



Resources Department
Town Hall, Upper Street, London, N1 2UD

AGENDA FOR THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Members of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee are summoned to a meeting, which will be held in Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on **20 March 2017 at 7.00 pm.**

Stephen Gerrard
Director of Law and Governance

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Despatched : 10 March 2017

Membership

Councillors:

Councillor Theresa Debono (Chair)
Councillor Rakhia Ismail (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Alex Diner
Councillor Satnam Gill OBE
Councillor Michelline Safi Ngongo
Councillor Nick Ward
Councillor Nick Wayne

Co-opted Member:

Erol Baduna, Primary Parent Governor
Mary Clement, Roman Catholic Diocese
James Stephenson, Secondary Parent Governor
Vacancy, Church of England Diocese

Substitute Members

Substitutes:

Councillor Alice Perry
Councillor Dave Poyser
Councillor Alice Donovan
Councillor Angela Picknell

Quorum: is 4 Councillors

A. Formal Matters

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1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Interest

If you have a **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest*** in an item of business:

- if it is not yet on the council's register, you **must** declare both the existence and details of it at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent;
- you may **choose** to declare a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest that is already in the register in the interests of openness and transparency.

In both the above cases, you **must** leave the room without participating in discussion of the item.

If you have a **personal** interest in an item of business **and** you intend to speak or vote on the item you **must** declare both the existence and details of it at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent but you **may** participate in the discussion and vote on the item.

***(a) Employment, etc** - Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.

(b) Sponsorship - Any payment or other financial benefit in respect of your expenses in carrying out duties as a member, or of your election; including from a trade union.

(c) Contracts - Any current contract for goods, services or works, between you or your partner (or a body in which one of you has a beneficial interest) and the council.

(d) Land - Any beneficial interest in land which is within the council's area.

(e) Licences- Any licence to occupy land in the council's area for a month or longer.

(f) Corporate tenancies - Any tenancy between the council and a body in which you or your partner have a beneficial interest.

(g) Securities - Any beneficial interest in securities of a body which has a place of business or land in the council's area, if the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body or of any one class of its issued share capital.

This applies to all members present at the meeting.

3. Declaration of Substitute Members
4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting
5. Chair's Report
6. Items for Call In (if any)
7. Public Questions

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B. Items for Decision/Discussion	Page
1. Post-16 Education, Employment and Training: Concluding Discussion	11 - 20
2. The Educational Attainment of BME and White British Pupils	<i>(to follow)</i>
3. Executive Member Questions	21 - 22
<i>Any questions that the Committee or members of the public may have should be submitted in advance to jonathan.moore@islington.gov.uk no later than Tuesday 14th March.</i>	
4. Review of Work Programme	23 - 24

C. Urgent non-exempt items (if any)

Any non-exempt items which the Chair agrees should be considered urgently by reason of special circumstances. The reasons for urgency will be agreed by the Chair and recorded in the minutes.

D. Exclusion of press and public

To consider whether, in view of the nature of the remaining items on the agenda, it is likely to involve the disclosure of exempt or confidential information within the terms of the Access to Information Procedure Rules in the Constitution and, if so, whether to exclude the press and public during discussion thereof.

E. Exempt items for Call In (if any)

F. Confidential/exempt items

G. Urgent exempt items (if any)

Any exempt items which the Chair agrees should be considered urgently by reason of special circumstances. The reasons for urgency will be agreed by the Chair and recorded in the minutes.

The next meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee will be on 9 May 2017

Please note that committee agendas, reports and minutes are available from the council's website: www.democracy.islington.gov.uk

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Agenda Item 4

London Borough of Islington

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday, 28 February 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee held at Committee Room 4, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on Tuesday, 28 February 2017 at 7.00 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Debono (Chair), Diner, Gill, Ngongo and Wayne
Co-opted Members: James Stephenson, Secondary Parent Governor
Mary Clement, Roman Catholic Diocese

Also Present: **Councillor:** Caluori

Councillor Theresa Debono in the Chair

203 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (ITEM NO. A1)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nick Ward and Rakhia Ismail, and Erol Baduna.

204 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (ITEM NO. A2)**

None.

205 **DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (ITEM NO. A3)**

None.

206 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (ITEM NO. A4)**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

207 **CHAIR'S REPORT (ITEM NO. A5)**

The Chair advised that this would be the last meeting to consider witness evidence as part of the review of Post-16 Education, Employment and Training.

The Committee was reminded that the May meeting had been rescheduled to Tuesday 9th May 2017.

The Chair noted that the Fair Futures Commission had been launched and commented that she looked forward to contributing to its work.

208 **ITEMS FOR CALL IN (IF ANY) (ITEM NO. A6)**

None.

209 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS (ITEM NO. A7)**

Ernestas Jegorovas noted that at the 22 September 2016 meeting, the Executive Member advised that the council was planning to expand Highbury Grove school to meet the demand for school places as it was popular in the community. Given that the school had since been placed in special measures, it was queried if the council's policy on expanding schools had changed, and if the council should consider other variables when deciding on school expansions. In response, Cllr Caluori advised that the council's position had not changed; the council would look to expand existing schools to meet the need for additional school places, and good and outstanding schools would be prioritised for expansion. It was noted that Highbury Grove was rated as an outstanding school at the time the decision was made.

210 **POST-16 EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING: WITNESS EVIDENCE AND CONCLUDING DISCUSSION (ITEM NO. B1)**

(a) Islington Schools/College Careers Cluster

The Committee received a presentation and noted a report from Jodi Pilling, Learning and Skills Manager, on the 'Careers Cluster' programme.

