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ISLINGTON

Resources Department
Town Hall, Upper Street, London, N1 2UD

AGENDA FOR THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Members of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee are summoned to a meeting, which will be held in Council Chamber, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on, **5 July 2022 at 7.00 pm.**

Enquiries to   :   Zoe Lewis
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Despatched   :   27 June 2022

Membership   Substitute Members

Councillors: **Substitutes:**
Councillor Sheila Chapman (Chair)   Councillor Jilani Chowdhury
Councillor Valerie Bossman-Quarshie   Councillor Paul Convery
(Vice-Chair)   Councillor Praful Nargund
Councillor Janet Burgess MBE   Councillor Toby North
Councillor Fin Craig   Councillor Caroline Russell
Councillor Ernestas Jegorovas-
Armstrong
Councillor Rosaline Ogunro
Councillor Gulcin Ozdemir
Councillor Saiqa Pandor

Co-opted Member:
Mary Clement, Roman Catholic Diocese
Zaleera Wallace, Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)
Jon Stansfield, Parent Governor Representative (Primary)
Vacancy Church of England Diocese

Quorum is 3 Councillors

A.   **Formal Matters**   **Page**

1.   Apologies for Absence

2.   Declaration of Substitute Members

3.   Declarations of Interest

If you have a **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest*** in an item of business:
- if it is not yet on the council's register, you **must** declare both the existence and details of it at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent;
- you may **choose** to declare a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest that is already in the register in the interests of openness and transparency.

In both the above cases, you **must** leave the room without participating in discussion of the item.

If you have a **personal** interest in an item of business **and** you intend to speak or vote on the item you **must** declare both the existence and details of it at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent but you **may** participate in the discussion and vote on the item.

***(a) Employment, etc -** Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.

(b) Sponsorship - Any payment or other financial benefit in respect of your expenses in carrying out duties as a member, or of your election; including from a trade union.

(c) Contracts - Any current contract for goods, services or works, between you or your partner (or a body in which one of you has a beneficial interest) and the council.

(d) Land - Any beneficial interest in land which is within the council's area.

(e) Licences- Any licence to occupy land in the council's area for a month or longer.

(f) Corporate tenancies - Any tenancy between the council and a body in which you or your partner have a beneficial interest.

(g) Securities - Any beneficial interest in securities of a body which has a place of business or land in the council's area, if the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body or of any one class of its issued share capital.

This applies to all members present at the meeting.

4.   Minutes of the Previous Meeting   1 - 12

5.   Chair's Report

6.   Items for Call In (if any)

7. Public Questions

For members of the public to ask questions relating to any subject on the meeting agenda under Procedure Rule 70.5. Alternatively, the Chair may opt to accept questions from the public during the discussion on each agenda item.

B. **Items for Decision/Discussion** **Page**

C. **Urgent non-exempt items (if any)**

Any non-exempt items which the Chair agrees should be considered urgently by reason of special circumstances. The reasons for urgency will be agreed by the Chair and recorded in the minutes.

D. **Exclusion of press and public**

To consider whether, in view of the nature of the remaining items on the agenda, it is likely to involve the disclosure of exempt or confidential information within the terms of the Access to Information Procedure Rules in the Constitution and, if so, whether to exclude the press and public during discussion thereof.

E. **Exempt items for Call In (if any)** **Page**

F. **Confidential/exempt items** **Page**

G. **Urgent exempt items (if any)**

Any exempt items which the Chair agrees should be considered urgently by reason of special circumstances. The reasons for urgency will be agreed by the Chair and recorded in the minutes.

The next meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee
will be on 8 September 2022

**Please note that committee agendas, reports and minutes are available
from the council's website: www.democracy.islington.gov.uk**

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.

- 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.

10 **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.

- 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.

11   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 lead 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 18th 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.

- 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.

12   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 LGBQT 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.

- 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.

13   **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.

14   **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

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+.

<u>RESOLVED:</u>
That the report be noted.

MEETING CLOSED AT 9.05 pm

Chair

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Report of: Director of Law and Governance

Meeting of: Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Date: 5 July 2022

Ward(s): N/A

Subject: Membership, Terms of Reference and Dates of Meetings of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

1. Synopsis

1.1. To inform members of the terms of reference of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.

2. Recommendations

2.1. To note the membership appointed by Annual Council on 26 May 2022, terms of reference and dates of meetings of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2022/23.

3. Background

3.1. The terms of reference of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee (as at Part 5 of the Council's Constitution) are set out at Appendix A.

3.2. The dates of meetings are also set out at Appendix A for information.

4. Implications

4.1.　**Financial Implications**
　　　None.

4.2.　**Legal Implications**
　　　None.

4.3.　**Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030**
　　　Papers are only circulated electronically.

4.4.　**Equalities Impact Assessment**
4.4.1.　The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

4.4.2.　An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required in relation to this report as the contents of the report relate to a purely administrative function and will not impact on residents.

5.　Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

5.1.　This report is submitted to ensure members are fully informed of the remit of the Committee.

Appendices:

- Appendix A – Meeting Dates and Terms of Reference.

Background papers:

- None

Final report clearance:

Signed by:

Director of Law and Governance

Date: 13 June 2022

Report Author: Zoe Lewis, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Tel: 020 7527 3486
Email: zoe.lewis@islington.gov.uk

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CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 2022/23

1. MEETING DATES

5 July 2022

8 September 2022

18 October 2022

29 November 2022

17 January 2023

28 February 2023

20 March 2023

25 April 2023

The dates, times and locations of meetings are publicised on the council's website – democracy.islington.gov.uk

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE
EXTRACT FROM PART 5 OF THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION

Scrutiny Committees

1. Overview and scrutiny functions are:

    - Reviewing or scrutinising decision or actions taken in connection with the discharge of executive functions
    - Making recommendations about executive functions
    - Reviewing or scrutinising decision or actions taken by the council in connection with the discharge of non-executive functions
    - Making recommendations about these functions
    - Making recommendations about matters which affect the authority's area or its inhabitants.
    - Carrying out the specific roles of health scrutiny and crime and disorder scrutiny.
    - To consider matters relating to the performance of the council.

2. Overview and scrutiny functions in respect of the Council's education functions are allocated to the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee the membership of which includes education representatives as set out in its terms of reference below.

3   Where one of the other Scrutiny Committees is carrying out a review or dealing with other business which will involve a consideration of the Council's education functions, the education representatives on the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee shall be entitled to join the Scrutiny Committee as voting members for the meeting concerned to participate in that review.

4   All Scrutiny Committee are responsible for considering equalities issues arising in respect of matters falling within their terms of reference.

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Composition

Members of the Executive may not be members of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.

No member may be involved in scrutinising a decision in which he/she has been directly involved.

The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee shall be entitled to appoint a number of people as non-voting co-optees and shall include in its membership the following voting co-optees:

(a)   At least one Church of England diocese representative;

(b)   At least one Roman Catholic diocese representative;

(c)   Between two and five parent governor representatives; and

(d)   A representative from other faiths or denominations as appropriate.

These representatives will be entitled to vote on education functions related to the Council's education functions, in respect of which the Council has responsibility under the Education Acts.

Quorum

The quorum for the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee shall be three members, not including co-opted members.

Terms of Reference

1.   To carry out the functions of an overview and scrutiny committee in respect of matters relating to the Children's Services Directorate

2.   To consider matters relating to the performance of the Council's partners in respect of the functions of the Children's Services department as appropriate.

3.   To receive requests from the Executive or the Leader of the Executive for scrutiny involvement in education related matters.

4.   To consider educational issues referred to it in accordance with the provisions contained in the call in procedure contained within Policy and Scrutiny Procedure Rules or the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules set out in Part 4 of this Constitution and to decide whether such matters should be referred to Council or to the Executive for reconsideration.

5.   To undertake a scrutiny review of its own choosing relating to a Children's Services Directorate function and any further reviews as directed by the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee and to make recommendations to the Executive thereon.

6.   To consider all matters that have been referred to it in accordance with the provisions contained in the councillor call for action procedure contained within the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

3. MEMBERSHIP (as agreed at Annual Council on 26 May 2022)

Members:
Councillor Sheila Chapman (Chair)
Councillor Valerie Bossman-Quarshie (Vice Chair)
Councillor Fin Craig
Councillor Janet Burgess
Councillor Rosaline Ogunro
Councillor Saiqa Pandor
Councillor Gulcin Ozdemir
Councillor Ernestas Jegorovas-Armstrong

Co-opted Members for Education related issues:
Roman Catholic Diocese – Mary Clement
Parent Governor Representative (Primary) – Jon Stansfield
Parent Governor Representative (Secondary) – Zaleera Wallace
Church of England Diocese - Vacancy

Substitutes:
Councillor Jilani Chowdhury
Councillor Paul Convery
Councillor Praful Nargund
Councillor Toby North
Councillor Ilkay Cinko-Oner
Councillor Caroline Russell

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CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
SCRUTINY TOPICS AND WORK PROGRAMME

(A)   SELECTION OF SCRUTINY TOPIC FOR 2022/2023

The Council's Constitution allows the Committee undertake one review of its own choosing. In recent years the Committee has carried out the following reviews:
- Vulnerable Adolescents (2017/18)
- Fixed Period and Permanent Exclusion from School (2018/19)
- Equalities in Educational Outcomes (2019/20)
- Transition from COVID-19 (2020/21)
- SEND Transitions (2021/22)

The Committee is invited to select its scrutiny topic for 2022/23.

(B)   WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

5 July 2022

1. Membership, Terms of Reference and Dates of Meetings

2. Scrutiny Topic and Draft Work Programme

3. SEND: Transitions – Final Report

4. Quarter 4 Performance Report

5. Draft Education Plan

6. Draft SEN Strategy

8 September 2022

1. Scrutiny Review – Scrutiny Initiation Document and introductory presentation

2. Executive Member Annual Report

3. Child Protection Annual Report

18 October 2022

1. Scrutiny Review – witness evidence

2. Quarter 1 Performance Report

3. Annual report back on the Transition from COVID-19 scrutiny review

29 November 2022

1. Scrutiny Review – witness evidence -

2. SACRE Annual Report

3. Quarter 2 Performance Report

17 January 2023

1. Scrutiny Review – witness evidence

2. Executive Member questions

28 February 2023

1. Scrutiny Review – witness evidence and concluding discussion

2. Islington Safeguarding Children Board – Annual Report (to be noted)

3. School Results 2022

20 March 2023

1. Scrutiny Review – Draft Recommendations

2. Quarter 3 Performance Report

25 April 2023

1. Scrutiny Review – Draft Report

2. Update on Supported Internships

Special Education Needs and Disabilities - Transitions

REPORT OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – JUNE 2022

Foreword:

Islington Council's vision, articulated in its Corporate Plan[1], is to make Islington a fairer place where everyone, whatever their background, has the same opportunity to reach their potential and enjoy a good quality of life. For Children and Young People this means making the borough the best place for all young people to grow up and lead healthy and independent lives.

In Islington, as elsewhere, the number of children with SEND is rising. Systems and service providers, including the local authority, are facing the dual challenges of rising need and the presentation of significant numbers of children and families for whom multiple and complex disadvantage intersect. The backdrop to these challenges is years of cuts to local authority funding which is why it is unsurprising that nationally and locally, in terms of educational attainment and securing sustainable employment, children and young people with SEND do less well than their peers and, evidence suggest, have been hardest hit by the pandemic.

For these reasons, the Committee decided to make SEND provision the focus of its 2021/22 scrutiny.

