

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY, 17 JANUARY 2017**

COUNCILLORS: Derek Levy (Chair), Katherine Chibah (Vice-Chair), Abdul
PRESENT Abdullahi, Nneka Keazor, Joanne Laban, Edward Smith.

STATUTORY 1 vacancy (*Church of England diocese representative*), Mr
CO-OPTees Simon Goulden (*other faiths/denominations*
representative), Mr Tony Murphy (*Catholic diocese*
representative), Alicia Meniru & 1 vacancy (*Parent*
Governor representative) – *Italics Denotes absence*

OFFICERS: Linda Hughes (Head of Service for LAC), Debbie Michael
(Adoption Manager, LAC), Joanne Stacey (Performance
Manager Chief Executives Office), Claire Johnson
(Governance and Scrutiny Manager) ,Elaine Huckell
(Scrutiny Officer)

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WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Simon Goulden and Tony Murphy and for lateness from Councillor Keazor.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were put forward.

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FOSTERING AND ADOPTION REPORT

Linda Hughes (Head of Service for LAC) and Debbie Michael (Adoption Manager, LAC) updated the Committee on the work of the Fostering and Adoption services during 2015 to 2016.

The Fostering service was initially discussed and the following was highlighted:

- In 2015/16 Enfield recruited 17 mainstream foster carers, one of the highest in the North London Adoption & Fostering Consortium.
- It is important to continue recruitment of foster carers because a number of them leave each year. There are various reasons why this happens and an analysis was carried out last year to determine the reasons behind the figures. It should be remembered that many are

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getting older in the borough and therefore wish to retire from the service.

- There are a number of reasons for carers leaving include moving house and quite a high number decide to adopt the child they have cared for.
- Hackney and Haringey have piloted a scheme to outsource the recruitment of foster carers. However they have now decided to bring back the service 'in house' because of problems experienced.
- Vacancies in 20 of Enfield's fostering households are currently unavailable and this is the case for a number of reasons. It may be because one child in the placement may be particularly challenging or unable to live with other children. Also some temporary 'family and friends' foster carers may be waiting for specific children to be placed while a further assessment is underway.
- A supervising social worker provides regular supervision for foster carers and training is always available for them.

The following questions were raised:

Q) Are problems in the recruitment of foster carers now more of a cause for concern than previously?

A) Our leaving rate is about average, if foster carers announce their intention to leave we would meet to arrange for a 'planned transition'. For children with challenging behaviour it may be possible to reduce the allocated time with foster carers to provide them with respite care.

Q) It is stated in the report at para 3.3 that we have 131 Enfield fostering households, does this include the 'family and friends foster carers'?

A) No, this does not include 'family and friends foster carers'?

Q) What would happen in the case of a carer being subject to a 'standard of care' investigation?

A) If there is a complaint about a standard of care this would be investigated and whilst this was ongoing a child would not be placed with the carer, however if this was a case where a child was arriving at school in an unkempt way, then we may not consider it necessary to remove the child while an investigation was ongoing. However if there was a more serious allegation then the child would be removed during the investigation.

Q) Is there an age bracket for fostering?

A) No, some older children respond better to older foster carers.

Q) Do foster carers experience particular problems?

A) There are sometimes problems for carers where young people may have difficult behaviours – for example for those who are physically aggressive. We have adapted our training so that we can provide support for issues such as 'gangs', 'drug use' etc. We find it also helps for carers to talk to each other about problems they may be experiencing.

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Q) What do we do to ensure we meet the balance of future needs for the service?

A) We need to look at future service requirements. A recent example is the cohort of children who include a high number of unaccompanied asylum seekers especially those from the Albanian community. We have targeted recruitment events including one at the Regents Park Mosque in October and we have forged relationships with the BME community. This has helped in the recruitment process and we also think it helps that newly approved carers meet on a social basis.

Q) Do you think more money for the service in Enfield would increase the number of foster carers for the borough?

A) We are comparable with other boroughs in the North London consortium, we would not like to start a bidding war. We do provide enhanced payments for carers who have particularly challenging problems to deal with.

