

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE
Committee Room 3A - Town Hall
14 February 2019 (7.00 - 9.35 pm)**

Present: Councillors Judith Holt (Chairman),
Michael Deon Burton, Tony Durdin, Tele Lawal,
Christine Vickery and Ray Morgon

Co-opted Members: Julie Lamb

Church Representatives:

Lynne Bennett

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gillian Ford, Carol Smith, Sally Miller, Reg Whitney and co-opted member Jack How.

A member of the public was also in attendance.

26 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS (2)

There were no disclosures of interest.

27 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (3)

The Chairman welcomed the non-members of the Sub-Committee who were in attendance.

The Chairman outlined that she undertook visits to departments in Children's Social Services, including the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in Mercury House and the St. Kilda Children's Centre in Romford. Further visits to Children's Social Services and schools were planned at Easter.

It was stated that key decisions that related to the Sub-Committee were accessible on the council website.

28 MINUTES (4)

The minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 27 November 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

29 QUARTER THREE PERFORMANCE REPORT (5)

The Sub-Committee received an update on performance data for Quarter Three. It was noted that performance data were available for all the eight indicators. Six of the indicators were given a RAG status: Three (50%) had a status of Green, two (33%) had a status of Amber and one (17%) had a status of Red.

Overall, the update was an improvement compared to the position at the end of Quarter 2, when 40% of indicators were rated Green.

The following highlights were outlined:

- The percentage of children in good or outstanding schools. Five schools had been inspected since September 2018 and four had reports had since been published; all of which received a 'Good' judgement.
- The percentage of early year's providers judged to be 'Good' or 'Outstanding' also remained better than target.
- The average number of children missing from education had reduced in comparison to both last quarter and the same point the previous year.
- The percentage of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs) held within 15 working days continued to improve and was within target tolerance.
- The number of adopters approved was better than the target for this point in the year and only one further approval was required to achieve the annual target.

The Sub-Committee noted that the following areas required improvement:

- The percentage of 16-18 year olds who were not in education, employment or training (NEET), or not known was recently confirmed as 3.5% for 2017/18; better than the England average of 6% and placing the borough in the top quintile. The performance at the end of Quarter 3 was off-target but within the agreed tolerance. Action being taken to further improve performance included increased tracking activities using admissions data and intelligence to reduce the number of 'Not Knowns', and the introduction of a new NEET to EET programme in central Romford.
- The number of children missing from care, missing from home or away from placement without authorisation had increased compared to the previous quarter but was lower than at the same point last year. The new approach to safeguarding adolescents would include a strong focus on missing children and the associated risks for the cohort.
- The number of new in-house foster carers was below the target set for this point in the year. Work continued to recruit high quality foster carers, with marketing targeted at the caring professions, certain faith

communities and those prepared to look after older children (age 11+) and sibling groups. Assessments were more robust however, which inevitably resulted in some households not being progressed. A Christmas Fostering campaign was undertaken and in January the service assessed the success of this and considered adjustments to the current marketing plan. Communication materials also promoted the message that IFA (Independent Fostering Agency) carers could easily transfer to the local authority.

During discussion, the Sub-Committee noted that the current Fostering Strategy had been in place since 2016 and would be due for review by the end of the year. Officers indicated that a report on Fostering was due before the Sub-Committee or the Corporate Parenting Panel.

In terms of the Christmas Fostering campaign, Members were informed that it had been a successful exercise. A total of eleven households were currently undergoing screening.

It was noted that officers would be reviewing the success of the advert and current marketing plan and initial feedback from Fostering Ambassadors was encouraging.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the service was engaging with faith communities and seeking opportunities to grow further interest with ethnic groups with regards recruiting new Foster Carers.

The percentage of 16-18 year olds who were not in education, employment or training (NEET), or not known - 2017/18 data was now confirmed at 3.5% for Havering, against an England average of 6%, placing Havering in the top quintile.

In 2017/18, the Children and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee received a total of 17 indicators, of which three were reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

Following discussion on the report, the Sub-Committee agreed that the following two Performance Indicators would be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Board from the fourth quarter of 2018/19.

- Number of new in-house foster carers (cumulative)
- Percentage of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), or not known

The Sub-Committee noted the performance update.

30 DOMESTIC ABUSE AND CHILDREN (6)

The Sub-Committee received a report that detailed the work of the Council to support children and families affected by Domestic Abuse in Havering.

The Havering Community Safety Partnership Plan 2018-19 had identified Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) as a priority and a revised VAWG Strategy was due to go to Cabinet in March 2019.

The Havering Community Safety Partnership had adopted the cross government definition which stated that domestic abuse and violence was:

‘Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who were or had been intimated by partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. Domestic Violence could encompass, but was not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional’

The Sub-Committee noted that domestic abuse on children and young people had a devastating impact on children and young people that could last into adulthood. Domestic abuse services offered specialist emotional and practical support for those children and young people affected.

The report informed the Sub-Committee that between January 2018 to December 2018, there were 4061 domestic violence incidents reported to the Police and 2515 domestic violence offences recorded by the Police. When the Police attended a domestic violence incident where a child was present a Merlin safeguarding alert would be passed to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to alert Children’s Services that domestic abuse was occurring in the household. In 2018 the MASH received 1,706 contacts in relation to domestic abuse.

