



ISLINGTON

# **Co-ordinated and joined up services for vulnerable adolescents**

## **REPORT OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**



**London Borough of Islington  
March 2018**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Co-ordinated and joined up services for vulnerable adolescents**

#### **Aim:**

To review how effective the council is in providing joined up services; and to ensure that there are effective processes and practices that ensure young people are involved in all aspects of their support and intervention

#### **Evidence:**

The Committee commenced the review in September 2017. Evidence was received from a variety of sources:

##### Evidence from Council Officers:

- Lisa Arthey, Director of Youth and Community Services
- Finola Culbert, Service Director of Safeguarding and Family Support
- Laura Eden, Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance
- Catherine Briody, Head of Youth and Community Services
- Curtis Ashton, Head of Targeted Youth Services and Youth Offending Service
- Abi Onaboye, Head of Early Help
- Holly Toft, Head of Play, Youth and Post-16
- Helen Cameron, Health and Wellbeing Manager
- Naomi Bannister, CSE Lead
- Sarah Whelan, Safeguarding Gangs Lead
- Gabriella Di-Sciullo, Head of Admissions and Children Out of School
- Sheron Hosking, Head of Children's Joint Health Commissioning

##### Evidence from young people:

- Simone Headley, Chair of the Children's Active Involvement Service Council
- Visit to the Children's Active Involvement Service

##### Evidence from partner organisations

- Inspector Kier Newman, Police representative for Safer Schools and Youth Engagement
- Freddie Hudson, Community Manager, Arsenal in the Community
- Abi Billingham, Founder and Director of Abianda

##### Documentary evidence:

- Early Intervention and Help Strategy for Islington, 2015-2025
- Working together to safeguard young people in Islington - Youth Crime Plan, 2017-20
- Recommendations & Executive Summary of Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee report on Knife Crime, 2015/16
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Transformation Plan
- Islington Safeguarding Gang Protocol and Procedure 2016
- Briefing Note on Contextual Safeguarding

## **Main Findings:**

- There are many services available to support vulnerable adolescents in Islington; these may be universal or targeted, statutory or non-statutory, provided directly by the council, or commissioned and delivered by others. The Committee is concerned by the growing demand for these services, and the increasing complexity of cases.
- The council has carried out a great deal of work in recent years to strengthen its services for vulnerable adolescents. Committee welcomes the council's sustained focus on improving services for vulnerable young people, however considers that there is scope for further improvement.
- Although the Committee was satisfied that a consistent and joined up approach was being taken by Children's Services, young people and their families also rely on a range of other local services. The Committee would welcome a greater strategic join up between these services and Children's Services, particularly on issues affecting the most vulnerable young people.
- The Committee received evidence on the challenges faced by the council in providing effective services for vulnerable adolescents. The borough's administrative boundaries made it challenging to engage with Islington's young people who choose to congregate outside of the borough. The Committee also noted that traditional family-based safeguarding approaches may not be wholly relevant to the issues faced by vulnerable adolescents. The Committee considers that a cross-borough approach to safeguarding is needed, which makes use of contextual safeguarding methods to protect vulnerable young people across London.
- The Committee is supportive of trauma informed approaches to working with young people, and would support these approaches being used more widely in schools and by other professionals working with young people.
- The Committee would support stronger and earlier interventions on domestic violence and abuse from both the council and the Police. The Committee would also support further work in schools to support young people affected by domestic violence and abuse. This is crucial to ensure that young people receive support at the earliest possible opportunity.
- The Committee believes that there is a great deal of potential in the local community and voluntary sector, and suggests that working even closer with the sector could assist in safeguarding and supporting vulnerable young people.
- Witnesses providing evidence to the Committee commented on the difficulty of communicating the range of services available to marginalised young people, particularly to those who did not access services at Islington's youth hubs. The Committee would support the development of an app/website, to communicate targeted information about support services, events, health and wellbeing messages, and other advice and guidance for young people. It is also suggested that young people should be able to contact their social worker through instant messaging, subject to all necessary safeguarding and data security criteria being met.
- Evidence received by the Committee highlighted a number of positive examples of services listening and responding to the views of children and young people.

## **Conclusions:**

Overall the Committee was impressed with the wide range of support services available for vulnerable adolescents. The Committee considered a number of examples of different services and agencies working together to provide co-ordinated services for the benefit of young people. It is

clear that the council and its partners recognise that providing joined up services is the best approach to supporting vulnerable young people. However, further improvements could be made to improve the effectiveness of services.

14 recommendations have been made in response to the evidence received. These are related to a greater strategic join-up between services; working differently by adopting new practices, such as trauma informed and contextual safeguarding approaches; closer work with the Police around domestic violence and the sharing of intelligence; making the most of existing resources; and communicating more effectively with young people and the professionals that support them.

The Committee would like to thank all the witnesses that gave evidence in relation to the review. The Executive is asked to endorse the Committee's recommendations.

## **Recommendations:**

1. A borough-wide pledge to support vulnerable young people should be developed by Summer 2018. Ownership of this pledge at Chief Executive level will help support accountability cross the council. All council services should commit to working collaboratively to reduce the risks to young people and improve their wellbeing. Partner organisations should also be encouraged to commit to the pledge. This would assist in developing more joined up early intervention approaches.
2. It is suggested that the delivery of the pledge should be incorporated into the terms of reference and work plans of all relevant multi-agency forums. These forums should monitor delivery of the pledge through their work. A member of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee should be invited to observe relevant meetings. In addition, the Youth Council and CAIS should be invited to undertake an annual review of the effectiveness of the Pledge and report their findings back to the Chief Executive.
3. To foster a more effective and joined-up approach to safeguarding across London, Children's Services should seek to work with neighbouring boroughs and other agencies to develop a contextual safeguarding approach. This approach is focused on reducing risks and vulnerabilities and promoting safeguarding by intervening in the social environments experienced by young people, rather than focusing interventions on individuals. As part of this work, the council should lead on the development of protocols across borders with neighbouring local authorities focusing on risk management and the sharing of good practice.
4. Subject to the results of the trauma-informed approaches pilot, Children's Services should work with the Community of Schools to encourage schools to engage with these approaches and adopt related screening tools. This may assist in identifying a range of issues, including the diagnosis of mental health issues, at a much earlier age. The five schools engaging in the ARC pilot project should be asked to support in cascading this approach.
5. A trauma-informed approach to working with young people should be embedded in multi-agency training through a review of the Safeguarding Children Board training offer.
6. A high number of vulnerable adolescents have experienced or witnessed domestic abuse earlier in their lives. It is crucial that these young people receive support at the earliest possible opportunity. It is recommended that the council and police work together to develop stronger and earlier interventions on domestic abuse. This work should include the development of Operation Encompass in schools and a focus on partnership work through Islington Safeguarding Children Board.
7. Children's Services should review if greater information can be shared between agencies to develop a more joined up approach to working with vulnerable adolescents. The Council should work with Police to ensure that lower level non-criminal concerns about young people are reported to the school via the Safer Schools Officer, so that young people's behaviour can be monitored and they can be referred to appropriate support services as appropriate.

8. The Committee considers that greater use could be made of Safer Schools officers. The promotion of Safer Schools officers and their role in safeguarding children should be reiterated through the Islington Community of Schools.
9. The council should ensure its strategic and commissioning priorities for vulnerable adolescents are shared with the voluntary and community sector and that priorities between the council and voluntary and community sector organisations are aligned. This could include the alignment of grant funding to these priorities.
10. Children's Services should continue to work closely with voluntary and community sector organisations and develop these relationships further as appropriate. This may assist in generating referrals, normalise accessing support, and help to ease transitions between services.
11. The council should work to improve its communications to young people. The Council should lead on the development of a multi-purpose young people's app/website to ensure a wider reach for communicating targeted messages and information about health and wellbeing and support services.
12. Children's Services should review the feasibility of allowing young people to contact their social worker through instant messaging.
13. The council should review its directory of services and ensure it is proactively promoted to professionals in the health, education, and voluntary and community sectors to raise awareness and understanding of the range of support services available to vulnerable adolescents.
14. The council should review if support services for young people are sufficiently flexible and accessible, and should consider the appropriateness and feasibility of providing evening and weekend support services, if such services are not already available.

## **MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 2017/18**

### **Councillors:**

Councillor Theresa Debono (Chair)  
Councillor Nick Wayne (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Troy Gallagher  
Councillor Rakhia Ismail  
Councillor Michelline Safi Ngongo  
Councillor Marian Spall  
Councillor Nick Ward

### **Co-opted Members:**

Erol Baduna – Primary Parent Governor Representative  
Mary Clement – Roman Catholic Diocese Representative  
James Stephenson – Secondary Parent Governor Representative

### **Substitutes:**

Councillor Alex Diner  
Councillor Satnam Gill OBE  
Councillor Mouna Hamitouche MBE  
Councillor Clare Jeapes  
Councillor Angela Picknell  
Councillor Dave Poyser  
Councillor Nurullah Turan

### **Acknowledgements:**

*The Committee would like to thank all the witnesses who gave evidence to the review.*

### **Officer Support:**

Tania Townsend – Children's Partnership Development and Strategy Manager  
Jonathan Moore – Senior Democratic Services Officer

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The review was held between September 2018 and February 2018. The overall aim of the review was to review how effective the council is in providing joined up services; and to ensure that there are effective processes and practices that ensure young people are involved in all aspects of their support and intervention.

The Committee also agreed the following objectives:

- To further understand the current and future risks and challenges faced by our young people who are vulnerable and how the council is continually responding to these in Islington.
  - To evaluate how the views and experiences of vulnerable adolescents are considered when planning and delivering services.
  - To assess how the current transition arrangements for vulnerable adolescents between early help, targeted and specialist services are continuously effective in providing a seamless support and intervention service/approach.
  - To assess if the support available to vulnerable adolescents from council services is sufficient, and how other support networks in the family, community, and peer groups can be developed to support further.
  - To explore the support network of young people within the family, community and friendships, and how they can support council services for vulnerable adolescents to reach their full potential.
  - To consider the effectiveness of partnership and integrated arrangements that the council has, if these achieve better outcomes, and to consider if further join up operationally and strategically would assist.
- 1.2 In carrying out the review the Committee met with young people, council officers and representatives of partner organisations to gain a balanced view. The Committee also considered relevant strategies, plans and other documents.

### Context

- 1.3 Adolescence is a difficult time for young people. As children develop into adults they face a range of social pressures and expectations, new freedoms, boundaries and responsibilities, and changes to their relationships with their family, peers, and wider society. Whilst the majority of young people living in Islington progress through adolescence in an overall positive way, this is not the case for all young people. Some young people have negative experiences during their childhood which can make them vulnerable. The council has statutory duties to protect vulnerable young people, and a moral obligation to support these young people in achieving the best possible outcomes.
- 1.4 There are many different views on when adolescence begins, however it is generally accepted that adolescence commences at the onset of puberty. The Committee focused its review on early adolescence, between the ages 10 to 13, as this is a key time during child development. It is also a time at which a young person's relationship with the local authority changes dramatically. Young people of this age are no longer the small children accessing early years provision and adventure play activities, however they are not yet the teenagers with complex and entrenched needs accessing the council's support services. It is crucial that young people, particularly vulnerable young people, receive effective and joined up support during this key period of change in their lives.



- 1.5 The Committee wished to review if the council and its partners could better support vulnerable adolescents; if there are opportunities for closer partnership work; if different approaches to working with these young people would be beneficial; and if the council is listening to the voices of young people when planning, commissioning and delivering services.

