

London Borough of Islington  
**Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - Monday, 28 March 2022**

Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on Monday, 28 March 2022 at 7.00 pm.

**Present:**           **Councillors:**           Chapman (Chair), Bell-Bradford, Burgess, North, Ozdemir and Woolf

**Also Present:**           **Councillor:**           Ngongo

**Co-opted Member**           Mary Clement, Roman Catholic Diocese  
Jon Stansfield, Parent Governor Representative (Primary)  
Zaleera Wallace, Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

**Councillor Sheila Chapman in the Chair**

**1       APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (ITEM NO. 1)**

Apologies were received from Councillors Convery and Woodbyrne.

**2       DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (ITEM NO. 2)**

There were no declarations of substitute members.

**3       DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (ITEM NO. 3)**

There were no declarations of interest.

**4       MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (ITEM NO. 4)**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2021 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

**5       CHAIR'S REPORT (ITEM NO. 5)**

The Chair welcomed Jon Stansfield, Parent Governor Representative (Primary) to the committee.

The Chair advised that the Government's Schools White Paper had been published. It called for higher targets for English and maths and behaviour, all schools to be academies and more Ofsted inspections.

**6       ITEMS FOR CALL IN (IF ANY) (ITEM NO. 6)**

None.

**7       PUBLIC QUESTIONS (ITEM NO. 7)**

The chair advised that public questions would be taken at the end of each agenda item.

8 **DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS (ITEM NO. B1)**

The Chair stated that that the draft recommendations, which included input from officers, had been circulated. The draft was a near-final iteration. The Chair asked members to delegate to her the authority to finalise the recommendations which she would do in consultation with members. This would enable to recommendations to be agreed before the end of the municipal year.

**RESOLVED:**

That the approval of the recommendations be delegated to the Chair in consultation with members.

9 **EDUCATION OUTCOMES 2021 (ITEM NO. B2)**

Cate Duffy, Corporate Director, Children's Services, presented the report.

In the presentation and discussion the following main points were made:

- There were no public examinations in 2020 or 2021 and school level performance data was not published in the way that it normally would be.
- In 2021, children were assessed by their teachers using a variety of assessment methods. There was flexibility in how assessments could be conducted.
- Whilst school level data was not published, local authority national data had been published. This data could not be compared with outcomes from previous years due to the methods of the assessment being different but it was possible to see if outcomes were different. Nationally and locally, attainment had increased under teacher assessment. Nationally gender gaps and pupil premium gaps widened but in Islington they did not. At GCSE level there was virtually no gender gap in and the pupil premium gap was about half, and in some cases less than half, than it was in 2019.
- There were many views about the robustness of the methods of assessment used in teacher assessment. However, there were more children in 2020 and 2021 who achieved the grades they needed to enable them to take their next steps.
- A member raised concern about the figures indicating that Islington appeared to have performed worse than both the London average and the national average at Key Stage 4 for those with Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) and Special Educational Needs (SEN). The officer stated that data comparisons in any year were difficult because the cohort of children with EHCPs who were entered for GCSEs varied dramatically. These children had a wide variety of needs and it was also a small cohort of about 70 young people which made it statistically difficult to compare. These children had to be looked at on a child by child basis. Ofsted recognised these difficulties and when they went into schools they tended not to look at this data in relation to the performance of a school.

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- A member of the public raised concern about the outcomes for black Caribbean children on free school meals. The officer stated that this was a small group of about 80 children and so it was difficult to make statistical comparisons. Also, methods of assessment differed nationally, across London and between Islington schools. This was a cohort that was tracked and would continue to be tracked.
- A member asked whether the results of black Caribbean boys had decreased as a result of other factors such as discrimination. The officer stated that although the results for this cohort were lower in 2021 than in 2020, they were still higher than when examinations took place in 2019. At the time, there were concerns about teacher assessment and unconscious bias nationally but it was difficult to draw conclusions about the effect on outcomes. To try and safeguard against bias schools were supported to blind mark so teachers did not know whose papers they were marking. There were a number of projects to target the black Caribbean cohort as historically there had been underperformance in this group.
- A member asked if it was possible to break down the data into males and females. The officer advised that in normal years it would be possible to do this but for 2020 and 2021 pupil level data was not compiled.
- A member raised concern about the cohort of pupils on free school meals, the pupil premium and the changing profile and asked what the council could do to mitigate against problems and make improvements. The officer advised that due to changes in Universal Credit, children were remaining entitled to free school meals for several years even if their families moved off the benefits that had entitled them to receive free school meals. This change increased the proportion who were entitled to pupil premium and changed the nature of that cohort which meant it was likely that outcomes for this group would improve.
- Subject to there being no more lockdowns there would be public exams this year and a more usual set of data that would be presented to the committee next year. However, this cohort was still a cohort that had been affected by the pandemic and lockdown so although data would be affected by this, the data would be more robust than the data than 2020 and 2021 data.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

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### **PROJECT SEARCH (ITEM NO. B3)**

Candy Holder, Head of Pupil Services, presented the report.

In the presentation and discussion, the following points were made:

- The report followed a report at the December 2021 meeting in relation to transition. The council had an ambition to develop supported internships. Demand would grow as the number of young people with Autism and Social Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH) were projected to increase significantly.

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- There had been some successes already. Regionally there were many opportunities, many of which were in hospitals or hospitality. An offer with a wide range of opportunities would be developed. The cost implications for the council would not be significant as the education element would be drawn down from the funding agency. There was capacity in the 14 to 19 team. There were resources to develop and finding business opportunities would be a challenge. At first, opportunities would be sought through the council and its services and major contractors. Larger employers could also be asked to offer placements.
- In response to a question about ensuring that supported internships followed an education programme and were not young people working unpaid, the officer stated that one of the objectives of the programme was for those who had completed their supported internships to enter paid employment, where appropriate, with the same employer. There had already been some successes with this.
- The Community Wealth Building team were undertaking a piece of work on measuring social value e.g. ensuring the planning application process required significant planning schemes to deliver social value.
- A member of the public asked about the cost per student. The officer stated that money would be allocated according to needs. Local resources would be used. The cost would be equivalent to that of full time education.
- In the UK there were different brands of Supported Internships. These included Project Search, Project Choice and Royal Mencap Society. In response to a question from a member, the officer stated that all these schemes could be used.
- The Chair stated that it was important that young people were not working two years without getting paid under any of the schemes.
- The chair asked if full-scale implementation could be brought forward from the three years stated in the report. The officer would report this request back to the Progress Team.
- The Chair asked about the mechanisms in place to monitor effectiveness of the whole scheme and also of the three different potential providers. The officer stated that there had been successes so far but there were small numbers and outcomes were dependent on the student. Work would be undertaken on how the Supported Internship schemes could be evaluated and outcomes compared.

### **RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That regular updates be submitted to the committee.
- 3) That officers consider the feasibility of reducing the proposed three-year schedule until full-scale implementation.

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**ISLINGTON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT (ITEM NO. B4)**

Laura Eden, Director of Safeguarding, presented the Islington Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report on behalf of Alan Caton, Independent Scrutineer of the Partnership.

In the presentation and discussion the following main points were made:

- The report set out the work and activities of the Safeguarding Partnership and sub-groups in 2020/2021.
- Legislation required the report to be completed annually and to be presented to several boards and committees in Islington, one of which was the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.
- A member asked if it was known why Islington had a higher rate of Children in Need and Children Looked After than statistical neighbours. The officer advised that there were high levels of children in Need in Islington but the numbers had decreased in recent years. The figures were masked by some children with disabilities who are receiving family support rather than an allocated social worker and were classed as Children in Need. There were also good early intervention services. In relation to Children Looked After, Islington had the second highest rate per 10,000 children. Work was taking place to ascertain the reasons for this. When reviewed by Ofsted, the service was advised that the right children were being brought in to care. Islington had a higher proportion of Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) than other boroughs.
- In response to questions about the Child Q case review, the officer advised that when police went into schools where a child was suspected to be a victim of child abuse or neglect, they would go in jointly with a social worker that had been agreed by a local authority manager. The phrase 'appropriate adult' was used for when children were arrested and required an appropriate adult to be present when they were interviewed. This could be a parent or an appropriate adult from a commissioned organisation. The Chair stated that Ofsted were asked to undertake an inspection after the Child Q case and were critical of the teachers saying they should have challenged the police and asked whether teachers were aware they should challenge the police where necessary and whether they felt empowered to do this. The officer advised that it was hoped teachers would intervene but in reality an unspoken hierarchy could prevent challenge. Safeguarding Partnerships only had to complete a review when a child died or was significantly injured but the Hackney Children Safeguarding Partnership had chosen to undertake a review to learn from the case and share the learning with other boroughs. The case review on Child Q would be brought to the relevant Islington Safeguarding Partnership sub-groups to analyse lessons to be learnt and help collect and understand data e.g. stop and search and strip searches. Police had given assurances about there being no strip searches within Islington schools and the police were on board with learning lessons. There was a training and development

issue around the hierarchy of agencies. The Child Q case report would be circulated to members.

- A member asked how feedback from children and parents about child protection conferences could be improved. The officer stated that in relation to parents' feedback a survey had taken place and parents were asked to give feedback at the end of a child protection conference. Approximately 14 parents provided feedback each year. It was noted that this was always a low number but it was a parent's choice whether they wished to do this.
- Whilst professionals often preferred online child protection conferences, parents had stated they preferred them to take place face-to-face. Therefore once restrictions were eased, parents had face-to-face child protection conferences with some professionals present in person and others online. Child protection conferences were now moving back to hybrid/face-to-face as that was in the best interests of families. In relation to children and participation there were differing views on whether children should be present at child protection conferences. Sometimes adult issues which impacted on the children were discussed and it might not be appropriate for a child to hear these. Parental permission was required to have children of a certain age present. It was important that a child was able to express their view and give a description of their lived experience to their social worker or potentially the child protection co-ordinator outside of the conference.
- A member asked about elective home education and if cross-referencing took place when the local authority was notified a child would be home educated e.g. to see if the family were known to social services or if there were any indicators that the local authority should intervene. The officer advised that cross-referencing took place and present or past concerns about child protection, safeguarding, domestic violence, mental health etc. that had led to a referral into social care would be identified. Assessments took place of the risks of the child being home educated however, the local authority could not legally prevent parents from home educating their children. An officer stated that one of the proposals of the Government white paper was to strengthen local authority powers in relation to children who were not in education.
- A member asked if there was any way to ascertain why three young people had gone missing from care for longer than one month. The officer stated that sometimes young people who were UASC went missing near their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday if they had not received a decision from the Home Office about their status. This was worrying and showed that even though work was done with young people to explain they were likely to get status and leave to remain, they were concerned that they would be returned to their home country. In these cases, the local authority alerted all national ports and photographs were sent to other boroughs. These young people would always be treated by the police as missing people and their cases would not be closed. Often long missing episodes were related to criminal exploitation.

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- A member asked about ongoing monitoring of peer-on-peer sexual violence, abuse and harassment and measures in place to ensure schools were following the protocol. An officer stated that many schools had been involved in producing the protocol. Schools were required to submit an annual safeguarding audit. If there was a lack of referrals from a school, this would be challenged.
- It was important to have a transparent and inclusive culture and to help young people feel safe enough to voice concerns and understand when something was not appropriate.
- There had been a successful bid for funding from the Violence Reduction Unit who wanted to do some work focused work around inclusion and peer-on-peer reviews. This would take place over three years and would involve work with 10 or 12 schools and experiences would be rolled out to other schools.
- A member referred to the lack of child sexual exploitation referrals from those of Asian Bangladeshi heritage and asked what could be done to improve this. The officer stated this would be tracked over a number of years and consideration would be given as to how to work with community groups and give advice on services available.

