

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

Thursday 18 June 2020 at 7.00 pm

MINUTES

PRESENT: Councillor Lucy Caldicott (Chair), Councillor Malcolm Clark, Simon Funnell (Parent Governor Co-Optee), Councillor Nicole Griffiths, Baboucarr Jallow (Parent Governor Co-Optee), Councillor Mohamed Jaser, Councillor Nanda Manley-Browne, Lynette Murphy O'Dwyer (Statutory Education Co-optee), Councillor Jane Pickard, and Frank Roberts (Statutory Education Co-optee)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Mary Atkins and Councillor Edward Davie

1. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were none.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Caldicott requested that the end date for funding of LEAP on page 4 be amended.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to Councillor Caldicott's amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2020 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record of the proceedings.

3. EDUCATION AND LEARNING RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Cathy Twist, Director of Education, introduced the report, stating that:

- Since the agenda was published on 08 June, there had been further updates due to the fast-changing nature of the Covid-19 response.
- Following the closure of schools except for vulnerable children and children of key workers, primary schools had started to re-open from 01 June, and secondary schools from 15 June. Approximately 2,500 or one-third of eligible children, across Lambeth were attending school.
- Officers were working with families and schools to ensure schools were physically able to accommodate children and to enable parents to feel confident that children would be safe in school.
- 10% of vulnerable children were attending school, compared to 5% nationally. Transport was offered for vulnerable pupils, children with Education and Health Care Plans (EHCP) were contacted regularly, and over 1,100 laptops had been allocated to children with social workers.
- The Education Welfare Service continued to operate and contacted children and families where there were concerns of a lack of engagement in education. A programme for 15-18 year olds who were not engaging in education had

been established.

- The Government had recently announced that free school meals would be provided over summer, but it was unclear whether form it would take and the input that councils would be expected to have.
- Officers and schools were planning for summer holiday provision and the autumn term, while considering the possibility of further lockdowns.

Councillor Edward Davie, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, then made the following comments:

- He thanked officers, families, schools, trade unions and children for their work during this difficult time.
- Changing guidance from central Government had made responding appropriately to the pandemic more difficult.
- The low number of children attending school was concerning, particularly in a borough like Lambeth where 42% of children were living in poverty and many lived in difficult circumstances.
- Due to the higher impact of Covid-19 on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, it was understandable for BAME parents to be more reluctant to send their children to school.
- Significant efforts would be required to prevent a 'lost generation' of young people.

Officers provided the following information in response to questions from Members:

- Penalties were not being issued to parents for non-attendance at school, but schools were in regular contact with pupils.
- Any child who was not engaging with school could be referred to Education Welfare Officers, not just those with an assigned social workers or EHCPs.
- Virtual Q&A sessions had been held for parents on issues surrounding future planning, child welfare and how to support children in home-learning.
- Schools and the Council were working on potentially allowing children in other year groups to attend school if there was sufficient capacity. However, groups had to remain stable to prevent too many different children mixing with each other and potentially spreading the virus.
- 72 out of 131 private schools and nurseries in the borough had remained open during the lockdown and had been supported by the Council to do so.
- Individual schools had largely retained responsibility for their pupils, regardless of their home borough. The exception to this was Looked After Children, whose education was overseen by the Virtual School.
- The sudden end of formal schooling had been traumatic for many children, as well as issues outside of school such as domestic abuse and recent events surrounding the Black Lives Matter protests. Online training was being offered to all teachers on trauma-informed practice.

RESOLVED:

1. That Members report any welfare concerns to schools or the Council.
2. That officers explore the possibility of running another Q&A for parents.

3. That the feedback survey for 11-17 years olds be noted, and the opportunity to gain further feedback be considered.
4. That positive outcomes from education during lockdown be utilised into future practice.

4. RAISING THE GAME: ACHIEVEMENT OF BLACK CARIBBEAN PUPILS IN LAMBETH, A LAMBETH SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE, 2018-2020

The report was introduced by Cathy Twist, Director of Education and Learning, who highlighted the following:

- Raising the Game was a two-year programme that was due to end in summer 2020 and which aimed to narrow the attainment gap for Black Caribbean pupils. The attainment gap had reduced in the decade to 2011, but had since widened.
- This was a long-standing issue that affected Lambeth in particular due to its demographics, and there was strong support from schools and the Council for the programme.

Andrea Parker, Headteacher at Bonneville Primary School and Lead Headteacher for Raising the Game, then provided the following information:

- A range of interventions were used across the programme, including coaching headteachers on identifying potential barriers to achievement, the creation of a parental engagement network, diversifying the curriculum and increasing representation of Black leaders and speakers.
- Although the programme was aimed at Black Caribbean pupils, the resources could and should be used by all.
- The number of Black Caribbean pupils who were permanently excluded reduced significantly since the start of the programme, although black children were still more likely to be permanently excluded.
- During the two years of the programme, inclusive curriculum materials had been developed for primary-age pupils, over 2,200 pupils from Years 2 to 10 had attended Aim High events, at which 190 inspirational black speakers had presented. The feedback from Aim High had been overwhelmingly positive.
- The Programme Board had agreed to extend Raising the Game to 2021, with funding to be provided by the Lambeth Schools Partnership and the Council. Raising the Game would be extended to all Lambeth schools.
- Performance of Black Caribbean pupils was of particular concern now due to the impact of Covid-19 on the BAME community.

