

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE
Council Chamber Town Hall
6 July 2021 (7.00 - 8.30 pm)**

Present: Councillors Judith Holt (Chairman), Robby Misir (Vice-Chair), Carol Smith, Gillian Ford, Tony Durdin, Tele Lawal and Reg Whitney

Non-voting Member: Ian Rusha

Apologies for absence were received from, Councillor Sally Miller BCAC, Lynne Bennett, Jack How, Julie Lamb 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

54 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There was no disclosures of interest at the meeting.

55 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

56 CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

The Sub-Committee noted the content of its annual report and agreed for it to be submitted to full Council.

57 MAY 2021 OFSTED VISIT FEEDBACK

The Sub-Committee was presented with an overview of the findings from the Ofsted Focused Visit in May 2021 and an outline of next steps.

It was explained that the inspection visit was undertaken remotely in line with Ofsted's phased approach to restarting inspection activity, the Local Authority was given notice of the visit ten working days in advance.

The report outlined that the visit considered the nine key decision making points throughout a child's social care journey from the front door through to legal proceedings and leaving care. The visit also considered how the service have safeguarded vulnerable children during the Covid-19 pandemic, with a particular focus on how education was prioritised and promoted. It was noted that Ofsted acknowledged the significant impact that Covid-19 has had on the borough and staff, noting the high infection and death rate and how services have had to adapt to respond.

The findings noted that strong, timely corporate and political support for children's services has enabled leaders to mitigate some of the impact of the pandemic. The report stated that Inspectors found that strengthened partnership arrangements are enabling a proactive and collaborative effort to support the most vulnerable families at a time of increased demand.

Members were informed that there were no priority actions identified during the visit which would have indicated concerns requiring an immediate response.

There was progress noted by Ofsted against the recommendations from the last inspection in 2018. These included the improved effectiveness of the quality assurance framework, strengthened partner agency attendance at strategy meetings and the effective and timely decision making within the MASH. The letter also highlights the proactive approach by the social workers in the children with disabilities service and the 'dedicated and knowledgeable' leaving care service.

The Sub-Committee was informed that in relation to schools, it was highlighted that leaders have built positive relationships with schools and have collaborated well to manage the increase in applications for elective home education. It was noted that children in care routinely continue to attend the same school, minimising the disruption in their lives. It was stated that going forward, the service need to ensure that there are consistent and effective feedback mechanisms to schools following the receipt of referrals and interventions ending. Members were informed that work to develop this is already underway.

It was noted that Inspectors recognised that social care leaders have an accurate understanding of children's services and have maintained a focus on improving services to better safeguard children and to improve their outcomes. Leaders know that there is more to do to ensure consistency in the quality of assessments, plans and supervision and how these are recorded.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the letter from Ofsted provided the following three areas of improvement for the service to build on going forward. These are the quality of analysis within assessments, rationales for decisions to step-down to early help services and the quality of supervision.

Officers response to the recommendations and findings from the visit forms part of the ongoing improvement activity. This is managed operationally by the Children's Services Improvement Board with oversight provided quarterly at the multi-agency Executive Board of which the Chief Executive, Lead Member and Council Leader are members.

In response to Ofsted, the priority of the service over the next three months is recruitment and retention, to ensure a permanent and skilled workforce is in place. It was explained that in order to achieve the necessary consistency in quality of practice needed to progress to the next stage of our improvement journey, stability in the workforce is essential.

The report informed that Ofsted do not provide a grading following a focused visit, however the findings of the visit are taken into account when planning the next inspection visit.

In response to Members, it was explained that officers were working on an improvement plan that would be presented to the sub-committee.

On the Covid Impact Topic Group, a Member asked about the status of the group. It was suggested that the Topic review was an important piece of work that needs to be engaged in.

Members were informed that the service self-evaluation had already identified issues raised by Ofsted. Officers stated that a revised self-evaluation will be presented to the sub-committee in the autumn.

Members noted the content of the report.

58 PERFORMANCE INFORMATION - QUARTER 4

The report and presentation before the Sub-Committee updated on the Quarter Four 2020/21 performance information.

