

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE
VIRTUAL MEETING
4 March 2021 (7.00 - 9.25 pm)**

Present: Councillors Judith Holt (Chairman), Robby Misir (Vice-Chair), Gillian Ford, Dilip Patel, Carol Smith and Reg Whitney

Co-opted Members:
Julie Lamb and Kathy Freeman

Church Representatives:
Lynne Bennett and Jack How
Non-voting Member: Ian Rusha

An apology for absence was received from
Councillor Sally Miller BCAC.

48 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

49 PROTOCOL ON THE OPERATION OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE MEETINGS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESTRICTIONS

The Sub-Committee noted the protocol on the operation of meetings during the Covid 19 pandemic restrictions.

50 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2020 were agreed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman at a later date.

51 SECONDARY SCHOOLS OUTCOME - 2020

The Sub-Committee received an update report on the outcomes of the 2020 statutory assessments within the secondary sector. The report included headline figures for attainment and progress at GCSE and Attainment at A-Level.

The report stated that that within Havering, there are 18 Secondary Academies, 6 Academy Sixth Forms, 3 Special Schools.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the Local Authority (LA) has a statutory duty to identify schools causing concern, those that are in decline or at risk of failure and to challenge and undertake timely interventions in schools to raise standards.

Where the LA has concerns about an academy performance, it will raise its concern initially with the school or directly with the Secretary of State via the Regional Schools Commissioner RSC and through Ofsted.

The main indicators at GCSE required Attainment 8 which is made up of 8 subjects. Grades 1-9 are translated into a numerical score, the total of which is Attainment 8. The average Attainment 8 score in Havering is compared with the Attainment of all pupils nationally.

It was explained that Progress 8 is calculated by the sum of the Attainment 8 results for all pupils in Havering, this score is compared with that of pupils all pupils nationally with the same KS2 attainment to create the P8 score which is the difference between the two.

It was noted that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the summer exam was cancelled in 2020. In addition the Department announced that it would not publish any school or college level educational performance data based on tests, assessments or exams for 2020. This meant that the performance tables were suspended.

The Sub-Committee was informed that students who were scheduled to sit GCSE and A/AS level exams in 2020 were awarded either a centre assessment grade (based on what the school or college believed the student would most likely have achieved had exams gone ahead) or their calculated grade using a model developed by Ofqual - whichever was the higher of the two.

It was explained that Key Stage 4 (GCSE's) –attainment in Havering were above national. The average Attainment 8 score in 2020 was 51.9 – marginally above as the national average of 50.2 this places Havering in the second quintile nationally and above the majority of its statistical neighbours.

Officers stated that outcomes have fluctuated over the last few years, with the ongoing changes in exams and methodology however it has remained consistently above national.

The Sub-Committee was informed that GCSE progress nationally will always remain static with state-funded schools being marginally below 0. The Department for Education (DfE) have not published Progress 8 for 2020 and therefore it was not represented on the line graph of the table. Officers stated that the Fisher Family Trust data for 2020 shows that secondary

schools in Havering delivered positive progress that was above the national average by their calculation even though it was from a high starting base.

It was stated that progress 8 in Havering has increased considerably from well below national in 2016 to broadly in line as at 2019. Historically Havering has been in the middle quintile at the end of Key Stage 4. However, pupils' prior attainment should also be considered as primary attainment in Havering has consistently been in the top quintile for the last decade, therefore it was extremely challenging for secondary schools in Havering to deliver top quintile progress.

It was explained that the Key Stage 5 A/AS levels in 2020 were awarded predominately through centre-assessment grades (what a school or college believed a student would most likely have achieved had exams gone ahead); for vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) awarding organisations were often able to use evidence of work already completed for CAGs. For other VTQ qualifications adapted assessment meant calculation was not needed at all. There was no national standardisation/moderation and some boroughs increased their attainment by significantly large percentages.

Officers stated that outcomes have fluctuated over the last few years, with the ongoing changes in exams and methodology calculations. The six academy sixth forms have had a 4-year improvement which has resulted in Havering now being ranked first amongst statistical neighbours and 34th nationally, placing in the top 40%. Havering schools increased by 4.5 percentage points in 2020.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the long standing excellent attainment at GCSEs and A-Levels did not translate to Ofsted judgements with 'percentage of schools Good or Better' only being above national once previously in 2013.

In 2012 schools were encouraged to become academies. Following this, the percentage of Good or better schools over time decreased to 56% and fluctuated with the ongoing changes in methodology calculations and academies being re-sponsored. Through the service quality assurance programme, working with our local sponsors and through work on developing leadership, our position has steadily improved since 2016. Last year saw the first re-inspection of a number of our formerly re-brokered academies and therefore showed a marked improvement.

