



Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Supplementary

Tuesday 19 January 2021 at 4.00 pm*

This will be held as an online virtual meeting. The link to view the meeting can be accessed [HERE](#)

*Please note the earlier start time

Membership:

Members

Councillors:

Ketan Sheth (Chair)
Colwill (Vice-Chair)
Aden
Daly
Ethapemi
Hector
Lloyd
Sangani
Shahzad
Thakkar

Substitute Members

Councillors:

S Choudhary, Hassan, Johnson, Kabir, Long,
Mahmood, Miller, Perrin and Shah

Councillors:

Kansagra and Maurice

Co-opted Members

Helen Askwith, Church of England Schools
Simon Goulden, Jewish Faith Schools
Dinah Walker, Parent Governor Representative
Alloysius Frederick, Roman Catholic Diocese Schools
Sayed Jaffar Milani, Muslim Faith Schools

Observers

Brent Youth Parliament
Jenny Cooper, NEU and Special School observer
John Roche, NEU and Secondary School Observer
Vacancy, NEU Primary School Observer

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**The press and public are welcome to attend this meeting.
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Notes for Members - Declarations of Interest:

If a Member is aware they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest* in an item of business, they must declare its existence and nature at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent and must leave the room without participating in discussion of the item.

If a Member is aware they have a Personal Interest** in an item of business, they must declare its existence and nature at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent.

If the Personal Interest is also significant enough to affect your judgement of a public interest and either it affects a financial position or relates to a regulatory matter then after disclosing the interest to the meeting the Member must leave the room without participating in discussion of the item, except that they may first make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to the matter, provided that the public are allowed to attend the meeting for those purposes.

***Disclosable Pecuniary Interests:**

- (a) **Employment, etc.** - Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit gain.
- (b) **Sponsorship** - Any payment or other financial benefit in respect of expenses in carrying out duties as a member, or of election; including from a trade union.
- (c) **Contracts** - Any current contract for goods, services or works, between the Councillors or their partner (or a body in which one has a beneficial interest) and the council.
- (d) **Land** - Any beneficial interest in land which is within the council's area.
- (e) **Licences**- Any licence to occupy land in the council's area for a month or longer.
- (f) **Corporate tenancies** - Any tenancy between the council and a body in which the Councillor or their partner have a beneficial interest.
- (g) **Securities** - Any beneficial interest in securities of a body which has a place of business or land in the council's area, if the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body or of any one class of its issued share capital.

****Personal Interests:**

The business relates to or affects:

- (a) Anybody of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management, and:
 - To which you are appointed by the council;
 - which exercises functions of a public nature;
 - which is directed is to charitable purposes;
 - whose principal purposes include the influence of public opinion or policy (including a political party or trade union).

- (b) The interests a of a person from whom you have received gifts or hospitality of at least £50 as a member in the municipal year;

or

A decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial position of:

- You yourself;
- a member of your family or your friend or any person with whom you have a close association or any person or body who is the subject of a registrable personal interest

Supplementary Agenda

Introductions, if appropriate.

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4 Minutes of the previous meeting	1 - 12

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting as a correct record.

Date of the next meeting: Wednesday 24 March 2021

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MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE Tuesday 24 November 2020 at 6pm

PRESENT: Councillor Ketan Sheth (Chair), Councillor Colwill (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Aden, Daly, Ethapemi, Hector, Lloyd, Sangani, Shahzad, and Thakkar, and co-opted members and Rev. Helen Askwith and Mr Simon Goulden. **All members were present in a remote capacity.**

Also Present (in remote capacity): Councillor McLennan and Councillor M Butt

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

Apologies for absence were received as follows:

- Co-opted member Mr Alloysius Frederick
- Co-opted member Mr Simon Goulden gave apologies that he would need to leave the meeting early to deliver a lecture
- Observers Jenny Cooper and John Roche (NEU representatives)

2. **Declarations of interests**

Interests were declared as follows:

- Councillor Ketan Sheth – Lead Governor, Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust, Board member for the Federation of St Joseph's Catholic Infant and Junior Schools, Board member for Harrow College and Uxbridge College, Board member for Daniel's Den
- Councillor Ethapemi – Spouse employed by the NHS
- Councillor Shahzad – Spouse employed by the NHS
- Councillor Sangani – Employed by the NHS
- Councillor Thakkar – Governor on Board at Phoenix Arch
- Mr Simon Goulden – Spouse Chair of governors of a Brent School

3. **Deputations (if any)**

There were no deputations received.

4. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

AGREED: That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 September 2020 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

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

There were no matters arising.

6. **Order of Business**

RESOLVED: that the Chair would take an urgent business item first, in accordance with Standing Order 60, which related to the matter of the imminent closure of the Wembley Ambulance Station.

7. **Any Other Urgent Business – Closure of Wembley Ambulance Station**

The Committee heard that the Chair would take an urgent item in relation to the imminent closure of the Wembley Ambulance Station under Standing Order 60.

The Chair welcomed Pauline Cramner (Director of Ambulance Services, London Ambulance Service) and Khadir Meer (Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Chief Executive, London Ambulance Service) to the meeting and thanked them for joining.

Khadir Meer explained that the Wembley Ambulance Station was similar to a garage with a small porta cabin which had been closed since March 2020 as part of the NHS response to Covid 19. He advised that the station was on an old site owned by NHS property services, and the lease was coming to an end therefore they had been asked to vacate the site. The Committee heard that the building was not fit for purpose to allow crews to mobilise and conclude their shift from. Khadir Meer emphasised that the ambulance station was not a healthcare setting or somewhere healthcare was provided, but a garage where vehicles were prepared and crews started and ended their shifts, with all services provided on the road 24 hours a day, seven days a week. As a result of the request to vacate by NHS property services, who were looking to redevelop the site, the plan was to vacate the station from 1 December 2020 in advance of the financial year concluding.

The Chair thanked Khadir Meer for his opening statement, expressing gratefulness on behalf of the whole Committee to LAS colleagues who had worked hard over the last few months. He invited members of the Committee to raise queries, with the following issues raised:

The Committee asked for confirmation that the London Ambulance Service (LAS) was part of the NHS, which LAS representatives affirmed. The Committee further queried what the NHS constitution stated with regards to stakeholder engagement and public consultation. Khadir Meer responded that the constitution stated very clearly that there should always be communication and engagement with all stakeholders, particularly Health and Wellbeing colleagues within local government. He expressed that engagement with stakeholders was very important to him and during the pandemic the LAS had been working very closely with all of local government, particularly with the Low Traffic Neighbourhoods initiative. The Chair thanked Khadir Meer for his response, and asked what stakeholder engagement and public consultation had taken place thus far with regard to the closure of the station. Khadir Meer highlighted that the station had already been closed since March 2020 to ensure the LAS was providing resilient services to the NHS in North West London. Pauline Cranmer added that it was their absolute priority to ensure they delivered healthcare to Brent residents and ensure they were able to provide care as communities grew. She expressed that, regarding public consultation, for her it was about ensuring there was no change to the care delivered to Brent residents, and noted that they had been operating out of a different site in Kenton, in the London Borough of Brent, since March 2020 with no detriment to the care delivered to Brent residents.

The Committee noted that the site would be due for re-development, and queried whether that meant the LAS would have the option to move back to the site once it had been redeveloped. Khadir Meer informed the Committee that they were not aware what future plans NHS property services had for that site, so were not able to comment on the future of the site.

In relation to response times for emergency calls, the Committee queried what impact operating out of a different location would have. The Committee wanted to hear more about the forensic analysis of the move to a different site. Khadir Meer highlighted that since March 2020 when they vacated the site and moved to operate out of Kenton response times had actually improved, and resources in the London Borough of Brent had increased since March. Pauline Cranmer advised that there were 2 critical time categories the LAS was measured against; category 1 for those in cardiac arrest, and category 2 for those very unwell and emergency for example those suffering from chest pains. For category 2, the national standard

performance target they were measured against was 18 minutes, and Brent month on month had been achieving around 13 minutes on average for response time for category 2 calls. The Committee noted that due to the pandemic the improved response times may have been a result of Wembley Stadium being closed.

