

## **Children's Services Scrutiny Committee**

### **Alternative Provision Scrutiny Review**

#### **Notes for Concluding Discussion**

The below notes have been compiled from the evidence received and are intended to facilitate discussion on the committee's conclusions. It is recommended that these are considered in relation to the overall aims of the review:

- 1. To identify how we can reduce the numbers of children on alternative provision.**
- 2. To identify how we can ensure that provision is of the highest quality.**
- 3. To make recommendations to further improve the outcomes, attendance, and accountability for those in alternative provision.**
- 4. To identify how schools and academies are ensuring the best possible outcomes for the most vulnerable children, including their emotional well-being, and make recommendations about how best practice can be in place in all schools and Academies.**
- 5. To evaluate the quality, standards and value for money of alternative provision providers, and the range of provision.**
- 6. To identify how early intervention and 'Think Family' approaches can be mainstreamed once the pump priming funding is no longer available.**

The conclusions of the committee will be incorporated into the draft recommendations, to be considered at the next meeting.

#### What works best for AP pupils?

Pupils responded to:

- Boundaries
- Consistent discipline
- Small classes
- Positivity about their aspirations linked to the comprehension of the purpose of education
- Pastoral support
- Access to health and fitness
- Getting to mix with different pupils from themselves
- Horizon widening activities
- Mentors

### How can schools adopt best practice?

- Adopt a “never give up” attitude
  - Early intensive support
  - More creative and flexible in dealing with difficult students: timings, differing activities
  - Greater focus on speech and language issues from a young age
  - Not use AP as a threat but as a fresh start
  - Have access to more behavioural specialists
  - Have access to mental health services
  - Interventions like “Achievement for All” – working with parents and pupils
  - Be sure that primary schools are using pupil premium to effectively support at risk children
  - Ensure that primary schools are using effective language and teaching methods that are about progress
  - Developing pupil resilience from an early age
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- How can the council work to best support schools? IFIT pilot programme, integration with existing support mechanisms, improvement programmes, etc.

### Referral processes and associated issues:

- Council ambition to reduce the number of pupils on AP – how best to achieve this? Links to referral processes, school support mechanisms, early help, reducing need and demand, etc?
- Schools approach referrals in different ways – referral numbers vary significantly
- The Alternative Provision service challenges schools on referrals; however schools can choose to refer outside of the local authority framework - difficult balance
- Could the “information passport” process be more robust? Should a formal referral panel be set up?
- The “out of sight, out of mind” issue and school accountability – how can schools be encouraged to engage?
- Potential for schools to learn from providers
- Referring back to mainstream – is this possible? Minimise disruption during GCSEs
- Schools should be encouraged to be honest when transferring pupils
- Suggestion that mid-phase admission can contribute to referral
- Pupil experiences of the referral process – most of those interviewed seemed pleased with their provision

### Best practice and improvements for providers:

- Educational attainment is important, not just a focus on behaviour
- How pupils are assessed by providers on referral – could this be more effective?
- How challenging is the education provided? Academic quality and access to GCSEs, particularly English and Maths
- Attendance: reduction in access and engagement service – half of cohort are persistent absentees
- Setting expectations and managing behaviour is essential
- High aspirations for pupils
- Different assessment standards to schools – attainment and attendance differ due to cohort
- Provider quality – six rated “good”, five “requires improvement”
- More celebratory events?

### The council's Alternative Provision service:

- Suggestion that more SEN and CAMHS support is needed
- Other agencies and services to be more forthcoming with information
- Suggestion that a stronger relationships with parents would be useful, but capacity issue
- Increase social care team engagement?
- There is regular contact and engagement with schools through attendance monitoring, reporting on progress, and quality evaluation
- Common quality evaluation framework across North London in line with Ofsted requirements; considered to be robust – schools have access to evaluation data and inadequate provision is terminated

### Other:

- The girls issue – majority of AP pupils are boys, do girls need additional support? Suggestion that girls deal with problems differently: are less likely to be disruptive, and are less likely to be referred
- White British boys most likely to be referred – targeted interventions?
- Is demand for vocational qualifications in schools contributing to demand for AP? Is this appropriate and can this demand be better met through other means
- Communicating with parents – reported that some push for referral, whereas others prefer their children to be in school – letters sent home for non-attendance and to recognise improvements in attendance
- “Value for money” considerations; schools indicated that AP is good value, however positive outcomes and attendance are essential – how should value be assessed?
- Different local authority AP models – what can be learned from Redbridge?  
Comprehensive model of support which prioritises individual needs  
Alternative provision available from early years onwards