

Recommendations

Next Steps for the Improving Outcomes Project

That the Task Group Members champion the progress of the council in its commitment to reduce inequalities and improve outcomes for black pupils through the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee which will call for regular updates on the progress of this work and will raise issues with the Executive.

That a further review is conducted in a year's time to monitor implementation of recommendations and assess progress.

That a council wide audit in all service areas is conducted on all the initiatives relating to families and disadvantaged families with under achieving pupils, such as Extended Schools strategy, Housing and Neighbourhood renewal/regeneration projects and youth and education projects, to inform the Task Group's further work on embedding Improving Outcomes within council policies.

That a senior coordinator, a projects co-ordinator and a schools consultant are dedicated to the Improving Outcomes Project.

That funding, together with associated guidance and monitoring, is targeted at schools with underachieving black pupils to commission relevant support for children and parents to narrow the achievement gap.

The Voluntary and Community Sector

That the council provides three year funding packages for targeted projects

That funding initiatives do not impose artificial postcode barriers which prevent youth projects from including all young people in the local area.

That the benefits of customised projects are marketed and the knowledge base is shared and accessible

That good quality projects are identified and the council takes responsibility for cross-departmental commissioning to create a Task Force delivering relevant, joined up and sustainable services to support the target group.

That these services are regularly monitored and evaluated against agreed Improving Outcomes criteria.

Schools and Parents

That the council looks at ways to support black parents' forums within schools where there is local demand.

That the council supports parents' networks drawing on the good practice from Hackney.

That the School Improvement Team promotes good practice associated with Improving Outcomes and monitors this including:

- integration of appropriate black history and African-Caribbean perspectives into the curriculum to facilitate understanding of culture and identity
- use of the Charter on Promoting the Achievement of Black Caribbean Boys *Born to be Great* (accessible on the teachers website) through the school governing bodies and school management within Brent Schools as a good practice tool.
- teaching of sexual health and drugs prevention within Brent schools and that gaps in provision are filled as a matter of urgency

That the Extended Schools/Services strategy includes a priority to ensure access and support for black parents/carers, children and young people, such as out-of-school study/homework centres, supplementary schools and use of sports, arts and multimedia resources as well as parenting support.

The Voice of Young People

That the progress of this Improving Outcomes priority and the ongoing issues arising are included in young people's consultation forums, including the Youth Parliament, Brent Youth Matters Too (BYM2) and other forums on a regular basis and that feedback reaches both the Scrutiny Committee and the council's Executive committee.

That in responding to young people's consistent calls for better access to the employment ladder, policies are put in place to provide young people with work experience and job taster opportunities within the council.



Foreword

Mary Arnold

Chair of the Task Group, Improving Outcomes for Black Pupils

It is with some humility, together with an urgency to get this long-standing well-documented priority embedded in our council policy, that I introduce our All Party Children and Families Scrutiny Task Group's report and recommendations to the council's Executive.

This is not a new subject. As our task group reports, educationalists and policy-makers have been exposing the problem, getting on for half a century. As a teacher in the seventies, I witnessed the concentration of black pupils in low streams. As a community school governor during the nineties, we battled with the underachievement of black pupils and the associated reports, putting in place value-added data systems and strategies but the statistics did not improve. Some have referred to the wasted talent as 'a lost generation'.

My own children and grandchild are from mixed British and Caribbean heritage and our experience has been that boys were under a range of obvious and hidden pressures which affect their school performance and can result in negative influence and behaviour with the associated risks and consequences. We are determined this will not affect this generation. Our task group has had stimulating and crystallising discussions with a number of people with a stake in this commitment to improve outcomes for black boys and we are very grateful for their contribution. This time we cannot let them down.

They include parents and parents' groups, young people including black boys and their peers, youth workers, voluntary sector and community organisations dedicated to changing outcomes through tailored support, community and business representatives as well as teachers, mentors, school managers, governors and local authority officers and managers.

What stood out in our investigation is the wealth of talent and potential among the young people themselves. We spoke to young people who articulated the issues and some of the solutions. We heard directly about schools' good practice from the Aiming High whole school project in Copeland, vocational education at John Kelly Boys (Mpower), peer group culture challenges at Kingsbury, celebrating student

success at the Afro-Caribbean evening in Queens Park Community School as well as reference to Preston Manor's support strategies and the work at Capital City Academy where there was a Black Boys Forum, renowned for its work.

Positive reinforcement and the celebration of the students' distinctive successes are vital to build confidence and turn around negative attitudes. This approach also informs and stimulates 'stakeholders' both about achievement and the wider cultural context often hidden from them. Brent, and indeed London, is proud of its diversity and cultural heritage and now is the time to recognise the contributions made by young black people and their 'role models' to arts, music, dance, sport, design as well as science and the professions.

We have not been able to cover all the ground needed. The government has invested in the reform of education for 14 – 19s to provide alternative pathways for both vocational skills and academic routes to suit learning needs. My own experience in further education teaching and management in the eighties and nineties was with successful outcomes for the black boys who reached college, where student-centred curriculum development is the vital factor. With the prospect of raising the school leaving age, the new specialist diplomas and outcomes of the Leitch Report on demand-led skills, young people's learning needs and preferences for employment will become even more important.

We stress that Improving Outcomes for Black and Minority Ethnic Groups is one of the priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan. The underachievement of Black Caribbean and Somali boys is targeted. The evidence we have provided and recommendations we are making will enable the council and its partners to fulfil this priority through all-party political will and commitment to service provision, including parental and community engagement as well as to adequate funding and resources.

I would like to thank my fellow task group members, each of who had specific expertise and significant contributions to make:

Councillor Jean Tullett
Councillor Mrs Fernandes
Mrs Bondzi-Simpson

Finally I would like to thank Stella Akintan, Policy and Regeneration Unit officer, for her excellent support, guidance and expertise in researching, organizing a number of local and town-hall based meetings and reporting on our findings.

Introduction

This task group has been set up to review the support given to a group of young people whose lives fall far short of the aspirations set out in the Every Child Matters Agenda. In Brent, statistics over a number of years have shown that some young people, specifically from African Caribbean and Somali heritage, experience below average outcomes across a range of measures including educational attainment, school exclusions and crime. The Children and Families Department within Brent Council have taken the lead on this challenge and have established an Improving Outcomes Project to address these issues. Improving Outcomes for underachieving pupils has been identified as a priority in the Children and Young Peoples Plan and the Children and Families Strategic Partnership Board are taking the lead. This task group was asked by the Children and Families Department to review the work of the project.

The Improving Outcomes Project

This council initiative was established in 2006 to address the issues of below average educational, social and economic outcomes that persist within some BME groups. The project has drawn upon key statistics from across council departments, detailing information on specific ethnic groups and has identified areas which are a cause for concern and for which standards need to be raised.

Key messages from the data are:

There is a decline in Black Caribbean academic outcomes from Key Stage 1 onwards:

Ghanaian/Nigerian pupil outcomes are significantly better than Somali pupil outcomes

Male academic outcomes start below and then decline more steeply than female academic outcomes for these groups

Black Caribbean groups are significantly over-represented on exclusions based measures and some social-based measures such as teenage pregnancies

Black African groups are over represented on some exclusions and social based measures but to a lesser degree than Black Caribbean children/young people

Black Africans are under-represented on teaching and support staff compared to the demographics of the school population

Both groups are over-represented in participation in youth activities

There is some evidence of over-representation of both groups on health measures, but the data is less conclusive.

The group most affected are African Caribbean boys who are over represented across a range of indicators including, low educational attainment, youth offending and school exclusions and those Not in Education Employment or Training between the ages of 16-18 (NEET).

In July 2006 the Improving Outcomes project hosted a conference involving stakeholders from within the council and externally to consider the issues and develop a Brent wide action plan. The action plan has been developed in partnership with the community and key stakeholders and includes interventions in schools, with parents, the voluntary and community sector and the sharing of good practice.

