



CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting of the CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE held on DECEMBER 05 2006 at 7:00PM at the Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

MEMBERS

PRESENT:

Councillor John Friary – Chair
Councillor Nick Vineall – Vice-Chair
Councillor Adele Morris
Councillor Sandra Rhule
Councillor Veronica Ward
Ms Ann Marie Eastwood – parent governor representative
Mrs Josie Spanswick – Roman Catholic diocese representative

OTHERS

PRESENT:

Romi Bowen – strategic director of children's services
Shelley Burke – head of overview and scrutiny
Stuart Edwards – Every Child Matters project manager
Carina Kane – scrutiny project manager
John Quinn – development director, Beatbullying
Terry Reynolds – deputy director achievement, access and inclusion
Rachel Woolf – senior education lawyer

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs Bob Skelly and Jonathan Mitchell and from Mr Alie Kallon. Apologies for lateness were received from Cllr Nick Vineall.

NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS AS URGENT

None.

DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

None.

MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the children's services and education scrutiny sub-committee meeting held on 11 October 2006 be agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

That the written responses of the executive member for children's services and education [item 1, October 11 2006] be published alongside the October minutes on the council's website.

1. BULLYING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- 1.1 The Chair informed the committee that he had visited a primary school to talk to the school council about bullying. More visits were scheduled for committee members to attend. He had found the visit very interesting, and said that most children seemed to understand reasons behind the aggressor (e.g. problems at home), and knew of techniques to respond to bullying (e.g. 'quiet' rooms to go to in order to calm down). He was concerned that without any prompting many of the children had described examples of violence that they had personally witnessed.
- 1.2 Members asked about whether there was guidance for the school visits. The scrutiny project manager said the guidance was sent to members going on the school visits in advance.
- 1.3 The Chair then invited John Quinn, the development director at beatbullying, to speak to the committee. Mr Quinn's presentation first explained the foundation and role of beatbullying. Beatbullying both supported people being bullied, but also worked with people doing the bullying.
- 1.4 In addition, Mr Quinn said that he was also one of the two London regional co-ordinators for the Anti-bullying Alliance and had responsibility for empowering young people to have a voice. With limited funding, the regional co-ordinators assisted local authorities in putting together multi-disciplinary teams to work together on bullying prevention.
- 1.5 Mr Quinn told the committee about beatbullying's bullying prevention model. Initially, beatbullying contacted schools and community groups and asked them to nominate the young people who would benefit the most from being involved. The model had five phases:
- phase 1: interagency partnership. This included defining the bullying problem and creating strategies for example a strategy around how to communicate the anti-bullying message. It also included conflict resolution training and mediation skills and training on how those involved could brand and market their work.
 - phase 2: roll-out to young people across the borough. Mr Quinn gave some examples of schools and youth centres in Southwark that beatbullying had worked with.
 - phase 3: interagency training of professionals. This was generic training for professionals or others involved with delivering services or custodial care.
 - phase 4: sub-regional agency co-operation. This was carried out at Milwall football club.
 - phase 5: mentoring. This was the phase which empowered people, and hopefully resulted in seeing a reformation. As a result of the model, 74% of young people had said that they would now think twice about bullying others.
- 1.6 The role of beatbullying in this process was to facilitate initially, and then step back once the young people were enthused to carry on. Mr Quinn added there was a broad skill base for young people to benefit from, and they worked with professional actors and graphic designers.

- 1.7 Mr Quinn told the committee that the last major project beatbullying had been involved with at Southwark was the 'Agencies Supporting Schools Programme', which was aimed at generating friendship and support. This had involved six primary schools, including Langborne, St Anthonys, Summerhouse Pupil Referral Centre, Goose Green and Dulwich Church of England. Examples of the work could be seen at www.m8z.org.uk/Southwark. Online information included photos and videos that the young people had made, and there were also individual classroom charters. Other schools had requested the teacher notes for the ASSP, which reflected positively on the programme.
- 1.8 Other work that beatbullying had been involved with in Southwark included:
- whole day workshops with the year 7 and 8 pupils at the City of London Academy
 - training three sets of 'peer listeners' at Kingsdale. Beatbullying were also working with Kingsdale in challenging conflict and developing a new mediation centre. There was also an initiative of using sports to encourage young people to be part of a team to foster respect and kindness.
 - working with the early intervention team at Burgess Park on a 'summer transition workshop'. This involved working with 'at risk' primary school children on how they were going to fit into secondary school. The project involved making leaflets and posters, which were then sent ahead to the secondary schools so that the children could see the work they had contributed to on display.
- 1.9 Ongoing work in Southwark included a programme into anti-faith bullying with Camberwell Arts, commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). One secondary and one primary school would be selected to nominate children to be part of this arts programme. In addition, anti-bullying week was aimed at supporting both schools and community groups.
- 1.10 Mr Quinn also briefly spoke about national campaigns. Celebrities, for example the band Girls Aloud, were used to promote anti-bullying messages such as with the Take A Stand campaign. Antbassadors was another national campaign, and Mr Quinn also mentioned that there were still 40 friendship benches available to those schools that told beatbullying about the initiatives they were taking to tackle bullying.
- 1.11 Mr Quinn spoke about beatbullying's work during anti-bullying week. He said that they were trying to get the DfES to ringfence £650,000 towards tackling truancy, attendance and anti-bullying. Research had shown that up to 20,000 young people were truanting from school every day because of bullying. (A copy of the report was available on the beatbullying website). This could also affect children in their own homes, due to mobile technology and social networking. There was a significant movement at the moment to tackle cyberbullying and homophobic bullying.
- 1.12 Mr Quinn directed the committee to two reports on the Office for the Children's Commission website: 'Bullying today', and a review document 'Current complaints procedures'. The latter had been launched in November for a period of consultation.