### **RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the Child Q report be circulated to members.

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### **YOUTH OFFER (ITEM NO. B5)**

Curtis Ashton, Director – Young Islington, presented the report.

In the presentation and discussion the following main points were made:

- Islington's youth provision included Lift, Platform, Rose Bowl, CYP, Soap Box and The Zone. As a result of an extra £500,000 a year investment, the universal youth work offer would continue to be responsive to the needs of Islington young people. Since February 2020, there had been engagement with young people and key stakeholders to design and formulate a new borough wide universal youth work offer.
- Data had shown that the previous offer did not engage with some communities e.g. Somali, Turkish, Bangladeshi and LGBTQ communities and young people with disabilities plus young people from poorer and more deprived backgrounds.
- The development of the new universal youth work offer coincided with the ending of a number of youth offer contracts.
- The procurement process was slightly hampered by COVID-19 and the council did not receive the number of bids that were anticipated. Lot 1 was awarded to London Youth and St Mary's. Lot 2 was awarded to Isledon Arts and Lot 3 was awarded to Fourth Monkey. However this provider for Lot 3 withdrew so it had been brought in-house.
- As part of the Lot 1 contract, London Youth and St Mary's would be leading on an annual report and helping with youth related leadership opportunities.

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- As part of the Lot 2 contract, there was a newly appointed youth worker for Lift. A minimum of 1,500 Islington young people would be engaged each year across Lift and Rose Bowl.
- As part of Lot 3, the council was creating a small internal youth work focussed team that would be supported by the Brandon Centre.
- Eligible staff members from Isledon Arts were being TUPEd across to Islington Council and this would continue for the foreseeable future.
- A Youth Hub Manager and a Senior Youth Officer had been appointed for Platform and would be starting in April. Services users had been involved in the recruitment.
- Work was taking place with key stakeholders on a programme of sessions. This would include cooking, access to safe spaces and open mic sessions.
- In response to a member's question about how many days/hours Brandon Centre staff would be at Platform, the officer advised that there would be a full time worker on site who would be responsive to the needs of young people. There would be a trained psychologist providing six counselling sessions to young people who needed it and these could be extended or the young person referred if necessary. A leaflet with contact details of the youth worker had been sent round to young people via social media networks and had been posted on the Platform website.
- A member raised concern that between January 2022 and April 2022 there was no youth worker in post. The officer responded that since the beginning of January 2022 there had been Targeted Youth Support staff on site. No young person had been turned away or left without support during this transition period.
- In response to a question about the strategy to engage priority groups, the officer stated that work would take place with locality networks. A number of youth providers were meeting regularly to ensure that the needs of young people were being discussed so that they could be supported more effectively and efficiently. Data would be monitored and work was taking place with groups of young people who had not accessed services in the past. Work would also take place with schools and colleges to ensure they were aware of the youth offer and could refer young people.
- Funding had been received from the Violence Reduction Unit to continue the Parent Champion Programme across Camden and Islington to reach out to and support young people and their families.
- The Andover Community Project was in a deprived part of the borough. There would be a youth provider there from June 2022.
- In response to a member's question about the costs of the in-house youth provision, the officer advised that the costs would be more than £320,000 and would be subject to discussion with members.
- In response to a question from a member of the public about outreach engagement and design, the officer stated that over 70 in-depth ethnographic studies had been undertaken to understand young people's needs and their way of life. Work started in February 2020 and in from March 2020, the Covid pandemic had made much more difficult

to engage with young people in large groups so engagement had taken place virtually. Engagement and participation would be measured and monitored.

- In response to a member's question about whether every young person in Islington could be informed about centres, support available and have a youth worker to contact, the officer stated that the service wanted all young people to know who to contact and work would be taking place on this in the coming months.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

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**YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE UPDATE (ITEM NO. B6)**

Curtis Ashton, Director – Young Islington, presented the Youth Offending Service (YOS) report.