Current and recent activities include:

- Black Pupil Achievement Programme in 5 secondary schools (2 schools were on similar programme last year)
- Black Children Achievement Pilot Programme in 3 primary schools
- Global Graduates Programme supporting 40 gifted and talented black pupils
- 4 parenting programmes being piloted in neighbourhoods supplementing existing programmes such as the Strengthening Families: Strengthening Communities led by the Council's Family Support Team
- Research and activities gathering the views of young people and parents (e.g. Roundwood Project, Help Somalia Foundation young people consultation , Voluntary and Community Organisation Reference Group parents and community, presentations at the Brent Parents Forum and Brent Youth Matters 2)
- Focused Service Audits on Council services with "hotspot" indicators e.g. teenage pregnancy, school exclusions, youth offending, NEETs (Connexions), teacher recruitment and housing

The Work of the Task Group

The task group have taken a strategic overview of the issues by looking at the work of the improving outcomes project and how this fits in with other policies and initiatives across the council. The task group also looked at work taking place at both the London-wide and national level.

The task group identified three main areas of focus for this work:

- Identify and review gaps in existing action plan
- Identify and promote good practice for all stakeholders
- raise the profile of this work across the council and embed in council policies

Task Group Methodology

To seek evidence for this work, the task group's approach has been to go out into the local community and speak with the people whom it impacts upon. The task group has also drawn upon the wealth of research evidence that already exists on how to raise achievement levels of young people and more specifically African Caribbean boys.

The task group drew upon the five outcomes within the Every Child Matters agenda as a framework for discussions and questions during consultation as this provides a key standard on measuring the quality of life for young people. The five outcomes are:

Being Healthy
Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving
Making a Positive Contribution
Achieving economic well-being

The Improving Outcomes report also identified some stakeholders who did not contribute to their consultation and the task group were keen to ensure that they were involved in their review. As a result, the task group held discussions with the following groups:

- Press Road Youth Club
- Kingsbury High School, Black Parents Forum
- Voluntary and Community Sector within Brent and other local stakeholders
- African Child Project
- Teen4Choice
- Mark Ainsworth, Project Consultant, Improving Outcomes Project.
- Susan Mackenzie, Extended Schools Co-ordinator,

Events attended by Task Group members included:

- Raising the Race: Black History and Heritage in our schools, An Institute of Education public lecture and debate on African and Caribbean history and heritage in our schools.
- Meeting of the Brent Parents Forum
- Hackney Schools and the Black Child Conference hosted by Dianne Abbott MP
- Evening of Celebration at Queens Park Community School – Afro-Caribbean Students’ Success and the bicentenary of the end of the slave trade

What are the issues?

The over representation of young black men in crime and the criminal justice system has according to Lee Jasper, Equalities Adviser to the London Mayor reached “crisis” levels¹. A recent spate of stabbings in London has drawn national attention to this issue and given rise to concerns about gang culture and knife crime amongst young people in general but to which young black men are disproportionately involved.

Characteristically, there is little media coverage on the underlying causes that could contribute to these young people being over-represented in this type of crime.

The Parliamentary Home Affairs Select Committee has recently published a report looking at the over- representation of young black people in the criminal justice system and has highlighted that “ young black people are disproportionately subject to socio-economic disadvantage” and also that:

National statistics indicate that black African and Caribbean groups make up approximately two and a half times as high proportion of the population in the most deprived areas of the country as for England as a whole. Eighty per cent of Black African and Black Caribbean communities live in Neighbourhood Renewal Fund Areas, those identified as England’s most deprived areas. According to the ACORN classification which places people in one of five groups according to their neighbourhoods level of affluence, 45.5% of Black African and 38.1% of Black Caribbean pupils in maintained primary and secondary schools live in areas

¹ Greater London Authority Press Release, 15th June 2007 No. 360

classified as 'hard pressed', the most deprived category in the scale. We also know that black people of Caribbean origin experience, on average, significantly higher unemployment and lower earnings than white people"²

The report also highlights that these issues are also compounded by family patterns and cultural attitudes. High levels of absent fathers among Caribbean communities are thought to have a particular detrimental effect on boys and also a youth culture in which illegitimate means of gaining success are glorified, particularly influenced by Rap/ Hip Hop music.