- 1.13 In concluding his presentation, Mr Quinn briefly commented on Southwark's anti-bullying work. He said that if the work was not embedded, it would be difficult to get buy in and develop effective strategies. He was not sure if Southwark was represented on the anti-bullying alliance network, but suggested this be considered. He stressed that these two points were not unique to Southwark as they were affected by capacity and sustainability. While beatbullying were only funded to support two local authorities, they could support any number of young people to be part of the Young London Anti-bullying Alliance Network. Furthermore, funding streams had increased which meant there was more resources available for carrying out anti-bullying work.
- 1.14 The Chair questioned whether beatbullying had received feedback on initiatives carried out in Southwark. Mr Quinn said that this was linked to the sustainability issue and he would like to embed work far more strategically. He mentioned that he was pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the committee, and the work could be useful for the next Joint Area Review.
- 1.15 A member informed that a Westminster seminar on 'tackling indiscipline' had discussed the importance of the role of the school itself, particularly around teacher training, and queried whether this had been given any consideration. Mr Quinn said that professional training sessions had been offered to Southwark, Lambeth and Lewisham a couple of years ago. Some teachers and youth centre staff had attended. It was not only important to embed the work with professionals, but also with parents (who needed to understand what schools were doing and the relevant legislation).
- 1.16 Officers were invited to put forward their opinions in regard to the issue of strategies and embedding. The deputy director achievement, access and inclusion said that all schools had anti-bullying strategies though these might be part of their behaviour management strategies. The council had done work linked to the behaviour management strategies. Recently, the council had used the DfES homophobic bullying guidance in schools, particularly secondary schools. However, it was a constant struggle as the issues needed to be tackled on an on-going basis.
- 1.17 The Chair said that it was interesting to look at what schools had done and the underlying principles behind the successful initiatives. He was concerned that examples of best practice were not being picked up and suggested that scrutiny may draw the best practice out. Mr Quinn observed that the theatre groups working with schools were very good, as were the examples of the primary schools involved in the ASSP.
- 1.18 The strategic director of children's services said an important issue was around evidence of what has had impact. The council needed to promote effective strategies so headteachers could make an informed decision about what programmes to commission (the school held the budget, not the council). The council had the leadership role around working within the community, and how parents and the community responded to bullying was an important consideration.
- 1.19 The Chair invited the parent teacher representative on the committee to give her view on the issues. She said that she believed the anti-bullying policies were instigated and running smoothly across schools. The schools were independent but the council was there to guide them. Her personal experience with two schools was that a lot of funding was being put towards the issue.

- 1.20 The issue of bullying outside school, particularly during school travel, was raised. One member reported that a headteacher in Southwark had recently commented on his dismay that his students were scared going home on the train. Mr Quinn said that beatbullying had been working with CityHall and Transport for London (TfL) on the issue. The 'Bullywatch London' intervention focused on intervening without being foolish and risking personal safety. He reported that 13,000 children in London experienced bullying every week and half of this (55%) was outside the school gate. 42% was experienced on public transport and this seemed to be particularly high since transport become free for under-16s.
- 1.22 Mr Quinn further commented that if someone was caught bullying whilst in school uniform, the school was likely to step in because it was tarnishing the school's reputation. On the other hand, schools were less likely to become involved if someone in school uniform was being bullied outside school. He suggested one possibility for why bullying was migrating into the streets could be that there was no room for bullying to breathe in schools.
- 1.23 The strategic director of children's services suggested the committee talk to the head of community safety about the issue of bullying outside school. She also suggested it could be useful to talk to the headteacher at the Academy at Peckham about how they take responsibility for their students both in the playground and then outside the school.
- 1.24 The deputy director achievement, access and inclusion commented that it was likely that there would be a continuum of school responses to bullying outside the school gate. It was important to be realistic and consider what could be reasonably expected of schools – it was a bigger problem than the schools could tackle on their own.
- 1.25 A member queried how well schools in Southwark could work together on tackling such issues, given their competitive nature. The strategic director of children's services thought that Southwark schools had a decent relationship; more so than some of the neighbouring boroughs. Mr Quinn suggested that if it was an issue, one way around it was to suggest that schools form a Youth Committee to look at safety from the young person's perspective and to take ownership of the issues directly.
- 1.26 The Chair thanked Mr Quinn and officers for their time and input.

RESOLVED: To invite both the head of community safety, and the headteacher at the Academy at Peckham to the January 2007 meeting to talk about initiatives to tackle bullying outside the school gate.

2 CHILDHOOD OBESITY [pages 16 - 20]

- 2.1 The strategic director of children's services explained that this item had been discussed by Young Southwark earlier that day. The discussion raised some complex issues, including the quality of the comparative data, and it was felt that further discussion was needed before the report would be ready for scrutiny consideration.

RESOLVED: That the report on childhood obesity be deferred until 2007.

3 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT 2006 AND PREPARATION FOR JOINT AREA REVIEW [pages 1 - 12]

- 3.1 The Every Child Matters project manager presented the outcomes of the annual performance assessment (APA) to the sub-committee. The report explained the process for the APA and highlighted the strengths and improvements needed for each of the five Every Child Matters outcomes.
- 3.2 The council had been awarded grade '3', i.e. good, in each of the areas of judgement. Local inspectors had originally rated the council as '4', i.e. outstanding, in two judgement areas (the council's overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people and the contribution of the council's social care services in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people). However, after the national moderation these became grade '3'.
- 3.3 Members commented on the high cost of the youth service in comparison to the level of take up by young people. Officers said the findings had been based on two sets of crude figures and they were looking at what underpinned the figures. Considerations included what the youth offer ought to be, what the children and young people want, and whether the best value for money was being achieved. The director of children's services thought the data had not counted all youth activity funded by the council, adding that the council spent considerable sums of money in this area.
- 3.4 The Chair noted that the sub-committee would be looking at providing more for young people to do in 2007/08. The director of children's services said the scrutiny exercise would be useful for the joint area review (JAR) as well. She added that the youth service and the youth offending team had not been subject to inspection in the recent past, but would be inspected under JAR. Youth offer work was due to go to executive in the spring and this had some interesting findings e.g. about what youth want.
- 3.5 Members agreed that youth provision was a high priority. Further comments included that leisure centres should be included as part of any considerations, the duplication of work within the voluntary sector, and how the Camberwell community council's youth engagement exercise a couple of years ago was a good example of effective and interesting civil engagement with youth.
- 3.6 A member asked about initiatives for improving achievement levels for black-Caribbean boys. Officers said there were three targeted projects: one for primary school – the black children achievement project, which focused on writing; a similar achievement project for secondary school; and study plus – which was targeted at GCSE students to reduce the gap between five good GCSEs and five GCSEs with English and maths. These projects started in the current academic year so would be subject to development and evaluation.
- 3.7 Members noted an article in the news about achievement levels. Officers informed that the article related to an Ofsted report on the work of London Challenge (which included Southwark). The report said that the educational achievement gaps for black-Caribbean children were being narrowed, but the achievement of poor white boys was declining. Poverty was an important factor in educational disparity.

3.8 Officers were also questioned about whether the council was a big provider for student placements, and if not, whether the council should set an example. The sub-committee were told that work experience was offered to all year 10 students in Southwark via the Education Business Alliance. The council was also developing a vocation education offer for fourteen to nineteen year olds which would include work-based learning and work certificates. In addition, the council was in the gateway process for piloting vocation-based 'new diplomas' for fourteen to sixteen year olds in various industries including health and social care and hospitality.

3.9 The officers were thanked for their time.

RESOLVED: That the annual performance assessment results were impressive and an excellent reflection on the director and senior managers.

4 WORK PROGRAMME [pages 13 -15]

4.1 Members discussed the work programme for 2006/07.

4.2 The Chair told the committee that the request for the school governor item had come from the overview and scrutiny committee who had been concerned about the process for appointments. Similar issues had been raised at the Camberwell community council meeting the previous night, and in his opinion it would be a relatively short, but useful, scrutiny.

4.3 A member suggested that the proposed changes to the Statement of Educational Needs (SEN) funding formula be added to the work programme. She reported receiving enquiries from concerned residents about the proposals, and was also concerned about the speed the review was moving at.

4.4 Officers were asked about the timetabling for the SEN review. They informed that the consultation had closed and the next steps were for it to go to the Schools Forum and then to the executive member for individual decision-making. Any changes to the formula would take effect in the financial year funding, and schools needed as much notice as possible.

4.5 The head of overview and scrutiny thought that there was little opportunity for pre-scrutiny of the SEN review at this stage, and reminded the committee that there was the option of call-in of the executive member decision.

4.6 Members also asked questions around the timing of recommendations and producing the report for the bullying review. More evidence would be gathered at the January 2007 meeting and then preliminary recommendations would be formed. The scrutiny project manager offered to provide a draft report for the sub-committee's March 2007 meeting.

RESOLVED:

1. That the children's services and education scrutiny sub-committee would keep a watch on the progress of the SEN review and receive a brief update at the next meeting.
2. That the scrutiny project manager would provide a draft report on the scrutiny into the bullying of children and young people for the March 2007 meeting.

The meeting closed at 8:55pm.

CHAIR:

DATE: