

## **EDUCATION, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND LEISURE SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of the Education, Children's Services and Leisure Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on Tuesday 9 July 2013 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G01B - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

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**PRESENT:** Councillor David Hubber (Chair)  
Councillor The Right Revd Emmanuel Oyewole (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Chris Brown  
Councillor Lisa Rajan  
Councillor Rosie Shimell  
Councillor Althea Smith  
Councillor Cleo Soanes

**OTHER MEMBERS  
PRESENT:**

**OFFICER  
SUPPORT:** Kerry Crichlow, Director Strategy & Commissioning  
Rory Patterson, Director, Children's Social Care  
Ann Flynn, Safeguarding Children Board Development Manager  
Adrian Whittle, Head of Culture, Libraries, Learning and Leisure  
Coral Flood, Arts Manager  
Colin Gale, Free Healthy School Meals project lead  
Julie Timbrell, Scrutiny Project Manager

### **1. APOLOGIES**

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from parent governor representatives Colin Elliott and Leticia Ojeda. Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Soanes and Councillor The Right Reverend Oyewole.

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

2.1 There were none.

**3. MINUTES**

4.1 The minutes of last administrative year's Education, Children's Services & Leisure Scrutiny Sub-Committee, held on 23 April 2013, were circulated , to note.

**RESOLVED**

Councillor Brown will be added to the list of attendees at the meeting.

**4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS**

3.1 There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

**5. UPDATE ON SOUTHWARK SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD (SSCB) ANNUAL REPORT**

5.1 The chair explained that the Independent Safeguarding chair had been invited to come to the committee meeting for the annual interview , but a domestic matter prevented his attendance, however he will attend the September meeting. The chair explained that it had been anticipated that the meeting would consider the draft Annual Safeguarding Board Report (ASBR), but this will not now be ready until the autumn. The chair said unfortunately the background reasons for the delay had not been discussed in detail with scrutiny members; however a positive meeting with senior officers had been very helpful in explaining the reasons.

5.2 Rory Patterson, Director, Children's Social Care and Ann Flynn, Safeguarding Children Board Development Manager, explained that the report was delayed because significant national policy and performance changes had taken place in

recent months that include overhauling of the Working Together Guidance, which is the key governance document of the board's work, and the Ofsted Framework for Safeguarding and Looked After Children's Services, published in June, which significantly raises the bar for the board and includes an inspection judgement on its effectiveness. There have also been changes to the national data collection timetables with final figures available at the end of July rather than the previous spring timeframe. A recent board discussion concluded that the most effective use of the ASBR would be to undertake a self assessment using the board's work over the past year against the revised governance frameworks. The work on the ASBR will be taken forward over the summer, with first draft going to the November Executive Safeguarding Board.

- 5.3 The Director of Children's Social Care said that the board is now undertaking a thorough self evaluation which will inform the plan. He reported that the recent inspection found that overall Southwark's safeguarding is good and with some outstanding work. There are some challenges, for example children's progress on the Child Protection Plan and how long they remain on there. He explained there is a question about how effective the interventions are and there is an investment in lots of training. He said that the service is transparent and do not get defensive. The service is going through a major period of change following the Monroe report with refresher training and changing structures. He reported that the service is focused on the 'troubled families' agenda, tackling inter - generational worklessness, sexual exploitation, with a particularly big focus on childhood neglect.
- 5.4 The chair mentioned the concerns raised over the timetable and process of bring regular reports to the scrutiny committee and remarked that over the last few years there has been year on year slippage. The Director responded that the board are required to produce the report 'in year', but best practice is in the first quarter and he said that he thought the service should be producing the report in this period.
- 5.5 A member asked if lessons have been learned from Rochdale and Oxford child abuse investigations and the Director responded that the services do take learning from major reports and how agencies can work together. The service looks to pick up the learning and build this into its work programme.