A recent Equalities Review report points out that inequalities in one area can set off a cascade of further disadvantage: "people with low levels of educational achievement can expect to be less employable, therefore poorer, therefore less healthy and probably less likely to participate in civic activity. The kinds of people who are less likely to be employed are also more likely to be involved in crime, to have shorter life spans and to have less fulfilling family lives."³

The work of this task group particularly focuses on educational underachievement because if intervention can be made at an early stage to address these issues it is more likely to halt the cycle of decline.

The Brent Context

The underachievement of African Caribbean boys within the education system is not specific to Brent but also a national issue that has persisted over many years. As far back as 1971 this subject was treated in a book entitled "How the West Indian child is made educationally subnormal in the British school system" This publication makes reference to a survey of race relations in Britain which argues that "by the year 2000 Britain will probably have a black 'under' class unless the education system is radically altered⁴." This thesis has been re-visited in a follow-up publication, Tell it like it is: How our schools fail Black Children, published in 2006⁵.

Sadly statistics regarding a significant proportion of African Caribbean boys in Brent lends weight to this prediction.

Despite the fact that these boys enter school on par with their white and Asian counterparts, by key stage 2 the decline begins. At key stage 4 the boys perform the lowest of all ethnic groups and only 30% gain 5 GCSE's grade A*-C. Similarly, only 30% of Somali boys in Brent achieve 5 GCSE's grade A* - C.

The high level of school exclusions amongst African Caribbean boys lies at the crux of this issue. African Caribbean boys in Brent account for 38% of permanent exclusions. Therefore the fact that they are also over-represented on crime measures supports the well documented correlation between school exclusions and crime.

² House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee, Young Black People and the Criminal Justice System. 15 June 2007

³ Fairness and Freedom: The final report of the equalities review, Trevor Philips Chair, Equalities Review Panel, February 2007.

⁴ Bernard Coard How the West Indian Child is made educationally subnormal in the British School system: the scandal of the Black child in schools in Britain. 1971

⁵ Tell it like it is: How our schools fail Black Children. Edited by Brian Richardson. 2006

Martin Narey, Former Director General of the Prisons Service once commented “The 13,000 young people excluded from school each year might as well be given a date to join the prison service some time later down the line.”⁶

The Government’s response

National policies to address the underachievement of Black boys has been around for over 25 years specifically in the Rampton Report of 1981 and the Swann report of 1985. More recently the Department for Education and Skills has established an Ethnic Minority Achievement Unit (EMAU) which provides funding and support to increase educational attainment amongst minority groups including Black Caribbean, Refugees, Gypsy and Traveller pupils.

In 2003 the EMAU published a consultation document entitled “Aiming Higher: Raising achievement of minority ethnic pupils” where the educational achievement of African Caribbean boys was highlighted as a specific concern. This subsequently led to a pilot initiative entitled the Ethnic Minority Achievement Project. This was piloted in 30 secondary schools across the UK from 2003-2006, with the aim of trying out a range of strategies for raising African Caribbean achievement. Each pilot school was asked to conduct an audit of their school policy and practice in relation to African Caribbean achievement and develop an action plan focussing on how attainment could be raised. Copland Community School and Queens Park Community School piloted the programme in Brent

The Ethnic Minority Achievement Project sought to encourage schools to develop strong leadership, effective teaching and learning, backed up by the use of accurate monitoring data, active engagement with parents and the wider community, and intolerance of racism, poor behaviour and bullying.

Building on the success of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Project, a national programme entitled the Black Pupils Achievement Programme is currently being rolled out across the country. This project currently involves 100 schools and 25 local authorities including five secondary schools in Brent; Wembley High Technology College, John Kelly Boys’ Technology College, Kingsbury High School, Capital City Academy and Cardinal Hinsley Mathematics and Computing College. The aim of this project includes supporting schools in developing a whole school approach to raising achievement of Black pupils, with leadership from senior levels. Schools are also encouraged to develop knowledge and understanding of the specific issues facing Black pupils and equipping teachers with the skills to respond to them.