## **2. Findings**

### Summary of issues and risks faced by Islington's vulnerable adolescents

- 2.1 The Committee considered the wide variety of issues and factors which may make a young person vulnerable. Some young people will face a range of issues, and may have multiple and complex vulnerabilities.
- 2.2 Adolescents may be vulnerable due to neglect or physical or emotional abuse. They may be deprived of food, education, parental care, or normal childhood experiences. Young people, or their parents, may have mental health issues or special educational needs. Young people may be victims of domestic abuse, or may have witnessed domestic abuse between their parents. Drug and alcohol misuse may be a factor for parents, or young people themselves. Vulnerable adolescents may be victims of exploitation. They may be victims of child sexual exploitation, which in Islington is generally perpetrated in a peer-to-peer context. They may be affiliated to a gang, or on the periphery of gang involvement. They may be being groomed to commit criminal activity, being used as a drug mule, or be involved in county lines drug dealing. They may be a young offender, or frequently go missing from home, care, or education. They may display challenging behaviour in school, commit anti-social behaviour on the streets, or be involved in serious youth violence.
- 2.3 There are many services available to support vulnerable adolescents in Islington; these may be universal or targeted, statutory or non-statutory, provided directly by the council, or commissioned and delivered by others. The Committee is concerned by the growing demand for these services, and the increasing complexity of cases. Officers advised that the number of adolescents on child protection plans had increased in recent years. Historically, the majority of child protection plans related to babies; however roughly the same number of adolescents as babies were now the subject of a child protection plan. Nationwide, the number of children aged 16 or over on a child protection plan increased by 70% between 2010 and 2013. Since 2010 there has been a national increase of 132% of the number of children aged 16 or over in care. In Islington, young people aged 13 to 17 represent 62% of looked after children, 17% of those on child protection plans, and 28% of those classified as a child in need. Over 3,000 referrals were made to social care in 2016/17, an increase of over 500 on the previous year. There are various factors contributing to this increase in demand and complexity, including escalating poverty, deprivation, and associated parental stresses.
- 2.4 The council has carried out a great deal of work in recent years to strengthen its services for vulnerable adolescents. The Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee previously reviewed Knife Crime and Mobile Phone Theft and made a number of recommendations to improve services. A Youth Crime Plan was subsequently developed by the council in partnership with the Safeguarding Children Board and Safer Islington Partnership. This plan is consistent with the council's Early Intervention and Help Strategy, which recognises that it is more effective to intervene earlier by supporting families, before needs escalate and issues become entrenched. The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee previously carried out a review of the council's early help services and made recommendations to develop them further. Work has also been carried out to transform the Youth Offending Service, young people's mental health services and youth employment services. In 2016/17 the council allocated an extra £500,000 for targeted support for young people most at risk of turning to gangs and crime.

- 2.5 Islington considers young people's involvement in gangs to be a safeguarding issue; whereas some boroughs only consider gang activity from a criminal perspective. Islington's overall approach is to build resilience in adolescents, to support them in making the right choices, and to improve their outcomes. The Committee welcomes the council's sustained focus on improving services for vulnerable young people, however considers that there is scope for further improvement.

Promoting joined up working between council services and partners

- 2.6 Children's Services provide and commission numerous services for vulnerable young people, the majority of which fall under either the Safeguarding and Family Support directorate, or the Youth and Communities directorate.
- 2.7 The Safeguarding and Family Support directorate includes early help and family support services, the 'front door service' which provides a single referral point for the council's services for vulnerable young people, Children in Need social work teams, Looked After Children social work teams, the 'Independent Futures' care leavers service, fostering and adoption services, and safeguarding and quality assurance teams.
- 2.8 The Youth and Community Services directorate was established in 2016 to align the early intervention and prevention of youth crime alongside safeguarding and family support services. The directorate includes the Youth Offending Service, the 'Targeted Youth Team' which carries out community outreach work with young people at risk of offending, the Integrated Gangs Team which works with the Police to offer support to those involved in gang activity, play and youth services, and the council's three youth hubs.
- 2.9 The Committee considered a number of case studies related to vulnerable adolescents and their families accessing a range of support services. Officers explained how the council's services work to minimise the risks to vulnerable adolescents, and as a result help young people and their families to build resilience, improve school attendance and attainment, cease gang involvement, reduce offending, secure employment, develop confidence and personal and social skills, engage with health services, reduce substance misuse, and achieve other positive outcomes. The Committee reviewed how different services operate in considerable detail.
- 2.10 Although the Committee was satisfied that a consistent and joined up approach was being taken by Children's Services, young people and their families also rely on a range of other local services. These may be other services provided by Islington Council, such as housing services or benefits assessment, or services provided by partners, including the Police, Schools, NHS, and the voluntary sector. Although Children's Services already engage with all of these partners, the Committee would welcome a greater strategic join up between these services and Children's Services, particularly on issues affecting the most vulnerable young people.
- 2.11 During the review officers commented that both GPs and schools could be more effective in referring vulnerable young people to support services at an earlier stage. Specific actions to support this are set out elsewhere in this report. However, it is suggested that further join up across services and partner organisations would foster a more consistent and holistic approach, and may in turn improve outcomes for vulnerable adolescents. Having a shared vision and priorities is key to this; and for this reason, it is recommended that a borough-wide pledge to support vulnerable young people is developed. This pledge should be owned at Chief Executive level to ensure that all council services contribute to the delivery of the pledge.
- 2.12 **A borough-wide pledge to support vulnerable young people should be developed by Summer 2018. Ownership of this pledge at Chief Executive level will help support accountability cross the council. All council services should commit to working collaboratively to reduce the risks to young people and improve their wellbeing. Partner**

**organisations should also be encouraged to commit to the pledge. This would assist in developing more joined up early intervention approaches.**

