

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - 19 September 2017

data was not held on the number of deportations, however schools did notify Children's Services when children moved abroad. This allowed the council to investigate if young people had been successfully enrolled at a school in another country. Children's Services was aware of 40 instances of children moving abroad since June 2015.

A group of local parents provided an update on the proposed closure of Paradise Park Children's Centre Café. The parents were very grateful that local ward councillors had awarded £20,000 to the Café through Community Infrastructure Levy funding, and reported that the café was to re-open. The parents asked if it was possible for a condition to be attached to the funding, so that the café would be required to have a paid worker. In response, the Corporate Director of Children's Services advised that she had recently reviewed the funding specification and confirmed that this would include provision for a paid worker.

A member of the public asked why the council could not fund transport to school for a child with autism. Officers advised that they would look into this individual case after the meeting.

244 **VULNERABLE ADOLESCENTS SCRUTINY REVIEW: SCRUTINY INITIATION DOCUMENT AND INTRODUCTORY BRIEFING (ITEM NO. B1)**

Councillor Gallagher entered the meeting and it was noted that the committee was quorate.

a) Scrutiny Initiation Document and Witness Evidence Plan

Lisa Arthey, Director – Youth and Communities, introduced the scrutiny initiation document and witness evidence plan.

The review was welcomed by officers, as joining up services for vulnerable adolescents was a priority area for Children's Services.

The Committee expressed concerns about young people missing from home, care, or education, as this could be an indicator of other complex vulnerabilities.

The Committee noted the attainment gap of young people from certain BME and White Working Class demographic groups, and commented that these young people may also have specific vulnerabilities. It was requested that witness evidence included demographic statistics where relevant and appropriate.

It was suggested that the Committee should be mindful of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee's 2015/16 review of Knife Crime and Mobile Phone Theft, which reviewed some services for vulnerable young people. It was commented that the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee should be careful not to duplicate this work, and the previous review may have identified services or issues which would merit further investigation.

As the review potentially covered a very broad area of work, the Committee was asked to specify which areas they wished the review to focus on. It was agreed that the review should have a particular focus on:

- vulnerable adolescents who are missing from home, care, or education;
- young people aged 10 to 13 years (but not exclusively);

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - 19 September 2017

- the issues faced by vulnerable young adults and what services or actions would have helped them as younger adolescents;
- the 'child's voice' and how the council ensures that services for vulnerable adolescents are tailored to their specific needs;
- the specific local causes of vulnerability.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the Scrutiny Initiation Document be agreed, subject to the scope of the review being amended to read as follows:
 - vulnerable adolescents who are missing from home, care, or education;
 - young people aged 10 to 13 years (but not exclusively);
 - the issues faced by vulnerable young adults and what services or actions would have helped them as younger adolescents;
 - the 'child's voice' and how the council ensures that services for vulnerable adolescents are tailored to their specific needs;
 - the specific local causes of vulnerability.
- ii) That the Witness Evidence Plan be revised to reflect the above amendment.

b) Introductory briefing

Laura Eden, Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, delivered an introductory presentation which set out the issues surrounding services for vulnerable adolescents.

The following main points were noted in the discussion:

- The Committee considered how adolescence can be defined. It was advised that there were a range of views on this matter, however it was generally accepted that adolescence commenced at the onset of puberty, which was usually around age 10 to 12.
- It was reported that the number of adolescents on child protection plans had increased in recent years. Previously the majority of child protection plans related to babies, however around the same number of adolescents as babies were now subject to child protection plans.
- Vulnerable adolescents were particularly vulnerable to gang activity.
- The council's early intervention approach sought to intervene before issues became entrenched.
- The council's services for vulnerable adolescents were complemented by the rich voluntary and community sector offer in Islington. Whilst the council commissioned some VCS services, others had their own sources of funding.
- The council's Youth Crime Plan had sought to strengthen joined up working by championing a 'one worker, one plan' model. It was commented that most young people responded positively to this model of service delivery.
- A number of legislative frameworks applied to services for vulnerable young people. As a result, different eligibility criteria and consent thresholds applied to different services.
- It was advised that front line officers working with young people needed different skills as opposed to officers ten or fifteen years ago. It was important that services for young people reflected changes in society and the demography of the borough.

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - 19 September 2017

- The Committee considered the difficulties related to safeguarding young people who were being groomed and had an emotional attachment to their abuser. Officers commented that teachers and others working with young people needed to be sensitive to this and recognise indicators of abuse.
- Peer to peer child sexual abuse was the most common form of sexual abuse in Islington. A smaller number of young people were abused online or in a family setting.
- A discussion was had on the challenges posed by Islington's administrative boundaries. It was known that a number of young people from Islington regularly gathered in Wood Green, Kings Cross, and the West End. As the council was not able to provide services outside of the borough, a London-wide response was required.
- It was explained that the Islington Safeguarding Children Board recognised three categories of gang involvement; Category 3 (those entrenched in gangs), Category 2 (low level offenders), and Category 1 (those who were vulnerable to gang involvement, for example if their sibling was in a gang). The Committee requested demographic information on the young people associated with gangs.
- The Committee considered the prevalence of drug and substance abuse among young people. It was commented that almost all teenagers had witnessed substance abuse to some degree.
- The Committee considered the reasons why young people congregate in public spaces, and queried if this was because there were not sufficient safe spaces for young people.

The Committee thanked the officers for their attendance.

245 OFSTED INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND REVIEW OF ISLINGTON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD (ITEM NO. B2)

Carmel Littleton, Corporate Director of Children's Services, introduced the report which summarised the recent Ofsted inspection of Children's Services.

The Committee welcomed that Islington's overall judgement was 'good'. Ofsted had made six recommendations which officers were seeking to implement.

The Committee queried how Islington's services compared to other London local authorities. In response, it was advised that many local authorities were graded as 'requires improvement', and some local authorities were 'inadequate'.

Whilst the positive inspection was welcomed, it was emphasised that the council could not be complacent, and robust scrutiny of the council's children's services was important to ensure continued effectiveness.

RESOLVED:

That the Ofsted inspection report be noted.

246 EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL PRESENTATION (ITEM NO. B3)

Councillor Joe Caluori, Executive Member for Children, Schools and Families, made a presentation to the Committee on Children's Services work in 2016/17 and priorities for 2017/18.

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - 19 September 2017

The following main points were noted in the discussion:

- The Executive Member welcomed the positive Ofsted inspection. It was commented that officers were aware of what was required to receive an 'outstanding' grade, and would be working towards that aim.
- The Executive Member commented on the progress made by the Pause Project, which worked with 50 vulnerable women who had 200 children taken into care. The women were required to take long-term reversible contraception while accessing the service which offered a range of support. It was advised that project worked on a two-year cycle and the first cohort had recently completed the project. The Executive Member commented that the progress made by the women had been astonishing.
- The Executive Member hoped that the Pause Project would continue to be supported, however there were sustainability issues which needed consideration. It was advised that Pause workers would be engaging with care leavers in a pilot project, and it was hoped to develop a parallel project for fathers.
- The Executive Member thanked officers for the relatively smooth implementation of the Bright Start programme, which had fundamentally changed the borough's early years provision. It was commented that the programme had been implemented with minimal disruption to parents.
- Youth crime remained a concern. The Executive Member emphasised the importance of investing in services which achieved the best outcomes for young people.
- The number of new entrants to the youth offending system was below target for the first time since the Executive Member had been in post.
- The Executive Member commented on the challenges facing education. Although the government was not pursuing forced academisation, the catholic diocese was seeking to transfer its primary schools to an academy trust. The Executive Member commented that a balanced discussion was needed with the diocese, that took into account the views of parents.
- Work was underway to re-found the Community of Schools. It was intended for schools to have a more significant role in setting the strategic direction of education in the borough.
- The Executive Member was lobbying the Home Office for further action on county lines drug dealing. Islington's response to county lines took into account the safeguarding needs of young people, however a cross-borough coordinated approach was needed.
- It was commented that Islington officers had been involved in developing a new special educational needs and disability (SEND) services inspection framework. Although there were areas for improvement in Islington's service, it was thought that SEND services were generally good. It was noted that SEND services were commissioned and provided by both the council and the NHS.
- The Executive Member provided an update on the progress of the Fair Futures Commission. A place summit had been held recently and useful feedback had been received from the young people in attendance. A call for evidence had recently been issued and the initial findings of the Commission were expected later in the autumn.
- The Executive Member outlined his principles and emphasised the importance of early intervention approaches, as they led to better outcomes and reduced the expenditure on more entrenched issues in the longer term.
- It was important for services to make the best use of data, as this identified which practices worked for young people and which did not.
- It was noted that a new youth council would be appointed in the autumn and the Executive Member looked forward to working with them.

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - 19 September 2017

- The Executive Member commented on the importance of building coalitions with partner organisations, other local authorities and charities. It was commented that coordinated pressure could result in changes to government policy on key issues affecting children's services.
- In response to a question, the Executive Member explained that the catholic diocese intended for its schools to move into an academy trust as they considered that this would safeguard the role of catholic education. The example was given of Mount Carmel school, a former catholic school which would re-open as a mixed sex non-denominational academy after a decrease in the number of pupils. The Executive Member suggested that this approach would do little to safeguard the role of catholic education as intended, as if an academy fell into special measures then it could be reassigned to a non-denominational academy chain. Mary Clement, as catholic diocese representative on the Committee, advised that she would seek further information from the diocese on this matter.
- A member suggested that the Pause Programme could employ women who had completed the programme, as their lived experience could be used to support other women.
- Following a question on the radicalisation of young people, it was advised that Prevent referrals were made to Channel, with decisions made by the Channel Panel. It was commented that Executive members carefully scrutinised actions taken after a Prevent referral.

The Committee thanked Councillor Caluori for his attendance.

247 REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME (ITEM NO. B4)

Noted.

248 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (ITEM NO. A4)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

MEETING CLOSED AT 8.40 pm

Chair