the good practice from the inspection report into local communities.

5. CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD REVIEW

Amana Gordon (Operational Director, Children and Young Peoples Service) presented the report on last year's review of the Corporate Parenting Board. The goal of the review was to strengthen direct engagement and consultation with young people and to ensure that it continued to meet its desired aims and objectives.

The Chair noted that she was a member of the Board and said how valuable it was to hear directly from engaged young people about their views and experiences.

Councillor Aliya Afzal-Khan spoke about peer mentoring and suggested the more mature young people could become mentors.

The Chair asked for examples of practical changes stemming from the review. Amana Gordon said the health offer had changed following feedback from young people. The health assessments for care experienced children would be seen in the community where possible and would be more bespoke to their individual needs. Jacqui McShannon gave the example of the Care Leavers Hub – young people had asked for a centre to go to and it was being brought to life in early 2023.

Amana Gordon spoke about how important it was to hear from a diverse set of voices at the Board. Officers wanted to ensure that everyone was given an opportunity to engage.

Jacqui McShannon updated members on the Children in Care awards ceremony that took place recently. The event was developed in co-production with young people,

and she felt it created a real sense of community and was an example of genuine corporate parenting.

The Chair and Councillor Afzal-Khan attended and noted the joyful atmosphere and the importance of sharing success stories.

RESOLVED

The Committee noted the redesign of Corporate Parenting Board and provided scrutiny and challenge of the impact and outcomes of the Board in future.

6. THE LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

Peter Haylock (Operational Director for Education and SEND) presented the item on the Hammersmith and Fulham Learning Partnership which was created to provide an enduring collaboration between schools and the wider community, cultural and business interests to deliver an excellent education that is exciting, challenging, and fit for the moment.

Eleanor Allen asked if the Partnership would think about providing subject specific support. She noted that in the past there were subject advisors available to support teachers. Peter Haylock said there wasn't enough funding for subject specific advisors, so the Partnership delivered subject specific professional development, including having national experts in to deliver targeted sessions to staff. Jacqui McShannon said they were also helping to create peer-to-peer support – acting as a broker between schools with different specialisms that could complemented each other.

Councillor Aliya Afzal-Khan asked how many schools were members. She also asked what incentive there was for schools to work together then they were in competition for students. Peter Haylock said the response had been positive so far. This was the first term of it so more data would come in over time. He added that the school community in the borough was very supportive.

Nandini Ganesh asked if schools paid to be members. Peter Haylock explained that it was free this year but the department's capacity to provide free services would stop when the Government grant funding ended early next year. The intention was that it would become part of a traded offer that schools buy in to.

A school governor in attendance said they supported the Partnership. Their only concern was money – it was a major challenge for schools.

Councillor Lucy Richardson discussed the SEND aspects of the Partnership and felt it was an exciting opportunity for schools to collaborate. Peter Haylock said they offered 'ask us' sessions where members of staff or SENCOs could book a call to discuss specific issues and then the service could target resources around that issue.

Councillor Afzal-Khan asked if it was possible for schools to share sports and transport facilities through the Partnership. She also discussed the possibility of

engaging local private schools. Peter Haylock said the goal of the Partnership was to provide support, advice and guidance to teachers. Though the Partnership did have a school games coordinator who supported primary sports activities.

The Chair noted that there were a lot of institutions in the borough with great facilities including the big football clubs and schools like Latimer and Godolphin. She felt the Council could play a coordinating role if a need was identified. She asked for a discussion with officers around this.

ACTION: Councillor Rowbottom / Peter Haylock

RESOLVED

That the Committee noted and commented on the report.

7. SUMMER IN THE CITY DELIVERY REPORT

Peter Haylock (Operational Director for Education and SEND) presented the report on the Summer in the City programme of free holiday activities and food for school aged children. The programme provided engaging activities, physical activity, and nutrition education. The 2022 programme saw high levels of engagement and a lot of positive feedback from parents from families. Peter Haylock thanked the Children's Services commissioning team and 'Let Me Play' for their fantastic work.

The Chair thanked officers for their work. Then she asked if there were any surprises during the programme. Peter Haylock said the rowing offer from Fulham Reach Boat Club was really positive, with children from previous years coming back to help.

Councillor Aliya Afzal-Khan said it was a fantastic initiative and added that she hoped information went out to schools on time so free school meals and pupil premium children could be targeted. A school governor attending the meeting said schools did receive information early and turnout was good. Peter Haylock added that the programme was also targeted through the Children and Young People's team as well as promotional signs and posters around borough.

Nandini Ganesh asked if the programme extended to 25-year-olds with SEND. Peter Haylock said it was mostly for school aged children, but officers could consider a more formalised offer for young adults with SEND in future years.

ACTION: Peter Haylock

RESOLVED

That the Committee noted and commented on the report.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The following dates of future meetings were noted:

- 30 January 2023
- 27 March 2023

Meeting started: 7.00 pm
Meeting ended: 8.54 pm

Chair

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