

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE  
Committee Room 2 - Town Hall  
21 October 2014 (Times Not Specified)**

**Present:** Councillors Gillian Ford (Chairman), Jason Frost (Vice-Chair), Nic Dodin, John Glanville, Reg Whitney, Julie Wilkes, Joshua Chapman, Philippa Crowder and Carol Smith

Co-opted Members: Phillip Grundy, Jack How, Julie Lamb, Emma Adams and Keith Passingham

Non-voting Member: Ian Rusha

The Chairman advised those present of action to be taken in the event of an emergency evacuation of the building becoming necessary

**40 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies were received from Pippa Brent-Isherwood, Lynda Rice (Secondary Schools) & Margaret Cameron (NAHT).

**41 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Joshua Chapman declared an interest as he is now a Governor of Squirrels Heath Junior School.

**42 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The chairman gave details of the action to be taken in case of fire or other event that may require an evacuation of the meeting room.

**43 MINUTES**

The minutes of the joint meeting with Health OSC on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2014 had two errors in the attendees. Philip Grundy was not present. Co-opted member Emma Adams was present.

Otherwise, the minutes of both meetings were agreed by all present and signed by the Chairman.

## **44      OFSTED OUTCOMES**

Officers explained that official OFSTED grades could be:

- 1) Outstanding
- 2) Good
- 3) School requires Improvement
- 4) Poor/failing

Overall, Havering Infant Schools were performing exceptionally well and Junior Schools were performing broadly well. Secondary Schools were not performing as well as Primary Schools.

Too few schools were performing at 'Outstanding' level (Grade 1), and too many required improvement (Grade 3).

All failing schools were academies and hence not under direct control of the authority.

In addition to showing overall figures, the report also showed individual schools and the grades they attained.

'Outstanding' and 'Good' schools were inspected once every five years. Some of Havering's 'Good' schools were performing at an 'Outstanding' level but had yet to be re-inspected, as inspection occurred once every five years for schools attaining Grade 1 or 2.

'Requiring improvement' schools were inspected annually, and visited termly. 'Failing' schools were inspected every six weeks.

Up to date OFSTED trends would be made available for each future meeting.

Separate to OFSTED, the Local Authority conducted a process of analysis and categorisation to ascertain if schools were performing to expectations, and for identification of any additional work to improve the schools. Rigorous monitoring and improvement works occurred 6 weekly between OFSTED inspections. The department could use its discretion to advise OFSTED, if any school significantly dropped in performance. Advising OFSTED triggered an instant inspection.

The Chairman suggested that the item of educational attainment could be considered by the Committee as a topic group outside of the main committee.

**45 SEND TRAVEL**

Complaints had been received that SEN children were on buses for too long or getting to school late.

As agreed at the previous meeting, a report on Special Educational Needs travel to school was anticipated. This had not however been provided. It was **AGREED** that this must be provided in advance of the next meeting, sent to Members via email.

Complaints had ceased from service users of the SEN travel, however that may have been due to officers advising of the impending action in this area.

An officer had been compiling a detailed first-hand report on the times of pick-up/drop-off and experiences of every child. It was noted that pick-up and drop off could have been calculated from the GPS trackers within the buses. This method was suggested as the most practical and speedy method of data collection for the anticipated report.

It was agreed that a meeting should be arranged between the Chairman, Head of Asset Management and Heads of Special Schools to discuss the issues in detail.

**46 CHILDREN'S PUBLIC HEALTH**

A list of commissioned services had been received from Children's Services. A similar list was expected from Public Health of what services Havering were receiving. It was noted that this was expected within two weeks.

**47 COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT**

The complaints process comprised three stages:

Stage One: Local Resolution

This had a 10 day response time (which could be extended to 20 days if a letter of delay explanation was sent to the complainant).

Stage Two: Independent Investigation

Two independent people would be invited to investigate the complaint and the original complaint response.

Stage Three: Review Panel

A panel would be called to independently review the complaint and the actions taken.

In 2013-14 the level of complaints resolved at stage one had decreased from the prior year. Stage two complaints remained at a static level as per 2012/13.

The highest levels of complaints had come from Under 12's Triage/ MASH & Assessment teams, and Looked After Children (LAC). LAC was a highly emotive area, and often resulted in a decision of one parent or another receiving care of a child. The other parent often did not agree with the decision of the Social Worker.

Information had been improved for those outcomes. Acknowledging how parents felt often improved the outcome for the aforementioned parents. The summer break could impact on timing of the complaints process as parties may not be available for interview or investigation.

At Stage 1, 24 complaints were resolved within the 10 day limit. Another 20 complaints were resolved within the extended limit of 20 days.

Stage 2 included face to face meetings and were mainly with regards to welfare of the children within the social care intervention spectrum. This was found to work very well. Communication was vitally important, but the wishes of the children had to be taken into account.

One complaint in 2013/14 reached stage three and one action was upheld by the Regional Practitioner. An amendment had been made to the records.

In 2013/14, less than 16% of complaints were corporate. In 2012/13 the level of corporate complaints was significantly higher.

A small number of entries were categorised incorrectly to Children's Services. Complaint numbers in the previous year had an unusual peak due to the closure of children's centres. 2014/15 data may have been unfairly benchmarked against that data.

The expenditure on 2012/13 complaints was zero.

The expenditure on 2013/14 complaints was £9652.90. Some of this was for complaints that did not complete in the 2012/13 fiscal year.

Most complaints were received via email and telephone as these were the instant, most convenient methods.

Members correspondence had a 56% drop in 2013/14 compared to the previous year. This was largely due to the closure of children's centres in 2012/13 having increased the volume of complaints. 67% of these were responded to within 10 days.

It was important for staff morale to receive compliments and these had been received across several teams. From the next meeting, examples of compliments would be made available. Compliment areas were mostly professionalism, practical advice given, and re helpful and understanding members of staff.

The complaints action plan showed some issues identified and areas of improvement in order to reduce that type of complaint.

The statutory timescale of complaint resolution were raised as being restrictive to a balanced and thorough investigation and resolution. Issues that took longer than the allotted time went to the Ombudsmen. The Ombudsmen took into account the quality of the investigation as a factor of going over timescale. No figures were available to identify how many cases were over the statutory timescale, or had to go to the Ombudsmen.

All leaflets for the service were being updated, including information within the 'Welcome to Care' pack. The information given was used to calm and inform parents of the services and how the process worked.

A copy of the 'Welcome to Care' pack would be provided by officers for circulation to the Committee.

#### **48 LEARNING & ACHIEVEMENT COMPLAINTS REPORT**

The report before the Committee evidenced that there was one Ombudsman complaint in 2013-14. This was a joint investigation with the Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman.

Within 2013/14 Learning and Achievement incurred compensation totalling £480.00 compared to £300.00 within the financial year 2012/13.

Within section 2, the total number of complaints showed on the table as totalling 27. This included some 'misfiling' of complaints which were wrongly assigned to Learning and Achievement.

Schools investigated and responded to their own complaints. Any complaints received by the service were recorded and forwarded to the schools. The complaint outcomes were not centrally recorded. Letters were sent to the complainants advising that if they were not completely satisfied then they should have written back to the central Council service to deal with the issue. Beyond that, if the complainant were still not happy, then OFSTED would be the next port-of-call.

Most complaints of this type were resolved at very early stages.

In August 2014, the Department of Education sent guidance to schools to deal with complaints. The guidance was of high quality and was proving successful. Compliments were also being encouraged.

The report highlighted the need for better information around outcomes; however results of complaints that involved schools within the borough, were difficult for the Local Authority to obtain. Discussions of how complaints were recorded needed to take place to improve the recorded information.

49 **SEF & ACTION PLAN**

The report was not available for viewing.

Officers confirmed that the report would be circulated to Members, with an accompanying briefing sheet which advised the main points of focus.

50 **IMPLICATIONS OF ROTHERHAM ENQUIRY**

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) was defined as someone taking sexual advantage for their own benefit through bribes, threats, violence, humiliation, or telling the victim that they loved them, in order to gain the power to undertake sexual acts for their own or other people's benefit or enjoyment including touching, kissing of body parts, sex or taking sexual photographs.

Data from the police was given detailing that from July to September 2014 there had been 25 reported suspicions of CSE in Havering. Nineteen of those were investigated. Within those investigations, six gangs were disrupted. These gangs were not from Havering, but some of the victims were. This figure included all children (including 'Looked After Children' and 'at home' children).

The report into CSE between 1997 and 2013 in Rotherham had been widely publicised, and the implications for all Local Authorities and Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCBs) were extensive, including a requirement for full auditing.

Officers explained that the key actions for Havering following the Rotherham Inquiry included:

- making sure every child had a voice, taking what children and young people said seriously. The Rotherham Inquiry showed that the opinions of staff of the younger people affected the ways the cases were handled. A case study was detailed of a 14-year-old girl who had classic signs of sexual exploitation, but the authority decided that her mother was not accepting the girl growing up.
- Protecting children placed out of the area - Looked After Children were often placed out of borough, and they were more likely to get involved in gangs. That could make supporting the children more difficult. Within the London region, the Metropolitan Police worked in a joined up way, and shared information. Outside of London, the Police Forces worked differently and information was not shared as readily.
- Profiling including race issues- Councillors in Rotherham knew that individuals from a specific ethnic group of the community were implicated in a large proportion of reported incidents, but failed to report the fact as they were afraid of being labelled as racist. Reporting that fact would have substantially reduced the time taken to identify CSE gangs.