- 5.6 The Director was then asked about the after affects on children of traumatic incidents and how the service provides after-support. The Director said that every child and family is offered support. Some will have more supportive families but others will need our support as children, and this applies particularly to children in care where Southwark is the corporate parent, and this is ongoing.
- 5.7 A member asked about the recommendation made by the last committee that the board do more to address the risk of harm from witchcraft and spirit possession in their child protection and safeguarding work, and that there is a particular need for engagement work with faith group communities and leaders. The Safeguarding Manager explained that this recommendation has been reviewed and the service is linking up with faith communities. She explained that the service is conducting a phone survey followed by a meeting, and that faith community members have been asked about witchcraft, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and also styles of discipline. A member suggested that a phone survey on these questions could result in the phone being put down and recommended building up relationships through face to face conversations. The officer explained that that the service is engaging people both via a forum and by telephone. Another member emphasised the importance of visiting churches and building up trust.
- 5.8 A member asked the Director to explain what he meant by children coming 'off a Child Protection Plan' and he explained that this meant children are being taken away from their families, which is progress, he said, because before often children would come off plans and then go back on again. He said that more children are being adopted, and numbers have increased from 20 to now 28 per year and he is expecting this to go up further through increased investment. He added there has been system change in the speed of court processes. He added that the service has written out to groups, such as faith groups, encouraging potential adopters to come forward and there has been a much more positive response. The Director said that Southwark has the highest rate of care proceedings in the country, and alongside adoptions there are guardianships, resident orders and permanent fostering.
- 5.9 A member asked if Children's Services worked with fostering agencies and he said that yes, they work with volunteer

fostering agencies locally and nationally.

- 5.10 The Director was asked how the service supports children in terms of educational support, particularly if there is a change in their home arrangement, and he explained that they have a virtual head teacher who advocates on their behalf.

## **RESOLVED**

The new Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Children Board will be invited to attend the next committee meeting

## **6. CULTURAL STRATEGY**

- 6.1 Adrian Whittle, Head of Culture, Libraries, Learning and Leisure and Coral Flood, Arts Manager presented the report circulated with the agenda. There were no questions.

## **7. REVIEW : FREE HEALTHY SCHOOL MEALS**

- 7.1 Colin Gale, Free Healthy School Meal Lead presented the report and the chair invited questions.
- 7.2 A member asked how many parents were not claiming free school meals, given this could impact on both council income and schools receiving public premium Kerry Crichlow reported that there has been a government initiative to simplify the process and there is now yes now one application with no need for this to be renewed annually, which this will reduce the paperwork. Colin Gales added that he is working with schools to increase uptake and that nationally around 10% are not claiming .The chair requested more information on how Southwark is working with schools to maximise take-up.
- 7.3 A member referred to a report focused on plugging the gap between rich and poor pupils and the recent announcement by OFSTED that schools will now be judged on how they narrow the gap.

## **RESOLVED**

Officers will provide information on the application process for Free Healthy School Meals

Data will be requested from schools on:

- registration rates for free school meals & the Pupil Premium
- details on how the Pupil Premium has been spent

**8. ROTHERHITHE SCHOOL AND SOUTHWARK FREE SCHOOLS - REGULAR REPORT**

8.1 The report was noted.

**9. REVIEW : BULLYING - SCHOOL AND COUNCIL POLICY IN SUPPORTING VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND REDUCING ABUSIVE AND POOR PEER RELATIONS**

10.1 The chair indicated that he would like to draw this review to a close and finalise the report and asked member to consider recommendations. A member remarked that Cybersmile's work with schools could be beneficial; however another member commented that their engagement work with parents could have been improved by working more closely with schools. The chair suggested that cautionary notes are added.

**RESOLVED**

A summary of the meetings deliberations and review reports will be circulated to the committee, with an invite to suggest recommendations.

**10. REVIEW : THE COUNCIL'S ROLE WITH MAINTAINED, ACADEMY AND FREE SCHOOLS**

10.1 The chair reported that he would like to invite academies to attend and give evidence on their exclusion policies. The committee agrees and further suggested looking at admissions policies and if they intended to deviate from the teachers' pay scale. Members then discussed which academies to invite and suggested Bacon's College, Harris Academy , Kingsdale School, City of London Academy, The Charter School, Globe Academy (ARK) and Walworth

Academy (ARK) and agreed that it would be better to invite the chief executive of the Academy chain, particularly when more than one school operates in Southwark .

## **11. WORK-PLAN**

### **RESOLVED**

- Complete the scrutiny report on bullying, for submission to OSC and Cabinet
- Interview the new Independent Chair and receive the final draft report from the Safeguarding Children Board
- Review the universal free school meals programme after the end of the current school year
- Conduct the annual interview of the Cabinet Members for Children's Services and Culture, Leisure and Sport
- Scrutinise the operation of the pupil premium in Southwark schools
- Monitor the provision of primary and secondary school places in the borough
- Review the council's role with maintained, academy and free schools
- Scrutinise exclusion rates in secondary schools
- Seek to obtain more comprehensive information from the secondary schools in the Borough and invite representatives from the Academy providers to meet the sub-committee

## **12. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PLAN**

- 12.1 Kerry Crichlow, Director Strategy & Commissioning, presented the draft Children and Young People Plan (CYPP). She explained the proposed CYPP builds on previous plans. The service once more collected a1000 journeys to inform the plan's development, and there were uncomfortable messages heard. The Director emphasised that the time you can make the most difference continues up to adolescence.

She reported that the plan has been subject to extensive consultation and engagement. A short film was shown.

- 12.2 She said that the CYPP is not an action plan; rather it is a transformational plan to inform operational plans and holds the system and people to account. The plan is a framework which concentrates on values and principles. She explained that the CYPP is a local choice now rather than a statutory duty - but a plan can motivate and inspire staff. She referred to her area of responsibilities referred to the plan's family focus, which aims to intervene with families at timely stage to support parents. She said that we know that transition times are often times of crisis and this is when parents might experience difficult behaviours so the service delivers targeted interventions, such as parent groups, at these times. A member commented that when he first received the plan he did think it was quite slim, however now he understands the intention better but he still wondered where the operational detail would be found.
- 12.3 A member asked how families might hold the system and decision makers to account using this plan. Kerry Crichlow commented that this is a difficult question to answer but the plan can be scrutinised for child outcomes on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (which measures health & wellbeing outcomes like obesity) and time spent on Child Protection Plans. She said that the plan has reduced the outcomes to be measured, but have taken a basket of indicators, for example child neglect.
- 12.4 The member asked if there will be a follow on report on indicators. Kerry Crichlow said that there will be a plan and a scorecard which will be reported with a smaller number of the pithiest indicators as we want to hone down on key issues. She added that the last paragraph said that the CYPP consultation is ongoing, and she assured the member that she will take away the question on how families will know the plan working.
- 12.5 Rory Patterson said that there is a more transparent system in terms of data for adoption but it is difficult until this is published to benchmark the service. He assured members that the plan is in many ways more transparent with no less data. Kerry Crichlow commented that in developing plan it became clear that health visitors only see about half of children; however the resources are targeted at the most vulnerable which is reassuring, but this is an area we want to



focus on, by increasing visits.

- 12.6 .A member commented it would be interesting to understand how families would hold the service to account - for example only a small proportion of children with a Special Education Need (SEN) have a statement. Families often say that they have to conduct a battle to get a statement as this gets them access to services. Kerry Crichlow acknowledged that it is an adversarial system and she said that there are moves to make it fairer and more family centred. The last Children's Trust looked at a pathfinder in Brighton which started to have more honest conversations with parents. For example, there is excellent school provision in Southwark - so that is not a battle.
- 12.7 Kerry Crichlow was asked who the plan would report to and she responded that said this is a whole system plan and partners include the Health and Wellbeing Board who see this as part of their delivery plan. The plan will also influence Economic Development and the Clinical Commissioning Board. She added that by partnering the plan gains some activity and commitment.
- 12.8 The member commented that she understands the plan is going to Council Assembly and this hopefully will be an opportunity for the committee's comments to be considered. The chair reported that he and the chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had a constructive discussion with the Strategic Director and pointed out that it would have been better to receive an opportunity to input earlier, particularly given some of the discussions on the CYPP in the committee meetings have been very useful and included young people.
- 12.9 A member commented that the importance of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is not made explicit. Kerry Crichlow commented that this single assessment process for whole system is now embedded and agreed that perhaps the plan needs to make that more explicit . The member commented that in her experience it is more effective to get action if a parent initiates it and she hoped that parents with an SEN Child would have an opportunity to receive support via CAF. Kerry Crichlow thanked the committee for the dialogue and promised to report back on the substantive issues raised.

## **RESOLVED**

Officers will return at a later stage with responses to the following points:

- Indicators that would enable members and families to measure and assess the impact and success of the plan.
- Clarity on the relationship to other parts the system and their delivery plans e.g. Health & Well-being Board and Children's Trust.
- A selection of the 1000 journeys recorded.
- An explanation of how the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) will fit into this plan.