Khadir Meer confirmed that they had not operated out of the site since March 2020, and that the lease for the site was being terminated by NHS property services at the end of the financial year with the LAS formally vacating as of 1st December 2020.

The Chair drew the item to a close and invited the Committee to make recommendations, with the following agreed:

- i) That the formal closure of the Wembley Ambulance station be paused.
- ii) That there be a stakeholder engagement and public consultation undertaken.

At the conclusion of this item the Chair offered thanks to Khadir Meer and Pauline Cranmer for joining the meeting, and expressed gratitude to their team for doing superb work for Brent residents.

8. Brent Council's management of the impact of COVID-19 on education settings and children's services

The Chair welcomed the Children and Young People Department to the meeting, as well as 2 Primary School Head teachers and representatives from Brent Youth Parliament. He invited Councillor Mili Patel (Lead Member for Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care) to introduce the report.

Councillor M Patel informed the Committee that the report updated members on the work the Children and Young People's department had been doing to manage the impact of COVID-19 on children's services. The paper provided an update from the report received in March 2020. It updated the committee on the following areas; early years settings and schools, early help, children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP), Looked After Children and Care Leavers, the Youth Justice services and the mental health and wellbeing of young people.

The Chair thanked the Lead Member for the introduction and invited comments and questions from the Committee, with the following issues raised:

The Committee expressed concern for young people's mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic and asked what assurances had been sought around the support offered to children and young people for their mental health and wellbeing. Councillor Patel drew the Committee's attention to section 10 of the report which detailed the Council-wide work led by Children's Services supporting young people's mental wellbeing. The Committee heard that counselling for Looked After Children and care leavers had been expanded with hours of support extended, and the Lead Member had heard further details of the support care leavers and looked after children had received at the Corporate Parenting Committee on 21 October 2020. The lead member also highlighted partnership work with Brent CCG to develop Mental Health Support Teams as part of an expanded CAMHS offer supporting young people's mental health working closely with schools.

The Chair invited Georgina Nutton (Head of Preston Park Primary School) to share what Preston Park Primary School had been doing to support their pupils during the pandemic. Georgina Nutton informed the Committee that they had been focussing on ensuring children had staff members to talk to as part of the ongoing support to children as they accessed

education either remotely or as vulnerable children on site in school. She described the effort to deliver an effective remote curriculum which had strong engagement from children, meaning come June when the school opened more widely to children they were able to progress well and “bounce back” when returning to a school environment. The Committee were informed that prior to all children returning to school in September, staff had planned a recovery curriculum and mapped any learning children had lost regarding their routine, to ensure a sense of normality around learning in the school environment. The full curriculum had now resumed whilst dipping in to the bespoke recovery curriculum where needed. To support pupil’s mental health the school used Place2Be through which children could access counselling, and offered online parenting support classes and sent out a wellbeing newsletter. The school had been focusing holistically on mental health through the PSHE curriculum and had adapted the timetable to focus time specifically on PSHE. The Committee heard that the school had a behaviour charter with emotion coaching focused language that staff used, and trained families to use at home, which enabled individuals to acknowledge feelings and helped to equip children with the skills to be able to self-regulate, know that the feelings they had were OK, have their feelings validated and work through them to set behaviour limits where needed.

Enid Lewis (Head of Park Lane Primary School) was also invited to share what Park Lane Primary School had been doing to support pupils during the pandemic, including vulnerable children and children with Special Education Needs (SEN). She highlighted that vulnerable children and children with SEN had been in school during the initial lockdown as well as later phases of the pandemic and had the support of school staff and their social worker. Park Lane Primary School also used Place2Be to support children with their mental health. The Committee heard that since the full return to school in September the school had focused on ensuring children were given the opportunities to talk about the lived experiences they had during lockdown, and all staff had training in how to help and support children deal with loss and grief prior to their return to school, as the school had a large number of children who were impacted by the virus. Enid Lewis informed the Committee that the school had focussed on mental health and linked that to physical health, as during lockdown many children did not have access to the quality meals they would have had at school so the school were focusing on both. She expressed that the school staff had gone above and beyond to ensure they had been available to support children with their mental health and talk to them about the worries they had, and children were now back into a routine. She highlighted that some children had genuine concerns around COVID-19 and their experience during lockdown.