A similar national pilot programme, the Black Child Achievement Pilot is being piloted in 3 Brent primary schools: John Keble C of E, Harlesden and Braintcroft.

Key findings of the task group

The task group would like to commend the work of the Improving Outcomes Project which has developed a comprehensive action plan and taken a holistic approach in analysing outcomes across a range of measures.

In addition this task group has identified priority interventions which, if implemented would have a clear impact on educational underachievement and lead to an improvement in the statistics over the next few years. These priorities include:

⁶ Martin Narey, Director General Prison Service, 2001

- Leadership and Coordination across the council
- Support for schools and parents
- The voice of Young People

Leadership and co-ordination across the council

The task group strongly emphasises that this issue requires leadership and a co-ordinated response to draw together all the good work that is taking place across the council. Many different projects are being implemented such as within the youth offending teams, community safety, anti-social behaviour initiatives, youth services, neighbourhood renewal and new deal for communities, as well as the children's integrated services and local area agreement projects to support underachieving pupils. However, none of this work is joined up and there is great capacity for duplication and overlap.

The Home Affairs Committee report on the over- representation of Black people in the criminal justice system states that "local authorities should set out clearly the responsibilities of all relevant agencies- voluntary and independent as well as public sector to reducing overrepresentation and should hold regular joint meetings to assess progress and address any shortcomings in the response."⁷

Although this relates to the over representation of black people in the criminal justice agencies the principle is the same; to tackle this problem, agencies that are involved need to work together to share information to ensure real progress.

The task group would like to see an audit of services departments in the council to identify the services they offer to these underachieving groups to attempt to eliminate overlap and develop greater commissioning of services.

More resources are needed to support the improving outcomes project. It is currently resourced by an officer 1.5 days a week and as a result many of the interventions described in the action plan are still to come to fruition. The task group considers that a co-ordination role needs to be incorporated into this project, both at a senior level and working on the ground to develop the project.

A projects liaison part- time post is necessary to act as a point of contact for this work, to develop expertise on projects happening within the borough and to develop a section of the website featuring good practice from both within the borough and externally.

This work also needs to be incorporated into the portfolio of a service manager who will be responsible for the overall management of the improving outcomes role and will line-manage the co-ordination post. A senior role is also needed to work with high level groups such as the Children and Young People Strategic Partnership Board, the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Executive.

We also need someone who can work directly with the schools, sharing good practice, providing training and workshops on key issues.

⁷ Home Affairs Select Committee report – p63

The appointment of neighbourhood co-ordinators within the Extended Schools Services project will also present a real opportunity for joining up of services on the ground and sign-posting local people to projects. The co-ordinators are conducting an audit of services within their area and are developing a locality map outlining all the projects and services within the area

The Children and Young People's Plan has identified, as one of its six priorities, the need to address the underachievement of black and ethnic minority groups and, in particular, African and Afro-Caribbean boys. Analysis of the data through the Improving Outcomes project shows that low achievements are specifically amongst black Caribbean and Somali boys. The task group's research illustrates that there are differing issues for each group although some overlap. The task group recommends that funding, together with associated guidance and monitoring requirements, is targeted at schools with underachieving black pupils to enable them to commission relevant support for children and families to narrow the achievement gap.

Recommendations:

That the Task Group Members champion the progress of the council in its commitment to reduce inequalities and improve outcomes for black pupils through the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee which will call for regular updates on the progress of this work and will raise issues with the Executive.

That a further review is conducted in a year's time to monitor implementation of recommendations and assess progress.

That a council wide audit in all the service areas is conducted on all the initiatives relating to families and disadvantaged families with under achieving pupils, such as Extended Schools strategy, Housing and Neighbourhood renewal/regeneration projects and youth and education projects to inform the task groups further work on embedding Improving Outcomes within council policies.

That a senior coordinator a project co-ordinator and a schools consultant are dedicated to the Improving Outcomes project.

