

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE
Town Hall
23 November 2021 (7.00 - 9.05 pm)**

Present: Councillors Judith Holt (Chairman), Carol Smith and Gillian Ford

Co-opted Members:
Julie Lamb

Church Representatives:
Lynne Bennett and Jack How – Attended Virtually

Non-voting Member: Ian Rusha

Apologies for absence were received from,
Councillor Robby Misir, Councillor Sally Miller BCAC,
Councillor Reg Whitney and Kathy Freeman

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

66 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There was no disclosures of interest at the meeting.

67 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

68 PERFORMANCE INFORMATION - QUARTER TWO

The Sub-Committee received a report and presentation that updated on the Quarter Two 2021/22 (April to June 2021) performance information.

The report provided an overview of the service performance against the 13 performance indicators that have been selected for monitoring by the Sub-Committee.

It was noted that 7 of the indicators have been given a Red Amber Green status; RAG status. Five (71%) have a status of Green and two (29%) have a status of Red.

The presentation highlighted the following areas of strong performance and potential areas for improvement.

The report detailed that in the academic Year 2019/20, there were 9 inspections in Havering schools between September 2019 and March 2020, before the first COVID-19 lockdown. All seven primary schools that were inspected retained their 'Good' outcomes and the two secondary academies inspected improved from 'Requires improvement' to 'Good'. Members were informed that this resulted in Havering's overall percentage of providers being judged to be Good or Outstanding by OFSTED. There was an increase by 2 percentage points, which was 5.2 percentage points above the national figure.

The percentage of primary phase providers judged to be Good or Outstanding by OFSTED reduced by 0.1 percentage point when compared with last quarter, due to the merging of one Infant and one junior school into a Primary. The percentage of pupils attending a Good or Outstanding provider remains above target for both phases, and for Primary is better than the London average.

The report explained that the rates of both fixed term and permanent exclusions in Havering have remained below the rates for England as a whole and better than London - both for primary and secondary schools - based on the latest available published data.

It was stated that the percentage of looked after children 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 have improved in the second quarter of the year to 65.2%, which was in line with the average for Outer London and just below the overall London average, based on the latest available data.

The Sub-Committee noted that Havering had a higher proportion of children in care experiencing 3 or more placements within a 12 month period, and the previously identified rise in placement moves has continued in the second quarter.

It was noted that there were a cohort of older children who were presenting with complex mental health/emotional needs, which was challenging for placement stability. It was explained that in order to understand the reasons for the high number of placement moves, an active working group including the Assistant Director were using a constructed audit tool to identify causation, themes and areas for improvement.

The report outlined the following areas that required improvement:

It was explained that the percentage of looked after children who ceased to be looked after as a result of permanency (Adoption and Special Guardianship Order) was below target at the end of the second quarter, with 3 Adoption Orders and 2 Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) granted in April to September 2021. The report detailed that the national figures for children ceasing to be looked after as a result of adoption peaked in 2015 with a total figure of 5,360 children. The latest national figures available were for 2020, when 3,440 children of a total children in care population of 80,080 (4.3%) ceased care for adoption.

The Sub-Committee was informed that Havering set a higher target of 6% of children in care leaving care for adoption and this was being achieved.

It was noted that there was a significant turnover of staff over the summer period and which has impacted on the percentage of Children in Care with 2+ changes of social worker in the last 12 months. The service have 36 agency staff covering posts, and 2 vacant posts. It was explained that adverts are being placed in December for some of the social work posts covered by agency workers.

The Sub-Committee was provided with an update on staff recruitment, 11 new foster carers have been recruited. It was also mention that the service was about to launch a new campaign to fill vacant post with fulltime staff.

Officer were asked to provide future performance update that had been benchmarked with the statistical neighbours in order for Members to have a better indication of the performance indicators.

A breakdown of the exclusion figure was requested in order to determine how many were children with an Educational Health Care Plan were. It was noted that there had been 49 request by schools for exclusion but following officer intervention 44 were withdrawn.

The Sub-Committee noted the contents of the report and presentation

69 ADOPT LONDON EAST ANNUAL REPORT

The Sub-Committee received the annual report of the Adopt London East the regional adoption agency, hosted by Havering; providing adoption services for Havering, Tower Hamlets, Newham and Barking and Dagenham.

The report fulfils the statutory requirements to report to the executive body on an annual basis providing information on Adopt London East business, performance, successes and challenges in 2020/2.

The report is the second Annual Report of Adopt London East and provides information on service development and performance in 2020/21. Appendix 1 of the report provided information on adoption performance in Havering throughout 2020/21 based on the Adoption and Special Guardian Leadership Board (ASGLB) data returns.

It was explained that Adopt London East has been successful in increasing overall numbers of children placed for adoption and in improving timeliness of placement. The number of matches per Local Authority in Adopt London East was significantly higher than matches in all other London Regional Adoption Agencies.

The Sub-Committee noted from the report that Adopter recruitment had a small downturn following the transition period. Covid restrictions added further challenge to recruitment and assessment work. The agency have worked hard to address challenges and the numbers of adopters approved and assessment has grown steadily since

The report detailed that the number of families supported by Adopt London East have grown markedly. Adopters express a high level of satisfaction with the service. Partnerships with other organisations including 'We are Family' an adopter peer led organisation helping to deliver on-line support creatively.

The Havering led on the Adopt London response to Covid was supported by a substantial grant that was used to engage 13 different providers who offered support to adoptive families and families with a Special Guardianship Order. The support offered included a help-line, therapeutic interventions, training and group work. An independent evaluation of the service rated it as outstanding. Members were informed that a recent government paper commented positively on the work in partnership.

The Sub-Committee requested that going forward that annual report to provide benchmarked information compared with other London agencies. In addition further information was sought of the membership of the adoption board.

It was also suggested that future report outline the areas for improvement in the service.

The Sub-Committee wish to put on record it appreciation to the Head of Adopt London East (Sue May) who it was announced would be retiring next year.

The Sub-Committee noted the annual report.

70 **ADAPTIONS DUE TO COVID AND COVID RECOVERY**

At the request of the Sub-Committee, a report that outlined adaptations due to Covid and Covid Recovery was presented to Members.

It was stated that since March 2020, schools have been required to make huge changes to their operations in all areas. They have made many adaptations to both the content of their curriculum and most notably to the delivery of the curriculum.

It was outlined that the adaptations were in four phases. During the first lockdown from March 2020 through to summer 2020, autumn term 2020, interrupted education, when schools had many pupils self-isolating and many class and year group bubbles closing, second lock down from January 2021 through to the summer term 2021. Finally the last phase from summer 2021 and continuing, the Covid Recovery phase.

It was explained that as yet no definitive date when we will be able to say “we have recovered”, as the impacts are wide and various.

The following key points were highlighted:

The report informed that members of the Havering School Improvement team have had regular conversations with school leaders as every school was allocated a lead officer. It was explained that conversations with schools throughout this time indicated a rapid advancement in both staff and pupils’ capabilities to engage with remote teaching and learning and rapid learning about utilising new technologies in a positive way.

Schools have played a major role and are continuing to play a role in community and family support and well-being.

There has been much discussion regarding the difficulties involved and the pupils who have suffered detriment, but our schools also talk about the positive gains made and the impact these would have on delivery in the future and some transformative teaching.

Schools have responded to the challenges in many different and unique ways as there is no single response as they have sought the best often bespoke options for their communities and circumstances.

Members commended staff for their work during the difficult times.

It was suggested that officers provide additional information to the report relating to children with Special educational needs and disabilities and More Able pupils.

The sub-committee received the following responses from officer at the meeting.

1. Elected Home School

The numbers electing to home educate their children has grown since the start of the pandemic, and was 242 at the last count in October. This has grown from 151 in 2018/19. There has been a spike in applications in the last two September's due to anxieties around Covid-19 and schools, but the LA ensures that parents/carers are clear about their responsibilities before allowing any children to be removed from the roll of their previous schools. This was critical at the start of the pandemic as many parents/carers mistook EHE for remote learning, and expected the same level of support from their previous schools.

2. Funding for Catch up programme

Due to the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on school attendance nationally, some local schools have reported that the levels of catch-up funding are not sufficient to meet demand. Many are having to use existing budgets to fund tutors, or have to look at other more cost-effective support.

3. How many schools have received Air Funding

Not sure how many schools have received their complement of CO2 monitors from the Department for Education (DfE), as this is being managed between the DfE and individual schools. However, we understand anecdotally that some schools are yet to receive them, but every LA maintained school has been supported to complete a ventilation risk assessment, and have identified the high risk rooms within their site.

4. Teacher support from Head Teachers

No issues have been raised, either direct or through the regular Union meetings, but school staff have previously expressed concern about the amount of 'Public Health' activities they have been engaged in, such as contact tracing and administering Covid-19 testing.

5. Measurement on the impact of the intervention

Service area regularly monitors impact through the volume of referrals being made for services, and through the social care 'front door'.

The Sub-Committee noted the contents of the report.

Chairman

