

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 5 September 2018 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Luke Sorba (Chair), Liz Johnston-Franklin (Vice-Chair), Octavia Holland, Coral Howard, Caroline Kalu, Hilary Moore, Jacq Paschoud, John Paschoud, Kevin Mantle (Parent Governor representative for special schools) (Parent Governor Representative) and Monsignor N Rotheron (Church Representative) and

APOLOGIES: Councillors Andre Bourne and Gail Exon

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Bill Brown (Chair of Overview & Scrutiny), Sara Williams (Executive Director, Children and Young People) (London Borough of Lewisham), Emma Aye-Kumi, Ian Thomas (Chief Executive), Jackie Jones (Service Manager for School Improvement and Intervention), Ruth Griffiths (Service Manager for Access Inclusion and Participation), Jean Imray (Interim Director of Children's Social Care), Councillor Alan Hall (Chair Audit Panel) and Councillor Chris Barnham (Cabinet Member for School Performance)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2018

The Chair opened the meeting and apologised for the delayed start which was due to an earlier meeting over-running.

The minutes were agreed subject to the following amendment:

Paragraph 4.5 delete "before deciding what cuts to make".

There were several matters arising from the minutes.

With reference to paragraph 4.2 of the minutes, penultimate bullet point - SEND budget overspend - it was clarified that the budget as allocated was overspent. The apparent contradiction had been down to erroneous accounting whereby expenditure had been moved to the DSG. This had since been rectified.

With reference to paragraph 4.4 of the minutes:

- the Cabinet Member gave assurances that he would lobby central government on the subject of Free School Meals. Officers advised that they had also lobbied on behalf of the council.
- The committee heard that schools would be encouraged to promote uptake of Free School Meals via the school administration officers meeting which had it as an agenda item for its upcoming meeting.

With reference to paragraph 5.2 of the minutes, the committee was advised that the revised Ofsted Improvement plan had been scheduled for consideration in January.

RESOLVED that the minutes be agreed subject to paragraph 4.5 being amended to read:

“4.5 The Cabinet Member for School Performance informed the committee that he had asked Cllr Octavia Holland to prepare a report that looked more widely than the points raised in the referral. The report would look at young people’s mental health needs to better understand the picture. Cllr Holland’s review would seek the input of mental health professionals and would report in September/ October, the committee heard.”

2. Declarations of interest

Kevin Mantle declared an interest as Trustee of Signal, a parent support group for autistic children and their families in Lewisham.

Councillor Jacq Paschoud declared an interested as a Trustee of Brent Knoll school and trust-appointed Governor of Watergate School.

Councillor John Pashoud declared his spouse’s interests as described above.

3. Responses to Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet

No responses were due.

It was moved, seconded and RESOLVED that the order of the meeting be altered to consider the remaining items in the following order:

- Item 6 – Safeguarding Services 6 monthly report
- Item 8 – Children’s Social Care Sufficiency Strategy
- Item 4 – Exclusions from school – in-depth review scoping report
- Item 5 – Annual report on Attendance and Exclusions
- Item 7 – Children’s Centres

4. Exclusions from school - in-depth review scoping report

The Scrutiny Manager introduced the item. The committee were invited to comment and following was noted:

1. While there was some support for following the lead of the Serious Youth Violence Commission which had the long term aim of completely eliminating exclusions, other members felt that to set to do so would be to pre-empt the findings of the review.
2. Members asked for examples of places where there had been significant reductions in the rate of exclusions, such as Glasgow.
3. Managed moves may be a way of avoiding permanent exclusion, but Members cautioned that from the point of view of a young child having to leave their school, the result was the same as being excluded.
4. The committee wished to examine the extent of and reasons for unofficial exclusions.
5. An additional line of enquiry should be added “what is the role of managed moves and what evidence is there of their success?”
6. Add new KLOE “what support is there for mental health and what evidence is there that this support is working?”

7. Make the last KLOE more explicit to read “What are Lewisham schools doing to reduce inequalities in school exclusions, in particular looking at ethnicity, gender, children eligible for Free School Meals.
8. The review should bear in mind various factors influencing the rate or exclusions, for example sometimes there can be a temporary increase in exclusions when a change of management take place.
9. The accuracy of the fixed period exclusion rate for special schools was questioned. In light of the disproportionately high figure, the committee requested that the impact of pupils with SEND also be added to the KLOE relating to disproportionality.