Recognising that SEND provision is a huge area and aware of anecdotal evidence suggesting that children and young people with SEND are more likely than their peers to experience difficulties during times of transition, the Committee decided to focus on the ways in which the council supports children and young people with SEND and their families through key changes in their lives.

Committee members undertook visits to mainstream and specialist schools and convened meetings with Headteachers, SENCOs, school governors, council leaders and other professionals as well as meeting with parents of children and adults with SEND and young

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[1] Building a Fairer Islington, Our Commitment, 2018-2022

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people with SEND themselves. We held meetings in person, online and solicited input via surveys. We interrogated data showing how the cohort of children and young people with SEND is spread through our mixed economy of schools, how the numbers have been increasing over time and the breakdown into different types of educational need and disability.

We recognise that navigating the SEND system presents additional challenges for families from ethnic minority backgrounds and/or those for whom English is not a first language. We were not as successful as we would have liked in capturing voices from these communities and urge Islington Council to redouble efforts to ensure engagement is fully inclusive.

The evidence gathered reveals some excellent work being done by officers and local partners in this field. In fact, during the scrutiny year Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission[2] carried out a joint inspection and found that the council's leadership in this area is "dedicated and ambitious", focused on continual improvement that "brings together well-established teams across education, health and social care" to ensure children and young people quickly receive the services they need."

However, the Committee believes that Islington Council aspires to do better and that it can do better for our children and young people with SEND.

With that in mind we offer 34 recommendations. Some are general and other pertain to specific areas such as Communication and Education Health and Care Plans. Some recommendations are specific to key transition points (Early Years to primary school, primary to secondary school and secondary school to the world of work or further education). We have also made specific recommendations relating to children with SEND who are in the care of the local authority.

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[2] Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission's joint inspection of the local area of Islington to
judge the effectiveness of the area in implementing the SEND reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014 published 21 December 2021.

Towards the end of the municipal year during which the evidence supporting the recommendations contained in this report was gathered, and after years of delay, the government published its green paper[3] seeking feedback on its proposals for providing better support for children with SEND. Later this year, the government will publish a national SEND delivery plan.

This means that the road ahead, in terms of central government funding and a national SEND strategy is an uncertain one.

We remain confident that Islington Council will continue to hold the highest aspirations for our children and young people with SEND and will welcome our recommendations and work hard to implement them.

The Committee would like to convey its sincere thanks to the schools that invited us to visit them and to the council officers, teachers, governors, psychologists, and other professionals who provided their expert input.

We are especially grateful to the children and young people with SEND and their parents who shared their lived experiences with us and who offered us their suggestions.

Councillor Sheila Chapman

Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

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[3] SEND Review: Right support, Right place, Right time, Government consultation on the SEND and alternative provision system in England published March 2022 by H M Government

ASC	**Autistic Spectrum Condition(s)**
	Autistic spectrum condition(s) are characterised by difficulties interacting and communicating. The characteristics of autism can be described as the 'triad of impairment':
	• Socialisation - poor social skills.
	• Communication - difficulties with speech language and communication.
	• Imagination - rigid thought and resistance to change. The commonly used terms 'autism' and 'Asperger's syndrome' are autistic spectrum disorders.
CAMHS	**Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services**
	Part of the NHS, specialising in providing help and treatment for children and young people with social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
Code of Practice	Statutory guidance for early education settings, schools, local authorities and those that help them, on meeting their responsibilities for children with SEND.
DfE	**Department for Education**
	The Department for Education is a ministerial department responsible for education and children's services in England, supported by agencies and public bodies including Ofsted, the Education Funding Agency and the Standards and Testing Agency.
Early Years Settings	Providers who receive government funding to deliver early education including maintained mainstream and special schools, maintained nursery schools, independent schools, non-maintained special schools, local authority day-care providers such as day nurseries and family centres, other registered day-care providers such as pre-schools, playgroups and private day nurseries, and accredited childminders.
EAL	**English as an Additional Language**
	Referring to students who were born in Britain for whom English is not the first language at home and for students not born in Britain, having arrived in the country after the acquisition of their first language (typically 5 years old or over).
EHCP, EHC Plan	**Education, Health and Care Plan**
	Some children or young people with more complex educational needs receive support through an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. An EHC plan is a legal document that describes a child or young person's special educational, health and social care needs. It explains the extra help that will be given to meet those needs and how that help will support the child or young person to achieve what they want to in their life. The plan is drawn up by the local authority after an EHC needs assessment.

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EP	**Educational Psychologist**
	Educational psychologists are trained in psychology, pedagogy and child development. They provide advice, consultation and assessment to schools and other settings
Governor	Each school has a board of Governors that is responsible to parents, funders and the community for making sure the school provides a good quality education.
IDLP	**Islington Learning Disabilities Partnership**
	Islington Learning Disabilities Partnership works with people affected with learning disabilities.
LA	**Local Authority**
	Local government body responsible for providing education and for making statutory assessments and maintaining statutory plans.
LDD	**Learning Disabilities and Difficulties**
	A child has learning difficulties if he or she finds it much harder to learn than most children of the same age, or has a disability which prevents them from making use of educational facilities provided.
Local Offer	All Local Authorities must publish a Local Offer. The purpose of the Local Offer is to enable parents and young people to see more clearly what services are available in their area and how to access them. The offer will include provision from birth to 25, across education, health and social care and should be developed in conjunction with children and young people, parents/carers and local services, including schools, colleges, health and social care agencies.
LAC	**Looked After Children**
	A child is looked after by a local authority if he or she is in their care or is provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority.
Mainstream School	A school which is not a special school
MLD	**Moderate Learning Difficulties**
	Definitions of Moderate Learning Difficulties vary. However, a common understanding is that there must be substantial difficulties (3+ years below standard progress) in two or more of the following areas: literacy, numeracy, speech and language, social skills, memory, concentration - typically in conjunction with an exceptionally low score on an individual test of intelligence and notable low self-esteem / independence in learning.
NEET	A NEET is a young person who is 'Not in Education, Employment, or Training'.
OFSTED	**Office for Standards in Education**
	OFSTED is the inspectorate for children and learners in England and they oversee the quality of the provision of education and care through inspection and regulation. They inspect childcare providers, schools, colleges, children's services, teacher training and youth work.
OT	**Occupational Therapist**
	Occupational Therapists see children who have difficulties with practical everyday activities such as dressing, eating, playing with toys etc.
Physiotherapists	Physiotherapists see children who have difficulties with movement (e.g.: walking, kicking a ball). The therapist will assess the child's movements and identify what the physical problems are and then devise a treatment plan.

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PMLD	**Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties**
	Children with profound and multiple learning difficulties have severe and complex learning needs, in addition they have other significant difficulties, such as physical disabilities or a sensory impairment. Children require a high level of support, both for their learning needs and also for personal care.
PRU	**Pupil Referral Unit**
	Provides education for children who may be out of school for a variety of reasons including exclusion.
SEN	**Special Educational Needs**
	Children have special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty which requires special educational provision to be made for them.
SENCO	**Special Educational Needs Coordinator**
	The member of staff with responsibility for coordinating special educational provision within a school setting.
SEND	**Special Educational Needs and Disability**
SEN Support/SEN K	Children who have special needs but do not have an EHCP are entitled to help in school under the SEN Support category
Short Breaks	Short breaks are provided to give children and young people with a disability enjoyable experiences away from their primary carers, helping them to develop their personal and social skills and reducing social isolation. These breaks can include day, evening, overnight and weekend activities and can take place in the child's own home, the home of an approved carer, a residential or community setting.
Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH)	Social, emotional and mental health needs are a type of special educational needs in which children/young people have severe difficulties in managing their emotions and behaviour. They often show inappropriate responses and feelings to situations. This means that they may have trouble in building and maintaining relationships with peers and adults; they can also struggle to engage with learning.
Special School	A school which caters for the needs of children with Special Educational Needs.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities – Transitions

Aim:

To assess the ways in which the council supports young people with SEND and their families at various points of transition: early years to primary school, primary to secondary school, secondary school to the world of work or further education as well as the transition from Children's Services to Adult Social Services, and paying particular attention to the experiences of SEND children (i) with emerging needs at key transition points and (ii) who move between schools outside of expected transition points.

Evidence:

The Committee commenced the review in July 2021. Evidence was received from a variety of sources:

Visits to:

- New River College – Meeting with Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Staff from Outreach Service, Teachers, Acting SENCO, Heads of Centres and three pupils
- The Bridge – Meetings with the Chief Executive Officer, the Head of Primary School and Head of Secondary School plus a tour of the primary and secondary sites
- St Mary Magdalene Academy – Meeting with the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, SENCO and Head of Year 7
- North Islington Nursery School – Virtual Meeting with Headteacher and SENCO

Evidence Sessions with:

- Parents of children with SEND

- Parent Carers Forum Chair and colleague

- One of the Youth Councillors

- SENCOs and Headteachers

- SEND Governors

Evidence From Council Officers

- Candy Holder, Head of Pupil Services

- Sue Imbriano – Assistant Director – School Improvement and Pupil Progression

- Charisse Monero, Assistant Director – Commissioning

- Gill Sassienie, Principal Educational Psychologist

- Alan Loivette – SEND Operations Manager

- Matthew Blood, Headteacher of Virtual School

- Brenda Amisi-Hutchinson, Service Manager, Independent Futures

- Karen Gibbings, Head of Service, Children Looked After

- Melanie Davies, Head of Service, Children in Need

- Rodney Gray, Service Manager, Disabled Children's Team

Surveys

- Survey of Parents and Carers

- Survey of Headteachers, SENCOs, Governors and Professionals

Other Evidence

- The Chair attended a Local Government Association workshop on Political Leadership of Effective SEND systems.

- Members attended a Services Transition Action Group meeting

- Members attended Family Carers Action Group meetings

- The Chair attended a virtual workshop facilitated by Linzi Roberts-Egan, Chief Executive and Cate Duffy, Corporate Director- People for Headteachers about a vision for education, collaborative working and building trust between schools and the local authority

Documentary Evidence

- SEND Parent Forum: https://centre404.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Parents-Forum-2019.pdf

- SENDIAS Independent Parent Advice Service: https://www.family-action.org.uk/what-we-do/children-families/send/islingtonsend/

- Islington's SEND Local Offer: https://directory.islington.gov.uk/kb5/islington/directory/localoffer.page?localofferchannelnew=1

- Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission's joint inspection of the local area of Islington to judge the effectiveness of the area in implementing the SEND reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014 published 21 December 2021.
- SEND Review: Right support, Right place, Right time, Government consultation on the SEND and alternative provision system in England published March 2022 by H M Government
- The Early Years Commission – A Cross-Party Manifesto published July 2021

Communication

1) Parents/carers struggle to find out what inclusive events are going on across the borough. The council should raise the profile of its online "Things To Do" calendar for children and their families with SEND[4].

2) Each year there is a SENCO network day when primary and secondary SENCOs come together to share information. It is not limited to Islington schools and out-of-borough receiving schools should be encouraged to attend.

3) Islington Council's Local Offer website[5] (co-produced with parents) is where current information, advice and services for children with SEND can be found. The Council's Corporate Communications Team should work with the Children's Services team to consider how it can better publicise the Local Offer and a translate facility should be made available on the Council's website so that the Local Offer can be accessed by non-English speakers. (See Endnote.)

Education Health and Care Plans

4) Islington Council do not require an Educational Psychologist report to be submitted with a request for an EHCP assessment. This is not widely known. The council should communicate this to families and schools thinking about submitting requests.