- 2.13 It is important that the delivery of the pledge is monitored to ensure that all services are working together in the best interests of vulnerable young people. Rather than task an individual or group with monitoring the pledge, it is recommended that delivery and monitoring should be incorporated into the terms of reference of all relevant multi-agency forums. This approach would allow services and partner organisations to hold each other to account without significantly increasing the burdens on services. Members of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee could be invited to attend relevant meetings where delivery of the pledge will be reviewed to provide democratic oversight and scrutiny.
- 2.14 The Committee also considers that it is important for young people to monitor the delivery of the pledge. Young people have valuable insights into the reality of service delivery and it is essential that their voices are heard. The Committee received evidence from Simone Headley, Chair of the Children's Active Involvement Service (CAIS) Council, and visited the CAIS Council to discuss their views on council services. The CAIS Council is open to all young people who are looked after or who have a social worker, and regularly provides feedback on services through the Corporate Parenting Board and other forums. Simone Headley commented that she was keen to keep senior officers "on their toes" and make sure they were listening to young people.
- 2.15 Young people should have a key role in holding services to account. This would not only help to improve services, but also help to develop the skills of the young people participating the process. The Committee recommends that both the CAIS Council and the Youth Council should carry out an annual review of how the pledge is being delivered and report their findings to the Chief Executive.
- 2.16 **It is suggested that the delivery of the pledge should be incorporated into the terms of reference and work plans of all relevant multi-agency forums. These forums should monitor delivery of the pledge through their work. A member of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee should be invited to observe relevant meetings. In addition, the Youth Council and CAIS should be invited to undertake an annual review of the effectiveness of the Pledge and report their findings back to the Chief Executive.**

Working differently to achieve the best outcomes for vulnerable adolescents

- 2.17 The Committee received evidence on the challenges faced by the council in providing effective services for vulnerable adolescents. Officers commented that the borough's administrative boundaries presented certain challenges. Although the council engages with young people on Islington estates, holds events in local youth hubs, and has a positive working relationship with the Police's local Safer Neighbourhood Teams, it was noted that some vulnerable young people from Islington frequently gather outside the borough boundary in Wood Green, Kings Cross, and the West End. The council is not able to target interventions in these areas, which makes it more difficult to engage with these young people.
- 2.18 The Committee also noted that traditional safeguarding approaches may not be wholly relevant to the issues faced by vulnerable adolescents. Traditional social work approaches are based on safeguarding children within a family; they work with young people and their parents on an individual basis, with interventions related to what happens within the family home. Whilst this is very effective for some vulnerable adolescents, this approach does not adequately address the risks to vulnerable adolescents in the community. Young people are not only influenced by what happens at home, but what happens in their peer group. Family based approaches only have limited relevance to, for example, a young person being exploited by a gang, or peer to peer child sexual exploitation. Parents have little influence over these risks.

- 2.19 The Committee received evidence on ‘contextual safeguarding’, a new approach being trialled in the London Borough of Hackney through government innovation funding. This new approach recognises the need to protect children from risks outside of the home; from peer groups and social media, and the community risks in their neighbourhoods and schools. The approach seeks to work in partnership with organisations that would not normally be involved in safeguarding, such as transport providers, local businesses, and fast food restaurants. The approach recognises that peer relationships are increasingly influential during adolescence, and these relationships are shaped by the local context of where they develop. Targeting interventions outside of the family home provides a more holistic safeguarding approach, in which children are protected in the places they are most vulnerable.
- 2.20 The Committee is supportive of contextual safeguarding approaches, however notes that current statutory frameworks are based on traditional family-based approaches. For this reason it is not possible for the council to fully implement contextual safeguarding approaches at present. However, the Committee considers that a cross-borough approach to safeguarding is needed, which makes use of contextual safeguarding methods to protect vulnerable young people across London. It is recommended that Islington Council work with other boroughs and key agencies such as the Police to develop such an approach as far as possible within the current statutory framework.
- 2.21 **To foster a more effective and joined-up approach to safeguarding across London, Children’s Services should seek to work with neighbouring boroughs and other agencies to develop a contextual safeguarding approach. This approach is focused on reducing risks and vulnerabilities and promoting safeguarding by intervening in the social environments experienced by young people, rather than focusing interventions on individuals. As part of this work, the council should lead on the development of protocols across borders with neighbouring local authorities focusing on risk management and the sharing of good practice.**
- 2.22 The Committee also received evidence on a new approach to working with young people in schools and other settings. Islington Council is currently delivering a project in partnership with Islington Clinical Commissioning Group and Whittington Health, which is seeking to implement trauma informed approaches in primary schools. This ‘ARC Pilot Project’ recognises that young people are affected by trauma; this might include physical, emotional or sexual abuse; physical or emotional neglect, or ‘household dysfunction’ such as domestic violence, substance misuse, mental illness, an incarcerated relative, or divorce. Experiences of trauma can lead to children developing coping strategies which may express as distressing behaviours, such as provoking conflict or avoiding seeking help. As a result, children who have experienced trauma may be under-developed in areas which are not useful to coping with trauma. For example, young children who have experienced trauma may have difficulty in sharing, problem solving, sustaining attention, seeking help, forming relationships, and managing emotions.
- 2.23 The pilot project was working with teachers and others working with young children to help them identify signs of trauma and target support at vulnerable young people who need it. This could include taking different approaches to managing behaviour in the classroom, or making referrals to support services as appropriate. It was suggested that those who have experienced trauma were more likely to have poorer outcomes, or develop vulnerabilities including mental health issues.
- 2.24 Whilst the results of the pilot project have not yet been evaluated, the Committee is supportive of trauma informed approaches, and considers that this work has significant potential to support vulnerable young people from an early age. The Committee suggests that these approaches,

and related screening tools for vulnerabilities, should be adopted more widely by schools. Engagement with the Community of Schools on this would be beneficial.

- 2.25 **Subject to the results of the trauma-informed approaches pilot, Children's Services should work with the Community of Schools to encourage schools to engage with these approaches and adopt related screening tools. This may assist in identifying a range of issues, including the diagnosis of mental health issues, at a much earlier age. The five schools engaging in the ARC pilot project should be asked to support in cascading this approach.**
- 2.26 There may be learning from the trauma informed approaches pilot which would benefit all professionals working with young people. To ensure this learning is shared as widely as possible, it is suggested that any relevant information should be incorporated into existing training provided through the Islington Safeguarding Children Board. It is hoped that this will assist professionals in identifying vulnerabilities and increase the number of referrals to support services.
- 2.27 **A trauma-informed approach to working with young people should be embedded in multi-agency training through a review of the Safeguarding Children Board training offer.**

Working with the Police to facilitate earlier intervention

- 2.28 The Committee received evidence on the close working relationship between Children's Services and the Police. The Committee welcomes that key agencies are working together through the Integrated Gangs Team, which includes staff from the council, Police, the Probation Service, the NHS, Victim Support, and others. The Police also engage in various multi-agency forums focused on safeguarding vulnerable young people, including the Islington Safeguarding Children Board. A sub-group of the Safeguarding Children Board has been formed to focus on the exploitation of young people, and this is chaired by the Police's safeguarding lead. This work makes a positive contribution to safeguarding in the borough, however, the Committee suggests that more could be done by both the council and the Police to ensure even earlier intervention for vulnerable young people.
- 2.29 Officers reported that domestic abuse and violence is a key factor experienced or witnessed by vulnerable adolescents. Officers suggested that around 60% of the most vulnerable adolescents had been affected by domestic abuse. The Committee noted that this is a sensitive topic and acknowledged the difficulties associated with addressing domestic violence issues; some perpetrators of domestic violence are very effective in controlling and coercing their victims, and some victims of domestic violence will not seek help out of fear.
- 2.30 The council and Police work in partnership to provide services for both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. This work is informed by the multi-agency Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy. Services include confidential drop in services and targeted interventions. Officers advised that there have been a number of local success stories where victims have left their abusive partner, perpetrators have changed their behaviour and formed healthy relationships, and vulnerable young people are protected. Whilst this work is welcomed, the Committee would support stronger and earlier interventions on domestic violence and abuse from both the council and the Police, given the high proportion of vulnerable adolescents being affected by domestic violence and abuse.

- 2.31 The Committee would also support further work in schools to support young people affected by domestic violence and abuse. Operation Encompass is a national partnership between the Police and Education. Participating boroughs establish processes for the Police to report to schools the next day if a young person has been exposed to or witnessed domestic abuse the previous evening. This information is passed to a responsible person at the school who can then arrange support as required. The Committee would support Islington participating in Operation Encompass. The Safeguarding Children Board may be best placed to lead on the implementation of the partnership.
- 2.32 **A high number of vulnerable adolescents have experienced or witnessed domestic abuse earlier in their lives. It is crucial that these young people receive support at the earliest possible opportunity. It is recommended that the council and police work together to develop stronger and earlier interventions on domestic abuse. This work should include the development of Operation Encompass in schools and a focus on partnership work through Islington Safeguarding Children Board.**
- 2.33 The Committee considers that there are further ways in which the Police could strengthen their partnership work with schools. The Police may hold useful information on young people which, if shared with schools and the local authority, could help to target support and interventions at an earlier stage. For example, Safer Neighbourhood Teams may have useful intelligence on young people at risk of gang activity. The information held may not be related to a particular crime, but local police officers may know, for example, which young people have been involved in anti-social behavior the previous evening, or who has been socialising with known gang members. The Committee noted that a young person's activity in a gang tends to escalate over time; young adolescents may start their gang involvement as a drug mule, before progressing to serious youth violence. It is important to engage with these vulnerable children as early as possible, before their gang involvement becomes entrenched. Greater use of Police intelligence may help in targeting this engagement.
- 2.34 **Children's Services should review if greater information can be shared between agencies to develop a more joined up approach to working with vulnerable adolescents. The Council should work with Police to ensure that lower level non-criminal concerns about young people are reported to the school via the Safer Schools Officer, so that young people's behaviour can be monitored and they can be referred to appropriate support services as appropriate.**

#### Making the most of existing resources

- 2.35 The Committee is acutely aware of the financial constraints on local authorities, schools, the Police, and the wider public sector. Resources to invest in new or enhanced services to support vulnerable adolescents are increasingly limited. It is essential that all partners involved in safeguarding children make the best use of existing resources.
- 2.36 The Committee received evidence on the Safer Schools offer provided by the Metropolitan Police. In Islington, every secondary school is assigned a Safer Schools Officer. This is a named Police Officer who will work in close partnership with the school, providing advice to pupils and staff on personal safety, crime prevention, safeguarding issues, drug awareness, exploitation, hate crime, knife crime, and domestic abuse. Although it was not possible to objectively measure the impact of Safer Schools officers, the sessions and advice provided was tailored to the needs of each school, and the project was intended to reduce the risks to young people and offending rates.

- 2.37 The Police advised the Committee that Safer Schools officers were being underused in Islington, and noted that Islington currently received a higher resource level than many other London boroughs, some of which only had four Safer Schools officers covering an entire borough. The Police commented that if Islington schools did not make greater use of Safer Schools officers then resource levels would have to be reviewed. The Committee considers that Safer Schools officers provide a valuable service and suggests that the benefits and opportunities they provide should be promoted through the Community of Schools.
- 2.38 **The Committee considers that greater use could be made of Safer Schools officers. The promotion of Safer Schools officers and their role in safeguarding children should be reiterated through the Islington Community of Schools.**
- 2.39 The Committee received evidence on how the community and voluntary sector supports vulnerable adolescents. The Committee received a presentation on the work of Arsenal in the Community. Although the organisation delivers activities through the medium of football, the focus of the organisation is on education, employment, and reducing youth crime. The organisation received funding from MOPAC, the Home Office and Sport England to deliver projects, and the effectiveness of its work was evaluated through key performance indicators. The organisation engaged with 5,700 participants a week through a range of short-term and long-term programmes. It was commented that long term approaches were most effective for vulnerable adolescents. These allowed workers to build relationships with young people; workers could then recognise when young people were struggling, and also when they were most receptive to support and open to changing their behaviour.
- 2.40 The Committee also received a presentation on the work of Abianda, a small social enterprise that works with young women affected by gangs and the professionals that support them. Abianda provided targeted services and bespoke projects for these young women, working with them on a one-to-one or small group basis. The organisation's work includes the Star Project, which explores issues such as healthy relationships, violence and exploitation; the Young Trainer Programme, which trains young women affected by gangs to become young trainers who can engage with professionals and help them to tailor their services; and the 'Be Your Own Boss' project, run in partnership with the London Village Network, which provides advice and support to young women wanting to start their own business. Abianda's work was focused around solution-based therapies, and all services were non-judgemental; they focused on the young woman's strengths and her future. Young women did not have to disclose any information about their relationships, associates or past traumas if they did not feel comfortable doing so. It was commented that this approach tended to allow young women to build relationships quickly with their support worker, even if the young woman had a history of non-engagement with support services. The organisation was currently working with 25 high-risk young women in Islington. Abianda hoped to develop services for younger girls as a form of early intervention, however this would require additional funding.
- 2.41 The Committee welcomes the work of the community and voluntary sector in supporting vulnerable adolescents. These organisations provide valuable services and are able to work with young people in a way that local agencies are not able to. Young people can face stigma when engaging with council services, health services, or the Police. For this reason, young people are more likely to engage with support organisations based in their community. The Committee is encouraged that this is recognised in the commissioning of services for young people, and that the council is working closely with voluntary sector organisations that deliver innovative and high quality support programmes.

