

Children and Adults, Public Health and Voluntary Sector Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 28 February 2023

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 5 December 2022

- Children and Young People's Plan Adoption.
- Secure Children's Home for London and Pan-London Commissioning Vehicle.

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

2.1 Children's Services

Mental Health Crisis and Pressure on Placement Availability

Nationally, in the last three years the likelihood of young people having a mental health problem has increased by 50% (The Children's Society, 2021). The pressure and increased demand on national Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is well known. In response to this, WCC has invested heavily in early intervention services such as supporting the implementation of Mental Health Support Teams, ongoing funding for KOOTH (our online counselling and digital early intervention and prevention service, free to people aged 11-25), and new funding of Mental Health Youth Practitioners within youth Hubs.

However, for children and young people with severe and complex mental health problems there is acute pressure within health services and step-down social care placements. A national shortage of social care placements able to support children with complex mental health and safeguarding needs has in some instances resulted in children remaining in hospital far longer than necessary, unable to be discharged due to levels of ongoing risk. Lack of placements available is a real challenge for children with difficulties such as these, with other neighbouring councils experiencing the same problems in step-down placements for young people with complex mental health needs. This teamed with the pressure on NHS beds creates tension within the professional network.

The national placement shortage and associated rising costs of social care placements affects our ability to source appropriate, timely and reasonably priced placements for all children and young people with complex or additional needs and is not limited to those with mental health needs. We have a skilled placements team who are involved early on in care planning, and who work hard to negotiate costs on placements. However, this is a national pressure where we have restricted influence. We work with London Commissioning Alliance with other London boroughs to collectively address placement sufficiency and cost. Following the 'David' Serious Case review in 2021, we are making efforts to connect with NHS England to improve commissioning arrangements across the health and care systems.

Increase in complexity in social care referrals

Since the pandemic, the complexity of referrals to children's social care, combined with the levels of distress faced by many families we work with, has noticeably increased. This has an impact not only on social workers and other frontline practitioners within social care, but also on those working in schools, youth organisations and voluntary sector organisations. Frontline social work staff, Early Help and IGXU staff are spending increasing time supporting those professionals in managing the complexity and often traumatic situations they are dealing with.

In response to traumatising and sometimes fatal Serious Youth Violence and gang-related incidents, frontline staff (in particular, in the IGXU) have spent significant time providing support to those who were affected, including families and peers of those affected; those who have witnessed incidents; youth workers; school staff; and voluntary sector staff. This support ranges from intensive therapeutic support, holding coffee mornings for concerned parents, chairing support meetings, and 1:1 support with workers. The unique set of skills within our teams, combining therapeutic training, understanding of trauma, as well as experience of managing high levels of risk and an extensive knowledge of the local community, mean that our staff are often the best placed to provide this much needed support to our partners, in addition to the day-to-day work of each of the teams. Whilst we have a skilled and committed workforce, the increased complexity of work is very time consuming especially when trying to prevent adolescents from entering care and addressing risk taking behaviours. We need to ensure that staff have the right level of support to ensure that staff's wellbeing is not negatively impacted and that they are able to sustain their work.

Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme and Additional Offer and Partnership Funding

Over the Christmas holidays, The Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme supported 1,410 children to access a range of different activities with meal provision. This is a notable increase from the numbers attending over Christmas 2021 which supported 862 children and young people. Activities over the Christmas holidays included arts and crafts, theatre trips, dance classes with professional dancers, and TV production classes.

Given that the Department for Education (DfE) do not fund a holiday food and activity offer during half terms, a partnership has been formed with Grosvenor Estates. They have agreed to match fund WCC's funding to deliver vital HAF programmes during the October 2022 and February 2023 half terms. This is to ensure that vulnerable children in Westminster do not go hungry during the holidays.

Considerable efforts are being made to ensure that parents are still applying for FSM. For example, the Council has written to schools in the school's bulletin encouraging them to ensure parents continue to apply for FSM and setting out the additional holiday benefits to FSM pupils. The importance of supporting eligible parents to apply for FSM was also stressed at Schools Forum. Certain schools have also committed to running incentive schemes to encourage parents to apply. The comms campaign around the free school lunch offer has included posters and fliers for pupils and parents that articulate the additional benefits for FSM pupils.

Introduction of Universal Free School Lunches in Westminster Primary schools

In December 2022, Westminster's Cabinet approved a decision to provide free school lunches to all children in maintained primary schools in the borough in response to the Cost-of-Living Crisis. Universal free school lunches are currently funded by the Department for Education for children in reception through to Year 2 (Key Stage 1). To ensure that no children go hungry in our primary schools, Cabinet have pledged £2.7 million over the next 18 months to fund universal free school lunches for children in Year 3 to Year 6. The introduction of this scheme, which began at the start of this term, will save families up to £550 per child per year, supporting those who need it the most.

School Funding

DfE's provisional allocations for school funding for 2023-2024 show an average increase of 6.4% per pupil. This is made up of the Dedicated Schools Grant, which has increased by £6.498m (3.6%) from 2022/23 to £185.017m, and the Mainstream Schools Additional Grant (MSAG) of £4.423m. Every school has an increase of at least 1.9% per pupil compared to 2022/23 funding.

We expect that the provisional allocation will cover the costs of the 2022-2023 pay award (4%) and non-pay related cost increases of 7.4% (e.g., energy and resources). However, this allocation may not cover the pay award for 2023-2024, and school finances will be under huge pressure if the pay awards exceed 2%.

There are 10 schools in deficit and with falling rolls, meaning they continue to be in a challenging budget position. We continue to offer support by way of strategic medium-term planning, for example the sharing of resources and potential amalgamations.

Proposed Amalgamation of Primary Schools

Due to a 17% reduction in the birth rate in London, primary school rolls continue to fall. As of October, the surplus primary school capacity across the borough is 25.7%. Two Church of England primary schools, St Stephen's and St Mary Magdalene's (located in the Westbourne ward which has a capacity of 28%) are currently consulting on amalgamating on the St Mary Magdalene's site with effect from September 2023. The council is advising and supporting both schools during this 4-week governor-led consultation.

Early Years Funding:

Nursery Schools

DfE's proposed changes to Maintained Nursery School (MNS) funding would reduce Westminster's funding by £342,941 in 2023-2024. The Early Years' Service has successfully challenged the DfE and helped negotiate a 3-year phased reduction in funding.

The proposed introduction of a funding cap of £10 per MNS per hour per child from April 2023 (a reduction from the current rate of £12.76 in Westminster) would reduce Westminster's funding by £342,941, or 25% of the current funding of £1,431,641. As a result of The Early Years Service's negotiations and counterproposal, the DfE announced in December that the cap will be introduced at a slower rate in Westminster. This negotiated reduction is £217k less than the originally proposed reduction for 2023-24, and a further £108k for 2024-25. Although this still signifies a reduction in funding, this action will reduce the impact on our maintained nursery schools and allow time for our nurseries to adjust to the new funding levels. The new funding amounts will have implications on staffing structures in most of the nurseries. However, a phased approach will be introduced as the DfE will be introducing the reductions in funding over a period of three years.

Early Years Provision in Primary Schools

The net increase in Early Years block funding in the DSG corresponds to the increase in 2 and 3-4-year-old funding rates and is partly offset by a reduction in the maintained nursery school (MNS) supplement rate of approximately 12%. The funding for 2022/23 and 2023/24 will be updated to reflect later Early Years census data. The majority of the funding is passed to providers both in maintained schools and private, voluntary and independent settings. The hourly rate for 3- and 4-year-olds will increase by 3% to £7.00. However, there is no separate teachers' pay and pension grant in 2023/24 and for maintained school providers this means the rate will effectively only increase by 1%. The hourly funding rates for eligible 2-year-olds has increased by 10% to £7.56 (+10%).

Strep A and Scarlet Fever

The latest data from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) continues to show Scarlet Fever and Group A Strep (GAS) infections remain high. There has been a drop in the number of cases notified over the Christmas and New Year Holidays, but this may rise now children are mixing again in school.

The picture in Westminster for 2022 is that there have been 32 notifications of scarlet fever and 4 notifications of invasive group A streptococcal disease (iGAS) in both adults and children. We have had no notifications of deaths. Since November 2022, the UKHSA have notified us of 9 outbreaks of group A strep in schools and nurseries in Westminster.

Westminster's Public Health response includes:

- An extensive comms campaign with bulletins, Headteacher's meetings and comms sent out to schools and nurseries reminding them of the actions they need to take in the event of an outbreak.
- Two letters sent to parents in November and December from the Director of Public Health, the first about scarlet fever and the second repeating those messages but with an emphasis on the signs and symptoms of iGAS and what action they need to take.
- Creation of a webpage with information on the Council website, information shared on Residents bulletins and through social media

Short Breaks Overspend

Our Short Breaks service is currently projecting an overspend of £584k by the end of this financial year. The overspend is mainly attributed to the Disabled Team care packages, at a projected overspend of £455k. These are packages for children with disabilities with complex needs, who are Children in Need (CIN) or Looked After Children (LAC). The characteristics of these children, of whom we have around 50 in Westminster, means they require extensive care packages. These cases are continuous, and these costs cannot be foreseen. For example, if a child with high needs requires care due to illness of a parent or carer, or if families require support in the home to prevent family breakdown.

