

Education, Children's Services and Leisure Scrutiny Sub-Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Education, Children's Services and Leisure Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on Monday 24 February 2014 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G02A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor David Hubber (Chair)
Councillor Chris Brown
Councillor Cleo Soanes
Lynette Murphy-O'Dwyer
Councillor Chopra

OTHER MEMBERS

PRESENT:

OFFICER AND PARTNER SUPPORT: Lauren Kocher, The Challenge Network, Programme Manager
Steven McGoldrick, The Challenge Network, Schools Relations Manager for Southwark, Lambeth and Lewisham
Ron St Louis, Early Help Team Leader Camberwell and Dulwich Locality
Darren Coghlan, Head of Secondary and Further Education
Employment and Inclusion
Liz Britton, Manager, Priority Learners
Kerry Crichlow, Director Strategy & Commissioning
Davina Bailey, Southwark Youth Council involvement officer
Julie Timbrell, Scrutiny project manager

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rajan, Right Reverend Oyewole and Shimell. Councillor Chopra attended as a substitute.

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

2.1 There were none.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

3.1 There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

4. MINUTES

4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2013 were agreed as an accurate record.

5. THE NATIONAL CITIZEN SERVICE WITH THE CHALLENGE - YOUTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHWARK

5.1 The chair invited Lauren Kocher, Programme Manager and Steven McGoldrick, Schools Relations Manager for Southwark, Lambeth and Lewisham to explain the work they do with the young people.

5.2 The Challenge Managers explained that the programme consists of 5 days of outside activities, such as climbing and canoeing, and is held in a residential location. The second 5 days is also spent away from home and consists of trying out different skills such as photography and media. The young people work with a local partner who can benefit from their input. The next stage is to develop a proposal for a Dragoon's Den and a social media campaign.

5.3 The initiative started in 2009 in Southwark with 200 young people and now 12,500 young people have taken part in a National Citizen Service programme powered by the Challenge Network. The scheme works with a range of local partners from care homes, to local charities like Blackfriars and Surry Docks, as well as larger corporations including the Police, the council and large firms like IBM.

5.4 The managers explained that they are always looking for partners (charities and professional organizations) and for councilors to volunteer as dragons. They added that they had managed to outreach to lots of mainstream schools, however they had been less successful with PRU and special needs schools in Southwark, and they would appreciate ideas, help and assistance in reaching young people in these educational establishments. A member asked how the council could help with this and the managers said that they had visited 'Street Vibe' but they had found it harder to make contact with other centers and they would appreciate help with improving links and communication. Members suggested using the Southwark Website and contacting Southwark communication department to assist with this.

5.5 Members asked how the Challenge Network engaged with schools and the managers explained that they present at assemblies, which is most effective. They also go back for lunchtimes and parent evenings. The initiative has an online presence which they use for outreach, but they have not found this as effective as face to face contact.

5.6 The Challenge Network was then asked if they build links with local businesses

that could lead to employment for young people. The managers explained that they have an initiative called 'Head start', which involves 16 hours volunteer work at a business with a guarantee of an interview. This is a brand new programme which they are piloting in Kentish Town.

- 5.7 A member asked how the programme is evaluated and the managers said that a survey is done looking at feelings and attitudes at the beginning and end of the programme and this always shows an improvement, and there is a youth council who look at how to improve the programme. Members asked if the programme uses schools to provide feedback for improvements, but the managers said they did not, and that schools are predominantly used as a platform to outreach and engage with young people. They added that schools are very over stretched and the Challenge Network does not want to add to their workload.
- 5.8 The managers were asked about young people who struggle, and find it difficult to complete the residential or the whole programme. They responded that there is a high graduation rate of 88 % . A member asked if the programme follows up with young people who don't complete. The managers said that this is often hard but they do follow up contact, and young people can also complete the programme in different ways.
- 5.9 Members referred to the Youth Council and asked if the Challenge Network had links and if their work was featured on respective websites and facebook pages. The Youth Council members and Challenge Network managers said they did not have formal links; however two Youth Council members said that they had done the programme and praised the content, remarking that the team building exercises had been very good and enabled the team to bond quickly. The young people remarked on how the programme had helped them to understand better how to talk with their peers, deal with anger and be a better leader – both participants reported it had been a positive experience.
- 5.10 Members thanked the Challenge Network for their presentation and encouraged the education officers present, youth council members and Challenge Network managers to exchange contact details to work together to support the programme.

6. SOUTHWARK YOUTH COUNCIL

- 6.1 The chair introduced the item by explaining that the purpose is to conduct an evaluation of the Youth Council's work with the committee. The aim is to identify what aspects have worked well and where there are areas for improvement, so that the new incoming Youth Council can build on this. He then invited the Youth Council members to say a few words.
- 6.2 One of the young people commented that the best thing has been the regular contact, which has been really positive. He then went on to remark that better feedback on how the contribution of the Youth Council has made a difference could be an improvement. The chair commented that the bullying scrutiny review report

that the Youth Council provided information for will shortly be responded to by cabinet and the committee will feedback to the Youth Council on this. The chair then asked Davina Bailey what might work better and the youth officer suggested that feedback be a regular part of the Youth Council attendance.