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[4] https://directory.islington.gov.uk/kb5/islington/directory/results.page?searchtype=event&activity=10

[5] www.islington.gov.uk/localoffer

5) Some parents/carers found EHCPs overly long and unwieldy with many strategies and interventions recommended. Every effort should be made to make sure EHCPs are concise and bespoke to individuals.

6) Some parents/carers found EHCPs difficult to understand. This is even more difficult for parents for whom English is not a first language. Islington Council should (i) make every effort to use simple, non-technical language and provide explanations of words/phrases not in common use and (ii) offer workshops to parents of children with EHCPs to explain the process and answer questions.

Transition: from Early Years to Primary School

7) Islington Council should continue its ongoing work with a group of Headteachers to establish a protocol to ensure that children with SEND not known to services are identified as early as possible so that the relevant early years setting can be informed.

8) Primary schools sometimes receive no prior notice that a child with SEND is about to join. Sometimes information is provided but it is incomplete or provided very late. This makes it difficult for the receiving school to plan appropriately. The council should create a "transitions toolkit" to provide guidance to early years settings of what information about a child with SEND should be provided to the primary school the child is moving to. The toolkit should set out best practice in terms of what information should be provided, when and in what format.

Transition: from Primary School to Secondary School

9) Similar to recommendation [8] above, there should be a "transitions toolkit" for children with SEND moving from primary to secondary school.

10) Islington Council should promote the guidance set out in its *Transition Good Practice* booklet which sets out expectations of schools to ensure there is a consistent transition offer.

Transition: Secondary School to Education, Employment, Training Opportunities and Adult Services

11) Islington Council and Islington secondary schools should ensure that all partners work together to consistently begin joint planning for this important transition for children with SEND when the child is 14 years old.

12) For any child with SEND who has a social worker, a Transitions team member should attend the annual review that takes place when the child is in Year 9.

13) The council should develop a specific strategy to support young people with SEND who are transitioning from Pupil Referral Units and alternate provision into Education, Employment or Training opportunities.

14) Islington Council should work with City and Islington college and with young people and their families to ensure that the college is meeting the needs of young people with SEND and providing what is required by their EHCPs.

15) Islington Council should undertake a longitudinal study of a subset of young people at 1 year, 2 year and 5 years after completion of the Progression to Adulthood programme to measure the long-term success of the programme.

16) Islington Council should consider becoming a Business Partner in Supported Internships.

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17) Members heard the council had a supported employment programme and as part of this disability-friendly jobs were created or found and a disability-friendly recruitment process was used to fill the roles. This had stalled during lockdown as it was not possible to operate the programme virtually. The council should restart the programme as soon as possible.

Transition: General

18) Islington Council should support schools to establish electronic databases to store reports prepared in respect of children with SEND. There should be a specified day each year when all such reports are transferred electronically to the receiving school.

Other

19) Islington Council should complete the audit of school buildings currently underway, so that improvements to create a more SEND-supportive schools' estate in the borough can be planned and prioritised, as and when funding becomes available.

20) When any physical space intended for use by children and young people is being designed, commissioned, or refurbished, Islington Council should ensure that the space is as inclusive as possible.

21) To embed inclusion, Islington Council should work with schools to ensure all teachers and not just SENCOs, understand attachment theory and trauma informed approaches.

22) During the covid pandemic some services stopped visiting schools. All services should return to in-person delivery as soon as feasible.

23) On a visit to The Bridge it was noted that the swimming pool at Beacon High next door was not available to be used by students at The Bridge. The possibility of offering sessions to students the Bridge should be explored by Islington Council.

Looked After Children

24) Islington Council should produce local guidance outlining guiding principles it will use and that it will encourage other local authorities to subscribe to in respect of looked after children with EHCPs. Such local guidance should set out the circumstances in which Islington Council will retain responsibility for an EHCP in respect of a child who is moving to another authority.

25) Islington Council should consider whether all young people entering care should be assessed for SEND screening.

26) In relation to a child not in a stable placement, Islington Council should liaise with the relevant Clinical Commissioning Group with a view to an Islington mental health professional being allocated to that child, if appropriate, until the child is in a stable placement.

27) Islington Council should roll out the Progression to Adulthood framework in Adult Services.

Support for Families

28) Members heard that there is currently one disability swim session per week at one swimming pool in Islington for children with SEND and their families. Islington Council should extend this model across all Islington swimming pools and leisure facilities such as trampoline parks, adventure playgrounds and encourage cinemas to provide viewings for SEND children and their families.

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29) Islington Council should promote more social events for adolescents and young adults with SEND.

30) The SEND Parent and Carers Forum already exists but consideration should be given by Islington Council as to (i) how to make more families aware of its existence and (ii) how the Forum can help fathers and siblings connect with each other.

31) Members heard that in general, parents welcomed social care assessments to look at the needs of the whole family. However, consideration should be given to the wording of the form to ensure that it is not the same as is used in the context of child protection.

32) Members were advised that the wording of the short breaks form currently referred to "severe and complex needs" which could prevent some entitled families from completing the form. Islington Council should therefore review the wording of the form.

33) Some Islington Council and Islington School SEND support groups had stopped meeting due to the Covid pandemic and where possible these groups should be restarted post-Covid.

34) Members heard that there was a Camden transition pack that Islington might be able to learn from. The Council should work with the Family Carers Action Group to produce transition packs including case studies of families of children with SEND who were willing to share their stories. This would enable parents and carers to imagine future options for their child and help them gain knowledge from others who had been in similar situations. Work should also take place to distribute packs more widely.

Endnote

The Local Offer Website contains current information, advice and services for children with SEND. Below are some areas that are covered on the Local Offer Website but that some parents were struggling to get information on.

- Islington SEND Community Support Service: https://directory.islington.gov.uk/kb5/islington/directory/service.page?id=W3osEWwjFGk

- Education, Health and Care Assessment – Parent Carers Guide: https://directory.islington.gov.uk/kb5/islington/directory/advice.page?id=HtotHWNAyCU

- Education information required by the Local Authority to consider an EHC needs assessment request: https://directory.islington.gov.uk/kb5/islington/directory/advice.page?id=0-u9y7LcyGs

- It is important parents/carers are aware of the site and that is available in different languages.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP – 2021/22

Councillors:

Councillor Sheila Chapman

Councillor Kadeema Woodbyrne (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Santiago Bell-Bradford

Councillor Janet Burgess MBE

Councillor Paul Convery

Councillor Toby North

Councillor Gulcin Ozdemir

Councillor John Woolf

Co-opted Members:

Claire Ballak, Parent Governor Representative (Primary)
(Until October 2021)

Mary Clement – Roman Catholic Diocese Representative

Zaleera Wallace, Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

Acknowledgements:

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

Officer Support:

Candy Holder – Head of Pupil Services

Sue Imbriano – Assistant Director – School Improvement and Pupil Progression

Zoe Lewis – Senior Democratic Services Office

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The review took place between July 2021 and March 2022. The overall aim was to assess the ways in which the council supports young people with SEND and their families at various points of transition: early years to primary school, primary to secondary school, secondary school to the world of work or further education as well, as the transition from Children's Services to Adult Social Services, and paying particular attention to the experiences of SEND children (i) with emerging needs at key transition points and (ii) who move between schools outside of expected transition points.

1.2 The Committee also agreed to the following objectives:

- To investigate whether schools and families are properly consulted by the local authority when the local authority is considering their request for a particular school.
- To ascertain whether some mainstream settings are taking significantly more/less children from disadvantaged groups than others and, if this is happening, what impact that has on all stakeholders and what measures the local authority could take to ensure fairness.
- To look at whether where a child attends primary school affects outcomes (for example, in terms of securing earlier diagnosis/support/intervention).
- To evaluate how joined up the local authority is where a child's borough of residence is not the same as the borough where the child goes to school or accesses services.
- To consider the factors that influence parental choice in selecting out-of-borough provision.
- To consider whether young people with SEND are disproportionately NEET, missing in education or permanently excluded and, if they are, what can be done.
- To consider which council services/interventions work well; to identify best practice and to investigate services/interventions which are less successful.

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- To look at outcomes for young people with SEND who are experiencing additional disadvantage (e.g., by virtue of (i) being a child at risk, (ii) economic disadvantage, (iii) criminal justice system involvement, or (iv) being missing from care etc).
- To consider the impact of Covid on children with SEND and whether there is a specific recovery strategy for children with SEND, the success of which could be evaluated.

1.3   In undertaking the review, the Committee met with young people with SEND, parents of children with SEND, headteachers, SENCOs, school governors, council officers, support groups, educational psychologists and others to gain a balanced view. The committee surveyed both parents of children with SEND and headteachers, SENCOs, Governors and other professionals. The Committee also visited a mainstream school, special school and a pupil referral unit. In addition, the Committee considered local and national data and a variety of documentary evidence.

THE SEND CODE OF PRACTICE

2.1   The SEND Code of Practice, which applies to all children and young people with SEND age 0-25, provides statutory guidance on duties, policies and procedures relating to the Children and Families Act 2014. Where the Code includes the word 'must' it refers to a statutory requirement under primary legislation, regulations, or case law.

2.2   The key principles of the Code are: 1) Full participation of parents, children and young people in assessment, planning and review, 2) Collaboration between Education, Health and Care Services, 3) A focus on inclusive practice and 4) Supporting successful transition to adulthood.

2.3   All relevant bodies (including local authorities, governing bodies and all schools and settings) must fulfill their statutory duties towards children and young people with SEND in light of the guidance set out in the Code.

2.4   When considering an appeal from a parent or young person, the First-tier Tribunal (SEND) ('the Tribunal') must have regard to the Code of Practice. The Tribunal expected Local Authorities and schools to be able to explain any departure from the Code.

2.5   The Children and Families Act 2014 secured the general presumption in law of mainstream education in relation to decisions about where children and young people with SEND should be educated, and the Equality Act 2010 provided protection from discrimination for disabled people.

2.6   Where a child or young person has SEND but does not have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) they must be educated in a mainstream setting.
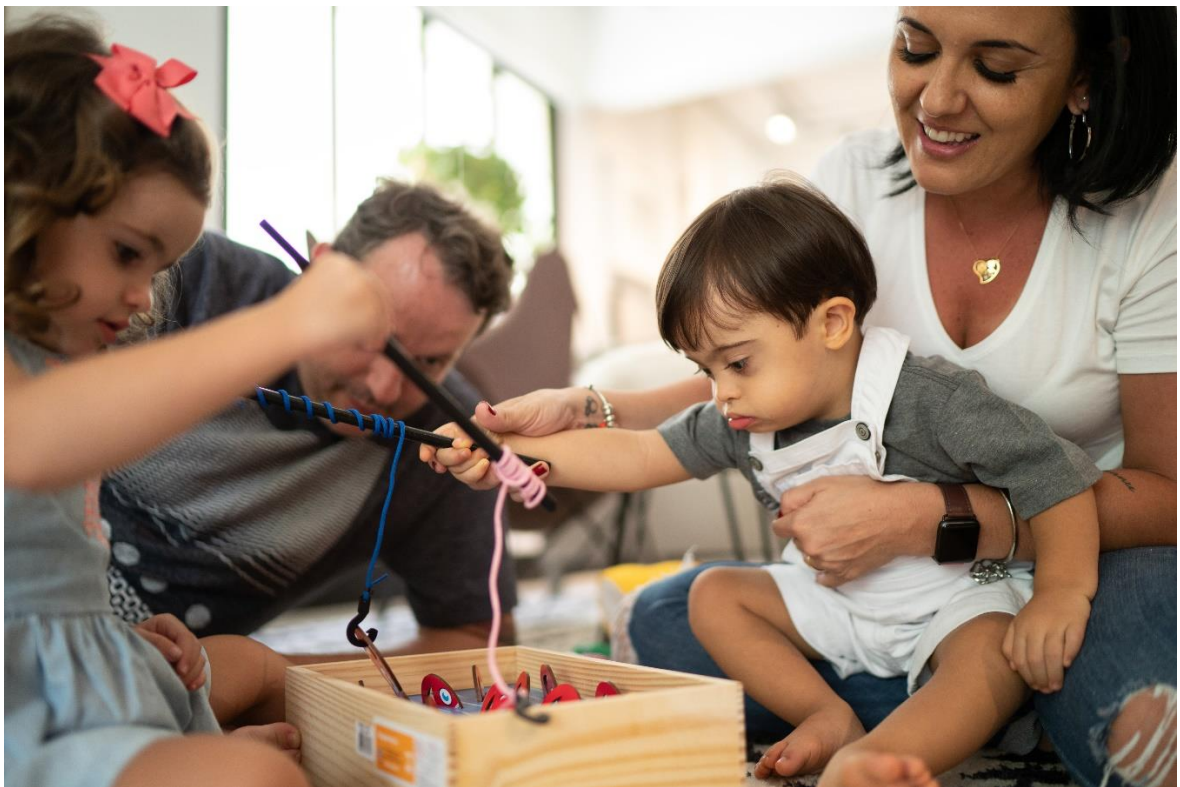
2.7 The School Admissions Code of Practice requires children and young people with SEND to be treated fairly. Admissions authorities: 1) must consider applications from parents of children with SEND but not an EHCP on the basis of the school's published admissions criteria as part of normal admissions procedures; 2) must not refuse to admit a child with SEND but without an EHCP because they do not feel able to cater for those needs; 3) must not refuse to admit a child on the grounds that they do not have an EHCP.

2.8 Where a child or young person has an EHCP, the child's parent (or the young person over the age of 16) has the right to request a particular school / college (including an independent school) be named in their EHCP. Where this happens, the local authority must comply with that preference and name the school or college in the EHCP unless it would be unsuitable for the age, ability, aptitude or SEND of the child or young person, or the attendance of the child or young person would be incompatible with the efficient education of others, or the efficient use of resources. The local authority must consult the school or college concerned and consider their comments before deciding whether to name it in the child or young person's EHCP. Where a parent or young person does not make a request for a particular school or college, the local authority must specify mainstream provision in the EHCP. Mainstream education cannot be refused by a local authority on the grounds that it is not suitable. A local authority can rely on the exception of incompatibility with the efficient education of others only if it can show that there are no reasonable steps it could take to prevent that incompatibility. The SEND Code of Practice sets out in some detail with examples, what 'reasonable steps' might look like in paragraphs 9.91 to 9.94.

2.9 In mainstream schools, school-based provision is called SEND Support. Schools are expected to follow a 'graduated approach' to SEND Support intervention that takes the form of cycles of 'assess, plan, do, review' as an ongoing process to make sure provision is meeting identified needs. They should also consult relevant external agencies, make use of assessment tools and materials, record observations and evidence of progress.
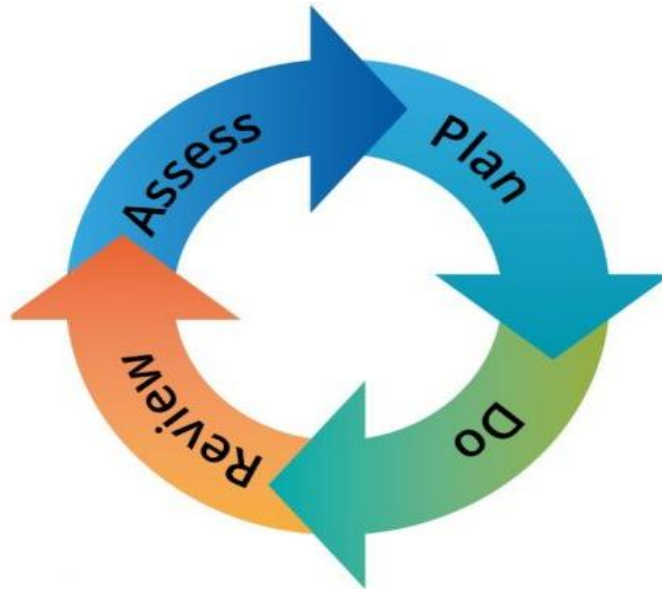
2.10   For children with significant or complex needs, where levels of support and intervention do not lead to expected progress, schools or parents can request a statutory Education Health and Care assessment. If needs are assessed as beyond a level that can be met from resources normally available to schools, an EHCP may be issued.

2.11. The national model has three levels of funding for SEND, with Elements 1 and 2 paid through school budgets, and Element 3 directly from the local authority. All schools receive funding for each pupil as part of their delegated funding - the Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) or Element 1. Support which is in addition to/different from the general is covered by another source of funding which is part of a school's delegated budget, known as Element 2. For children with more complex needs, Element 3 'top-up' funding (i.e. to top up already available Element 1 and 2) funding is managed by the local authority, normally through an EHCP.

2.12   The government refreshed the national strategy for improving the lives of autistic people and their families (published in July 2021) and has for the first time extended its scope to include children and young people. The revised strategy also takes account of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people with Autism, backed by research from the Policy Innovation and Evaluation Research Unit (LSE) (Autistic People's Experiences During the Pandemic) and by the National Autistic Society and others (Left Stranded) which confirmed the view that the pandemic has exacerbated challenges many autistic

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people already face, such as loneliness, social isolation and anxiety, with those with higher support needs, autistic women and non-binary people particularly impacted. The changes include:

1) Improving autistic children and young people's access to education and supporting positive transitions into adulthood.

2) Supporting more autistic people into employment.

Statistics

Number of EHCPs

1509

Number of EHCPs active as at Jan 2021 (1364 at 2020)

145 more ECHPs for 2021 mean:
- 145 x £14,891 (av cost of EHCP) = £2.16M additional spend
- 145 more Annual Reviews
- 38 more families requesting transport
- 48 more special school places

For All EHCPs...

26% are for Girls (23% in 2020)   74% are for Boys (77% in 2020)

For Years 0 – 14...

Year 5: largest cohort, with 109 EHCPs (av for Years 0-11 is 94)

Year 11: highest cost cohort at £1.8m pa

70 LAC with EHCPs

Year 7: high... % of girls with an EHCP at 31% 31 girls)

Year 0: highest proportion of children with ASC at 80%

Area of Need

47%

of all EHCPs identify Autism as the main area of need (47% at 2020)

62% of children aged 0-11 with EHCPs have ASC as their main area of need (62% at 2020)

37% of young people aged 12-25 with EHCPs have ASC as their main area of need (34% at 2020)

19% EHCPs for SEMH rose by this amount between Jan 2020 to Jan 2021 (8% rise from 2019-2020)

Autism and all other areas of need:

■ ASC ■ Other

80%

of all EHCPs identify Autism, Moderate/ Severe Learning Difficulty or SEMH as the main area of need (81% in 2020)

Children attending special school

34%

of all children/young people with an EHCP attend special school (38% at 2020)

There are four more children and young people with ASC placed in special school in Jan 2021 than there were in Jan 2020.

Average cost of mainstream place for ASC: £23,641 Average cost of special school place for ASC: £67,043 (Do the Maths, London Councils 2018)

SEND Transport

£3,754,000pa

the cost of SEND Transport (2021)

£15,696: the average cost of a journey by taxi
£6,332: the average cost of a journey by bus

■ School Bus ■ Taxi
■ Personal Budget ■ No Transport

3.1   Candy Holder, Head of Pupil Services gave a presentation outlining the statistics.

3.2   The Committee heard that there are currently 1,509 children with an EHCP, 178 of whom have no additional education top up. Of the remaining 1331, the total Islington cost (mainstream & special) is £14,609,451. This relates to 991 children/young people at an average cost of £14,742 per pupil and the total out-of-borough cost (mainstream & special) is £5,225,996. This related to 334 children/young people at an average cost of £15,515 per pupil. Of these 334 children/young people, 44 (13%) are Looked After Children at a cost of £775,993 (£17,634 average cost per pupil) and 140 (41%) are in Further Education.

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3.3   Of the 255 children/young people in out-of-borough mainstream education, 117 (around 50%) are in Further Education colleges. Of the £2,383,607 spent on out-of-borough special provision, 31 children/young people (2%) are in independent schools at a cost of £1,164,565 with an average cost of £35,566 per pupil). Islington's spend is lower than comparators.

3.4   Of those in out-of-borough (mainstream and special provision) 193 (57%) are attending school / college in adjacent boroughs (Camden, Hackney, Haringey). Another 44 (13%) are Looked After Children. 22% of Islington resident children/young people with SEND attend schools out of borough. 25% of non-SEND children/young people attend schools out of borough.

3.5   40 county councils in England are warning of a £1.3bn SEND deficit which threatens to derail their finances and undermine capacity to support recovery efforts after the pandemic.

3.6   There is disparity between boys and girls with autism. Islington's average of girls to boys is better than the national average. However, often girls present as adolescents and sometimes this manifests as self-harming or eating disorders.

3.7   The demand on services will become greater in the future with higher rates of autism in the primary cohort and a larger cohort at primary level. There are approximately 120 children with autism in each year at primary level.

3.8   There is a disproportionately high number of Black African children who have EHCPs at primary school and this reverses at secondary school. There is double the average number of EHCPs amongst Black Somali young people. Work is taking place with Somali groups and consideration is being given to whether diagnostic tools are accurate. It is recognised that trauma and inherited trauma could be factors in the overrepresentation.

3.9   It is anticipated, based on a three year trend, that next year there will be an additional 40 children with SEMH needs. There has also been a significant increase in those with

Autism. There are more children entering the system than there are exiting it. Health colleagues have advised that it currently takes 2.5 years for an autism diagnosis. There is a broad Autism spectrum, with some children requiring minimal support and others having complex needs.

3.10 During covid only 50% of EHCPs were issued in the 20-week timeframe due to prioritisation of other areas e.g. food supplies to families. Since then, the figures have been on track and are currently at 80%. Sometimes delays occur when parents want more advice or are waiting for health assessments.

The Local Offer

3.11   Candy Holder, Head of Pupil Services gave a presentation on the Local Offer which includes schools for physical and sensory need, SEMH, communication and interaction and learning and cognition. Where a child has more specialist needs, these may be provided out of borough.

3.12   Islington had 'SEN Support in Islington' handbooks for: 1) the Early Years and Primary Local Offer, 2) Secondary and Post 16 Local Offer, 3) Advice, Guidance and Expectations and 4) Behaviour.

3.13   The council recognises that all children might need support at some time to enjoy the new opportunities and meet the challenges they face as they move through different stages of their life. Some children and young people, including those with SEND are likely to need more support however, particularly at key transition times.

3.14   The four over-arching principles of guidance are: 1) the effective planning to support children and young people and their families in managing change; 2) the engagement and participation of children and young people and their families in assessment, planning and review; 3) ensuring information exchange – with children and young people and their parents as well as across services and between institutions; and 4) effective commissioning to ensure the right provision and support is in place for the right children at the right time – this sometimes means conversations about funding has to take place with parents.

