

London Borough of Islington  
**Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday, 28 February 2023**

Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on Tuesday, 28 February 2023 at 7.00 pm.

<b>Present:</b>	<b>Councillors:</b>	Chapman (Chair), Bossman-Quarshie (Vice-Chair), Burgess, Cinko-Oner (Substitute), Jegorovas-Armstrong, North (Substitute), Ogunro and Pandor
	<b>Co-opted Member</b>	Mary Clement, Roman Catholic Diocese Zaleera Wallace, Parent Governor Representative (Secondary) Jon Stansfield, Parent Governor Representative (Primary)
<b>Also Present:</b>	<b>Councillors:</b>	Ngongo

**Councillor Sheila Chapman in the Chair**

- 68 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (ITEM NO. 1)**  
Apologies were received for Cllr Fin Craig and Cllr Gulcin Ozdemir
- 69 **DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (ITEM NO. 2)**  
Councillor Toby North and Councillor Ilkay Cinko-Oner substituted for Councillor Gulcin Ozdemir and Councillor Fin Craig
- 70 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (ITEM NO. 3)**  
None.
- 71 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (ITEM NO. 4)**  
The minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2023 was confirmed as an accurate record and the Chair was authorised to sign them
- 72 **CHAIR'S REPORT (ITEM NO. 5)**  
The Chair welcomed the recent announcement from the Mayor of London on providing free school meals for all primary school children in London, highlighting that while this was already in practice in Islington, it was positive news for the rest of London.  
  
The Chair thanked officers in Children's Services for their hard work and noted that there were successful OFSTED inspections that had taken place recently at four primary schools in the borough.  
  
The Chair also thanked members of the committee for attending scrutiny visits to Lift Youth Hub, the Youth Justice Service, and virtually with home-educated families. The Chair is working with officers to arrange further visits.
- 73 **ITEMS FOR CALL IN (IF ANY) (ITEM NO. 6)**

None.

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

None.

75 **EXTERNAL ATTENDEES (IF ANY) (ITEM NO. 8)**

None.

76 **MAKING CHILDREN VISIBLE - WITNESS EVIDENCE AND CONCLUDING DISCUSSION (ITEM NO. B1)**

Josh Harsant, Head of Voice & Influence at Barnardo's UK, delivered a presentation that had been circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting, on The Voice & Influence of Children & Young People. Key highlights from the discussion included:

- Often children are labelled pre-emptively, and Josh Harsant encouraged the Committee to instead consider the points below when approaching the subject of voice and influence of children and young people: What is the problem you're trying to solve? Who are the right people to help you understand and address the problem? What are the values and ways of working that bind everyone together? Who has power to act and who has power to inform and influence?
- The Committee were also encouraged to consider how children's rights can be put front and centre, what mechanisms there are for increasing the voice and influence of children and young people, and where the voice and influence of children and young people in the context of decision making. An example highlighted was a suggestion given to other local authorities to include a sub-section of the implications section of corporate reports for this.
- Josh Harsant made the point to the Committee that children and young people will identify differently depending on the environment they were in, and that they were often not talked of outside of the statutory framework. Labels were not a good starting point when approaching the subject of voice and influence and the Committee should look at them as a young resident with lived experience and consider whether applying a label would make any significant difference when applying it.
- Josh Harsant cited UNICEF's Child Friendly Programme which operated in schools in two London boroughs, one of which was Redbridge, who are involving children and young people in planning matters for the first time. In response, it was noted that Islington had also involved young people on planning matters in the past, citing the Holloway Prison redevelopment as one example.

Tania Townsend, Head of Strategic Programmes and Strategy delivered the second presentation to the Committee on Voice and Influence of young people and parents/carers, which had also been circulated to Committee members prior to the meeting. Highlights of the discussion included.

- All children and young people have the right for their voice to be heard.
- The importance of moving from participation to co-production in terms of the services used by decisions affecting and decisions regarding children and families.
- That the approach in Islington was centred on shifting the focus to outcome-focused involvement and acknowledging that it was important that parents and carers got as much out of this process as well.
- Examples were given of what Islington currently had in place concerning the voice and influence of children and young people in Islington.

## Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - 28 February 2023

- It was important that learning and best practice was embedded so that it can be retained long-term and not lost to officer turnover / electoral lifecycles.

In response to a question from the Committee stating that an update had not been provided since 2020 on implementing the recommendations the Fair Futures commission, the Head of Strategic Programmes and Strategy told the Committee that when the report of that commission was published, one of the key elements missing from the report was climate change and how young people wanted the Council and the system at large to address it; to that end, the Head of Strategic Programmes and Strategy proposed that an update could be presented to a future meeting. It may be appropriate to engage with young people on their latest priorities and for this to be reflected in the report. The Chair confirmed that they were for happy for this to be reflected on in the work programme next year.

In response to question from the Committee that there had not been a question put forward to a Council meeting from the youth councillors since 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020 and that they should be reinvited to full Council, the Director of Children's Services, Jon Abbey, stated that a better approach would be to seek the Youth Council's view on how to proceed. Guest speaker, Josh Harsant, welcomed this approach. The Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families, Councillor Ngongo, informed the committee that both she and the Director of Children's Services had met with youth councillors the previous week and that the Youth Council were preparing a presentation for herself and the Director of Children's Services, and Councillor Ngongo will invite members of the scrutiny committee to attend this presentation also.

### **ACTION:**

Jon Abbey to consult with the Youth Council on how to proceed with Council questions.

77

### **SCHOOL RESULTS 2022 (ITEM NO. B2)**

Anthony Doudle, Head of School Improvement, presented the report on School Results, which had been circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting. Some of the key points raised from the discussion were:

- The Committee were told that when writing the education plan, it was noted that school attendance needed to improve, as this was one of the main factors affecting learning. This was particularly among those who were persistently absent from school. The sooner children were able to access education, the better their outcomes were.
- 2021–22 was the first year that Statutory Assessments returned for all key stages in the education sector
- Officers commented that there was far too much variability on outcomes between schools. Officers were reviewing outcomes with each school.
- 2022 Phonics Screening Check – Islington's performance this year was down on 2019's, and 1% off the inner-London target.
- At Key Stage 1, schools were meeting the needs of majority of pupils and teacher assessments were very positive. The challenge going forward was that assessment at this stage will not be mandatory after 2023/24, and close collaboration was underway with schools to establish how attainment is monitored after this.
- It was important that schools were using data to drive improvements.
- Officers commented that a bigger issue is the progress made from KS1 to where they were in Year 6. Lockdowns have impacted on the progress of young people.
- At Key Stage 4, attainment was above the national average, but compared to inner London there was more work to do to close the gap

## Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - 28 February 2023

- Attainment levels for Key Stage 5 saw big improvements – comparative London data was not available at the time of report
- Up until 2019, progress was being made with the 'Black Caribbean' cohort's learning journey.
- The reason given to the Committee for the absence of some community groups in the data, was due to that section focussing on groups that underperformed relative to other groups and success stories. Disproportionality groups were also drawn from national data (the Census). The Head of School Improvement will consult the data team about data for all groups will be reported to the Committee at the next scrutiny by exception. The Chair suggested in response that there should be more of a focus on 'groups', rather than 'disproportionality groups' so that there can be context to the success stories highlighted.
- The Chair of the Committee also suggested that officers should attempt to present the Committee the full learning journey for some of these groups
- Children from six families who have home educated their children have gone on to university – this will be added to the scrutiny tracker.
- Although there was growth in the number of electively home educated children since the pandemic, there had been no published, national data on this cohort. The statutory requirement is that home education provides a suitable education, but it does not have to follow the national curriculum.
- It was clarified that "Key Stage 5 basics" referred to English and Maths

### 78 **REPORT ON EQUALITIES IN EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES (2019/20) SCRUTINY REVIEW (ITEM NO. B3)**

Anthony Doudle, Head of School Improvement, presented the item to the Committee, the report for which was circulated to members prior to the meeting.

The Committee were told that at the time of the scrutiny review, two national lockdowns were in effect, which somewhat changed the focus of what supporting inequality meant, and supporting students, school leaders and families during that period of time. The report highlighted that Islington supported the community well during that time and the transition to/from remote learning.

The Chair thanked all members and officers for the hard work, particularly during the COVID-19 lockdowns.

### 79 **WORK PROGRAMME AND SCRUTINY INITIATION DOCUMENT (ITEM NO. B4)**

The Chair requested that the draft recommendations be moved from the meeting of 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023 to the following meeting of 25<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

MEETING CLOSED AT 9.05 pm

Chair