



Children and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee Annual Report 2021/2022

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

It has been said an infinite number of times, but last Municipal Year 2021-2022 was again unprecedented, the COVID-19 pandemic challenging Government locally and nationally in ways previously unthinkable.

Since September, the OSSC and CPP have met again virtually. The need to adapt and be flexible with working methods as a consequence of the pandemic was recognised. Nonetheless, scrutiny was carried out on the Children's Services Budget, Complaints Report and Semi-Independent Living Provision.

Councillor Judith Holt

Chairman, Children and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee / Corporate Parenting Panel

REMIT AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

This report is the annual report of the Sub-Committee, summarising the Sub-Committee's activities during its year of operation ended March 2022.

It is planned for this report to stand as a public record of achievement for the year and enable Members and others to have a record of the Committee's activities and performance.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The areas scrutinised by the Sub-Committee are:

- School Improvement (BSF)
- Pupil and Student Services (including the Youth Service)
- Children's Social Services
- Safeguarding
- Adult Education
- 14-19 Diploma

- Scrutiny of relevant aspects of the LAA
- Councillor Calls for Action
- Social Inclusion

SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Judith Holt (Chairman)
Councillor Gillian Ford (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Michael Deon Burton
Councillor Tony Durdin
Councillor Tele Lawal
Councillor Sally Miller
Councillor Carol Smith
Councillor Christine Vickery
Councillor Reg Whitney

Statutory Member representing the Churches:

Mrs Lynne Bennett (Church of England)
Mr Jack How (Roman Catholic Church)

Statutory Members representing parent governors:

Mrs Julie Lamb (Special)
Mrs Kathy Freeman (Primary)

Non-voting members representing local teacher unions and professional associations:

Mr Ian Rusha (NEU)

REVIEW OF ACTIVITY

During the year under review, the Sub-Committee met on four occasions and dealt with the following issues:

SCHOOL QUALITY ASSURANCE

At its meeting in September 2021, the Sub-Committee received the annual report for School Quality Assurance. The report detailed an overview of the statutory responsibilities of the Local Authority (LA) with regard to ensuring education excellence.

It was explained that the service recognised and respected the diverse educational landscape and models of governance that now existed within the borough. The Education Act 2011 outlined that the role of Local Authority in relation to all children and young people.

ADOPT EAST LONDON ANNUAL REPORT

The Sub-Committee received an Adopt East London Annual Report from the regional adoption agency, hosted by Havering that provided adoption services for Havering, Tower Hamlets, Newham and Barking and Dagenham.

The report fulfilled 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 2020/21.

It was noted that Adopt London East had 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.

ADAPTIONS DUE TO COVID

The Sub-Committee received a report that outlined adaptations due to Covid and Covid Recovery. Since March 2020, schools had been required to make huge changes to their operations in all areas. They made many adaptations to both the content and delivery of their curriculum.

Adaptions had occurred in four phases and no definitive date of when they would be able to say, “we have recovered” was possible because the impacts were far and wide.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES ANNUAL COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS REPORT 2020-21

The Sub-Committee received the Children’s Services Annual Complaints and Compliments report 2020-21. The annual report was a requirement for monitoring by Members as part of the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.

Complaints in 2020-21 had increased by 9% (87) compared to 2019-20 (80). The number of enquiries had increased significantly in 2020-21 compared to 2019-20, by 46%. There continued to be a steady number of complaints escalating to Stage 2 investigations in 2020-21 (6) and was at the same level as in 2019-20. There was one complaint escalated to stage 3 which was escalated to the Ombudsman.

Response times had improved in 2020-21 with 31% (27) responded to within the 10 working day timeframe. Efforts would continue to improve response times, while recognising the increased complexities of cases and balancing the priorities of the service. Complaints had continued to be received by email (57) and a further 18 received online.

The cost of independent investigations decreased significantly in 2020-21, due to the withdrawal of three Stage 2 escalations, reducing the cost to £6,087.95 from £19,531.65 in 2019-20.

INCREASE IN DEMAND AND IMPACT ON COSTS FOR PLACEMENTS FOR PEOPLE AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH COMPLEX NEEDS

The Sub-Committee received a report on the Increase in Demand and Impact on Costs for Placements for People and Young People with Complex Needs. It was stated that There was an the increase in the number of children and young people with multiple complex needs requiring support from the authority and the impact this was having on the placements budget.

It was noted that Havering was a growing borough, with ONS population projections for the 0-17 population rising from 59,020 currently to 61,369 by April 2024. The changing demography locally would impact on the demand over the next five years.

In the years 2008-2019, running up to the pandemic the sector nationally saw a 19% increase in referrals. The number of children subject to a child protection plan increased by 76% in the same period. In 2019 it was estimated that children's social care was facing a £3.1 billion funding gap by March 2025 (LGA). It was estimated that the number of vulnerable children being placed in council care in England could reach almost 100,000 by 2025, up from 69,000 in 2015.

UPDATE REPORT ON ATTENDANCE AND EXCLUSION POST COVID

The Sub-Committee received an update report on the Attendance and Exclusion Post Covid.

The report updated members of the Committee on the progress made to improve School Admissions & Inclusions arrangements, across all Havering's Schools/ Academies and Alternative Provisions to ensure consistency with Havering's vision to ensure a good start for every child to reach their full potential during their educational journey.

It was noted that the Attendance Team had ensured that schools' understanding of Covid Coding on absences was regularly checked, and remained in line with changing guidance from the DfE. They continued to provide both remote and onsite support, and reported that schools were requiring additional time for consultations due to the increased number of pupils now deemed persistently absent.

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Throughout the year the Sub-Committee continued to receive the quarterly performance reports that had previously been reported to Cabinet and Demand Pressure Dashboards which illustrated the growing demands on Council services and the context that the performance levels set out in the reports had been achieved within.

The update provided an overview of performance against the six performance indicators currently monitored by the Sub-Committee in 2021/22.

THE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

The Corporate Parenting Panel met periodically throughout the year, a new innovation was introduced with support from officers establishing Topic Groups to scrutinise the implementation of the new Corporate Parenting Strategy. These groups will focus on Education and Training, Health, Housing / Accommodation and Participation.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

None – narrative report only.

Legal implications and risks:

None – narrative report only.

Human Resources implications and risks:

None – narrative report only.

Equalities implications and risks:

While the work of the Sub-Committee can impact on all members of the community, there are no implications arising from this specific report which is a narrative of the Sub-Committee's work over the past year.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Minutes of meetings of Children and Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee.