

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE 7 DECEMBER 2021

Report title: 2021-22 Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee Work Programme

Wards: All

Portfolio: Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance: Councillor Andy Wilson

Report Authorised by: Interim Director of Legal and Governance: Andrew Pavlou

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REPORT SUMMARY

This report sets out the Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee's work programme as currently drafted and provides a record of recommendations and actions arising from previous meetings (Appendix 1).

FINANCE SUMMARY

There are no financial implications beyond the existing Scrutiny budget.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To consider and approve the work programme as currently drafted (Appendix 1) and identify and prioritise matters for future scrutiny of Children's Services.

1. CONTEXT

- 1.1 The Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee (CSSSC) was established in April 2017 and its Chair, Councillor Joshua Lindsey, also sits on Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) to ensure coordination of work between the two bodies, eliminate potential duplication and feed in findings between the two meetings, where relevant. This is the second meeting in the Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee of the 2021-22 municipal year.

Terms of Reference

- 1.2 The Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee terms of reference are detailed in Lambeth Council's Constitution, page 61, as follows:
- a. The provision, planning and management of children and young people's services – including education, learning and schools; youth services; early years; education capital estate; children's social care; safeguarding children; children with learning disabilities; children in care; troubled families and the Youth Offending Service (YOS).

Meetings and Membership

- 1.3 The 21 April 2021 AGM of the Full Council also agreed the Committee membership and meeting dates for the 2021-22 municipal year.
- 1.4 Three meetings of the Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee are scheduled in 2021-22 as follow:
- a. 30 June 2021;
 - b. 07 December 2021; and,
 - c. 15 March 2022.
- 1.5 The Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee membership for 2021-22 is:
- a. Councillor Joshua Lindsey (Chair)
 - b. Councillor Marcia Cameron
 - c. Councillor Joe Corry-Roake
 - d. Councillor Nicole Griffiths
 - e. Councillor Mohamed Jaser
 - f. Councillor Jane Pickard
 - g. Councillor Marcia Cameron
 - h. Lynette Murphy-O'Dwyer (Southwark Roman Catholic Schools Commission, Church co-optee)
 - i. Frank Roberts (Southwark Church of England Diocesan Board of Education, Church co-optee)
 - j. Baboucarr Jallow (Parent Governor Representatives, co-optee)
 - k. Simon Funnell (Parent Governor Representatives, co-optee)

2. PROPOSAL AND REASONS

- 2.1 The Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee may set its own agenda within the scope of its terms of reference and this report serves to invite the Sub-Committee to consider its work programme at each meeting. Although some flexibility needs to be retained to enable items to be added at relatively short notice, planning the Committee's work programme facilitates scrutiny of those matters Members consider to be a priority, assists in the commissioning of reports and helps ensure that matters are considered in a timely manner.
- 2.2 The Sub-Committee's work programme and action monitoring table are attached at Appendix 1. The work programme is updated following completion of any actions or recommendations arising

or timetabling of new items. The work programme should be monitored at each meeting to ensure that previous actions and requests have been completed in full.

- 2.3 When considering which items to include in the work programme the following questions can usefully be asked of each proposed topic:
- a. are statutory requirements being met effectively?
 - b. are quality services being delivered?
 - c. are any audits or external inspections due?
 - d. are the specific needs of user groups being met?
 - e. does the service compare well with neighbouring/other comparable authorities and against national performance indicators?
 - f. is the service an improving one?
 - g. does the service know what changes are imminent or likely and are preparations being made?
 - h. is this a priority for the Council?

Borough Plan

- 2.4 Lambeth's Borough Plan sets out the outcomes and objectives that the Council is trying to achieve; these can be a useful tool for scrutiny members in their holding to account role; and, to support the consideration, identification, and prioritisation of work programme items. The Borough Plan is based around five big ambitions:
- a. enable sustainable growth and investment;
 - b. increase community resilience;
 - c. promote care and independence by reforming services;
 - d. make Lambeth a place where people want to live, work and invest; and,
 - e. be passionate about equality, strengthening diversity, and delivering inclusion.

External Inspections

Ofsted Inspection Lambeth Children's Services

- 2.5 The findings from the Ofsted inspection of Lambeth's Children's Services (*Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers*) was published on 9 May 2018. Ofsted's overall conclusion was that Children's Services in Lambeth 'requires improvement to be good' and were therefore no longer 'inadequate'. However, the adoption performance sub-judgement was that this service remains 'inadequate'.
- 2.6 Ofsted made 12 recommendations for further progress, including:
- a. recruit enough adopters to meet the need of children in Lambeth;
 - b. consider how to better engage young people who are gang affiliated, leaving custody, and those who have more entrenched criminal behaviours, so that they achieve better outcomes;
 - c. improve the frequency, quality and consistency of management oversight and supervision in all teams;
 - d. ensure that supervision is regular, reflective and challenging, and that managers record the rationale for their case decisions;
 - e. improve the quality of assessments so that the lived experiences of children are fully understood and inform plans;
 - f. develop an approach for assessing and responding to children detained in custody;
 - g. improve oversight of children in care with substance misuse difficulties and ensure that services and interventions are sufficient for them to receive the right help at the right time; and,
 - h. offer more practical and timely help to ensure that young people leaving care gain the skills and attitudes they need to better engage in education, employment or training.

Focused visit to Lambeth local authority children's services

- 2.7 There was a further focused visit to Lambeth local authority children's services on 9 and 10 April 2019 to evaluate the quality-of-care planning for children in care and the timeliness of permanence arrangement for children who are unable to live with their birth parents.
- 2.8 In addition to the findings as noted in the 8 May 2019 publication, Ofsted noted the following improvements in this area of social work practice:
- a. early permanence planning;
 - b. oversight of permanence planning by IROs and managers;
 - c. the quality and timeliness of permanence planning meetings;
 - d. the quality and timeliness of permanence planning meetings; and,
 - e. performance data relating to permanence.

Youth Offending Service Inspection

- 2.9 The Youth Offending Service (YOS) has been subject to progress reporting to scrutiny on securing improvement and responding to the findings of the full joint inspection of the service conducted by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation published in April 2019.
- 2.10 Arising from the annual Overview and Scrutiny Crime and Disorder Committee and the focus on serious youth violence, OSC recommended that the Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee considers whether the educational/training programmes offered by the Youth Offending Services are:
- a. sufficiently targeted;
 - b. up to date; and,
 - c. meeting clients' needs.

- 2.11 This was subsequently discussed at the 18 June 2020 Sub-Committee (Appendix 2).

SEND Inspection

- 2.12 SEND inspection of local area services for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities was published in March 2020.
- 2.13 The local SEND offer and the findings and recommendations of the inspection was considered by the Sub-Committee on 07 October 2020, which made the following recommendations:
- a. that the Council continue to support the work of the Fair Access Panel and should have an ambition of zero exclusions;
 - b. that more support be provided for families with English as an Additional Language, including the recruitment of a diverse workforce within schools;
 - c. that as far as possible, to ensure that children with SEND are not excluded, and that their needs are met at an early stage;
 - d. that exclusion data be harmonised across schools and checked for accuracy;
 - e. that schools and families be encouraged to engage with support services such as CAMHS at an early stage;
 - f. that the Council and schools improve communications on exclusions with parents and young people and give them a voice during the process, including access to independent advocacy;
 - g. that the use of internal exclusions be monitored to ensure the provision of proper education and to prevent children missing mainstream educational activities;
 - h. that all communications relating to exclusion be made with parents and carers, rather than solely via children; and,
 - i. that support for the transition from primary to secondary school be strengthened.

Performance Information

- 2.14 Information on performance across all matters within Lambeth's Children's Services is contained in the Quarterly Budget and Performance report. This information may support development of the Sub-Committee's annual work plan and identify priority issues for future scrutiny.

Forward Plan

- 2.15 The Forward Plan lists all key decisions that the Council (including the Health and Wellbeing Board) will take over the coming months. A key decision is defined as an executive decision which will:
- a. Require an amendment to the Community Plan Outcomes Framework or require a recommendation to Council to amend the Budget and Policy Framework; and/or,
 - b. Result in the local authority incurring expenditure, raising income or making savings in excess of £500,000; and/or,
 - c. Have a significant community impact on:
 - i. communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in Lambeth;
 - ii. the wellbeing of the community or the quality of service provided to a significant number of people living or working in an area; or,
 - iii. communities of interest.
- 2.16 The Plan is therefore a useful tool for identifying forthcoming decisions where the committee could add value.

3. FINANCE

- 3.1 There are no additional capital or revenue implications arising as a direct result of this report. The work programme will be undertaken within the existing budget provision for Scrutiny within the Democratic Services department within the Legal and Governance directorate.

4. LEGAL AND DEMOCRACY

- 4.1 There are no legal implications, but advice on specific work programme items may be provided in the future.
- 4.2 There are no additional comments from Democratic Services.

5. CONSULTATION AND CO-PRODUCTION

- 5.1 All Members of the Council are entitled to suggest items for scrutiny work programmes in accordance with the Council's scrutiny procedure rules (Constitution Part 3, Section B, pages 61 – 77). Suggestions are also invited specifically from scrutiny members as part of their community leadership role and from members of the public. The Council's website includes a form for the submission of suggestions and for public notice questions.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 None.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment of the work programme has not been undertaken. Reports commissioned by the Sub-Committee will be expected to address any equalities issues. Any

recommendations arising from commissions will have equalities implications considered at the drafting stage.

8. COMMUNITY SAFETY

8.1 None.

9. ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Environmental

9.1 Not applicable.

Health

9.2 Not applicable.

Corporate Parenting

9.3 None as a result of this report, although the Sub-Committee will consider reports relating to the Council's Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

Staffing and accommodation

9.4 Not applicable.

Responsible Procurement

9.5 Not applicable.

10. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

10.1 See Appendix 1.

AUDIT TRAIL

Name and Position/Title	Lambeth Directorate	Date Sent	Date Received	Comments in paragraph:
Hamant Bharadia, Assistant Director for Strategic Finance	Finance and Performance	29.11.21	29.11.21	
Andrew Pavlou, Legal Services	Legal and Governance	29.11.21	29.11.21	
Maria Burton, Democratic Services	Legal and Governance	29.11.21	29.11.21	

REPORT HISTORY

Original discussion with Cabinet Member	N/A
Report deadline	24.11.21
Date final report sent	29.11.21
Part II Exempt from Disclosure/confidential accompanying report?	No
Key decision report	No
Date first appeared on forward plan	N/A
Key decision reasons	N/A
Background information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Full Council AGM 21.04.21 b. Lambeth Borough Plan c. Forward Plan of Key Decisions d. Lambeth Council Constitution e. Ofsted inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers, 9 May 2018 f. Ofsted focused visit to Lambeth local authority children's services, 8 May 2019 letter g. Historic Ofsted activity reports and ratings h. HMIP inspection of youth offending services in Lambeth, 25 April 2019 i. Historic Justice Inspectorate reports (YOS) j. Joint Local Area SEND Inspection of Lambeth, 9 March 2020
Appendices	Appendix 1 – Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee Work Programme 2021-22