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

The presentation outlined the following highlights:

It was explained that the percentage of Looked After Children (LAC) cases with supervision in the last three months of the year ended at 100%. Regular monitoring at weekly performance meetings has led to sustained improvement in this area and from April, performance will be measured against the new supervision standard, which is a two monthly cycle for LAC and Children in Need (CIN) cases, and monthly for Child Protection cases. It was explained that a priority for 2021/22 would be to achieve further improvement in the quality and consistency of supervision.

It was noted that the percentage of contacts progressing to Early Help was down compared to the previous quarter but has increased when compared to the same point in the previous year. Members were informed that an Early Help worker is based in the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to support and improve the identification of cases that would benefit from Early Help intervention, whether by the Early Help Service or universal services.

In addition it was stated that the Head of Service for MASH, Early Intervention and Edge of Care is working closely with the Performance Team to improve the way in which Early Help activity is captured and reported.

The percentage of LAC with an up to date pathway plan in place was reported to have dipped slightly in the final quarter of the year. This was attributed to capacity issues, as there were a high number of vacancies within intensive supervision and surveillance (ISS) during the period. The presentation outlined that the equivalent indicator for over 18 year olds (which was highlighted as below target last quarter) has also improved significantly. In addition to the timeliness of plans, it was mentioned that young people need to be engaged with the pathway planning process and their voice evident, and this remains an on-going priority for the service in 2021/22.

The following areas of improvement were outlined:

The 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 have remained relatively stable throughout 2020/21, but was lower than previous years and now below the London average. It was explained that the quality, sufficiency and stability of placements for children in care is a priority for the service over the coming year. It was stated that challenges relating to availability and choice of placements have been further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the council is not alone in this experience. The proportion of children with three or more placement moves has decreased compared to last year which is positive; however we know that too many young people still experience placement breakdowns and there is more to do. A high proportion of the children in our care are teenagers, many of whom have experienced trauma and display challenging behaviours, and we require skilled and dedicated carers to provide a home for these children. In response, we delivered a ten week training programme for foster carers alongside their supervising social worker - facilitated by a systemic family therapist - providing strategies and exploring new ways for carers to relate to their foster child. A Placement Stability Panel has been in place since December 2020, alongside a New to Care and Edge of Care Panel. These are both chaired by the Head of Quality Assurance with the view that a child's plan is scrutinised at the point of coming in to care and then again if they move to a second placement within 12 months.

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. It was explained that Covid-19 has been an adverse effect on many of the young adults especially those working in retail, hospitality, health and hair and beauty. It was stated that there is a greater focus within pathway plans on EET and outcomes are being closely monitored in supervision with multiple strategies being implemented to ensure that young people do not drop out of education due to the increasing challenge of Covid-19 restrictions and have an impact on their emotional and psychological wellbeing. A number of Care Leavers have been offered opportunities and it is anticipated that with the Cocoon now being partially open, some face to face meetings would be supported, giving confidence to care leavers to consider all of the options and opportunities within EET. The Leaving Care service also continues to liaise with the Virtual School in order to target support to sustain EET prior to young people turning 18.

The percentage of Educational Health Care assessments completed within 20 weeks was below target at the end of the March 2021. The main factor contributing to the dip in performance (to 48%, from 53% in Q3) has been capacity, with one case officer absent due to sickness, and the impact of additional work and training required to implement the new Liquidlogic EHC module.

The latest published data (from the annual SEN2 statutory return, released in May 2021 and covering January 2020 to January 2021) shows that nationally, the rate of EHC plans issued within 20 weeks was 58%, which was down slightly from 60.4% in 2019. It was reported that Havering's performance for the same period was 60.8%, meaning the council remain above the national average and similar to the London average of 61.8%.

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

It was agreed that members of the sub-committee suggest which performance indicators it would like to consider for monitoring and scrutiny during 2021/22 and inform the Chairman in 14 days.

60 **ADULT EDUCATION OUTCOMES UPDATES**

The Sub-Committee received an update on Havering Adult College that included performance outcomes for 2019/20 2020.

It was explained that the council delivers adult and community learning (ACL) through the Havering Adult College. The college receives two direct grants to fund its operation, one from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and one from the General London Authority (GLA) that enables the service to deliver a range of courses aimed at learners aged 19+ who can be resident in the borough, or attend from outside of the borough.