3.15   A SEND Strategy 2018-21 is being updated. Islington is looking again at SEND funding arrangements through a SEND Review to see how 'front load' funding for predicted intake could be improved. In the meantime, schools can apply for exceptional needs funding in individual / unforeseen circumstances. As part of the work Children's Services is undertaking, a survey of Headteachers had been undertaken. Some respondents stated that they were at capacity but with the right vision they could do more. Spending had been contained through the existing budget and there was an extra £4m this year which will be directed to where it will be most effective. Officers had discussed other funding models with other boroughs. If the second tier of funding was front-loaded, this would give schools greater flexibility and mean resources could be moved to where most needed. Formal consultation would take place but it was expected that schools would formally support the change.

3.16   It was important to create a local system that could be trusted. There was a need to look at provision due to increased need and complexity. There was also a need for inclusive practice as this was not currently fully embedded across all settings. Fairness and equity were therefore of high priority in considering whether the system could be funded differently.

3.17   Culture, ethos and philosophy were important. It would be a challenge to ensure consistency of practice across provisions, but work would be taking place on this.

3.18   There were many transition points and parents are often of the view that they are always in some type of transition. Transitions are more complex where a child moves in or out of borough. Moving from mainstream to a special school or vice versa is often a difficult transition to support.

OFSTED SEND Inspection

3.19   The recent SEND Inspection has been long awaited. The new inspection regime had been introduced in 2015 to see how well the 2014 reforms have been embedded and this was the first Islington inspection under the regime. The introduction of EHCPs was one of the 2014 reforms. Islington Council had passed the inspection.

3.20   The inspection was a rigorous process. There were five inspectors for four days. Their work included meetings with focus groups, interviews with parents and they also undertook a parent survey. They also visited seven schools which were randomly selected by Ofsted. There was a focus on self-evaluation and whether this was accurate. The results of the inspection were published in January 2022 and can be found at
Ofsted | London Borough of Islington

4. TRANSITION FROM EARLY YEARS TO PRIMARY SCHOOL

4.1   In a presentation on transitions, Candy Holder, Head of Pupil Services and Sue Imbriano, Assistant Director – School Improvement and Pupil Progression reported on transitions from early years to primary schools.

4.2   Members were advised that children with SEND are supported across the Early Years provision by well trained staff, with advice and guidance from Area SENCOs, Educational Psychologists, CAMHS, therapists and other support services. There are also 36 specialist (additionally resourced) places across Early Years Settings and Early Years Providers could also apply for additional funding to put in place additional support for identified children. It is important to identify children with SEND as early as possible.

4.3   Early years, the SEND Team and Health colleagues work closely together to identify those children who might have SEND that would require support over and above what is

normally available, and therefore might need an EHCP to support them when they transfer to school.

4.4   Transition is carefully planned and managed between the Early Years provider and destination school, with support from the Area SENCO Team. This will normally include an exchange of information, visits and joint planning that fully involves parents and carers. For those children who might require an EHCP, every effort is made to ensure this is in place before the transition to school so that the school has a clear understanding of needs, outcomes and provision for that child as well as any necessary top-up funding assessed to support the delivery of the plan. The school will always be consulted before they are named in a plan, but the local authority has to comply with parental preference unless there is concrete evidence that this would not be compatible with the efficient use of resource or the education of others.

4.5   Challenges in Early Years to Primary Transition include a rapid increase in the number and complexity of children with SEND in Early Years. This has led to more demand for specialist places at transition, which has both immediate and longer-term implications for the Local Offer. 25 additional places have been made available at The Bridge Special School (for children with Autism) from September 2021, while longer-term solutions are being considered through the current SEND Review. All schools are seeing a higher number of children with EHCPs and SEND Support needs across Key Stage 1, and for a small number of mainstream schools, 10% or more of children in one class have complex needs.

Transition From Early Years To Primary School -

Good Practice Identified In The Discussion with North Islington Nursery School and the Discussions with Headteachers, SENCOs and SEND Governors

- Primary School SENCOS offering tours for prospective parents.

- Early Years Settings holding information meetings for parents about transitioning and assisting parents with completing forms and providing a checklist of questions they could ask prospective primary schools.

- Early Years Settings starting the EHCP process where appropriate, so children receive them as early as possible.

- Early communication between Early Years Settings and primary schools once it is known which primary school a child will attend. This could include staff from the primary school visiting the Early Years Setting.

- Schools providing transition booklets.

5.1   In a presentation on Transitions, Candy Holder, Head of Pupil Services and Sue Imbriano, Assistant Director – School Improvement and Pupil Progression reported on transitions from primary school to secondary school.

5.2   The Committee heard that to support primary to secondary transition, the primary school should share information with the secondary school the child or young person is moving to. This is achieved in a number of ways including visits, through review meetings and/or at an annual SENCO conference organised by the local authority. There are some examples of good practice in Islington schools, e.g. one secondary school has all children with SEND in attendance for a week before term starts to enable them to get the know the building, rules and the staff who will be supporting them. The school should agree with parents and pupils the information to be shared as part of the planning process.

5.3   For children with an EHCP, the plan must be reviewed and amended by 15 February in the calendar year of the transfer. The SEND Team has an officer dedicated to secondary transfer who guides parents through the process.

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5.4 Each secondary transfer cohort includes approximately 100 children. Parents are encouraged to identify more the one preference. Where the parents' preferred school is not named in the plan, the parents have the right of appeal to the independent First Tier (SEND) Tribunal. Within the context of the requirements of the Code of Practice, the SEND Team keeps oversight of parental choice to identify any school that has a disproportionately high number of EHCP preferences. In such cases, and where the school may not be the closest to the home address, consideration is given to whether naming the school will be compatible with the efficient use of resource or the efficient education of others, although the burden of proof on this is high.

5.5 Challenges in primary to secondary transitions includes: 1) Different schools operate different practice in transition arrangements; 2) Despite the good transition practice, the majority of schools (Islington and out-of-borough) respond negatively to the initial consultation (which normally takes place in early January); 3) Parents may not give consent to information sharing; 4) Children with an EHCP receive confirmation of the school named in their plan by 15 February while all other children receive their offer on 1 March; 5) The First Tier (SEND) Tribunal found in favour of Local Authorities who did not name the parents preferred school for only 8% of cases; 6) Some Islington secondary schools feel that that decision making regarding placement of children is not transparent or fair. For the 2021 exercise, secondary school SENCOs were invited to join officers when they considered the cohort, preferences and placement. In the current cycle, 50% of preferences have been received and there have been 18 requests for one special school with only six places available;7) Where a parent identifies an out-of-borough school, not only must the school be consulted, but also the home local authority for that school. This could make negotiations more challenging. Similarly, other Local Authorities must consult Islington before naming an Islington school for one of their residents and this also had to be taken into account in planning.

Transition from Primary School to Secondary School -

Current Good Practice Identified In The Discussions with Headteachers, SENCOs, SEND Governors and the visits to New River College (NRC), The Bridge and St Mary Magdalene Academy

- The boroughwide SENCO network day when primary and secondary SENCOs came together to share information.
- Staff from secondary schools visiting primary schools.
- Secondary schools offering parent and child tours and taster days.
- Secondary schools offering activities in the summer holidays for those transitioning.
- Secondary schools using pupil passports, directed by children and their families to aid transition.
- Often pupils at New River College were dual registered so that if transition to another school was unsuccessful, the pupil could easily return to New River College. This also meant New River College could keep exam results of the children which removes a disincentive for mainstream schools who are concerned about exam league tables.
- Close working with parents.
- Parents being assisted to complete paperwork, meet teachers, staff and therapists.
- Schools providing transitions booklets.
- Children being placed with the right guardian/form tutor for their needs and being allocated a named keyworker who would meet them a couple of times a week.

6.1   In a presentation on Transitions, Candy Holder, Head of Pupil Services and Sue Imbriano, Assistant Director – School Improvement and Pupil Progression reported on transitions from secondary school to education, employment, training opportunities and adult services.

6.2   In relation to the Transition to Adulthood, the Code of Practice expects that high aspirations about employment, independent living and community participation should be developed from the earliest possible stage. It also expects schools to seek partnerships with employment services, businesses, housing agencies, disability organisations and arts and sports groups, to help children understand what is available to them as they get older, and what is possible for them to achieve.

6.3   Local authorities are required to ensure for those with SEND that the relevant services are in place to help prepare the young people for adulthood. These might include housing services, adult social care and employment. There are good examples of these relationships through Islington's special schools and New River College (PRU),

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supported by wider Council services such as iWork, iSet (Islington Supported Employment Team) and the *100 hours of Work* initiative. New River College had won a national award for their career's advice.

6.4   For teenagers, preparation for adult life should become a more explicit element of their planning and support, focused on what they want to achieve and the best way to support them. Considering the right post-16 option is part of this planning. Local authorities have a range of other duties which are particularly relevant to this area, including: 1) to offer advice and information directly to young people over the age of 16 together with health services, to make joint commissioning arrangements about the education, health and care provision of children and young people to secure positive adult outcomes, 2) to co-operate with Further Education colleges, sixth-form colleges, 16-19 academies and independent specialist colleges; 3) to include in the Local Offer provision which will help children and young people prepare for adulthood and independent living. Also, EHCPs cover Education, Health and Care, so that transition to adult health and where necessary, social care services is also a very important part of this planning.

6.5   Maintained schools and PRUs have a statutory duty (section 42A of the Education Act 1997) to ensure all pupils from Year 8 until Year 13 are provided with independent careers guidance. Academies, including 16-19 academies, and free schools are subject to this duty through their Funding Agreements. All young people should be helped to develop the skills and experience, and achieve the qualifications they need, to succeed in their careers, with the expectation that the vast majority of young people with SEND are capable of sustainable paid employment. All professionals working with them should share that presumption.

6.6   One of the most effective ways to prepare young people with SEND for employment is through work-based learning that enables them to have first-hand experience of work, such as: 1) Apprenticeships: paid jobs that incorporate training, leading to nationally recognised qualifications. Young people with EHCP can retain their plan when on an apprenticeship; 2) Traineeships: Education and training programmes with work experience, focused on giving young people the skills and experience they need to help

them compete for an apprenticeship or other jobs; 3) Supported internships: Structured study programmes for young people with an EHCP, based primarily with an employer. Internships normally last for a year and include extended unpaid work placements for at least six months. Wherever possible, they support the young person to move into paid employment at the end of the programme. Young people with EHCP retain their plan when undertaking a supported internship. Local examples include Project Search Whittington Hospital – in conjunction with Ambitious College (for young people with autism), Project Search Moorfields (for young people with learning difficulties and/or autism). These opportunities are in a range of areas such as IT, catering, engineering and maintenance. The potential employment opportunities at the council and its partner organisations are vast.

6.7 Local authorities must ensure that the EHCP review at Year 9, and every review thereafter, includes a focus on preparing for adulthood.

6.8 Preparing for adulthood planning in the review of the EHCP includes: 1) support to prepare for further education and/or employment to include identifying appropriate post-16 pathways, training options such as supported internships, apprenticeships and traineeships, or support for setting up businesses. Reviews cover support in finding a job, learning how to do a job (e.g. through work experience opportunities) and help in understanding any welfare benefits that might be available; 2) support to prepare for independent living including discussing where the child or young person wants to live in the future, who they want to live with and what support they will need; 3) support in maintaining good health in adult life, including effective planning with health services regarding the transition from specialist paediatric services to adult health care; 4) support in participating in society, including understanding mobility and transport support, and how to find out about social and community activities, and in developing and maintaining friendships and relationships; 4) the review should identify the support the child or young person needs to achieve these aspirations and should also identify the components that should be included in their study programme to best prepare them for adult life; 5) For young people moving from secondary school to a post-16 institution or apprenticeship, the review and amendments to the EHCP must be completed by the 31 March in the calendar year of the transfer.

