

People Directorate 222 Upper Street, London N1 1XR

Report of: Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families

Meeting of:	Date:	Ward(s):
Executive	28 November 2019	All
Delete as appropriate:	Exempt	Non-exempt

SUBJECT: Exclusion from School – Response to the report of Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

1. Synopsis

1.1 In June 2019, Executive received a report from the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee which examined the use and impact of fixed period and permanent exclusion from both primary and secondary school in Islington. The scrutiny report proposed fourteen recommendations that will enable more children and young people to remain in mainstream education. This report proposes actions to be taken in response to the recommendations.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To welcome the findings of the Exclusion from School Scrutiny Review
- 2.2 To agree the responses to the review as set out in Section 4 of this report.
- 2.3 To agree that officers report back on progress to the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee in one year's time.

3. Background

3.1 Between July 2018 and April 2019, the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee conducted a review of fixed period and permanent exclusion from both primary and secondary school. In carrying out the review the Committee met with young people, parents, head teachers, council officers and others to gain a balanced view. The Committee also considered relevant data, guidance and other documentation. Overall the Committee was satisfied with

the range of support services available. However, the Committee concluded that Islington's exclusion rate is too high, that the significant variation of exclusion rates across Islington's schools is not justified and that further focused work with the highest excluding schools is needed. The Committee emphasised that exclusion is a fairness issue that is having a real impact on young people and their families.

4. Response to the Scrutiny Committee recommendations

<u>Helping our schools to prevent exclusions and support young people at risk of exclusion</u>

4.1 Recommendation 1: Schools should be encouraged to make referrals at the earliest opportunity to support services such as Educational Psychology, CAMHS, the New River College outreach service and Early Help services.

Improving the range, quality of and access to services for children and young people with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs is one of three priorities under children's services Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy 2018-20.

An objective of the strategy is that by 2020, Islington will have a fully integrated whole system social, emotional and mental health offer, delivered through a system delivered beyond traditional heath settings with a central front door and a strong focus on early intervention and prevention. Implementation has been in two stages:

- **Stage one:** implementation of an expanded SEMH emotional wellbeing pathway, including Barnardo's (new contractual relationship); Emotional Wellbeing Workers (new roles); Social Prescription (Third Sector / Universal Services pilot); online counselling (Kooth new service) as well as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Early Help (live from June 2019).
- **Stage two**: full integration of CAMHS and the emotional wellbeing pathway within the Children's Services Contact Team (CSCT) (live from September 2019).

A review of Early Help services is also underway with a view to improving the quality and timeliness of support families receive, thereby improving outcomes for children and families. The project will remodel the current early help offer to enable different roles, functions and support that better meet families' needs earlier and in ways that are more effective and coordinated.

Similarly, work is underway to rationalise referral routes to school support services, including New River College out-reach. Instead of making separate referrals to different services, Schools will use a single referral route through to a multi-disciplinary team of support service representatives, who will the determine the most appropriate response to the School, based on a principle of 'no wrong referral'.

An intended outcome of all of the above is streamlined (and therefore quicker) school and family access to the right service for the right child at the right time. Earlier intervention will support the prevention of escalation that may result in disengagement and exclusion from school, as well as other risks.

4.2 Recommendation 2: Schools should be further encouraged to make best use of the whole-school transformation programmes offered by CAMHS, Educational Psychology, and the New River College outreach services.

The following whole-school programmes have been developed in Islington and are available to all of our schools:

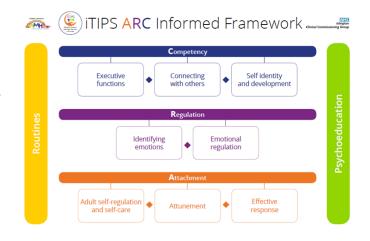
Islington Mental Health and Resilience in Schools (iMHARS)

The iMHARS framework helps schools understand the seven aspects (components) of school life that can support and contribute to pupils' positive mental health and resilience. The seven components were created from a wide body of evidence and have been developed and tested in Islington schools. The framework can be used in schools to audit support in place to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils, and preventative measures for all pupils. 52% of Islington schools have used the iMHARS framework to improve practice and develop a whole-school approach to mental health. This includes 24/47 primary, 6/11 secondary and 4/6 special schools.



Islington Trauma Informed Practices in Schools (iTIPS)

This project that aims to help schools embed a whole-school trauma strategy. Each iTIPS school has a 'champion' from Islington CAMHS and the EP service to train staff and support the development of the approach, which draws from the ARC (Attachment, Regulation and Competency) framework. iTIPS has been piloted in two phases (2017-2019) and currently includes eleven primary schools, two secondary schools and New River College.



