



Report of: Corporate Director of Children, Employment and Skills

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| Children’s Service Scrutiny Committee | Date: 20 February 2018 | Ward(s): All |
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SUBJECT: Update on work undertaken to support schools and other service providers to identify, prevent and address any issues of bullying and provide recommendations for further areas of work

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the committee with an overview of the work being conducted by the Local Authority to support schools to better identify, prevent and therefore reduce the incidents of bullying in schools, whilst promoting a culture based on human rights, diversity, equality of opportunity and respect. The report recognised that bullying has not been identified as a significant issue in Ofsted inspections of schools. In two instances where pupils did raise issues with inspectors these have been subsequently addressed by the schools. The report will highlight the various mechanisms used to achieve the aim above, including pupil consultation, parent/carer engagement and staff training and support.
- 1.2 Anti-bullying work in schools is supported by the council’s Prevention Programme. Programme data from 2016/17 is set out at Appendix 1. Over a quarter of schools (27 per cent) took up the offer of anti-bullying lessons; and over two thirds of parent workshops addressed anti-bullying issues. The report recognises that there needs to be further work with schools to ensure greater take-up. This will support the development of a strategy which secures a consistent response to existing and emerging forms of behaviour that constitute bullying. The data at Appendix 1 has been gathered from a selection of primary and secondary schools to provide a snapshot of the types of bullying and responses to such incidents.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To consider the actions recommended by the council’s Anti-Bullying Coordinator, as set out below.

3. Actions recommended by the council's Anti-Bullying Coordinator

3.1 The recommendations below have been put forward by the Anti-Bullying Coordinator, children and young people in the borough and are supported by the Anti-Bullying Steering Group. It is hoped therefore that the recommendations for further work are endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee. The task will then be to further support and engage with schools and other service providers so that the recommendations can be implemented across the borough. The recommendations relate to staff training, formal and informal education (curriculum and play), as well as supporting therapeutic interventions and engagement with families. The recommendations listed below have been compiled through an analysis of evaluation forms from students and of work currently being undertaken with schools to identify what is currently being delivered and where provision needs further strengthening. It is therefore recommended that further work is now undertaken with schools to focus on :

- The further development and delivery of Talking therapies – individual or groups
- Supporting schools in the delivery of anti-bullying staff training
- Increasing the provision and take up of parent workshops which focus on this area
- Further work on reporting mechanisms that more securely identify incidents of bullying so that prevention can be more focused
- Promoting the establishment of Paperclip (student equality) groups in every school
- Greater focus in the overall PSHE offer on LGBT issues, islamophobia, racism, sexism and other activities to promote equality and inclusivity
- Work with schools to ensure that responses to the reporting of bullying are consistently timely and proportionate
- Building on good practice, support schools in raising the profile of anti-bullying awareness and addressing this through a range of curricular and other provision for example providing more formal reflection opportunities, dance/art therapy classes or groups

3.2 The Anti-Bullying Coordinator, who chairs Islington's anti-bullying steering group, also established a shadow anti-bullying steering group (SABSG) made up of young people from one of Islington's secondary schools. The SABSG presented on the key issues that they felt the adult steering group should prioritise in this academic year (2017/2018), as part of its strategic responsibility to seek to reduce bullying and promote safeguarding in Islington schools. It is further recommended that work is undertaken with schools to focus on

- The identification and prevention of sexual bullying and harassment in school
- Encouraging and supporting greater diversity in the PSHE curriculum
- Further supporting initiatives which focus on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people

4. Background

4.1 The Prevention Programme was set up to meet the aims of both the Islington Domestic Violence Prevention Strategy and the government agenda around addressing bullying at school (see for example, the Department for Education's (DfE) non-statutory advice for schools: "Preventing and Tackling Bullying", July 2017). The cornerstone of these strategies recognise the needs of, and give support to, children and young people affected by bullying/other forms of abuse. This reflects existing international, national and local guidance and policies, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (notably Articles 19, 28 and 34), the UK Government's "Ending Violence against Women and Girls Strategy 2016-2020", DfE statutory guidance "Keeping Children Safe in Education 2016", "Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015" and the Ofsted Inspection Handbook, which scrutinises a schools' performance around tackling "*bullying, discriminatory and prejudicial behaviour, either directly or indirectly, including racist, sexist, disability and homophobic bullying, use of derogatory language and racist incidents.*" (Ofsted School Inspection Handbook, October 2017 No. 150066, p.18). The Prevention Programme is available to all education settings from Early Years through to Further Education. The support to schools is holistic in

approach i.e. working with the whole-school community to ensure a consistent, joined-up package for pupils, staff and parents around anti-bullying. The offer includes:

- Consultation with relevant school staff
- Whole school/setting staff training
- Borough-wide events to promote key national/international dates of significance
- Universal pupil lessons
- Parent workshops
- Targeted work with children and young people at risk of/experiencing abuse
- Advice, sign-posting and support

4.2 The Prevention Programme is currently not a mandatory part of the staff training or pupil curriculum framework, as the lessons form part of the PSHE (non-statutory) curriculum, and the staff training/parent workshops form part of good practice work with schools. Working to secure more consistent provision across the borough is reflected in the recommendations for further work. In addition, it is not comparable, as other London boroughs do not have a designated officer providing holistic training, lessons, advice and support to school's/education settings. The repeated take-up from schools and feedback from 2016 -17 indicates the need for this unique service (appendix 2). The work delivered via the Prevention Programme demonstrates, that despite long-term financial constraints, creative, collaborative initiatives are undertaken to ensure that anti-bullying remains on the school agenda. This is evidenced by, for example, the borough-wide conference for schools, which has been successfully organised over a number of years, as part of National Anti-Bullying Week. The 2016 conference, which was attended by over 147 pupils and staff, was supported by a range of specialist agencies, including Diversity Role Models and Race on the Agenda (appendix 3).

4.3 The programme, which is designed to support the whole-school community, regularly consults with pupils, parents and staff through evaluation forms, questionnaires and verbal feedback. Pupil voice, for example, is a central component to ensuring that the service evolves to meet the changing needs of pupil safety and wellbeing, especially in areas of technological advancement and corresponding online safety. Discussions on sensitive issues such as life streaming platforms, 'sexting' ('sexting' is any form of online or cyber bullying of a sexual nature. This includes sending naked or sexually explicit images or text messages) and child sexual exploitation (CSE), have been incorporated into lessons to better educate and protect children and young people. At the behest of children (through the delivery of anti-bullying lessons), parent workshops now include exploration of how to talk to their children about terrorist attacks, as the attacks have had an adverse impact on children's sense of safety and wellbeing. The Islington Children and Young People's Health and Wellbeing Survey 2017 (see appendix 4), captures a wealth of data from specific year groups in primary and secondary settings. This includes information on bullying, which further informs the practice of the Prevention Programme. The establishment of the SABSG Group has greatly influenced the strategic and operational work of the adult Anti-Bullying Steering Group. This is illustrated by the co-facilitation by the SABSG of the Anti-Bullying School Conference (2016), greater prioritising of transgender support in school, as well as the decision to host the forthcoming Sexual Bullying and Gender Stereotyping Conference in March 2018. This conference is specifically aimed at school Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL's), to inform them of what constitutes sexual bullying/gender stereotyping, how to improve responses to such behaviour, in order to better safeguard victims and improve whole-system mechanisms in school, around gender equality issues.

4.4 This is a stand-alone service, however in recognition of the complex and inter-related nature of safeguarding, the Anti-Bullying Coordinator works closely with other services in Islington and with external specialist agencies to assist in the development and sustainability of various initiatives. This includes the establishment of a supervision policy for schools and group supervision programme for Islington school DSL's. Both were jointly established with the Islington Safeguarding Children Board (ISCB) and rolled out with the commissioning of the Educational Psychology Service to co-facilitate the sessions. There has been an overwhelmingly positive response from attendees of the group supervision programme. In light of the central role of DSL's in safeguarding children and young people in school, this is a significant initiative, realised through collaborative work with professionals across the local authority.

- 4.5 The essence of the service remains the same – holistic support to school's/education settings - however as safeguarding is not a static agenda, changes are constantly being made in order to keep the service current and meaningful. This will include incorporating changes to the law and national guidance, alongside closer partnership working with other agencies/services to enhance the Prevention Programme. For example, working alongside the Islington Youth and Communities Service around the violence against women and girls (VAWG) agenda and the serious youth violence agenda; the Pause Programme; and the Health and Well-being Service, all with the objective of early intervention to achieve harm reduction for children, young people and their families, whilst enhancing the work of schools, particularly through working with the safeguarding and PSHE leads.
- 4.6 Bullying and other forms of trauma affecting children is widely documented. The Islington Children and Young People's Health and Wellbeing Survey 2017, for example, clearly evidences that children are affected by bullying; 9 percent of Year 8 and Year 10 pupils and 37 percent of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils in the borough responded that they were worried "quite a lot" or "a lot" about cyber bullying and other types of bullying. These figures highlight the need for specialist, universal intervention in schools, to provide advice and support, as well as helping schools strategically with initiatives to prevent and mitigate incidents, if they do arise.

5. Implications

5.1 Financial Implications:

The Anti-Bullying Coordinator/Domestic Violence Prevention Officer post is funded by the Schools Forum. No additional funding has been ring-fenced by the Local Authority. This limits the amount of borough-wide events and initiatives that can be undertaken to further promote the anti-bullying agenda across the school community.

5.2 Legal Implications:

The council does not have a legal obligation to monitor incidents of bullying. Prior to the introduction of the Equality Act 2010 the Local Authority did have a legal duty to monitor racist bullying, but went beyond this to monitor all forms of bullying, by asking schools to submit quarterly returns regarding bullying incidents. Since the change in the law regarding the Equality Act 2010, this is no longer the case. Schools are tasked on an individual basis with maintaining data regarding the collating and recording of such information.

5.3 Environmental Implications

None.

5.4 Resident Impact Assessment:

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.

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 the Anti-bullying Coordinator undertakes work with schools to educate the school community on all aspects of bullying to promote good relations between pupils and families, regardless of difference, and to engage the whole school community on the protected characteristics listed within the legislation in order to reduce bullying and discrimination amongst individuals and/or groups that maybe vulnerable to bullying on the grounds of their ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion and belief or disability. This includes:

- Working with parents around issues of discrimination and the anti-bullying agenda;
- Consulting with children and young people about the impact of bullying and how it can be addressed;
- Educating pupils on equality and human rights issues and the right to be safe at school and in the community;
- Delivering training to staff so that they can spot the signs and symptoms and implement initiatives around tackling bullying in school.”

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The Prevention Programme was originally established to ensure that the borough was; developing a programme that actively espouses notions of human rights, tolerance, diversity and equality of opportunity for all, within an anti-bullying context, which would benefit the entire school population. For example, the most vulnerable and at risk students and families, alongside school staff working with these really complex sensitive issues, are able to explore and contextualise these issues in a safe environment, as the programme serves to better raise awareness, educate and empower those in need regarding anti-bullying. It also affords schools the opportunity to work collectively around safeguarding reduction and improved outcomes for victims and/or those at risk of bullying and abuse.
- 6.2 Challenges do remain, often linked to funding of initiatives, but also include wider, societal influences such as social media and the increased usage by children and young people. However, by working collaboratively with other services, safeguarding children and young people against bullying remains a priority for the Prevention Programme.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Data for schools that took up anti-bullying support via the Prevention Programme 2016/17
- Appendix 2: Prevention Programme for Schools Annual Report 2016/17.
- Appendix 3: Children and Young People’s Anti-Bullying Conference Report 2016: Event Report.
- Appendix 4: Extracts from The Islington Children and Young People’s Health and Wellbeing Survey 2017

Background papers:

None

Signed by:



Carmel Littleton, Corporate Director
Children, Employment and Skills

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Date

Report Author: Heather Vacciana, Anti-Bullying Coordinator
Tel: 020 7527 7793
Email: heather.vacciana@islington.gov.uk