- 2.42 The Committee believes that there is a great deal of potential in the local community and voluntary sector, and suggests that working even closer with the sector could assist in safeguarding and supporting vulnerable young people. Engaging with the sector on the council's priorities and early intervention approach would be a valuable exercise, and may result in greater alignment between council priorities and the priorities of the sector. It is also thought that aligning grant funding to these priorities may encourage a greater join up between council services and the community and voluntary sector. This could result in a more coherent approach to working with vulnerable young people across the borough.
- 2.43 **The council should ensure its strategic and commissioning priorities for vulnerable adolescents are shared with the voluntary and community sector and that priorities between the council and voluntary and community sector organisations are aligned. This could include the alignment of grant funding to these priorities.**
- 2.44 The Committee notes that some smaller community and voluntary sector organisations may be keen to work with the council on projects to support vulnerable young people, but need help in developing their approach. Developing closer relationships with these organisations may assist in generating referrals to the council, normalising accessing support services, and help to ease transitions between voluntary sector services and the council's support services.
- 2.45 **Children's Services should continue to work closely with voluntary and community sector organisations and develop these relationships further as appropriate. This may assist in generating referrals, normalise accessing support, and help to ease transitions between services.**

Improving communication with young people and professionals

- 2.46 The Committee considered the importance of communicating effectively with young people. There are a range of support services available to vulnerable adolescents, and it is crucial that young people are signposted to these services successfully.
- 2.47 The Committee visited the CAIS Council to discuss young people's views on council services. It was commented that some young people working with CAIS did not know about all of the services available to them. For example, a regular drop-in health clinic was held for these young people, however not all of those eligible were aware of this. It was commented that young people working with CAIS were provided with a printed booklet of services. The young people wanted to be able to find out about services in a more engaging way, and had recommended through the Corporate Parenting Board that an app be developed. The young people wanted the app to contain key information which could be updated regularly, and send notifications about upcoming events and drop-in sessions. Officers commented that progress on the development of the app had been slow due to technical and contractual issues.
- 2.48 The Committee considers that an app/website would be useful, not only for young people working with CAIS, but for all young people in the borough. Witnesses providing evidence to the Committee commented on the difficulty of communicating the range of services available to marginalised young people, particularly to those who did not access services at Islington's youth hubs. Abianda had received feedback from gang affected young women that they did not know there were services available to support them.



- 2.49 It is thought that a young person's app/website could communicate targeted information about support services, events, health and wellbeing messages, and other advice and guidance for young people, particularly vulnerable young people. Although it is suggested that the council lead on this, the app/website could also include useful information from the Police, NHS, voluntary sector, and others. Any app/website developed would need to be promoted regularly through schools and social media.
- 2.50 **The council should work to improve its communications to young people. The Council should lead on the development of a multi-purpose young people's app/website to ensure a wider reach for communicating targeted messages and information about health and wellbeing and support services.**
- 2.51 The CAIS Council also reported that young people were frustrated at not not being able to contact their social worker at short notice. The CAIS Council understood that social workers had a caseload of around 20 young people and were generally not free for unscheduled meetings or calls, however commented that the use of instant messaging would be a good service development and provide them with a faster response. Some young people knew they could email their social worker, but the CAIS Council highlighted that this was not a form of communication widely used by children and younger adolescents. There was a duty social worker available for short notice appointments, but young people emphasised that they did not have a relationship with this individual and wanted to be able to talk to their own social worker, who knew and understood their issues. The Committee would support allowing young people to contact their social worker through instant messaging, subject to all necessary safeguarding and data security criteria being met.
- 2.52 **Children's Services should review the feasibility of allowing young people to contact their social worker through instant messaging.**
- 2.53 It is suggested that services could be better promoted to professionals working with young people also. A directory of services is available on the council's website; however, witnesses queried the effectiveness of this. Both Arsenal in the Community and Abianda commented that their services were sometimes misunderstood by professionals, and this resulted in young people having different expectations of their services. The directory of services should be reviewed to ensure that it clearly communicates how a service is able to support a young person; this could include details of the programmes available and the methods they use alongside eligibility criteria. This would support professionals in judging whether a referral is appropriate or not.
- 2.54 It is also important that the directory is proactively promoted to all relevant professionals working with young people. The Committee suggests that the directory should be promoted through a series of communications about how to use it effectively; and if necessary officers could visit professional network meetings to discuss its use with colleagues in other sectors, including education and health. The directory could also be promoted through relevant safeguarding training.
- 2.55 **The council should review its directory of services and ensure it is proactively promoted to professionals in the health, education, and voluntary and community sectors to raise awareness and understanding of the range of support services available to vulnerable adolescents.**

## Other findings

- 2.56 Members of the CAIS Council suggested that services for young people could be more flexible and accessible. One care leaver commented that she was unable to access certain support services as she worked full time and the services were only available during standard office hours, Monday to Friday. It was thought that other young people may be in a similar position, or have other reasons why they are not able to access services during usual hours. For this reason, it is suggested that it may be appropriate to provide evening and weekend services if there is sufficient demand from young people. This would need to be reviewed on a service-by-service basis.
- 2.57 **The council should review if support services for young people are sufficiently flexible and accessible, and should consider the appropriateness and feasibility of providing evening and weekend support services, if such services are not already available.**
- 2.58 Evidence received by the Committee highlighted a number of positive examples of services listening and responding to the views of children and young people. The Youth Council has an active role in developing and reviewing services. Young people accessing Children in Need services are asked about their views and experiences, which inform targeted interventions with their parents. Senior officers regularly engage with the CAIS Council and officers suggested that this resulted in Islington providing some of the most comprehensive services for looked after children in London. Young people have been consulted to co-design future CAMHS services. Young people regularly sit on staff interview panels to ensure that the child's voice is reflected in the recruitment of relevant staff. The Council had established the Fair Futures Commission, which worked closely with young people and included young commissioners. The Commission had made several recommendations to the council and others on how to improve services for young people.
- 2.59 Of course, it is not possible to implement all suggestions made by young people. For example, it was highlighted that some young people were keen to self-refer to support services, however officers thought that this would not allow for the effective triaging of support. There was a concern that if access to certain services was not managed effectively then services could become overwhelmed. The Committee appreciates these concerns, welcomes that services proactively seek the views of young people, and is satisfied that services are positively responding to young people's feedback when possible.

## **3. Conclusions**

- 3.1 Overall the Committee was impressed with the wide range of support services available for vulnerable adolescents. The Committee considered a number of examples of different services and agencies working together to provide co-ordinated services for the benefit of young people. It is clear that the council and its partners recognise that providing joined up services is the best approach to supporting vulnerable young people. However, further improvements could be made to improve the effectiveness of services.
- 3.2 14 recommendations have been made in response to the evidence received. These are related to a greater strategic join-up between services; working differently by adopting new practices, such as trauma informed and contextual safeguarding approaches; closer work with the Police around domestic violence and the sharing of intelligence; making the most of existing resources; and communicating more effectively with young people and the professionals that support them.
- 3.3 The Committee would like to thank all the witnesses that gave evidence in relation to the review. The Executive is asked to endorse the Committee's recommendations.

<b>SCRUTINY INITIATION DOCUMENT (SID)</b>	
Title: Co-ordinated and joined up services for vulnerable adolescents	
Scrutiny Review Committee: Children's Services Scrutiny Committee	
Directors leading the review: Lisa Arthey, Director of Youth and Communities Finola Culbert, Director of Safeguarding and Family Support	
Lead officers: Catherine Briody, Head of Youth and Community Services Laura Eden, Head of Service – Safeguarding and Quality Assurance	
Overall aim: To review how effective the council is in providing joined up services; and to ensure that there are effective processes and practices that ensure young people are involved in all aspects of their support and intervention	
<p>Objectives of the review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To further understand the current and future risks and challenges faced by our young people who are vulnerable and how the council is continually responding to these in Islington.</li> <li>• To evaluate how the views and experiences of vulnerable adolescents are considered when planning and delivering services.</li> <li>• To assess how the current transition arrangements for vulnerable adolescents between early help, targeted and specialist services are continuously effective in providing a seamless support and intervention service/approach.</li> <li>• To assess if the support available to vulnerable adolescents from council services is sufficient, and how other support networks in the family, community, and peer groups can be developed to support further.</li> <li>• To explore the support network of young people within the family, community and friendships, and how they can support council services for vulnerable adolescents to reach their full potential.</li> <li>• To consider the effectiveness of partnership and integrated arrangements that the council has, if these achieve better outcomes, and to consider if further join up operationally and strategically would assist.</li> </ul>	
<p>How is the review to be carried out?</p> <p><u>Scope of the review</u></p> <p>The review will focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• vulnerable adolescents who are missing from home, care, or education;</li> <li>• young people aged 10 to 13 years (but not exclusively);</li> <li>• the issues faced by vulnerable young adults and what services or actions would have helped them as younger adolescents;</li> <li>• the 'child's voice' and how the council ensures that services for vulnerable adolescents are tailored to their specific needs;</li> <li>• the specific local causes of vulnerability.</li> </ul>	

### Types of evidence

- Evidence from officers across Children's Services
- Evidence from partner organisations that work closely with vulnerable adolescents
- Visits to services, to enable the committee to interview young people and front-line staff
- Evidence from other local authorities which demonstrate best practice in terms of services for vulnerable adolescents and integrated and joined up services
- Documentary evidence on young people's vulnerabilities, best practice, and service performance.

### Additional information:

For the purposes of this scrutiny review, adolescents are young people aged from the onset of puberty to 19 years. Focus will be given to young people aged 10-13, as this is a crucial age at which they transition from young people to teenagers and change schools.

In carrying out the review the committee will consider equalities implications and resident impacts identified by witnesses. The Executive is required to have due regard to these, and any other relevant implications, when responding to the review recommendations.

### Programme

Key output:	To be submitted to Committee on:
1. Scrutiny Initiation Document	19 September 2017
2. Draft Recommendations	20 February 2018
3. Final Report	20 March 2018

## WITNESS EVIDENCE PLAN

### Aim:

To review how effectively the council is in providing joined up services for Adolescents; and to ensure that there are effective processes and practices that enable young people to be involved in all aspects of their support and intervention

### Scope of the review:

- The changing vulnerabilities and risks identified by the young people themselves and professionals working in Islington
- The current services provided to vulnerable adolescents in Islington
- The young person's pathway between preventative, early help and specialist services and how successfully this is navigated.
- A closer look at the engagement with young people across all services, and how effective this is in ensuring the voice of the young person is heard and acted upon.
- Different models of service delivery, including multi-disciplinary and wrap-around services, and exploration what works best for the young person in achieving change

