

Date:	12 September 2022
Portfolio:	Young People, Learning and Leisure
The Report of:	Councillor Tim Roca, Cabinet Member for Young People Learning and Leisure
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1. Key decisions made in the preceding period since my last Policy & Scrutiny report dated 12 July 2022

- 12 August 2022 – Direct Award of Travel Care contracts for Children and Adults. This was an urgent decision required for the provision of transport for home to school travel care for children with special educational needs and vulnerable adults to day activities after the provider advised they would cease services in August. More information can be found [here](#).

2. The following report includes my priorities and delivery progress to date of the new administration:

2.1 Children's Services

Ofsted visit focussing on safeguarding against extra-familial harm

In June 2022, Children's Services received a themed focused visit by Ofsted, looking at Extra Familial Abuse, often referred to as Contextual Safeguarding. The inspection looked at many areas of work including child sexual and criminal exploitation, children missing from home, care, and school, risks associated with gangs, radicalisation, trafficking, and modern slavery. Inspectors spoke to children, young adults, workers and managers, and scrutinised performance management and quality-assurance information and children's case records.

In a letter published 20th July 2022, Ofsted Inspectors were positive about Westminster's leadership and partnership working "Protecting children and supporting their families are at the heart of a whole-council, partnership, and community-based approach... Senior officers and elected members of the council ensure that a collective responsibility for safeguarding children is embedded across the council."

Key Headline findings:

- Children at risk of extra-familial harm receive excellent support and services in Westminster.
- Senior leaders and partners critically evaluate the impact partnership work is having on improving children's lives and strive to identify children who are at risk but invisible to services.

- Westminster’s culture of compassion and high support is mirrored by staff in their work with children.
- A consistent quality of practice, a clearly articulated value base, effective professional development strategies, and the stability of a diverse, skilled and caring workforce provide a solid foundation for the work to improve children’s lives and safeguard them from extra-familial harm.

No recommendations for improvement were identified by Ofsted, though we continue to work tirelessly to build upon excellence to ensure that our safeguarding practices are as effective as possible.

School Uniform Support Fund launched to support families in need

Following the approval of £85,550 funding for a new School Uniform Support Fund, the School Finance Team in Children’s Services have successfully communicated with Primary schools in the borough and distributed funding to support families in need with the cost of school uniform. The scheme offers the highest amount of support compared with similar schemes across London. On 14th July, direct payments totalling £77,539 were made to all 41 primary schools in the borough based on the number of children eligible for Free School Meals. Of this, £9,889 was allocated to support the families of 319 children entering reception, at an allocation of £31 per child. A further £67,650 has been allocated to support the families of 451 outgoing year 6 children who are moving to secondary school, at a rate of £150 per child.

Once schools re-open in September, the Council will make contact to establish how well the distribution of funds went and support schools with ensuring that families that are eligible receive the funding.

Holiday Activity and Food Fund and Additional Offer

Through the Department for Education’s Holiday Activity and Food Programme (HAF), £440,000 has been allocated to fund 3200 summer holiday spaces for Westminster’s, school age, Free School Meal (FSM) eligible children.

To further address concerns around the effects of the cost-of-living crisis on holiday hunger, Westminster City Council has provided an additional £239,000 to enable children under five, and young people aged 16-18 (or 16-25 with additional needs) to access holiday and food provision for free, as well as those who fall just short of the FSM eligibility criteria but are experiencing hardship. It has also enabled organisations providing beneficial activities and food who fall outside of the strict requirements of the HAF programme (where providers must offer a minimum of 4 hours daily for 4 days a week for 4 weeks) to provide free activities and meals.

The additional funding has provided an extra 2700 activity spaces, delivered by some 44 organisations. 11 ongoing HAF providers have accessed this additional funding to extend their offer to children and young people who need support but do not meet the FSM criteria. Providers used the funding to offer a range of workshops and play activities, such as a week-long camp at the London Zoo, tutoring sessions, sporting programmes, cooking workshops, cartoon-making workshops, and a careers fair at a library, offering initial interviews with local employers, free professional photography and CV writing workshops. Other providers of free summer activities used the funding to introduce free meals for children and young people, such as Somerset House’s ‘This Bright Land’ activity programme.

At the time of writing, the holiday activities are in full swing, and colleagues are currently undertaking monitoring visits of the various providers.

Launch of the Bi-borough School Inclusion Strategy

Children's Services has officially launched and published the Bi-Borough School Inclusion Strategy 2022. The Strategy was developed in collaboration with partners across the system including schools, alternative provision settings, Early Help, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, and voluntary and community sector organisations. This ambitious strategy sets out our collective aims to:

- Reduce the number of children and young people being removed from mainstream education as a result of their behaviour.
- Address factors that lead to specific groups of children and young people being disproportionately affected by exclusion.
- Drive a whole system commitment to work with children and young people at risk of exclusion in a trauma-informed way.
- Improve outcomes for children and young people who are excluded.
- Improve reintegration rates from alternative provision back into mainstream education.

We know that there are no easy fixes for creating truly inclusive learning environments and that turning our ambitions into reality will require us to strengthen our partnerships and continue to learn from one another. On the 13th of July 2022, we held a launch event for Kensington and Chelsea schools at Chelsea Academy to bring together colleagues from across the system to share best practices and hear from schools who have successfully implemented trauma-informed approaches. This event had a secondary-school age focus and we will be hosting a second launch event in September at a Primary School in Westminster.

