

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham



Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes

Monday 11 November 2024

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Helen Rowbottom (Chair), Daryl Brown, Trey Campbell-Simon and Aliya Afzal-Khan

Co-opted members: Nandini Ganesh (Parentsactive Representative) and Nadia Taylor (Parent Governor Representative)

Other Councillors: Councillor Alex Sanderson (Deputy Leader)

Young People in attendance

Miss Ealaf Malnajar, Member, Youth Parliament

Mr Albi Fenner, Youth Mayor

Miss Precisa Getsevich, Deputy Youth Mayor

Miss Mahika Chandrashekar, Member, Youth Council

Guests:

Natasha Patten (Designated Clinical Officer, Northwest London Integrated Care Board)

Officers:

Jacqui McShannon (Executive Director of People)

Peter Haylock (Operation Director of Education and SEND)

Brenda Whinnett (Youth Voice Co-ordinator, Education & SEND)

Alistair Ayres (Head of Programmes, Children's Services)

Debbie Yau (Committee Coordinator)

1. INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed everyone and led a round of introduction with attendance listed above.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mercy Umeh. Councillor Trey Campbell-Simon and Nandini Ganesh attended remotely.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Trey Campbell-Simon who was attending the meeting for the first time. She also thanked outgoing Councillor Lucy Richardson and Eleanor Allen for their past contributions.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2024 were agreed to be an accurate record.

5. YOUTH VOICE

Brenda Whinnett (Youth Voice Co-ordinator, Education & SEND) introduced the four young people and highlighted that they had done a lot of work together in the last one and a half years which were detailed in the report.

Ealaf Malnajar (Member, Youth Parliament representing Hammersmith and Fulham) said her time with the Youth Council had enabled her to develop herself personally while striving to make changes and strengthen impact on young people. She said that the Youth Council had worked to ensure youth voices were heard and policy measures targeting at young people were co-produced to meet their needs. She then introduced the evidence-based inclusive research project.

Albi Fenner (Youth Mayor) was grateful for the opportunities to enhance the youth voice at the borough. He elaborated the multiple methods used under the evidence-based inclusive research including hosting events like Summer in the City and reaching out to young people at different places like schools.

Precisa Getsevich (Deputy Youth Mayor) said through her role, she had come into a lot of different opportunities. She highlighted that in deciding the actions needed based on the inclusive research, they had held many meetings in a long and busy year with the strategic leads and drive forward the priorities for further actions.

Mahika Chandrashekar (Member, Youth Council) shared her aspiration of being a member of the Youth Council and making changes to many young people's lives in the borough. She, Ealaf Malnajar and Albi Fenner outlined the priorities and identified actions in the areas of mental health, work readiness, life skills and staying safe, enlisting the respective leading departments, strategic leads and key partners. Precisa Getsevich then shared the key performance indicators for each of the priority areas, followed by the progress summary outlined by Mahika.

On planned next steps, Ealaf Malnajar highlighted, among others, the launch of the co-produced Youth Hub and the roll-out of the healthy relationship podcast event on 5 December and invited all interested members to join. She added that the Youth Council had a very busy programme of events over the next few months which would involve as many young people as inclusively possible and help them make informed decisions.

The Chair appreciated their impressive presentation in particular the display of emotional maturity and creativity in problem-solving. Councillor Daryl Brown echoed and said being a teacher, she was impressed by all of them who should continue these amazing abilities of being fantastic speakers even after leaving the roles. Nadia Taylor added that they earned the praise and were inspirational to their peers in displaying much confidence in addressing a formal forum this evening. She encouraged them to continue in the journey which might be the beginning of a worth-pursuing career. Nadia also sent credits to Brenda Whinnett who had coached and helped them develop.

Appreciating the young people's lots of effort put in preparing the report and this meeting, Brenda Whinnett said she had witnessed the progression in the past one and half decade and now it became a Council-wide approach for departments across to embed youth voice and engage in co-production with young people.

The Chair asked about their reflections on improvements seen so far. Ealaf Malnajar responded that having been a member for three years, the Youth Council which used to rely on itself and Brenda/the Youth Voice Coordinator was now having more interconnection with the rest of the H&F Council and interacting with councillors and key officers. It was encouraging and important to see that the youth voice had really been integrated within decision-making of different departments. Mahika Chandrashekar noted that members of the Youth Council also became relying less on Brenda/the Youth Voice Coordinator in developing independent ideas. Albi Fenner agreed with the observation and said that now more members were turning up at meetings, with some even joined physically to express their opinions and make their voices heard.

