

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, 11th October 2007 at 7.30 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Motley (Chair), Councillor Arnold (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Ahmed, Mistry, C J Patel and Tullett and co-opted members Rev Phil Stone, Mrs Bondzi-Simpson, Mr Lorenzato and Mr Akisanya.

Councillor Wharton (Lead Member, Children and Families), Ms Jenny Cooper (observer), Mrs Lesley Gouldbourne (observer) and Dr Gill Reed (observer) also attended the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Vaughan (observer).

1. Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

There were none.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting of the Children and Families Scrutiny Panel held on Wednesday, 11th July 2007 be agreed as a true and accurate record.

3. Matters Arising

Matters Arising – Tracking

In response to questions, the Chair clarified that a tracking report would be submitted for consideration by the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the meeting on 11th December 2007.

Progress on Brent Youth Parliament

The Vice Chair highlighted the point about there being adequate sport and leisure facilities in the borough but noted that it would be worthwhile to develop a central point of information about the available facilities as young people were often not aware of what was available. The Chair also commented on the importance of increasing participation in sport and suggested that this could be also be investigated by a task group of this Committee in the future. Stella Akintan (Policy and Performance Officer) advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee currently had a Task Group looking into Increasing Participation in Sport and suggested that the report could be looked at by this Committee in the future.

In response to questions, Krutika Pau (Assistant Director of Strategy and Partnerships, Children and Families) informed the Committee that an item on a review of the plans to create additional secondary schools within the borough taking into account the current Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) investigations, would be put before the Committee at their meeting in December.

4. Teenage Pregnancy and Sexual Health

Before Committee members was an update on the development of the Teenage Pregnancy and Young People's Sexual Health Strategy and the outcomes from the Teenage Pregnancy National Support Team's (NST) visit in May 2007.

Christine Chapman (Teenage Pregnancy and Sexual Health Manager, Children and Families) presented the report, highlighting some of the key issues and trends. The Committee was informed that the Teenage Pregnancy National Support Team visited in May and whilst acknowledging good practice, made several recommendations. These recommendations had been integrated into the Teenage Pregnancy Action Plan, the key features of which were outlined by Christine Chapman.

With regard to strategic aims, it was noted that the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy would be revised and that a Teenage Pregnancy Executive Group would be established to monitor the Action Plan. To help achieve this, an event day involving key partners had been arranged for the 29th October 2007. Members were also advised that to address data collection issues, a data officer from the National Teenage Pregnancy Unit would be coming in to work with Brent.

Other key features of the Action Plan related to prevention, for example it had been recommended that the number of drop-in venues offering contraceptive and sexual health advice and support services should be increased. It was also noted that the 'safe card' system was still being used whereby young people could access free condoms at dedicated pharmacists. Additionally, members were also advised of an audit toolkit that had been developed to assist with the audit of Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) in Brent secondary schools. The intention was to carry out an audit in October and November with a view to preparing a report in December. Other preventative schemes included the Teens and Toddlers Programme that targeted those at risk of teenage pregnancy, Christine Chapman explained that the programme was now in its fourth round and had helped 80 young people during its last run. It was suggested that up to half of these young people could have been potentially at risk of teenage pregnancy. A further objective was to provide support to parents/carers in talking to their children about relationships and sex and the Committee was informed of funding that the Department had secured from the learning skills programme to provide courses for teen parents.

The Committee then considered the report's recommendation that a task group be established to investigate the themes raised. Christine Chapman suggested that any task group's focus should be on encouraging healthy relationships rather than on promoting safe sex as it was felt that there was already a lot of work addressing the latter. Christine Chapman also expressed the view that it would be good to get parental input and the views of the community, including faith groups on this issue. It was also acknowledged that the Youth Parliament had identified teenage pregnancy as a priority issue and would therefore be interested in contributing to any activity in this area.

Susie Daniel (Chief Executive, Brook London) was also present to update the Committee on recent activity. Members noted that Brook had opened a new service in Monks Park which also offered up to 6 hours a week of outreach work. Ms Daniel stressed the importance of outreach work, noting that it had proven to be successful particularly with reaching out to young men. Ms Daniel also advised of some research that had been carried out in Camden to look at the issues facing young Asian people. It was emphasised that a key message was that young Asians faced the same issues as their contemporaries from other backgrounds; however they had highlighted a need for support with regard to educating their parents on the issues they faced. In view of this Ms Daniel re-iterated the view that it would be important to incorporate faith groups especially as there were particular challenges faced by communities for cultural and religious reasons.

Councillor Mistry expressed the view that there was often a conflict between what parents considered to be good advice and what young people were being told from other sources. In view of this Councillor Mistry emphasised the importance of open communication.

Lesley Gouldbourne (observer) enquired about the effect of PCT cuts to school nurses on preventative work in the area of sexual health. Christine Chapman expressed the view that whilst the effects had not been seen yet, it was envisioned that there would be a significant impact. It was explained that school nurses had been trained to play a central role in providing advice on sexual health and contraception amongst other things and thus a reduction in the service would be noticed. It was also noted that it was not possible for this to be compensated for by the voluntary sector.

Lesley Gouldbourne also referred to the membership of the Task Group and the Teenage Pregnancy Executive Group and asked whether either body would or had considered the inclusion of young people and teachers. In response, Christine Chapman explained that the service had often raised the issue with teachers at school INSET days and explained that there was always an open offer to do so. Acknowledging that there was already a considerable degree of engagement with schools, the Chair expressed the view that it would be important for the task group to concentrate its efforts on engaging with parents and faith groups, furthermore it was felt that the Task Group should not be too large so as to maximise its effectiveness. For these reasons the Chair suggested that it

was not necessary to have teachers included in the membership of the task group. With regard to Teenage Pregnancy Strategy Groups, Krutika Pau explained that every Local Authority was under an obligation to have a Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board. It was explained that the Board in Brent had members representing the PCT, schools, the voluntary sector and staff from various other Departments of the Council. Noting this, Krutika Pau explained that the NST had recommended that the Council have a smaller Executive Group to address performance management issues. However the wider Partnership Board was a more inclusive group and in addition to the parties involved as mentioned above, it was keen to involve young people too.

The Chair asked whether there was any correlation between ethnicity and teenage pregnancy, in response Christine Chapman explained that the Teenage Pregnancy and Sexual Health Team received statistics from the PCT on a quarterly basis. It was noted that these statistics had demonstrated that black African and Caribbean young people were over represented in this area. The Vice Chair asked about the general issues around data collection and Christine Chapman explained that attempts were being made to improve the accuracy of the data collected.

The Vice Chair enquired about the budget allocated to dealing with teenage pregnancy. In response Krutika Pau explained that a Teenage Pregnancy Implementation Grant (TPIG) was provided by central government. It was also noted that it was necessary to work in partnership with the voluntary sector. The Committee also heard that TPIG was now part of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and the grant was not ringfenced.

Manveen Patwalia (Principal Youth Participation Manager, Children & Families), was present along with several members of the Youth Parliament, and on the invitation of the Chair shared the views of the Youth Parliament on this matter. It was explained that the Youth parliament Members had attended a "Circle of Influence" event at which several issues affecting young people were discussed. An outcome of the event had been that several pledges were made regarding objectives for young people and some of these related to the issue of healthy relationships. Ms Patwalia explained that objectives included achieving consistency across the board on sex education in schools. It had also been noted that young people attending the event had expressed their views on sex education and suggested that there was too much emphasis on negative aspects such as teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases rather than being focussed on promoting healthy relationships. The Youth Participation Manager concluded by highlighting that this issue was one which Youth Parliament members had already identified to be included in their work programme over the year, and she informed the Committee that the Youth Parliament would be interested in being involved in the Task Group.

In response to further questions, Christine Chapman informed the Committee that her team was looking into the possibility of setting up an outreach service operating from Kingsbury High School to serve the needs of children in the north of the borough.