Further roll-out of these programmes will be directed towards schools with higher levels of exclusion.

Mental Health Support Teams 'Trailblazer'

Additionally, in June 2019 Islington was successfully awarded 'Trailblazer' status as part of a national NHS and schools in England initiative to provide trained mental health support. Trailblazer sites will test how the development of Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) can work with schools, local authority and other services to improve earlier identification

and intervention, thereby reducing waiting times for specialist NHS mental health services. MHSTs will be based in and near schools. Islington will develop two teams, North and South of the borough, so that every child in an Islington school will have access to a MHST. The MHSTs will:

- Build on support already in place e.g. school counsellors, nurses, educational psychologists, voluntary sector, programmes such as iMAHRS and iTIPs
- Support children and young people with mild to moderate mental health issues e.g. exam stress, behavioural difficulties or friendship issues
- Help children and young people with more severe needs to access the right support, and provide a link to specialist NHS services

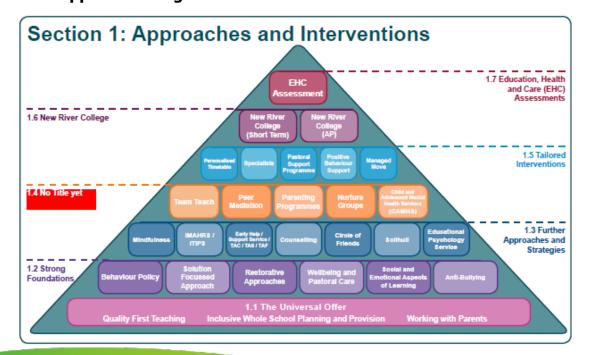
The Department for Education will also fund training for senior mental health leads in each school in the MHST area to ensure a 'whole school' approach to mental health and wellbeing. All Islington schools will be supported and encouraged to participate.

4.3 Recommendation 3: Officers in Pupil Services and School Improvement should encourage schools to closely link their Behaviour Management and Special Educational Needs functions.

Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) is identified as one of four areas of need in the governments statutory SEN Code of Practice. It is also one of three priorities under Childrens Services Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy 2018-20. Consequently, it will remain an area of focus for regular support and development forums, including the SEN Co-ordinators, Designated Safeguarding Leads, Deputy Head teachers and Head teachers.

In response to recommendations from the Scrutiny Review, Officers have also developed an interactive Behaviour Handbook for Islington schools, to sit alongside SEND Support handbooks and other materials available through iMARHS and iTIPs programmes. The purpose of the Handbook is to give information to assist with the early identification and planning of consistent support for children and young people with SEMH. It is informed by existing good practice in Islington as well as the latest DfE guidance on SEMH and SEND.

SEN Support in Islington – Behaviour Handbook



The Handbook will be launched to schools in October 2019, and demonstrated at a SEND Exhibition of Good Practice for Islington Head teachers and SENCOs to be held at the Town Hall in November 2019.

4.4 Recommendation 4: Officers in Pupil Services and School Improvement should encourage and support all schools to form Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships.

Officers from Pupil Services and School Improvement, will further research different Behaviour and Attendance Partnership models in operation across the country and their impact, and present evidence to Head teachers for further consideration.

4.5 Recommendation 5: School governors should receive training on how they can help to shape their school's culture and ethos, their role in the exclusion process, and how they can scrutinise school behaviour policies and practices.

Two presentations have already taken place for all Chairs of Governors (May and September 2019) on fixed term and permanent exclusion, the recommendations of the Scrutiny review and Governors role in developing an inclusive school ethos. Further training sessions for all Governors are planned for November 2019.

4.6 Recommendation 6. To ensure that all school staff are well equipped to support young people at risk of exclusion, officers in the Children, Employment and Skills directorate should explore how information on pupil needs can be shared widely between support services and school staff whilst meeting confidentiality requirements.

Evidence from a number of Local Authorities suggests that 'Team Around the School (TAS)' is an effective framework for enabling information-sharing.

TAS is a local network consisting of schools and other family support services that meet on a regular basis to have a shared conversation about children and young people that they may be worried about and that early help and intervention may stop concerns escalating.

In local areas where the model is well-established, Schools and services report that the approach:

- Strengthens local/partner relationships and networks by providing the infrastructure for agencies to work together to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families
- Ensures more efficient deployment of multi-agency resource
- Ensures a solutions-focussed approach
- Provides a support network for frontline staff
- Prevents a 'refer on' culture

- Ensures all partners hold appropriate level of risk
- Ensures consistent application of effective support
- Enables sharing of good practice and consistency of service delivery
- Helps to align early help with school improvement
- Helps to provide support to families that is outcome driven
- Can prevent a child or young person requiring complex/acute support in the future.

The TAS approach is currently followed by some, but not the majority of Islington schools, and adoption is currently reliant on the views and experience of individuals within schools and support agencies.

People Services directorate will therefore consult on, develop and promote an Islington 'Team Around the School' approach for schools and support services. This would be supported by guidance on how successfully to operate a TAS. The model would be underpinned by the 'Seven Golden Rules of Information Sharing' as set out in advice from HM Government¹.

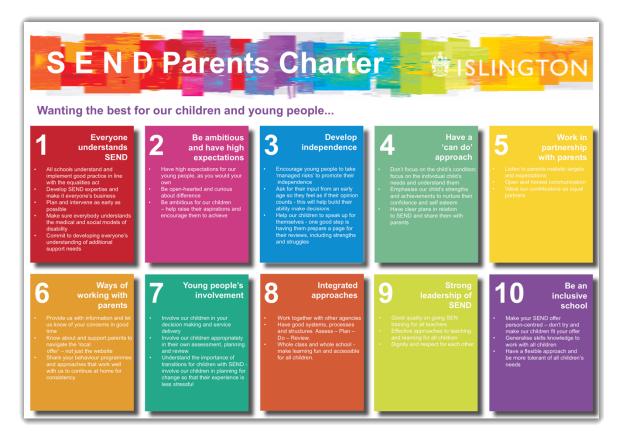
Developing best practice in our schools

4.7 Recommendation 7: Officers in Pupil Services and School Improvement should use the Committee's findings to produce a Good Practice Guide for schools.

See 'Behaviour Handbook', as detailed in 4.3 above.

4.8 Recommendation 8: A 'Charter for Inclusion' should be developed with Islington Schools and New River College to affirm their commitment to supporting Islington's young people to stay mainstream education.

Work to improve support, achievement and progress of children and young people with additional needs is a priority of Islington's current SEND Strategy. As part of this work, Islington parents of children with SEND developed a SEND Parents Charter, which all schools have been asked to sign up to.



A new Ofsted Education Inspection Framework for schools, has been introduced from September 2019. As part of the new school inspection regime, Inspectors will want to see how well SEND is embedded. They will also talk to classroom and subject teachers as well as SEND Coordinators and observe practice for reasonable adjustment and differentiation in the classroom when making this judgement.

Inspectors will want to see that the school:

- Is ambitious for all pupils with SEND
- Identify, assess and meet the needs of pupils with SEND
- Adapt the curriculum (i.e. across all subjects) so that it is relevant to all pupils' needs and starting points
- Involves parents and carers in deciding how best to support pupils with SEND, and
- Includes pupils with SEND in all aspects of school life

A 'Charter for Inclusion' will provide a good response to the Parent's Charter, Ofsted and the Scrutiny Committee recommendation, and Officers will work with Islington schools and New River College to develop this.

Supporting children and young people excluded from school

4.9 Recommendation 9: Officers in the Children, Employment and Skills directorate should review the feasibility of attaching a named social worker to New River College.

¹ Information Sharing - Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers (July 2018), HM Government

As part of Early Help Review outlined in paragraph 4.1, officers will consult with New River College on the best model of delivering support to children and young people who attend the College and their families.

4.10 Recommendation 10: To remove the stigma associated with attending a pupil referral unit, officers in the Children, Employment and Skills directorate should work with New River College to widely promote the successes of its pupils.

Officers will continue to promote the successes of pupils at New River College, and this will be overseen by the Director of Learning and Schools Management Team.

Additionally, the national Timpson Review of Exclusion from School calls for the Department for Education to promote the role of Alternative Provision (which includes Pupil Referral Units) by:

- Promoting the role of AP in supporting mainstream and special schools to deliver
 effective intervention and recognising the best AP institutions as teaching schools so
 that they can share best practice across the wider system
- Supporting AP Schools to attract the staff they need
- 'Significantly improving and expanding' AP buildings and facilities, with the 'right level of capital funding' as a priority for the spending review
- Renaming Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) to 'reflect their role as both schools and places to support pupils overcome barriers to engaging in education' and also help to remove 'the stigma attached to being educated in these settings'.
- Better understand and act on the current challenges with the workforce in AP, by backing initiatives to support its development.

4.11 Recommendation 11: Officers in the Children, Employment and Skills directorate should engage with neighbouring authorities and schools in neighbouring boroughs close to the borough boundary, making them aware of this review and the support that is expected for pupils who are Islington residents.

