



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

Ernestas Jegorovas asked how the overspend in the Children's Services budget was going to impact on school improvements.

Councillor Caluori advised that the budget proposals go through formal scrutiny and that there are a number of opportunities to review them. Councillor Wayne also suggested that as this question did not relate to any of the items on the agenda, it might be more appropriately discussed when the Committee receives the Quarterly Performance Report.

**267**      **VULNERABLE ADOLESCENTS REVIEW - WITNESS EVIDENCE (ITEM NO. B1)**

The Committee reviewed the Draft Witness Evidence Plan and received a number of presentations as follows:

The Committee received a presentation from Helen Cameron, Health and Wellbeing Manager, Schools Improvement Service on 'Islington TRIPPS – Trauma informed PRU, primary schools and partners project'.

The following main points were made:

- Trauma is common and can happen as a result of a variety of experiences in childhood, including physical, emotional or sexual abuse, physical or emotional neglect or issues within the family, such as domestic violence, mental illness and substance misuse.
- Developmental trauma is also referred to as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) can have detrimental effects that last into adulthood. It can affect the physical and chemical development of the brain.
- Children who have experienced ACE learn to survive by assuming situations are dangerous. They can have heightened survival skills that are not useful in a classroom; instead of learning to wait, share, problem solve, seek support and form relationships, they become ready to respond to any threat and develop strategies to meet their developmental needs, such as controlling or provocative behaviour. They can also seek out conflict or dissociate.
- For children who have experienced ACE there can be a school to prison 'pipeline', starting with exclusion from school.
- The trauma project aims to catch this early, to encourage children to think about what's safe and to build the skills they haven't got because they've been learning how to survive.
- Rather than looking at individual children, the project looks at what the system can do by equipping school staff to support children who may be dealing with underlying trauma, so that children see their school as a safe and caring environment in which there is an adult they feel comfortable talking to.
- In addition to increasing their capabilities in supporting vulnerable children, schools are also helped to make more effective use of referral pathways.
- The training has been completed in three schools and work is ongoing on developing a model and reviewing policies. By the end of the academic year we will have evaluated the outcomes.

The Committee asked a number of questions. The following main points were noted in the discussion:

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- The referral pathways and responsibility for safeguarding are already embedded within schools, the training helps them to develop a different, more questioning and considered approach to what would previously have been described as naughty behaviour.
- In the USA, where the system has been used for some time, it is working very well and is helping children to remain in school; it's keeping them in the classroom more.
- This approach is evidenced based, recommended by clinical psychologists and part of a national response to trauma. It's not an individual intervention; it changes the way schools relate to, support and work with children.
- The training is undertaken by all staff in the school from the Head Teacher to the Caretaker. It should affect what happens in the classroom and the playground and help staff to build relationships. The school decides how to use the additional time; they can focus on particular children or particular issues, such as how a child might return to school after a difficult weekend.

The Committee received a presentation from Abi Onaboye, Service Manager Early Help. Case studies featured examples of experience of Families First and Islington Families Intensive Team NRC Outreach services.

The following main points were made:

- The service works with the whole family; you can't change the behaviour of an adolescent by working with them alone.
- Targeted services are available to help with multiple problems and the Islington Families Intensive Team (FIT) provide intensive support to families with higher risks, such as eviction, involvement in crime or anti-social behaviour, children not attending school and at risk of becoming looked after.

The Committee asked a number of questions. The following main points were noted in the discussion:

- Where there are serious issues, such as violence in the home, or a breakdown in the relationship with one or both parents, an extensive whole family assessment is undertaken so everyone involved understands.
- Of approximately 1,800 families who are in receipt of services, only 10% go into specialist service provision. In these cases the level of complex need requires specialist intervention.

The Committee received a presentation from Holly Toft, Head of Play, Youth and Post 16. Case studies featured Adventure Playgrounds, Accessing Youth Provision - Open For All services and Youth Hubs.