That funding, together with associated guidance and monitoring, is targeted at schools with underachieving black pupils to commission relevant support for children and parents to narrow the achievement gap.

The role of the voluntary and community sector

Our discussions with the voluntary and community sector revealed that the council still has to harness the full potential of this important group.

The voluntary and community organisations play an essential role in developing projects to support BME communities. They develop projects on the ground working closely with local people to gain their trust and tailor services in accordance with their

needs. They are also often able to build expertise on issues and access close knit communities who would be more reluctant to engage with the council directly.

The Improving Outcomes project conducted a mapping exercise to identify projects that have been developed in relation to this area. The voluntary sectors featured very strongly in this work and are acknowledged as providing an essential service to the community.

The picture within this sector highlights a need for greater co-ordination and capacity building. Discussions with representatives highlighted the need to develop the voluntary sector infrastructure, more support needs to be given to BRAVA in its co-ordinating role. Voluntary organisations need more support in marketing their services to ensure that local people are aware of the services available. The task group found that neither parents nor young people were clear where they could go if they needed support. Issues were also raised around accountability as it was felt that some voluntary organisations receive funding irrespective of whether they provide good services to the community.

The task group recommends that a number of good voluntary sector organisations that are addressing these issues be identified so the council can signpost local people to these services.

The short term nature of funding was cited as being a specific problem. By the time many youth projects are fully established funding ceases and projects come to an end which leads to disillusionment among young people.

Funding methods can reinforce the problems of territorialism and gang culture amongst youth. Brent faces specific problems where hostility and violence exist among young people from different areas of the borough. When funding is restricted to specific areas with no flexibility, young people who live in the same area have little interaction which in turn breeds fear and mistrust. A youth worker commented that many years ago, Brent facilitated inter-borough activities which built up a sense of community and belonging.

The views of this task group were also supported by Home Affairs Committee who reported that...

“ we heard that strong territorial rivalries among youth affiliations can lead them to commit violent crime in order to exercise control over their area. Superintendent Leroy Logan warned of an increase in “postcode violence”, driven by “paranoid misguided loyalties” of young people who feel threatened by the presence of strangers in their area”⁸

That the council provides three year funding packages for targeted projects

That funding initiatives do not impose artificial postcode barriers which prevent youth projects from including all young people in the local area.

That the benefits of customised projects are marketed and the knowledge base is accessible and shared

⁸ Home Affairs Select Committee Report page 22

That good quality projects are identified and the council takes responsibility for cross-departmental commissioning to create a Task Force delivering relevant, joined up and sustainable services to support the target group.

That these services are regularly monitored and evaluated against agreed Improving Outcomes criteria.

Support for schools and parents

The role of Black Parents

Black parents expressed a sense of frustration that this issue has been on the agenda for four decades, yet very little has changed, and to some extent things have got worse. Over the years Supplementary Saturday schools has gone some way to support achievement, yet there is recognition among parents that more must be done within schools themselves to support both pupils and the school.

The task groups discussions with parents highlighted that they could relate with many of the issues found by parents in a report commissioned by the London Development Agency "The educational experiences and achievements of Black boys in London 2000-2003. Research showed that many parents felt that:

- Some parents who had a negative experience at school themselves did not trust the system and taught their children to "stand up for themselves". This approach has led to conflict between teachers and pupils.
- Working hours, including evening work affected the degree to which black parents could be involved in their children's schooling.
- Teachers need better training about meeting the needs of Black pupils
- Some teachers have admitted that they feared African Caribbean pupils which lead to them administering heavy handed, disproportionate discipline.
- Low teacher expectations of black children and a need for a more honest dialogue about pupil progress achievement and behaviour.⁹

The task group found that Parents at Kingsbury High School are in the process of developing a Black Parents Forum which they felt among other things can help to reach parents who are reluctant to engage with the school directly. The forum with support of teachers and the head teacher will also focus on specific issues such as managing peer pressure, mentoring and family support.

