

**REPORT TITLE: Visits and work undertaken by the Exclusions Workstream**

**REPORT AUTHOR/S:  
Susan O'Connell  
Governance & Scrutiny Officer**

## **1. BACKGROUND**

The Exclusions workstream was set up by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in July 2019 and met on 4 occasions. This workstream was chaired by Cllr Bernie Lappage.

Members were concerned about the effect exclusions can have on young people and their families. The workstream set out to explore this further and look at the actual numbers and reasons and whether or not any group of young people are disproportionately affected and if so, how this is addressed and what more can be done. Explore why the numbers of exclusions increase from primary to secondary school.

Members felt that this was an opportunity to make a difference, acknowledge what is working well in Enfield and seize any opportunities to improve and to commend the good work already taking place. The Chair referred to a prison report and said that the thrust of this review should be guided by some its reflections that 'Exclusion should be a catalyst for change for the positive, however exclusions are often a negative downward spiral'.

Unfortunately, due to the impact of Covid 19 and the changes to the structure of scrutiny the workstream did not hold all of its planned meeting and was not able to finalise this review.

### Visits and Observations

In addition to the workstream meetings members of the workstream:

- Attended a Secondary Fair Access Panel to observe a meeting. The Secondary Fair Access Panel (FAP) meets every two weeks during term time. It is chaired by a Secondary Head Teacher and all schools are invited to attend. Schools make referrals to the panel of pupils in relation to a request for a managed move. Complex, hard to place in year admissions are also discussed. Placements are also decided for pupils who are ready to return to the mainstream setting from Orchardside, the Pupil Referral

Unit. Decisions made by FAP apply to all schools regardless of whether they are maintained or academies.

- Visited the Pupil Referral Unit at Orchardside, meeting with the Headteacher and some of the pupils
- The Chair attended governor training.

The workstream received information and explored the issues below in detail at their meetings:

- Redacted case studies to understand the complexities of around exclusion
- Knife crime, gang membership and exclusions
- Looked after children and exclusions
- Exclusions and overrepresented groups
- The role of Safer Schools Officers and the police in schools
- Waiting lists for Speech & Language Therapy
- Waiting lists for Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services
- Destination information for permanently excluded children this includes the outcomes for those attending the Pupil Referral Unit and those children attending Alternative Provision (AP). It was noted that only the most extreme cases are referred to AP
- The language used around exclusions and the affect this has on those excluded
- Managed Moves- A Managed Move is defined as a formal agreement between two schools, a child and his parents/carers. It allows for a pupil to transfer to another school where all parties agree their placement in the home school has become untenable. The move requires the agreement of the child's parent/carer, the head teacher of the child's current school (the home school), the head teacher of the proposed school, and a representative from the Behaviour Support Service. The Managed Move process cannot be used for pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- NEXUS progress update - NEXUS was brought about as a result of youth violence and the level of permanent exclusions in Enfield at the time. It is about connecting communities together working with parents, young people and community working together.
- The Chair circulated to workstream members the; executive summary of 'The Timpson Review of School Exclusion' and from this review 'School exclusion: a literature review on the continued disproportionate exclusion of Certain Children' published in May 2019.

## **2. ISSUES AND CHALLENGES**

The workstream identified examples of good practice and a clear determination and a willingness to work together from the officers and all those that they met with. They were grateful for the opportunities to observe a secondary Fair Access Panel, the visit to Orchardside the Pupil Referral Unit and the opportunities to speak with pupils at the unit all of whom were honest, polite and gracious with their time.

Following a request from the Headteacher at the Pupil Referral Unit the workstream were pleased to be able to successfully assist with their request for bikes for the new bike park at the school.

The number of permanent exclusions of secondary school age children reduced in Enfield in 2018/19, the workstream were keen to ensure that this is sustainable.

The workstream had identified the following issues:

- Observations from the Chair who attended governor training, she felt this could be further enhanced in a number of ways; the use of case studies during the training, consideration as to whether this training be undertaken in smaller groups within schools themselves, and there should be better written guidance available in different languages for use as a point of reference available for both governors and parents.
- Speech and Language was a key issue in exclusions and members were concerned at waiting lists around this.
- Child & Adolescent Mental Health services, this was another key issue and the workstream was concerned at the effect waiting lists can have.
- Overrepresented groups- the workstream were still to explore further how we understand as a council whether there are young people from certain communities who are disproportionately excluded.
- Language around exclusions workstream members supported this proposal for change but the actual rewording itself was still being worked through.
- Managed Moves, members felt that there was variation on exclusion between schools. Members were advised that officers were trying to achieve commonality on exclusions. There were also Improvements being sought to the Fair Access Panel and this was due to come back to a further workstream meeting.
- Alternative Provision –Members were very concerned at the stark difference in outcomes when children attended Alternative Provision instead of the Pupil Referral Unit. There had been discussions around the possible expansion of the provision provided by the Pupil Referral Unit in the future. Members felt this this needs to be undertaken at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Nexus- members wanted more information on what feedback is received on the schemes, how successful are the projects and how is success being measured. Members felt the stronger the evidence base the greater the support this will provide for continuation of funding. The workstream were going to look at this again
- Safer Schools Officers, members had been concerned at vacancy position in the Safer Schools team and wanted to look at updated information. An update was provided by the Safer Schools Inspector on the 17 November 2020. They currently have a vacancy of 3 Schools officers and are actively seeking to fill these vacancies in the coming months. Currently all schools have an officer assigned to them, most of the officers have 2 schools when ideally the schools

would have a dedicated officer with just one school. When the vacancies are filled this will happen.

The workstream has not looked at the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic and the tremendous disruption this has caused to education, the effects of lockdown and the varying levels of education during this period.

A report 'School Exclusion Risks after Covid 19' published in June 2020 stated that 'All children will have experienced some adverse effects from Covid -19 pandemic, but for some these will be traumatic and long lasting and this may impact negatively on whether and how they return to school, and the likelihood of formal, informal and self-exclusion'. This identified a number of themes either heightening or producing new areas of risk; heightened anxiety, bereavement, poverty, disconnection from schooling and the digital divide between pupils.