In the presentation and discussion, the following main points were made:

- There had been inspections in 2014 and 2015 and inspection outcomes were not good. Since then there had been significant change with much success in terms of key performance indicators and the work being undertaken.
- The first time entrants figure had improved substantially.
- In 2016, Islington had the worst custody rate in the whole country but now Islington outperformed statistical neighbours and the London average.
- There had been improvement in the reoffending rate.
- There had been progress made in relation to disproportionality. There was an over representation of boys from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and a project funded by the Youth Justice Board had resulted in a number of recommendations being made. Further work would be undertaken.
- Covid had impacted on the way services were delivered. All young people were still seen virtually with the most vulnerable seen through home visits.
- The YOS was awaiting an inspection.
- Much work had taken place to prevent knife crime. The YOS had produced an award winning film which was shown in schools and to young people involved with the Service. It showed the dangers of carrying a knife which was particularly significant as in 2021 there had been the largest number of teenagers in London killed by knife crime with 31 people killed.
- Partners were brought together in multi-disciplinary panels to plan and be respond to the needs of young people and help young people turn their lives around. These included health professionals, psychologists, education and social care. It was important to ensure that victims were supported as well and restorative justice principles were important.
- As the data related to young people aged 10-17, a member asked who supported those aged 18 and over. The officer advised that the YOS supported young people aged 17 and 18 in line with the legislation.

Those who were aged 18-24 who were at risk of offending were supported by the Integrated Gangs Team (IGT). It was a multi-agency team which could wrap around young people and provide support to them in terms of emotional wellbeing, help with their housing, help to remain in education, training, or employment. The police service was a key partner and there were daily tasking meetings. The IGT supported victims and perpetrators.

- In response to a member's question about how the YOS team supported parents, the officer stated that there was a Parental Officer based within the YOS and the Parent Champions Group as well as robust parenting programmes.
- A member asked if young people were tracked to see how successful interventions were at keeping young people out of custody up until the age of 25. The officer stated that this data was not collected. If a person offended post 18 they would be involved with and supported by the Probation Service. It would however be possible to look at data for the IGT and see if offenders had previously been involved with the YOS.
- The officer advised that there were 30 young people in custody in 2016 and this had reduced to five young people a year ago. In addition, the diversion rate which was a corporate measure of those at risk of criminality was 90%, exceeding the target of 85%.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the committee be provided with data from the IGT detailing the numbers of young people who had offended aged 18-24 and had previously been involved with the YOS.

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**QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REPORT (ITEM NO. B7)**

In the discussion the following main points were made:

- A member asked about the split between Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) and those who were not. An officer advised that there at the end of February 2022 there were 392 Looked After Children. There were currently 70 UASC Children Looked After (CLA), many of whom had been put into hotels by the Home Office, incorrectly identified as adults and following local authority age assessments, had been taken into care. There were also 140 care leavers who were unaccompanied and separated adults out of 590 care leavers. It was expected the number of UASC would slow down unless another hotel for asylum seekers was opened in the borough. There was a national transfer scheme for boroughs such as Islington which were over their quota but to date this had not been as effective as necessary.
- A member of the public referred to a leaflet about every young person having had 100 hours of work experience and eleven outstanding cultural experiences by Year 11. An officer confirmed this was an aspiration.
- A member asked about placement stability. An officer stated that shorter-term stability meant children moved two or more times after they came into care. At the end of Quarter 3 the figure was 9.4% which

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was better than last year. Last year there were more issues with the placement market during Covid and lockdown periods when more people were not accepting children into their homes. Some children moved for positive reasons. Long term stability was the number of children that had been in care for two and a half years and stayed in the same placement for two years. Approximately 85% were in long term placements. The most common children to move placements and therefore not be in long term placements were those who had entered care aged 14+.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

MEETING CLOSED AT 9.05 pm

Chair