
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, **28 November 2023 at 7.00 pm.**

Enquiries to : Theo McLean
Tel : 0207 527 6568
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Despatched : 20 November 2023

Membership

Substitute Members

Councillors:

Councillor Sheila Chapman (Chair)
Councillor Valerie Bossman-Quarshie
(Vice-Chair)
Councillor Fin Craig
Councillor Ernestas Jegorovas-
Armstrong
Councillor Toby North
Councillor Rosaline Ogunro
Councillor Saiqa Pandor
Councillor Claire Zammit

Substitutes:

Councillor Jilani Chowdhury
Councillor Ilkay Cinko-Oner
Councillor Paul Convery
Councillor Benali Hamdache
Councillor Dave Poyser
Councillor Heather Staff

Co-opted Member:

Mary Clement, Roman Catholic Diocese
Vacancy Church of England Diocese
Vacancy Primary School Parent Governor Representative
Vacancy Secondary School Parent Governor Representative
Vacancy Other Faiths Co-Opted Member

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 - 6
5. Chair's Report
6. External Attendees (if any)

7. Items for Call In (if any)

8. 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

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1. The Children's Workforce Scrutiny Review - Witness Evidence from the Metropolitan Police (Verbal Update)

VERBAL
UPDATE
(NO
PAPERS)

2. Early Years and Childcare Update

7 - 14

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)

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F. Confidential/exempt items

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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 15 January 2024

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

Agenda Item 4

London Borough of Islington
Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday, 31 October 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on Tuesday, 31 October 2023 at 7.00 pm.

Present:	Councillors:	Chapman (Chair), Bossman-Quarshie (Vice-Chair), Craig, Jegorovas-Armstrong, North, Ogunro, Pandor and Zammit
Also Present:	Councillors	Ngongo
	Co-opted Member	Mary Clement, Roman Catholic Diocese

Councillor Sheila Chapman in the Chair

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

There were no apologies for absence.

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

There were no declarations of substitute members.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

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

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14th September 2023 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

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

The Chair informed the Committee that they would be working with officers in the coming weeks to prepare evidence sessions for this year's scrutiny review. This included arranging sessions with Rose Bowl Youth Centre, The Parent House, and the fathers' group in Highbury, and the Chair would inform all members as and when these sessions would be taking place.

146 **EXTERNAL ATTENDEES (IF ANY) (ITEM NO. 6)**

Three members of the public were in attendance.

147 **ITEMS FOR CALL IN (IF ANY) (ITEM NO. 7)**

None.

148 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS (ITEM NO. 8)**

None.

149

ATTENDANCE (ITEM NO. B1)

Officers delivered a presentation to the Committee on school attendance in the post-pandemic era. In the discussion, the following points were raised:

- Officers highlighted in their presentation, the national context behind school attendance. The Council had received correspondence from the Chief Executive of the Youth Justice Board, the Children's Commissioner, and the Chief Medical Officer, acknowledging, pledging support for, and urging a focus on improving school attendance.
- The Committee were told that one of the most damaging legacies from the pandemic was that there was now a generation of students out of the habit of attending school regularly, as a result of pandemic-related school closures.
- The Committee were also told that sociologists' initial predictions of attendance levels bouncing back afterwards, had not transpired. Instead, data had shown there had been an almost doubling of school absences overall, since the pandemic. Persistent absences also doubled over the same period.
- A child not attending school above 90% of the time was the equivalent of an entire school year not in education over the course of a student's career.
- Emerging research illustrated particularly troubling trends, such as poor labour outcomes for the COVID generation, and a pattern of emerging workplace inequalities.
- While all children were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, children from the most deprived areas were more profoundly affected than others.
- Officers delivered a demonstration of how they are able to analyse and collect live data.
- In response to concerns from members that performance was decreasing and absences higher and more entrenched in Islington than statistical neighbours over recent years; and questions about how this was considered in the school reorganisation, officers responded that all factors were considered, of which there were many. One was that Islington had one of the highest deprivation rates in the country and there was a very strong link between deprivation and attendance. Another was there was some correlation between schools that had lower-rolls, and that those schools appeared to be struggling more. The issue was complex and spread across schools. During the pandemic, Islington's attendance rate was above regional and national measures, but it had unfortunately reverted since then.
- In response to questions from the Committee, members were told that traditionally, peaks in absence had been concentrated on years ten and eleven, but increases were now being seen across the board, including at primary level. While officers acknowledged members' concerns that encouraging 100% attendance may place pressure on students, officers stated that it would be too much of a risk to encourage anything less. In terms of fines for school absences, the vast majority were for holiday time absences which parents were increasingly factoring into the cost of