The report outlined the following In-Year Outcomes for Learners and Impact of, and response to, COVID-19:

1. 2041 learners recruited during 2019-20, retention was excellent at 95%, with overall achievement also excellent at 96.97%.
2. For skills-based (accredited) courses, retention was excellent at 92%, and achievement was particularly excellent at 95.98%.
3. For community learning (non-accredited) courses, retention was very good at 97%, with achievement remaining excellent at 97%. Retention on community learning courses can often be more challenging, especially as in some cases, learners are able to access the provision for free, thus mitigating any financial commitment to the course in a minority of cases. That fact notwithstanding, the achievement rate details the successful achievement of their learning aims prior to leaving the course, which could also account for a drop off in their commitment to attending.
4. All withdrawn learners are followed up as part of the college's robust quality assurance and improvement infrastructure, and reasons are recorded for the early departure.
5. The overall impact of COVID-19 did see an in-year transition to blended learning (incorporating on-site and remote learning). Learners benefitted from the swift actions of the leadership team to support their successes, although a reduction in later in-year enrolments was felt.
6. It remains anticipated that the academic year 20-21 would continue to see the impact of the pandemic, with fewer adult learners feeling inclined to enrol on adult learning programmes, or – where they wish to – to be satisfied with online learning, given the wider social benefits of in-class learning. A more accurate final picture can be drawn at the close of the academic year.

In response to the digital skills programmes the Sub-Committee was informed that the digital production programme is undertaken from the new studio based at the Barking and Dagenham College.

The Sun-Committee noted the update.

61 **INTEGRATED ADOLESCENT SAFEGUARDING SERVICE (IASS) UPDATE**

The Sub-Committee received an update report on Integrated Adolescent Safeguarding Service (IASS). It was mentioned that the service was formed in response to the Adolescent Safeguarding Strategy with the aims to better identify and support children and young people vulnerable to exploitation.

The report outlined that since February 2020, the service have continued to drive forward the adolescent safeguarding strategy with a committed focus on the following four priority areas:

1. Reviewing and updating operational arrangements for exploitation and missing to make sure the service have in place the right protocols and procedures for management oversight, joint analysis, planning tools, meetings and for our early intervention offer. It was mentioned that the service have updated the IASS Outcomes and presented it to the Havering Safeguarding Children Partnership.
2. Developing the Multi-disciplinary Integrated Adolescent Safeguarding Service (IASS) bringing together Youth Services, Youth Offending, Virtual School, Child Sexual Exploitation/Missing coordination, clinical health posts and analysis of data to enable earlier identification of children vulnerable to criminal exploitation and serious group violence. Teams are in place and service modelling work has commenced.
3. Take collective responsibility to join up data analysis and information sharing to enable an integrated offer of early intervention and support that will prevent young people from harm, exploitation, and involvement in serious violence.
4. Create innovative training and development opportunities to build capacity across the partnership for early intervention and adolescent safeguarding – based in new practice approaches for professionals to improve their work with young people. Case formulation support and case-shadowing opportunities in place. Risk Identification Tool workshops delivered. Early discussion has taken place to review IASS position at the front door within Children's Services.

The report outlined that the current and future priorities for the IASS are to continue to progress work across the four priority areas as well as reviewing exploitation protocol, embedding a restorative and trauma-informed practice model and developing a communications plan and a workforce development strategy.

- A data analyst is working to improve Havering data sets with regards to the profile of young people and their presenting needs and concerns and streamline operational risk management processes to clearly identify young people of concern.
- A key area of work continues to be our action on disproportionality and building on the forthcoming opportunity for independent scrutiny of HSCP to ensure partnership commitment to anti-racism and

tackling disproportionality and ensuring proportionate safe pathways for young people in Havering.

- A proposal for audit of our safeguarding work with young people has been progressed via the tenacious leadership of the data and performance lead.
- Quality Assurance work continues to drive performance and improve practice.

A Member of the sub-committee suggested that there should be a Pledge to support the strategy.

The Sub-Committee also requested that the report from the Independent scrutiny of HSCP be presented to Members on completion.

The Sun-Committee noted the update.

Chairman