The Committee drew attention to section 7.4 of the report which detailed the increase in referrals received by the Family Front Door in October 2020. The Committee asked for assurances that the impact of the pandemic on children in need and children subject to a child protection plan had been managed effectively. Councillor Patel highlighted that the rise in referrals had been anticipated, as Children’s Services were aware the majority of referrals came from schools and settings which were not accessible to the majority of young people during the lockdown. The department had prepared for the number of referrals to increase when schools reopened. Nigel Chapman (Operational Director Integration and Improved Outcomes, Brent Council), who is the Council’s statutory social work practice leader, advised that the rise had been primarily led by the return of children to schools and had led to increased pressure on child protection work and referral work and was increasing the number of looked after children. He explained that to mitigate the increased demand as a result of increased referrals he had implemented a new Family Front Door team to manage referrals more effectively and screen off some work that may not necessarily require a long term intervention by Children and Young People’s services, and to provide a very quick and effective response, which had taken around 10% of unnecessary work away from the service. Another mitigation was to ensure staff leave was taken during the summer so that social workers were back in place in time for the anticipated rise in demand.

With regards to early years settings, early help and children aged 0-5 years old, the Committee queried what the impact of the pandemic had been and how the wellbeing of those groups had been supported. Gail Tolley (Strategic Director Children and Young People, Brent Council) drew the Committee's attention to section 4 of the report which detailed the work done in early years settings and schools. She highlighted that a number of early years settings did remain open during the lockdown, particularly for vulnerable children, and the early years team based in the Civic Centre continued to support settings including visiting provision. Whilst children's centres had not remained fully open they had remained open for the more intensive and specialist work for those vulnerable children aged under 5 and ensuring access to health visiting support. Sue Gates (Head of Early Help, Brent Council) added that the communication from Children's Centres and liaison with the early years team had been very good throughout the pandemic and they knew on a twice weekly basis which vulnerable children had attended settings and which had not, with any attendance issues or concerns followed up by CYP early years staff. Children's Centres provided significant support to families throughout the pandemic period, including the delivery of early learning packages, doorstep drops, online sessions both 1 to 1 and in small groups, and speech and language therapy. Councillor Patel informed the Committee that many of the private voluntary and independent sector providers of early years settings had been required to close during the pandemic due to their home based settings, and the Children and Young People department had brokered access to alternative settings for vulnerable children and children of key workers where needed. She advised that there remains significant financial pressure for those organisations with a risk that some may not reopen due to budget impacts on particularly smaller private sector providers of early years. Whilst the government had provided funding through to the end of December the Council had concerns regarding the sustainability of those settings for the following year. Councillor Patel was working with leads across London in a cross-party manner to lobby the government for extra funding to mitigate the impact of the pandemic period and to confirm continued funding for early years settings, and advised she would continue to raise the issue wherever she could.

In relation to Family Wellbeing Centres, Gail Tolley confirmed that the decision was taken the previous year to move from 17 Children's Centres and to set up 8 Family Wellbeing Centres and the work to implement that was underway.

Concern was raised with regard to safeguarding demand pressures and extra staffing costs. Gail Tolley acknowledged that there were demand pressures and that Brent, as with all other Councils, was in a resource challenge situation that would be more challenging going forward. The report set out how the Family Front Door team noted in discussions earlier were managing this demand and Gail noted that social workers were carrying larger caseloads than the department would like. This was being monitored carefully. The Committee were advised that the complexity of cases had increased since September and the easing of restrictions. Gail Tolley informed the committee that CYP are monitoring the resource impact implications of Covid related pressures and these were being reported in year, in the budget reports presented to Cabinet.

The Committee questioned section 6.8 of the report, regarding the assurances presented by the North West London (NWL) Integrated Care System (ICS) to the NHS that phase 3 expectations would be met, noting that ICS were not legal bodies. Brian Grady (Operational Director Safeguarding Performance and Strategy, Brent Council) confirmed that the ICS was not a legal entity but a partnership arrangement by which the NHS was planning and delivering services across NWL. The partnership included the 10 NHS provider trusts and the 8 NWL CCGs, and was the planning footprint on which the NHS was reporting regularly to NHS England. Section 6.8 of the report referenced the assurances Brent Children's Trust (BCT), chaired by Gail Tolley, had been seeking and had received from the NHS system locally to ensure that every element of NHS delivery of services for vulnerable children had gone through appropriate rapid recovery and that the right services were in place for children and

young people. Gail Tolley highlighted that she had chaired a BCT meeting the morning of this meeting where she received reassurance again from a CCG representative. At the meeting she received assurance that going forward or in the event of a second lockdown qualified nurses working in children's services would not be drawn into other acute services in Brent.

With regard to how well schools were supported to respond to incidents of Covid-19, Councillor Tom Stephens (Lead Member for Schools, Employment and Skills) advised that paragraph 4.11 set out the arrangements to support early years settings and schools in the case of positive tests for Covid-19 of either children attending a setting, pupils or members of staff. School attendance in Brent was higher than both the national and London averages. He advised that the Children and Young People's department had supported all Brent schools during the pandemic including support with reviewing school COVID-19 risk assessments.

The Chair drew the item to a close by inviting 2 representatives from Brent Youth Parliament to address the Committee. Their questions focused on the mental health of children and young people, in particular focusing on section 10.5 of the report regarding the NHS linking mental health support teams with schools. The representatives queried whether those teams were aimed to be preventative or aimed at supporting those already in, or heading towards, crisis. Brian Grady advised that the teams would focus on emerging need and there would be a focus on prevention, aiming to identify, respond to and prevent emotional health needs growing in the population. He added that there were other interventions supporting the wellbeing of children returning to education that would be worked on during the year so children should see enhanced mental health support for current mental health conditions, on a preventative basis.

The Committee expressed gratitude to the Children and Young People department, noting the fantastic work undertaken. Gail Tolley thanked the Committee and expressed that collaboratively the frontline staff in all children's services settings had been outstanding throughout the pandemic.

As there were no further questions, the Chair thanked Committee members their contributions and drew the item to a close.

9. Update on schools and education, including the action plan for raising the achievement of boys of Black Caribbean heritage

Councillor Tom Stephens (Lead Member for Schools, Employment and Skills) introduced the report which presented the overall school standards and achievement and the action plan for raising the achievement of boys of Black Caribbean heritage. He drew the Committee's attention to paragraph 3.16 of the report which noted there were no performance data for schools for the 2019-20 academic year following the Department for Education announcement that the summer 2020 primary key stage statutory assessments and GCSE, A Level and Level 3 vocational examinations would be cancelled. The background paper provided the 2018-19 annual school standards and achievement report presented to the Committee in March 2020. Councillor Stephens felt that overall the information showed impressive figures on standards and achievement, and Brent had met all but one of 3 Borough targets. Brent had missed 1 target by 1 percentage point regarding the achievement of boys of Black Caribbean heritage, and met the targets for more than 95% of Brent schools being judged outstanding and reducing the attainment gap.

The Chair thanked Councillor Stephens for his introduction and invited members to ask questions, with the following issues raised:

In response to queries regarding what impact the pandemic had on the achievement of boys of Black Caribbean heritage and what additional support those boys were being given to

support their optimal achievement, Gail Tolley (Strategic Director Children and Young People, Brent Council) highlighted that there was no specific evidence as yet to show whether the pandemic had impacted the attainment outcomes for those young people as there were no public examinations during the year. Councillor Stephens added that there was nationally an anticipated impact on educational inequality as a result of the pandemic, but there was no current evidence to suggest whether that impact had been more severe for certain groups.