their holiday; the Department for Education (DfE) were pushing for parenting orders as an alternative but historically, officers had not found this approach to be particularly effective.

- In response to questions from the Committee, members were told that schools make all reasonable efforts to contact and locate absent children and their families. They would also inform officers that can perform follow up visits should schools be unsuccessful in doing so. Each child's circumstances were individual and considered; and form the basis of targeted support meetings in which the most appropriate means of intervention is decided.

ACTION:

Officers to provide the Islington statistics on emotional-based school avoidance.

150

YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE / YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN (ITEM NO. B2)

Officers delivered an overview of the plan to the Committee. In the discussion, the following points were raised:

- Officers apologised for typos in the report and acknowledged that the version put before members was in draft form. A final version would be put forward to the Youth Justice Board in November, incorporating feedback from both the Committee and other partners.
- The report was a statutory requirement and the Youth Justice Service itself was a statutory service under the Criminal Justice Act 1988.
- The numbers of young people being supported by the Youth Justice Service had been curtailed over the last five years, which was good. There had been just thirty-seven first time entrants into the service which was an improvement on a peak in 2014.
- Officers were pleased with the performance on custodial sentences and the reduction in the reoffending rate to date.
- There had been an increase in female offenders and officers were investigating the reasons behind this as well as responding to this change.
- There continued to be an overrepresentation of Black Caribbean boys although on average their offences were mostly of a lower gravity.
- The most common types of offences perpetrated by young people in 2022-23, included violence against a person, robbery drug offences and motoring offences. Highbury and Archway generally saw a higher concentration of offences committed.
- A major protective factor to young people was involvement in education, employment and/or training, as well as supportive and nurturing families.
- Officers noted that groups of concern/priority included white working-class boys and looked after children, who were said to be more vulnerable to exploitation.
- Members advised that officers should consider the primary audience of the plan, with specific reference to the length of the document, use of acronyms and what was said to be a retrospective focus; suggesting to

officers that the density of the text is broken down and the prospective elements given more weight. Officers responded, highlighting that the plan was an annual, statutory document with at least five different audiences, with the Youth Justice Board mandating what needed to be included. Officers told the Committee that the plan intended to highlight achievements as well as ambitions, and agreed with members that the plan could be strengthened by adding case studies.

- Members stressed that where the plan references the vicinity of Highbury Grove School as a hotspot for offences, it should be made clear that it is the area surrounding the school, and not students at the school itself.
- In response to questions from the Committee, officers noted that in terms of the universal offer, there was more work to be done and improvements to be made.
- The Committee were told that the means in which young people were represented at court was important. Officers would often give background to officials on a young person's circumstances, trauma and educational needs and would often advise court officials, including judges, to adapt their language in a way that the young person can understand. Officers based at Highbury Corner assist with this.
- In addition of a report on disproportionality there was an evaluation report funded by MOPAC in the works.
- Officers were making active efforts to hold partners to account. Parent Champions and Youth Justice staff had also participated in training/recruitment of police staff, in teaching them about early age trauma and the experience of a young person who has been stopped and searched. Officers had also delivered training to magistrates, district judges and lay benches about disproportionality.
- Safer Neighbourhood Boards hold the police to account on stop and search, behaviours, and practices, and have representatives of the youth justice service and young people, on the board.
- In response to questions from the Committee, officers highlighted that they do take onboard learning from neighbouring local authorities, such as Haringey, Hackney, and Camden, as well as other authorities further afield.
- Officers acknowledged that not all of the work and achievements undertaken would have been captured in the document, and some had to be edited out to avoid it being excessively long, however if members felt there was something missing that should be added back in, officers would consider it.