Theme	Related SID Objective
<b>From risk to resilience</b>	<b>SID Objective 1:</b> To further understand the current and future challenges and risks faced by our young people who are vulnerable and how the council is continually responding to these in Islington.
<b>The network of support for vulnerable adolescents</b>	<p><b>SID Objective 3:</b> To assess how the current transition arrangements for vulnerable adolescents between early help, targeted and specialist services are continuously effective in providing a seamless support and intervention service/approach.</p> <p><b>SID Objective 4:</b> To assess if the support available to vulnerable adolescents from council services is sufficient across the age range and demographic of the borough</p> <p><b>SID Objective 5:</b> To explore the support network of young people within the family, community and friendships, and how they can support council services for vulnerable adolescents to reach their full potential.</p>
<b>Working collaboratively with adolescents, across the council and with partners</b>	<p><b>SID Objective 2:</b> To evaluate how the views and experiences of vulnerable adolescents are considered when planning and delivering services.</p> <p><b>SID Objective 6:</b> To consider the effectiveness of partnership and integrated arrangements that the council has, if these achieve better outcomes, and to consider if further join up operationally and strategically would assist.</p>

## Suggested Work programme

Given the breadth of the subject area chosen, the committee has identified a number of areas for the review to focus on. These are:

- vulnerable adolescents who are missing from home, care, or education;
- young people aged 10 to 13 years (but not exclusively);
- the issues faced by vulnerable young adults and what services or actions would have helped them as younger adolescents;
- the 'child's voice' and how the council ensures that services for vulnerable adolescents are tailored to their specific needs;
- the specific local causes of vulnerability.

### 1. Witnesses

<b>Tuesday 19 September: Witnesses</b>	
<b>Who / Organisation</b>	<b>Area of focus</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lisa Arthey, Service Director of Youth and Community Services,</li> <li>• Catherine Briody, Head of Youth and Community Services</li> <li>• Laura Eden, Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance</li> </ul>	Scene-setting / introduction to vulnerable adolescents and what is currently in place to support and work with this age group.

<b>Monday 30 October: Witnesses</b>	
<b>Who / Organisation</b>	<b>Area of focus – Preventative services</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finola Culbert, Service Director of Safeguarding and Family Support</li> <li>• Lisa Arthey, Service Director of Youth and Community Services</li> </ul>	Overview of how services for vulnerable adolescents are structured.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence from a young person: Simone Headley, Chair of the In Care Council.</li> </ul>	A young person to share their experiences and give their views on council services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspector Kier Newman – Police representative for Safer Schools and Youth Engagement</li> <li>• Freddie Hudson – Community Manager, Arsenal in the Community</li> <li>• Abi Billingham – Founder and Director of ABIANDA</li> <li>• Sheron Hosking – CAMHS, Head of Children's Joint Health Commissioning</li> </ul>	Services provided and/or procured
	Involvement of young people in planning/commissioning/reviewing services or support
	Use of other support networks - family, community, and peer groups
	Different models of service delivery and what works best for delivering change
	How effective are these services? How can we measure if they are effective or not? Are services joined up?

### Documentary evidence:

- Early Intervention and Help Strategy for Islington, 2015-2025
- Mapping of preventative services / resources in the borough for adolescents
- Working together to safeguard young people in Islington - Youth Crime Plan, 2017-20
- Recommendations & Executive Summary of Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee report on Knife Crime, 2015/16
- CAHMS transformation plan

<b>Tuesday 28 November: Witnesses</b>	
<b>Who / Organisation</b>	<b>Area of focus – Early Help &amp; Specialist Services Part 1</b> <i>Instability in the family / anti-social and criminal behaviours</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Curtis Ashton – Head of Targeted Youth Services and Youth Offending Service</li> <li>Abi Onaboye – Head of Early Help Children Skills and Employment Services</li> <li>Holly Toft – Head of Play, Youth and Post-16</li> <li>Helen Cameron – Health and Wellbeing Manager (Trauma Informed Practice)</li> </ul>	Services provided and/or procured - Step up from early help / step down from specialist
	How the child's voice can be heard throughout service commissioning and delivery.
	Involvement of young people in planning / commissioning / reviewing services or support where risk behaviours are identified
	Use of other support networks - family, community, and peer groups and how they support the young person
	How effective are these services? How can we measure if they are effective or not? Are services joined up?

<b>Tuesday 9 January: Witnesses</b>	
<b>Who / Organisation</b>	<b>Area of focus – Early Help &amp; Specialist Services Part 2</b> <i>Abuse and neglect / missing from home, care or education</i> <i>Child Sexual Exploitation / Edge of care work</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Laura Eden – Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance</li> <li>Naomi Bannister – CSE lead</li> <li>Sarah Whelan – Safeguarding Gangs Lead for Children, Employment and Skills</li> <li>Gabriella Di-Sciullo – Head of Admissions &amp; Children Out of School</li> </ul>	Services provided and/or procured - Step up from early help and how to support where risk is identified that impacts on the young person's level of vulnerability
	How the child's voice can be heard throughout service commissioning and delivery.
	Involvement of young people in planning / commissioning / reviewing services and how this translates to actions
	Use of other support networks - family, community, and peer groups
	How effective are these services? How can we measure if they are effective or not? Are services joined up?

#### **Documentary evidence:**

- Islington Safeguarding Gang Protocol and procedure 2016

<b>Tuesday 20 February: Concluding Discussion and Draft Recommendations for approval</b>	
<b>Who/Organisation</b>	<b>Area of focus – Conclusions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lisa Arthey – Service Director, Youth and Community Services</li> <li>Finola Culbert – Service Director, Safeguarding and Family Support</li> </ul>	To assist the Committee in forming conclusions and to provide updates on any outstanding matters. To provide comparative information on how other authorities deliver their services.

#### **Documentary evidence:**

- Briefing Note on Contextual Safeguarding

## 2. Visits

Visits			
Who	Organisation/remit	Area of focus	When
Young people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• CAIS representatives</li></ul>	Looked after children engaging in the CAIS Council	What works or could work better for them re: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Support</li><li>- Involvement in planning or reviewing services</li></ul>	February 2018

## 3. Report

- **20 February 2018:** Draft recommendations
- **20 March 2018:** Draft report