The following main points were noted in the discussion:

- Islington's careers cluster was one of 12 pilots across London and was to be funded up to March 2018 by the European Social Investment Fund and the Skills Funding Agency.
- Westminster Kingsway City and Islington College had won the contract for the careers cluster and had subcontracted a significant part of the contract to the council. The council had working relationships with all schools in the borough and this had helped in the implementation of the programme.
- The programme was being delivered to 700 pupils and intended to bridge the gap between the academic and working lives of young people. In particular, the programme was to support young people in making better transitions, improve the relevance of intelligence and data which would help to embed more effective careers education in schools, and to support business and higher education engagement with schools and colleges.
- The Committee considered the key performance indicators and outcomes as set out in the report. It was advised that the number of university applications would also be monitored, in particular the number of young people applying for university who were classified as 'gifted and talented' however who were considered by their schools to be less likely to apply to universities than their peers. Anecdotal evidence would also be considered when measuring the success of the pilot; including teacher confidence in providing support and advice. It was commented that increasing the confidence of teachers in providing careers advice could have a very positive impact on young people.
- Some of the work to be carried out through the pilot was an extension of the work carried out through the iWork service; the pilot would provide more 'Present Yourself' days and more employment workshops for young people.
- The pilot was engaging with more employers than required. The ESF funding stipulated that 18 employers must be engaged in the pilot; however the council had engaged 21 employers to ensure that a range of sectors were represented. It was commented that the employers were keen to work with young people.
- Slaughter and May would be hosting a session on International Women's Day for girls who had expressed an interest in law however did not have family

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connections in the city. The Institute of Physics was holding a session for students interested in a career in science. Assemblies were also being held for those interested in creative industries.

- Industrial placements were being arranged for teachers to enable them to understand different industries.
- Following a question, it was advised that the contribution to the programme from the European Social Investment Fund was not at risk from Brexit.
- A member of the public asked how many young people were not in education, employment or training in the borough. In response, it was advised that the number had reduced significantly in recent years to around 100 young people aged 16-18, however it was emphasised that this was a transient group.

The Committee thanked Jodi Pilling for her attendance.

Mary Clement and Councillor Diner entered the meeting.

(b) Evidence from local employers

Dorcas Morgan, Development Director at Park Theatre, advised the Committee of their work in supporting the development of young people.

- Park Theatre was based in Finsbury and had been operating since 2013. They operated two theatres and produced 25 plays a year. The organisation also carried out a great deal of outreach and community work, managed a theatre café and bar, and welcomed 100,000 visitors a year.
- Outreach work included providing volunteering opportunities, a young patron's programme, work with local migrants, and the employment of local people in the café and bar. The theatre also provided subsidised classes for low income families.
- The organisation had developed relationships with local organisations to provide opportunities in the arts to young people and other people facing disadvantage. Park Theatre had strong relationships with City and Islington College, The Bridge School, University of the Arts and Islington Arts and Media School. The organisation also worked closely with Children's Services, the Employment Support team, NRPF, and JobCentre Plus.
- Park Theatre offered a creative apprenticeship programme for young people. It was crucial for Park Theatre to fundraise effectively to enable it to provide such opportunities. Islington Council had provided funding to the organisation, with the condition that opportunities were ring-fenced for Islington residents.
- Apprentices were paid £10,000 p.a. and worked for 40 hours a week.
- The Committee was surprised that only two applicants had been interviewed for the latest apprenticeship position; and only three applicants had been interviewed for the previous round. It was thought that there would be many young people in Islington interested in a career in the arts who would enthusiastically apply for such an opportunity. In response, it was advised that all applications were initially screened by Islington Council, and it was thought that the specific eligibility criteria and timing of the application period resulted in a low number of applications. The apprenticeships were only open to those who had not previously been in further education and who were currently claiming Jobseekers Allowance. These eligibility criteria were agreed with JobCentre Plus, which was contributing funding to the programme. It was advised that the timing of the applications process could be amended in future years to coincide with the further education application process. It was commented that some young people did not claim Jobseekers Allowance even if they were eligible.

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- It was suggested that further work was needed to raise awareness of apprenticeship programmes among hard to reach groups, including BME communities. The Committee suggested that promotion via social media and community centres could be useful.
- Officers acknowledged that creative apprenticeships could be promoted better; whilst some schools were keen to identify pupils with a creative interest and promote such opportunities to them, others were not.
- A member of the public commented that Park Theatre provided Level 2 apprenticeships and queried if Level 3 apprenticeships could be offered. In response it was advised that the organisation was currently funded to provide Level 2 apprenticeships and the organisation would need to look into accreditation and funding if making changes to its apprenticeship offer.

John Nugent of Green and Fortune advised the Committee of their work in supporting young people.

- Green and Fortune was a local business in the bar, restaurant, catering and events industry. The company operated one venue at King's Place which had 80 employees, and another on the South Bank with 70 employees.
- Green and Fortune employed young people to carry out a range of roles. Opportunities were available in over 20 different roles, including sales and marketing and commercial development. It was commented that there was a great willingness among employers to engage with young people, however it had proved difficult to attract high quality candidates with the required skills.
- Green and Fortune considered that council initiatives such as the Saturday Jobs Scheme had been a great success and thought that providing young people with five or six hours of employment a week was the best way to develop employability skills and experience. The company had employed two young people through the scheme, both of which had since been promoted, and as a result the company had recently employed two more young people.
- The company had developed employment programmes with the council, JobCentre Plus, and Global Generation, a local charity. The company was willing to train young people and develop their employment skills, however it was commented that some young people did not have a strong work ethic and were challenging to work with. The company offered a six week programme to six young people, however by the end of the programme only one participant from the first cohort remained. It was noted that the programme had since been revised to increase the emphasis on work readiness.
- The Committee queried why some young people did not succeed at Green and Fortune, asking if the work was mundane, did not offer sufficient incentives, was on a 'zero hours' basis, or if staff were expected to work too long hours. In response, it was advised that some opportunities offered by the company were on a zero-hours basis, however most staff worked between 40 and 50 hours a week and earned the London Living Wage. It was also commented that the hospitality sector was known for identifying talent and promoting people quickly and therefore there was lots of opportunity within the sector, particularly given the amount of regeneration in the local area. It was thought that some young people struggled because they were not ready for employment and found it difficult to commit to routines.
- It was commented that some businesses used a very high number of agency staff, and it was thought that this should not be the case when there were so many young people looking for permanent work in London.
- Anna Douglas, Principal of City and Islington College, advised that the college encouraged its students to seek employment and indicated that she would

