

## Minutes

### CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

18 March 2015

Meeting held at Committee Room 6 - Civic Centre,  
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



	<p><b>Committee Members Present:</b> Councillors John Hensley (Chairman), Brian Crowe (Vice-Chairman), Nick Denys, Jem Duducu, Duncan Flynn, Peter Money, John Morse, Jane Palmer, Jan Sweeting (Labour Lead) and Mr Tony Little.</p> <p><b>LBH Officers Present:</b> Steve Buckingham (Performance and Intelligence Manager), Vince Clark (Interim Assistant Director Children in Care, Permanency &amp; Children's Resources), Nikki Cruickshank (Interim Assistant Director of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance), Sarah Hydrie (Assistant Internal Audit Manager), Dan Kennedy (Head of Business Performance, Policy and Standards), Nasima Patel (Interim Assistant Director - Child Protection), Jon Pitt (Democratic Services Officer) and Tony Zaman (Director Adult Social Services / Director Children &amp; Young People Services (Interim)).</p>
63.	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b> (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Tony Eginton with Cllr. John Morse substituting.</p>
64.	<p><b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THE MEETING</b> (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>No Declarations of Interest were made.</p>
65.	<p><b>MATTERS NOTIFIED IN ADVANCE OR URGENT</b> (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>No matters had been notified in advance or as urgent.</p>
66.	<p><b>TO CONFIRM THAT ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED PART 1 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT THE ITEMS MARKED PART 2 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE</b> (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that items marked Part 1 would be heard in public and that those marked Part 2 would be heard in private.</p>
67.	<p><b>TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 18 FEBRUARY 2015</b> (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p><b>Resolved: That:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>1. The minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2015 be agreed as a correct record.</b></li></ol>

68. **PROGRESS REPORT ON ACTION PLAN IN RESPONSE TO OFSTED INSPECTION OF SERVICES TO CHILDREN IN NEED OF HELP AND PROTECTION, CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AND CARE LEAVERS ("OFSTED ACTION PLAN")**

*(Agenda Item 6)*

Officers introduced a progress report on improvement activities that had occurred in the Children and Young People's Service as a result of the Ofsted inspection in December 2013.

In June 2014, Ofsted had endorsed Hillingdon's "Ofsted Action Plan". This had been developed to address 11 areas of improvement that had been identified following the previous "requires improvement" judgement given to the Service. The Action Plan contained 41 specific actions, 30 of which had been completed. It was noted that a number of residual actions had been moved into the Child Services Improvement Plan. There had been significant changes that had affected the service.

Progress had been made in relation to implementation of the Public Law Outline (PLO). The aim was to ensure that children achieved a final care order and permanency plan within 26 weeks. The current average for completed care cases was 34 weeks, down from 57 weeks in 2013/14.

Triage arrangements had been made more robust and services now had a more effective front door entry system. The number of Children in Need cases without a care plan for six weeks or longer had fallen to 250 and it was anticipated that this would soon fall to zero. From April 2015, the average care case in Hillingdon was projected to finish within 25 weeks, down from 34 weeks.

The Chairman advised that Her Honour, Judge Judith Rowe QC, the Designated Family Judge for West London had recognised the improvements made to date.

A Member of the Committee requested that it be noted that the Ofsted Action Plan had previously been presented to the Committee in October 2014, rather than in September 2014 as set out in officer's report. The Member also felt that the real test of the work undertaken would be the sign off of the Improvement Plan by Ofsted. It was questioned whether a number of the actions set out in Action Plan had been achieved. Officers confirmed that they had been.

Officers advised that meetings would be held with services to consider the Plan in detail and that the Plan aimed to take the Service forward, rather than dwelling on the situation as it had been in 2013. The Children and Young People's Service could not yet be considered to be good, but it was on a continuous improvement journey. In response to a Member question, it was confirmed that the percentage of cases consistently meeting 'good' standards currently stood at 35%.

The Committee asked what progress had been made in relation to recruitment of permanent staff and it was suggested that the number of agency staff currently employed was not sustainable. Officers acknowledged that the Service had faced a very challenging situation in summer 2014 and that it had been acknowledged that serious intervention would be required.

The Council was continuing to make use of an external company, Skylakes Social Work, to assist with social work delivery. The situation in relation to turnover of agency staff had improved, with staff now staying an average of 37 weeks. This illustrated the increasing stability of the Service. The ratio of frontline staff to managers was 1:5,

which would ensure adequate supervision. Pay within social services at Hillingdon was within the top quartile of all local authorities and a number of channels were being used to recruit staff. In response to a Member question, officers advised that the managed element of the service had given frontline staff capacity to get on with their jobs.

