

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

Thursday, 18 July 2024 at 7.00 pm

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Luke Sorba (Chair), Liz Johnston-Franklin (Vice-Chair), Coral Howard, Ayesha Lahai-Taylor, Jacq Paschoud, S. Dixon and Mons Nicholas Rother

ALSO JOINING THE MEETING VIRTUALLY: Councillors Chris Barnham (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) and Yemisi Anifowose

APOLOGIES: Councillor Hilary Moore and Erica Wooff

ALSO PRESENT: Benjamin Awkal (Scrutiny Manager), Pinaki Ghoshal (Executive Director for Children & Young People), Sara Rahman and Simon Whitlock (Head of Joint Commissioning • Joint Commissioning FQC), Benjamin Awkal (Scrutiny Manager), Paul Frimpong (Deputy Young Mayor) and Sabir Rooble (Young Advisor)

ALSO PRESENT VIRTUALLY: Lucie Heyes (Director of Children's Social Care) and Lorraine Harker (Family Hubs Project Manager)

NB: Those Councillors listed as joining virtually were not in attendance for the purposes of the meeting being quorate, any decisions taken or to satisfy the requirements of s85 Local Government Act 1972

1. Election of a Chair and Vice-Chair

RESOLVED

That Cllr Sorba be elected Chair and Cllr Johnson-Franklin be elected Vice-Chair for the municipal year.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2024 be agreed as an accurate record.

3. Declarations of interest

There were none.

4. Children and Family Centre and Family Hub Integration

Witnesses

Cllr Chris Barnham, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
Pinaki Ghoshal, Executive Director of Children and Young People's Services
Sara Rahman, Director of Families, Quality and Commissioning

Simon Whitlock, Head of Joint Commissioning for Children and Young People
Lorraine Harker, Family Hubs Project Manager

Key points from discussion

The Director of Families, Quality and Commissioning, Head of Joint Commissioning for Children and Young People and Family Hubs Project Manager introduced the report. Key points raised:

- 4.1. In August 2021, the Council received funding from the Department for Education to create family hubs by March 2025.
- 4.2. In the preceding week, the Mayor and Cabinet had agreed to integrate the Council's Children and Family Centre and Family Hub offers in order to ensure equitable geographic distribution, address duplication and simplify and clarify pathways.
- 4.3. The offer was being promoted, and some outreach services being delivered, in places such as GP (general practice) surgeries, supermarkets and libraries.
- 4.4. A Common Moral Purpose and various pledges had been developed and were included in the meeting papers.
- 4.5. The Department for Education funding would enable the creation of a digital directory to enable families to access information about the offer and access the services that would meet their needs.
- 4.6. Children and Young People's Services had worked with stakeholders to ensure the offer was co-produced.

The Committee put questions to the witnesses. Key points from the discussion were:

- 4.7. The offer was area-based: it went beyond hubs with the intent of serving areas' whole populations, regardless of families' proximity to hubs, through spoke delivery from the Council and its partners' other buildings. For example, in Bellingham, services would be available from locations including TNG Youth Centre and Eliot Bank Primary School.
- 4.8. There would be a minimum offer for all areas and the sites from which services were offered were to be continually increased.
- 4.9. The digital directory of services and Navigator support would enable families to access the right services. Outreach would help services to reach families who might not otherwise access services.
- 4.10. Whether a relatively uniform geographic distribution of services, versus a needs-based distribution, was equitable was queried. A needs assessment had been undertaken. There was a foundational offer in each area which could be further developed on the basis of local needs.
- 4.11. Community buildings suitable for use as spoke delivery sites were still being identified.
- 4.12. Co-production had been undertaken with the Family Hub Leadership Alliance, an oversight/steering group comprising stakeholders including families, health partners, carers and schools to ensure services were aligned with young people and their families' needs. For example, following families' input, hubs were to be open on weekends and whether hubs could be used to support immunisation programmes to support health partners was being considered. The Common Moral Purpose was developed in consultation with parent advisor groups.

- 4.13. Analysis of service users' postcodes would enable outreach services to be targeted at areas of need.
- 4.14. Children and Young People's Services were working with the Young Mayor's Office to develop a Curriculum For Life, which would articulate what young people needed to support their development. There was an aspiration to connect Family Hubs to youth services, including independent ones. Stay and Play sessions were available in Family Hubs. The need for further consultation and a more comprehensive youth offer was recognised.
- 4.15. There was an aspiration for Kaleidoscope to provide a specialist offer, in addition to specialist provision in other locations, for children with additional needs.
- 4.16. It was important to involve young people with additional needs in service design to ensure they were as inclusive as possible. Consultation had been undertaken with young people from a range of backgrounds and with a variety of needs. Connecting hubs with specialist services for young people with autism, so they could access a range of services under one roof, was a consideration in deciding hub locations.
- 4.17. Transport assistance would not be available to help families access hubs.
- 4.18. The Family Hub programme was a joint initiative with Health partners and would respond to the needs and issues identified in the Birmingham and Lewisham African and Caribbean Health Inequalities Review (BLACHIR), including the need for better-connected and more-accessible services, the need to have Navigators to reach disengaged and distrustful communities and the need to identify and involve underrepresented communities in service design.
- 4.19. Children and Young People's Services was in receipt of a number of grants due to expire in March 2025, including Family Hubs funding. The Family Hubs programme was designed to be sustainable beyond the conclusion of its grant funding; the merging of the Children and Family Centre and Family Hub programmes and bringing their services in house were part of that approach. Further, the Family Hub offer was not wholly council funded and facilitated the delivery of partner's self-funded services. Further partners were being sought.
- 4.20. No pre-existing digital directory with the required range of functions was available for adoption by the Council. Facilitating the directory was to be one part of an officer's role. The potential contribution of artificial intelligence was being considered.
- 4.21. In order to engage and support disengaged or distrustful sections of the communities, it was key to ensure they were represented in service design. The location of services was important too; Family Hub services were not to be delivered from clinical settings because there were groups who were known to prefer not to engage in clinical settings. It was also important to work with local community groups and grassroot organisations to promote the offer and communicate that Family Hub services were positive places to attend – officers were encouraged to utilise ward councillors' trusting relationships with community leaders and groups.
- 4.22. The options in the report were affordable and comprehensively costed, including Transfer of Undertakings costs.

- 4.23. Agreement with Greenwich and Lewisham NHS Trust for Area 2's hub to be based in Kaleidoscope for a cost within the budget envelope was close to being arrived at. A Navigator for Area 2 was expected to be in post by September 2024.
- 4.24. Kaleidoscope was not the answer for all young people with additional needs. Kaleidoscope was to be a doorway for a Navigator to engage with the families of young people with additional needs and link them with the offer. Further, the whole Family Hub offer had to be as inclusive as possible.

ACTION

Scrutiny Manager to arrange Family Hub visits towards the end of 2024.

RESOLVED

To recommend that decisions regarding the long-term locations of Family Hubs be taken promptly and the Committee be provided with an update report at an appropriate time.

5. Pathfinder

Witnesses

Pinaki Ghoshal, Executive Director of Children and Young People
Sara Rahman, Director of Families, Quality and Commissioning

Key points from discussion

The Executive Director introduced the report. Key points included:

- 5.1. Following three reviews of children's social care issues which reported in 2022, the Department for Education published the report *Stable Homes, Built on Love* in 2023. The Pathfinder programme had been introduced to test the reforms proposed in the report.
- 5.2. Lewisham was one of seven areas to receive funding under the second wave of Pathfinder.
- 5.3. The Council had been informed that it would receive the funding in March 2023 and began activity in June. The bulk of the activity was to begin in September. Five schools were to receive support.
- 5.4. Children's services were also evolving their practice to prevent more children entering care in the first place.

The Committee then put questions to the witnesses. Key points raised included:

- 5.5. The numbers of children entering care and on statutory plans were reducing. However, it would be challenging to demonstrate the impact of the Pathfinder funding by March 2025.
- 5.6. Pathfinder support was to be provided to newly referred families; existing ones would not have their support disrupted.
- 5.7. Significant training was being delivered to children's services, Police, Health and Education staff. Training was to include hosting family network meetings, where a young person's wider family network would be involved in discussions regarding how a child could be best supported; this was an expansion of existing practice.

Cllr Jacq Paschoud left the meeting at 8.30 pm.

- 5.8. The £3.3 million of funding was to be used in accordance with the four pillars of reform detailed in the report. Most delivery was to be achieved using existing staff resources. The aim was to deliver a consistent family decision-making process under which funding was used to support families with solutions that worked for them: for example, additional carer support, purchasing furniture or offsetting lost earnings resulting from participating in support. Officers were confident that the agreed funding plan would result in full use of the funding.
- 5.9. The Council's improved Ofsted grading would enable it to more effectively market itself as an attractive place to work.
- 5.10. There were some Department for Education requirements under the programme which were inconsistent with children's services' approach, against which officers had successfully pushed back.
- 5.11. The Integrated Adolescent Service's school-based support enabled the provision of multi-agency wraparound support involving agencies who did not normally work with children's services, for example youth workers and substance misuse workers. The recruitment of further specialist mentors was being explored.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

6. Select Committee work programme

- 6.1. It was suggested the September 'for information' item on school admissions numbers provided opportunity for the consideration of the impact of the introduction of VAT on independent school fees. That impact was likely to be insignificant and there was capacity to absorb several hundred students from the independent sector in Lewisham's state secondary schools.

RESOLVED

That the draft work programme be agreed.

The meeting ended at 8.56 pm

Chair:

Date:
