

London Borough of Enfield

Subject: Referral to Cabinet from Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Panel

Director: Jeremy Chambers

Key Decision: N/A

Purpose of Report

1. This report details a referral from the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Panel, for consideration by Cabinet.

Proposal(s)

2. For Cabinet to approve the recommendation from the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Panel and ask officers to action the following:
 - The Council should produce an action orientated mental health charter & 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 Education Unions , Enfield Youth Parliament with the involvement of the Children Young People and Education Scrutiny Panel.

Reason for Proposal(s)

3. In discharging their scrutiny functions, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny Panel Chairs are entitled to report with recommendations to Cabinet.

Relevance to the Council Plan

4. Safe, Healthy and confident communities. The panel heard how the impact of covid-19 had increased stress, anxiety and mental health issues amongst staff and pupils. By working with partners and stakeholders the council will support the community to recover over the longer term.

Background

5. Mental health and the effects of the Covid-19 crisis on children, young people and staff working in schools was an item considered at the meeting of the Children Young People & Education Scrutiny Panel on the 3 February 2021.

6. The Director of Education, and Principal Educational Psychologist/ Strategic Lead for Social Emotional Mental Health introduced the report which was based on the key lines of enquiry requested by the Chair and panel, these were:
 - Understanding of how young people's mental health has been affected during Covid-19, covering school closures, working from home, re-opening of schools and then closure because of the outbreak of Covid 19 in a school bubble
 - Is there a difference and any data to show if there is a difference for:
 - a. primary/secondary young people?
 - b. girls and boys?
 - c. social groupings?
 - How have mental health issues manifested themselves?
 - How are school staff managing their own mental health?
 - What has the local authority and schools learnt?
 - What measures have been put into place?
 - What support has there been from government or national bodies?
7. The Panel were informed and noted the amount of support provided to schools to meet the social, emotional and mental health needs of their pupils, through the Mental Health Support Teams, Educational Psychology Schools Emotional Wellbeing Service, Primary Behaviour Support Service (SWERRL), and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (Barnet, Enfield & Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust). Particularly the response during the pandemic to set-up online support groups to all staff and pupils, there were also specific sessions aimed at Headteachers and Leaders, recognising the difficulties that they face in terms of feeling a strong need to demonstrate strength as a leader (which makes it difficult for them to feel or show vulnerability).
8. A representative from the National Education Union spoke of long-term issues on mental health amongst teachers and support staff. Covid 19 has caused further deterioration in mental health issues. They shared the results of a recent survey to the Panel and expressed concern that more action is needed to tackle the stress, anxiety and depression and prevent professionals from wanting to leave their profession and tackle the root causes. Union members welcomed the opportunity to work with 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.

9. Members of Enfield Youth Parliament provided a written paper to the Panel which highlighted their concerns on this issue. They had detailed anxiety, stress and worry caused by uncertainty over the future and young people's aspirations for the future and the need for more information to be available to all students to help them cope. They supported the proposal for a Mental Health Charter, and the need for more action to support young people and were keen to work with other stakeholders.
10. The Panel agreed with the proposal for a Mental Health Charter and felt that this was a good opportunity to highlight these issues and work in partnership. This was supported by the Youth Parliament. The Panel felt that this should be an action orientated mental health charter and policy which would look at the resources needed 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 schools, Education unions, Enfield Youth Parliament and the Children Young People and Education Scrutiny Panel.
11. The item was discussed at Overview & Scrutiny on the 1st April 2021, and the committee agreed, for the item to be referred to Cabinet.

Main Considerations for the Council

12. Scrutiny is essential to good governance and enables the voice and concerns of residents and communities to be heard and provides positive challenge and accountability.

Safeguarding Implications

13. There are no immediate safeguarding implications connected to the proposals within the report.

Public Health Implications

14. The Councils Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy is committed to helping ensure that mental and emotional wellbeing is everyone's business and to putting in place a whole system response to supporting individual and community resilience. The proposals within the report support this approach.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

15. There are no specific Equalities Impact issues related to this report

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

16. None identified.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

17. There are no risks associated with this report.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

18. There are no risks associated with this report.

Financial Implications

19. There are no direct financial implications relating to the recommendations proposed in this report.

Legal Implications

20. tbc

Workforce Implications

21. None identified.

Property Implications

22. None identified

Other Implications

23. None identified

Options Considered

24. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee, under the Council's Constitution, has the right to make comment or make recommendations to the Cabinet.

Conclusions

25. The proposal allows the council to work with its partners to develop a mental health charter and policy to support the Health & wellbeing of both teachers and pupils.

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Background Papers

None