Discussions with black parents highlighted their concerns around the lack of discipline in schools and their desire to see it enforced more strongly. There was an

⁹ The educational experiences and achievements of Black boys in London Schools 2000-2003. A report by the Education Commission.

acknowledgement that high performing schools were those in which rules and regulations were implemented. Parents thought that teachers and pupils should develop contracts around behaviour, with teachers having easy and direct access to parents via telephones or email if this was breached.

One of the outcomes from the Hackney Schools and the Black Child conference was the recognition that parents need to be empowered to support themselves and each other, many want to develop local networks either by meeting or by email to discuss local issues and share intelligence on what is happening in the area.

A completely different set of issues arose during our discussions with Somali parents at the African Child Project. The consultation highlighted that one of the main barriers to Somali young people progressing at school was the language barrier. In many cases very little English is spoken by the parents and in some cases the children. This not only makes it difficult for parents to help their children with their homework but also means that parents cannot engage with the school. Most letters and standard communication from the school is translated but the language barriers mean that the parents cannot communicate with teachers on a one to one basis. One parent gave an example of the school not contacting her after her son had been absent from school for a number of weeks. She felt that the school had not bothered because of the difficulties posed by the language barriers.

The task group found that language support is offered to parents but only lasts for five weeks and is therefore not enough to gain even a basic understanding or to facilitate engagement with the school. While the children may fall behind on English, parents are often able to support them in maths and science. Most of the parents spent any additional income they had on providing tutors for the children. However financial restraints meant that this was very limited. Not only are parents very keen to receive additional language support for themselves and their children but they are anxious that their children's needs are addressed in the mainstream or through out-of-school study centre support so that children's learning is not impaired and communications with parents are improved.

Recommendations:

That the council look at ways to support black parents' forums within schools where there is local demand.

That the Council supports parents networks drawing on the good practice from Hackney.

That homework clubs for children with language support and supplementary learning needs be provided through the extended services project.

Black History Month

Black History Month is an initiative that has attempted to celebrate the contribution of the black community to British society. The month of October is well known in the UK calendar when events take place not only in schools but also in theatres, libraries and many forums across the country to showcase black history and to celebrate African and African Caribbean culture.

Although the initiative in itself has become successful, all our interviewees felt that its teaching in schools has become compartmentalised rather than integrated within main stream teaching. Also celebrations often focus on music and dance which although is important, this does not reflect the wide ranging contribution of black Britons. Such a narrow view does not raise the esteem of young black people which is one of the aims of the black history month initiative.

The task group found during the event held at the Institute of Education that black history taught within schools often focuses on slavery, which is one of its most negative aspects so that rather than be a source of pride it can have the reverse effect and instil shame within black pupils. To place Black History within its full context it needs to be looked at prior to the slave trade.

Good Practice needs to be shared within schools to encourage appropriate Black History to be taught within the curriculum. For example history and geography subjects will cover African-Caribbean perspectives and encourage understanding of culture and identity from a broad perspective.

Recommendations:

That the School Improvement Team promotes good practice in the integration of appropriate black history and Afro-Caribbean perspectives into the curriculum to facilitate understanding of culture and identity

Teacher Training

The issue of training for teachers was raised in all of the consultation sessions. The task group members are conscious that they have not had the opportunity to consult with teachers directly and while they take on board the views received so far, discussions do need to be held with teachers at a later stage.

It was suggested that some teachers need more training to deal with cultural differences that exist among different ethnic groups. When the task group met with stakeholders within the borough, an example was given to the task group of a Somali pupil refusing to look the teacher in the eye and this being seen as evidence of lying when in fact within that pupil's culture it is rude to look an adult in the eye and young people are instructed to look down.

Another example was the differing physical responses of children in school. Cultural differences also mean that black boys are likely to express themselves through body language, to speak louder or respond loudly if admonished and this can be misinterpreted by the teacher. An example was given by a learning mentor who in her work has found the need to give specific support and training to pupils, specifically black boys, whose expression is seen as aggressive.

