

## **Education & Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee**

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Education & Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on Wednesday 14 January 2015 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G02A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

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**PRESENT:** Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)  
Councillor Evelyn Akoto  
Councillor Anne Kirby  
Councillor Kath Whittam  
Councillor Kieron Williams  
Lynette Murphy-O'Dwyer  
Abdul Raheem Musa

**OTHER MEMBERS  
PRESENT:**

**OFFICER  
SUPPORT:** Strategic Director , David Quirke-Thornton and Rory Patterson,  
Rory Patterson, Director, Children's Social Care  
Alasdair Smith, Head of Service, Permanence  
Rory Patterson, Director, Children's Social Care.  
Julie Timbrell, Scrutiny project manager  
Shelley Burke , Head of scrutiny

**1. APOLOGIES**

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Martin Brecknell and Councillors Lisa Rajan and James Okosun.

**1. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT**

2.1 There were no urgent items of business.

## **1. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS**

3.1 There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

## **1. MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2014 will be amended at point 7.6 to note that Newham CCG was given as an example of good practice , rather than Southwark , for its work on mental health .

## **1. SOUTHWARK SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD REPORT**

5.1 The chair invited officers to introduce themselves and present the Safeguarding report. Strategic Director , David Quirke-Thornton and Rory Patterson, Director of Children's Service introduced themselves and gave apologies for the Independent Safeguarding Chair , Michael O' Connor, who was unable to attend because of a funeral.

5.2 The Strategic Director explained he was new into post and offered some key observations. He said there was a strong partnership. The key model being used: 'social work matters' is a systemic group process with clinical support. Social workers go out in difficult and unknown situations - so a process that holds our social workers is vital. This model has been developed from both social work and the safeguarding partnership.

5.3 MASH is a hub that enables good decisions making and also enables people to be offered support even if they do not meet a threshold. This partnership approach enables others partners to participate, rather than just leaving interventions to social workers.

5.4 The report under sells the involvement of young people in the work of the Safeguarding Board . The Strategic Director observed he went to a meeting and they were active posing questions. Other parts are more objective.

5.5 The Children's Service is glad this report comes to this committee. In future Children's Services would like to increase the role and voices of children and families in the report so it gives more of local flavor.

5.6 This report is for the previous year. A current focus is Children on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and at last meeting the Board looked at social media.

5.7 The Strategic Director commented that best practice to publish board minutes and papers and publish the presentations of the conference. In future this report could be read in conjunction with the minutes.

5.8 The chair asked if the boards work influences Children's Services policy and the Director said it did, for example domestic abuse. 70 % of safeguarding is related to domestic abuse and the impact on children - witnessing incidents is harmful. The strategy

on Domestic Abuse is held is elsewhere in the council but conversations at the Board influence this policy. The board is also engaged in family matters, CSE and also neglect. We receive a Key Performance Indicators (KPI) report from partners. The Board has a key role in holding to account with reductions in budgets.

5.9 The chair asked why the minutes of the board meetings were not made available to the committee or published, particularly given the current emphasis on transparency. The Strategic Director apologized and said the emerging good practice is to publish. He assured the chair that Children's Services will find a way to reconcile the minutes from last year and share with the committee. A member asked what the problem had been and the Strategic Director explained that the Independent Chair, as a matter of courtesy, had wanted to check that the partners were happy to share.

5.10 A member asked about attendance and engagement and the Strategic Director said he had been impressed by the culture the chair has encouraged: the Probation Service has commissioned a rehabilitation company and officers from both parts of the service are there. The best part is when the children set tasks and ask question, which is at every meeting and keeps it real.

5.11 Officers were asked if schools & academies are playing their part in Safeguarding and officers explained that there is an education representative on the Board and officers also meet with the Headteacher's Executive. Children's Service also have area teams that work with schools , however the Director cautioned that he wouldn't want to say that covers everything . Members observed that there is a blind spot with Harris Academies and that they do not participate in Headteacher's Executive. Officers explained that they highlight the benefits and risks of not attending, and added that Children's Services also reaches out to schools. Members ask for clarification and if there is a representative of the Headteacher's Executive on the board and officers confirmed that there was, a primary school teacher.

5.12 A member noted there is only a small mention of work to tackle FGM . The Director said that Southwak is setting up a joint project with Lewisham. Children Services had a briefing with the Chief Social worker and has received extra funding for 18 months to start an initiative based on a scheme in Belgium, which is very approachable for potential clients. A member asked if this was part of the 5 borough service and the Director explained this was something different, however the Chief Social Worker does chair this. The chair mentioned the scrutiny in a day on this topic and the Director offered to bring people along working on this proposal.

5.13 Officers were asked about links with the voluntary and faith groups and the committee was informed that there is a sub group chaired by CAS. The Strategic Director said it is it is early days but the Board is working on this.

5.14 A member commented that it is really good to see the involvement of young people as that was not clear from report. Officers mention a recent DVD that has been commissioned to work with Children on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

5.15 It was noted that the report contain a single page setting out priorities - but it was then hard to see how these were delivered in the report. The Director said we are changing the report so it will be easier to see this. He said that the capacity of Safeguarding relates to the strengths and weakness on front line practice and traditional

tools do not bring that out richly - the Annual Safeguarding conference is one way we look at issues in more detail. The theme for this years conference is 'The Younger's - the focus is teenagers on how to very young people may be coming of age, engaging in relationships, might be both a victim and perpetrator.

