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Brent

MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE Wednesday 22 November 2017 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Ketan Sheth (Chair), Councillors Colwill (Vice-Chair), Conneely, Hector, Jones, Nerva, and Shahzad

Co-opted Members: Mr A Frederick, Ms Askwith, Mr Goulden and Ms Yaqub

Appointed observers: Ms Lesley Gouldbourne and Ms Monteleone

Also Present: Councillor M Patel

Absent: Councillor Hoda-Benn

1. **Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members**

There were no apologies for absence received.

2. **Declarations of interests**

There were no declarations of interests.

3. **Deputations (if any)**

There were no deputations received.

4. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 19 September 2017, be approved as an accurate record of the meeting, subject to the following change:

- Agenda Item 9, page 7 - the word 'of' be deleted from the phrase 'a large of number of reports'.

5. **Matters arising (if any)**

A Member of the Committee commented that it would be helpful recommendations made by the Committee to specify the body they had been directed to and provide a timeframe for feedback. Pascoe Sawyers (the Council's Head of Strategy and Partnerships) said that the request had been noted and action would be taken to ensure that relevant organisations were made aware of recommendations.

6. **Local Area Inspection of SEND**

Gail Tolley (the Council's Strategic Director of Children and Young People) introduced the paper which had been developed jointly with the Brent Clinical

Commissioning Group (CCG). The Committee heard that, in May 2017, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) had conducted a joint inspection of Brent to judge the effectiveness of the area in implementing the improvements within the Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014. Ms Tolley said that the inspection report had been complimentary of the strategic leadership at the Local Authority and the relationship between the Local Authority and schools in the area, which demonstrated the strong link between education and care outcomes. However, there were some areas where the inspection team felt there had been reasons for concern (page 12 to the Agenda pack). These had included concerns about a lack of strategic leadership within the CCG related to implementation of the SEND reforms and the fragmented approach to joint commissioning leading to gaps in services and separated commissioned services being delivered by the same provider. Having been invited to comment, Sheik Auladin (Interim Chief Operating Officer at Brent CCG) advised that deficits identified by the inspection were being addressed and approximately £1.2 million would be invested in integrating services and joint commissioning, with outcomes expected in a short period of time. In relation to a question about improvement of frontline services, Sarah Basham (Vice-Chair of the Children's Trust and Co-Clinical Director at Brent CCG) said that therapists would be supported by the Designated Clinical Officer and the Council for Disabled Children to provide information in a format that would be compatible with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans.

Ms Tolley added that an action plan, formally identified as a Written Statement of Action, had been agreed and it had been approved by Ofsted without comment. She informed the Committee that the monitoring dashboard had been updated, with the most recent version dated 3 November 2017. Furthermore, Sheik Auladin pointed out that ways to integrate health and Local Authority commissioning had been examined and work had begun on all actions included in the Written Statement of Action. The Committee heard that a further priority for the CCG would be to make joint commissioning arrangements work to address the issue of fragmented commissioning.

A Member of the Committee and an appointed observer raised the issue of SEND provision in academies, given the difference in funding and terms of reference for admission. Ms Tolley assured the Committee that the inspection team had visited both maintained schools and academies and they had not pointed out any differences in terms of experience and outcomes for children based on the type of school. She explained that there were two academies and two maintained special schools in Brent, with the majority of young people with additional needs educated in mainstream schools. Ms Tolley said that one of the areas where improvements could be made was the provision of school support for children at maintained schools. In relation to a further query regarding the potential academisation of a particular school, Councillor Mili Patel (Lead Member for Children and Young People) and Ms Tolley both confirmed that they had not been formally approached and suggested that as this was not directly related to the item under consideration it would be more appropriate for further discussion on this issue to take place outside of the formal committee meeting, which the Chair supported.

The Committee focused its attention on the recruitment and the work of therapists. Duncan Ambrose (Assistant Director at National Health Service (NHS) Brent CCG) said that it had been challenging to recruit audiology specialists so shared service

arrangements had been made with Hounslow; occupational therapists (one additional member of staff had been recruited so the number of cases on the waiting list had been reduced by 50%); and speech and language therapists. Mr Ambrose noted that action had been taken to address the shortages in the immediate term and an update on the situation was expected in January 2018. In terms of the need for extra resources, Dr Basham said that it would be more important to examine the resources currently available and consider how lessons learned could be implemented to ensure these went further without increasing budgets. Ms Tolley added that funding for education for children with additional needs and disabilities came through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). She emphasised that the biggest impact on outcomes for children was and would be created by changes to the national funding formula and the high needs block, which combined with population growth, created additional pressure for funding special educational needs. Andrew Ward (the Council's Head of Finance – Children and Young People) commented on the High Needs Block and pointed out that the funding formula was well below the level Brent currently received and the small increase that had been applied was below the level of inflation.