It was noted that secondary schools have enjoyed a three year improvement which has resulted in the averages being above national and Havering now being ranked fourth amongst statistical neighbours and 66th nationally.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the ambition of the service was to ensure Havering schools are Good or Better. In response officers stated that there three schools which were currently rated as inadequate and one

school that required improvement but an inspection will give a positive rating.

The Director of Service reassured the sub-committee that available data suggest schools in Havering are moving in the right direction.

The Sub-Committee noted the content of the report and the performance of Havering schools and academies in relation to national standards, outcomes across London, and in comparison to statistical neighbours.

52 **SEMI INDEPENDENT PROVISION AND MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS**

At the request of the Sub-Committee, the Commissioning Programme Manager presented a report that detailed the management and engagement of providers offering Semi-Independent Living Accommodation in Havering.

It was explained that whilst the population of children in Havering is increasing, the number of new children becoming looked after has started to decline. The total number of looked after children was not reducing as the Young People are remaining looked after for longer periods of time.

It was stated that as a result of preventative work, the number of children coming into care at earlier ages was decreasing whilst the number arriving at 16+ has dramatically increased since 2014/15. This was partly as a result of a significant increase in unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

This has been putting pressure on service availability and leading to a significant number of older children being placed in semi-independent accommodation. There is a lack of residential and foster provision across London, in particular for teenage children and this was proving increasingly difficult to place children and young people close to their local area. It was also stated that the costs for residential provision are increasing and often local authorities are competing for the same placements.

In order to try and keep young people close to home, and in a bid to try and manage costs, local authorities (LA) are increasingly having to use semi-independent/unregulated provision.

The duties placed on LA's require that the service have a responsibility for young people whom are care experienced up to their 25th birthday, increasing the number of young people requiring support.

It was explained that semi-independent provision is not regulated by Ofsted or the Care Quality Commission however a placing authority have a responsibility to ensure the appropriateness of the provision and home for the young people being placed. This type of provision is mainly used for young people aged 16 and above. Semi-independent units are staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the service is developing a system that builds quality and assurance in to the services commissioned. It was noted that other local authorities could commission such provisions within Havering without prior knowledge and populated with young people from other boroughs.

It was explained that services across Havering are working together to address the issues being caused by such provisions as there is no legal requirement for organisations to notify or seek approval from the LA in which they are setting up. The Planning, Licencing, Community Engagement and Joint Commissioning Unit (JCU) are working together to develop a better approach to managing such provisions. Teams are sharing intelligence to map and identify known provisions.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the JCU are working closely with the providers of services to develop a better understanding of expectations on both sides. There were plans underway to introduce a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) by the beginning of July 2021, allowing better control over provider quality and cost for those young people that Havering places and will in turn negate the need for spot purchasing.

It was explained that that the service has developed its own semi-independent provision at two properties which belong to the authority. The LA has commissioned a provider to deliver services at the premises with total control over all young people placed in these accommodations, unlike provisions which are privately run. The established LA provisions are fully occupied and the provider has shown that they are able to manage complex young people.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the placements team of the JCU carry out regular monitoring visits to the commissioned properties unannounced and a visit checklist is completed.. Monitoring visits have continued virtually throughout Covid.

It was explained that the service continue to review and develop its own quality assurance processes and will be introducing improved systems to better help manage and track provider quality assurance.

It was noted that all young people placed in these units who are under 18 Children looked after (CLA) have an allocated Social Worker who make regular visits and work in partnership with the staff in the units to ensure good outcomes.

Officers stated that the JCU are working with Local Authorities across North East London to develop protocols to share details of provisions, outcomes of quality assurance visits and any concerns. This will also allow LA's to develop a better understanding of providers operating in the area outside the LA frameworks/DPS, and will also allow for better intelligence gathering of out of borough young people being placed in Havering.

It was stated that the Department of Education (DFE) have called for reforms to unregulated provision for children in care and care leavers. In February 2020, a government consultation was launched seeking views on proposed new measures to ensure that the use of semi-independent provision provides the right level of support and does not place children in care and care leavers at risk.

It was explained that there is a national push to bring in these reforms which are vital to ensuring the local authority can demonstrate that young people are placed in the most appropriate placements which can achieve positive outcomes towards independence.

Members of the sub-committee noted that monitoring inspection were taking place but it was suggested that Councillors inspection of accommodation should be resumed as part of the review.

Officers explained that in the situation where a provider is regarded as not providing the adequate provision, the sub-committee was informed that working with colleagues in Social Care the service will assess the risk and issues to determine if the risk were significant for current occupants at the provision to be moved.

In response to the complaint mechanism available to the young person, it was explained that the Director and Assistant Director organise a monthly surgery at The Cocoon where issues can be raised.

A Member enquired if the service had noticed an increase of mental issues and illness with Young People and what provision are available to support them.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the service continues to develop an effective quality assurance and undertake random check at the provision currently in use.

The Sub-Committee noted the content of the report.

53 PERFORMANCE INFORMATION - QUARTER 3

The Sub-Committee received the quarter three performance indicators (PIs) update. The PIs are the standards by which performance of services are measured within the Council.

The update provided an overview of performance against the six performance indicators currently monitored by the Sub-Committee in 2020/21.

The report outlined that all six of the indicators have been given a Red Amber Green status; RAG status - two rated Green, one rated Amber and three indicators rated Red.

The report provided the following highlights:

It was stated that the percentage of contacts progressing to Early Help is down compared with the same point in the previous year but has risen compared to the previous quarter, which coincided with pupils returning to classroom based learning in September. An Early Help worker was now based in the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to support and improve the identification of cases that would benefit from Early Help intervention.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the most prevalent reason for contacts remains as domestic abuse but during COVID-19 the service have seen an increase in contacts regarding mental health (both child and parental) and a decrease in contacts concerning neglect. It was noted that this trend was being explored further through the local safeguarding partnership.

The Sub-Committee was informed that data on the percentage of Looked After Children (LAC) with an up to date pathway plan in place is reviewed weekly. It was mentioned that this, coupled with the role of the Independent Review Officer in ensuring that a pathway assessment has been completed by 15 years and 9 months, has led to sustained improvement against this indicator. It was noted that in addition to the timeliness of plans, there remains a focus on ensuring that young people are engaged with the pathway planning process and that their voice is evident.

The service reported that during the quarter, there was a reduction in the percentage of care leavers (aged 18+) with an up to date pathway plan was recorded. This is attributed to a combination of challenges associated with remote working, virtual visits and some of the young adults experiencing a level of disengagement due to lockdown restrictions. However, every care leaver does have a pathway plan and a clear strategy is in place for the review of post 18 pathway plans. Leaving Care Team managers are also being more robust in reviewing pathway plans.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the percentage of LAC cases with supervision in the last three months has remained above target throughout the quarter. It was explained that performance in this area is closely monitored by the Head of Service and Group Managers and discussed at weekly performance meetings. The service's supervision policy was reviewed during 2020 and the expectation is now that case supervision on LAC cases should take place at a minimum every two months. From April 2021, performance will be reported against this new standard.

The report outlined the following areas of potential areas for improvement was outlined:

The report informed that percentage of LAC aged under 16 who have been looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years and living in the same

placement for at least 2 years has increased compared with the previous quarter but remains lower than the same point last year and below our locally set target. It was stated that the London average at the end of Quarter 2, based on informal benchmarking, was 65%. The Sub-Committee was informed that in addition to the Systemic training offer that has been developed for carers with adolescents, fortnightly placement stability meetings are taking place to consider all children/young people who are moving to their second placement. This was to identify individual triggers and patterns at an early stage and provide a robust approach to support, before challenges are experienced.

It was explained that the percentage of former relevant young people at age 18-21 who are in education, employment or training (EET) has reduced compared to the previous quarter. The Sub-Committee was informed that Havering's performance in 2019/20 was better or similar to all comparator groups (statistical neighbours, London and England) for both the 17-18 year old and 19-21 year old cohorts. It was noted that the Covid pandemic has had an adverse effect on many of the young adults, especially those working in retail, hospitality, health and hair and beauty. In addition, a number of young adults in higher education are struggling to maintain course work and college engagement remotely. Most young people in education have been provided with a laptop and the service has ensured that a keyworker within the unit is available to offer support, which is evidenced through progress reports and conversations with the young people.

It was explained that the new Future Mentors Scheme would provide another layer of support to help care leavers to engage in EET and offer continued support to those young people already on a course or in employment. It was stated that the Mentors have now completed their training and the matching of mentors with young people began in November 2020. The Leaving Care service also continues to liaise with the Virtual School in order to target support to sustain EET, prior to the young people turning 18 years.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the percentage of EHC assessments completed within 20 weeks was below target at the end of the December 2020. There was a reduction in new applications for education, health and care assessments initially in the quarter but volumes increased again as the schools settled back into the new academic year. Three new officers have been trained on the new assessment process, which has contributed to performance increasing from 48% in Quarter 2 to 53% in Quarter 3.

The Sub-Committee noted the content of the report.

Chairman