5.16 Members asked how achievements are measured. The Director said there were audits and measurement of partner KPI; however the conference was about getting to heart of issues. The Director said that when he sees things working well it is about core issues - such as consistency and multi agency working together which, when at its best, can really shift issues in a family. The Strategic Director referred to Section 11 audits, which are often not particularly welcomed, but are really important. He said the service is reviewing the format to make them more engaging and also encouraging partners to contribute.

5.1 The chair asked about Serous Case Review and sharing the lessons learnt. The Director responded that there are checks and balances on why one would not be carried out. The service circulates the lessons learnt.

## **RESOLVED**

The minutes of the previous years Children's Safeguarding Board will be provided.

The Independent Safeguarding Board chair will be invited to attend the next meeting.

A copy of the DVD on Child Exploitation will be provided.

## **1. REVIEW: ATTAINMENT GAP**

6.1 The chair invited Edna Mathieson, a local resident, to comment on the topic and her work locally. She explained that her interest is in raising white working class achievement; she is a teacher and academic and is presently working with LSE University. She founded Southwark Community Education Council which holds literacy and math lessons at James Allyn's School and a Saturday school at Dulwich School, with Maths, English and Drama.

6.2 Members asked why these schools were used and she explained that the project wanted to set up a Saturday school to combat the gross under achievements of working class children , however state schools would have to charge for a caretaker as they do not open on the weekend , but Dulwich School are is, which keeps cost down .

6.3 She went on to explain that she was keen to draw upon the research work done by Lambeth Council on ways local schools are raising white working class achievement. This was conducted by Feyisa Demie and is outlined in a publication and led to a conference supported by the Institute of Education.

6.4 A member commented that the committee should be considering both how and why working class children achieve and consider motivation, including the chance to have a job at the end. The quality of teachers is also crucial.

6.5 The chair invited comments on the reports circulated and a member noted the mention on genetics and commented that this would not be an acceptable topic for Jewish people, for example. Another member commented that the Select Committee report looked into genetics as a factor in white working class under achievement, which is outrageous. A member agreed, however added that the report challenged the evidence.

## **RESOLVED**

Edna Mathieson will provide a copy of work undertaken in Lambeth with white working class pupils , produced by Feyisa Demie and Kirston Lewis , and details of a conference held in June 2014.

The chair, and available committee members, will meet with Edna Mathieson to discuss her work further.

## **1. MINI REVIEW: ADOPTION - FEEDBACK FROM ADOPTION FOCUS GROUPS**

7.1 The chair, Councillor Ali, and Councillor Akoto reported back on the focus group with adopters and potential adopters. The chair explained she had produced the grid to highlight the main issues. There was a lots of praise for for staff and some room for improvement. One person there reported that Southwark had said that she had no chance of adopting as she was white and there was no consideration given to her adopting a child of a different ethnicity. Although this did happen several years ago , and before the recent change in government policy towards trans-racial adoptions, the chair said she was still concerned about the councils stance as she had received recent feedback form a constituent that the services was not positive about trans-racial adoption . Officers said that are some fantastic examples of trans-racial adoption, but there are some children it is hard to find a home for. Older children, black children and children with more challenging issues are harder to place and tend to wait longer for a permanent placement.

7.2 A member commented that there appeared to be a communication gap after a positive panel decision and that there was also slowness to produce life story books.

7.3 The project manager reported that following concerns raised at the focus group on the quality of school support for adopted children she had been put in

touch with an adoption network which is doing work with an organization called PAC –UK . They have been recommended for their work with schools in supporting the education of permanently placed children - she has asked this organization for more information for the committee. Members asked officers is there is a training programme for teachers, governors and SENCO. Officers responded that most Southwark children are adopted outside of Southwark; however there is a wider responsibility to adopted children and the adoption team will be taking this away and thinking more about this. Members pointed out that teachers have to do CPD on a weekly basis and that by training governors, and trainers, even if only once every few years it can cascade.

7.4 Members reported that one feedback was that they like the post adoption feedback, including peer support. Mirander Gregory, a local adopter, set up a peer support network. She had helped gather people for the focus group. We are Family blogs here <https://wearefamilyadoption.wordpress.com/>.

7.5 A member of the committee asked if there were many same sex adopters. Officers said about a third of adopters were same sex, and members commented that this was reflected in the focus group. Officers reported that Southwark was one of the first councils to pioneer same sex adopters and it is a real area of strength.

7.6 The committee discussed the feedback that the induction process was quite bleak and if this needed to be softened. Members commented that it is a balance as people do have to have the have the mettle, however the focus group emphasized the need to communicate the realities, both the joys and pains of parenting. Officers commented that they would be thinking about this and noted that people value hearing from people with experience of the adoption, both being parents and giving a child up for adopting. Officers explained they invited some communication people came to induction meetings to improve the process.

## **RESOLVED**

Information from PAC – UK on their work with schools will be circulated.

### **1. FREE HEALTHY SCHOOL MEALS (FHSM)**

#### **1. WORK-PLAN**

9.1 A member raised concerns with families being transferred out of the borough to access housing and the impact on their children, and particularly their schooling. She reported that the housing offered was often far away from their

communities and extended family, in cities like Birmingham and Manchester. Families also frequently had to accept the offer very quickly, which made transition difficult.

## **RESOLVED**

FGM scrutiny in a day will be held on a Thursday and a doodle will be sent around to establish the best date for members, officers, outside experts and survivors.

The Autism Strategy has been pushed back and will now be taken in March.

Members present will each contact four schools and encourage them to complete the Attainment gap survey.