Lesley Gouldbourne (observer) commented on sex education in schools, she explained that this would comprise part of the Personal, Social and Health Education programme. Lesley Gouldbourne explained that through her experience as a teacher she had seen how limits had been placed on the PSHE offer as the government was shifting focus onto other things. Additionally it was explained that teachers were allowed to refuse teaching sex education classes. In relation to this there was further discussion on school governors' responsibility to have a policy on sex education in schools. Christine Chapman commented on the importance of educating governors and informed the Committee that she would be attending the next governor conference. The Teenage Pregnancy and Sexual Health Manager further explained that her service would be carrying out an audit of the Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) in schools to see which schools had a policy, how effective it was and who was consulted on it. Ms Daniel commented that an issue was that a school's policy could theoretically be to not provide SRE and therefore there was always a need for the public sector to provide an accessible service incorporating outreach work.

There followed discussion on the scope of the Task Group and how its membership should be comprised. The Chair re-iterated the importance of keeping the group small in order to maximise effectiveness, however it was also highlighted that it was important to engage with parents and community faith groups. Councillor Motley (Chair) confirmed that he would like to Chair the Task Group. Committee members highlighted that Councillor Mrs Fernandes had been working in the area of Teenage Pregnancy including work with some clinics. Councillor Ahmed confirmed her interest in being one of the Committee Members on the Task Group. It was noted that the Co-Opted Member Reverend Phil Stone had expressed an interest in being a faith representative on the Task Group. Georgina Bondzi-Simpson (Co-Opted Member and Parent Governor representative) highlighted that two of the Co-Opted members on the Committee were parent governor representatives and also expressed an interest in being on the Task Group. The Chair suggested that it would be good to include a mother and a father to represent parents in the Task Group and explained that he would discuss this further with individual Committee Members after the meeting.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That progress on improving young people's sexual health and the revised Action Plan reflecting the outcomes from the National Support Team visit be noted; and
- (ii) that a Task Group be established to explore the promotion of healthy relationships for young people in the borough. The Task Group should focus on:

- How Brent can engage parents in supporting their children with healthy relationships and
 - How Brent can engage communities and faith organisations in supporting relationships and sexual health education? And
- (iii) that Councillor Motley Chair the Task Group and that membership should comprise the following:
- Four Committee Members with cross-party representation
 - A Primary Care Trust (PCT) representative
 - A Youth Parliament representative
 - A representative from a faith group
 - A parent representative.

5. Brent PCT Proposals for making savings at Hay Lane School

A report was circulated to members outlining how the PCT determined savings proposals in physiotherapy services at Hay Lane school. Phil Church (PCT) introduced the item and apologised for the delay in getting the report to the Committee. It was noted that the report sought to provide a forensic analysis of the reduction to the service. Janet Stajkowski (PCT) presented the report and explained the context, noting that cuts were being made to physiotherapy services as a result of budget cuts across the PCT. It was further explained that to assess the impact of the cuts children's needs were reviewed and the objective was to make cuts without comprising the core services. Ms Stajkowski informed the Committee that as a result of the cuts there would be 50% less time spent on hands on physiotherapy and exercise programmes. Ms Stajkowski commented that many of the children at Hay Lane school were accessing 24 hour care and as a result whilst they might be missing out on physiotherapy at school it was likely they were accessing such services at other points in the day. Referring to the effect on teaching staff, Ms Stajkowski explained that she had been to Hay Lane School to discuss the impact of the cuts with the headteacher and expressed the view that whilst it had been challenging, the school had been trying to make it work and were able to deliver the services.

Jenny Cooper (observer) asked whether there really was no impact on disability rights as had been indicated in the report. Ms Stajkowski acknowledged the changing nature of disabilities and the increase in the number of children on the autistic spectrum. However she also explained that all children with special needs were being seen and assessed. Ms Cooper also highlighted that staff were being asked to do more as a result of the changes and as a result it was likely that another area of work would be compromised. In response, Ms Stajkowski suggested that staff should not be impacted on to such a great extent as a child's physiotherapy needs would be spread across the board to involve all those involved in the child's day to day care including parents and carers. It was hoped that this would decrease the pressures on time for teachers at the school.

In response to questions about the teachers' views on the changes, Ms Stajkowski re-iterated that she had met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher at Hay Lane School. She advised the Committee that there were no significant issues or indications that children were being put at risk. The Chair acknowledged this but emphasised the importance of a continued vigilance to ensure that children's educational needs were not being compromised. Jenny Cooper (observer) and Lesley Gouldbourne (observer) drew the PCT's attention to a letter from the Teachers' Panel acknowledging the PCT's challenging circumstances but suggesting the addition of a part time physiotherapist half funded by the school and half funded by the PCT. The PCT representatives explained that they had not seen this letter, however Phil Church informed the Committee that he would review this suggestion with his PCT colleagues Bashir Arif and Lynda Greenhill before preparing a formal response. Krutika Pau suggested that when considering the suggestion the PCT should keep in mind all schools affected by the cuts not just Hay Lane. In response to further questions, Ms Stajkowski informed the committee that there would not be a reduction in school nurses in special schools and it was noted that there would be an increase in the number of occupational therapists.

RESOLVED:-

That the equality impact assessment be noted.

6. Community Access to School Facilities

Councillor Wharton (Lead Member, Children and Families) presented this report that outlined how school facilities could be opened up to make them more widely available to the public. It was noted that there had previously been a Task Group that explored this issue and looked at the options available for increasing community use of school facilities should money be made available to do so. Councillor Wharton suggested that one option would be to provide schools with a subsidy, however he emphasised the importance of ensuring that the money was not used to support existing services but instead be used for promoting objectively desirable outcomes. Councillor Wharton invited members to give their views on the options outlined in the report.

The Vice Chair commented that the analysis in the report was useful and highlighted that promoting the Children and Young People's plan (CYPP) was an objective for all schools. Councillor Arnold expressed the view that paying a subsidy for caretakers to cover extra hours was a good idea. Acknowledging that the Extended Schools Co-ordinator was already working closely with schools, the Vice Chair asked what more could be done to provide a further incentive to schools to make them more available for community use.

Krutika Pau explained to the Committee that the facilities provided at schools varied enormously and some schools were not able to make themselves available due to their design. Also there were practical considerations, such as the security of equipment, which made schools reluctant to being more available. Having said this, Ms Pau advised the

Committee that there were a number of community groups that were currently using school premises successfully and suggested that an objective should be to open access and encourage groups that were not doing so already, to use school premises.

Lesley Gouldbourne spoke of her experiences as a teacher with regard to other groups using school premises. Whilst acknowledging the benefits to the community of extended school, Ms Gouldbourne noted there were practical implications, for example teachers could find it difficult to finish their work at school if community groups were using the premises and making noise. Ms Gouldbourne also drew members' attention to the fact that some teachers felt that their concerns about Health and Safety issues had not been adequately responded to. Ms Pau, in response, noted that a guidance note had been recently issued to all schools which covered Health and Safety in extended Schools. Ms Gouldbourne acknowledged this but expressed the view that the guidance was ambiguous. In view of these comments the Chair suggested that the guidance should be reviewed further. The Vice Chair also suggested that during any review headteachers should be consulted and there should be discussion with schools so that examples of good practice could be shared.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the report be noted; and
- (ii) that the guidance on Health and Safety in Extended Schools should be reviewed further in light of feedback from the Teachers' Panel.

7. Wembley Study Support Centre

The report before members had details of the Study Support Centre opening within Wembley National Stadium. Krutika Pau (Assistant Director of Strategy and Partnerships, Children and Families) presented this item highlighting the positive progress in developing a Study Support Centre. It was noted that the project was developed in partnership between Brent Council, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCFS) and Wembley National Stadium (WNS). Ms Pau explained that it would be a flagship centre funded three ways by the partners. Members were informed that the centre would be situated in the 'Coach Driver's Lounge' within the WNS complex and that a centre manager had been appointed.

In response to questions, Ms Pau highlighted that the centre would be working in the first instance with 12 secondary and 12 primary schools per year in the borough, including special schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). Ms Pau also drew members' attention to the premises good accessibility as it had plenty of space and the appropriate features for good disabled access. It was also noted that the centre would work with the City Academy planned for Wembley Park.

RESOLVED:-

that progress in the development of the Wembley Study Support Centre be noted.

8. **Information Updates**

Improving Outcomes for African Caribbean and Black African Pupils – Task Group Report to Executive

Councillor Arnold (Task Group Chair) updated the Committee on the response of the Executive to the Task Group's report. It was noted that the report was considered by the Executive at their meeting on the 11th September and that the Executive supported a Council wide approach to addressing the issue of improving outcomes with each service area making a contribution. Councillor Arnold informed the Committee that Task Group members had hoped that the executive would have adopted all the recommendations set out in the Task Group's report. However, it was acknowledged that the Executive requested the Children and Families Directorate to report back by May 2008 on what measures have been taken to identify best practice and disseminate it to schools and social care staff. Councillor Arnold explained that this would help with developing a knowledge base and highlighted the need to secure funding to help achieve the objectives. It was noted that funding could be achieved through making adjustments to the funding formula and Councillor Wharton emphasised the need for the School's Forum to address this when reviewing the funding formula. The Committee were also advised that they would have the opportunity to highlight this at a future meeting when a report on the funding formula would be considered.

Councillor Arnold also informed the Committee that the Task Group had since received some feedback from the Ethnic Minority & Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS) officer and that there plans for consultation with teachers and a discussion with Brent Youth Matters 2 Forum.

Primary and Secondary School Places

Councillor Wharton (Lead Member for Children and Families) updated the Committee on the situation regarding the demand for school places in the borough. He explained that statistics indicated an increase in live births each year which would have huge implications for school places in the borough. It was noted that in 2007 there was a 7% increase in reception applications and Councillor Wharton expressed the view that the statistics suggested this would continue to increase. The Committee was informed that the Directorate had had to act quickly to meet this demand and part of their response this year was to extend existing schools and open an extra four Reception classes. Councillor Wharton continued to outline the present situation and explained that there were no schools with spare Reception places. It was also noted that there were approximately 83 children of primary school age without a school place and 117 unplaced children at secondary school level. To further illustrate this, maps were circulated to Committee members highlighting Brent Primary aged 'out of

school' pupil by Planning Area. Krutika Pau (Assistant Director of Strategy and Partnerships, Children and Families) highlighted that September was a very volatile month for school places as there was a lot of movement, however she suggested that a more accurate picture would be available by the end of October. Ms Pau also informed the Committee that a survey was due to be carried out on the 9th October to see which children were on roll at school and this would help with assessing the situation.

The Vice Chair asked about the demand for places at Catholic schools. Ms Pau expressed the view that at present there were sufficient places at secondary level particularly for boys, however she suggested that at primary level an increased demand could emerge possibly in view of the increasing size of the Polish community. Councillor Wharton added that there was a heavier demand on Catholic schools in the north of the borough.

Some statistics were provided in response to questions about the number of children out of school and the length of time children were out of school for. Krutika Pau informed Committee members that the Department's target was to offer a school place to a child within six weeks of the unplaced child presenting to them. It was also noted that there were 152 children out of school as of the 12th September, of these 6 were reception age, 27 were for year 1 and 19 for Year 2. On hearing these figures and noting that this capacity issue was likely to persist for sometime, the Chair requested that the Committee be updated on this on a meeting by meeting basis. Councillor Wharton also suggested that the Committee should see the papers that were being considered by the School Places Strategy Board.

Clive Romain (Senior Education Lawyer, Legal & Democratic Services) also highlighted for the Committee that the Council had a statutory duty to provide each child with an education and with this in mind emphasised the importance of addressing this issue as not doing so would put the Council at risk of legal action.

When asked about the possibility of securing government funding to help with this, Ms Pau informed the Committee that some meetings had already taken place to try and achieve this. She added that the Director of Children and Families was leading these discussions that sought to attract additional resources in order to increase the provision to build new schools and expand existing schools.

Youth Opportunity Fund

Krutika Pau informed the Committee it had been confirmed that the Youth Opportunity Fund would continue between 2008 and 2011. It was also hoped that the funding would be at a similar rate to previous years. Ms Pau also explained that the expectation was that in the future young people would be more involved in budget setting and that by 2008 5% of the Youth Service budget would be devolved to young people to determine how it was to be spent and by 2018 this would raise to 20%.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the information updates be noted; and
- (ii) that the Committee continue to be provided with an update on the school places issue in the borough on a meeting by meeting basis.

10. **Date of Next Meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the next meeting of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee take place on Tuesday, 11th December 2007.

11. **Any Other Urgent Business**

There was none.

The meeting ended at 9.40 pm

W MOTLEY
Chair