ACTION:

The Executive Member for Children, Young People & Families will invite members of the Committee to any sessions that is felt would benefit the work of the Committee / support the Scrutiny Review. This includes visits to Highbury Corner Magistrates Court and a practice fortnight of events promoting Islington's offer to children, young people, and families.

ACTION:

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - 31 October 2023

Officers to invite the Committee to the Practice Fortnight in March 2024 for the Youth Justice Service and arrange for members to also attend a Practice Fortnight for Children's Social Care.

ACTION:

Officers to provide members with further information on what the service is doing to tackle disproportionality.

151

WORK PROGRAMME (ITEM NO. B3)

The Chair informed the Committee that the work programme had been revised to account for scheduling issues. The Metropolitan Police were unavailable to present evidence at this meeting (31st October) and will instead attend the meeting of 28th November 2023. Additionally, the Executive Member for Children, Young People & Families has given apologies for the meeting of 28th November 2023, and will instead present their item, "Executive Members Report" at the meeting of 15th January 2024 instead.

MEETING CLOSED AT 9.05 pm

Chair

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Early Years and Childcare Updates

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Sarah Callaghan - Director of Learning and Achievement

Christine Halliwell - Head of Operations, Early Years and Childcare Service

28 November 2023

Agenda Item B2

Current National Offer

Who is it for?

All children the term after their 3rd birthday

Where is it offered?

This is a national offer which can be accessed in multiple settings across the borough including schools

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Who is it for?

Eligible children the term after they turn 2 whose parents are receiving benefits such as Income Support.

OR

Families whose annual income does not exceed £15,400 if in receipt of universal credit.

OR

£16,190 before tax if receiving tax credits.

Where is it offered?

This is a national offer which can be accessed in multiple settings across the borough including many schools

Free Early Learning places (15hrs) for all 3 and 4 year olds

Islington's Childcare Offer

Free Early Learning places (15hrs) for eligible 2 year olds

Free 30 hrs for eligible 3 and 4 year olds

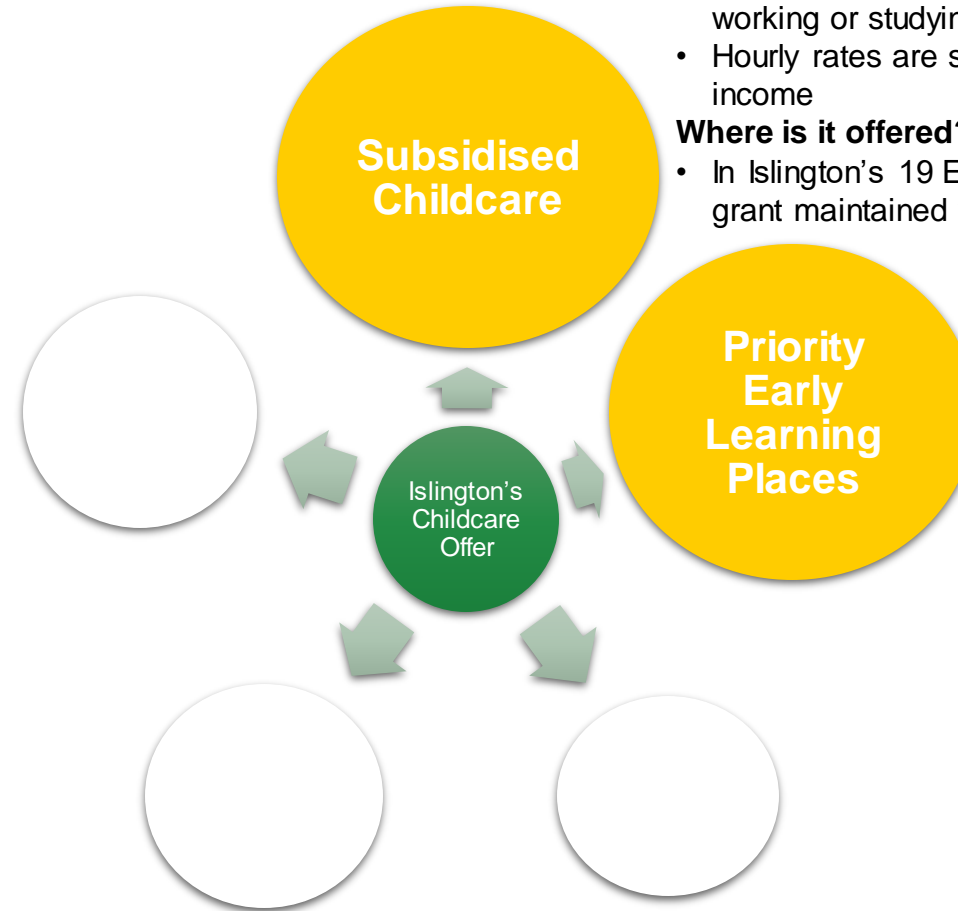
Who is it for?