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welcome the opportunity to discuss opportunities with Mr Nugent after the meeting.

- The Committee welcomed that the employment opportunities available locally were of a high quality, however expressed concern that some young people seemed to lack the basic skills needed for employment. In response to a question, it was advised that the company had not identified if pupils lacking skills came from a particular school or background. It was commented that Green and Fortune would be working closer with schools as part of the Careers Cluster programme.
- It was commented that social skills were needed in all jobs, not just in the hospitality sector, and it was suggested that customer service should be taught in schools.
- It was remarked that employment support services for young people seemed well resourced however not all young people achieved positive outcomes. It was queried if more sector-specific targeted work would be beneficial to young people.

The Committee thanked Ms Morgan and Mr Nugent for their attendance.

(c) Evidence from LB Hackney

The Committee received a presentation from Jo Margie, 14-19 Programme Manager at the Hackney Learning Trust, and Pauline Adams, Head of Service of Young Hackney, on the work to reduce the number of NEETs in Hackney.

The following main points were noted in the discussion:

- Hackney was similar to Islington in many respects, however had a larger cohort of young people.
- The Hackney Learning Trust was a not-for-profit, independent organisation appointed to manage and improve education services in Hackney. The Trust was established in 2002 and since then all schools in the borough had significantly improved.
- Hackney had a 95% participation rate. Over 87% of young people known to the Youth Justice system were in EET.
- Young Hackney was the borough's early help service. The service provided integrated employment support, as well as other services such as mental health and behavioural support.
- Hackney did not have an equivalent to Islington's Progress Team, and instead commissioned an organisation called Prospectus to provide intensive employment support.
- Hackney Council offered apprenticeships in a similar way to Islington Council. It was commented that 120 young people applied for six placements; with the best candidates having soft skills and the confidence to perform well at interview.
- Early help was linked to all young people's services in Hackney, including play services and schools. It was intended to provide a comprehensive service to young people focused to prevention, diversion, and health and wellbeing.
- Young Hackney workers were located at several hubs across the borough, so that young people could present at various community facilities and receive integrated advice and support.
- NEETs in Hackney tended to face barriers such as special education needs, disability, speech and language issues, or issues such as substance misuse, mental health, or domestic violence.

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- Hackney had worked to develop positive working relationships with local schools and colleges to increase referrals to youth services.
- Hackney had developed a system for identifying pupils at risk of becoming NEET, the 'Risk of NEET Index'. This evaluated various factors including attendance, KS2 performance and the number of times they had transferred school.
- Most schools in Hackney employed a non-teaching careers officer to develop the school's careers offer. Most schools carried out one-to-one interviews with their pupils to assess their employability skills and support needs.
- Hackney strongly recommended the work of the Careers Cluster, commenting that schools received a lot of offers from employers and organisations wanting to work with young people, and the cluster helped to evaluate these opportunities and identify the best schemes for young people.
- Some Hackney schools ran apprenticeship clubs in which young people were supported in completing their applications. Hackney schools tried to make the apprenticeship application process mirror the university application process as much as possible.
- Hackney recognised that employers wanted employability skills, whilst schools were driven primarily by academic outcomes. As a result Hackney had developed a "Careers Collaborative" to help schools to develop careers programmes at little cost to the school. It was commented that the biggest challenge to implementing employability support programmes in school was finding time in the school curriculum.
- A number of extra-curricular activities were available in Hackney including coding clubs, holiday programmes, accredited activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award, volunteering opportunities and work experience.
- Hackney had a number of cross-borough forums for schools and education professionals to consider EET data and other issues affecting young people.
- Young Hackney encouraged its staff to take collective responsibility for the progress of young people and staff were expected to report back on the progress of the young people they had interacted with.
- The Committee queried how Hackney Council had encouraged so many young people to apply for its apprenticeships. In response it was advised that opportunities were advertised through youth networks, including voluntary sector organisations working with young people. It was thought that schools were not the best route to promote apprenticeships as they tended to focus on university applications.
- It was commented that Hackney's youth hubs strongly promoted volunteering opportunities as this was considered to be the best way to develop the employability skills of young people.
- The Committee asked what aspects of its work Hackney Council would recommend to other local authorities. In response, it was advised that the Careers Collaborative had encouraged schools to work closely together in providing careers education and this had developed very effective and consistent services. It was also important to listen to schools and develop services in response to their specific needs. It was also commented that aligning early help services with universal services had normalised accessing early help services and had improved the reach of support services.
- In response to a question, it was advised that Islington already had a youth website which advertised employment, apprenticeship, and volunteering opportunities. It was suggested that this could be made more user-friendly and could benefit from incentives to use the site, such as a prize draw.
- It was suggested that Children's Services could recruit an apprentice to maintain the social media presence of youth services.
- A member of the public questioned the success of Hackney's Risk of NEET Index, querying how many young people were classified at risk of NEET for

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multiple factors. It was advised that this data was not available at the meeting, however the index was considered successful and was being rolled out to schools following a pilot. It was noted that the system required further development as it did not cover all risk factors, such as bereavement.