The Chair invited Enid Lewis (Head of Park Lane Primary School) to share how her school had been supporting the achievement of pupils. Enid Lewis advised that Park Lane Primary School had done a lot of work supporting all disadvantaged children, including where relevant for pupils of Black Caribbean heritage, working with an action research methodology. A lot of additional support had been put in place, including ensuring each pupil had access to relevant technology, and catch-up support was being put in place to narrow any gaps.

The Committee highlighted some national concerns that pupils of Black Caribbean heritage may not have the necessary equipment to participate in home schooling and had not been able to engage with online learning during the pandemic, and queried whether that was the case in Brent. Councillor Stephens agreed that the lack of digital access was part of wider socioeconomic circumstances which could impact negatively on children's education such as overcrowded households meaning some pupils did not have the capacity to sit through a whole series of lessons and learn in a quiet space. He advised that the previous report did highlight the work done by the Council to support vulnerable pupils with their learning and from April 2020, the DfE began to issue digital devices (laptops, tablets and 4G wireless routers) to local authorities to distribute to schools. In terms of more targeted support for boys of Black Caribbean heritage, Councillor Stephens highlighted the importance of Black Caribbean Achievement Champions in schools.

The Committee heard that the Black Caribbean Achievement Champions referenced in the report had been funded by Brent Council through the Schools Forum and these champions were school staff determined by the schools themselves. Gail Tolley highlighted that very often the role was not assigned to someone in senior leadership teams but that champions held different roles across Brent schools, so that raising the achievement of boys of Black Caribbean heritage was seen as a whole school responsibility. Enid Lewis informed the Committee that the role was to liaise with senior leaders, parents, and other stakeholders to ensure the achievement of Black Caribbean boys was on all agendas and to look at the quality of education boys of Black Caribbean heritage were receiving.

The Committee asked whether the voice of the parents of Black Caribbean boys had been considered in the report. Gail Tolley explained that as part of the funding for the project to increase the achievement of boys of Black Caribbean heritage parents had been working with the Brent Schools Partnership to design and set up a portal driven by parents of boys of Black Caribbean heritage. John Galligan (Head of Setting and School Effectiveness, Brent Council) informed the Committee that the portal had gone live and all parents had been given passwords, with the Champions working closely with parents to enable them to get the best out of the portal. He added that parents had welcomed the additional meetings specifically focused on their children and improving their children's outcomes, and drew the Committee's attention to section 3.43 which detailed feedback received.

The Committee wanted assurance that partnership working was effective to ensure every boy of Black Caribbean heritage was achieving in all educational settings at all key stages. Councillor Stephens confirmed that this work was being done through the Brent Schools Partnership. Gail Tolley (Strategic Director Children and Young People, Brent Council) added that the partnership approach for this work was driven through the Strategic School Effectiveness Board, which she chaired and which included representative primary, secondary and special school headteachers, governors and the Brent School Partnership. She advised

that partnership working with schools continued to be highly effective, and that through the pandemic period that she had convened a regular webcast meeting with high levels of engagement and attendance from Brent headteachers to keep that partnership working strong. In addition, schools had been supported to organise into local clusters and were working well together. Georgina Nutton (Head of Preston Park Primary School) felt that throughout the pandemic, partnership working had strengthened and schools had been required to innovate for how they would engage with each other. She advised that Gail Tolley had engaged well with them and had brought people together and communicated information effectively, and noted the partnership with the Family Front Door and social work teams had been important to ensure families were kept safe during the pandemic. She also noted that all schools were engaging with the work to raise the achievements of boys of Black Caribbean heritage and it was always high on the agenda at meetings such as the cluster group meetings. Her school was looking at how they could engage the wider community with the project such as through artists, local galleries and authors.

The Committee queried how the percentage of disadvantaged pupils in Brent was broken down in section 3.6 of the report. Gail Tolley advised that the percentage was the percentage of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding in schools, and that schools would know what proportion of those pupils were of Black Caribbean heritage, which would have been part of the data that went into the audit.

In relation to Key Stages, the Committee asked how Key Stage 1 (KS1) was performing in relation to reading as there appeared to be issues at that stage. John Galligan advised that KS1 was the only key stage that was completely teacher assessed and there was an action plan to look at the moderation of that Key Stage and understand potential factors; including whether teacher unconscious bias played any contributory part. The Local Authority had a statutory responsibility to moderate and were going to use the summer moderation of KS1 as the opportunity to look into why some groups might not be doing as well, however there had been no statutory assessment that year for them to look at so schools were looking at this independently. John Galligan added that the Brent Schools Partnership had led in delivering unconscious bias training and a number of schools had signed up to that training.

Drawing the item to a close, the Chair invited representatives from Brent Youth Parliament to address the Committee. The representatives focussed on digital poverty and what consideration Brent Council had given to support people locally affected by digital poverty who might not have been able to engage in lessons and online services as effectively as other young people. Councillor Stephens agreed that digital provision was an issue and the Children and Young People's department were in discussion with schools about digital provision in their areas. There was government funding available to address digital poverty but it was not sufficient to meet the need.

As no further questions were raised, the Chair thanked education colleagues for their contributions and led a round of applause in thanks to education and settings based staff.

10. Brent Youth Offending Service (YOS) post inspection action plan implementation

Councillor Mili Patel (Lead Member for Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care) introduced the report which provided details of actions taken from the 4 recommendations that arose from the Youth Offending Service inspection in 2019. She explained that the report gave further information on the performance of Brent YOS in general and the impact of COVID-19 on the service. She felt that the Children and Young People's department had made some major strides in implementing the recommendations through staffing restructure, proactively identifying external funding in order to support recommendations such as the Mayors Fund, and had secured substantial funding recently for a 3 year grant from the Youth Justice Board to deal with the impact of COVID-19 in BAME Communities. Councillor Patel also highlighted

the introduction of Family Wellbeing Centres, and the Roundwood School, which would provide further spaces to work with young people within a community setting.

In relation to courts and criminalisation the Committee wanted reassurance that unnecessary criminalisation was not an issue for Brent. Nigel Chapman (Operational Director Integration and Improved Outcomes, Brent Council) advised that Brent's relationship with the Magistrates' Court, which was where most YOS work went through, was very effective and had continued to operate at a good level throughout the pandemic, and the Court had been very supportive of the work. In relation to the random sampling of cases involving out of court disposals, he advised that Brent YOS had made good strides with the police where previously they felt police were offering too many conditional cautions instead of cautions, which was felt unsuitable for some young people and led to the Court finding young people breaching those cautions leading to a criminal offence being committed. He advised that the cohort size was relatively small therefore the sampling approach was effective and provided a more tailored approach.

Committee members noted that there was a lot of input required from CAMHS from the service and queried what the current waiting times were. Sue Gates (Head of Early Help, Brent Council) advised that she recognised that waiting lists with CAMHS were an issue elsewhere but highlighted that Brent YOS had their own dedicated CAMHS worker who kept up to date with all work and never had a young person waiting, with an assessment conducted as soon as a referral was made. There was also input from a staff member working on a project around mental health, seeking to identify those who may need additional help around mental health, anxiety and wellbeing early. The staff member saw the young people in the police station, in their home, via video link, in court cells or wherever the first place they were identified was.

The Committee were encouraged by the reduction in court order sentences, but queried whether that could be as a result of court closures and whether the pandemic had an impact on the number of youth offending. Nigel Chapman advised that there was less activity in the court system and less crime committed, which was noted in London and nationally and the court systems did reduce their capacity. He added that the overall picture on youth offending generally was that there had been a significant reduction in young people entering the youth justice system over the last 8 years. In response to whether any mentoring system was in place which may have contributed to the reduction, Nigel Chapman advised of a number of factors at play including building trusted relationships between the young person and their YOS case worker, or the young person's mentors, or a combination of the 2, and working closely with the young person's parents. He advised that primarily the service was based around understanding a young person and helping them with employment, education and thinking through their offending behaviour.

Regarding how the YOS could work with voluntary sector substance misuse services to support the work of YOS further, Sue Gates highlighted that they had worked with Each Brent and the Westminster Drugs Project for a considerable length of time and had a very good relationship with them. She expressed that they did more than was required of them, were co-located with YOS workers, and were seen as part of the team. They saw most young people that came through the system and worked with families and siblings.

The Chair drew the item to a close by noting the positive feedback highlighted in paragraph 7 of the report received from the YOS survey of young people and their families which had 76 participants.

11. **Contextual Safeguarding**

Councillor Mili Patel (Lead Member Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care) introduced the report which provided an update on the development of contextual safeguarding in Brent arising from a task group report by the Community and Wellbeing

Scrutiny Committee agreed by the Committee in March 2019. She advised that the report showed how contextual safeguarding was now embedded in the work done around safeguarding and young people, and noted the section on the impact of COVID-19 due to the fact contextual safeguarding related to safeguarding outside of the young person's familial area. As a result of the lockdown some of the complex issues that young people might usually face were reduced.

The Chair thanked Councillor Patel for her introduction and invited comments and questions from the Committee, with the following issues raised:

In relation to the progress of the recommendations, Councillor Patel advised that there were restrictions due to the pandemic which meant some recommendations had not progressed but were ready to be actioned as soon as restrictions lifted, such as the TFL and school travel planning recommendation.

The Committee queried whether the growing use of digital technology by young people had an impact on contextual safeguarding. Gail Tolley advised that whilst there were links to digital behaviours, contextual safeguarding related to significant safeguarding issues that took place outside of the home. Sonya Kalyniak (Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance, Brent Council) acknowledged there was a risk to young people using technology especially when young people were groomed into exploitative behaviour, and that the safeguarding team were working with schools around improving digital safeguarding for children and young people.

The Committee highlighted section 3.7 of the report which detailed the increase in the number of young people going missing regularly. Gail Tolley agreed that it gave a sense of the vulnerability of those young people and the complexity of cases social workers were carrying. Sonya Kalyniak advised that this was monitored carefully throughout the lockdown and the trend of extremely vulnerable young people continuing to go missing led to the service conducting comprehensive vulnerable adolescent risk assessments for each of those young people to understand very clearly what the risks were and put individual safety plans in place for them.

The Committee asked what level of confidence the Committee should have that Brent Officers had effective working relationships with health colleagues. Councillor Mohammed Butt (Leader, Brent Council) highlighted that all Brent Officers would ensure due diligence was carried out at all levels, and that as a matter of process Officers worked with partners, colleagues, stakeholders and neighbouring Boroughs to share and collaborate. He added that the Council of the Year, which Brent Council had been awarded in 2020 by the LGC, stated that a Council would achieve that status because it exemplifies the best standards and levels of oversight.

In relation to contextual safeguarding work being done pan London which could assist Brent, Councillor Mohammed Butt (Leader, Brent Council) advised that each Borough was working within its own boundaries but that the sharing of information and data would take place between the Children and Young People Directors. Nigel Chapman (Operational Director for Integration and Improved Outcomes, Brent Council) highlighted the Rescue and Response Programme which was a pan London response to issues of county lines. The programme was funded to help all London Boroughs support young people at risk of gang exploitation. A bid to the Violence Reduction Unit for a project called "My Ends" had also been submitted, supported by the Council, which would provide funding for some micro community based support projects for young people most at risk, using street based interventions. Councillor McLennan advised that by working with a pan London approach she was looking at how to get additional funding for children's services particularly the offers that children's services were providing that were not being funded. She was also a member of the London Council's Grants

Committee which was looking at funding projects pan London regarding digital exclusion and poverty amongst young people.

The Chair drew the item to a close and led a round of applause for Children and Young People colleagues.

12. **Any Other Urgent Business**

This item was taken first as above.

The meeting ended at 8:02 pm
COUNCILLOR KETAN SHETH

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