



CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting of the CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE held on January 26th 2009 at 7:00PM at the Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillor Barrie Hargrove - Chair
Councillor Nick Vineall – Vice Chair
Councillor Adedokun Lasaki
Councillor Veronica Ward
Councillor Jonathan Mitchell
Councillor Sandra Rhule
Councillor Bob Skelly
Rev. Nicholas Elder Church of England Diocese Representative
Jane Hole Parent Governor Representative
Colin Elliot Parent Governor Representative

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT

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Rory Patterson – Assistant director of specialist children's services and safeguarding.
Romi Bowen – Director of Children's Services
Jane Bailey – Assistant Director of Children's Services
Sally Masson – Scrutiny Project Manager

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS AS URGENT

None.

DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

Item 5: Councillor Skelly and Jane Hole declared a non-prejudicial interest. Both are governors in Southwark schools.

1. **PRESENTATION ON INTEGRATED YOUTH PROVISION**

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and decided to take the presentation on integrated youth provision first. **(See appendix 1)**

- 1.2 Jane Bailey – assistant director of children’s services said that there were very positive moves to bring more targeted youth work together with agencies such as connexions into a multi agency working arrangement.
- 1.3 Children’s services are liaising with teams in schools to ensure joined up working, ensuring that young people are being effectively needs assessed and offering the appropriate support.
- 1.4 There is work looking at commissioning provision within the youth offer and strengthening the relationships with the third sector.
- 1.5 Slide 3 of the presentation, detailed the proposed integrated structure. There are 3 service arms with cross-service area teams with links to the localities. Jane Bailey said that each locality mirrors 2 community councils and each area has on going consultation as to whether this model is the best model to use.
- 1.6 The structure comprises of 3 strands of service. Youth Service and Commissioning has a managers and youth workers; Information, Advice and Guidance has a manager, connexions PAs and PAYP key workers and the Targeted Youth Support stream has a manager and TYS workers. The Youth Service and Connexions become one.
- 1.7 Slide 4 detailed some of the key features including ‘Cross-service area teams who provide greater co-ordination and ensure young people have access to all services according to need. Posts delivering similar work are grouped together to prevent duplication. Youth service and commissioning will deliver a range of youth programmes accessible by all young people and will take the lead in youth participation, engagement and accreditation.’
- 1.8 Slide 5 showed that information, advice and guidance (IAG) will be composed mostly of Connexions personal advisors (PAs) joined by PAYP funded staff. Targeted Youth Support (TYS) will consist principally of the work undertaken by the Youth Inclusion Programme (YIP) and young people referred from the Youth Inclusion Support Panels (YISP). To provide links between IYSS and existing localities TYS managers will attend regular casework meetings with locality colleagues’.
- 1.9 Slide 6 presented the four tiers of service in which the three service arms will cater for young people. Tier 1= Universal Service, Tier 2 = Preventative Services, Tier 3 = Statutory Services and Tier 4 = Acute Services.
- 1.10 Slide 7 Illustrated the JAR Enhanced Youth Inspection which shows areas of strength to continue to build on. For example: ‘Young people gain a good range of knowledge and skills through volunteering: Good facilities support young people’s engagement in sports, physical activity, arts and the media. Provision targeted at young people with disabilities is good. Equality and diversity are promoted well. Strategic managers are well informed about the progress and quality of the service and provide good support. Fast Forward on Buller Close came in for particular praise

- 1.11 Slide 8 covered the areas for improvement which included: The creation of new posts to develop youth engagement with the Youth Council's area forums and clear links with Schools Councils. There is also a planned re-launch of the Youth Council. Service and area plans must be discussed with young people before being signed off. Children's services to explore all possible sources of external funding. Monitoring and evaluation of voluntary organisations is included in the job description of grants officer.
- 1.12 Slide 9 set out what was happening with the Connexions service. 'The service will become part of the information, advice and guidance service with staff being managed within IAG but will also be allocated to one of four cross-service area teams. A dedicated IAG operational manager will report direct to Head of Service. The distribution of Personal Advisors (PAs) will be reviewed so that all schools have access to a PA if they want one. Main focus of the work will continue to be enabling all vulnerable young people to access education, employment or training. The Prospects contract will be reviewed to ensure value for money and greater co-ordination between internal and external providers will be developed.
- 1.13 Members felt that it was important to ensure that there was adequate measuring of resources showing how much projects were costing. Southwark is well funded and an exercise in the reallocation of spending could be beneficial.
- 1.14 It was also important to ensure that part time staff and volunteers were adequately monitored and accountable. There is a need to have more providers working closely with secondary schools, integrating the youth provision within schools for the future.
- 1.15 The aim of the Connexions service is to address the amount of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs). There is ongoing consultation with staff as to how effective the service is. It is thought to be valuable support for children, providing a listening ear with good quality advice to young people who may not be receiving adequate support otherwise.
- 1.16 There was some concern over the level of information sharing across the youth service with the police and community safety (see YOT inspection report). The director of children's services said that there was good information sharing and with the current reorganisation of the services this work should be strengthened.
- 1.17 Members commented that the reorganisation was ambitious but timely. That up to now the Connexions service had been seen as inadequate and it was hoped that improvements could now be made. The director of children's services agreed that in six months to a year would be a good time to review how things were going.
- 1.18 The Chair observed that NEETS were down from 10% to 8% but Southwark still had a higher proportion than its neighbouring boroughs. Officers said that many young people come into the borough to train and then become NEET which means that they are then counted in the Southwark figures. It was pointed out that some young people are not counted by anyone and are classed as 'not knowns,' existing outside the system altogether. Members commended the aspiration underlying the large scale reorganisation to move to the next level, i.e. to become an Excellent performing Children's Service.

2 JOINT AREA REVIEW

- 2.1 The director of children's services said that the JAR had looked at how each area of service was performing and the nature of the relationships with other agencies such as the police and health. The emphasis was on the way the system worked in relation to vulnerable children in families with abuse, learning difficulties and other special needs.
- 2.2 All areas of services were found to be good. The review involved interviewing staff, children's services and senior officers. The JAR is interlinked with the Comprehensive Assessment and it was disappointing that the positive results contained in the JAR were delayed due to the late publication of the CPA work.
- 2.3 There was good partnership working, a good safeguarding service along with consistency across the service as a whole. However officers reassured the sub-committee that they would keep checking and auditing performance through the action plan to ensure that improvements were made to weak areas.
- 2.4 Members were concerned that there were problems with long term accommodation for people in care and that there had been a breakdown in some placements. The assistant director of specialist services and safeguarding said that often the move out of placements are planned moves. These can affect indicators when young people move towards independence at around 18 years of age. However, he acknowledged that there was a question mark over whether Southwark find the right placements for young people but children's services were doing their best to ensure that placements were appropriate.
- 2.5 There are efforts to improve performance of the early years services in regard to attainment and youth crime. Officers said that it was helpful that the annual performance assessment had looked at the quality of schools and that head teachers were working with the council again.
- 2.6 With regard to equality and diversity, the report said that Southwark was culturally sensitive and were working hard to address the differing cultural needs. However, there were still challenges working in partnership in relation to 'silent communities' and hard to reach groups.
- 2.7 Members said that it was all very good news. There seemed to be strong leadership and effective partnership working with head teachers. It was very heartening that Southwark has made such terrific progress.
- 2.8 In light of recent events in Haringey, the director of children's services said that it was children's services job to ensure that children are not at risk and they were working hard to identify the risks to children in difficult families. Southwark are confident but not complacent in their risk assessment systems and believe it is important not to take children into care unnecessarily.

3 **SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE**

- 3.1 The major projects board decided at the end of October that the contract should go to 'Transformed Schools.' They matched all of the criteria and all involved agreed that it was the right partner for this work.

- 3.2 The project will be undertaken financially by the BSF programme and Walworth construction is on track, working with Balfour Beatty on the more detailed aspects of planning such as classroom design.
- 3.3 The key risks include the funding position for PFI schools with the NHS not being able to raise capital.
- 3.4 SMBC are still lending. In comparison to other work this is a small project in terms of capital and the banks are still looking committed to help deliver the programme.
- 3.5 There have been delays in the management planning and in the present economic climate along with complex stakeholder consultation the project has been challenging.
- 3.6 Members wanted to know if opposition to the project had now melted away. It was acknowledged that it had been necessary to deal with asbestos on one of the sites but that this was being dealt with effectively.
- 3.7 There will be a further update in May.

4 CONNEXIONS/LEARNING SKILLS COUNCIL REVIEW

- 4.1 Members said that now that the JAR had been published, the connexions service could be looked at in context. However, Members wanted to be informed about what the Learning Skills Council do. The service seems to be spread very thinly and Members wondered if the Action Plan had addressed this.
- 4.2 The assistant director of specialist services and safeguarding children said that there was an issue with a lack of clarity as to where this service sits with the Youth Offending Team. However with the adoption of the new model of integrated service, this should redress the focus appropriately. The statistics for NEETs would be crucial when further developments are made under the new structure.
- 4.3 Members agreed that this topic is to be revisited in the new municipal year when things have had time to settle a little. However Members requested a full briefing on what the Learning Skills Council does and what the implications might be under the new structure.
- 4.4 The assistant director of specialist services and safeguarding informed the committee that children's services were reviewing the referral assessment process; looking at staff referral rates with a yearly report to bring to scrutiny. This report will cover data along with significant details as to how the service has been performing. The first report will be expected at the March meeting 2009.

5 SOUTHWARK SAFER SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP

- 5.1 Cllr Skelly and Jane Hole – (school governors) declared a non-prejudicial interest in this item.
- 5.2 Members of the committee discussed the under resourcing of PCs in some schools. Both staff and pupils welcomed the PCs and wardens into their schools, although resources for pre-school were not enough.

- 5.3 The sub-committee agreed that evidence need to be taken from young people themselves to inform the review. The assistant director of specialist services and safeguarding made a commitment to ensure that the youth council were aware of the review and encouraged to come forward and speak to the sub-committee.
- 5.4 It was decided that Members would submit questions to the scrutiny project manager by Wednesday the 4th February to be passed onto the youth council in advance of the March meeting.
- 5.5 Members requested the drafting of the SSSP report in advance of the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was decided that Members would submit questions to the scrutiny project manager by Wednesday the 4th to be passed onto the youth council in advance.

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6 **OTHER BUSINESS**

- 6.1 Members expressed concern that they had not been able to view pupil attainment data. They asked that they should be able to view the data without officers being concerned that Members were seeking to embarrass or cause problems.
- 6.2 Members wanted to know if there was a reliable way they could get early figures so that there could be a proper analysis and examination made.
- 6.3 Members sought clarification as to when the sub-committee would be joined by a roman catholic representative. The Chair also put forward the name of a head teacher who wished to propose a colleague to join the sub-committee in the role of head teacher representative.

7 **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

- 7.1 Minutes of the meeting on the 24th November 2008 to be agreed at the next meeting in March when amendments have been made to the pupil attainment data.

The meeting closed at 10pm.

CHAIR:

DATE: