

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

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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