

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON THURSDAY, 8TH JULY, 2021

**MEMBERS:** Councillors Chinelo Anyanwu, Elif Erbil, Ahmet Oykenner, Andrew Thorp and Glynis Vince (Conservative Group Whip)

**Officers:** Tony Theodoulou (Executive Director, Place), Koulla Panaretou (Governance Officer)

**Also Attending:** Cllr Mahtab Uddin (Cabinet Member for Children's Services)

### 1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

Cllr Elif Erbil (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting and those present introduced themselves.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mustafa Cetinkaya, Cllr Tolga Aramaz and Cllr Ayfer Orhan

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

### 3. INTRODUCTIONS- PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

The Chair advised that the purpose of this meeting is to devise and agree a work programme for the coming year.

### 4. LOCAL PRIORITIES FOR 2021/22

The Chair invited Councillor Mahtab Uddin (Cabinet Member for Children's Services) and Tony Theodoulou (Executive Director People) to present to the Panel the local priorities for 2021-2022.

Cllr Uddin began by advising that the Council will do their utmost to safeguard the children of Enfield and provide the very best for them, especially over the summer holidays, with many fun activities and delicious food in place.

Tony Theodoulou confirmed this commitment and highlighted the following priorities to be considered:

1. Annual Safeguarding Report: The Council are obliged to complete this report every year and once consultations are completed, the report will eventually go to full Council to be approved. Therefore, the report will

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be added to the work programme to be discussed as it outlines activities and protection of children in the Borough.

2. Early Help Services - Reviewing Effectiveness: this service provides support for families and children who need help without the intervention of a statutory social worker. This service has been built up over the years but as the grant comes to an end, it is a good time to review which parts of the service should continue and prioritise accordingly.
3. Children's services - Self Evaluation: A report is produced yearly and is very important as Ofsted meet with us to discuss the self-assessment and they provide a challenge of what work we are doing compared to the 2019-20 report.
4. Protecting Young People From Exploitation and Family Breakdown: an increase has been seen in criminal and sexual exploitation and family breakdowns which could be pandemic related, in particular very young babies (parental issues) and older teenagers, where there has been a lot of family conflict and young people have been asked to leave. The Council are duty bound to look after these young people until they are 18.
5. Service User Feedback and How This Will Be Used to Improve Services: The Children in Care Council, Youth Parliament and School Council's are engines to enable the Council to hear directly from school children and families. This will be re-established this year as it has dropped off during the pandemic in recent months.
6. Leaving Care Service Review: It is the Council's duty to look after children in care up to 21 or 25 if still in education or have special educational needs or a disability. An Ofsted inspection is expected this year and in preparation the Council have commissioned a review of our leaving care service and the Panel may wish to hear the outcome of this. It was recognised that it is an important transition to leave being in care, begin an independent life once school has finished and then perhaps have no secure employment. It was recommended that the Panel may wish to assess whether young people are adequately supported during this important time of their lives.
7. Holiday Activities and Food Programme: The Government have given funding of £1m to be spent on holiday activities during Easter, Summer and Christmas 2021. Any child eligible for free school meals can attend a holiday programme and get a hot meal during half term holidays. Once the holidays are over, the Panel may be interested in the outcome of the programme and perhaps provide an update on the work done by FAST (Family and Adolescent Support Team), who offer early help and support to young people aged 11 to 17 and their families who are at risk of family breakdown.

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8. Education Recovery Programme: this programme has been introduced by the government in recognition of the lack of learning experienced by many young people during the pandemic.
9. Mental Health Support in Schools: there has been much said about the prominence of mental health in the media and the Panel may be interested in what the Council are doing to help the young people who are affected by mental health issues.
10. Pupil Place Planning: it is the legal duty of the Council to provide enough pupil places to meet our obligations. At present we have too many school places available and this will have an adverse effect on the school budgets as schools get paid for each child that they teach. Brexit has had a huge impact on the number of pupils as many families have gone back to their country of origin and have not yet returned.
11. Increasing In-Borough SEND Provision: with a 10% increase in Education, Health and Care plans every year, it has been necessary to send young people to schools outside our Borough. It is the Council's duty to get these children into school, the cost of transportation is rising.
12. SEN Services - Reviewing Effectiveness: Due to increase in demand, this service is under pressure. The Panel may be interested in how the Council have invested in the service and how the money has seen improvements to the quality of this service.
13. Improvement Support to Schools: The Council provides consultancy services to provide support and challenge to the Head Teachers. The consultants are ex-head teachers and ex-inspectors and the Council send them into schools, especially those requiring improvements.
14. Update on Exclusions: The Panel asked for an update on exclusion numbers.

In response, the following comments/questions were received from Panel Members:

1. Cllr Chinelo Anyanwu sought clarity on how the Council are going to tackle the issue of Mental Health in our Borough as there are a lot of troubled young people, what provisions are in place?

In response, Tony Theodoulou advised that additional funding is to be made available. Many young people suffer from anxiety and some will eventually require hospital intervention. Most children receive mental health support at school who have specialist services in place. The NHS have a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) where the demand for this service is high with a long waiting list. The

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NHS (BEH Mental Health Trust is the provider) could attend a Panel meeting and discuss their plans. There is currently a review of Mental Health Services in place across NCL NHS.

Cllr Anyanwu requested a detailed review of funding and how Mental Health provision can be planned for, objectives to be defined. **Action: Tony Theodoulou**

2. Cllr Ahmet Oykenar asked what support mechanisms were in place for those young people whose exam results were not as expected due to the pandemic and other issues. Additional support may not be forthcoming in their households and the Council may need to take ownership of their wellbeing and aspects of loneliness and work together to provide help. This is a problem across the Borough.

In response, Tony Theodoulou advised that when a child has additional needs, parents and teachers can request a statutory assessment, involving a range of professional assessors. They provide an education and healthcare plan to help each child reach their full potential. Over 3,000 children have this plan. Some children need to attend special schools and we have five of these schools in our Borough. Only when these schools are full or the individual child has a rare need, do they have to travel to schools outside of the Borough, where we are obliged to pay their transport and sometimes an escort. A government lead review has been delayed by the pandemic, but it is acknowledged that this area needs to be sorted out.

3. Cllr Glynis Vince advised the Panel of a drama production that was aired a few years ago, called Chelsea's Choice.

In response, Tony Theodoulou advised that once an area of focus is decided, the Panel are encouraged to visit the services. This is an open offer to all Panel members, particularly those interested in specific service areas, to make visits and the Council can facilitate this request.

4. Cllr Glynis Vince spoke to the Panel about the work that the award-winning Children in Care Council, KRATOS do. KRATOS are children and young people in care and care leavers working with Enfield Council to get the voices of others in care heard.

In response, Tony Theodoulou promotes two important principles to his staff; every child belongs with their family but where this is not possible, the Council must look after them as if they were our own children.

5. Cllr Andrew Thorp asked for some further information about Pupil Place Planning.

In response, Tony Theodoulou advised that the Borough demographics are constantly changing. This has left a surplus of places in Primary

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Schools, especially in the east of the Borough. Other Boroughs have seen schools close, but Enfield are working together to make sensible decisions for everyone concerned.

Some schools have a deficit in budget and will take several years to rectify as schools are not allowed to exceed 30 pupils per class.

6. Regarding exclusions, it was agreed that this issue be followed up as numbers are currently low in Enfield. It was agreed that schools should do more with parents and governors, to follow up and provide more support and work with troubled children and not just exclude them. Staff in the schools should help deal with this at source.

In response, Cllr Vince advised that she believes governors should be trained to deal with exclusions as some children could be left at home alone whilst excluded if their parents are working. Statistical update requested for a future meeting.

7. With regard to the holiday activities and food programmes, Cllr Thorp recommended that the Councillors visit the events over the summer and these details can be provided by Tony Theodoulou, if required.

### **5. PLANNING THE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2021/22**

The Chair noted the detailed discussion and suggestions that had been raised together with the priorities and the Panel's terms of reference. In conclusion, the following areas were priorities for the current year, some of which are for information only by way of an update.

AGREED the following items for inclusion on the Panel's work programme for 2021-2022:

1. Annual Safeguarding Report
2. Early help services – reviewing effectiveness
3. Safeguarding children – self-evaluation
4. Protecting young people from exploitation and family breakdown
5. Service user feedback and how this will be used to improve services.
6. Leaving care service review
7. Holiday activities and food programme
8. Education Recovery programme
9. Mental health support in schools
10. Pupil place planning
11. Increasing in-borough SEND provision
12. SEN services - reviewing effectiveness
13. Improvement support to schools

In conclusion, Councillor Erbil (Chair) advised the Panel that the work programme would go forward for consideration by Overview and Scrutiny Committee by the 20th July, Cabinet by 15<sup>th</sup> September and Council by 22<sup>nd</sup> September.

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### 6. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Panel Members noted and agreed the content of the Terms of Reference for the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Panel as detailed in the Council's Constitution.

### 7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Panel agreed the following dates for future meetings:

Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> October - changed from original date of 7<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2021

**Additional meeting to be confirmed once agreed by the Monitoring Officer of Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified.