



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: TUESDAY, 6 DECEMBER 2022 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Batool (Chair)
Councillor Willmott (Vice Chair)

Councillor Khan

Councillor Dr Moore

Standing Invitees (Non-Voting)

Henry Zawadzki
Jennifer Day

Youth Representative
Union Representative

Also Present

Councillor Russell – Deputy City Mayor

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41. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Riyait, Janet McKenna, and Mohit Sharma.

42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they may have had in the business to be discussed.

There were no declarations of interest.

43. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

1. That the minutes of the meeting of the Children, Young

People and Education Scrutiny Commission held on 25 October 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

44. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

45. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS, AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

46. CHILDREN OUT OF SCHOOL REPORT

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submitted a report to provide an overview about the provision of education to children who were not on the roll of a state-maintained school, also those who were on roll but attending alternative provision, and the statutory responsibilities and processes of the local authority.

The Principal Education Officer presented the item, it was noted that:

- It was a parental duty to ensure that their children had access to education, and the Council's powers and responsibilities around children out of school were limited.
- There had been a significant increase since the pandemic of children being electively home educated.
- The Council took action to follow up on those children who were missing from education.
- There were 14 independent schools in the city, the Council now received the data of who was coming onto and off of those school rolls.
- There was a new duty to ensure that independent schools had appropriate safeguarding audits in place. There were specific inspections around safeguarding.
- There were also responsibilities around monitoring those moving schools, applying for schools when emigrating, or leaving the city.

In response to questions from Members and Youth Representatives, it was noted that:

- There was a through approach in finding children whose cases needed to be followed up.
- The largest change on numbers in previous years was the numbers being electively home educated. There had been a fluctuation in independent school numbers as well.
- The level in movement in numbers was now more dynamic than in previous decades.
- The start of the school year was a hotspot point for parents to withdraw their children from school rolls.

- These figures were not published on a national level so comparison with other authorities was not currently possible. However, DfE were expected to soon be publishing more data in this area which could lead to comparison.
- The increase in those being electively home educated seemed to be a national trend.
- There was now only one independent school which had not provided a safeguarding audit, an escalation process was ongoing. This could lead to the school being identified to the Independent Schools Inspectorate.
- The Council had no role in regulating the provision of online education. It was anticipated regulatory powers may be brought in with the upcoming Online Safety Bill.
- The DfE were not currently providing any additional funding for these new responsibilities despite the expectation of new burden funding, there was widespread concern about this. Efforts were ongoing to manage the increased demand with lesser resources.
- Current guidance suggested the Council do an annual check on each home educated child.
- There was evidence that there were home educating groups to allow contact with peers. Is there was no evidence of socialisation for children then that would be of concern from the Council regarding this.
- There was no obligation for parents home educating to follow any given curriculum.

AGREED:

1. That the Commission expresses concern over the lack of new burden funding for the additional responsibilities around monitoring children out of school.
2. That the Commission asks for a verbal update at a future meeting regarding the outstanding safeguarding audit from the independent school

47. YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2022-23

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submitted a report on the Youth Justice Plan for 2022-23.

The Deputy City Mayor for Social Care and Anti-Poverty introduced the item, noting that the recent Youth Service Awards had shown several examples of the positive impact of the Council's work with young people in the criminal justice system.

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education noted that due to the timetables set out by the National Youth Justice Board, the Plan had already been submitted and approved by the Board several months ago. Comments to build into the Plan for 2023-24 were welcomed.

The Head of Service for Early Help presented the item, it was noted that:

- The format of the Plan had to be changed to fit the new template set out by the Board. However, the focus was still on examining the approach of Services, the performance of Services, and the financial picture. Celebrating achievements and sharing ambitions were a key part of the Plan.
- Local successes included inroads in reducing the numbers of CLA entering the criminal justice system.
- The prevention agenda remained a high priority.
- The REACH Team pilot focused on reducing school exclusions. This had been successful and further funding had been received.
- There had been an emphasis on participation to ensure co-production.
- KPIs were measured by the Government.
- During the pandemic there were issues with post-16 employment retention due to casual contracts being ended quickly.
- Another area of emphasis was work with victims, including meditation sessions.

In response to questions from Members and Youth Representatives, it was noted that:

- The numbers of young people committing crime in Leicester was consistently reducing.
- There was extensive work with schools to help raise awareness for the support available for vulnerable young people but also to make clear the consequences of crime.
- Officers were not fond of the new template set out by the Board.
- There had been a number of campaigns focusing on gang crime.
- There had been a task and finish group into disproportionality in young people entering the criminal justice system. The group found that black males were more likely to enter the system at a earlier age and receive a more significant outcome. There was also a disproportion of white males in the system.
- The Board gave the Council a grant, often late in the year. This year there had been an uplift of £90k in the grant. There was also additional funding for prevention work. This work was becoming increasingly dependent on grants from Government and other partners as opposed to being funded from the general fund. This made it difficult to have a longer-term approach.
- The area of evidence-based interventions required more investment, however work with partners helped to ensure more efficient work.
- There had been no additional funding to help with regard to the recent issues in the east of the city.
- The Service used the Lundy model of participation and had a strong co-production arm.

AGREED:

1. That the Commission requests that Officers enquire with the National Youth Justice Board to see comparison data with local comparator

Council's on serious youth violence and exploitation.

2. That the Commission requests that Officers provide the findings of the task and finish group into disproportionality to Commission Members.

48. JOURNEY TO EXCELLENCE: ONE YEAR ON FROM THE OFSTED INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY SERVICES (ILACS)

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submitted a report updating the Commission on the follow on steps for Children's Services from the OFSTED inspection in 2021.

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education presented the item, it was noted that:

- Every 3 years there was a full ILACS inspection which produced a grade, in other years there would be joint targeted inspections, focused visits, and annual engagement meetings.
- A new inspection framework for SEND Services had recently been signed off.
- The Youth Justice Service was subject to inspections by the Probation Service.
- The outcome of the previous ILACS inspection in 2021 was a 'good' rating. Despite this there was still an ambition to improve Services, not to get an improved outcome of the next inspection but to provide the best Service possible.
- An Excellence Board had been created to bring partners together to focus on improving Services. The previous President of the Association of Directors of Children's Services had agreed to Chair the Board, and north Tyneside Council would also support the Council.
- There were challenges with the increased demand for Social Care and Early Help, financial pressures, and the shortage of qualified Social Workers. Work was ongoing to look at how work was allocated to see if there could be less dependency on qualified Social Workers.
- There would be a focus on Early Help so that less support would be needed later down the line. Other Councils with the 'outstanding' rating had that focus on early intervention. The concern was around the lack of resources for this.
- The joint targeted inspection originally scheduled for December had been postponed, a focused visit would instead be held on the week commencing 12 December 2022. A narrative report will be published on 30 January 2023.
- There was always 1 week notice ahead of inspections.

The Chair thanked Officers and wished everyone the best of luck for the joint targeted inspection.

AGREED:

That the Commission notes the update.

49. COMMISSIONING APPROACH TO SEND TRANSPORT - UPDATE

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submitted a report providing the Commission with an update on the commissioning programme for Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND), including the Taxi re-procurement exercise to ensure new contracts were in place with effect from 1 April 2022 and progress on managing demand and reducing reliance on the use of taxis.

The Director of SEND and Early Help presented the item, it was noted that the new taxi provision was now in place.

In response to a question from the Chair, it was noted that there was no evidence could be provided of collusion in the dynamic purchasing system.

The Chair requested a report on who the contractors were for the last 5 years, how many were engaged, and what the criteria for contractors was.

AGREED:

That the Commission requests that Officers provide Commission Members with information on who has received SEND taxi contracts in the last 5 years, how many companies were engaged, and what the criteria for the contracts was.

50. WORK PROGRAMME

Members of the Commission were invited to consider content of the work programme and were invited to make suggestions for additions as appropriate to be brought to future meetings.

51. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Director of SEND and Early Help presented a brief verbal update on the situation regarding residential amenity at Ash Field Academy. It was noted that the consultation had been extended for a further 2 weeks and would now end on 9 January 2023. A copy of the report was also attached to the consultation. School Governors had been contacted regarding the possibility of opening up the provision, they stated that a decision on funding needed to be made first.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 7.10pm.