

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes



Monday 29 March 2021

PRESENT

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

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

Jan Parnell (Director of Education)

Keith Tysoe (Strategic Lead, Education and Inclusion)

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

Sarah Sanderson (Head of Service)

Brenda Whinnett (Youth Voice Coordinator)

David Abbott (Head of Governance)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Matt Jenkins.

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Lucy Richardson (who entered at 6.43pm).

2. ROLL CALL AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. **MINUTES**

Jacqui McShannon (Director of Children's Services) requested the following corrections (underlined) to paragraph six of the Children's Services section in the 27 January 2021 joint budget meeting minutes:-

Jacqui McShannon confirmed an overspend of approximately £3.1 million in 2020/21 on the high needs block which represented a considerable reduction in overspend since 2017/18. The forecast overspend for 2021/22 was £0.43 million after allowing for targeted investment in high needs support and largely due to increases in funding as a result of population census changes impacting the High Needs funding formula. It was clarified that an agreement to address an overspend of £19.8 million from reserves over a five-year period to March 2020 was now in its third year.

RESOLVED

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2020 and the amended minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2021 were agreed as accurate records.

4. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Some questions were received from a member of the public who wasn't able to attend the meeting. The Chair noted that a written response would be provided after the meeting.

5. **YOUTH VOICE UPDATE**

Brenda Whinnett (Youth Voice Coordinator) introduced the item that provided an update on the work of the Youth Council. She was joined by members of the Youth Council – Moon, Sara, Marley, and Malachi who spoke in turn about the work they had undertaken during the pandemic, including:

- Producing youth centred communication and videos to share key messages about Covid-19.
- Developing the Inclusive Youth Voice Network
- Organising the 2021 Youth Achievement Awards
- Promoting mental health support for young people
- Collaborating on inclusive employment projects
- Producing the Youth Council Manifesto for 21/22

Brenda Whinnett noted that a key area of focus had been on embedding co-production for services involving children and young people.

Councillor Alex Sanderson congratulated the Youth Council on their hard work. She also reiterated a previous request for a list of children's mental health provision in the borough.

ACTION: Jacqui McShannon

Councillor Sanderson and Councillor Loveday suggested members of the committee could attend Youth Council meetings and advise on how to take their ideas forward. Brenda Whinnett said she would share a forward plan of meetings with the

committee so members could make arrangements. She added that invites for the Youth Achievement Awards would be sent out shortly and encouraged members to attend.

ACTION: Brenda Whinnett

Nandini Ganesh congratulated Brenda and the Youth Council for continuing to improve inclusion of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. She then asked if there had been a positive reception to the Youth Achievement nominations. Brenda Whinnett said there had been lots of nominations so far but there was still time to submit entries. Nominations were set to close on 9 April. Malachi suggested inviting the local army cadets to submit nominations.

The Chair thanked Brenda Whinnett and the Youth Council for all of their hard work during a particularly difficult time. She looked forward to continuing to work closely with the Youth Council in future.

6. SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2021

Jan Parnell (Director of Education) introduced the item that informed members of the outcomes of the Summer 2020 assessments and examinations in the borough's primary and secondary schools, and the current position with regard to Ofsted school inspections.

Councillor Mark Loveday asked what challenges had been created due to the withdrawal of Key Stage 1 and 2 assessments – and how schools and the council could effectively monitor progress in this situation. Keith Tysoe (Strategic Lead Education and Inclusion) said it was a challenge as SATs were a key measure of school performance. With no SATs results there would be no baseline to measure progress going forward. However officers continued to work very closely with schools and could use that local knowledge to identify any issues that needed to be addressed. There was also a broader shift in accountability measures for schools – Ofsted were moving away from SATs results and looking at the overall curriculum and quality of delivery. H&F would be doing the same.

Jan Parnell added that the education team were having regular one-to-one discussions with head teachers and recently met with 28 primary head teachers at the Hammersmith and Fulham Learning Partnership meeting in March. She said all primary schools had carried out baseline assessments on the return to full education. They reported that the majority of vulnerable children had actually caught up because schools in the borough had stayed open and smaller class sizes meant they received more targeted support. Most secondary schools were working together to ensure equitability in the system of assessed grades but they were anticipating some challenge from parents.

Jan Parnell noted she was also on a national committee looking at the possibility of changing the university entrance exam system post-Covid. There was also a big push locally on apprenticeships and job readiness.

Councillor Loveday asked if testing had been restarted yet. Keith Tysoe said the Department for Education (DfE) had cancelled all formal assessments.

Councillor Loveday asked when Ofsted would be restarting school inspections. Keith Tysoe said it was likely to be the summer term, but it depended on Covid and resourcing issues. No formal date had been set.

Councillor Loveday asked what would happen to the three schools in the borough rated as 'requiring improvement' if inspections were further delayed. Keith Tysoe said William Morris had recently had a very positive visit and officers were confident they would receive a better rating when the next full inspection was carried out. Melcombe had recently appointed a very successful head teacher and officers were positive about the future of the school. The third was a private nursery.

Councillor Alexandra Sanderson asked what was being done around socialisation and children's mental health – particularly for early years.

Keith Tysoe said a lot of work had been done by Education Psychology team. There was a focus on outdoor learning – many children hadn't had very much access to parks and open spaces and the council wanted to capitalise on the resources in borough (the river, parks, Fulham Palace etc.). Keith added that schools were delighted to have their children back and so far, they weren't reporting huge gaps. Children were settling back in well. Jan Parnell added that specialist teachers were available to children and parents and officers were remaining vigilant but reports from the school community had been positive.

Councillor Sanderson asked what mental health support was available to teachers. Jan Parnell said additional counselling support had been provided for head teachers. And head teachers were reporting good returns to work from their teaching staff. Officers had also been holding weekly Teams calls with head teachers to support them through the pandemic period. The resilience of teacher and support staff remained a key issue for the team.

Councillor Sanderson asked why the 'not known' category of destinations for those leaving education had increased. Jan Parnell said the education team had recently reviewed their NEET (not in education, employment or training) contract. The provider gathered good data but wasn't so good at following up so some of those elements were being brought back in-house so the team could get a better picture of the 'not knowns'. Jan added that the council felt it was important to develop alternative pathways – not everyone wanted to go to university and there were many other opportunities available.

Councillor Sanderson asked if the council could track the progress and destinations of children educated at home. Jan Parnell said it wasn't possible, but the council had lobbied the government to strengthen the requirements around home education.

Nandini Ganesh asked if the destination statistics included children and young people with special educational needs. Keith Tysoe said the figures included all young people. Nandini Ganesh asked if internships and apprenticeships counted as destinations. Jan Parnell said they did – destinations were recorded to ensure young people, including young people with special educational needs didn't get 'stuck' without progressing. Nandini asked if educational placements for children with

special educational needs would be rolled over given the disruption from the pandemic. Officers said they would raise the issue with Helen Green.

ACTION: Jan Parnell / Helen Green

Eleanor Allen asked for more information about the projects undertaken with Imperial College. Jan Parnell said the council was proud to have been involved in a number of research projects with Imperial College. She gave the example of a series of inspirational science lessons co-produced and delivered by young medics as part of the borough's STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) agenda.

Councillor Larry Culhane (Cabinet Member for Children and Education) paid tribute to the school community in H&F for their hard work and dedication throughout the pandemic. He gave thanks to Jan Parnell and whole education team who had been 'brilliant' working with schools and the wider education community throughout the pandemic. The Chair echoed Councillor Culhane's thanks to the education team.

RESOLVED

The Committee noted the report.

7. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

Amana Gordon (Operational Director, Children and Young Peoples Service) and Sarah Sanderson (Head of Service) introduced the item which presented the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Annual Report for 2019-20. She explained the report had been delayed due to Covid-19 pressures and work had already started on the 2020/21 report.

Sarah Sanderson discussed the following seven key priorities that were identified in 2019/20 and fed into corporate parenting activity during the year:

- Ensuring well-matched care when children can no longer stay at home safely
- Improve the timeliness of permanence planning
- Improve how we assure ourselves of the quality of the provisions we use
- Provide independent living skills training to support transitions
- Continue to improve the accommodation pathway for Care Leavers
- Continue to deliver 5 key areas for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC)
- Provide effective Covid-19 response to keep children safe and support recovery

Amana Gordon and Sarah Sanderson spoke about the H&F model of corporate parenting, the work done to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, the virtual awards ceremony held in July 2020, and the changes made to services in response to feedback from children and young people.

Eleanor Allen asked what types of issues were raised in corporate parenting meetings. Sarah Sanderson said a recurring theme was language used – the young people didn't like the 'LAC' abbreviation, so it had been changed to 'our children'.

Councillor Mark Loveday, noting the numbers of older UASC, asked what would happen as they filtered out as they left care or applications for asylum were refused. Was the Council planning to take more UASC under the national scheme? Amana Gordon said the Council had an obligation through the national transferal mechanism. H&F had made a commitment to provide support. Jacqui McShannon added that the Council would respond to need and would work with other local authorities who were struggling where H&F had capacity.

Councillor Loveday asked if the children taken under the 'Dubs amendment' (section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016) scheme were separate to the national transfer scheme commitment. Jacqui McShannon said they were additional.

Councillor Alexandra Sanderson said she was proud that H&F Council was looking after so many children so well. She then asked about mental health provision and if there were Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for children who have moved out of the borough. Sarah Sanderson said there was a CAMHS team within the LAC service that supported workers to bridge the gap when children moved. They made links and ensured provision was continued in the new area.

Councillor Sanderson asked if the committee could send congratulations to the young people who had achieved. Sarah Sanderson said she would speak to Amelia (Virtual School Headteacher) to see how to do that.

The Chair summarised the discussion and reinforced the importance of the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities. She also noted that the report set out the cooperation and co-production that helped shaped the service and hoped that would continue into the future.

Councillor Larry Culhane (Cabinet Member for Children and Education) paid tribute to the young people who took part in the Children in Care Council and the Corporate Parenting Board who all had contributed a huge amount and were focused on the needs of their peers. He also noted that the borough had a rich history of welcoming and caring for people of all backgrounds and in recent years H&F had refused to look the other way when children were in need.

8. OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT EQUALITIES PLAN, SETTING THE INCLUSION AGENDA FOR 2021-25

Jacqui McShannon (Director of Children's Services) introduced the item which alerted members to the recently launched draft Equalities Plan 2021-2025, open to public consultation for a 12-week period until the end of April. She noted that the consultation was launched on 1 February 2021 and closed at the end of April 2021. She encouraged committee members to take part in consultation.

Councillor Alexandra Sanderson asked if the consultation would be sent to the Youth Council. Jacqui McShannon said it would be – and would also be sent to all schools in the borough. The council wanted to reach as many people as possible. She encouraged members to complete it and share it with residents groups.

RESOLVED

The committee noted the report.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was noted as 30 June 2021.

Meeting started: 6.30 pm
Meeting ended: 8.00 pm

Chair

Contact officer David Abbott
Head of Governance
Governance and Scrutiny
Tel 07776 672877
E-mail: david.abbott@lbhf.gov.uk