

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON MONDAY, 30TH OCTOBER, 2023

MEMBERS: Councillors Maria Alexandrou (Chair), Andrew Thorp (Vice-Chair), Gunes Akbulut, Mahym Bedekova, Nelly Gyosheva, Doris Jiagge and Ruby Sampson

Officers:

Peter Nathan (Director of Education), Anne Stoker (Director of Education and Director of Children and Family Services), Bharat Ayer (Head of Safeguarding Partnerships), Neil Best (Head of Strategic Resourcing & Partnerships), Barbara Thurogood (Head of Special Educational Needs), Laura Martins (Head of Transformation & Complaints & Access to Information Services-Acting), Chloe Pettigrew, (Safeguarding Children Partnership Manager), Will Wraxall (Complaints, MEQs & Corporate Function Manager) and Stacey Gilmour (Governance & Scrutiny Officer).

Also Attending:

Matilda Ward (Enfield Youth Council Member)
Finley Willis (Enfield Youth Council Member)

Observing:

Sevgi Rifat (Lead Participation Worker)

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Abdul Abdullahi (Cabinet Member for Children's Services) and Cllr Ahmet Oykenner.

Apologies for lateness were received from Cllr Doris Jiagge and Chloe Pettigrew (Safeguarding Children Partnership Manager)

To accommodate for the late arrival of the officer presenting agenda item no: 4, the Chair agreed to amend the running order of the agenda, therefore agenda item no:5 was taken first. However, for clarity the minutes are shown in the order of the published agenda.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 March 2023 were **AGREED** subject to the following amendment:

- (i) Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Gunes Akbulut.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were received:

Cllr Mahym Bedekova declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 6 as her child is in receipt of an SEN Statement.

4. SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

Chloe Pettigrew, Safeguarding Children Partnership Manager introduced the report of the Executive Director – People, to note the activity of the Enfield Children's Safeguarding Partnership (ECSP) in 2022/23 and the priorities of the partnership for 2023/24.

Questions were invited from Members.

In response to Members' questions, clarification was provided in respect of Operation Engage, and details given regarding trauma informed practice.

Following questions from Members clarity was provided regarding the role of the Safeguarding Ambassadors, a group of Enfield young people who are working with the Safeguarding Children's Partnership to improve practice. They are part of Enfield Youth Service's Young Leaders programme and have been trained specifically on safeguarding and how to work with partners. The Ambassadors had met with the Detective Superintendent of the North Area BCU (Basic Command Unit) three times and discussed their experiences of the police. This led to the Police asking the Ambassadors to create a video outlining their experiences, so that it could be shared more widely across the force. This video will be made in 2023-24 and will be shared with the Panel Members once available.

Clarity was sought on the impact figures detailed on page 24 of the report and further information was provided.

In response to Members questions, clarification was provided on the Turnaround Project which is funded by the Youth Justice Board and delivered jointly with Enfield Youth Justice Service. The project was launched in December 2022 and the key aim of the project is to identify children at the cusp of offending and divert them from further involvement in offending through early intervention support.

The Panel agreed:

I. To note the Annual Report. Noting the report at Cabinet, Scrutiny and Council enables Enfield Council to demonstrate its commitment to safeguarding children and young people throughout the organisation. The report is a partnership document and as such is agreed at the Safeguarding Children Partnership Executive Group.

II. Once signed off, a summary of the report will be circulated to the Panel Members.

Action: Bharat Ayer, Head of Safeguarding Partnerships.

5. ANNUAL CHILDREN'S STATUTORY COMPLAINTS REPORT

Laura Martins, Head of Transformation & Complaints & Access to Information Services (Acting) introduced the report which provided an insight into complaints received and upheld, identified themes in complaints, performance in responding promptly to complaints, and the actions proposed to improve experience for children and their families going forward. A new system had been implemented which had provided a better way of recording complaints and obtaining data

During 2022/23, Enfield Council received a total of 29 stage 1 Children's Social Care statutory complaints which is a decrease in volume of 9 complaints compared to the previous year. There were two stage 2 investigations and one stage 3 panel held.

Questions were invited from Members:

Members sought further clarification regarding the complaints data detailed in the report. Officers advised that 17% of complaints were fully upheld and 44% partially upheld. The addition of upheld statistics is a new aspect of the report facilitated by the new complaint management software.

In response to further questioning from Members, it was explained that 73% of stage one complaints were responded to within the statutory timescale, which is below the Council's target of 95%. The late responses were due to cases being particularly complex and requiring additional time to investigate.

In response to Members' concerns regarding targets not being met, Officers advised that in terms of learning, there had been delays when monitoring progress and handling escalations from first to second stages resulting in significant response delays. There were also opportunities to improve response quality and case recording. This learning has informed improvement actions which are now underway, and these actions are designed to improve response timeframes and case handling quality as well as reduce service and complaint related delays.