The following main points were made:

- Attending an Adventure Playground can help children develop positive relationships with significant adults outside their family.
- The 'free play' at Adventure Playgrounds, with the support of skilled play workers, can help children learn to negotiate relationships and provide a positive experience in the lives of children who may be struggling at school and who have no other opportunities for success.
- If a child has a difficult day at school that information can be passed on to the staff at the playground and it can be taken into account.

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- Children who attend regularly can start to manage conflict better, resolve problems, learn to negotiate their own solutions and have improved confidence, better social skills and communicate better.
- The children that do attend Adventure Playgrounds, tend to be heavy users and to attend 6 days a week.
- The Launchpad programme offers young people who are experiencing frustration and social isolation because they have difficulty accessing services that appropriately meet their social needs, a commissioner who helps them engage.
- Attending these activities, helps socially isolated young people develop confidence, positive relationships with their peers and improves their mental wellbeing.

The Committee received a presentation from Curtis Ashton, Head of Targeted Youth Support, Youth Offending and Integrated Gangs.

The following main points were made:

- Serious youth violence is estimated to cost the UK £4B per annum.
- It costs a minimum of £204K pa for one young person to be accommodated in a secure children's home, £163K pa for one young person to attend a secure training centre and £75K pa for one place in a young offenders institution.
- If the young person continues to offend as they become adults, the costs continue to accumulate; custody costs £80K pa and there are often increased health care costs. Early intervention is therefore essential.
- Children and young people with multiple vulnerabilities are more likely to become offenders or affiliated with a gang.
- Although they are generally demonised in the media, evidence is increasingly showing that many young offenders have experienced significant episodes of trauma in their lives; a large number have experienced or witnessed domestic abuse or have been exposed to significant levels of neglect and this has a significant effect on their behaviour.
- Many young offenders also have speech and language issues or special educational needs, such as dyslexia.
- Many young offenders are also victims.
- The number of victims of serious youth violence has risen in London over the past four years; there have been 7,700 recorded victims in the past 12 months. Islington borders two boroughs which have some of the highest levels of youth crime in London.
- Incidences of young people carrying weapons has increased; in 2016 there were no gun related fatalities in London and there have been 7 so far this year. There have also been over 2,000 knife related incidents in London over the same period.
- The main responsibility of the Youth Offending Service is to prevent offending and re-offending, using a multi-agency approach.
- The service works closely with the Police, Children's Social Care, Placements and the Integrated Gangs Team and tries to provide suitable residential placements for those leaving custody and as an alternative to custody. The service also works with the Courts to encourage their consideration of alternatives to custodial sentences.
- The Targeted Youth Support service works with people aged 10 to 21, predominately males, who may have disengaged with school and are engaging in low level offending / anti-social behaviour. Many have problems at home and have experienced trauma. They may also be at risk of exploitation or being encouraged to offend by their peers. The service

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supports them to make better informed, more positive choices and decisions. The work includes Youth Counselling between the ages of 12 and 21.

- The Integrated Gangs Team objectives are to improve safeguarding for children and vulnerable young adults at risk of gang affiliation or already involved in gangs, to reduce levels of violence and reoffending and to reduce victimisation of local people as a result of gang activity.

The Committee asked a number of questions. The following main points were noted in the discussion:

- The Youth Offending Service has up to 100 cases open at any one time, although it varies from month to month.
- The Targeted Youth Support Service has over 100 cases open at any one time.
- The Integrated Gangs Team has approximately 75 cases open at any one time.
- The ethnicity of those involved is very diverse, except that young black men are over-represented in Youth Offending Service cases, in common with the rest of London.
- Many have multiple needs, speech, language or learning difficulties. New research also suggests that many adult offenders have undiagnosed needs / learning difficulties.
- If those involved are NEET, that will be the service's main area of focus.
- The services try to intervene as early as possible and engage with young people based on referrals from schools, parents, neighbours. Staff also directly engage with groups of young people on the streets.
- The team works closely with Early Help Family Services.
- The service helps about 10 young people per year avoid a custodial sentence, by assisting them with employment, helping them managing their finances and identifying appropriate accommodation.
- We have some reciprocal arrangements with other boroughs when young people need to be rehoused out of the borough.
- An Open Day was held recently for Magistrates to highlight alternatives to custody and regularly reviews behaviour orders with the Police.

The Committee thanked the officers for their attendance.

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### **SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS AND DISABILITY (SEND) REFORMS AND IMPACT (ITEM NO. B2)**

The Committee received a presentation from Candy Holder, Head of Pupil Services on progress with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) reforms and their impacts.

The following main points were made:

- The robust identification of children with Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) has been confirmed by an independent review by the National Autistic Society. We are on trend with the numbers expected and other areas are now catching up; York has seen a 93% increase of cases in the past 12 months.
- The Early Years services has improved the timeliness of assessments and we have good data on children by the time they get to school.
- A SEND co-production board has been established with parents.
- Parents are being trained to be parent consultants.

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- We are developing a Parent Parliament to consult as services develop.
- Three special schools have been rated as Outstanding by Ofsted.
- We have launched a handbook for early years and primary schools and are working on a second handbook for secondary/post 16s.
- We have a higher than average number of children per 1,000 in specialist settings, with statutory plans and at SEND support, in comparison to similar local authorities and the high numbers stretch resources; we have to plan carefully.
- Good progress is being made transitioning from the old plans and we are confident all children will be on the new plans by the 2018 target. Once that work is complete we will have one plan in place for each child and can start to be more strategic.
- Four strategic areas of work have been identified
  - Delivering services within budget
  - Social, emotional and mental health
  - Consistency in schools SEND support
  - Progressing to adulthood
- The Local Area Inspection is expected soon; inspectors are in Hackney now. 13 out of 33 boroughs inspected have gone into special measures. We are working on a self-evaluation and progression to adulthood is a key risk at the moment.

The Committee asked a number of questions. The following main points were noted in the discussion:

- The biggest overall risk is delivering services within budget. Early intervention through the Early Help service will help prevent higher costs at a later stage, but early intervention also sometimes means longer intervention, so it can also increase costs. We are working on increasing people's resilience as they move into adulthood so we can reduce levels of support.
- A root and branch review of transport is ongoing, as the costs associated are extremely high.

### 269 **ALTERNATIVE PROVISION REVIEW 2015/16 - 12 MONTH REPORT BACK (ITEM NO. B3)**

The Committee received a presentation from Jeff Cole, Head of School Improvement – Secondary on the 12 month report back on the Alternative Provision Review.

A lot of work has been undertaken to implement the recommendations of the review, including:

- Management of Alternative Provision has been passed to New River College.
- Year 10 pupils are under an entirely new system.
- Schools remain responsible for the progress, attendance and wellbeing of referred pupils and pay up to a limit of £10,000 per placement. The pupils stay on the school roll until Year 11.
- From 104 the numbers have reduced to 40; 35 children in year 11 and 5 children in year 10. Those that are referred are receiving better quality services from a small number of providers.
- The number of exclusions has not increased and there have been none so far this term.
- The team is in constant contact with the New River College and Schools to ensure that the service is working well and that children are not pushed out into other areas.

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The Committee asked a number of questions. The following main point was noted in the discussion:

- The significant decrease in the number of referrals is one of the results of the scrutiny review which helped to convince Heads that they were drawing the line in the wrong place and that many of the children previously referred were entitled to a normal education.

### **270 EXECUTIVE MEMBER QUESTIONS - VERBAL UPDATE (ITEM NO. B4)**

Councillor Caluori was asked to provide a brief update on progress with the Fair Futures Commission and advised that the consultation went well and work is now ongoing to analyse the responses. Jermaine Jackman, Chair of the Commission, has already published some of the emerging issues and a set of proposals will be available in February and will be presented at Budget Council.

### **271 REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME (ITEM NO. B5)**

Reviewed. It was agreed that the Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report currently on the agenda for the meeting on 9 January 2018 would be circulated by email and the item is to be removed from the agenda.

MEETING CLOSED AT 9.10 pm

Chair