

## Education and Business Scrutiny Commission

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Education and Business Scrutiny Commission held on Monday 16 December 2019 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G02A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

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**PRESENT:** Councillor Peter Babudu (Chair)  
Councillor William Hougbo  
Councillor Karl Eastham  
Councillor Renata Hamvas  
Councillor Eleanor Kerslake  
Councillor Eliza Mann  
Lynette Murphy-O'Dwyer  
Martin Brecknell

**OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT:** Councillor Jasmine Ali, Cabinet member for Children, Schools and Adult Social care  
Councillor Stephanie Cryan, Cabinet Member for Jobs, Business and Innovation

**OFFICER SUPPORT:** Nina Dohel, Education Director  
Jenny Brennan, Assistant Director Family Early Help & Youth Justice.  
David Bromfield, Education Adviser  
Genette Laws, Director of Commissioning , Children and Adults Services  
Julie Timbrell, scrutiny Project Manager

### 1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

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

There were none.

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

Councillor William Hougbo declared he is a Parent Governor at Tower Bridge Primary School and Councillor Karl Eastham declared he is a teacher at Globe ARK secondary school.

### **4. MINUTES**

The minutes of 7 October will go to the next meeting.

### **5. REVIEW: SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS - WANDSWORTH ALTERNATIVE PROVISION**

The following Wandsworth alternative provision leads gave a presentation:

- Eileen Shannon, Head Teacher, Victoria Drive PRU
- Carol Self, Nurture Provision lead, Wandsworth Council.

The chair then invited questions and comments:

- A member commented that it was very helpful to hear about the work with parents and families, and then asked if there were any challenges? The presenters said there can be stigma attached to a PRU and its not uncommon to hear initial comments such as 'hell can frieze over before my child attends'. The PRU give parents a choice; which really changes the dynamic. Parents often feel judged. The work with parents focuses on stress busting and being very honest and open about problems. The explicit emphasis is being there for the child – and as such the PRU are prepared to challenge both school and family.
- How do the pupils cope with transition to secondary school? At year 6 they work with Francis Barber PRU. Wandsworth primary PRU have done a tracking exercise and this shows that between years 6 -10 these children have not resurfaced as excluded children later in their secondary education .This does rely on having good ECHP plan in place in many cases as the children and young people remain vulnerable.
- How many children are excluded? Wandsworth have not had any permanent exclusions at primary level, this year or last year. The primary PRU can increase attendance at the PRU to up to 50 %. They also go into home schools, setting up other activities. The provision is very flexible and able to hold children during episodes.
- Members asked about the statement that the PRU tell the families that they will walk away if do not get the green light from families ; however what if the parents are very vulnerable? The PRU lead said the reality is if families do not give permission it will not work. They explained that the provision has a systemic family worker who is very good at engaging families. Many parents have had lots of negative experiences, including often attending a PRU when they were younger.

When they give parents a choice they do not walk away. For families who are working with social workers they will also work to persuade them. They also work with extended family as that can be persuasive. They explained to members that they do work with parents with significant mental health problems, in a collaborative way.

- A member said in their educational experience the news that a child has to attend a PRU is awful for the student and their parents; how does this stigma get overcome? The PRU lead said obviously people often feel rejected. Often children can feel fear and stress - so they act out (and get a reward of missing education). In the sessions they have with us the children have a different experience, and because of that they are able to unlock learning.
- Why do PRU often fail? Wandsworth said that they funded by the high needs funding, that is top sliced. This means that the Wandsworth provision is needs led, rather than placement funding led. There is no incentive to keep the pupils at the PRU and as such often a short term intervention is effective. The model of the children remaining very much part of their home school helps with the socialisation and friendship. The PRU also manages to achieve 96% attendance, which is important, and to secure that the provision has a service to pick them up from home to take them to school, which really helps.
- What are the common underlying issues that lead to children being at risk of exclusion? They explained that these can vary; undiagnosed mental health (ADH etc.) is fairly common and they work well with St George's Hospital and take us seriously. A lot of disruptive behaviour is the result of the impact of domestic violence - trauma stunts development. Other issues are marriage breakup and neglect.

The chair and commission members thanked Eileen Shannon, Head Teacher, Victoria Drive PRU, and Carol Self, Nurture Provision lead, Wandsworth Council for their valuable contribution.

## **6. INTERVIEW: CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND ADULT CARE (RE EDUCATION)**

### **RESOLVED**

Officers and cabinet member will provide:

- Update on work with 16/ 17 year olds persistently missing from school / NEET (Cabinet member offered to attend a future meeting once this is complete)
- Analysis arising from tracking the cohort of 300 children who have used Southwark's Summerhouse provision for primary school children. This will look at outcomes of those children, and if they were later excluded at secondary school etc

- Follow up on forensic work on off-rolling and how this can be tackled more effectively
- A concern raised regarding some Kurdish girls not going to school after puberty

## **7. INTERVIEW: CABINET MEMBER FOR JOBS, BUSINESS AND INNOVATION**

### **RESOLVED**

Officers will provide :

- number of apprenticeships that led to jobs
- performance report on portfolio

## **8. REVIEW: SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS - SCHOOL REPORTS**

The reports were noted and will be discussed at the next meeting when the dioceses will send representatives to present.

## **9. REVIEW: SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS - OFFICER BRIEFING**

Nina Dohel, Education Director, Jenny Brennan, Assistant Director Family Early Help & Youth Justice and David Bromfield, Education Adviser addressed the following questions on the briefing provided.

- What are the reasons for growing home education? Officers said that they need to do some more drilling down. There is anecdotal evidence that this could in part be either to avoid an exclusion or because parents cannot find a suitable school.
- Do you track when children enter home education? Is this happening at transitions? Officers said that they need to do a deep dive. There are some trends. Could be that some families are home educating in the hope of a better school. There is no peek at transition time, but it is growing at key stage 3 and 4. Some children dip in and out of school. The council need to know more as clearly the trend of home-schooling is increasing.
- Could the rise in home schooling be because schools are not meeting children's cultural needs? The new inspections framework is looking more at cultural needs. It is likely that schools are meeting these at least in part, even if not always fully.
- The data shows 59 children missing 20 days, how is this addressed. Officers said they do trace missing children and it is rare that they do not find the child. Reasons include moving house.
- The data suggests that home-schooling is over represented amongst child from minority ethnic backgrounds; are there also more disabled children home-schooled. It is a concern that the parents may not always have adequate

resources, particularly if many come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

- How is the council addressing off -rolling. Officers said that they are now using the same methodology as Ofsted use to conduct analysis. Ofsted have identified two schools where they have concerns in Southwark.

#### **10. REVIEW: PROCUREMENT - CHILDREN AND ADULTS SERVICES**

Genette Laws, Director of Commissioning, Children and Adults Services presented on engagement with hubs, with reference to a report that was tabled. Members asked when this approach would be used and the Director responded in a limited way for particular issues, as resource intensive.

#### **11. REVIEW:PROCUREMENT - SOUTH TYNESIDE COUNCIL**

The report was noted.

#### **12. WORK PROGRAMME**

The workplan was noted.

Meeting ended at 10.00 pm