The success of the Strategy is being tracked by our Education Partnership Board that is chaired by the Director of Children's Services and has representation from colleagues across the Education system.

Supporting Ukrainian Arrivals

To date 408 Ukrainian's have arrived in Westminster under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, of whom 108 are children under 18 years old. A further 225 Ukrainian's have been issued visas and are due to arrive in the borough, whilst a further 133 have visa applications that are pending.

On 15 July 2022, the Homes for Ukraine Scheme was expanded to allow eligible children and minors under the age of 18, who had already applied for visas, to come to the UK without a parent or guardian and stay with a "known sponsor". On 10 August 2022, the visa application process for new applications from eligible children opened. Children arriving under this scheme are able to live in the UK for up to three years and access education, healthcare, benefits, employment and other support.

For unaccompanied minors coming over on the Homes for Ukraine scheme, the safeguarding checks on a sponsor must be completed before a new visa application for an eligible child can be started.

This includes:

- Home Office security/criminal record checks
- DBS checks (on all members of sponsor household aged 16+)
- Accommodation suitability check
- Council led assessment including:
 - A suitability assessment of sponsorship arrangements in accordance with the Guidance on Private Fostering
 - Confirmation of expectations including in relation to the duration of sponsorship

- Written confirmation that the prospective sponsor understands the expectations of them
- Councils have the discretion to veto a sponsor if they are deemed unsuitable

This is a long-term commitment for the council, as once the child is in the UK, ongoing visits will need to be made to ensure that the arrangements continue to be satisfactory and in the child's best interest. This should be in line with the guidance for Private Fostering arrangements. At present, we have a relatively low number of applicants from unaccompanied minors, but we may see this rise over time as applications remain open.

Ukrainian Welcome event

On the 21st July, the Bi-borough Ukrainian response team in partnership with the Ukrainian Welcome Centre hosted a welcome event for Ukrainian arrivals. The event was held at the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral and was attended by more than 150 Ukrainians and their sponsors (including children). Colleagues from across council departments, local health bodies, and voluntary and community sector organisations were on hand to provide information, advice and guidance. It was a successful event where Ukrainian guests were able to get advice and information on vaccines, GP and wider health services, school admissions, the family hubs, youth services, voluntary sector services, housing, ESOL, employment, leisure, and libraries. Extremely positive feedback was received from all those who attended.

From speaking with our Ukrainian guests, service representatives were able to identify key areas of demand and challenges facing guests. This information has been collated, and staff working on the Bi-borough Ukraine response are exploring measures to address current and emerging issues such as extending the ESOL offer.

2.2 Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES)

Supporting residents into Digital Careers

WAES has continued its work in this area and has been awarded funds by the GLA to run Digital Skills Bootcamps. These will begin in September 2022 with a target to train and support up to 75 people.

Supporting Ukrainian Families

Demand for English as a Second Language (ESOL) classes has increased due to the needs of the recently arrived Ukrainian refugees. We are running summer classes at our Lisson Grove centre to ensure continuity of study and support. We have now supported around 150 individuals and continue to deal with daily enquiries.

Department for Education (DfE) Consultation Paper

On 21 July 2022, the DfE published their second consultation on Funding and Accountability for the Further Education sector and the deadline to respond is 21 September. WAES is working with HOLEX (the Adult and Community Learning membership body) to prepare a response that reflects concerns at a local, regional and national level. We will also be liaising with the GLA to understand their position on this, as devolved authorities may have a choice on whether there are aspects of national policy that they will flex to ensure that local needs are met.

2.3 Culture

Culture Fund

A Culture Fund proposal is being prepared for a Cabinet Member Decision that will reallocate unspent MyWestminster Funds to fund cultural initiatives, in partnership with local community stakeholders, over the next four years. The fund is to be part of the Fairer Westminster strategy to support the delivery of ambitions to widen opportunities for participation in culture, improve the wellbeing of our residents and enhance the local visitor offer through a range of targeted programmes.

Art of London's Brighter Future Public Art Project

Heart of London Business Alliance's Art of London programme launched the Brighter Future public art project on 9 August in partnership with National Gallery X and comedian Harry Hill, supported by the council. Art installations are appearing in Piccadilly Circus, Leicester Square, Waterloo Place and St James's Market until the autumn.

Summer on the Square with the National Gallery

The council has worked with the National Gallery to facilitate a free festival of art on the North Terrace, building on the success of 2021's 'Sketch in the Square', part of the inaugural Inside Out Festival. Visitors can take part in free, daily creative activities to inspire them to create their own masterpieces and all sessions are on a drop-in basis for all ages and abilities. Large scale immersive installations inspired by the Gallery's collection will also pop up outside the gallery.

2.4 Leisure

Seymour Leisure Centre

Willmott Dixon have been appointed as the build contractor for Seymour Centre. The earliest date that the Seymour Centre could close for works to begin is in Summer 2023, though this could be later in 2023. This date depends on achieving planning permission and the site surveys which will bring to light any technical complications.

Everyone Active Contract

Draft legal terms for the new Deed of Variation to the contract have been shared with Sports Leisure Management. The service is talking to their legal team about changes relating to points of feedback around the impacts of future site closures on minimum income guarantee.

Active Westminster Strategy

Work has begun to develop the Active Westminster Strategy 2023+. A core part of the strategy is about services and resources being available to all. Stakeholder consultation will commence in September with an aim of finalising the strategy in November.