



Report of: Corporate Director for People

Meeting of:	Date	Ward(s)
Children's Services Scrutiny Committee	9 July 2019	All

Delete as appropriate		Non-exempt
-----------------------	--	------------

SUBJECT: Vulnerable Adolescents – One Year On

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 The Executive received a report from the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee which reviewed how effective the council is in providing joined up services and whether there are effective processes and practices that ensure young people are involved in all aspects of their support and intervention. The scrutiny report proposed 14 recommendations to further improve the co-ordination and join up of services for vulnerable adolescents. This report updates the committee on the actions taken in response to the vulnerable adolescents' scrutiny.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the progress on actions taken in response to the Vulnerable Adolescents Scrutiny Review.

3. Background

- 3.1 During 2017/18, the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee conducted a review on the co-ordination and join up of services for vulnerable adolescents. Overall the Committee was impressed with the wide range of support services available for vulnerable adolescents. The Committee considered several examples of different services and agencies working together to provide co-ordinated services for the benefit of young people. It concluded that the council and its partners recognise that providing joined up services is the best approach to supporting vulnerable young people. However, the Committee advocated for further improvements which related to a greater strategic join-up between services; working differently by adopting new practices, such as trauma informed and contextual safeguarding approaches; closer work with the Police around domestic violence and the sharing of intelligence; making the most of existing resources; and communicating more effectively with young people and the professionals that support them.

4. Scrutiny Committee recommendations – One Year On

- 4.1 **Recommendation 1. A borough-wide pledge to support vulnerable young people should be developed by Summer 2018. Ownership of this pledge at Chief Executive level will help support accountability cross the council. All council services should commit to working collaboratively to reduce the risks to young people and improve their wellbeing. Partner organisations should also be encouraged to commit to the pledge. This would assist in developing more joined up early intervention approaches.**

Recommendation 2. It is suggested that the delivery of the pledge should be incorporated into the terms of reference and work plans of all relevant multi-agency forums. These forums should monitor delivery of the pledge through their work. A member of the Children’s Services Scrutiny Committee should be invited to observe relevant meetings. In addition, the Youth Council and CAIS should be invited to undertake an annual review of the effectiveness of the Pledge and report their findings back to the Chief Executive.

Work has begun on transforming the Children and Families Board to become the successor to the Fair Futures Commission. Its first task is to co-design and launch the ‘Islington Guarantee’ or ‘Promise for Young People’ for those living and/or studying in Islington with young people by next Summer. We have begun to build elements of the Pledge such as 11 by 11, the guarantee of 100 hours experience of the world of work and a recent refresh of the charter for children in care.

- 4.2 **Recommendation 3: To foster a more effective and joined-up approach to safeguarding across London, Children’s Services should seek to work with neighbouring boroughs and other agencies to develop a contextual safeguarding approach. This approach is focused on reducing risks and vulnerabilities and promoting safeguarding by intervening in the social environments experienced by young people, rather than focusing interventions on individuals. As part of this work, the council should lead on the development of protocols across borders with neighbouring local authorities focusing on risk management and the sharing of good practice.**

Islington continues to be the comparator group for Hackney’s contextual safeguarding model and work is underway with the researchers, including interviews with practitioners, questionnaires and focus groups with young people. This is an ongoing project for which feedback is received.

The Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) remit has been widened to encompass other areas of exploitation including gangs, serious youth violence, HSB, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Modern Slavery/Trafficking (including criminal exploitation). The MASE has been re-named Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE).

Other partners have joined the MACE including community safety. This has opened up the discussion around patterns, themes, locations (hot-spots) identified across all areas of exploitation and contextual safeguarding. It also enables resources across the partnership to be identified and deployed.

The Exploitation and Missing Team has recruited a new analyst who is making links with neighbouring boroughs, including Camden, Hackney and Haringey. We plan to develop these links and have regular cross-borough meetings to share information and discuss areas where contextual safeguarding risks are identified in order to deploy resources.

- 4.3 **Recommendation 4: Subject to the results of the trauma-informed approaches pilot, Children’s Services should work with the community of schools to encourage schools to engage with these approaches and adopt related screening tools. This may assist in identifying a range of issues, including the diagnosis of mental health issues, at a much earlier age. The five schools engaging in the ARC pilot project should be asked to support in cascading this approach.**

Following an event held last year, and subsequent discussions with schools, six primary schools and two secondary schools joined Wave 2 of the Islington Trauma-Informed Practice in Schools (iTIPS) pilot. All schools that were recruited completed Year One of iTIPS and are committed to continuing into Year Two. Wave 3 schools have been recruited with four primary schools and one secondary school starting iTIPS in September 2019. In addition to the 14 schools that were trained as part of iTIPS, a further 11 schools (two secondary and nine primary schools) have had the three-hour trauma-awareness training facilitated by one or more members of the working group. The multi-agency project team continues and has been joined by the Speech and Language Service.