- 6.3 A member commented that she had invited the Youth Council to do a presentation at her community council. She said she had seen the young people's confidence grow and noted how articulate they had become during the course of their term of office. She praised their contribution to debates at the committee and said she hoped their participation in scrutiny had helped the young people's development.
- 6.4 Members then asked the Youth Council when their term ended and the young people explained that this ended next week. The chair said that the new administrative committee would meet in May or June and he hoped the new Youth Council would continue to contribute. The members all agreed that their contribution had been very valuable. The Youth Officer responded that it would take a while for the new Youth Council to be inducted, but it was the intention to continue to engage with the scrutiny committee. The young people thanked the committee for the opportunity to work together.

7. EXCLUSIONS AND MANAGED MOVES - SECONDARY SCHOOLS

- 7.1 The chair invited Ron St Louis, Early Help Team Leader Camberwell and Dulwich Locality ; Darren Coghlan, Head of Secondary and Further Education Employment and Inclusion and Liz Britton, Manager, Priority Learners to introduce the report.
- 7.2 Darren Coghlan explained that the report now has contains more accurate real time information provided by schools directly, as well as additional information on the size of the school roll and exclusions expressed as a percentage . He added that the report indicated that 19 children were at risk of permanent exclusion, however as a result of the local authorities work with schools this has now been reduced to 6.
- 7.3 A member remarked that Kingsdale have zero exclusions and asked if this was accurate. Officers said these figures are correct and the school has a very effective strategy including an off site unit on an estate - technically the children are still on roll, but this allows children to cool off.
- 7.4 Members asked how schools work with the local authority on exclusions and Ron St Louis explained that officers are notified by the school and take action to look at possible interventions, which could include a managed move. For example a Harris Academy suggested six exclusions but four of these became managed moves. Another child was in care and the school was encouraged to provide intensive support, and ultimately she moved to a school closer to her foster carer. Another child went to a PRU on a dual registration, which the school paid for, where the child benefited from the additional support. Darren Coghlan emphasized that the local authority worked well with academy chains and Liz Britton agreed that there was good reciprocity.

- 7.5 A member asked if sometimes managed moves were done between schools and officers confirmed that this did happen, however the authority was always informed.
- 7.6 Officers were asked if children can have more than one managed move. Ron St Louis explained that usually children go to a school on a temporary trail basis and either it works or it dose not, however occasionally pupils return to one school because they have made sufficient progress while at another on trail.
- 7.7 Officers were asked how a child would be provided with an education once excluded. Ron St Louis explained that they would be provided with work by the school for the first 5 days and after that the pupil would go to a SILS provision provided by the local authority until a more permanent arrangement had been put in place. A member asked if there are ever children that the authority can not place. The officer responded that this is not usual but if a child is post Christmas year 11 it might be better to stay at the SILS. He emphasized that the local authority have an effective "in year fair access process" and the local authority are obliged to ensure children are provided with an education. Darren Coghlan emphasised that SILS are very effective and very few young people become NEETs.
- 7.8 A member commented that she was was taken aback by the numbers of fixed term exclusions. Liz Britton commented that: sometimes fix term exclusions are an effective strategy to manage behavior and prevent permanent exclusions. She explained that some are half day exclusions and that some schools, such as Harris Bermondsey have special units that children can attend while things calm down.
- 7.9 Officers were asked how willing schools are to work with the local authority. Ron St Louis commented that all schools are keen and he had never met a head who would turn a good option for a pupil. He added that exclusions are a key performance indicator for schools. A member asked if all schools were equally willing to cooperate and officers explained that all are keen to receive assistance with exclusions, however some are less keen to reciprocate with managed moves.
- 7.10 A member commented on the rise in school exclusions are year 11 and asked why that would be. Liz Britton commented that pupils experience a huge amount of pressure that schools are managing around the time of exams. Ron St Louis explained that specific incidents involving a number of children can also skew the numbers. For example there was a situation in a Harris Academy where 5 boys were involved in a fight, and in Walworth there was an also a group situation involving selling knives. These incidents resulted in a number of exclusions.
- 7.11 A member asked about exclusions at Highshore. She commented that given this is specialist school she was surprised to see fixed exclusions and would have thought that they would be able to offer specialist support on site. Ron St Louis explained that the incidents in Highshore involved knives, and as such would usually have led to permanent exclusion in a mainstream school, however in Highshore they were given a fixed term as the school is able to provide additional support. He added that schools also have to think about the impact of seeing a perpetrator return to a school if a serious incident happened.

- 7.12 A member asked how the officer support for exclusions was paid and Darren Coghlan explained that this was funded by government as a statutory responsibility.

8. REGULAR UPDATE ON SOUTHWARK FREE SCHOOLS

- 8.1 Members asked if there was any additional information on timelines for the acquisition of sites for the Harris Federation free school in Nunhead. Officers explained that the council was reliant on information supplied by the DFE and school providers; the council provides assistance but securing a site is not a local authority responsibility.

9. WORK - PLAN

- 9.1 The project manager, Julie Timbrell, reported that the final Safeguarding Children report, and attendance by the independent chair to present, was provisionally on the agenda; however this had not been confirmed as yet. The chair emphasized the importance of this given past delays with the report. Kerry Crichlow, Director Strategy & Commissioning, assured the committee that the independent chair had agreed to attend and that the final report would be made available, and this was already in hand.