Children where both parents are working and eligible can access an additional 15hrs childcare.

Where is it offered?

This is a national programme and providers need to have signed up to the scheme for children to attend.

Islington's Current Offer



Who is it for?

- Children living in Islington aged from 6mths where both parents are working or studying
- Hourly rates are subsidised on a sliding scale depending on joint family income

Where is it offered?

- In Islington's 19 Early Years and Children's Centres as well as some grant maintained voluntary sector nurseries

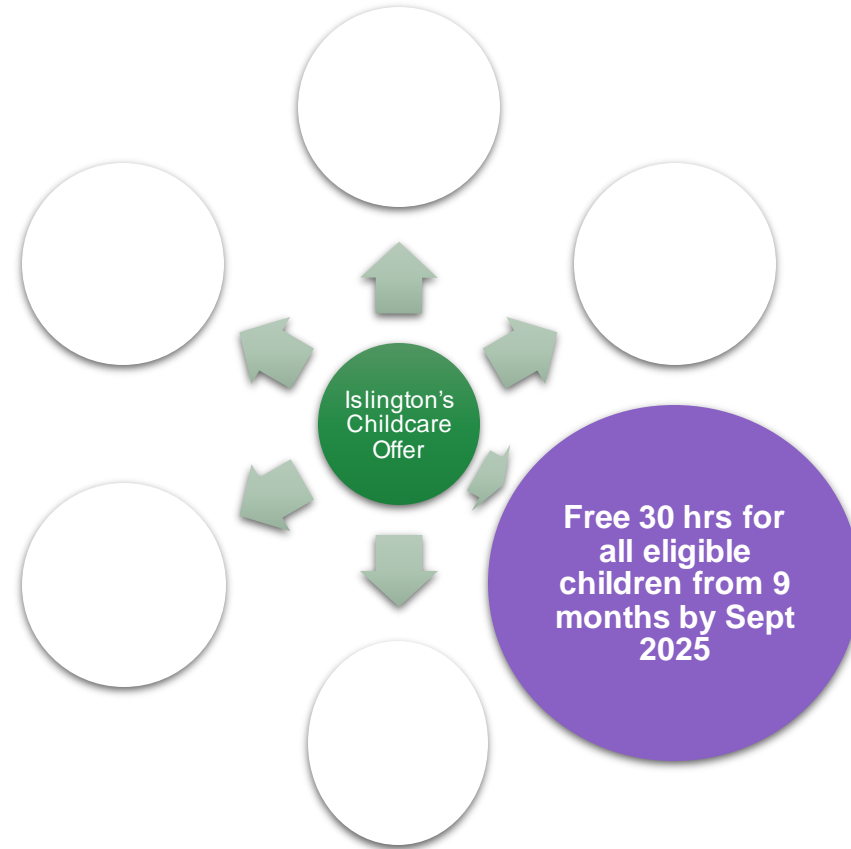
Who is it for?

- Islington children who are deemed in need and therefore given priority access to one of Islington's Children's Centres and some maintained nursery settings.
- Families are income assessed as with other subsidised places but both parents need not be working.
- Places are requested by a professional working with the family.
- All requests are assessed and agreed by a multi-agency panel.

Where is it offered?

- In Islington's 19 Early Years and Children's Centres as well as some grant maintained voluntary sector nurseries and childminders.

Childcare Expansion



Who is it for?

Eligible working parents in England will be able to access 30 hours of free childcare per week, for 38 weeks of the year, from when their child is 9 months old to when they start school.

This will be rolled out in stages:

- From April 2024, eligible working parents of 2-year-olds can access 15 hours per week
- From Sept 2024, eligible working parents of children aged 9 months to 3 years old can access 15 hours per week
- From Sept 2025, eligible working parents of children aged 9 months to 3 years old can access 30 hours free childcare per week



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Scrutiny November 2023, Early Years Childcare Expansion

Current offer – National and Islington		
The offer	Who is it for?	Where is it offered?
Free Early Learning places (15hrs) for eligible 2 year olds	All eligible children the term after they turn 2 whose parents are receiving benefits or where the annual family income does not exceed £15,400 if in receipt of universal credit or £16,190 before tax if receiving tax credits.	This is a national offer which can be accessed in multiple settings across the borough.
Free Early Learning places (15hrs) for 3 and 4 year olds	All children the term after their 3 rd birthday.	This is a national offer which can be accessed in multiple settings across the borough.
Free 30 hrs for 3 and 4 year olds of eligible working parents	Children where both parents are working and eligible can access an additional 15hrs childcare.	This is a national offer which can be accessed in multiple settings across the borough.
Subsidised childcare	Children living in Islington aged from 6mths where both parents are working or studying. Hourly rates are subsidised on a sliding scale depending on joint family income.	In Islington's 19 Early Years and Children's Centres as well as some grant maintained voluntary sector nurseries.
Priority Early Learning Places	Islington children who are deemed in need and therefore given priority access to one of Islington's Children's Centres and some maintained nursery settings. All requests are assessed and agreed by a multi-agency panel. Families are income assessed as with other subsidised places but both parents need not be working.	In Islington's 19 Early Years and Children's Centres as well as some grant maintained voluntary sector nurseries and childminders.

The new expanded childcare offer from April 2024 for working parents

- Eligible working parents in England will be able to access 30 hours of free childcare per week, for 38 weeks of the year, from when their child is 9 months old to when they start school.
- This will be rolled out in stages over the next two years:
 - From April 2024, eligible working parents of 2-year-olds can access 15 hours per week
 - From Sept 2024, eligible working parents of children aged 9 months to 3 years old can access 15 hours per week
 - From Sept 2025, eligible working parents of children aged 9 months to 3 years old can access 30 hours free childcare per week
- More information can be found here: www.childcarechoices.gov.uk

Childcare sufficiency in Islington to meet the new offer

According to DfE modelling Islington already has sufficient capacity. Islington's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment also indicates that there is sufficient capacity. Because of our subsidised childcare offer we are in a stronger position than many LAs as many of our working families are taking up childcare in our nurseries. This gives us a good indicator of capacity and eligibility.

The new expansion does not require a change of ratios, and change to statutory ratios for 2 year olds announced from September 2023 is not compulsory. This has not affected the funding rates and there is no appetite from providers in Islington to change current ratios. There is no change to the statutory space requirements as set out in the EYFS – i.e. no change to square metre per child requirements.

What will the childcare expansion changes look like for parents and providers?

The DfE have not yet confirmed hourly funding rates for the expanded childcare scheme. Indicative funding rates were published as part of the consultation which closed in August. Actual funding rates are expected by the end of the year.

Until hourly rates are confirmed, we will not have a clear picture of how many providers will be offering free hours/places. The new rates are likely to be attractive to childminders, in particular. We will be working with them and other providers to support them in moving towards understanding the benefits of providing expanded free childcare.

Parents who take up childcare places in our subsidised nurseries are charged on a sliding scale according to income. There is no plan to change this progressive policy of 11 charging bands and a marketed (unsubsidised) rate for the highest earning parents and those living out of borough.

Next steps

There is an ongoing piece of work to review the allocation of Islington's childcare subsidy to ensure future financial viability, to review the way that our places are offered, for example, to increase flexibility for families and to support those more vulnerable children who will not be able to benefit from the new expansion.