4.4 Recommendation 5: A trauma-informed approach to working with young people should be embedded in multi-agency training through a review of the Safeguarding Children Board training offer.

The Islington Safeguarding Children Board (ISCB) agreed in July 2018 that trauma-informed practice will be adopted by the partnership's as a way of working. The training and workforce development sub-group amended the training strategy, now requiring all partners to ensure that their staff receive training or briefings in trauma informed practice. All ISCB multi-agency training now reference trauma-informed practice as a way of working in Islington. The ISCB and partners have developed multi-agency trauma-informed practice briefings which remain ongoing for the partnership. These have been very well received.

In the autumn, the ISCB will carry out a training audit to ensure that:

1. Partners included trauma-informed practice in their local training strategies; and
2. Staff are attending the ISCB briefings.

4.5 Recommendation 6: A high number of vulnerable adolescents have experienced or witnessed domestic abuse earlier in their lives. It is crucial that these young people receive support at the earliest possible opportunity. It is recommended that the council and police work together to develop stronger and earlier interventions on domestic abuse. This work should include the development of Operation Encompass in schools and a focus on partnership work through Islington Safeguarding Children Board.

Following the successful bid to the Ministry for Communities and Local Government for 'Earned Autonomy under the Troubled Families Programme, a multi-partnership prototype was put in place to develop effective ways to work with domestic abuse and parental conflict. This focuses on 'Prevention, Protection and Repair.' The team became operational on 7 January and includes specialisms seconded from across the partnership including a Police Officer, a Housing DV worker, perpetrator services, mental health, a substance misuse specialist, Early Help Practitioners and Social Care practitioners. The University of Bedfordshire are working alongside the innovation team to shape the practice and evaluate the outcomes of the pilot.

[Operation Encompass](#), which includes the guidance policy around information sharing between the police and schools, is live. Most schools are now signed up. Operation Encompass will be fully up and running by September.

4.6 Recommendation 7: Children's Services should review if greater information can be shared between agencies to develop a more joined up approach to working with vulnerable adolescents. The Council should work with Police to ensure that lower level non-criminal concerns about young people are reported to the school via the Safer Schools Officer, so that young people's behaviour can be monitored and they can be referred to appropriate support services as appropriate.

Work to develop appropriate, effective and proactive information sharing continues to be ongoing and remains a priority for the Missing & Child/Adolescent Exploitation Sub Group of the ISCB.

4.7 **Recommendation 8: The Committee considers that greater use could be made of Safer Schools officers. The promotion of Safer Schools officers and their role in safeguarding children should be reiterated through Islington's community of schools.**

Safer Schools Officers continue to engage proactively with schools. The feedback to date is satisfaction with this engagement and the Police will continue to prioritise this relationship.

4.8 **Recommendation 9: The council should ensure its strategic and commissioning priorities for vulnerable adolescents are shared with the voluntary and community sector and that priorities between the council and voluntary and community sector organisations are aligned. This could include the alignment of grant funding to these priorities.**

Recommendations 10: Children's Services should continue to work closely with voluntary and community sector organisations and develop these relationships further as appropriate. This may assist in generating referrals, normalise accessing support, and help to ease transitions between services.

Youth and Community Services continue to work with the voluntary and community sector to agree commissioning priorities for vulnerable adolescents. There are several consultation events planned in Summer/Autumn 2019 as part of the review of the Working Together for a Safer Islington plan. The new plan will be launched in April 2019 and set out the council's strategic and commissioning priorities for reducing the exploitation of vulnerable adolescents.

Concise and collated information is pulled together on services for vulnerable adolescents including referral mechanisms and contact details particularly in 'hot spot' areas. These are shared via the Children and Young People's Voluntary and Community Sector Forum and Voluntary Action Islington's network, as well as through networks of commissioned youth, play and support service providers in priority locations.

Following a workshop held in June 2018, 20 programmes were funded through the Young Londoners Fund which will provide over 2,200 places in sports, arts, leisure and targeted support services for vulnerable Islington young people. Youth and Community also presented at a recent workshop for this year's round of the Young Londoners Fund. Officers will continue to raise awareness about the ISCB training offer and encourage successful providers to access these.