6.9   The Islington Multi-Agency Progression to Adulthood protocol set out the role of each agency and processes for accessing support for those transitioning to adulthood.

6.10   There was a Progression to Adulthood Programme of Work which included work in relation to goals and aspirations (education, employment and training), independent living, health and wellbeing, health and wellbeing and community cohesion.

Transition from Secondary School to Education, Employment, Training Opportunities and Adult Services -
Good Practice Identified in the visits to New River College, The Bridge and St Mary Magdalene Academy

- A focus on independence skills
- Work experience and visits to workplaces
- Parents being involved in transition pathways discussions once their child was 14.
- Supporting Year 10 and 11 pupils to make college applications and help with career progression.

Progression to Adulthood Programme

7.1   Charisse Monero, Assistant Director – Commissioning gave a presentation on Progression to Adulthood.

7.2   The Progression to Adulthood (PTA) Strategy was developed in 2019/2020 and was a joint strategy between Children's Services and Adult Social Services. The Strategy set out a range of needs, aims and aspirations to support and improve how young people with SEND are enabled to progress into adulthood. This included goals and aspirations, information, health and wellbeing, housing, and data and commissioning. A Programme Board has been established to oversee the strategic direction, delivery and implementation of the PTA programme.

7.3   A programme of work was devised to realise the PTA Strategy. Key workstreams were: 1) Health and wellbeing; 2) Independent living; 3) Community inclusion; and 4) Goals and aspirations (education, training and employment). The PTA service was being developed to make it impactful for those making the transition. Overall good progress has been made in ensuring young people making the transition are supported.

7.4   A pilot scheme was established to proactively undertake care act assessment and provide transition support for young people with: 1) SEMH needs; 2) Autistic spectrum conditions; 3) Sensory needs; 4) Complex health needs. The pilot started in December 2020/January 2021 and was funded for a year.

7.5   Collaborative working had been strengthened across Children's Services and Adult Social Care to ensure young people that would otherwise 'fall through the gaps' are being supported. The PTA services has enabled timely assessments for young people with complex mental health needs, preventing escalation, and higher costs in the future and

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boosted the confidence of young people as well as enabled stability and supported employment outcomes and signposted families to services.

7.6   10 young people who had participated in the PTA pilot scheme were sampled to understand impact. These had identified positive working relationships with young people and their new practitioners/social workers. The team had undertaken mental health capacity assessments, put in place deprivation of liberty safeguards and ensured there was a full range of PTA outcomes for young people including housing, education/training/employment, health and community inclusion.

7.7   Young people and their families had stated that: 1) the team had helped with education independence, helped to work on CVs and guidance towards employment and college; 2) assessment of need was very good; 3) having someone to turn to and pick up pieces was really important and; 4) parents found carer assessment really helpful.

7.8   Areas for development were: 1) assessments as there was some frustration at the number of assessments; 2) strengthening joint working between services and collaborating earlier to enable earlier intervention.

7.9   The plan for the next 12 months included; 1) developing relationships with the wider system; 2) strengthening the partnership with the leaving care team; 3) diversifying disciplines within the team from predominantly social workers to include more mental health input; 4) identifying further opportunities for strengthening shared ways of working between children's and adult service to shape shared ways of working; and 5) strengthening the skills of the workforce in relation to autism and mental health, particularly given the prevalence, complexity and severity of need in relation to autism and the shortage of suitable employment opportunities.

7.10   For those aged 16, 17 and 18 there are approximately 100 young people in each group with EHCPs. Approximately 50% could live independently with support and the other 50% require more support. The PTA project works with young people aged 17-25.

7.11   Currently the average intervention with the team lasts 6-9 months. Going forward, it is anticipated shorter, 16-week interventions could be offered to young people with less complex needs in addition to a longer-term programme for those with more complex needs. The 16-week programme would aim to create independence and empower a young person to access services in a shorter time frame. Before a young person left the programme, work took place with other services on an exit pathway to ensure a safe transition out with the young person being able to live independently.

7.12   Across the cohort of 100, there are approximately 67% males and 33% females and in the cohort of young people with autism, it is approximately 60% males and 40% females. Post-Covid there have been more girls presenting at Tier 4 (the highest level of hospital admissions) in relation to mental health. Asperger's is at the higher functioning end of the autism spectrum and although data is not broken down into types of autism, approximately 20% of young people on the spectrum are at the higher-functioning end of the spectrum.

7.13   Work has been undertaken with the police and health colleagues to raise awareness about autism. 130 young people in the borough have received police orders in the last year and of these 20% have a diagnosis of autism. More work would be done to raise awareness and provide support for these young people.

7.14   It was important to ensure there was not just a whole family response but also a whole system approach with progression to adulthood being a shared endeavour and responsibility between education, social care and health services providing wraparound support. A diverse menu of support would be provided and interventions would have a life course approach and provide a safe landing into community services.

7.15   Work is taking place to create an environment of cultural inclusion. Co-production workshops would be run in the lead up to the launch of the new service and the service wanted to reach out to harder to reach families and hear from bilingual families and disadvantaged groups as part of this. There would be multi-communication channels to enable parents to communicate.

7.16   The success of the programme would be measured by examining case studies and using key performance measures with baseline, mid-point of intervention and end of intervention measurements taken as well as measurements 3-6 months after the intervention to check transitions into employment, education and secure housing had been successful and that outcomes had been sustained without support. This would give a comprehensive evaluation.

Supported Internships

7.17   Candy Holder, Head of Pupil Services, gave a presentation on Supported Internships.

7.18   The Committee heard that one of the areas for development that had been identified locally with parents and young people is that options for post-16 for pupils with the most complex needs are limited. Although individual schools and training providers found future pathways on an *ad hoc* basis, a more systemic and co-ordinated approach is needed.

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7.19   Supported Internships is one way of extending options. Supported Internships involve a structured study programme being delivered by a Further Education provider (such as Mencap or CandI). They are unpaid, last a minimum of six months and are based primarily at an employer. Alongside their time with the employer, young people complete a personalised study programme which includes the chance to study for relevant substantial qualifications, if appropriate, and English and maths.

7.20   Supported Internships enable young people aged 16-24 with an EHCP to achieve sustainable paid employment by equipping them with the skills they require for work, through learning in the workplace.

7.21   Supported Internships involve the young person and their family, the business, a training provider, a job coach and the young person's school/college working in partnership.

7.22   The council has an ambition to develop supported internships. Demand will grow as the number of young people with Autism and SEMH needs is projected to increase significantly.

7.23   There have been some successes already. There are many opportunities, many of which are in hospitals or hospitality. Ideally, an offer with a wider range of opportunities would be developed. At first, opportunities would be sought through the council and its services and major contractors. Larger employers in the borough could also be asked to offer placements.

7.24   In response to a member's question about ensuring that supported internships followed an education programme and were not just 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.

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7.25   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 which would include providing internships or work experience opportunities to young people with SEND.

7.26   The first local internships were in 2017 and there were five interns. This had grown to 32 interns by 2020. The Local Offer now included competitive access to a range of supported internships including Mencap, Leisure@National Star College and hospital-based programmes (Moorfields, Whittington, Great Ormond Street Hospital). Jobs included: Childcare, Hotels, Retail, Catering, Leisure (e.g. Tottenham Football Club).

7.27   On average, 71% moved into employment by 2020, but this dipped during the COVID period, and there were currently interns repeating study programmes.

7.28   Through the development of Internship programmes, some important themes had been identified:
   o   For those with EHCPs, the inclusion of PTA outcomes from the earliest stage, rather than just from Year 9 onward, helped discussions about employment and raised aspirations.
   o   Opportunities for exposure to the world of work and work experience – 100 hours of work, Think Forward / Move Forward programmes had an impact.
   o   Transition planning and support, including engaging people over the summer holidays, was key.
   o   There was a need for a family curriculum to address concerns such as changes in benefits and how to deal with increased independence of young people.
   o   There was a need for follow-on support.

7.29   Challenges included:
   o   There remained a low expectation that young people with SEND would enter paid employment.

- o The capacity to keep track of the offer and making sure information about what was available, recruitment days etc. got to those who needed it.
- o COVID restrictions meant that some programmes finished in April 2020 and had not reopened.
- o Too many 'Employment study programmes' at local Further Education (FE) colleges were not actually linked to employers and were not able to offer work-based learning. Development work was needed with FE providers.
- o Monitoring progress and job outcomes was an area for further work as there was a need to track people over a longer period and monitor if they stayed in employment.
- o The offer of Adjusted Apprenticeships remained underdeveloped for young people with SEND locally, as elsewhere.

7.30   One way of delivering Supported Internships was through Project SEARCH. Project SEARCH is a recognised internship support model that could accommodate different business sectors / regional variation whilst keeping to the critical core model components which are:

1) The sole definition of a successful outcome was competitive employment in an integrated setting for each intern;

2) Being business-led with interns learning relevant marketable skills whilst immersed in the business;

3) There being true collaboration among partner agencies which included businesses, schools/colleges, supported employment and families;

4) Interns experiencing total immersion in the workplace;

5) On-site support provided by a tutor and job coach;

6) Data being submitted to a national Project SEARCH database;

7) Project SEARCH graduates receiving effective follow-along services to retain employment.

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7.31 The DFN Foundation is a UK commissioning charity established by David Forbes-Nixon in 2014, inspired by his disabled son, to make a positive difference to the lives of young people with SEND.

7.32 In 2018, the foundation was awarded the franchise rights in the UK to deliver Project Search, forming DFN Project Search. DFN Project Search is a transition to work programme for students with learning disabilities and autism spectrum conditions, aimed at those motivated to achieve competitive employment.

7.33 As of October 2021, they had operated over 70 schemes throughout the UK and Europe and had supported more than 1,300 young people into paid work, including at both Lambeth and Hackney Councils. As the largest employer in Islington, consideration could be given to the council becoming a business partner in Project Search.

7.34 Project Search is open to those aged 16-24. If a young person is still in school, it makes bridging easier but it was still possible for those not in school to join the project. There are limits on spaces and motivation to take part is a key indicator.

7.35 In response to a member's question about how long the unpaid internships lasted, the officer advised they usually last 6-12 months.

7.36 In response to a member's question, the officer advised that 70% went into paid employment after the project but it was not known if they remained there. As EHCPs lasted until a young person was 25, their key workers met them each year up until the age of 25 and so would know if they were still in employment. There was a need to track the cohort as a group to know if they were staying in paid employment.

7.37 Adjusted apprenticeships could be used for some young people. However, no matter how much apprenticeships were adjusted, they would not be right for all young people. Project Search targeted a different group and although the internships were unpaid, they provided an opportunity for those that otherwise would not be working.

7.38   Members raised concerns about young people on the project not being paid. An officer stated that the project was about developing skills before progressing to paid employment, including Maths and English tuition. A member suggested that if the Council was the employer, paid work should be guaranteed after 3 or 6 months. The first part of the internship could then be for learning and the knowledge that paid work would follow would help motivate the young people.

7.39   Nationally over 50 Local Authorities are involved in Project Search and nationally 60% of interns who complete the project enter full term paid employment.

7.40   In addition to Project Search, other brands of Supported Internships are Project Choice and Royal Mencap Society. All of these schemes could be used and work would be undertaken on how the Supported Internship schemes could be evaluated and outcomes compared.

Meeting with Educational Psychologist and SEND Operations Manager

7.41   Members met with an Educational Psychologist and SEND Operations Manager who outlined the work of their team.

7.42   The Early Years Identification Working Group identify children aged three and four years old with SEND and determine needs and support. Colleagues from education, health and social care identify children in early years settings who might need assessments for EHCPs. Early Years Settings are then encouraged to submit requests for EHCP assessments so that when the children transitioned to primary school, plans are in place.

7.43   There is an Area SENCO for Early Years who manages the EHCP process. If a high level of need is identified, work takes place to manage this. Work is taking place to simplify the process to make it less bureaucratic so assessments can take place more quickly.

7.44   The service provided by the Educational Psychologists is partly council funded with schools buying in further hours for work that is not considered core or statutory. Statutory assessment is council funded and early intervention is a service that schools buy in. There is no essential requirement for Educational Psychologists to be involved before a request for an EHCP assessment is submitted however the level of need has to be demonstrated. Educational Psychologists are trying to provide more consultation and sometimes encourage schools not to wait for a report but to put in a request for an EHCP assessment after a discussion with the Educational Psychologist. If a primary school has a number of children who require assessments this would not cost £600 for each child as Educational Psychologists look at the work that has already been done and help schools fill in the gaps in their understanding and make the best use of their time, rather than duplicate work. The relationship with Academies was similar; they have the same core offer and can buy in more Educational Psychologist time. Work is taking place to review the model of delivery as some schools buy in a lot more time than others.

7.45 In response to a member's question about how children who required an EHCP could be presenting at secondary school without one, the officers advised that it was unusual to see a request for a child in Year 7 or above. For some young people, their needs could be met in small, nurturing primary schools. However, secondary school was a different environment and their needs could become more apparent.

7.46 This year funding for exceptional needs requests has been reintroduced. Where a child arrives at school without an EHCP but with a high level of need, requests could be turned around in weeks. The funding is in line with EHCP banding levels e.g. £5,500 or £8,400 on top of the £6000 available to a school. Once a child receives an EHCP, the exceptional needs funding would cease.

7.47 The Chair advised that schools have raised concern that there are on-costs of one-to-one support of £25,000 which means there is a significant funding shortfall after £8,740 EHCP funding and £6,000 SEND funding. The officers stated that there are very few children who require one-to-one support all day in a mainstream school. If they do, they would usually be in a special school. In Islington, plans were specific as to when one-to-one support is required e.g. during interventions.

7.48 EHCPs are reviewed every 12 months. There has to be a reason for amending a plan and minor changes would not result in the plan being amended. Plans are updated at key transition points to ensure they are accurate. Last year there were 90 children with an EHCP that required updating ready for transitioning to secondary school and this year there are 130 children. When amending a plan, therapy services and parents are consulted before the plan is sent to secondary schools. Local authorities try to obtain information from primary schools as they know the children best but some schools are better than others at providing this and sometimes this is due to a capacity issue. One of the roles of Educational Psychologists is to support schools in making sure the plans are deliverable in secondary school.

7.49 In relation to speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy, the review of the plans in Year 5 considers what has been provided in primary school

and whether this would be required in secondary school. There are shortages of therapists but where therapy sessions are written in the plans, this would be put in by the professionals and there should not be anything in the plans that could not be delivered.

7.50   In response to a member's question about a concern raised by parents that teaching assistants delivered therapy, the officers stated that this was not unusual as therapists try to ensure that the strategies they put in place do not always need to be delivered by themselves. The therapists worked with the children and then train school staff to continue delivering the strategies.

7.51   In response to a member's question about a suggestion from parents that getting diagnosed unlocks funding, the SEND manager stated that this was a perception held by some schools but not the local authority. The local authority is needs-led rather than diagnosis-led. Parents and schools should not delay applying for an EHCP waiting for a diagnosis. A diagnosis includes recommendations on strategies which schools are expected to deliver.

7.52   Within the SEND Team, there are four officers dedicated to post-16 transitions. They discuss needs with therapists and there is a broader range of professionals to consult as well as adult services teams and post-16 settings. The recent SEND Inspection complemented Islington on its plans. Educational Psychologists were not involved in transitions from secondary school to college or work unless requested.

7.53   The rise in numbers of children with SEND is a global issue. Diagnoses of Autism have risen significantly and the diagnosis is being given to a broader range of people. More girls are being diagnosed and intergenerational trauma could affect numbers.

7.54   In response to a member's question about concern raised by parents that some schools are reluctant to take children with SEND the SEND Manager stated that the number of schools and incidents is small. One school had raised concerns about access and these

had been resolved. The team tried to work through any challenges with schools in order to help them meet the needs of children with SEND.

7.55   It was suggested that upskilling staff in schools could be of benefit with more specialist teachers and specialist interventions.

Meeting with Headteacher of Virtual School, Service Manager, Independent Futures, Head of Service, Children Looked After, Head of Service, Children in Need and Service Manager, Disabled Children's Team

7.56   Members met with officers and heard that last year's PTA Team pilot had improved access to services such as adult mental health services. Staff are now being recruited to the new smaller team. The team would conduct assessments and help young people transition.

7.58   If a young person had both trauma and developmental needs, it could be hard to ascertain which pathway would best fit. It is important to establish the main cause of concern and then find the best fit team.

7.59   If young people with an EHCP are in care before their annual review when they are age 14, discussions on transitioning would begin. However, where a young person came into care later and had not had a review this could result in discussions happening later. Some of these young people did not have an EHCP but required one and therefore work had to take place to obtain one.

7.60   All partners should work together to start joint planning transitions age 14. There were a number of transitions to plan including where a young person would live, who would care for them, health transfer and education transfer. This happened in most cases where an EHCP was in place and there was a stable placement. When a young person

entered care age 16 or 17 and had previously been out of education it was unlikely that transition planning had taken place.

7.61   There was a transitions social worker who helped with the transitions of young people with profound disabilities. Transition work started in Year 9 and the social worker worked part time in Children's Services and part time in Adult Services.

7.62   Looked after children have access to prompt mental health support. Officers raised concern that some children entered care with complex needs and after their initial placement, they moved out of borough and their ECHP had to be referred to the new local authority. This created a delay which could be avoided if the local authority could retain responsibility until after the assessment.

7.63   The SEND code of practice stated that it is the responsibility of the child's ordinary residence to maintain legal responsibility of the EHCP. Exceptions are if a child is not in a settled placement or where a child is in a 52-week residential placement. In these cases, the local authority could maintain a holding position. There are 75 Looked After Children with EHCPs placed out of borough. The council held the plans of between 20 and 25 of these.

7.64   Officers considered that plans should not be transferred until a young person is in a stable placement and that it should be a "best interest's decision" or there could be joint responsibility. However, this had to be considered in the national context and could not be changed in isolation from other local authorities.

7.65   Where a child with an EHCP had placement instability and moved between local authorities this presented bureaucratic, legal and practical difficulties.

7.66   The rationale for transferring a plan to the local authority where a child is placed, is that they were better equipped to identify local provision.

7.67   Some local authorities had different philosophies about SEND. If a child is placed in a local authority with a different philosophy e.g. one where there is no special school,

even if they would have attended a special school in Islington or another local authority, they would be supported to attend a mainstream school there.

7.68   The chair stated that members had heard from parents that they felt driven to get diagnoses to access services. Officers stated that this was sometimes the case when young people transitioned to adult services and they required another diagnosis to access services. The adult threshold for statutory support is high and young people could be vulnerable especially as they progressed into adulthood. They could be at risk of exploitation including radicalisation. There needed to be an early screening process to identify those who did not meet the threshold and how their needs would be met.

7.69   If a young person lives out of borough and stayed there as an adult, the other local authority is responsible for arrangements e.g. supported housing.

7.70   In response to the chair's question about whether children ageing out the service are tracked, an officer advised that young people are not tracked post 25. Some kept in touch but contact is not made systematically. The chair suggested that those post 25 could be invited to keep in touch and become part of a community that could meet and find out about other services. Officers stated that Housing is working on being lifelong champions for care experienced people and that perhaps Children's Services could look at the long-term effectiveness of their work as part of this.

7.71   The following suggestions were made:

- It would be helpful to have local guiding principles when transferring a plan to another local authority including when it is in the child's best interests to retain the plan. The DfE is looking to produce national guidance but this could take some time.
- It would be helpful to have EHCP screening for all young people entering care. However, it should be noted that two thirds of LAC do not have an EHCP and are supported well. This is in line with the national figure. If more EHCPs are issued, more looked after children are likely to go to special schools rather than be educated in mainstream schools.

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- There should be clear pathways for children without Global Development Delay and clear thresholds set out.
- If a child is not in a stable placement, there should be flexibility to allocate an Islington mental health professional if required, who would stay allocated until the child is in a stable placement.
- The programme to adulthood framework should be rolled out in adult services.

Other Work Being Undertaken By The Council

7.72   Members attended two Family Carers' meetings and heard about other work being undertaken by the Council.

7.73   Members heard that work was being done to collate various information that the council has access to from EHCPs and information on national databases regarding older people with SEND. The idea is to project level of need based on demographic information so that appropriate services can be commissioned (e.g., working with colleagues in housing who build new properties or develop new models of supported living/co-housing).

7.74   There would be changes in mental health coming from NHS England around how the front door (first point of access) is for individuals. The idea is to take away the diagnostic element to services. Diagnoses would no longer be required and access would be widened to those with a mental health need. GPs or family or friend could refer a person. There would also be targets from NHS England with a target period of 4 weeks from the point of referral to the point of getting a care and support plan in place. This should mean easier and more timely access to support going forward.
Work is taking place with 90 plus young people aged 17+ with a mixture of needs. Feedback has been collated to shape new service. The pilot aims to improve connections between children's services, Islington Learning Disabilities Partnership (ILDP), mental health services, employment services and voluntary services.

7.75   The Disabled Children's Services support 130 families including seventeen, 17 years olds. For this reason, transition is high on the agenda. The team undertakes reassessments of need for social care when children are 14 years old. The focus is on developing life skills and the progression to adulthood along with goals for the social care support plan.

7.76   The Transitions team is based in the ILDP. The team included five social workers, a senior social worker, a care manager, and administrative and occupational therapy support. The PTA team will be part of the Transitions team and will support those without a diagnosis of a learning disability but with support needs that will continue into adulthood. There is a working group to set up joint processes and protocols.

7.77   The Transitions team takes over statutory support when a young person reaches their 18th birthday. The team aims to allocate a social worker a year before transition and whilst there have been difficulties in achieving this due to covid, the team is now working to achieve this. There is a reciprocal arrangement with Children's Services to ensure young people are supported.

7.78   The main 'staging points' are when a young person leaves school or college or moves to supported living or their own accommodation. It is expected that they would be allocated a social worker at these times to support transition. The team works closely with Children's Services and Health colleagues at these transition points.

7.79   The Transitions team are looking to start attending Annual Review meetings from age 14. The Transitions team have transitions information packs they could share with parents following a refresh as a result of Covid and the two transition teams being brought together. Frequently asked questions could be created with family carers and included in the information packs. Consideration should be given to where information could be shared e.g. libraries, GP surgeries and schools. It was suggested that there is a Camden transition pack that Islington could learn from.

7.80   Islington Council supported over 1000 people into employment each year – this involved working with various partnership organisations. The Autism and Learning Disability Group brought together teams and partner organisations responsible for supporting people with Learning Disabilities or Autism into employment.

7.81   Work took place to craft disability-friendly jobs with a disability-friendly recruitment process. This involves working with employers to identify or create suitable roles for people with learning disabilities or autism. They then advertise in a variety of formats including a 'live' job description where potential employees could visit the workplace, and often held trials as part of the interview process. They also include in-work support for up to six weeks when a candidate starts but found that few people require support for the full six weeks. The programme had stalled during lockdown as the process was difficult to undertake virtually.

7.82   Partnership organisations for the Autism and Learning Disability Group include: Islington Supporting Employment Team, Mencap, Scope, a specialist Autism Organisation, Action for Kids and Think Forward.

8. EVIDENCE FROM PARENTS AND CARERS

8.1   Members spoke to a range of parents and carers and valued hearing about their individual experiences. They also consulted parents through a survey, received written testimonies from parents and met with the Chair of Islington Parent Carer Forum and her colleague.

The main challenges identified by parents:

- Navigating the system and advocating for their children feels like a constant battle.
- The EHCP system is particularly difficult for those with English as an additional language.
- There is a lack of opportunity for parents to present their views
- There is a lack of centralised information
- Transition discussions are not always starting aged 14.
- Transitions have been affected by the Covid 19 pandemic.
- Some parents have received negative comments from schools about admitting their children.
- There is limited support for families of children with SEND.
- Parents feel like they are constantly in the process of transitioning.
- There was a lack of communication.
- The transition process is an anxious time for children with SEND.
- The EHCP system is confusing.
- EHCPs are too long and too hard to understand.
- Parents have to undertake their own research into schools and some feel poorly informed and unsupported.

Suggestions made by parents:

- There should be help with choosing suitable schools.
- The acoustics/aesthetics of schools is important.
- There should be an events calendar.
- Parents and carers should be given a key contact person to help them navigate the system.
- There should be a transitions document outlining clear pathway options.
- There should be more internships for young people with SEND.
- More timely information should be provided.
- There should be more activities for children.
- There is currently one disability swim session per week at one swimming pool in Islington for children with SEND and their families. It would benefit families if similar sessions were offered across Islington pools and other leisure facilities.
- Although in general, parents welcome social care assessments to look at the needs of the whole family, the form should be reworded so it was not the same as the form for child protection.
- The wording of the short breaks form should be reviewed as it currently referred to "severe and complex needs" which could prevent some entitled families from completing the form.

9. EVIDENCE FROM HEADTEACHERS, SENCOS, SEND GOVERNORS AND PROFESSIONALS

9.1   Members undertook visits to New River College Pupil Referral Unit, The Bridge and St Mary Magdalene Academy. Virtual sessions took place with staff from North Islington Nursery School, SEND Governors, SENCOs and Headteachers. Further consultation took place through a survey.

The main challenges identified by schools and professionals

- The rising numbers of children with SEND and the complexity of cases

- Funding pressures and resource implications

- Inconsistency in the information received from previous settings

- Schools sometimes being unaware of children's needs when they arrive

- Delays in waiting for Educational Psychologist reports

- Not all services had returned to in-person visits post-covid

Suggestions Made By Schools

- Stronger cross borough links

- Standardised forms, procedures and offers

- Timely information sharing with a specific day for the transfer of electronic files

- More work should be done with colleges

- More paid traineeships

- Improved communication

- A checklist for the sending and receiving school would improve consistency

- A central list of contact details for SENCOs would aid communication

- It would be beneficial if all teachers and not just SENCOs, understood attachment theory and trauma informed approaches.
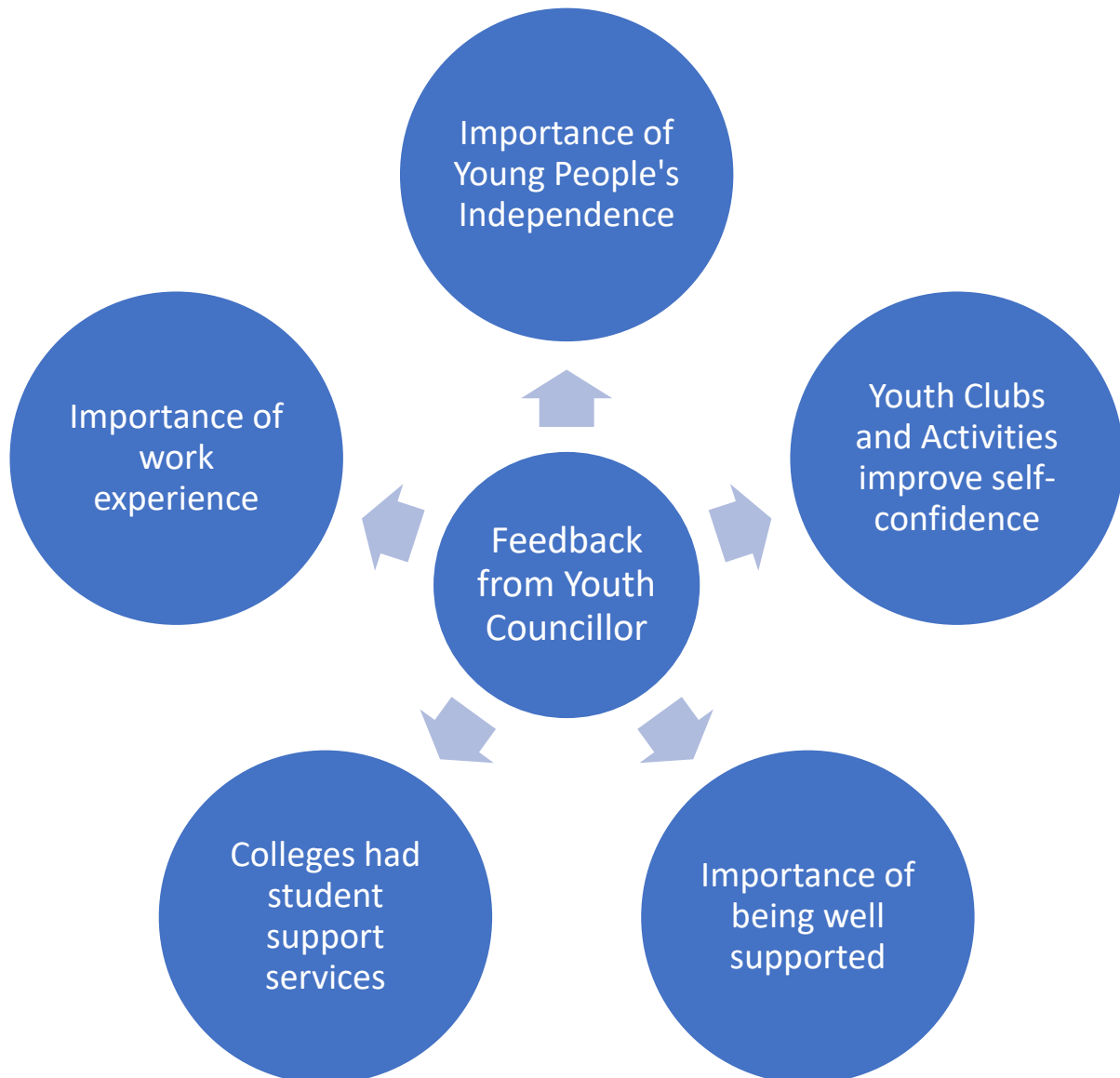
10.1 Pupils from New River College

Members had a discussion with young people at New River College. Their feedback was as follows:

10.2 Youth Councillor

Members met a Youth Councillor with SEND who had transitioned from school to college.

Importance of Young People's Independence

Importance of work experience

Feedback from Youth Councillor

Youth Clubs and Activities improve self-confidence

Colleges had student support services

Importance of being well supported

11.1   This review focussed on assessing the ways in which the council supports young people with SEND and their families at various points of transition to make recommendations to improve the transition process for parents, young people, education settings and professionals.

11.2   The Committee noted the wide-ranging work already being undertaken by the council to improve transitions and outcomes for young people. It is hoped the Committee's review will further support this work.

11.3   34 recommendations have been made in response to the evidence received.

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.

SCRUTINY INITIATION DOCUMENT (SID)	
Review title	Special Education Needs and Disabilities – Transitions
Scrutiny Committee	Children's Services Scrutiny Committee
Lead Director	Cate Duffy, Director – People

Lead officers

Candy Holder, Head of Pupil Services, Learning and Schools and

Sue Imbriano, Assistant Director, School Improvement and Pupil Progression

Overall aim

To assess the ways in which the council supports young people with SEND and their families at various points of transition: early years to primary school, primary to secondary school, secondary school to the world of work or further education as well, as the transition from Children's Services to Adult Social Services, and paying particular attention to the experiences of SEND children (i) with emerging needs at key transition points and (ii) who move between schools outside of expected transition points.

Key Objectives

1. To investigate whether schools and families are properly consulted by the local authority when the local authority is considering their request for a particular school.

2. To ascertain whether some mainstream settings are taking significantly more/less children from disadvantaged groups than others and, if this is happening, what impact that has on all stakeholders and what measures the local authority could take to ensure fairness.

3. To look at whether where a child attends primary school affects outcomes (for example, in terms of securing earlier diagnosis/support/intervention).

4. To evaluate how joined up the local authority is where a child's borough of residence is not the same as the borough where the child goes to school or accesses services.

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5. To consider the factors that influence parental choice in selecting out-of-borough provision.

6. To consider whether young people with SEND are disproportionately NEET, missing in education or permanently excluded and, if they are, what can be done.

7. To consider which council services/interventions work well; to identify best practice and to investigate services/interventions which are less successful.

8. To look at outcomes for young people with SEND who are experiencing additional disadvantage (e.g. by virtue of (i) being a child at risk, (ii) economic disadvantage, (iii) criminal justice system involvement, being missing from care etc).

9. To consider the impact of Covid on children with SEND and whether there is a specific recovery strategy for children with SEND, the success of which could be evaluated.

Scope of the review

The review will focus on:

1. Provision and how this is funded

2. Profile and complexity of needs

3. Projected demand

4. Inclusion in schools

Types of evidence

1. It is proposed that witness evidence is taken from:
    a. Headteachers and SENCOs in mainstream primary and secondary schools
    b. Senior leaders in pupil referral units
    c. Officers responsible for drawing up Education and Health Care Plans (including educational psychologists)
    d. Service Directors responsible for setting Islington's SEND strategy
    e. Parents/carers of children with SEND
    f. SEND Link governors
    g. Representatives from transition support services / projects

    h. Officers with lead responsibility for transition

    i. Officers from comparator boroughs

2. It is proposed that member of the committee visit New River College, The Bridge and a mainstream school.

3. The Committee will:

    a. Contact policy institutes such as the Education Policy Institute.

    b. Consider data on how children with SEND were spread across schools in the borough, different categories of schools and the complexity of need of the children.

    c. Request that one of two members attend a transition review meeting for a child or young person (subject to GDPR regulations and parental consent).

    d. Request that officers map out the journey of two or three children from early years to their current stage.

Additional information

A. The SEND Code of Practice, Paragraphs 9.78-9.79 states that:

The child's parent or the young person has the right to request a particular school, college or other institution…

If a child's parent or a young person makes a request for a particular nursery, school or post-16 institution in these groups the local authority must comply with that preference and name the school or college in the EHC plan unless:

    i) it would be unsuitable for the age, ability, aptitude or SEND of the child or young person, or

    ii) the attendance of the child or young person there would be incompatible with the efficient education of others, or the efficient use of resources.

B. 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.

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