A copy of the Review has been shared with neighbouring Local Authorities alongside an extract from Islington's local 'advice, support and expectations' document and contact details of our Pupil Services and School Improvement Services, should they have any concerns about an Islington resident that cannot be addressed through services normally available to all children and young people at that school.

Supporting parents and carers (Recommendation 12)

- 4.12 In response to evidence received during the review, officers have already implemented the following service changes:
 - (a) The council now provides more comprehensive information on independent sources of support available to parents and carers on its website and in the initial letter which is sent to parents and carers informing them of their child's permanent exclusion from school.
 - (b) Officers have asked Islington Law Centre to hold free parent workshops on the exclusions process. The first session was held in November 2018.
 - (c) Islington Law Centre has offered to hold a series of monthly drop-in sessions, at no cost to the council, for parents and carers seeking independent advice on issues arising from their child's exclusion.

<u>Urging Central Government to act in the best interests of young people</u>

4.13 Recommendation 13: Islington Council should lobby for national policy changes that would support children to remain in mainstream education

A number of recommendations for Ofsted and the Department for Education are included in the Timpson Review. Officers will ensure that Islington continues to respond fully and robustly to any consultations that flow from these recommendations.

4.14 Recommendation 14: Officers in the Children, Employment and Skills directorate should report back to the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee on the findings of the national School Exclusions Review led by Edward Timpson CBE, and detail if it is possible to implement its recommendations locally.

A report and the findings of the Timpson Review was presented to Children's Services Scrutiny Committee in June 2019, and the following actions are included in an action plan alongside those identified above:

- To review and update information about exclusion in the SEND Local Offer
- To routinely share real-time data on exclusion and other moves out of education with Islington Safeguarding Children Board
- To ensure social workers are notified alongside parents when a Child in Need is moved out of their school, or involved in any processes around decisions to exclude
- To ask all Governing bodies to review information on children who leave their schools
- To provide an analysis of data on exclusion and children who leave their school to both primary and secondary Securing Education Boards² to ensure an understanding of how such activity feeds into local trends.

5. Implications

5.1 Financial implications:

All of the recommendations are being implemented within existing budgets with the exception of part of recommendation 2 where June 2019 Islington was successfully awarded 'Trailblazer' status as part of a national NHS and schools in England initiative to provide trained mental health support. The Trailblazer funding is being provided by NHS England for 2019/20 and 2020/21 (£160k and £588k respectively). £19k of this funding in 19/20 and £76k in 20/21 will come to the Council, with the rest going to the CCG.

5.2 Legal Implications:

Governing bodies must have regard to Statutory guidance on the exclusion of pupils from local-authority-maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units and the principal legislation to which this Guidance relates to is:

² Islington operate a primary and secondary Securing Education Board. The Boards are made up of Head teacher and support service representatives. They make decisions on the educational placement of pupils excluded (or at risk of exclusion), either to mainstream school or alternative provision, and ensure fair access.

- The Education Act 2002, as amended by the Education Act 2011;
- The School Discipline (Pupil Exclusions and Reviews) (England) Regulations 2012;
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006;
- The Education Act 1996; and
- The Education (Provision of Full-Time Education for Excluded Pupils) (England)
 Regulations 2007, as amended by the Education (Provision of Full-Time Education for Excluded Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014.

The guidance makes clear that only the head teacher of a school can exclude a pupil and this must be on disciplinary grounds. A pupil may be excluded for one or more fixed periods (up to a maximum of 45 school days in a single academic year), or permanently. A fixed-period exclusion does not have to be for a continuous period.

Any decision of a school, including exclusion, must be made in line with the principles of administrative law, i.e. that it is: lawful (with respect to the legislation relating directly to exclusions and a school's wider legal duties, including the European Convention on Human Rights and the Equality Act 2010); rational; reasonable; fair; and proportionate.

Governing Bodies must also have regard to 'Behaviour and discipline in schools' as stipulated in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and acknowledge the school's legal duties under the Equality Act 2010, in respect of safeguarding and pupils with SEN.

5.3 Environmental Implications and contribution to Zero Net Carbon by 2030:

The actions proposed in this report do not have any environmental implications beyond those associated with standard office usage and are unlikely to significantly change the existing impacts of the services.

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.

Resident Impact Assessments will be undertaken as part of the process of developing and implementing policies and actions arising from this report.

6. Reason for recommendations

6.1 This report details the Executive's response to the recommendations from the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.

Background papers: None Final report clearance:

Signed by:

20 November 2019

Councillor Kaya Comer-Schwartz Date:

Executive Member for Children, Young People

and Families

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