MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE
Wednesday, 15 May 2013 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors John Paschoud (Chair), Jenni Clutten (Vice-Chair), David Britton, Stella Jeffrey, Marion Nisbet, Stephen Padmore, Jacq Paschoud, Philip Peake, Alan Till, Dan Whittle, Sharon Archibald (Parent Governor Representative) and Mark Saunders (Parent Governor Representative), Monsignor N Rothon (Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark Commission for Schools and Colleges) and Gail Exon (Church of England Southwark Diocesan Board of Education)

APOLOGIES: None

ALSO PRESENT: Fola Bello (Young Carers Co-ordinator) (Family Action), John Green (Strategic Leader, School Improvement Team), Andrew Hagger (Scrutiny Manager), Councillor Helen Klier (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People), Rob McAuliffe (Vice-Principal) (Christ the King College), Philip Mills (Young Carers Manager) (Carers Lewisham), Dr Jane Overbury (Principal) (Christ the King College), Ian Smith (Director Children’s Social Care), Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People) and Chris Threlfall (Head of Education Infrastructure)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2013

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2013 were agreed

2. Declarations of interest

2.1 Cllr John Paschoud declared a personal interest as a member of Carers Lewisham

2.2 Cllr Jacq Paschoud declared a personal interest as a member of Carers Lewisham

2.3 Monsignor Rothon declared a personal interest as Governor at Christ the King Sixth Form College

3. Young carers

3.1 Cllr John Paschoud, Chair of the Committee introduced the item, explaining that this item was added to the work programme following a recommendation emerging from the ‘Falling Through The Gaps’ in-depth review.

3.2 Ian Smith, Director for Children’s Social Services introduced the report, highlighting the large number of young carers in the borough, the range of services for young carers provided within children services and the development of the schools charter for young carers.

3.3 Fola Bello, Family Action Lewisham, made a presentation to the Committee about the Lewisham Young Carers Family Project, which is a partnership project between Family Action & Carers Lewisham and is funded by Comic Relief through
Carers Trust till October 2013. The presentation highlighted the following key points:

- Aims include reducing inappropriate caring roles for children and young people, improving family relationships between parents and young carers, increasing young people’s engagement in education and improving the self-esteem and confidence of parents and young carers.
- The project offers a range of support to help young carers manage their situation.
- The project works with targeted schools and can help with grants.
- A key objective is to build the confidence of young carers
- Many young carers deal with parents who have substance misuse issues. This can mean young carers hide what happens at home and keep secrets, concentrate primarily on their parent/s safety and welfare, look after siblings, provide emotional support to their parents and deal with the aftermath of alcohol or substance misuse.
- The emotional impact on young carers can be large, young carers can be angry, confused, sad or upset, as well as afraid, embarrassed, anxious and withdrawn.
- The physical impact can include neglect by parents, self-neglect and poor personal hygiene while cognitive development may be delayed.
- The school impacts can include experience of being stigmatised, academic underachievement, arriving late to school and poor attendance.
- The project tries to help young carers to understand their parents issues and provide info which help young carers to empathise and respect with their cared-for

3.4 In response to questions from the Committee, Fola Bello and Philip Mills, Young Carers Manager, Carers Lewisham, provided the following information:

- If a young carer is really struggling then there might be a need to consider removing them from the family. If the situation is escalated then the issue would be referred to Children’s Social Care and other agencies get involved.
- Drop-in sessions are like an after-school club, offering the chance for young carers to socialise and get food and are one of many services delivered by the project, including activities, mentoring and residential trips. Recently there has been a reduction in the level of activities with a focus more on education.
- Carers Lewisham has been working with carers for 25 years and working with young carers for 20 years
- The Schools Charter has been developed by Carers Lewisham to support young carers.
- Two young people involved in the project have gone on to university since 2010. Carers Lewisham have seen increases in self-confidence amongst young carers they work with, they more engaged in school where previously they had no aspirations.
- Carers Lewisham has a good relationship with Lewisham Council and other local bodies. They receive referrals from GPs as well as housing associations, although they do not have a lot of influence over what they do.
- Children can often be confused by the caring situations they are in and may lack confidence, have little aspiration and experience neglect. These can increase the risk that the young carer to develop the same problems as parents, such as substance misuse.
A large part of the work of Carers Lewisham is geared towards adult care and relieving carers through respite support. This can give young time to get away. Around 450 young carers are registered, though it is estimated that there are double this in the borough. Carers Lewisham tries to keep in touch with former young carers, although there is not systemic feedback. A young carer may not stop being a carer once they become an adult and some young adult carers have been involved with Carers Lewisham since primary school. There are groups where adult and young carers can share their experiences and there is a mentoring programme where adult carers can support young carers. An issue for young carers can be their caring situation not being identified by other agencies, such as adult services, and not assessing their needs when looking at the needs of the cared-for. The Young Carers School Charter has 45 schools signed up to it, who will participate in Carers Week. Schools may choose to support Carers Lewisham through their charity work as well, for example Forest Hill Boys support because some of the group involved in Carers Lewisham go there and have shared their experiences with other pupils.

3.5 Dr. Jane Overbury, Principal, Christ the King Sixth Form College, and Rob McAuliffe, Vice Principal, Christ the King Sixth Form College, introduced their presentation about the work that Christ the King, a 6th form college, does around young carers. The presentation highlighted the following key points:

- There are a range of backgrounds among students, so the college has to liaise across a wide area to get information
- There are a wide range of students and circumstances among young carers.
- Young carers often look after siblings, especially when the carer is at a later age. The caring responsibility also falls often to female rather than male students.
- Young carers can be identified through sharing information with a previous school, from a 1:1 interview or by identifying incidents relating to attendance, performance and punctuality.
- Christ the King has a vulnerable student’s register, which includes those with criminal charges, health concerns, young parents and young carers. These groups are more likely to underachieve, and if the college knows they are in that group then it is possible to recognise the risk, redress the balance and get in support. College staff are careful to avoid stigma and not label pupils. Those on the register have their performance and progress monitored and support is put in place where needed. The college uses the achievement of vulnerable students to gauge performance.
- Young carers have partial or full exemption from the college’s late rule. They also have access to a welfare counsellor and the college takes note of its safeguarding responsibilities.

3.6 Rob McAuliffe then went through a number of case studies of pupils who have previously attended or are attending the college. These highlighted the varying levels of caring that takes place and the different needs for young carers as well the various attitudes towards being a young carer that young people may have. They also showed that young carers are more vulnerable to underachieving than other young people, but support can mean the gap is narrowed. A bespoke
approach is needed to fit individual circumstances and also to strike a balance between supporting and potentially disempowering or patronising young carers.

3.7 In response to questions from the Committee, officers provided the following information

- The Young Carers’ Social Worker will automatically convene a Team Around the Child, including GP, school, housing and other professionals. As there is more embedded early intervention and targeted support such as these then stronger networks are formed.
- Intervening in a young carer situation can be difficult as it is important to not destabilise the situation. Too much intervention could upset the carer and many will be able to cope with limited support.
- Identification of young caring situations by other agencies is important, this includes adult social care but also housing and health as understanding early intervention and the availability of support is important.
- The case studies highlighted that young carers are not a homogeneous group, they have very different needs.
- Lewisham is one of the few boroughs to have a dedicated young carers social worker.
- If support is not there for adults, young people could then take up that supporting role. Work is being done to address this and ensure that the needs of young people and potential caring situations are taken into account when doing assessment.
- Children’s social care workers have been trained to be aware of young carer situations and identify them. It can’t be guaranteed they will find all these situations, but the aim will be to strike a balance in their intervention.

Resolved:

The Committee agreed to pass the following comments on to the Mayor:

- The Committee commends the continued presence of a dedicated Young Carer’s Social Worker within the Children and Young People Directorate and urges the Mayor to continue to fund those voluntary organisations that work with young carers.
- The Committee recommends that agencies who deal with vulnerable adults (such as adult social care, housing and health services) should improve the work they do around identifying the needs and support arrangements for the whole family. This should include the young people in the family, with consideration given to the needs of young people who may be performing a caring role.

4. Nursery and Childcare Review - Scoping Paper

4.1 Andrew Hagger, Scrutiny Manager, introduced the scoping report. The Committee then discussed the scoping report with officers, highlighting the following key issues:

- The importance of knowing the educational quality of nursery and childcare provision, including those aspects monitored by Ofsted.
- The supply and demand in the borough, including the drivers for demand and how they are changing.
• The flexibility in the provision of nursery and childcare places in schools compared to the private, voluntary and independent sector (PVI).

Resolved:

• The Committee agreed to change the name of the review to Nursery Education and Childcare Review.
• That the sufficiency review should be circulated to the Committee.
• The Committee agreed the scoping report.

5. Select Committee work programme

5.1 Andrew Hagger, Scrutiny Manager, introduced the work programme report.

Resolved:

The Committee agreed the work programme.

6. Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet

Resolved:

To refer the comments agreed under item 3 to the Mayor and Cabinet.

The meeting ended at 10.10 pm

Chair: ________________________________

Date: ________________________________