The Committee thanked Ms Margie and Ms Adams for their attendance.

Councillor Ngongo left the meeting.

(d) Concluding Discussion

The Committee agreed to defer the concluding discussion to the next meeting.

211 QUARTERLY REVIEW OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE (Q3) (ITEM NO. B2)

Carmel Littleton, Corporate Director of Children's Services; Finola Culbert, Director of Targeted and Specialist Children and Families Services; and Mark Taylor, Director of Learning and Schools, introduced the report which set out the performance of Children's Services in quarter three 2016/17.

The following main points were noted in the discussion:

- It was clarified that data related to engagement in early years services related to children accessing services by age five.
- The Committee expressed concern at the increase in the number of children missing from care, commenting that children could not be safeguarded whilst they were missing, and noting that these children were vulnerable to gang and criminal activity. In response, it was advised that the council had dedicated officer support to this issue. It was commented that children missing from care were generally staying with someone known to the young person. It was also noted that some young people repeatedly went missing from care and therefore would be counted multiple times in the data. All young people who go missing were offered return home interviews.
- It was advised that a small minority of young people who go missing were involved in criminal activity, and whilst the council worked to divert these young people to other activities, the risk of criminals exploiting vulnerable young people could not be eradicated completely.
- Two young people were subject to secure accommodation orders granted by the courts. It was advised that the courts tended to grant secure accommodation orders for children and younger teenagers and once a child reached age 16 it was unlikely that a request for a secure accommodation order would be granted.
- It was queried if parental permission was required to make a secure accommodation order. In response, it was advised that parental permission was often sought, but not in all circumstances as this was not a legal requirement.
- It was advised that some young people had agreed to be accommodated outside of London as an alternative to secure accommodation. Officers summarised the concept of 'Gillick Competency', which related to the age at which a young person could make their own decisions without reference to their parents.
- The Committee queried why no comparative trend data was available for the performance of Black-Caribbean pupils at Key Stage 2. In response, it was advised that this was due to how data was collected nationally. It was noted

that a report on the educational attainment of BME pupils would be reported to the next meeting. Members requested that the report include a breakdown of performance by school; however it was acknowledged that identifying information may need to be obscured for reasons of confidentiality.

- A member of the public highlighted the attainment gap between Black-Caribbean pupils and the Islington-average at KS4; and in light of this queried the proposal to replace monitoring 5+ A*-C grades with the Progress 8 measure, noting that there was no historic trend data for Progress 8 to track if this attainment gap was wider or narrower than before. In response, officers confirmed that the measure would not allow historic comparison, however it was acknowledged that attainment gap was too wide and work was underway to reduce this.
- A member of the public queried the effectiveness of return home interviews for missing children.
- The Committee welcomed that Islington was performing well for pupils achieving the expected level in Reading, Writing and Maths at the end of KS2; that GCSE results were above the national average; and that all Islington schools were performing above floor standards.

RESOLVED:

That Children's Services performance in Q3 2015/16, the revised format of the Data Dashboard, and the proposed changes to performance indicators be noted.

212 EXECUTIVE MEMBER QUESTIONS (ITEM NO. B3)

Councillor Joe Caluori, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families, provided an update and answered questions related to his portfolio.

The Fair Futures Commission had been launched the previous week. It was reported that the Commission would listen to children and parents, and would be particularly useful in identifying the barriers they face and the services that they want. The Executive Member was looking forward to the work of the Commission commencing and advised that its conclusions would help to shape council services.

The Executive Member was disappointed with the lack of progress from the government on county lines drug dealing, commenting that vulnerable children were being exploited and that it was not being considered as a safeguarding issue. It was reported that London boroughs were lobbying the government on this issue and a meeting with the Minister for Vulnerability, Safeguarding and Countering Extremism had been scheduled for 16th March 2017.

The Executive Member noted his disappointment at the recent Ofsted inspection of Highbury Grove School in which the school was rated as inadequate. The Executive Member was saddened that the school would become an academy and advised that there was no basis for appeal against academisation. It was not known which academy provider would be selected to manage the school, however it was hoped that the academy trust would engage with the council and Islington's community of schools.

Ernestas Jegorovas queried if other schools were at risk of being rated as inadequate. In response the Executive Member advised that he did not think that other schools were at risk, but that performance would continue to be monitored.

Ernestas Jegorovas queried how many young people had left school in January following the Christmas break. In response the Executive member commented that he

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was not aware of the latest figures, however these pupils were generally referred to alternative provision and the number of referrals to alternative provision was reducing. It was commented that the education white paper 'Educational Excellence Everywhere' indicated that schools would retain responsibility for their pupils after they were referred to alternative provision.

A member of the public noted that the Executive Member would be meeting the Minister for Vulnerability, Safeguarding and Countering Extremism about county lines drug dealing and queried if he would also raise matters related to child sexual exploitation. In response it was advised that CSE could be a factor in some instances of county lines drug dealing, and gang-related CSE was the biggest CSE risk in the borough.

213 REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME (ITEM NO. B4)

It was agreed that the concluding discussion on the review of Post-16 Education, Employment and Training would be held at the March meeting.

MEETING CLOSED AT 9.35 pm

Chair

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CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
POST-16 EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING
NOTES TO ASSIST CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

This document summarises the main evidence received by the Committee to date. The Committee is invited to assess the evidence received against the objectives and discuss any conclusions which may arise from the review.

The concluding discussion will help to inform the draft recommendations, to be considered at the next meeting.

Overall aims of the review:

1. To explore how to sustain improvements and continue to increase the number of young people progressing to, and in, post 16 education, employment and training; and
2. To suggest ways to prevent young people becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET) in the first place.

Objectives of the review:

1. To understand the profile of 16-18 and 18-24 year olds in Islington currently progressing to and in education, employment and training; and which groups of young people are most vulnerable to being NEET
2. To assess the strategic role of Islington Council in helping to increase the number of young people in EET
3. To understand the obstacles to progression into EET
4. To identify and assess specific measures which will increase the progression into EET for groups of young people with low levels of participation in EET and other young people vulnerable to becoming NEET
5. To assess the availability and effectiveness of information, advice, guidance and employability skills support for young people regarding post 16 education, employment and training
6. To examine 'promising practice' approaches at school and local authority level that indicate the best success in reducing the number of young people NEET and preventing young people becoming NEET, and how they might apply locally.

N.B. Objectives 2, 4 and 5 cover implementation of the Employment Commission recommendations, an area highlighted by the Committee for review.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

The Committee has received evidence from the following sources:

1. Holly Toft, Head of Post-16
2. Paul McIntyre, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School
3. Lesley Thain, Central Foundation Boys' School
4. Alison Bennett, Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) Specialist
5. Cherrylynn Jaffier, Progress Advisor (Vocational Pathways)
6. Lorraine Blyth, Post-16 Participation Manager
7. Hamish Mackay, Young Employment and Apprenticeships Manager
8. Mercedes and Alex, Mer-IT
9. David Williams, NEET Achievement Coach Manager, Groundwork London
10. Jo Margrie, 14-19 Programme Manager, Hackney Council & Pauline Adams, Head of Service, Young Hackney
11. Jodi Pilling, Learning and Skills Manager
12. Dorcas Morgan, Development Director, Park Theatre
13. John Nugent, Green and Fortune
14. Visit to Lift Youth Hub to meet young people and staff from the Progress Team

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE TO DATE

1. The profile of 16-18 and 18-24 year olds in Islington currently progressing to and in education, employment and training; and which groups of young people are most vulnerable to being NEET

- The number of young people classified as NEET changes constantly as young people drift in and out of education, employment and training.
- Snapshot demographic information indicated that, of 99 young people aged 16-18 NEET in December 2015, 59% had cycled in and out of EET. 63% were male; the majority of which were available to the labour market. 36% were female, with around half of those NEET due to pregnancy or parenthood.
- The majority of young people NEET were from white ethnic backgrounds.
- Only around a quarter of young people NEET had attended mainstream Islington schools. Around half had attended New River College or Alternative Provision; around a quarter had attended schools outside of Islington.
- Some young people were NEET and not available to the labour market due to illness, including mental health problems.
- Those who were available to the labour market often had multiple vulnerabilities, including health problems, behavioral problems, involvement of the criminal justice system, and being from a workless household.

2. The strategic role of Islington Council in helping to increase the number of young people in EET

Support to Young People

- The Council has statutory duties to support young people to remain in learning until their 18th birthday. If a young person has special educational needs or disabilities, this extends to their 25th birthday.
- Islington Council's EET support services are provided through two teams. The Progress Team, which supports 16-19 year olds; and the iWork team, which supports 19-24 year olds.
- The Progress Team employs qualified advisors who work with those vulnerable to dropping out and those who have already become NEET. This includes one-to-one support, job coaching and opportunity matching, and follow up support.
- The iWork service provides skills and employability programmes which help people to access vocational pathways, including apprenticeships. The service works with employers, colleges, and also schools to raise the profile of vocational training and broker employment opportunities.
- The Council provides the 'September Guarantee' which gives every Year 11 pupil at Islington schools, and every Year 12 resident in the borough, a named educational offer
- The council is one of the local authorities piloting the 'careers cluster' programme. This is intended to bridge the gap between the academic and working lives of young people. In particular, the programme will support young people in making better transitions, improve the relevance of intelligence and data which would help to embed more effective careers education in schools, and support business and higher education engagement with schools and colleges.
- The Council is engaging with 21 employers as part of the 'careers cluster' pilot. Employers were keen to work with young people and provided a range of support and opportunities.

Support to schools

- The council works with schools to identify pupils at risk of dropping out.
- The council provides careers training to staff in-school and arranges other development sessions for careers leads and tutors across the borough. A termly newsletter, termly careers network meeting, and on-line portal is also provided.
- The council also works with schools to help develop their careers education and guidance offer. It was advised that some schools needed support in this area as they either did not have a full understanding of statutory duties and guidance, were unaware of the resources available to support young people, were unaware of what Ofsted expected of schools, or were unaware of best practice approaches.
- The council had introduced a specialist vocational pathway advisor following feedback from schools that they were not confident in giving advice in this area.

The Council's role as an employer

- The council has an extensive internal apprenticeship programme, having committed to offering 200 apprenticeships between 2014-2018. Vacancies are open to all ages, however recruitment activities are targeted at 16-24 year olds and there is a commitment to providing opportunities for young people who are disengaged or at risk of disengagement. 90% of the 44 apprentices recruited in 2015-16 were aged 16-24.
- Those on apprenticeships were supported in applying for full time positions in the Council.

3. The obstacles to progression into EET

Vulnerabilities

- Some young people NEET had complex personal issues or significant skills gaps.
- Some young people were not prepared for the transition from school to college or employment.
- Pupils with special educational needs faced additional barriers to employment, education and training; as did pupils who spoke English as a second language.
- Some young people were vulnerable to gang activity would not travel outside of their immediate local area, which was detrimental to their wellbeing and employment prospects.
- Some pupils found it difficult to find part-time work due to the amount of competition in the local job market.

Other obstacles

- Some young people had chosen college courses which were not suitable for them and had dropped out.
- Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School had received feedback that some of their ethnic minority pupils lacked confidence in the workplace and was working to improve this.
- Islington Council has recently increased its focus on vocational pathways and apprenticeships; providing apprenticeships and specialist advisors. However, some parents and young people are sceptical of non-academic pathways.
- It was advised that some pupils and their families needed advice on how employment or an apprenticeship could affect their benefits eligibility; Central Foundation School was aware of instances where families had unexpectedly lost benefits income as a result of their child's employment, one family had subsequently become homeless.
- It was also a concern that young people progressing to university accrued huge amounts of debt, even if they dropped out during their first year.
- Young people are entitled to two years of free learning post-16; however this typically ends on their 19th birthday unless they have a special educational need or disability. After this stage young people may have to make a financial contribution to their education.
- Young people need academic references to be accepted onto college courses. The Committee was made aware of one instance where a young person was denied a reference from her college after requesting to change course. She became NEET as a result.
- One young person commented that the letters he and his parents received from his school after he stopped attending amounted to bullying or harassment; and these actually discouraged him from re-engaging with education.
- Some apprenticeships have strict eligibility criteria, which result in very few applications being made. The apprenticeships provided by Park Theatre, funded by JobCentre Plus, required the young people to be claiming JSA and they could not have previously been enrolled in further education. As a result only two valid applications were received. Although strict eligibility criteria can ringfence opportunities for 'hard to reach' groups, they can also deter applicants.
- Green and Fortune (a local employer) advised that they were very keen to employ young people, but some young people did not have the employability skills or motivation to succeed in a full time job.

4. Specific measures which will increase the progression into EET

Stepping stone approaches.

- Islington has some 'stepping stone' provision for pupils who are NEET but are not yet ready for full time education or an apprenticeship. These often provide Level 1 qualifications and functional skills in literacy and numeracy. These 'bitesize' options are linked to vocational areas and are geared towards young people who struggle to commit to long term programmes.
- Officers suggested that the council's own employment practices could be improved to better support young people. Although a number of apprenticeships were offered, it was thought that easing selection processes and offering 'traineeships' as a bridge to apprenticeships would benefit the most vulnerable young people.

Work undertaken by schools

- School work to support EET was not only limited to information, advice and guidance. The schools which provided evidence to the review advised that they worked to develop the character, ambitions, confidence and skills of their pupils from an early age.
- Some witnesses highlighted the need to raise aspirations, both in pupils and their parents. Schools commented on the importance of positive role models.
- The young people interviewed thought it would be helpful if support organisations and post-16 education providers came into schools to talk to pupils about alternative pathways.

Cultural and creative activities

- Schools considered that being located in London provided pupils with huge opportunities in terms of employment, apprenticeships, work experience, personal development, and extra-curricular activities. It is important for pupils to make the most of these opportunities.
- Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School emphasised to parents that it was essential for pupils to have a range of activities on their CV, however some parents did not value creative activities. The school advised parents that providing a range of opportunities to pupils was as important as attaining high grades.

Islington's vocational offer

- Academic pathways are not suitable for all young people and strong vocational options are also needed. It was suggested that a strategic review of the quality, range and accessibility of vocational pathways would be useful in determining if there are appropriate pathways available. The Committee's previous review of Alternative Provision found that some young people were referred to Alternative Provision as a means of accessing vocational education. A more flexible arrangement, allowing pupils to sit vocational qualifications alongside their GCSEs in school, would be more desirable.

Partnership work

- Partnership work was vital to the work of the Progress Team. Many young people accessed the team following a referral from Social Services, Housing, their school, or others.
- Progress Advisors and Children's Services officers were asked how support services for young people could be improved. It was commented that Progress Advisors attended some schools on results day and were available to discuss options with the pupils who did not attain their expected grades. However, some schools did not allow them access to the school.
- Not all schools provided information to the council on the pupils who would benefit from support from the Progress Team. Some schools provided the council with details of the pupils that did not attain their expected grades; this allowed the Progress Team to meet with the pupil on results day, or at least speak with them on the telephone. If schools did not identify these young people to the council, then they would only be contacted by the Progress Team after they were identified as not being registered with a local college. This process could take several weeks.
- Members queried if referrals could be made to the Progress Team before young people left school, if it was thought that they may not attain their required grades. In response, officers commented that this would be very helpful, however for this to work the profile of the Progress Team needed to be raised at a strategic level within schools.

The employer's perspective

- Green and Fortune considered that council initiatives such as the Saturday Jobs Scheme had been a great success and thought that providing young people with five or six hours of employment a week was the best way to develop employability skills and experience. The company had employed two young people through the scheme, both of which had since been promoted, and as a result the company had recently employed two more young people.

5. The availability and effectiveness of information, advice, guidance

- Careers education previously had to be delivered in accordance with statutory guidance and prescribed materials; however this duty was removed in 2012. Schools still have a statutory responsibility to provide information, advice and guidance; however this is without prescriptive guidance or funding. As a result, each school has a different approach to careers education and the impact of this varies. Ofsted found that 75% of schools nationally do not provide the right level of support to their pupils.
- The Council's CEIAG specialist works across schools to fill gaps in delivery, ensuring that all pupils receive consistent and high-quality careers education.
- Around half of young people NEET were previously in New River College or Alternative Provision. As a response to the Employment Commission recommendations, the council developed a 'gold standard' for careers education in NRC and AP. This is a pack of activity plans comprised of six modules across key stages 3 and 4; and is intended to ensure that these pupils receive high quality careers education.

- The young people interviewed indicated that they were very satisfied with the council's support services, however acknowledged that most young people did not know about the services offered by the council. Some young people commented that if they had known that support services were available then they would have accessed them sooner.
- The young people interviewed by committee members commented that schools put a disproportionate emphasis on GCSEs, and young people didn't know the range of alternative qualifications and pathways available, or how to access them. The young people had thought that without GCSEs they would not be able to gain employment or access further education.
- The council's vocational progression advisor commented that some young people needed sustained intensive support and at times the caseload was so great that it was not possible to support every young person in this way.

6. 'Promising practice' approaches at school and local authority level

The use of data

- Islington's NEET rate had significantly reduced in recent years, from an average of 8.3% in 2011/12, to 2.2% in 2015/16. Officers suggested that service improvements had been secured by improving the accuracy of data, which allowed officers to provide an effective and focused service.
- The Council stopped routinely collecting destinations data for young people at age 19. It was commented that collecting such data becomes increasingly difficult as time goes by.

Innovative approaches

- The Council led the Islington Youth Employment Network, which arranged opportunities for local employers to meet young people NEET through speed-networking sessions and TED style talks. It was noted that the last such event was attended by 60 young people and 17 employers; within a fortnight 14 of those young people were in employment.
- The council was trying new methods of engaging hard to reach young people. Organisations had recently been commissioned to carry out peer to peer outreach work on a pilot basis; the results of this had not yet been received.
- Hackney Council had integrated employment support into early help services, with a worker linked to all universal services. This had normalised accessing support services and enabled a comprehensive and joined-up approach.
- Hackney Council had developed a system for identifying pupils at risk of becoming NEET, the 'Risk of NEET Index'. This evaluated various factors including attendance, KS2 performance and the number of times they had transferred school.

The work of schools

- Some schools had partnership arrangements with high-quality businesses and universities. Some businesses supported mentoring programmes in schools, provided guest speakers at assemblies, hosted school-trips to their offices, or provided work experience.
- Central Foundation School commented that it had a two-way relationship with its business partners. After working with the school's pupils, one employer changed its recruitment practices to target school leavers as well as university graduates.

7. Other findings

- The Chair commented on the importance of small community organisations in supporting the development of young people and queried how the council could best support such organisations. In response, it was advised that community groups were able to engage with the council's community and voluntary sector development officers, who could provide advice and guidance on funding and other aspects of running a community organisation.
- It was advised that all schools were supposed to have a governor with responsibility for careers education, however not all governing bodies had appointed someone to this role.
- It was advised that an increasing number of young people were interested in creative media, graphic design, web design, and similar pathways; however few opportunities in these fields were available.
- The young people interviewed suggested that schools and colleges should advise their pupils on their options if they don't attain their expected grades; this should be practical advice, delivered positively. The young people identified that schools, colleges and their peers did not talk about back-up plans. One young person reported that he was worried he would not achieve the required grades, but his school mentor refused to consider a back-up plan, instead encouraging him to focus on his studies. When he did not attain the required GCSEs, he didn't know what to do, what pathways were available to him, or how to access support.
- Some of the young people thought that their becoming NEET was entirely avoidable, and that they would have moved directly from school into another pathway had they known about the options available. They stressed the importance of stopping young people becoming NEET.
- Members suggested that the Progress Team could make use of advertising at bus stops and in the local press around results day. It was also suggested that a greater use of advertising online and through social media could be effective.
- It was considered that there was no shortage of job opportunities. Green and Fortune commented on the number of opportunities created by regeneration in the local area. Some businesses used a very high number of agency staff, and it was thought that this should not be the case when there were so many young people looking for permanent work in London.

OBSERVATIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Councillor Wayne:

1. It is clear that Islington Council provides excellent support to young people trying to find employment and training. However, I have real concerns that we are not adequately promoting our services and that the sheer number of schemes that we are offering means that it can be difficult for young people to know how best to access support. There is a danger that we as a committee look at the range of services offered from the perspective of the council offering the services rather than through the eyes of the young people trying to get help and not perhaps knowing where to look.
2. What struck me from the evidence was how many apprenticeship / training opportunities there are for young people in Islington. Where there seems to be a block is in getting the right people placed into apprenticeships. One issue may be a perception around apprenticeships that they are a source of cheap labour for employers that will not lead to a long-term career. One option might be to publicise apprenticeship successes, not just our in-house apprentices, but those placed with the assistance of the Progress team, so that there are role models.
3. Schools and colleges support for less academically gifted children in terms of post 16 options is patchy at best. Would be appropriate for there to be a pledge, along the line of the pledges we make to our looked after children, of a minimum level of support to help young people into education, employment and training? Could this be something we could develop with our youth councillors, so that young people are actively shaping the service? Maybe that is something for the fair futures commission to think about as well.

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

20 March 2017

Executive Member Questions

The Committee is invited to question the Executive Member on his work and the work of the Committee. An update from the Executive Member is set out below. The procedure for Executive Member questions is set out overleaf.

Any questions that the Committee or members of the public may have should be submitted in advance to jonathan.moore@islington.gov.uk no later than Tuesday 14th March.

Update from the Executive Member

The Islington Fair Futures Commission has now officially launched. It was a fantastic event at which we heard from Chair Jermaine Jackman, Deputy Chair Kadeema Woodbyrne and great speakers including Commissioner Dez Holmes and Islington Young Mayor Diana Gomez. There is a real buzz about this commission and I'm really excited about the potential. To find out how to interact with the commission please visit www.fairfutures.org.uk There will be an extended listening and engagement process before the Commissioners start to analyse feedback and come up with proposals.

We now have 21 Boroughs signed up to our campaign on County Lines drug dealing and have a confirmed meeting with Home Office Minister Sarah Newton on 16th March. After our letter made the front page of the Standard the BBC got in touch - they are making a documentary about County Lines and are featuring our campaign as a key part of that. It should air in the Spring. I have also been invited to give evidence about this issue from a local government perspective to the all-party parliamentary group on Missing Children at which a Home Office Minister will be present. I have been listening to first hand testimonies from young people who have been caught up in this, and the dangers to young people who get involved are acute. Immediate action is needed at a national level in addition to our local safeguarding work.

An academy order has now been made in respect of Highbury Grove and the City are beginning due diligence prior to making a bid to the regional commissioner to run the school. The ethos of the school should be retained along with the focus on music. We explored all available options after the inspection and it was clear that any appeal would certainly fail. Whilst we remain opposed to forced academisation (Ofsted's own report says the LA knew what should be done to improve the school) encouraging the Governing body to appeal would merely have drawn out the process ahead for teachers, parents and pupils. Our hope is that the City of London MAT will agree to take on the school. The City participate in our local community of schools and would retain local authority and parent governors, work with the local authority and other schools.

Ofsted will be coming in to inspect Children's Services in Islington and the Independent Safeguarding Board very soon, so we have been doing lots of work to prepare for that. The recent decision of this Committee to scrutinise the role of the local authority as a corporate parent is very welcome and will show Ofsted how committed we are to this at a corporate level. Scrutiny Committee will be able to undertake the kind of long term in depth work that is not always possible in the short time available at Corporate Parenting Board. I would welcome scrutiny on the experience of looked after children placed 20 miles or more from home, care leavers and educational outcomes from looked after children, and young people who are remanded into care as priority areas.

Procedure for Executive Member Questions at Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

- (a) Elected members and members of the public may ask the Executive Member for Children and Families questions on any matter in relation to the executive portfolio or the work of the committee.
- (b) The intention of the session is to complement and enhance the work of the committee. The Executive Member may submit written information in advance of the meeting to advise of his recent work and other topical and timely matters of relevance. The session is not intended to replace or replicate the questions sessions held at each ordinary meeting of the Council.
- (c) Questions should be submitted in writing to the committee clerk no later than three clear working days in advance of the meeting. Such questions will be notified to the Executive Member which may facilitate a more detailed answer at the meeting. Details of how questions should be submitted will be detailed on the agenda for the meeting.
- (d) Questioners should provide their name to enable this to be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. The minutes of the meeting will include a summary of the question and the response.
- (e) The Chair may permit questions to be asked at the meeting without notice.
- (f) The time set aside for questions shall be no longer than 15 minutes.
- (g) No individual may ask more than two questions at each meeting.
- (h) Where there is more than one question on any particular subject or closely related subjects, the Executive Member may give a joint reply to the questions.
- (i) The committee clerk shall have power to edit or amend written questions to make them concise but without affecting the substance, following consultation with the questioner.
- (j) An answer may take the form of:
 - A direct oral answer;
 - Where the desired information is in a publication of the Council or other published work, a reference to that publication; or
 - Where the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, a written answer circulated later to the questioner within 5 working days provided the questioner has given contact details.
- (k) Priority shall normally be given to questions notified in advance.
- (l) The Chair may permit supplementary questions to be asked. Supplementary questions must arise directly out of the original question or the reply.
- (m) A question may be rejected by the committee clerk, or the Chair at the meeting, if it:
 - does not relate to the executive portfolio or the work of the committee;
 - is defamatory, frivolous or offensive;
 - is substantially the same as a question asked to the Executive Member at any meeting within the last six months;
 - requests the disclosure of information which is confidential or exempt; or
 - names, or clearly identifies, a member of staff or any other individual.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17

Tuesday 17 May 2016

1. Membership, Terms of Reference, Dates of Meetings
2. Alternative Provision: Draft Recommendations
3. The Impact of SEND Changes on Children and Families
4. Scrutiny Topics 2016/17

Tuesday 28 June 2016

1. Executive Member Annual Presentation
2. Alternative Provision: Final Report
3. Outcomes Post-16: Scrutiny Initiation Document
4. Work Programme 2016/17

Thursday 22 September 2016

1. Outcomes Post-16: Witness Evidence
2. Early Help Scrutiny: 12 Month Report Back
3. Update on the Youth Offending Service Improvement Plan
4. Executive Member Questions
5. Review of Work Programme

Tuesday 18 October 2016

1. Outcomes Post-16: Witness Evidence
2. Progress on Changes to SEND
3. Quarterly Review of Children's Services Performance (Q1)
4. Executive Member Questions
5. Review of Work Programme

Monday 21 November 2016

1. Outcomes Post-16: Witness Evidence
2. The Children's Services response to Prevent
3. Quarterly Review of Children's Services Performance (Q2)
4. Executive Member Questions
5. Review of Work Programme

Monday 11 January 2017

1. Outcomes Post-16: Witness Evidence
2. Islington Safeguarding Children Board: Annual Report
3. Safeguarding Children Annual Report
4. Executive Member Questions
5. Review of Work Programme

Tuesday 28 February 2017

1. Outcomes Post-16: Witness Evidence
2. Quarterly Review of Children's Services Performance (Q3)
3. Executive Member Questions
4. Review of Work Programme

Monday 20 March 2017

1. Scrutiny Review: Concluding Discussion
2. The educational attainment of BME and White British pupils
3. Executive Member Questions
4. Review of Work Programme

Tuesday 9 May 2017

1. Scrutiny Review: Draft recommendations
2. Education in Islington: Annual Report
3. Update on trends and demand for places at Islington schools
4. Scrutiny Topics 2017/18