Q) You said Hackney and Haringey's decision to outsource their recruitment of foster carers was unsuccessful why was this?

A) Although the private companies were able to recruit a high number of foster carers they were predominantly people who wished to foster babies and as such they did not provide the range of carers that were required. Hence both local authorities have now brought back this service 'in house'

Q) You mentioned that there were a number of Albanian children that needed foster carers?

A) Yes we have been successful in getting a number of Albanian carers including some from agencies.

Q) If, following our best intentions we were unable to acquire an appropriate foster carer what would be our contingency plan?

A) We would look to our North London consortium partners to see if they had someone suitable and failing that would then look nationwide. However it is unfortunate if a child has to be moved outside the borough as they would be away from their community groups, education etc. It is therefore imperative that we are able to recruit a sufficient number of potential foster carers.

The Adoption Service was then discussed and the following matters highlighted:

- There are now more available adopters than children requiring adoptive families.
- Across the consortium there was a 12% reduction in adoptions from the previous year
- The reduction in adoptions is mainly due to the change in judiciary practice which has resulted in fewer Placement Orders being made by the Courts. Instead, Special Guardianship Orders are made to keep the child in their family of origin.
- There are still problems in obtaining adopters for all children. Adopters tend to want a young child without difficulties and the children who do come through are often those from chaotic families i.e those where parents have mental health problems or alcohol / drug abuse.

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- For a child who has a Mother with alcohol problems, it may only become apparent when a child is older, (as an adolescent) that the child has been affected.
- Adopters do not like the uncertainty of what they might expect from a child with these issues. It is necessary to ensure potential adopters are fully aware of future potential problems.

The following questions/ issues were raised:

If someone is considering adoption of a child whose mother/ father has problems then an advisor would always be brought in to discuss potential issues with them. One of the obstacles to be considered is that the child may have a tendency to extreme aggression as an adolescent if the mother has an alcohol problem. If one parent has mental health issues, then a child may be affected by this. Where both parents have mental health problems then the chances of the child being affected are much higher.

Q) Have there been cases where a child has been adopted but where the relationship has broken down and the child has ended up back in the care system?

A) There is a small number of children who have been adopted but have ended up back in the care system. Where relationships have become very difficult we would try to put support/ preventative services in place, to help.

There were 8 sets of adopters in 2015/16 which was a reduction on the 19 approved the previous year. This is because the aim has been to recruit adopters who are able to take on children with complex issues. It was confirmed that some potential adopters have felt aggrieved because there were no children able to be matched with them, however we are honest about the children needing to be adopted. The situation may be more difficult for people if, for example there are siblings to be kept together and also if someone already has one adopted child, that child's needs would have to be considered before another child can be adopted.

It was confirmed that whilst children are still being adopted this is a much smaller number than previously. This year there have been 6 Adoption Orders and 20 Special Guardianships. In the past there would have been many more adoption orders. Members expressed their concerns over cases where Special Guardianship orders have ultimately been to the detriment of the child concerned, where the judiciary have overruled social workers conclusions. It was thought that there are plans to make it more difficult for people to become Special Guardians in future.

Q) Are there now 100% DBS checks for all our foster carers?

A) Yes there are now 100% DBS checks for all our foster carers.

Q) In the case of Special Guardianships do we sometimes place the care of a child with someone abroad? and if so how do we monitor them?

A) Yes this does happen and we have to work with agencies abroad and are sometimes directed to go to other countries to investigate family members.

We will check to ensure assessments going to Court are robust and if we feel a special guardianship order is not in the best interests of a child we will argue against it.

Members thanked Linda Hughes and Debbie Michael for their update.

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QUARTER 2 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Chair introduced this item and said that it was important for Members to be able to examine the Corporate Performance Report and raise issues with officers. However, as questions were likely to be wide ranging it was thought issues should be raised at this meeting and actions/ answers would be given at a special meeting to be held before the end of this financial year or as post meeting notes in the minutes.

Joanne Stacey (Performance Manager Chief Executives Office) introduced the Q2 Corporate Performance Report and the following issues/ questions were raised by Members on performance indicators (in italics) shown.

(a) Housing and Homelessness

Number of households living in temporary accommodation

Reference was made to the amount the local authority is prepared to pay landlords. It was asked if this was likely to increase availability.

Joanne Stacey understood that there is an agreement between London boroughs on an upper threshold to prevent rents from spiralling out of control. She said two members of her team were working on this issue to look at where problems may lie – they were looking at emergency accommodation, Housing Associations and co-ordinating data.

Councillor Keazor asked if there would be problems in balancing this budget at the end of the financial year? **Action: Sally McTernan to provide information at additional meeting of OSC**

Overall satisfaction with repairs service provided by Council Homes

Councillor Smith said that given the problems experienced with contractors this year, the high satisfaction rates given for this indicator does not seem to reflect our findings with the service?

Joanne Stacey said the user survey satisfaction figures were compiled from letter/ telephone responses. **Post Meeting note – This point will be explored by the Housing Repairs Workstream.**

(b) Adult Social Care

Delayed transfers of care (patients) per 100,000 population

Cllr Abdullahi said it would be useful to have an indicator to show targets for people waiting to be assessed for care package.

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It was commented that it would be useful to see actual numbers rather than as a % of the population. Members would like to see Bindi Nagra at the special meeting of OSC to discuss these issues further.

Cllr Laban referred to comments in the notes given that two hospital groups meet regularly to review delays and the reasons behind them. She would like to know how effective this meeting is? **Action: Bindi Nagra to provide information at additional meeting of OSC**

No of adults receiving secondary mental health services in employment

This data includes patients that are detained in the regional medium secure unit (Forensic) based at the Chase Farm site. Although highlighted with 3 x's, at this stage in the annual monitoring programme it is understood that this indicator is not an issue for immediate concern. However it continues to be closely monitored at department level.

New admissions to Residential and Nursing Care and, as shown per 100,000 population (2 indicators)

These figures show red alert – further analysis is to be explored. Can we see from Q3 figs what direction this indicator is heading? **Action: Bindi Nagra to provide information at additional meeting of OSC**

f) Sport & Culture

Number of visits in person to libraries and

Wi-fi usage in libraries – total number of sessions libraries with ICAM wifi only

Is the lower number of visits due to closures when works have been on-going? **Joanne Stacey has provided a post meeting note as follows:**

(The reduction in library usage is as a result of temporary closures of Enfield Highway and Southgate Circus libraries in Quarter 2. There will also be a reduction on figures at Q3 as a result of temporary closure of Edmonton Green Library and the ongoing temporary closure of Enfield Highway.)

g) Income Collection, Debt Recovery and Benefit Processing

Recovery of council properties fraudulently obtained, sublet or abandoned

Joanne Stacey confirmed that interventions were taking place to progress this. It was asked if the Q3 report is showing any improvements?

Action: Joanne Stacey/ Madeleine Forster

% of Housing Benefits Overpayments Recovered

It is understood that this indicator is actually satisfactory and the red X alerts should not be shown as such.

Processing Times for Benefit change in circumstances (average number of calendar days) cumulative YTD –

The current target is shown as 7 days, however doubts were raised about this figure. Cllr Abdullahi said his understanding was that it often takes 4 weeks or more for changes to take place, he would like to see an indicator to show how

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many Housing benefit payments are processed outside of the target time.
Action: Sally McTernan to provide information at additional meeting of OSC

2.Growth & Sustainability

a)Employment & Worklessness

Young offenders access to suitable accommodation

Joanne Stacey pointed out that this change reflected only 1 person.

b)Planning

Processing of planning applications: Major applications processed within 13 weeks

This figure is showing a red alert and members were of the opinion that this was probably due to the new hub arrangements? Reference was made to Enfield 2017 and it was commented that 100 – 200 emails for the Development Control team had been found unanswered due to the new arrangements.

Members would like to know how the new hubs are working? Concerns were raised about the effectiveness of the Planning Enforcement Team. There does not appear to be an indicator to capture any problems?

Cllr Laban said it was possible to go into 'special measures' if the 13 week target is missed. It was confirmed that this would be discussed at the next DMT meeting. **Action: Joanne Stacey to provide an update/ information regarding a Planning Enforcement Team indicator**

c)Waste, Recycling & Cleanliness

Indicators for this service do not give current performance as we are awaiting information from NLWA.

Concerns were raised regarding the recycling rates which are not as good as they once were. It is understood that contamination is a problem and a policy of 'inside bin' inspections are taking place.

It would be useful to have an indicator giving the number of lorries/ bins rejected due to contamination issues.

With this year's Green bin service changes, OSC may look at this issue further. **Joanne Stacey has provided data which is shown at the end of the minutes.**

3.Strong Communities.

a)Crime Rates

Theft from the Person and Violence with Injury.

Higher rates are given – It was stated that the indicators shown are for the 7 MOPAC challenges.

c)Complaints

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All Departments – Complaints answered within 10 days

Members would like Nicholas Foster, Complaints Manager to come along to a future meeting of OSC to discuss complaints issues. **Action: Nicholas Forster to attend OSC in February to discuss the Annual Complaints report.**

d)Other Corporate Indicators

Average Sick days – Council staff – current performance

This indicates that 31K days are lost in the year. Work is ongoing in this area to support HR and to review sickness data to identify emerging patterns and trends in sickness so that targeted actions can be provided. A list of current interventions that have been put in place is detailed in the performance report. Joanne Stacey mentioned that sickness levels are higher, with blue collar workers and a member of her team is supporting HR to review sickness data to look at emerging patterns and trend.

% of invoices paid within 30 days for all Departments

Members were concerned that this can cause real hardship for Enfield companies. Joanne Stacey would discuss this matter with DMT's.

Action: Joanne Stacey

AGREED

- A special meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be arranged before April 2017 to look at issues of concern raised by members regarding the Q2 Corporate Performance figures.
- Where indicators specify a 'number per 100k of the population', or where a % figure is given and a more clear number can be used, consideration be given to giving actual numbers instead.

Action: Joanne Stacey

- The Q3 Corporate Performance figures will be presented to DMT in February 2017 and then to Cabinet. It would be useful for Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be made aware of improvements or decline in performance for those indicators highlighted by members for further discussion.
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee to determine how to scrutinize Corporate Performance data in future on a regular basis.
- Bindi Nagra, AD Strategy and Resources HH&ASC and Sally McTernan, AD Community Housing HH&ASC to attend the special meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Joanne Stacey was thanked for presenting the Corporate Performance Report for Quarter 2.

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ENFIELD SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

Members noted the report which had been submitted to Council on 9 November 2016. Councillor Smith asked if future details for the Safeguarding Children Board could follow a similar format to that of the Safeguarding Adults Annual Report.

Reference was made to the section on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) which had been discussed at a previous meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14 July 2016. This item had been presented by Dr Allison Duggal who had now left the service. Members were concerned that this position had not been filled. Members also asked for clarification on whether any prosecutions had been made regarding FGM since the meeting. It had been noted at that time there had been only one failed prosecution case.

AGREED

Overview & Scrutiny Committee noted the report and the progress being made to safeguard children and young people, and the Enfield Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report.

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ENFIELD SAFEGUARDING ADULTS ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

Members noted the report which had been submitted to Council on 9 November 2016.

AGREED

Overview & Scrutiny Committee noted the progress being made in protecting vulnerable adults in the Borough as set out in the annual report of the Safeguarding Adults Board.

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The Work Programme was noted. It was thought at the next business meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 February 2017 consideration should be given to looking at potential workstreams for the forthcoming year.

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DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Business Meeting – 23 February 2017, 27 April 2017.

Provisional Call-In dates

- 16 February 2017
- 8 March 2017
- 21 March 2017
- 12 April 2017

Waste, Recycling & Cleanliness

Recycling Contamination Rates;

Response;

Table below shows current rates for 2016/17, remedial action being taken includes

- Borough wide and specific communications programme being delivered
- Revised policy and enforcement approach has been agreed and being implemented
- Appropriate enforcement action is being taken to reduce rejected loads and non-recyclable elements