Short Break care packages are projecting an overspend of £106k and Direct Payments of £23k. A contributing factor is the changes to the assessment criteria by NHS partners in the CCG for children with medical needs. A number of families have had their care packages reduced by Health partners as a result of these changes which has resulted in a reliance on social care services to meet the shortfall. Work with NHS colleagues to address the impact of these recent changes is underway. Currently, 3.4% children in Westminster have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Nationally, EHCPs have risen by 8% over the last 2 years, however we are seeing a 4% rise locally. Our hypothesis is that by investing in early help we are preventing families relying on more intensive and costly support further down the line, though we are now overspending in this area.

Work is also underway with Finance to evaluate the costings of CIN and LAC placement support, and to differentiate these costs from other Short Breaks costs. The Transformation and Innovation service are working with the CCG around the care packages of children with complex needs. Some of the Short Breaks overspend can be attributed to additional staffing costs as the Tresham centre is temporary based in Lilestone Street whilst the Tresham Centre is undergoing refurbishment.

Tresham Centre Developments

Building work is underway on the Tresham North centre, which will amalgamate two buildings into one new state-of-the-art building, with much-needed space and appropriate security and layout to support children with complex and varied needs. The new building will increase the capacity of the centre and house the outsourced play schemes which operates out of Four Feathers youth club and Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee School, saving money on the hiring of these venues and reducing running costs.

Following the amalgamation of the St Vincent and Westminster Cathedral primary schools, which left the Westminster Cathedral School site vacant, work is planned to use the site for both the expansion of College Park school to increase capacity, and to also house the Tresham South services. This will increase capacity and save money on transport where children have been transported to the North site for services. Building work will start in the Easter holidays.

Ukraine Update

Since the Homes for Ukraine Scheme was launched in March 2022, 348 Westminster residents have opened their homes to accommodate 619 Ukrainian arrivals (127 of whom are children). Although the number of arrivals has declined from a peak of 87 families arriving in May 2022, 83 additional families have arrived in the last 3 months, and we continue to see a steady influx of new families coming into the borough. To date, 228 visas have been issued to Ukrainians who have not yet arrived in the borough, and 154 applications are being processed.

In addition to arrivals on the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, there will be additional Ukrainian families in the borough on the Family Scheme and/or the extension scheme. The government does not provide any information at the local authority level on these schemes, but there have been 44,200 arrivals on the family scheme, 27,700 extensions issued, and 110,300 arrivals on the sponsorship scheme.

Since March, 51 individuals / households have presented to the housing department in need of support relating to homelessness. Of those, 26 were here on family visas and 23 on sponsorship visas (2 other visa types). 14 of these cases have been closed. As of 23 December, the Housing Solutions Service was supporting 37 individuals / households, 28 of which had been placed in temporary accommodation.

Recognising the ongoing war in Ukraine, the government announced a new package of support as part of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme on 14 December. After the first year of sponsorship, hosts will receive an increased payment of £500 per month (up from £350) and two funds have been created specifically to help address the homeless pressures – a £150 million fund aimed primarily at helping to support Ukrainian families move into their own accommodation, and a £500 million capital fund to acquire housing stock for those fleeing conflict and reduce homelessness. We are waiting for details as to how these funds will be distributed.

2.2 Young People's Skills, Learning and Opportunities

City Lions

City Lions continues to give the young people of the borough aged 13-16 access to cultural and creative opportunities with the aim to help them lead successful and meaningful lives. The programme focuses on opening their eyes to creative career opportunities, raising their aspirations and developing a creative future workforce.

The headlines for this period are:

- Westminster City Council work experience has been agreed with SLT, the first cohort are due to start in February.

- £10,000 funding agreed from Christies Auctioneers to support the work of City Lions, in partnership with DreamArts. This will be a co-creation project with young people, due to start soon.
- City Lions mentoring project 2023 has launched and a Westminster Academy Specific Mentoring Project is also due to launch.
- The City Lions Christmas Holiday Programme, in partnership with Westminster Cultural organisation, (supported by HAF funding) was fully attended over the festive period.
- The Lord Mayors Parlour hosted a City Lions Partner event with 60 partners from creative and cultural organisations across the city.

Westminster Employment Service Support for Young People

The Westminster Employment Service Support for Young People continues to see a steady flow of referrals into the service from both internal and external partners. The team continues to focus on suitable employment opportunities in the final quarter of 22/23, and has collaborated with:

- Iconic Steps – to deliver a two-day workshop (25 – 26 January) for young people to explore careers in the creative industry.
- “Realiz” – in conjunction with Apprentice Nation, a one-day workshop on the 2 February to help young people discover a new level of confidence and self-belief whilst preparing for the professional working world.

2.3 Culture

Culture Fund

The £1.8 million Culture Fund was launched publicly in November, and the Culture and Community Grants Fund for community arts projects targeting residents opened. The Inside Out Grants Fund for outdoor arts activities during the Inside Out Festival is currently open with a deadline of 10 February. The council ran an engagement event about the new funding opportunities for cultural and community partners in the Lord Mayors Parlour in December.

Following cuts to their Arts Council funding, the Donmar Warehouse theatre have been awarded £25K of funding from the Culture Fund commissions strand and will tour 10 secondary schools in Westminster throughout the summer, reaching up to 1,500 students.

ENO Arts Council Grant

The Leader wrote to the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the DCMS Select Committee in November to argue for the reinstatement of Arts Council funding to key Westminster arts organisations totalling 45%.

In January, the Arts Council issued a statement awarding the English National Opera (ENO) £11.46m funding for 2023-24 which was closer to previous annual levels (£12.8m) albeit with a 9% cut. The ENO is likely to continue delivering a programme at the London Coliseum while discussing possible regional activity and relocation with the Arts Council. A further grant extension for 2024-26 may be announced in March.

Creative Apprenticeships Event

The Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES) have developed several apprenticeship standards relevant to the cultural and creative sectors:

- Library, Information and Archive Services Assistant
- Museums and Galleries Technician
- Cultural Learning and Participation Officer

The Westminster Culture Network of over 600 members have been invited to an employer event during National Apprenticeships Week event at Westminster Abbey on 6 February. This will promote the benefits of work-based learning and apprenticeships as a great way to both diversify and upskill the workforce. Additional WAES events during the week will engage schoolchildren, educators, and potential recruits across Westminster.

Out and About

Out and About is the Council's programme of free cultural events for residents over 65 who may be experiencing social isolation, and has been relaunched early this year. The programme introduces residents to culture and Open Age has helped with recent recruitment of new members. Over 300 residents have signed up to Out and About, and many from our priority wards.

West End LIVE

The sponsor's lunch was hosted in November, and sponsors will be contacted soon to secure their support for this year's event, which will take place from 17 - 18 June 2023. The date was announced to the public on 20 January.

2.4 Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES)

Matrix Accreditation

Matrix accreditation is the international quality standard for organisations that deliver information, advice and/or guidance to clients, either as their sole purpose or as part of their wider service and education offer. Achieving the Standard involves an agreed assessment process, where the quality and delivery of information and advice is assessed. WAES had an external verification visit in December 2022, which involved three days of interviews of a cross-section of staff across the service and external partners. This resulted in WAES gaining full accreditation for Information, Advice and Guidance Services.

2021/22 Annual Self-Assessment Report (SAR)

The annual Service Self-Assessment Report has been approved by the Board of Governors and will be uploaded to the Ofsted portal by the end of this month. Areas of focus that Governors commented on for this academic year include:

- Reviewing how we capture and track destinations data for learners.
- Improving outcomes on functional skills qualifications.
- Understanding the growth in learners requiring safeguarding and additional support needs.
- Embedding a greater understanding of PREVENT with learners.

2.5 Leisure

Leisure Centre Stats

- From October to December 2022 the average total attendance across the leisure contract is 67% compared to the same period in 2019.
- Little Venice has remained consistently low at an average of 22% over the past 12 months.
- Due to the festive period, leisure centre usage typically sees reduced numbers. However, whilst Marshall Street recovery averages at 34%, it is one of two centres to report and increased percentage change in attendance comparing November to December.

Seymour Leisure Centre

Seymour Leisure Centre development is nearing stage 3 where the project will go for planning permission. Stakeholders have expressed a desire to have more wet side space and expressed concern that plans reduce the space impacting on provision. Cabinet Members have recently

decided on a way forward with the refurbishment. This includes leaving the existing main pool as-is in terms of dimensions but undertaking a full renovation and access enhancements. There will be no learner pool with this option, but the wet-side capacity will remain the same.

Everyone Active Contract

The Leisure Contract Deed of Variation took effect on 1 February 2023 and will last until 30 June 2026. The Authority and Sport and Leisure Management have agreed the following Minimum Income Guarantee position, taking into consideration London Living Wage to be implemented for applicable Everyone Active staff, as well as costs associated to the new Church Street and Jubilee Community Leisure Centres.

The Deed of Variation encompasses:

- The Council have an 80:20 minimum split of profit in our favour.
- There will be no sharing of losses.
- Minimum Income Guarantee of £200k in year 2 of the contract and a further £200k in year.

Financial implications for any closure or added new site to the leisure portfolio will be negotiated case by case. Currently this only applies to Seymour Leisure Centre, as there are no other site closures or new sites planned during extended contract period.