As far as EHC plans were concerned, Mr Ambrose explained that there was a standardised template which determined the type of needs. New operating procedures had been introduced to allow health providers to write a summary that was tailored to their needs and provided a good understanding of the purpose of the plan. Brian Grady (the Council's Operational Director Safeguarding, Performance and Strategy) said that a high level of completion of EHC plans was maintained and, despite the current demand on the system, there would not be an increase of funding in real terms. However, Members challenged the amber status of completion of plans and Mr Grady clarified that it was a result of a comparison to previous reports.

A Co-opted Member referred to the 17% increase in requests for new EHC plans between October 2016 and October 2017 and enquired what the percentage in other boroughs was. Mr Grady said that work had been undertaken to find out the reasons for this increase and its scale in other areas. He acknowledged that requests for new plans had increased nationally, but did not dismiss the possibility that the figure could be a result of greater awareness. Mr Ambrose said that engagement with members of the public had been good and people had been actively involved in co-production of plans. However, specific challenges associated with getting the voice of young people heard and making sure they knew how to access Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) remained. He noted that provision of mental health services in schools had been improved, meetings with headteachers had been set up and engagement activities had been planned, but this could take time due to the large number of schools in the Borough.

A Co-opted Member pointed out that the report had been presented to the Committee after targets had been agreed and the action plan had been set. In response, Ms Tolley said that this was due to the fact that the paper had to be submitted to Ofsted by a specific deadline

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The contents of the Local Area Inspection of SEND paper, be noted;

- (ii) The next steps to continue to address the areas of concern identified through the local area SEND inspection be endorsed;
- (iii) Details of a Human Resources Strategy for the delivery of the future therapy service model be provided at a future meeting of the Committee;
- (iv) Information about how the SEND budget in the health and social care system would be safeguarded be provided at a future meeting of the Committee; and
- (v) An update report on jointly commissioned services be provided during the 2018/2019 municipal year.

7. Effectiveness of Existing Support Arrangements for Care Leavers and Implications of Recent Legislative Changes

Councillor Mili Patel (Lead Member for Children and Young People) and Nigel Chapman (the Council's Operational Director for Integration and Improved Outcomes) introduced the paper which informed the Committee about the effectiveness of current services for care leavers and the implications of recent legislative changes introduced by the Children and Social Work Act in April 2017. Mr Chapman explained that one of the key changes was that the duty and responsibility to all care leavers was extended to the age of 25, regardless of their education and employment status. He directed the Committee's attention to section four of the report (page 35 to the Agenda pack) which provided information on the most recent Ofsted inspection that took place in September 2015. In response to the finding that the quality of support for care leavers required improvement, a specialist Leaving Care Team had been created, the number of Personal Advisers (PAs) had been increased and experienced managers had been recruited to support PAs. Nevertheless, the number of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) remained a concern – although the proportion of care leavers in education, employment or training was above the national average (51% compared to 49%), it remained below the Borough's statistical neighbours (56%) (paragraphs 4.2 to 4.8 on pages 36 and 37 to the Agenda pack). Onder Beter (the Council's Head of Looked After Children and Permanency) said that despite the fact that 45 young people were in higher education, the number of care leavers in vocational training (apprenticeships) had to be improved – currently, three care leavers were in an apprenticeship, 12 awaited next month's allocation and eight had been supported into employment through the NEET panel, which would bring Brent to the national average.

A Member of the Committee asked how effective services for care leavers were and whether Brent Council followed the principles of corporate parenting. Mr Chapman said that this enquiry fell into the remit of the Corporate Parenting Committee and highlighted that key accomplishments had been the reduction of the ratio of cases to PAs, the increase in the number of young people accessing apprenticeships, and the provision of permanent accommodation to care leavers. Moreover, each care leaver had a pathway that addressed certain areas for support and guidance and over 90% of pathways were being completed on time.

In relation to PAs' workload, Mr Beter said that following the legislative changes, the Local Authority could support approximately 500 young people although the level of

support could vary as often care leavers did not all want or need the same level of guidance. Nevertheless, support remained available, if required, and very experienced managers and PAs had been appointed to deliver services under the new arrangements. As far as contact with care leavers was concerned, Mr Beter said that the Local Authority was measured on the number of people it kept in touch with and it was a requirement to maintain contact with care leavers who had to be able to access a service wherever they were. He reminded the Committee that Brent remained responsible for Looked After Children even when they had moved outside the Borough.

Andrew Ward (the Council's Head of Finance – Children and Young People) said that although the precise budget implications of the new local offer were not yet clear, there was a need for demographic growth to be built in so a new cohort of teenagers, currently growing up, could be accounted for. Gail Tolley (the Council's Strategic Director of Children and Young People) added that the new offer required additional resources and she would be making the case that the Council considered lobbying the Department for Education to secure the additional funding required due to legal implications arising from the Children and Social Work Act. In terms of a rough estimation of cost, if the Council had to support 200 additional care leavers and continue to provide the same level of service, it had to recruit eight new PAs, costing approximately £328,000.

In response to a question about partnership work, the Committee heard that the Council's apprenticeship and job brokerage service had contacts with key employers in the Borough and Mr Beter said that he would be meeting with Matt Dibben, Head of Employment, Skills and Enterprise, to discuss potential options of joint working to identify employment opportunities, suitable for care leavers, and potential options of working together with companies such as the Football Association, Wembley Stadium, Ikea, Costco, etc. Furthermore, when tickets for events at Wembley Stadium were received, the first allocation was to children in care and care leavers. Ms Tolley said that there had been good working between teams within the local authority and spoke about a special session delivered at Brent Senior Managers Group which informed colleagues of the work of the Leaving Care Team and generated pledges from various teams to support care leavers. As far as the transition of the Brent Housing Partnership back in house was concerned, Ms Tolley noted that she had attended the induction of staff who had moved over and Mr Beter highlighted that there would be an allocated officer from Housing who would support care leavers, including with arrangements in the private sector. This would mean that a case would be closed only when the young person had demonstrated the skills necessary to manage their tenancy. The Committee heard that no care leaver had been made homeless in the last 11 months and there were not any care leavers living in a bed and breakfast type of placement.

Access to mental health services continued being a major challenge as the current Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) had different levels of interventions for adults and children, with no service bridging this gap. Nevertheless, this issue would be addressed in the work of the Children's Trust.

A Member of the Committee asked a question that related to consulting young people on the offer. Mr Chapman explained that the Care in Action Group (for young people under 18 and care leavers over 18) met every week and was attended by Council officers and partners on a regular basis. Ms Tolley added that

representatives of the Group sat on the Corporate Parenting Committee and there was a standing item on its agenda to consider reports by them, along with any issues they wished to raise.

Ms Tolley summarised that she was pleased with the progress that had been made towards the revised local offer. She said that there had been good input from the Corporate Parenting Committee and a draft updated local offer would be presented to it in February for approval before it was considered by Cabinet prior to April 2018.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The contents of the Effectiveness of Existing Support Arrangements for Care Leavers and Implications of Recent Legislative Changes report, be noted;
- (ii) The Lead Member for Children and Young People and the Council continued to lobby central government to secure the necessary finances to meet the delivery of the new local offer;
- (iii) Detail be sought from mental health services about how they would work with care leavers up to the age of 25 in relation to the new local offer; and
- (iv) The Head of Strategy and Partnerships be encouraged to seek support from local retail outlets to add value to the local care offer.

Ms Yaqub left the meeting at 8:10 pm.

Councillor Mili Patel left the meeting at 8:51 pm.

8. Update on scrutiny work programme (If any)

James Diamond (the Council's Scrutiny Officer) reminded Members that there would be a special meeting of the Committee on 6 December 2017 to consider a paper by the Brent Clinical Commissioning Group on access to General Practices in the Borough.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The contents of the Update on the Committee's Work Programme 2017-18 report, be noted;
- (ii) The special meeting on 6 December would start at 6:30 pm;
- (iii) The report on access to GP services by a former Task and Finish Group be made available before the meeting to Members; and
- (iv) A member of the Council's Planning service attend the meeting to assist Members with the discussion.

9. Any other urgent business

None.

The meeting closed at 8.58 pm

COUNCILLOR KETAN SHETH
Chair

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