- Therapy devolved to the victims - Contracts for therapy were presently limited to six weeks. This was not long enough for supporting these individuals.

The 'See me, hear me' framework was presented, which showed the need to embed good communication in every function.

The 'missing' services in Havering were working together in a joined up way. Children flagged to the 'Missing from School' service worked with the 'reported missing' service to address issues quicker, the service assisting if child exploitation was occurring.

Actions underway to improve the relevant services in Havering were:

- additional training for staff on attitudes, actions and language used when referring to and liaising with children and young people
- respect training to support and guide members of staff
- key partners meeting to develop a detailed action plan

Children had not known that they were at risk, and did not see that they were being abused. It was the responsibility of the adults to help the child identify the risk, and to give them the help they required. Children were already vulnerable. When prepped, groomed and felt loved, they had been pulled into the trap where they may have felt that they had consented.

'Return home' interviews were conducted across the borough and although every case was not high risk, some were found to be very serious.

Concerns were raised of at risk children and young people who were Looked After, and placed away from London. London's connections were strong, but outside of this remit, the information sharing was weaker.

There was a lack of support for adults who were victims of child exploitation, within the known gap between children's services and adult services.

When a child was identified as a victim of CSE, mapping exercises were used to identify those who they were connected with who may have experienced CSE or who were at high risk.

Profiling children and young people was a difficult task as some cases occurred where victims of CSE came from good homes and good schools in Havering, breaking the expected pattern.

Social Workers and the Children's Society provided trusted adults for children to talk to if they had concerns or had no one else to talk to.

The gap of service was acknowledged between CSE support (up to the age of 21, or up to 25 if a LAC) and no continuing support into adulthood. Some victims of LAC were even more vulnerable when able to go into independent living.

The Looked After Children report would be brought to the Committee once complete and the next training dates would also be circulated by officers.

Further preventative work was due to be completed in schools including providing more information in Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) classes on the changing context of Havering, and all boroughs.

Continuity of staffing of Social Workers had been identified as problematic, as the same Social Worker was sometimes not available for those that needed support.

The Committee NOTED the presentation.

## 51 **OFSTED INSPECTION**

Many changes had been seen in the borough, including changes in the work completed, and the highest number of children on Child Protection Plans (CPPs), and Havering's highest recorded proportion of children known to other local authorities.

A high proportion of the residents now in tenanted property had never lived in the borough before (70-80%), meaning there was more pressure on children's services from this additional influx of residents.

The last completed OFSTED inspection was 18 months ago. There were positives recorded in terms of case loads and working with partners.

Of the schools that had areas for improvement, some had made progress whilst others were less advanced in their development plans.

There were concerns recorded regarding the computer system, as better compliance could have been achieved if the system had been easier to use. Taking someone through the system proved how difficult to use it was. Potential alternative systems were being looked into.

The turnover of social workers was a huge pressure to the service, and resulted in instability for the users of the service.

A recruitment campaign was about to be run, in parallel with the launch of a retention campaign for social workers at the National Children's and Adult Services conference (NCAS) the week following the meeting.

Officers accepted that services were too short staffed. Children sometimes had no educational plans or too little on them. The Looked After Children coordinator was to help get the right people in place to help the social workers get their job done effectively and efficiently. An additional service manager had been recruited to support the programme and it was agreed that they should be invited to the following meeting.



Consideration was given to using administrative staff differently in order to reduce the pressure on the social workers, giving their roles less paperwork and retaining some administrative staff who may have otherwise been made redundant, to support and grow the service.

The Committee **NOTED** the position.

**52 TOPIC DISCUSSION**

The Chairman advised that at each board meeting, specific topics were to be discussed as arising from the preceding meeting.

All of the board, members, co-opted members and officers were invited to bring ideas for discussion subjects to the Chairman and the clerk of the Committee for inclusion in the forward plan of the topic discussion to be raised in each meeting.

**53 REPORTS PACK**

The Chairman advised that the process would be changed to only display on the agenda the reports that had been brought to each meeting, rather than the whole list of potential reports.

There were no other comments on the reports presented.

**54 FUTURE AGENDAS**

No items were raised.

**55 URGENT BUSINESS**

No urgent business was raised.

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**Chairman**