It was confirmed that a Sustainability Plan was being prepared and was due to be presented to the Leader of the Council in the week following the Committee meeting. A significant volume of improvement work had been undertaken since August / September 2014 and it had always been anticipated that improvements would be realised gradually. It was emphasised that the references to 'good' in the officer report referred to the progress that had been made and did not represent an overall judgement on the service.

A Committee Member stated that there was significant evidence of service improvement. They were pleased that the figure for case file audits completed by managers had reached 100% and that there had been good engagement with senior managers. This was helping to create stability in the service and an improvement in staff morale. The Member felt that the Ofsted would find a very different service if they were to visit at the current point in time and thanked officers for their work, particularly in relation to Triage arrangements, which had helped to clear the backlog of work.

Clarification was sought regarding what was meant by the term 'signs of safety' in the officer's report. It was clarified that this was a national framework designed to help practitioners with risk assessment and safety planning in child protection cases. All child protection conferences now used this model.

Committee Members suggested that although there was evidence of improvement, the information provided in the Action Plan could have been provided in a clearer and more accessible format. Officers advised that a sheet of supplementary evidence presented at the Committee meeting provided up to date statistical information covering February 2015. It was acknowledged that some milestones had not been achieved, but that these had now been added to the Service Improvement Plan to help ensure that they would be realised.

The Committee questioned what factors helped to make a good Council service. It was suggested that these included having time and space to think, robust procedures being in place and staff being properly supported. There had been a focus on reducing caseloads, which had been the biggest improvement realised. This was allowing staff to get on with the work that they had been trained to do and was enabling them to work in a more proactive way.

Independent Practice Advisors were now available to coach social workers and work was being undertaken with Human Resources on a Workforce Development Plan. Training was provided in both classroom and on-site environments. Hillingdon was on an improvement journey, but it was likely to be a couple of years before services provided to children in need, children looked after and care leavers would be very good. The Chairman summarised that social workers required support from the workplace in order to be able to share concerns. There needed to be an investment in people and there was a belief that the Council was starting to achieve this.

Another Committee Member reflected that it was great to see signs of improvement. They questioned what steps were being taken to ensure that staff who were performing well were able to mentor other staff and what performance management measures were being taken for staff performing below required standards. Officers advised that

staff performance issues would be analysed as caseloads continued to fall. New staff received a three day induction and delivery of the Action Plan would help to ensure that improvements were made. In the event that staff consistently had inadequate cases, this would be identified for managers to take appropriate action. Managers had also been encouraged to raise any issues identified with senior managers.

Members asked why no up-to-date figures had been provided in relation to measure 3C of the Action Plan, 'all cases, closed management sign off.' A baseline figure of 18% for assessments that met 'good' standards had been set in May 2014. By September 2014, this figure had reached 90% and it was anticipated that it would be 100% from March 2015. However, there was no up-to-date figure available because the baseline had changed and it was noted that the quality of assessment audit was an outstanding action. It was confirmed that the Action Plan would need to be recalibrated and that Internal Audit would be scrutinising the plan and the response to Ofsted.

Some Members reiterated that there were gaps in the data provided and that this raised further questions. The progress made in relation to the improvements since Summer 2014 was recognised and the Chairman thanked officers for their work and openness in answering questions at the meeting.

Officers confirmed that a completed Children's Social Care Improvement Plan would be brought to the April 2015 meeting of the Committee.

**Resolved: That:**

- 1. A completed Children's Social Care Improvement Plan be brought to the April 2015 meeting of the Committee**
- 2. Cllr. Sweeting would provide a list of follow up questions in relation to the report to Democratic Services.**
- 3. The report be noted.**

69. **STANDARDS AND QUALITY IN EDUCATION IN HILLINGDON 2013/2014**  
(Agenda Item 7)

Officers introduced a report on Standards and Quality in Education in Hillingdon. This annually produced report had been presented to Cabinet in January and was being presented to the Committee in order to provide an opportunity for Members to question officers and to seek clarification on the information contained therein.

The report showed that overall results and attainment had improved in Hillingdon and were continuing to rise across the five key stages. Results were particularly strong at key stages 1, 2 and 4. It was noted that there had been a number of changes in the national assessment frameworks. This had meant that reliable comparison with previous years had not always been possible. 2013/14 was the first time that results could be compared accurately with previous years. There had been a number of changes in the measures used at GCSE / Key Stage 4 level.

Within Hillingdon, 13 primary schools and five secondary schools had been identified by Ofsted as requiring improvement. One of the five had since improved and was therefore no longer included in the category. It was noted that Ofsted would challenge the leadership and governance of schools that were under performing. The Council issued warning notices and recommended intervention action for community schools where there was a need to improve standards, although warning notices were usually only issued as a last resort.

The majority of schools were supportive of Council efforts to improve standards. The Council also adopted a brokering role to enable schools that needed to improve to be supported by better performing schools. This support could be provided for a fixed period of time and could also cover a particular subject or range of subjects. A Member questioned how many of the schools that required improvement were under control of the Local Authority. Officers advised that at primary level, 10 out of the 13 that required improvement were maintained, while at secondary level, only one of the four were maintained by the Authority.

Individual tuition support had been made available to Looked After Children in year 6 and year 11. It was noted separately that daily updates on school attendance were available to the Council and that for the 2014/15, there was a focus on improving literacy.

In response to a Member question, Officers advised that although the percentage of fixed term exclusions at Special Schools within Hillingdon (49.06%) was well above local and national averages, 95% of these exclusions had related to one school. Improvements had been made and the latest available figures showed a reduction in this type of exclusion.

There were two primary schools within the Borough that had five forms of entry. There was no evidence to show that the size of a school had a significant impact on pupil performance. Instead, leadership, governance and scrutiny of a school were the key factors that determined results.

Members questioned how school performance was moderated at primary level. Officers advised that there were three levels of moderation. This took place internally within schools and externally via the Department for Education's Standards and Testing Agency. The moderation process was also subject to scrutiny.

The Committee questioned whether it was the case that schools were able to obtain credit for the results of pupils who had sat examinations at institutions other than their own school. It was confirmed that this was an issue and that the academic results obtained by pupils at a school would not always fully reflect its success, or otherwise. This was due to external factors, such as pupils receiving private tuition.

A Member questioned whether the Council was aware of issues in relation to funding payments made to schools with regard to specific pupils and whether schools were aware of their obligations. It was also questioned whether checks could be made with schools. These payments were not ring-fenced and could therefore be spent on provision that did not directly benefit the child in question. It was confirmed that the issue was due for consideration and that a thematic review could be considered. This would be shared amongst all schools and it was noted that audit testing could be used to confirm how funding was being spent by schools. It was suggested that the issue be given further consideration by the Committee later in 2015.

The Committee questioned why the Ofsted judgements against school inspections had only been compared against national averages and not with other London Boroughs. It was suggested that this could be because such a comparison would make Hillingdon's performance look less good and that Hillingdon's Ofsted performance, was in fact, the ninth worst of the thirty-two London Boroughs. Officers acknowledged that there were some weaknesses in some of the Borough's schools and the Council was challenging schools to raise their standards.

	<p>Concerns were raised by Members that while performance for the seven key subjects at Foundation Stage (age 3 to 5) showed improvement across all areas compared to 2013, performance remained below the national and outer London averages. Officers advised that investment from Council officers would help to address issues. Last year there had been a focus on maths, while the focus during the current year was on improving literacy skills.</p> <p>A Member noted that the names of the schools requiring improvement had not been provided in the report and officers advised that this information could be provided to the Committee separately.</p> <p><b>Resolved: That:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The spending of payments provided to schools to support specific pupils be investigated and a report brought to the Committee later in 2015.</li> <li>2. Officers to provide Democratic Services with the names of the schools within Hillingdon that required improvement, for circulation to the Committee.</li> <li>3. The report be noted.</li> </ol>
70.	<p><b>SINGLE MEETING REVIEW - HILLINGDON'S IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY (SEND) REFORMS - DRAFT REPORT</b> <i>(Agenda Item 8)</i></p> <p>The Chairman introduced the Draft Final Report for the single meeting review, 'Hillingdon's Implementation of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Reforms.' Committee Members acknowledged and endorsed the work already undertaken to implement the Reforms and agreed the report and recommendations as presented.</p> <p><b>Resolved: That:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the Committee agreed the Draft Report as presented by the Chairman.</li> <li>2. That the Chairman would present the Draft Report to Cabinet on 23 April 2015.</li> </ol>
71.	<p><b>FORWARD PLAN 2014 / 2015</b> <i>(Agenda Item 9)</i></p> <p><b>Resolved: That:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Forward Plan be noted.</li> </ol>
72.	<p><b>WORK PROGRAMME 2014 / 2015</b> <i>(Agenda Item 10)</i></p> <p>The following additions to the Committee's Work Programme were noted:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A completed Children's Social Care Improvement Plan would be brought to the April 2015 meeting.</li> <li>2. An item in relation to auditing of the performance of secondary schools be added to the work programme for the April 2015 meeting.</li> </ol> <p><b>Resolved: That: subject to the above amendments, the Work Programme be noted.</b></p>

	The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8.30 pm.
--	---

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Jon Pitt on 01895 277655. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.