Nandini Ganesh was concerned about the representation of young people with disability in the Youth Council. Brenda Whinnett highlighted the inclusivity approach throughout the process and the use of multi-methods to capture all the different youth voices including reaching out to young people in special schools and Action on Disability. She stressed that some of the disabilities might not be visible and the Youth Council was becoming increasingly diverse as a result of the inclusivity approach.

Councillor Aliya Afzal-Khan congratulated all on co-producing such a fantastic and streamlined programme with focused and critical priority areas. She also appreciated the young people's passion, belief and ownership about their work. She sought elaboration about the "Best for You" (West London Mental Health Website). Mahika Chandrashekar explained that the co-produced Website had taken into account young people's opinion expressed at the meetings and after some tweaking,

the “Best for You” website would be easily accessible and simple to read and understand.

Councillor Afzal-Khan asked about H&F Works under the priority area of Work Readiness. Precisa Getsevich agreed with the importance of job access for H&F youth who could start to learn from H&F Works some basic skills like finding a job and preparing the CVs/interviews. Ealaf Malnajar highlighted that the young people could learn about local opportunities from the “Best for You” website and get online support tailored to young people for example mental health videos created in collaboration with the NHS.

The Chair believed the initiatives would form part of the industrial strategy and apprenticeships. Brenda Whinnett referred to the close collaboration with the Economy and together they had created a co-produced youth focus section linked to H&F Works with a view to ensuring that young people in the borough could access the lots of local opportunities around.

Brenda Whinnett noted that a Youth Hub page under development would be accessible from the Family Hubs webpage and linked to the four priority areas including mental health and work readiness (linked to H&F Works). The Youth Hub would be launched as part of the event on 5 December together with the healthy relationship podcasts series. The Chair was keen to ensure information related to the event on 5 December be circulated to the Committee and made widely known among the small and medium businesses and universities in the borough to get the biggest exposure.

NOTE: Flyers and invites for the event have been circulated to Committee members on 22 November 2024

RESOLVED

That the Committee agreed:

1. To note the efforts of the Youth Council and positive outcomes for young people toward the actions identified.
2. To note how the young people’s identified priorities are effectively integrated into broader council targets.

6. OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SEND IN HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM

Peter Haylock (Operational Director for Education and SEND) updated the Committee on the positive outcomes for children and young people with SEND across Hammersmith & Fulham (H&F). He highlighted the key to SEND education was a strong local partnership. Local Area Partnership had recently after detailed surveys and research co-produced the SEND outcome framework with children and young people who identified a clear set of priorities. He then briefed members on some of the positive outcomes, such as the significant increase in new birth visits, a vibrant SENCO network for schools, and positive feedback in terms of support

provided by the Educational Psychology services. He also referred to the Joint Communication Team (JCT) which had delivered training focusing on speech and language to over 140 early years and school employees during the summer term. JCT measured and rated pre- and post-intervention RAG scores which had revealed very positive outcomes.

Natasha Patten (NWL ICB) outlined the consistent reduction in autism assessment waiting times, the “waiting well” offer to support families and the development of the child while awaiting assessment and enhanced mental health support for schools with positive feedback from children and young people, parents and carers. Peter Haylock added that more positive outcomes could be seen in rates of absence, suspension and permanent exclusion.

Addressing Nandini Ganesh’s concerns

- about the rating of the RAG scores, Peter Haylock explained that a progression tool assessing speech and language skills was used to show how SEND students performed across the different assessment. The chart (p.29) showed progression after intervention, with a 6% less students remaining weak (Red) and 40% more becoming relatively strong (Green).
- about the delivery of mental health support in schools, Natasha Patten noted that the clinical appointments referenced in the report were delivered by Hammersmith, Fulham, Ealing and Hounslow MIND and did not include appointments seen through CAMHS. The Mental Health Support Teams worked closely with CAMHS which had referred cases requiring more expertise intervention, so a graduated approach was adopted to support children and young people according to their needs.
- about the outcomes of mental health intervention and their measurement, Natasha Patten understood that surveys were conducted with service users including children and young people before and after the workshops. She added that the upskilling workshop helped parents and school staff to know how to manage mental health needs which was really important in early identification and early intervention.

Nandini Ganesh said she was impressed by the employment figures and asked about their makeup. Peter Haylock replied that they were a combination of young people on the supported internships and those who were new to the working world.

Councillor Aliya Afzal-Khan enquired about the number of EHCP applications received in a year and the time needed to deliver a final decision on them. Peter Haylock noted that out of the 226 applications received from schools and parents last year, 83% were delivered within the national benchmark of twenty weeks. Those requiring longer time were complex cases or due to significant number of applications received just before summer holidays. Given H&F’s timeliness of delivery was strong compared to the national average of 50%, Peter noted that capacity building mainly focused on enhancing the quality of the plans so that schools were able to provide better support and achieve the positive outcomes stated in the plans.

In response to Councillor Afzal-Khan's question on what had contributed to the low suspension rate, Peter Haylock pointed out that H&F had good schools, strong leadership, strong teaching and good support services such as funding for behavioural support offer.

Councillor Afzal-Khan asked whether SEND students were equitably allocated to schools across the borough and how to ensure the schools had good procedures and systems for educating SEND students. Peter Haylock explained that SEND placements were driven by parents' choices and the team worked with parents carefully to support them. It was noted that the SEND offer in many H&F schools was strong, evidenced by Ofsted inspections, and the team was working on developing the SENCO network and working with schools to implement the ordinarily available guidance.

The Chair enquired about how autism referrals and appointments were made, and the rate of positive diagnosis. Natasha Patten explained that many referrals came from early years settings and schools which were ideally placed to identify social communication difficulties as they manifested in social situations. Some traits of autism might only manifest as the child developed and had greater interactions with other children in social settings. The rate of diagnosis was very high. She added that the referrals were screened by the Child Development Service in order to prioritise those where there might be safeguarding or mental health concerns, or school placement breakdown. Schools were supported to understand autism and how best to support autistic pupils through the autism education trust approach and the local authority's outreach service.

Nadia Taylor was concerned about why it took so long for autism diagnosis to be made. Natasha Patten advised that autism was a very complex condition sometimes complicated by the presence of ADHD symptoms and/or mental health needs. Ensuring the diagnosis was made correctly depended on a robust process involving detailed evidence from parents and schools in terms of the child's developmental processes and presentation of traits. An autism diagnostic assessment involved detailed observations of a child or young person's play with toys and interactions with others. The significant demand for autism assessment and its complexity had contributed to long waiting times for the diagnostic assessment. Natasha reassured members that while families found it helpful to have a diagnostic label, support was not dependent on a diagnosis.

The Chair asked if there was anything that could strategically improve the waiting times. Peter Haylock replied that it was important to keep working with health colleagues, GPs and nurseries on early years intervention. As there were no resources allocated to meet the additional demand, the team would continue with the work that they had been doing. Natasha Patten noted the evidence provided by schools could help health colleagues speed up the assessment and provide early intervention as well as ensuring the child or young person's needs were being met.

RESOLVED

That the Committee noted the positive outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

7. FAMILY HUBS

Alistair Ayres (Head of Programmes, Children's Services) briefed members on the report which provided an update on the progress of the Family Hubs since its launch in April 2024. It also provided an overview of the Family Hub launches, coproduction and marketing, explained the services available through the Family Hub offer and evaluated initial feedback from residents, identifying areas of improvement moving forward.

In response to Nandini Ganesh's question, Alistair Ayres confirmed that housing officer support was available in the hubs on a regular basis to provide advice and guidance. If necessary, the Family Navigator would help link the residents with the housing officers. On the format of services provided, Alistair noted that services were delivered in mixed modes depending on the need, for example, some were more front-facing like CAMHS, 1:1 health visit by midwives, or services providing information and advice.

Noting that 26% of people visiting the hubs were new attendees, the Chair asked about ways in stepping up marketing and promotion of the Family Hubs say by words of mouth. Alistair Ayres responded that in the long term, the recently created Family Hubs PowerApp would help collect and analyse the attendance data to allow improvement. Meanwhile, a lot of promotion was done by words of mouth through GPs, schools, Youth Council and youth clubs, and parents' groups. The work had led to footfall increase month on month. He added that to market the Hubs further, social media pages were being built to appeal to younger residents who did not visit traditional websites or read leaflets. Officers were also pushing the Family Hubs constantly during their meetings with external partners.

On the expected outcomes a year after launching in next June, Alistair Ayres referred to the outcome framework which was being finalised at the moment. While the Family Hubs would work to better the attendance figures over time, they would also seek at the next stage to fill the gaps in the evenings. There were opportunities for different community groups and third sector organisations to deliver services for the communities at the Hubs after 5 pm.

RESOLVED

That the Committee noted the report.

8. SUMMER IN THE CITY

Peter Haylock (Operational Director for Education and SEND) provided an overview on the Summer in The City 2024 programme. He highlighted it was a success again and activities held were linked to the Council's commitment around climate emergency, young people's mental health needs, Olympics, and STEM in terms of future inventors. He was pleased to see the activities had engaged several young people with SEND. There were also a very high percentage of young people were on free school meals and from the south of the borough.

RESOLVED

That the Committee noted the report.

9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted the following dates of future meetings:

- 28 January 2025
- 22 April 2025

Meeting started: 7.04 pm
Meeting ended: 8.47 pm

Chair

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