Members noted that all contacts of possible child safeguarding or protection concerns were referred to the Havering MASH). The information was triaged by a Children Social Care MASH Team Manager to determine what action was required to respond to the concerns that had been referred.

During a brief discussion, it was stated that following referral, the MASH Team Manager had to make a decision on the level of risk of any child within the household.

It was made clear that MASH and MARAC had different roles to play with domestic abuse cases. The role of the MARAC was to facilitate, monitor and

evaluate effective information sharing to enable appropriate actions to be taken to increase public safety.

In response to an enquiry, it was indicated that progress was measured when the relevant agencies had ensured that the individual was not becoming a repeat victim.

In terms of violence against men, it was accepted that this was rarely reported. Havering was one of the few boroughs with a men only service. About fifty men used the service, mostly seeking advice on the telephone.

In response to an enquiry, officer informed the Sub-Committee that the service was looking to provide Family Therapy in the case of child against parent violence.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the department for Works and Pensions was providing resources on an initiative to reduce parental conflict.

Members agreed to scrutinise the topic further in the near future.

The Sub-Committee noted the content of the report.

31 KNIFE CRIME AND CHILDREN (8)

The Sub-Committee received a report that detailed the work of the Council to address Serious Youth Violence and Knife Crime in Havering. The report outlined the proposed future plans to address the issue through the lens of adolescent safeguarding.

Members were advised that the Havering Community Safety Partnership identified serious youth violence and knife crime as a priority for 2018-19 and a Serious Group Violence and Knife Crime Strategy 2018-2021 had been developed. It was noted that the strategy was due to go to Cabinet in March 2019. The proposed strategy sought to set out the London Borough of Havering's plan to address serious group violence and knife crime over the next three years.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the Strategy also linked closely with the Mayor of London's 2017-2021 Police and Crime Plan, the Mayor's 2017 Knife Crime Strategy and the Home Office report on Ending Gang Violence and Exploitation 2016.

The Sub-Committee noted that the Crime and Disorder Sub-Committee recently constituted a Topic Group on Knife Crime. In the previous 18 months Havering had seen an increase in reported knife crime, with Romford ward having the highest record of knife crime across the tri boroughs.

In response to an enquiry on the reason for the increase, officers responded that it was more of an influx of some individuals coming into Havering Town Centre and that Havering children were 'easy picking'.

The Sub-Committee was informed that a regional Adolescent Improvement Alliance was planned and Members indicated an interest to be invited to the tri-borough events.

Members noted that a multi-disciplinary 'hub' arrangement to better identify and respond to adolescent safeguarding and meet needs of young people was proposed. The agency would work together with schools, the Local Authority and partners.

Other initiative included:

- Using social Media to educate Young People
- Upskilling parents and engaging parents with training.

In terms of Child Sex Exploitation (CSE), Members noted that every borough had CSE issues and there was now a greater awareness of the issues

In response to an enquiry on identifying businesses in the Town Centre able to be Safehavens, the Sub-Committee noted that such practises already existed in Lewisham and Croydon.

It was suggested that there should be opportunity for Young People and the Police to dialogue and provide opportunities for Young People to sit on appropriate bodies.

On criminal exploitation and financial crime, it was noted that banks were being invited to address colleges and students and give safe guidance advice.

Members agreed to scrutinise the topic further in the near future.

The Sub-Committee noted the content of the report.

32 PUBLIC SECTOR LEASING AND CHILDREN (7)

The Sub-Committee received a report that provided an update on Private Sector Leased accommodation (PSL). The report provided Members with information on the housing and support needs of households living in Private Sector Leased accommodation (PSL) where there were children.

Members noted from the report the following headlines of the review in relation to children:

- At present, there were no safeguarding concerns identified.

- There was more clarity on the number of households with dependent children in PSL accommodation.
- Families in smaller and larger sized accommodation were identified and the Council would be looking for appropriate housing solutions for them in the future.

The report detailed that there were 630 (71%) households with dependent children in PSL accommodation and a total of 1,171 children. The majority (76%) of the households with dependent children were lone female parent households, followed by 23% of two parent households.

The report informed Members that Housing and Children's Services were working together to address the housing and support needs of families in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

There was an ongoing focus on reducing the need for temporary accommodation for families by working with those at risk earlier and preventing them from becoming homeless.

Families with identified support need were given support and advice by the Council. Where additional support was needed, a referral was made to Peabody Floating Support Service so that they could be given emotional and practical help to manage their tenancies.

In a situation when a family needed multi-agency intervention, case conferences were used to bring all partners together.

During a brief discussion, Members noted that the PSL was a temporary arrangement against homelessness. The process enabled the Service to understand the needs of a family. It was noted that there was no safeguarding concern.

It was indicated that a report on the outcome of the PSL review would be reported to Cabinet at a later date.

In response to an enquiry, officers confirmed that there was no child with a disability within the PSL arrangement.

Members noted the report.

Chairman