Following further questioning from Members, information was provided on the complaints process for each of the three stages.

In response to further concerns regarding Stage 2 complaints and the fact that no responses were provided on time nor in line with the response timeframe targets, Officers explained that this was due to resource issues in both the central complaints handling team and service area, as well as challenges securing external investigators due to lack of availability. However, action had been taken to address this issue and, following a concerted effort last year, a bigger pod of trained independent investigators had now been identified.

The Panel agreed:

- I. To note the report

6. SEND PROVISION UPDATE

Peter Nathan, Director of Education introduced the report which provided an update on special educational need placements, current pressures, and activities to increase the number of places within Enfield and to reduce out of borough expenditure. The report also highlighted current and projected demand for SEND places, current provision both in-borough and out-of-borough and the related costs to the Council and sets out proposals for the introduction of large scale SEND provision.

Barbara Thurogood, Head of Special Educational Needs also provided an additional PowerPoint presentation, providing further information on SEN population, timeliness, increased provision, Delivering Better Value (DBV) Government initiative, opportunities, workstreams and the Change Programme.

Questions were invited from Members:

In response to questions about the Change Programme Officers explained in more detail the three-tier model for alternative provision which included targeted support in mainstream schools, time limited placements and transitional placements.

Further details were provided to Members on the proposed SEN projects within the Schools Capital Programme. This included information on Fern House School, Winchmore Secondary School, Swan Annexe and Oaktree School.

In response to Members' questions regarding the realistic timescales for the opening of the Portcullis Lodge site, Officers explained that the DfE will be responsible for design and construction of the new school building which is subject to further development work. Officers are supporting this process and the Council will be expected to fund early site preparation works and the costs of these works is currently being estimated. Other factors will also come into play such as ecological and access issues, however once planning has been finalised it is a good site for building on. The DfE have indicated that the Secretary of State will announce the successful academy trust in January 2024. Following a statutory consultation period pre-start work will begin between the Trust and the DfE to develop proposals for the new school but it is hoped that it will be completed in 2026, with September 2026 being a more realistic date. It was hoped that there would be an update on the build completion projection in December which would then be shared with the Panel.

Action: Neil Best, Head of Strategic Resourcing & Partnerships.

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Further discussions took place on prospective projects. A second application to the DfE SEND Wave for provision at Addison House in Southgate was unsuccessful as funding any works through allocated DfE grant funding was not possible given commitments within the agreed Schools Capital Programme. The option of the Council funding this development directly through borrowing has also been deemed unaffordable given the Council's financial position and other priorities. A review of the Capital Programme is now underway to ascertain whether funds can now be made available to bring forward a project at Addison House. The revised School Capital Programme is to be presented to Cabinet in December.

Members sought clarification on the DfE Delivering Better Value Programme (DVB) and Officers provided further information. Participation in the programme enables local authorities to apply for a £1m grant to deliver innovative programmes to support children and young people and to optimise their financial position. Enfield have been successful in their application to the DfE and have been awarded the grant to deliver six strands.

In respect of the introduction of a new SEN support pathway for early years SEND children, it was confirmed that this will mean that EHCPs will no longer be necessary for needs to be met. This change will result in children receiving more timely and appropriate support and it is expected that by 2024/25, the number of Early Years EHCPs will decrease by 5-10%. The pathway will also be expanded to allow children to access Speech and Language Therapy without an EHCP, and it is anticipated that this expansion will significantly reduce the number of EHCPs that will need to be issued. This change will not only decrease the number of EHCPs required but also ensure that support can be provided more promptly.

In response to questions from Members regarding the Change Programme Partnership Officers advised that this is a new government initiative which is a response to the SEND Green Paper. The plan sets out a clear roadmap to transform the SEND and AP system and make it sustainable over the long term. Thirty-one local authorities have been selected by ministers to pilot key SEND reforms through a £70 million 'change programme'. Barnet Local Authority will be the lead supported by Enfield, Camden, and Islington. This will allow for a more consistent approach and all boroughs will have the same offer, making the system less confusing for parents, therefore enabling them to make informed choices for their children and young people.

The Chair thanked Officers for a very thorough report.

The panel agreed:

- I. To note the report
- II. That a build completion projection update for Portcullis Lodge be circulated to the Panel once this information became available.

7. WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

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NOTED the Children, Young People & Education Scrutiny Panel Work Programme for 2023/24.

AGREED to move the planned agenda item on Falling School Rolls to the meeting on 11 March 2024. This would avoid the need for an additional meeting of the panel.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

NOTED the dates of future meetings as follows:

Monday 18 December 2023

Monday 11 March 2024

The meeting ended at 8:55pm