

Minutes

**Education & Children's Services Policy Overview
Committee
Monday 11 January 2010
Meeting held at High Street, Uxbridge, UB8 1UW**



Members Present:

Councillors Catherine Dann (Chairman), Brian Crowe (Vice-Chairman), Judith Cooper, Peter Curling, and John Hensley.

Officers Present: Natasha Dogra, Debbie Haith, Tim Lake and Chris Spencer.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Tony Little.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTER COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING

Councillors Catherine Dann, Judith Cooper, Peter Curling, and John Hensley declared personal interests in all items on the agenda due to their roles as school governors.

3. TO CONFIRM THAT ALL ITEMS MARKED PART 1 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND ALL THOSE MARKED IN PART 2 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

All items were Part 1 and were considered in public.

4. TO RECEIVE AND AGREE THE MINUTES OF 26 NOVEMBER 2009

The minutes were agreed by the Committee.

5. ECS REPORTS: Child Social Care and Educational Attainment

Action By:

Child Social Care

The Chairman welcomed the officers present to the Committee meeting and asked Debbie Haith (Head of Safeguarding) to begin presenting her report.

Officers informed Members that the purpose of the report was to provide further details on the arrangements for auditing and archiving case records.

The file auditing procedure outlined the process for auditing case records across Children and Families Services, this procedure had been in place since October 2008 and records were now audited on a quarterly basis. The audit tool included a set of 15 standards which applied to all records and there were a further set of customised audit materials which were specifically designed to cover the practice requirements of regulated services such as fostering and adoption records.

Supervising managers audit a minimum of one file per team member each

quarter, the last audit was undertaken in September 2009 and over 200 records were audited non were judged inadequate. The scheduled audit for December did not take place due to the announced Ofsted inspection which independently audited over 100 case records of which 20 were in reviewed on a multi-agency basis with Health records, no records were identified as inadequate. The inspection judged Hillingdon to be Good in both Safeguarding and Looked After Children's services. However, internal and external scrutiny has identified and issue of timeliness of recording which is being addressed.

All personnel who handled Hillingdon data were subject to Criminal Records Bureau checks. All current agency staff must complete a CRB check before joining the service. Staff who had not been checked were provided with a risk assessment. Agency staff were checked on a yearly basis. Certain specific information was stored in high security cages and access to these areas was even further restricted to a more limited number of personnel. The building was fitted with specialist fire detection equipment and linked directly to the fire station. Currently there were no issues relating to files not being available when requested.

Currently records of a looked-after child were kept for 75 years. The records of an adopted child were kept for 100 years. Records pre-1965 have been requested in the past and have been made available. Officers informed Members that the archiving system was safe and secure, and records were retrieved with ease.

Some staff were being provided with laptops to take with them when visiting the child, so the time lapse between a visit and updating of records was kept to a minimum. Records kept by agency staff were checked before the staff left the service to ensure that records were not left unfinished.

Files which included paper information such as a written letter were kept up to date with paper information scanned in and attached to the file. This was to ensure that when audited, the full file was being audited. This also ensured that all information was available in an electronic format as well as hard copy.

The Committee thanked Officers for the update and requested a full Child Social Care quarterly update which also included the following information; live files, closed files, archived files, number of files audited, children with no allocated social worker, timeliness of assessment, timeliness of record updating and vacancy rates. This report would come to Committee at their first meeting of the next municipal year – June 2010.

To Note:

The Committee noted the update.

Educational Attainment

The Chairman welcomed officers to the meeting and requested Tim Lake (Manager of performance and analysis team) to begin the update.

*Debbie
Haith, EYL*

Officers informed the Committee that overall Hillingdon was performing well. The real improvement had taken place in the secondary schools, where schools in the borough were performing at a high level. Work still needed to be done to improve the performance of primary schools in the borough, although they were still performing well. The concept of forming federations between a very successful school and a school not performing as well had proven to be very successful with schools being able to help each other in a number of fields. Some Members of the Committee expressed their reservations over the use of federations.

Officers informed the Committee that there had been a huge improvement at Key Stage 4 level with a large proportion of secondary school overachieving.

The Committee requested figures regarding the achievement of looked-after child. Officers said the figures along with a report on 'virtual schooling' would be made presented to Committee at either the March or April meeting.

*Chris
Spencer,
ECS.*

To Note:

The Committee noted the report.

The meeting closed at 19.30