RESOLVED that the scope of the review be agreed subject to the Key Lines of Enquiry being amended to read as follows:

What does good practice look like in preventing and managing exclusions and how can this be successfully embedded and emulated?

Evidence from outside Lewisham

- What does successful early intervention look like? How early is early enough?
- What examples are there of innovative practice in behaviour management?
- What alternatives are there to exclusion and what evidence exists as to their effectiveness?
- What are the lowest excluding schools and local authorities doing to reduce their exclusion rate?
- Why are some groups more likely to be excluded than others and what can schools and the local authority do to address this?

Evidence from Lewisham

- What is the council’s role in respect of school exclusions?
- What is the practice in Lewisham schools in relation to behaviour management and early intervention? What evidence is there that these practices work?
- What support is there for mental health, and what evidence is there of that this support is working?
- What happens when a pupil is excluded – what process is followed, what right of appeal does the pupil/ parents have, what support is available?
- What can we learn from pupil and parent experiences of exclusion in Lewisham?
- What does best practice look like in engaging parents and pupils effectively in the exclusions process?
- What evidence is there of unofficial exclusions, including off-rolling, in Lewisham schools?
- What are the drivers behind the variation in the exclusion rates between schools with a similar intake?
- Why is the fixed term exclusion rate from Lewisham special schools high, and what is being done to reduce it?
- What is the role of managed moves and what evidence is there of their success?
- How are excluded pupils supported through reintegration, whether to the school they were excluded from, or a when starting a new school?

- How are excluded pupils supported to reduce their risk of further exclusions?
- What are Lewisham schools doing to reduce inequalities in school exclusion, in particular looking at:
 - Ethnicity
 - Gender
 - Those eligible for Free School Meals
 - Children and young people with SEND.

5. Annual report on Attendance and Exclusions

The Service Manager Access - Inclusion and Participation introduced the item and invited questions from the committee.

It was noted:

1. Take up of the attendance service had gone down. While the service offered had become more effective, other attendance services were marketed to schools, and some schools took these up.
2. While attendance at the PRU had been poor, the committee was given assurances that the new head teacher was tackling attendance and improving outcomes.
3. Where there was poor attendance due to a family being in temporary accommodation resulting in a long journey to school, officers were liaising with Housing to make sure they understood that they could ask the Attendance Service to liaise with the receiving local authority to speed up the process of getting affected children into local schools.
4. Elective Home Education numbers were increasing nationally. Schools have to notify the local authority of every child being removed from school to be home educated. Robust procedures were in place.
5. As regards unauthorised term time absence, the committee heard that schools were skilled at dealing with these attendance issues in a sympathetic way. Schools also employed a range of creative and innovative ways of tackling persistent absenteeism.
6. One challenge facing Housing was helping families in temporary accommodation outside of the borough realise that keeping their child in a Lewisham school would not increase their chance of being housed back in the borough.
7. Paragraph 7.3 was headed “Ethnicity” but referred to nationality.
8. Managed moves were only a very small part of the reason for the decrease in exclusions. Mostly it was due to collaborative working and earlier intervention.
9. Preventing permanent exclusion was harder with children in out of borough schools, but this was something the service was working to improve.
10. A managed move differed from an in-year application because the latter was a decision by the parent, whereas a managed move was a decision by the school in agreement with the family.
11. Members requested a breakdown of permanent exclusions of Lewisham students in out of borough schools by ethnicity and gender.
12. Referring to the table at paragraph 8.7 of the report headed “Permanent exclusion reasons – Lewisham schools only”, Members asked that more explicit reasons for exclusion were offered for the 3 cases where “other” was recorded.
13. Academy schools in Lewisham did not appear to have higher rates of exclusions than local authority schools.

14. The weapons protocol had been in place for a year and had undoubtedly played a part in reducing permanent exclusions. The protocol offered guidance to schools on what to do if they find a weapon on a pupil. Previously, weapon carrying resulted in automatic permanent exclusion. Now schools are directed to contact the local authority to look at alternatives.
15. Schools agreed the weapons protocol and had ownership of it. They were positive about the effect it was having.

RESOLVED that:

1. The report be noted;
2. Officers supply a breakdown of out of borough exclusions of Lewisham children and young people by ethnicity and gender;
3. Officers provide reasons for the three permanent exclusions under the category "other".

6. Safeguarding Services 6-monthly report

The Interim Director of Children Social Care presented the item.

