

Children and Young People
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Report of: Corporate Director of Children and Young People

Meeting of: Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Date: 20 March 2023

Ward(s): All

Subject: Vulnerable Adolescents: Update on the 2017/18 scrutiny review

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.
- 1.2. The Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee has requested updates on all previous scrutiny reviews carried about by the committee. This report follows on from the update to the committee on 9 July 2019, 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. This updates the report presented to the 9th of July 2019 Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.

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. 2017/18 CS Scrutiny Committee recommendations

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

4.1.1. Work has begun on transforming the Children and Families Board to become the successor to the Fair Futures Commission. These recommendations will be embedded on its work programme.

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

- 4.2.1. 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.
- 4.2.2. 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).
- 4.2.3. The Exploitation and Serious Youth Violence Analyst has established links with neighbouring boroughs, including Camden, Hackney and Haringey. There are cross-borough meetings to share information and discuss areas where contextual safeguarding risks are identified in order to deploy resources.
- 4.2.4. The developing contextual safeguarding policy outlines the multiple ways in which the service address concerns and risk outside of the family home. One key area is how information is shared with neighbouring boroughs. As part of the daily Integrated Gangs Team tasking meeting chains of communication have been established with counterparts in neighbouring boroughs so if there is any incident relating to an out of borough location or group, information can get shared and/or gathered quickly.
- 4.2.5. The 6-week Pre-MACE meeting is where individual exploitation cases are reviewed, and quality assured by partner agencies, crucially social care and police. As part of the process if any young person has links with locations outside of Islington the Exploitation and Missing Team will contact the exploitation leads in that location and share relevant information. An integral part of this meeting is to extrapolate themes and patterns of exploitation and think, as a multiagency panel, how these can be tackled more widely. Other partners have joined Pre-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.
- 4.2.6. Islington and Camden Children's Social Care were successful in the joint bid to be a part of the National Referral Mechanism devolved decision making pilot. A monthly panel is held where National Referral Mechanism applications from both boroughs are reviewed and a threshold decision is made, which is reviewed by the Single Competent Authority. This joint piece of work has assisted to develop an approach of collating intelligence around exploitation and the types of modern-day slavery young people are experiencing across the boroughs.
- 4.2.7. The terms of reference for the new weekly contextual safeguarding meeting are currently being agreed. The aims of the meeting are to coordinate the boroughs response to contextual concerns raised in multiple forums. Examples of these issues may be certain parks where there have been reports of ASB or spates of robberies in certain areas. A coordinated response will be agreed within the weekly meeting and the agreed actions plan will be quality assured by the MACE panel.

- 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.**
- 4.3.1. 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.
- 4.3.2. Islington remains committed to supporting schools to understand and support children and young people and their families to be trauma informed. More than half (35) of all primary schools in Islington (including 50% of secondary schools) have now been trained in, and supported to embed, trauma-informed practices in their work. This supports them to recognise children's behaviour as a means of communication and respond to them more effectively, helping both staff and children to avoid dysregulation and better manage their emotions and responses.
- 4.3.3. Newer programmes, Tiny TIPS and Community iTIPS, which work with early years settings and VCS organisations in the same way, support the communities around schools in this approach so there is consistency throughout children, young people's and families.
- 4.3.4. The iTIPS team have developed and piloted a workshop for parents which has been facilitated with eight parent groups to date. A video explaining dysregulation and how adults can help children who are dysregulated has been filmed with children from Prior Weston primary school and will shortly be available to view on Islington Council's YouTube channel.
- 4.3.5. More recently, the local authority is working with Islington Safer Schools Partnership is exploring how the approach could also be supported in schools' work with the Police.
- 4.3.6. In addition to iTIPS, Islington Council have been successful in securing a bid to take part in the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) – Nurturing and Inclusive Schools programme. 10 Islington schools have been identified to take part. This will bring a significant investment to Islington as part of a three-million-pound investment across 7 local authorities. The 10 schools will benefit from training, leading to national accreditation as nurturing schools.

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.

4.4.1. The Islington Safeguarding Children Partnership (ISCP) agreed in July 2018 that trauma-informed practice will be adopted by the partnership 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 ISCP multi-agency training now references trauma-informed practice as a way of working in Islington. The ISCP 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 ISCP will carry out a training audit to ensure that:

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

4.4.2. Relevant agencies within the training and workforce development sub-group have demonstrated how they have incorporated a trauma-informed approach within their training and workforce development. For example, CAMHS have collaborated with Early Years to deliver an introduction to trauma informed training to Bright Start staff as well as the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) Early Years sector. Adults social care have also held workshops raising awareness and the benefits of practicing in a trauma-informed approach for service users especially in the context of transitional safeguarding. The Police Child Exploitation/Missing and Predatory Team within Central North BCU have reported to having trauma informed practice. The use of a trauma informed approach by relevant agencies does evidence that it has been adopted, however, the ISCP will need to ensure that it continues to be embedded by the training and workforce development team in agencies.

4.4.3. Training provided by the ISCP business unit continues to incorporate trauma informed awareness in existing training modules, however this has been limited due to limited capacity in staffing. The ISCP business unit will have filled its vacant training and quality assurance manager by April 2023 so will be in a better position to offer bitesize workshops with input from CAMHS to provide multi agency training to relevant agencies within the ISCP.

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.

4.5.1. The learning and good practice from the successful Keel multi-partnership prototype project that tested new ways effective ways to work with families experience domestic abuse was used to inform an ambitious transformation of the council's VAWG services and approach. Launched in April 2020, with the support of the Islington Safeguarding Children Board the VAWG Transformation programme aimed to intervene earlier to break

cycles of violence; support survivors and families to stay safe; hold perpetrators to account and deliver a new community response to Domestic Abuse.

4.5.2. This work has been supported by significant additional council investment in VAWG services (£2mill over 3 years) plus additional funding from Troubled Families, Public Health, MHCLG, CCG and the London Violence Reduction Unit to support a range of services and initiatives with a focus on additional resources support to children and young people and their families. This includes:

- A comprehensive VAWG workforce development offer including training for all professionals in statutory and VCS organisations in Islington, as well as case consultations to social workers, probation and police, family support workers, youth justice and youth workers etc,
- Additional IDVA's co-located in agencies including CIN, Early Help, MASH, housing and health services.
- Specialist Children's IDVA co-located with TYS
- Two Abianda Girls and Young Women workers co-located with TYS and the Integrated Gangs Team
- Family Support workers in Islington refuges
- Sunflower project supporting children experiencing DA and the non-abusive parent

4.5.3. In January 2021 Islington launched the new DA Daily Safeguarding Meeting (DSM) a multi-agency led, fully integrated approach to needs management for victims of Domestic Abuse across Islington embedding the DA MARAC process into the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). The DSM aims to address the needs at the time the intervention has the greatest impact and to maximise victim engagement using service user led feedback. Between January 2021 – December 2022 the DSM heard 1339 cases with 1375 children residing at the households discussed. Over this period the VAWG workforce development team have delivered 238 consultations with practitioners working with families and 190 referrals were made to children's service following initial safeguarding alerts that were raised at DSM.

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.**

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

4.6.2. All statutory partners electronically signed the "London Multi-Agency Safeguarding Data Sharing Agreement for Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children" in

September 2019 that was published by the London Safeguarding Children Partnership. This agreement was put in place to coincide with the statutory requirement to share information between relevant agencies. This has resulted in incorporating the information sharing guidance into the ISCP's training material whilst also having workshops to spread awareness and understanding on the legal basis to share information, proportionately.

- 4.6.3. The Missing Children and Exploitation subgroup's 2022 to 2024 action plan still prioritises the improvement of intelligence gathering and information sharing. There are opportunities for individual education establishments to engage with Safer Schools officers to share information regarding individual children going missing albeit it is accepted that not all educational facilities have a Safer Schools officer, e.g. Pupil Referral Units. In addition, there is an action for Safer Schools Officers in primary schools and secondary schools to consider how they could facilitate better intelligence sharing between schools and agencies by attending intel and information sharing (e.g. borough briefing, MACE) disseminating information to their respective schools to ensure the welfare of vulnerable children is still being promoted and they are safeguarded from risk in the community. This will be further strengthened once the completion of the contextual safeguarding protocol is implemented into practice (April 2023).
- 4.6.4. As part of the development of the Contextual Safeguarding Approach there is now a monthly meeting held with the Safer Schools Officers, chaired by IGT, where intel is shared and how to engage individual or groups of young people are explored.
- 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.**
- 4.7.1. 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.
- 4.7.2. The Islington Secondary School, College Leadership (ISSCL) group have developed close links with the police and now meets regularly with the Safer Schools Team including the Inspector and Superintendent who oversee strategic and operational responsibilities. The Islington Safer School Partnership Protocol (ISSPP) will provide the framework for schools, the council and the police to work more closely together and will be launched at a public meeting in March 2023.
- 4.7.3. The ISSPP will provide more clarity on how the current team of Safer Schools Officers (SSOs) will be deployed. It will also outline how a newly formed working group comprising the schools' Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) will be working more closely with the police to provide reliable and timely intelligence.
- 4.7.4. The aims and objectives of the ISSPP is to make clear what the 'offer' is from the Safer Schools Team and what the expectations are from schools, police teams and council staff.

- 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.

- 4.8.1. Between February 2020 March 2021, the council co-produced, alongside young people and key stakeholders including the voluntary and community sector, a new youth offer for young people in Islington in line with Fairer Together and the Youth Safety Strategy. Through extensive discovery and design work comprising of conversations, focus groups and larger coproduction events which were carried out in partnership with two independent expert organisations, stakeholders agreed that they wanted to see:

- a youth work offer that is rooted in local, grassroots community delivery,
- a strengthened offer of detached and outreach youth work, and
- a connected offer of youth work that is effectively led, delivering quality engagement for young people across the borough.

- 4.8.2. The Young Islington universal youth work offer was launched from early 2022 and aims to:

- reach further into Somali, Turkish and Bangladeshi communities,
- engage young people who have previously not used universal youth services,
- more directly address inequalities, e.g. accessibility for young people with disabilities, and from LGBTQ communities,
- attract those that are vulnerable to poorer outcomes,
- attract those who are living in more deprived wards or households,
- effectively draw in the collective capacity of the Islington community, and
- better utilise space available to engage young people, including establishing a new repurposed youth space on the Andover Estate, which was opened in September 2022.

- 4.8.3. The offer comprises of a number of new elements which together are intended to create the connectedness and quality envisaged by the partners. These are:

- The Quality Leadership Impact Partnership which is the new **youth work leadership element** of the Young Islington offer. It is a central quality function that supports youth work and co-production across the offer, leads on understanding and communicating

its outcomes and impact, shapes cross-borough pieces of work and draws in additional resources to deliver them. This contract is delivered by London Youth in partnership with Mary's as QLIP.

- **Three locality networks** of local stakeholders, providers and young people, corresponding with the Fairer Together localities
- The spaces - Islington offers a range of youth work services to young people delivered from various spaces across the borough, including services both commissioned and non-commissioned by the council
- A **new youth space** has been developed within the Community Centre on the **Andover Estate** that focuses on local young people aged 11 to 14 who may require additional support to access the range of opportunities available across the wider offer and who are at the transition stage, between junior and secondary school. The contract for this centre has been awarded to Manor Gardens, a well respected VCS organisation in the borough
- **Enhanced detached work** - focusing on the areas of greatest need, youth works will engage with young people across the borough and provide youth work on the streets. This contract has also been awarded to a local VCS organisation

4.8.4. It has also been a priority to engage with and support other key VCS and community organisations in order to ensure the existence of high-quality services for young people and families. One such organisation is Minority Matters, who provide support and interventions predominately to young people of Somali decent, but also other cultures and backgrounds. Minority Matters has received financial assistance from not only the council, but also the Violence Reduction Unit (as recommended by the council). This has helped to develop the parent champion network who provide important interventions to vulnerable young people and families.

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.

4.9.1. 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.

4.9.2. Social workers have been allocated smartphones to enable contact and engagement via WhatsApp with young people and this is one of the most common forms of communication between Social Workers and young people. Messages are recorded in children's social care files as an email or telephone call would be.

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.

4.10.1. 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.

4.10.2. Extensive work has also been undertaken to improve the look and feel of the Local Offer website, which links directly to the Family Directory. The directory of services, which includes the Family, Local Offer and Youth directories, was refreshed and updated in summer 2022 and has been widely promoted internally and externally with families and practitioners via digital channels and through a range of touch points with children, young people and families.

4.10.3. The Family Directory was awarded 'Best Directory' in the recent National Association of Family Information Service awards. Comments from service users included: "This is much more user friendly when using my mobile, things are easier to find!" We consulted with parent champions and local residents on what they wanted to see on the directory and how it could be a better user experience for them.

4.10.4. Practitioners are also using the directory as an information source to help with mapping and commissioning, whereby users can export their shortlist to Excel and create their own mini databases.

4.10.5. Further work with the FIS is intended in the run up to Easter and the HAF programme, linking in more directly with the Young People's Participation Officer and with Bright Futures colleagues to gather and respond to user feedback. This will coincide with the recruitment of a parent champion to specifically promote the website. The Corporate Communications Team have also been asked to investigate a translate facility.

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.

4.11.1. The refreshed youth offer that was outlined in 4.8 has ensured that services are flexible and accessible and consideration has been given to providing services during evening and weekends. Young people now have access to a variety and wide range of commissioned and non-commissioned services which exist to help keep them safe and engaged in positive and meaningful activities. All of the youth hubs – including Lift, Rosebowl, Platform, The Zone and Soapbox – offer evening sessions and there is also some weekend provision.

4.11.2. The detached youth work delivered by Targeted Youth Support focusses on engaging with young people in the evening and signposting them to appropriate services. In addition, the new commissioned outreach service, which was awarded the contract in late 2022, will compliment this and also focus on delivery outside of core hours.

- 4.11.3. A review of The Zone also took place, which involved making staffing adjustments and enhancements. This has enabled the service to be more responsive to the needs of young people, particularly those with SEND

5. Implications

5.1. Financial Implications

- 5.1.1. All activity in response to the Vulnerable Adolescents Scrutiny Review is being managed within existing budgets.

5.2. Legal Implications

- 5.2.1. 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).

5.3. Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030

- 5.3.1. All environmental implications and contributions to a net zero carbon Islington by 2030 have been considered within individual commissioning and policy activities that contribute to this update.

5.4. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 5.4.1. 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.

- 5.4.2. An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required in relation to this report, because it updates previous policy recommendations.

6. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

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

Final report clearance:

Signed by:

Corporate Director of Children and Young People Service

Date: 7th March 2023

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