

# Children, Environment and Leisure Policy and Scrutiny Committee

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Monday 5 February 2017</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Cllr Richard Holloway</b>
<b>Portfolio:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Young People</b>
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## 1. Children's Services

### SEN Evaluations and Transfers

- 1.1 Since September 2014, the Children and Families Act has required that the outcome of a statutory assessment of a child's special educational needs (SEN) be compiled in an Educational, Health and Care (EHC) plan, rather than an SEN statement as previously. The timescale for completing these new assessments is within 20 weeks of the initial request. The Children and Families Act also requires that all SEN statements be reviewed through an 18 week re-assessment process and transferred to EHC plans, where appropriate, by 1 April 2018.
- 1.2 Initially tri-borough services struggled to meet this challenge: in 2016, in Westminster only 15% of EHC assessments were completed within 20 weeks and only 53 transfers were processed. Therefore, in October 2016 the service completed a radical leadership reorganisation. This was followed by a comprehensive review of processes leading to the implementation of the 'New Ways of Working' in April 2017 together with a significantly increased Transfer Review team. In September 2017, the service began the implementation of a new Case Management System, developed in-house by the SEN Service and Corporate IT using input from FutureGov. All new assessments are now managed through this. A short life (i.e. one term) Historic Cases Team was also established to address cases that had not been completed to date and which were outside the 20 weeks timescale. At the same time, the service developed a detailed improvement plan for implementation over the Autumn Term, and a process to develop

Working Document Plans more efficiently from the Transfer Review information. In addition, a SEN adviser from the Department for Education was seconded to the service from September 2017 to support the Transfer Review process and compliance over the disaggregation period.

- 1.3 Since July 2017, i.e. 20 weeks after the implementation of the 'New Ways of Working' for new assessments, there has been significant improvement both in the number of EHC assessments completed and the percentage completed within the 20 weeks timescale. The latest quarter's data shows that 80% of assessments were completed within timescale, rising to 100% when historic cases were excluded. Furthermore, all historic cases have now been completed.
- 1.4 There has been a similar improvement in EHC transfers since that time. The number of transfer reviews completed is now consistently high and the number of reviews to be completed has decreased. The last quarter's transfers represented the highest achieved since the implementation of the Children and Families Act. The intention is to complete all the Transfer Reviews by the statutory deadline of 31 March 2018.

	APR – JUN	JUL – SEP	OCT – DEC
EHC transfer reviews completed	110	88	116
EHC transfer reviews remaining	776	688	487

### **Cabinet Member Priority Projects**

- 1.5 The My Westminster Projects currently under my remit are progressing.
- 1.6 The My Westminster Life Skills Short Breaks project will enhance our short breaks offer in order to enhance attendees' ability to live independently and find employment. So far a Service Level Agreement (SLA) has been drafted to deliver this project and has been shared with possible providers. Officers from children's commissioning have been leading this work but have consulted with colleagues from across the council. This SLA contains suggested Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and methods by which we can oversee the delivery of the project.
- 1.7 My Westminster Life Skills Lessons will strengthen the quality of Personal, Social, Health Education Lessons in schools and offer targeted support for schools seeking the Healthy Schools Award accreditation. Officers have contacted schools with proposals to develop Centres of Excellence to share best practice in PSHE; training will also be offered to school staff and an assessment tool for these areas will be developed. We hope to incorporate schools' feedback on these ideas going forward.
- 1.8 A task and finish group led by the Early Help Service in consultation with the Integrated Gangs Unit has been set up to deliver the My Westminster Stay Safe Project. A SLA has

been drafted, again in consultation with officers from across the council, for the two strands of this project. Timelines for delivery are currently being agreed.

- 1.9 The Council Tax Exemption for Care Leavers has been implemented for those eligible in the last quarter. Our Looked After Children and Care Leavers team is currently working with the Revenue and Benefits team to identify eligible care leavers for the next quarter.

### **Youth Violence Roundtable**

- 1.10 On 14 December I chaired a Youth Violence Roundtable which brought together stakeholders, officers from across the council, third sector providers and the police. The group reviewed a report by the Integrated Gangs Unit and the Youth Offending Service. These reports highlighted that while serious youth violence has increased in Westminster and London as a whole, the number of young offenders referred to our Youth Offending Services has dropped. This discrepancy could be explained by a variety of factors; such as young people from outside Westminster committing violent crimes in the city or the fact the Youth Offending Service deals with a more limited age-range than the age-range included in the 'youth crime' figures. I have asked that further work be undertaken to understand this discrepancy and the recent spike in youth violence.
- 1.11 The group also discussed the broader themes of the changing nature of gangs, the increasingly challenging phenomenon of cross county lines crime, moped crime, and other trends in youth crime in Westminster. Our increased engagement with schools and excluded children reflects the greater emphasis Westminster is putting on working with vulnerable young people at risk of becoming involved in youth violence, rather than solely tackling gangs. For example, the IGU delivered a series of workshops in schools focused on knife crime, serious youth violence and gangs, drug related offending, and exploitation and raised awareness about the dangers of carrying knives and weapons.

### **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children**

- 1.12 The council now has 68 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in the care population. Our National Transfer Scheme Threshold is currently 28 UASCs (0.07% of the child population), thus we are 40 UASCs over our threshold.
- 1.13 These 40 are awaiting placement to other local authorities. Until that time, we have accommodated all of these 40 children in accordance with the Looked After Children guidance of the Children's Act 1989. Each case is allocated to a social worker, an assessment of their needs is completed and they are accommodated as a Looked After Child.

- 1.14 We have received £185,000 in additional funding from MHCLG to support our work in this area. We have also submitted a bid to MHCLG for funding for English language lessons and other integration initiatives for UASCs in our care and are waiting to hear if this has been successful.

## **2. Schools and Education**

### **School Results**

- 2.1 In mid-December the Department for Education confirmed Key Stage 2 results. This confirmed that Westminster primary schools performed above the national average in 2017. 68% of Westminster pupils reached the expected KS2 standards and 10% exceeded that standard. These results are the 19<sup>th</sup> best in the country and 8<sup>th</sup> highest in inner London.
- 2.2 Revised secondary schools results are expected to be confirmed at the end of January.

### **School Funding**

- 2.3 The transition to the National Funding Formula (NFF) will mean the funding schools receive will be increasingly determined by student numbers and councils will have a reduced ability to redistribute school funding money from central government. This means that schools with falling rolls and small student numbers will face increasing financial challenges, despite the increases in per-pupil funding the NFF provides.
- 2.4 Now that the latest student numbers are confirmed we have a good idea about the schools facing the greatest challenge during the transition to the NFF. I and my officers, have been in frequent communication with these schools and I attended the latest Schools Forum, at which this issue was discussed. I am confident that schools are aware of the challenges they are facing and we are doing all we can to offer assistance and advice to schools planning for the NFF changes.
- 2.5 In addition, the continued pressure on the High Needs block of the Dedicated Schools Grant for the provision of funding for children with Special Educational Needs. This pressure is being felt across the country, but more acutely in London. We are currently working with London Councils and the DfE to ensure the level of funding is sufficient to meet the increasing demands.

### **Pre-school Education Provision**

- 2.6 As previously reported to this committee, uptake of the 2 year old free education and childcare offer is 80% which is above both London and national averages. However, uptake of the 30 hours funding for 3 year olds in Westminster remains low – only 37%.

There may be several reasons for this, including the fact that the Department for Education has overestimated the number of eligible 3 year olds living in Westminster. Westminster also continues to fund some full time places in schools and maintained nurseries for this academic year.

- 2.7 In order to manage our work around these offers a Childcare Partnership Board has recently been established. This board will bring together officers from our Early Years team, Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) providers, maintained nursery providers and primary heads. It will develop a clearer understanding of demand and take up, and eliminate barriers to efficient allocation of places. We hope the work of this board will help improve uptake of in free childcare hours and enhance our relationship with providers in the sector.

### **Marylebone Boys Schools Development Scheme**

- 2.8 Marylebone Boys School's (MBS) permanent home is being developed as part of the wider Dudley House Scheme in the Paddington Basin. The MBS element of this scheme is due to be practically completed by 31 August 2018, in time for the new school year. Work is progressing well, the concrete structure is now complete with an exterior façade and windows, and work on the interior is also underway. The scheme remains on schedule.

## **3. Children's Commissioning**

### **Passenger Transport Re-procurement**

- 3.1 A significant amount of work has been undertaken to develop a re-procurement strategy for passenger transport. Passenger transport refers to council funded home to school transport for children with special education needs and disabilities and home to day centre transport for vulnerable adults. This re-procurement is necessary as the previous contract frameworks for taxis and minibuses will expire in 2018 and 2019, respectively.
- 3.2 A commissioning strategy has been developed to establish two Westminster City Council Passenger Transport Frameworks, which will aim to formalise high quality standards, reflect feedback from our extensive consultation with service users, and deliver value for money.
- 3.3 Due to the length, value and importance of the frameworks my colleagues the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Corporate Services and the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services and Public Health will be consulted on the strategy, as will our counterparts in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. The frameworks for taxi and minibus provision are planned to go live in August 2018 and August 2019, respectively.

## **Young Westminster Foundation Needs Analysis**

- 3.4 Officers have provided feedback on the first draft of the Young Westminster Foundation Needs Analysis Report. Officers have asked for further details and clarification on some of the methodology in the draft report and hope to receive an updated version of the needs analysis by the end of January.

## **Perfect Pathways**

- 3.5 Perfect Pathways is a project to improve services for children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The aim is a consistently high quality service for children with SEND and their families, while meeting required spending targets.
- 3.6 As part of this project we have undertaken a system wide review of services for children with children with SEND, consulting parents, providers and other stakeholders on their current experience of the service. Several themes emerged from this engagement which officers have since developed into proposals for the service, from a revised and more accessible short break offer to the introduction of a new key worker service. Officers now intend to create more detailed deliver plans relating to these proposals.

## **Troubled Families Earned Autonomy Expression of Interest**

- 3.7 An expression of interest in seeking earned autonomy status for our Troubled Families Programme was submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in November last year. In December we were advised by MHCLG that Westminster had been selected as one of 19 authorities to progress to the next stage of the process.
- 3.8 Earned Autonomy status for our services would allow us to receive funding for our Supporting Families Programme at the start of the remaining two years, rather than as individual payments by results when we achieve more generic national outcomes which are not necessarily aligned to our city's particular circumstances. Receiving the funding in this way would allow us to plan programme spending more effectively and tailor the goals of the scheme to Westminster's particular priorities. It would also offer the opportunity to better integrate the programme with our other services (e.g. family hubs). The next stage of the process to develop these goals and a corresponding funding agreement with MHCLG.
- 3.9 Officers have begun to develop a Memorandum of Understanding with our proposed model for MHCLG. While this currently looks like a good opportunity, we are continuing to work through the implications and determining any risks such earned autonomy would present. This Memorandum of Understanding will be shared with MHCLG in mid-February.