The Chair then opened up the debate to members of the Sub-Committee and in response to questions the Director of Education and Learning and the Headteacher of Bonneville Primary School stated that:

- The most effective elements of the programme had been Aim High and diversifying the curriculum. Aim High had allowed young people to meet black professionals and expand their ambitions, as well as meeting children from other schools. Some children had started businesses or set new goals as a result of Aim High events.

- The main barriers to further involvement were the cost and time involved, particularly around curriculum development. Other sources of funding were being explored to allow as many schools as possible to participate.
- There had been greater discussion nationally on decolonising the curriculum as a result of the Black Lives Matter movement. Headteachers should take this opportunity to diversify the curriculum.

Councillor Edward Davie, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People then made the following comments:

- He thanked officers, headteachers and schools in their work on the programme.
- Lambeth had the largest Black Caribbean population in the country, and it was unacceptable that children were unable to achieve their potential because of structural racism.
- Cabinet Members supported the programme and had committed to it continuing at least until 2021.

RESOLVED:

1. That the wider context that young people live in be considered and addressed.
2. That the Council continue to support Raising the Game, including sourcing funding and expansion to all schools.
3. That the work with families be commended and continued.
4. That greater opportunities for work experience be identified.
5. That the possibility of diversifying the curriculum be explored.

5. YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE: PROGRESS REPORT

Ellanora Clarke, Head of the Youth Offending Service, introduced the report, stating that:

- The Youth Offending Service (YOS) had last been inspected in February 2019, and this report provided an update on the progress of the service.
- A key concern from the inspection had been the consistency of practice, which was being addressed through ensuring stability in the workforce, providing more training and undertaking peer reviews.
- There had been a significant impact on the service as a result of Covid-19, with a 40% fall in crime and youth courts only focusing on priority cases. Officers were considering how to ensure young people remained engaged with the YOS over the summer.
- Re-offending rates had decreased, although the latest information available was 18 months old.
- There were stark racial disparities, particularly in custodial cases where 95% of young people were BAME.
- The YOS continued to work with the Youth Justice Board and as part of a six-borough consortium to share knowledge and best practice.

Councillor Ed Davie, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, then made the following comment:

- He thanked officers for their work in improving the service following previously poor inspections, noting that it was now compassionate and child-centred.

During discussion of this item the guillotine fell at 9.00 pm.

RESOLVED: That the meeting continue for a further period of up to 30 minutes.

The Head of the Youth Offending Service then provided the following information in response to questions from Members:

- It was important to work with parents and families to ensure engagement and prevent offending.
- Young people had been asked about their feelings surrounding the lockdown and BLM protests, and the impact that these events had had on them.
- Council and courts staff, as well as magistrates and judges, had received unconscious bias training.
- Savings had been made, but efforts were underway to ensure the service was unaffected as much as possible.
- Data showed that the service was improving, although further developments were needed and the only official way of measuring the service was through inspections.
- Children in the YOS could also participate in programmes organised by other services, such as Raising the Game in the education system.
- Officers were ambitious for the young people in the YOS and wanted them to be able to achieve their goals.
- The deadline for submitting the Youth Justice Plan had been delayed to July 2020 due to the impact of Covid-19.
- The budget for young people remanded in custody was a challenge, due to the severity of the crimes and the length of time people remained on remand prior to trial. The number of young people remanded had remained stable, but the length of time they were on remand had increased, resulting in budget pressures.
- Interventions such as Raising the Game and efforts to reduce permanent exclusions had a major impact on young people who may have otherwise gone through the criminal justice system, but data would need to be analysed to measure that impact.
- During lockdown, Outreach Workers went into communities to speak to young people, listen to their concerns and identify potential support, and this would continue over the summer.

Members thanked officers for their work in continuing the progress made.

RESOLVED:

1. That the level of ambition for young people be maintained.
2. That the 'whole family approach' and regular engagement with young people and their families be continued.
3. That the Youth Justice Plan report be sent to Members when available in July 2020.

6. SEND INSPECTION OUTCOME LETTER

Cathy Twist, Director of Education, presented the report, stating that the findings from the Ofsted inspection held in January 2020 were positive. A new SEND Strategy was being developed, and the action plan would be presented to the Sub-Committee in Autumn 2020.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

7. 2020/21 CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Sub-Committee Members and the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People suggested the following areas for potential future scrutiny:

- The impact of Covid-19 on Children's Services and positive learning from lockdown.
- Adoption of the Unicef child-friendly city standards.
- Commissioning of youth and play services.
- The impact of poverty on young people, particularly BAME young people.

The Chair requested that a representative from the Youth Council be appointed as a co-optee as soon as possible.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted.

CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting ended at 9.25 pm

CHAIR

Date of Despatch: Tuesday 21 July
Contact for Enquiries: Maria Burton
Tel: 020 7926 8703
Fax: 020 7926 2361
E-mail: mburton2@lambeth.gov.uk
Web: www.lambeth.gov.uk