

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 3RD FEBRUARY, 2021

MEMBERS: Councillors Birsen Demirel, Achilleas Georgiou (Chair), Derek Levy, Ahmet Oykenar and Glynis Vince (Conservative Group Whip)

Officers: Tony Theodoulou, Executive Director People, Peter Nathan, Director of Education, Suzy Francis, Principal Educational Psychologist/ Strategic Lead for Social Emotional Mental Health, Barbara Thurogood, Head of Special Educational Needs Education Services, Cheryl Headon, Cheryl Headon, Head of Schools Traded Services, Sarah Fryer, Head of Schools Personnel Service, Sangeeta Brown, Resources Development Manager and Lucy Nutt, Head of School & Early Years Improvement Service

Also Attending: Cllr Ergin Erbil, Claire Docherty, 2 Youth Parliament Members and 4 members of the public

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Councillors Hockney, Lappage and Jewell.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. ASSOCIATE CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor Ergin Erbil highlighted the following from his report.

NOTED:

1. The priority is to protect and safeguard children and young people at all times.
2. A number of young people have become involved in offending due to adverse childhood experiences, trauma, discrimination, socio economic deprivation and exploitation. It is essential that whilst simultaneously protecting the public and victims that these young people are supported to reduce youth violence.
3. A holistic approach is needed tackling this as a public health crisis working alongside children, their parents or carers and the wider community. Research shows that some cohorts of young people are more vulnerable to exploitation or becoming involved in and affected by youth violence than others. The work detailed in the report aims to prevent this.

Comments, queries and questions:

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- Following a query on who Cllr Erbil has met with, he confirmed that the pandemic has meant that unfortunately it has not been possible to hold physical meetings. All meetings have been online including meeting with; Young Mayors; a number of BAME groups and a number of other people and organisations relevant to this issue.
- Clarification was requested on Associate Cabinet Member role. Cllr Erbil advised that his role is to support the Cabinet Members in their work, Cllr Erbil's role supports both the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Cohesion and the Cabinet Member for Children's Services.
- A member of the Youth Parliament was asked to highlight his general thoughts. He felt that there was a lack of opportunities for young people in the east. He could not see the agenda report and was interested in the approaches that will be taken. It was recognised that Young people are facing issues never faced in the past such as mental health, lack of opportunity, Covid related issues such as self-isolation. It was agreed for the document to be shared with the Youth Parliament and Cllr Erbil was happy to meet virtually with the Youth Parliament after this meeting to discuss further.
- Following a query on why the report focused on youth violence and the work undertaken in Islington and what were the tangible plans coming from the report. Cllr Erbil is also the ward councillor for Edmonton Green which suffers from the highest rates of knife crime youth violence in London. Youth violence is a very important issue and the long-term aim of the document is to prevent youth violence. Islington is felt to be a very good model in terms of youth violence. The Associate Cabinet Member role is a supportive role therefore any questions on tangible plans are for the Cabinet Member to answer.
- The Youth Parliament member was asked what would be helpful to young people moving forward. He felt that more opportunities for youth engagement and involvement would be welcome. Shadow opportunities for the Youth Parliament had previously been discussed and this should be revisited. Post meeting note a meeting had been held with the Youth Parliament to discuss Shadow opportunities officers will follow up again.

4. MENTAL HEALTH

Suzy Francis, Principal Educational Psychologist/ Strategic Lead for Social Emotional Mental Health introduced the report

NOTED:

1. The Background of the document provides the national context of mental health. The paper from youth parliament echoes what is covered in the report.
2. From the first lockdown in March last year Enfield Thrives Together was set up. This started with six people across voluntary sector, parents, schools, NHS and the local authority. From this there has been regular fortnightly meetings to continue to listen to what was going on and to pivot services as they adapted in lockdown. Enfield Thrives Together now has a membership of over 70 partners.

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3. The document reflects the actions during the pandemic from looking at what parents are experiencing through to school staff wellbeing.
4. Schools are undertaking a lot of work to support each other.
5. The Professional Learning programme was set up in the summer promoting resilience and recovery.
6. In Autumn term the wellbeing for education return grant was received enabling the local authority to provide a network of presentations and training to the schools. This included Royal Free eating disorders clinic, CAMHS, EPS, the PSHE lead, voluntary sector, social prescribing and PE Team providing a wide scope of how childrens wellbeing could be supported. This included expert knowledge and information about local services. This programme will carry on until the 1 April. Providing parent care and telephone support lines opening up accessibility to Educational Psychology services. Schools and staff will continue to be provided with emotional wellbeing support. There will also be online workshops for young people led by Children and Wellbeing practitioners and Educational Psychologists
7. An example was provide of an online workshop for parents where in excess of 150 parents had logged in.
8. Officers are hoping to work with Youth Parliament members on a film to be developed with young people for young people. It is hoped that this will be ready to launch in May around World Mental Health Day.

