

EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Education & Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on Wednesday 14 June 2017 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G01B - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT:

Councillor Rosie Shimell
Councillor Karl Eastham
Councillor Samantha Jury-Dada
Councillor James Okosun
Councillor Catherine Rose
Councillor Kath Whittam
Martin Brecknell
Councillor Jon Hartley

OTHER MEMBERS

PRESENT:

OFFICER SUPPORT:

David Quirke -Thornton, Strategic Director of Children's and Adults' Services
Alasdair Smith, Director, Children's , Families and Adults' Services
Nina Dohel, Director of Education
Clarissa Cupid, designated nurse safeguarding lead, and multi agency lead for the FGM
Julie Timbrell, scrutiny project manager

1. APOLOGIES

- 1.1 There were apologies for absence from the Chair, Cllr Jasmine Ali and Lynette Murphy-O'Dwyer.

VIDEO - OPENING OF THE MEETING

<https://bambuser.com/v/6769047>

2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

2.1 There were no urgent items of business.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

3.1 There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

4. SOUTHWARK EDUCATION OVERVIEW

Nina Dohel, the Education Director, gave a brief update, followed by a discussion with committee members. The following points were made:

- The Fairer Funding consultation result is anticipated. Politicians indicated during the election were that no school would lose out; however it is difficult to know what that will mean in terms of the funding formula.
- It is possible that the grammar school programme may go quietly.
- The drift towards more Academy schools is unlikely to change given the existing framework. The council is encouraging maintained schools to remain this way, however there is likely to be a steady trickle converting. There may become a tipping point in terms of the sustainability of schools services provided by the council.
- There was reference by a member to the Schools Commissioners and the potential changes to admissions. The Education Director said that there are some issues with Academy schools commissioning alternative provision rather than using 'exclusion'. Communication with the council is variable. Members sought clarification that there is an Early Help service to prevent and assist with exclusions, and the Education Director confirmed there was.
- The state of schools buildings was mentioned in the election and the maintenance programme. The Education Director said that schools in Southwark are in a good condition. There are no known sites being targeted for academies or new schools. Members asked about the Old Kent Road development and the Education Director promised to update the committee if there are any bids to utilise this site at a later date.

VIDEO OF SOUTHWARK EDUCATION OVERVIEW

<https://bambuser.com/v/6769106>

5. OFSTED INSPECTION OF SOUTHWARK CHILDREN'S SERVICES

David Quirke –Thornton, Strategic Director of Children's and Adults' Services and Alasdair Smith, Director, Children's, Families and Adults' Services presented the Ofsted report, following the inspection that took place in March. Southwark was rated good. The Strategic Director reported that 28% of local authorities are rated good or outstanding, while the majority of other Local Authority Children's Services have been rated requiring improvement or inadequate. There are issues that the Strategic Director acknowledged need to be addressed, which included:

- Stability of Placements
- Care leavers journey and knowledge of rights
- Consistency of social workers (in the context of a high national turnover and a national career average of only 7 years)

A report will be developed to address these.

The chair congratulated the team on the result. Members were invited to ask questions. The following points were raised:

- The Directors were asked about social work continuity and how this is being addressed. The Strategic Director referred to a national piece of work to change the narrative about social workers. This has used the voices of young people to talk about the importance of the work. Unfortunately Social workers are now regulated by Whitehall, and the government is bringing in tests to be licensed. This is professionally unusual as most similar professions have Royal Colleges promoting professional development. Concerns were raised about the extra pressure licencing and tests would this place on social workers; particularly given the pilot had showed a 20% test fail rate. Officers said they could not recognise this high fail rate in their experience of social workers, and this could increase turnover even further. Concerns were raised about the weak professional culture that allowed direct government assessment, rather than a professional body. Officers said that other challenges around retention include social workers leaving Southwark because of high housing costs. Positive features of the service are the good management support in place, which helps retention, recognised by Ofsted. The in-house recruitment and training programme means the council has a high quality cohort of the newly qualified social workers. Southwark is investing more in retention of this cohort. Social workers are attracted by the good judgement of Ofsted. 'Frontline' was identified as a programme that is also used by Southwark and social workers had been sustained from this route. 16% of Southwark Social Workers are agency – this is lower than average, though the lowest is 10 %. Officers are encouraging social workers to commit to the borough. The Directors emphasised that there doing lot to regarding retention, but the council can not ignore the report finding that young people want consistency.

- Officers added they remain ambitious for the services and will still be pushing more on housing and training for young people.
- Members asked about sharing the good story. The Directors suggested a generosity in helping other boroughs. This applies to scrutiny function as well. The Directors noted praise in the report for the effective chairing, and the contribution the committee had made through its FGM and adoption reviews.

VIDEO OF OFSTED INSPECTION OF SOUTHWARK CHILDREN'S SERVICES

<https://bambuser.com/v/6769070>

6. FGM UPDATE

Clarissa Cupid, designated nurse safeguarding lead, and multi agency lead for the FGM presented the report. She referred to the ongoing partnership work detailed; the development of the community profile that the scrutiny review recommended and highlighted the success of the work with Rotherhithe School.

Members then raised the following issues:

- When will the training for frontline workers be delivered? The safeguarding lead nurse said that this is being developed with the council and will be rolled out in September.
- When will further schools be worked with? The safeguarding lead nurse said the partnership is looking at another couple of schools to work with. They want to find schools in the areas where FGM work is most needed. There are also 'sharing information' issues to resolve.
- What about the scrutiny review recommendation that follow up work be done with the High Commissions, particularly concerning children at risk of being taken out of the country? The safeguarding lead nurse confirmed that they have been contacted but more needs to be done to progress this.
- Will there be work with girls and young girls to promote bodily integrity and human rights? The safeguarding lead nurse said there has been a very affective leaflet produced by Rotherhithe School that had led to girls and boys raising FGM with parents and saying they did not want this to happen to their sisters. This will be developed.
- Given school governors now need to be aware of FGM a member recommended that school governors receive a training module. The safeguarding lead welcomed this suggestion and remarked this could be integrated into the developing training programme.

VIDEO OF FGM UPDATE

<https://bambuser.com/v/6769052>

7. WORK-PLAN

The committee identified the following matters for the work-plan:

- School funding – update following consultation results
- Schools performance using new assessment criteria
- Ofsted follow up report
- CAMHS / Mental health (follow up on previous committee's years work on this area and looking at the anticipated Joint Mental Health Strategy)
- A review into knife crime (including gangs)

The work-plan and review scope will be devised over the summer by the chair, with support from the scrutiny manager, in consultation with members. A draft will come to the next meeting to be agreed.

VIDEO OF WORK PLAN