Commissioners have engaged with children's social care, early help and community safety colleagues to run several sessions with local third sector play and youth providers to identify information sharing opportunities and smooth pathways between services. Consideration is being made of setting up a network for Designated Safeguarding Leads in play and youth providers to ensure effective referrals and enable earlier intervention when required.

4.9 **Recommendation 11: The council should work to improve its communications to young people. The Council should lead on the development of a multi-purpose young people's app/website to ensure a wider reach for communicating targeted messages and information about health and wellbeing and support services.**

Recommendation 12: Children's Services should review the feasibility of allowing young people to contact their social worker through instant messaging.

The local Islington page on NHS Go, a confidential health advice and information service for young people, is live and currently includes local information on emotional health and wellbeing. We are planning to expand local information to cover key areas which can impact on emotional health and wellbeing including drugs & alcohol and sexual health.

Social workers have been allocated smartphones to enable contact and engagement via WhatsApp with young people.

4.10 Recommendation 13: The council should review its directory of services and ensure it is proactively promoted to professionals in the health, education, and voluntary and community sectors to raise awareness and understanding of the range of support services available to vulnerable adolescents.

The Family Directory is reviewed and promoted regularly to ensure and incorporate the range of support services available to young people and their families. The team are working with the Young People's Participation Officer to incorporate feedback from individual young people on the user journey for the appropriate directories.

4.11 Recommendation 14: The council should review if support services for young people are sufficiently flexible and accessible and should consider the appropriateness and feasibility of providing evening and weekend support services, if such services are not already available.

Support services for young people continue to be kept under review in order to respond to changing needs and preferences.

In line with young people's needs, a wide range of services are currently available in the evenings including detached youth work, open for all youth provision and one to one targeted youth work. Detached youth work and open for all youth work is also available on Friday evenings across the borough. There is an offer of mentoring for up to 30 vulnerable adolescents (aged 11+) which is delivered in the evenings and at weekends depending on the interests of the young people taking part.

Over the past year as a result of ongoing work with young people, services have continued to flex and respond, for example, the Rose Bowl Youth Club will be opening on Friday evenings for young people 13+. 'Summer Saturday' evening openings at Lift and Platform were piloted last summer. There is further work to do to better understand young people's preferences and motivations around their attendance at services in the evenings at weekends. The Islington Youth Council will be leading a series of sessions with their peers in late June / early July at Lift, Platform, Rose Bowl and Soapbox to further understand what young people want from their youth services.

The Youth Council led the successful 'YouthFest19' event on Friday 5th April at Lift, which attracted nearly 200 young people. The event was fun and participative and showcased a range of support services available in the borough, including those that can help young people to stay safe. The Youth Council will be leading 'Summerfest' in early July at Platform as a result of the success of this event.

A review of the Zone youth club was completed and moved into Targeted Youth Support. Open at least three times a week in the evening, targeted youth support workers are embedded to carry out detached youth work. Programmes were recently extended to run during the half term and Easter holidays with a Summer programme lined up from July. The service is looking at how it can incorporate emotional wellbeing services to ensure that vulnerable adolescents can access this through The Zone.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial implications:

All activity in response to the Vulnerable Adolescents Scrutiny Review is being managed within existing budgets, with the exception of Recommendation 6, where funding has been received from the Ministry of Communities and Local Government for earned autonomy under the Troubled Families Programme. This funding runs until the end of this financial year.

4.2 Legal Implications:

Under the Children Act 1989, the Council has a duty to take action to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and to investigate and take appropriate protective action when a child is suffering,

or is likely to suffer, significant harm. A duty of care can be owed by local authorities when undertaking their social welfare functions (*CN v Poole Borough Council*, Supreme Court, 6th June 2019). The Council is required to secure sufficient services and activities for young people aged 13 to 19, and those with learning difficulties to age 24, to improve their well-being (section 507B Education Act 1996).

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.

5. Reason for recommendations

5.1 This report details the progress on actions taken in response to the recommendations from the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.

Appendices: None

Background papers: None

Final report clearance:

Signed by:

Carmel Littleton, Corporate Director of People Date xxx

Report Author: Tania Townsend, Partnership Development and Strategy Manager | Fair Futures Programme Lead

Tel: 020 7527 3080

Email: tania.townsend@islington.gov.uk

Financial Implications Author: Tim Partington, Head of Finance

Tel: 020 7527 1851

Email: tim.partington@islington.gov.uk

Legal Implications Author: Peter Fehler, Acting Director of Law and Governance

Tel: 020 7527 3126

Email: peter.fehler@islington.gov.uk