Comments, queries and questions:

- The following was highlighted by the Youth Parliament member from their discussions on this issue:
 - Young people feel very uncertain about their future and this causes worry.
 - Concerns raised on not enough face to face support or enough information about the future going forward, particularly at years 11,12 and 13.
 - Lots of worries caused on exams marking last year.
 - Not every student speaks up and ask for support.
 - Awareness that schools try hard to tackle. More information needed to help cope with uncertainty.
 - Stress of the large amounts of online schoolwork than can cause burnout, difficulties in focusing and depression affecting students of all abilities
 - Uncertainty for this year's exams is adding to stress and anxiety.
- Claire Docherty on behalf of the unions highlighted the following issues:
 - Echoed that if the wellbeing of the school staff is looked after then this helps support the wellbeing of students
 - A survey was undertaken with NEU members on mental health amongst teachers and support staff with 276 responses received. The results are indicative of the results that all the unions are having with their members. Amongst the findings from the survey:
 - 40% rated their mental health as good or better, 23% rated their mental health as poor.

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- 60% said experiencing low mood or depression
- The main cause of stress and anxiety was workload and a lack of work/life balance
- 70% considered leaving the profession due to the impact of work on their mental health
- 33% were constantly anxious and stressed due to work
- The efforts of leaders to support mental health was recognised and appreciated, but felt more could be done to look at root causes rather than the symptoms
- Unions members would welcome the opportunity to work with all stakeholders to develop something like a mental health charter for Enfield. Mental health concerns have been around for a while. However, the pandemic has brought to the fore. It was agreed that this survey can be shared with members
- Following a query on whether timing had affected the survey results, it was confirmed that results were similar 12 months ago. Although members stated that since the pandemic their mental health has further deteriorated.
- An observation was made that mental health is a very important issue and felt that the report should be elevated and discussed and debated elsewhere, such as Cabinet or Council. It is important to look at the cause of issues and that actions included quick fix short term actions must come from the report.
- An observation on the young people going into schools at present. It was raised that if the foster carers own children were not going into schools, the children in care could feel that it was unfair that they should be attending school.
- Officers were asked to address raised so far that had been exemplified by both the unions and the youth parliament, these being: information, uncertainty and staff wellbeing.
- Officers would like the help of the Youth Parliament on information, to look at the types of mediums that can be used to help the young people at the right time.
- On the issue of uncertainty and the stress and anxiety that comes from this. One of the key messages throughout all the work on community wellbeing is how do we stay in the present and remain in control of what we can manage. It is important to ensure that there is good information available that provides some containment and some certainty. This is key in managing the uncertainty and being able to stick with what you can control.
- On the Staff survey and staff wellbeing, the local authority are using lots of different ways to link in with Enfield school staff; such as through the teams that work in schools and through council officers meeting with Headteacher or other members of leadership teams. It was acknowledged that workload and work life balance was still an issue a year ago. The issue of stigma in relation to mental health was raised. For example, a confidential service available to young people – Kooth which was believed to be quite well known, however the take up is not that high. Following conversation with Headteachers regarding support for them and their staff and the take up is not as high as would have

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expected. Enfield Thrives Together is a very active partnership, trauma informed practice training will roll out in the near future subject to funding. The Mental Health agenda is regularly discussed with schools and the local authority continues to look at ways to working and support schools.

- Does the Council have a mental health charter or policy? There is advice and guidance in terms of HR but not a charter, this could be worked on with schools and the youth parliament.

It was agreed that the Chair will put forward to OSC the following recommendation for them to agree and put forward to Cabinet:

‘OSC are asked to recommend to Cabinet that the Council should produce an action orientated mental health charter and policy and provide the resources to make changes that will support young people and staff on matters such as information, uncertainty and staff wellbeing. In producing this the Council is asked to work with the various stakeholders including the unions and the Youth Parliament and with the involvement of the Children Young People and Education Scrutiny Panel.’

Officers were thanked for their report

5. SUPPORTING SCHOOLS AND THE HEADS OF SCHOOLS

Peter Nathan, Director of Education introduced the report.

NOTED:

1. These are very challenging times for school leaders.
2. The report highlights the main ways the local authority is supporting schools. There are fortnightly briefings with headteachers updating them with relevant information.
3. Risk Assessments have helped schools look at every aspect of school life in relation to the pandemic to ensure that school staff are safe, the pupils are safe, and the right decisions are taken.
4. The attendance at the virtual meetings has been very good with virtually all schools represented. There are regular meetings with trade unions to feed in any concerns through to headteachers, and meeting with headteachers representatives weekly to talk through issues that have been raised.
5. Covid has meant that key colleagues are available 24/7 to support schools. Headteachers are often working weekends to deal with issues.

Comments, queries and questions:

- How far in the future can the local authority plan for or is it just planning for the here and now? It was confirmed that both must be planned for. The guidance must be followed from the government and from public health. An example was highlighted of the delay on decisions on exams causing difficulties for schools. Preliminary work has started with schools on planning for the return on the 8 March, such as discussing testing on secondary schools

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- What latitude do schools have to do things differently? Many schools work together, online learning will remain, there are now good systems in place. There will be a return to face to face learning, however it is expected that there will be more use of zoom technology and goggle classroom. It is expected that many things may change going forward.
- What is the situation with regards to young people having access to good online learning facilities? It was confirmed that maintained schools have received approximately 3,400 devices from the DfE including academies this is over 5,000. It is estimated that this is around 60-70% of the need. Whilst some schools have sufficient supplies others do not and this has been raised with the DfE. Other issues include access to broadband and houses with multiple children being able to create space and quiet to do schoolwork. It is expected that the disadvantaged gap will widen.
- Claire Docherty said that a mapping of the disadvantaged gap would be helpful and expressed concern on how this can be addressed. There are plans such as 2 years of the National Tutoring College and catch up funding. The levelling up will be a challenge. There is an Enfield Learning Excellence Partnership Board, with one of the key targets to improve achievement over the next 4 to 5 years.
- It was acknowledged that this is a very fluid situation.

Officers were thanked for their report

6. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Barbara Thurogood, Head of Special Educational Needs Education Services introduced the report.

NOTED:

1. Enfield has seen a year on year increase on referrals for Education, Health & Care Needs assessments, there is not dissimilar to any other London borough.
2. The Special Educational Needs 2 survey undertaken by DfE shows that there has been a 10% increase nationally in children with SEND. The DfE have been looking at reviewing SEND reforms to see how the increasing demand can be managed.
3. The threshold for assessment is low which means there is an increase in referrals. It is expected that post Covid there will be a higher demand.
4. Following analysis, the needs that have been identified are: speech, language and communication, autism and complex autism.
3. Some examples of work were provided: currently looking at an Inclusion Charter, so that all schools will start to be more inclusive for children with SEN identifying needs as early as possible; a Speech and Language Communication hub is being developed, this is at the project initiation stage. This will be to support schools to identify children who may not need EHCP but may require additional support. More support for autism and changes to nurture groups, so they will be part time and increase numbers from 10 to 28.

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4. Increases in travel costs is because there has not been enough growth of provisions in borough. This is being reviewed and developing different options with school place planning so provision can be increased locally.

Comments, queries and questions:

- What has been the impact of Personal Travel budgets and how have they been received? How has Covid effected personal travel budgets? Officers advised that some colleges were supporting young people with independent travel training and they are not able to do this due to Covid restrictions. However, those young people who are still able to attend schools and colleges are still accessing personal travel budgets. The local authority is reviewed how the SEN service works with the travel assistance team, to ensure that there is fairness and equity within the offer and to manage the provision more effectively. The legislation states you identify the nearest school in the first instance, and this is the school that is offered if there is places available. If parental choice not to go there, then under the Education Act it is not an effective use of public funding to pay for travel assistance as well.
- What other boroughs have introduced this and how has it worked? In Waltham Forest this has not been effective. However, in Barking & Dagenham this is working well with pick up points making it easier to manage the length of time a young person is on a bus.
- Rising demand is showing projections of 8-10% for EHCP's what has this been in previous years? In Enfield this has been around 6-8% but this has increased nationally.
- Is there a concern that there will potentially be an increase due to the Pandemic and if so, what provisions are being made for this? There is expected to be an increase due to Covid where children have not been in school. Some programmes that have been put forward through Schools Forum; Speech and Language Hub, changes in nurture groups and the work on autism and these will have an impact. The local authority is currently looking to develop a data dashboard to provide a better understanding. There is an operational SEN group and SEN board and all issues and concerns are highlighted as they arise to allow a rigorous response to the demands.
- Why is there a sharp increase between 2018/19 and 2019/20 of home to school transport costs? A large part of this is out of borough provision. There were children with more complex autism and insufficient places within the borough for children with such complexity of need. More analysis is needed as to why Enfield has a higher proportion of children with complex needs.
- Pupils needs are decreasing in Enfield but the number of children with SEND are increasing. Given there are extra places in some primary and secondary schools as pupils numbers are down is there opportunity for more SEND pupils to attend mainstream schools? Officers advised that it is expected that in future pupil numbers will increase. Where there are decreasing pupils' numbers in some schools looking to see if there can be more resource provision within those schools.

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- Following a request for timelines on increasing provision in borough the following was confirmed: 14 additional places at Suffolk's School for this year; another local school a further 23 places for this year, 70 further places at Salmons Brook School for 2022, Fern House an additional 22 places for this year and looking at moving staff from a building to a school to utilise these premises for more complex autism creates around 22 places hopefully this year. By 2022 there will be 110 new places will be created but hopefully this figure will be higher.

Officers were thanked for their report

7. CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION SCRUTINY PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

The work programme was noted.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The date of the next meeting was noted.