The task group would like to endorse the Charter drawn up by the National Union of Teachers entitled *Born to be Great - A charter on raising the achievement of Black Caribbean Boy*. This sets out rights and responsibilities for pupils, teachers, support staff and parents. It also reminds school governing bodies of the legal responsibility to comply with the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 and in particular the General duty to promote equality of opportunity, combat unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people of different racial groups. It is their responsibility to apply these duties through the application of race equality policy and a number of areas are referred to.

The task group wishes to endorse the importance of addressing these areas in the governance, formulation of policy and monitoring. They include

- governor training in relation to how racism manifests at institutional, cultural and personal levels
- ethnicity performance monitoring and accessible information in respect of pupils' educational outcomes, attendance, exclusions and complaints
- regard to the concerns and aspirations of families and community in relation to black Caribbean boys and their achievements
- contributing to the positive ethos of the school and its work in enhancing pupils' learning
- being mindful of evidence provided by Youth Justice Board and others of the link between school exclusions and youth offending
- responsibility to work with school managers, teachers and parents to exclude in most exceptional circumstances only and that parents/carers are supported in managing excluded pupils

Recommendations:

That the School Improvement Team promotes the use of the charter *Born to be Great* (accessible on the teachers website), to school governing bodies and school management, within Brent Schools as a good practice tool.

Extended Schools/Services strategy

The task group met with the Extended Schools/ Services co-ordinator to find out what out-of-school and community provision was being made available around schools in the borough. The mapping of current activities now being undertaken by the neighbourhood co-ordinators will provide baseline information. The task group welcomed the emphasis on listening to parents' views about the support needed to ensure their children have the best opportunities to gain from their education and the neighbourhood facilities. The priority to support underachieving children must be a common priority.

Recommendation

That the Extended Schools/Services strategy includes a priority to ensure access and support for black parents/carers, children and young people, such as out-of school study/homework centres, supplementary schools and use of sports, arts and multimedia resources as well as parenting support

The voice of young people

The task group was also pleased about the emerging forums for young people to have their voices heard such as school councils, and within Brent the Youth Parliament and Brent Youth Matters Consultative Forum. Members were also pleased to learn that this issue will be on a future agenda for the Youth Parliament.

The task group found in discussions with youth at Press Road that the young people were very willing to talk about issues that concern them. Particular concerns were around a labelling or a reputation that was easily attached to them by teachers. Once a perception was held it became very difficult to change. Particular instances

included if a teacher had reason to believe, rightly or wrongly that a pupil was badly behaved this perception continued throughout their time at the school.

The young people also gave examples of the police intervention when young black people are on the street while at the same time white groups were ignored. They talked about the territorialism and how they manage vulnerability on the street. Another significant issue was their perception of the absence of sex education and lack of information on sexual health in their schools.

Many of these views were reiterated during discussions with Teen4Choice, a group of around twenty young people who work together to provide support and share learning around sexual health and other issues that affect their lives. The group raised issues around labelling by teachers. They felt there is need for more teaching on black history both from schools and parents. They also felt that there needs to be more support from the council to provide facilities such as a place to meet and access to computers for groups such as theirs. Teen4choice also felt that one of the best ways to provide support and raise the self esteem of young people would be to ensure that they have clear employment opportunities through access to good quality work experience.

One of the big issues raised by both the youth at Press Road and Teen4Choice was that of sexual health. All the young people we spoke to felt that teaching on sex education and drugs in schools was inadequate. Teen4chioce told us that many myths exist amongst young people about issues concerning sex, sexually transmitted diseases and conception and in the absence of reliable information, young people would speak with their friends and peers.

Recommendation

That appropriate policies are put in place to provide young people with work experience and job taster opportunities within the council

That good practice on teaching of sexual health and drugs in schools is shared within Brent schools and that gaps in provision are filled as a matter of urgency

Conclusion

In this bicentenary year of the commemoration of the abolition of slavery, the past degradation is coming into the public arena exposing the psychological effects and legacy of slavery. Now, more than ever, this is a time to show political will and make the commitment to tackling the identified issues at the local council level wherever we have the powers to do so and the influence with our partners.