The following points were noted in response to questions by the committee:

1. Referring to para 7.4, a new neglect toolkit was being introduced. It was hoped that this would lead to better detection of neglect cases.
2. Officers were in the early stages of looking at trends in the increased in referrals and consequent assessment work but it was too early to report on this.
3. Where child protection conferences were due to the category of harm "neglect", this should also be picked up when looking at trends.
4. Whereas the primary focus was on children, it was necessary to look at their whole families, and where relevant join with adult services to deal with issues such as mental health and addiction.
5. The moment it was not possible to provide PAUSE-type services in house. Owing to the low demand in Lewisham, the option of spot-purchasing in the future was being explored. For now, the PAUSE model would not work within the practice framework of Lewisham.
6. Members requested year on year comparisons and comparisons with statistical neighbours/ London/ national in future safeguarding reports.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

7. Children's Centres

The Service Manager - CYP Joint Commissioning presented the item.

The following was noted in discussion:

1. Members felt the overview was helpful but wanted more information to help the committee understand the balance between different provision, for example, enabling parents back into work and child development. To do this the committee would need precise information on outcomes and impact, including levels of support available, the number of families using children's centres, etc. More detail would be needed to feed into the next contract.

2. Currently Children's Centres were targeted to work with approximately 4000 universal families and 1500 targeted families. They were around halfway through the existing contract and on target.
3. Members requested that a further report come back to committee with more information such as details of what is offered at the Children's Centres, how they are working with these families, what they are achieving, and a comparison with other budgets, details of how outcomes and impact are measured.
4. Members were concerned that some of the school-based Children's Centres were not available for community use and asked officers to liaise with the necessary contractors to ensure that space in Children's Centres covered by the Pre-School Learning Alliance contract (Clyde, Beecroft, Kilmorie, Marvel's Lane) was being appropriately used. There was some suggestion that one Children's Centre was being used by a school nursery to deliver nursery for 2 year olds, in which case there could be gaps in local provision if, for example, this offering was only available to a limited demographic within a limited catchment or geographical area.

RESOLVED that:

1. the report be noted
2. a further, more detailed report, return to committee later in the municipal year.

The meeting was suspended for 2 minutes to allow for a comfort break.

8. Children's Social Care Sufficiency Strategy

The Interim Director of Children's Social Care presented the report. She explained that she had asked to withdraw the sufficiency strategy from the agenda as the current strategy was not fit for purpose. Work was being done on a revised strategy which would seek to address the overspend. This would be presented to the committee later in the year.

A discussion followed in which the following was noted:

1. Officers were looking at the council's long term fostering and special guardianship policies as in some cases families were deterred from applying for adoption because it was financially less favourable to do so.
2. Preventative work had cost implications but the revised sufficiency strategy would look at benefits over a 3-5 year period as, in the long run, investing in preventative work could realise cost benefits as well as achieving better outcomes for children.
3. Although preventative work could not prevent all children entering care, it could support borderline families to keep their children, resulting in better outcomes for the children and allowing the children's social care department to focus on complex cases.
4. Use of High cost placements such as residential settings were being reviewed. In most cases best practice - keeping a child in a family setting - was more cost effective.
5. It was assumed that the increase in demand that the service had experienced was due to borderline families struggling due to the current financial climate. If the increased demand for the service was found to be due to something other

than borderline families, Members asked that more frequent monitoring/scrutiny be done.

6. Members stressed that officers should not expose children to increased risk in a bid to reduce costs. The priority had to be achieving best outcomes for the child and not on securing the cheapest placement.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

9. Select Committee work programme

The Scrutiny Manager invited Members to discuss the work programme.

The following points were made:

- The committee requested an item on Home Education. The committee heard anecdotal evidence that some parents of high functioning ASD children were electing to home educate because they felt that their children were not being adequately supported at school.
- Update on Youth First – the committee requested to hear about the finances and plans for future provision of Youth First.
- SEND Strategy – it was requested that the response to the Ombudsman regarding the transport strategy be circulated to the committee when available, rather than waiting until December.
- The Committee requested a confidential preview and analysis of results, including Progress 8 data, before December.

RESOLVED that

1. the report be noted
2. an item on Home Education be added to the work programme
3. provision secondary results be shared on a confidential basis with the committee ahead of being made public
4. a link to the response to the Ombudsman be circulated, when available.

10. Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet

No referrals were made.

The Chair reminded the Committee that they were invited to attend the next meeting of the Public Accounts Select Committee on 25 September at which cost pressures in Children's Social Care would be discussed.

The meeting ended at 9.40 pm

Chair:

Date:
