

Scrutiny Children & Young People Sub-Committee

Meeting of held on Tuesday, 5 November 2019 at 6.30 pm in The Council Chamber,
Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Robert Ward (Chair);
Councillor Sean Fitzsimons (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Sue Bennett, Mary Croos, Jerry Fitzpatrick, Bernadette Khan,
Gareth Streeter and Callton Young

Co-optee Members

Geoff Hopper (Voting Parent Governor Representative) and Paul O'Donnell
(Voting Parent Governor Representative)

Apologies: Dave Harvey and Elaine Jones

PART A

48/19 Apologies for absence

Apologies received from Dave Harvey and Elaine Jones

49/19 Minutes of the previous sub-committee meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2019 was agreed and signed as a accurate record.

50/19 Disclosures of interest

There were no disclosures of interest.

51/19 Urgent Business (if any)

There was none.

52/19 Actions List Update

The Chair advised that there were still some actions outstanding and reminders had been sent to relevant officers to advise that resolution was required. Some items were ongoing, do not have an end date and this was reflected in the list.

The following was also noted:

- It was important to engage in discussions on what scrutiny of the service would involve going forward.

- A process to be established on capturing the voice of the child at each meeting.
- Reference was made to the London Scrutiny Network meeting that took place on 1 November 2019 which included discussions on the varying forms in which this was captured by different LA's.

The Executive Director of Children, Families and Education welcomed discussions on further involvement and capturing of the voice of the child.

The Sub-Committee was informed that a relaunch of Empire, the children in care council had taken place and they would meet fortnightly to develop action plans on holding the Council to account. The leaving care forum for 18-25 year olds had been launched and in the future the service would be working on launching SEN, CWD and Young Offenders forum

Young people had been involved in the production of training for corporate parents which will be launched in 2020 and young commissioners have played a part on shaping services.

53/19 Croydon Adult Learning and Training (CALAT)

The Head of Employment and Skills delivery gave a presentation which included an overview of the service including Strengths Weaknesses, Opportunities and Tensions.

The following was noted:

- The service was accessible to all learners
- CALAT was working across different partners such as schools and businesses to reach different groups in the borough
- CALAT was exploring ways to address income deprivation and in-work poverty.
- Tutors to have skills gap analysis to upskill where necessary
- The service was cost neutral to the Council.

A Member congratulated the work carried out by the service and the figures. It was asked how the service could be beneficial and provide training in schools for teaching assistants. The officer replied that funding had been removed from schools for teaching assistants and they were currently in discussions as to how they can be supportive to schools.

It was asked how family learning at schools worked. The officer said that the school agreed an informal learning programme whereby parents were encouraged to learn with their child through activities such as reading workshops. Once confidence has been built up, the parent is encouraged to take up formal training by signing up to a suitable course.

In response to a member question on the percentage of students that already possessed a qualification in their country of origin and what assistance was in place to convert, the officer said the percentage was not known. There was a

system in place whereby overseas qualifications could be identified, and correlated to a UK qualification. A paid service was provided for conversion of a qualification.

It was asked how accessible the service was for older people and those with disabilities. The officer responded that CALAT was accessible to all and older people were also encouraged to sign up to ITC courses which were available in Croydon Libraries. There was a designated Learning Disabilities department at the Strand House site of CALAT

A Member asked what was being done to attract learners in New Addington which had been identified as an area of challenge for the service. The officer said that they were working with resident engagement teams, colleagues in the library as well as community service to find out ways to reach the community and improve their experience.

In response to questions of what could be done to improve collaboration with John Ruskin and Croydon College, the Officer responded that the key was to understand each other's strengths. It was understood that the quality of apprenticeships at both those settings were high but also that people that had not succeeded with other providers come to CALAT and do very well.

The officer was thanked for attendance at the meeting and answering questions. She was also commended for the work

Request for information

- What percentage of learners have an overseas qualification.
- The age range of people benefitting from CALAT courses.
- The percentage of learners that are self-funders, co-funded and fully funded.
- The criteria for community learning sites.

The Sub-Committee came to the following **Conclusions**:

- The service provided by CALAT to date was exemplary.
- It was important that they continue to find innovative ways to reach and serve the diverse community of Croydon
- It was encouraging that businesses and schools recognised the advantage of working in partnership with CALAT.
- There was a robust offer of courses available.
- A future visit to a learning site would be beneficial to Members

54/19 Children's Improvement Plan 2019/29

An update was provided on the improvement journey alongside a presentation on future governance and oversight arrangements which included the following:

- It was recognised that there had been sustained progress in all areas of the service in the last three monitoring visits.
- The quality of work in the assessment areas had improved but there was still a long way to go as there remain inconsistencies in practice.
- There has been a noted cultural change with improved staff morale.
- The final Ofsted inspection took place on 16 and 17 October, the letter has been received and will be published after the December 12 General Elections.
- A full inspection is anticipated anytime in the next six months
- Proposals are being put together on transitioning from the Improvement Board
- It is important to start considering what Scrutiny of the service would look like going forward
- Four possible options provided for consideration on ensuring political oversight of the service.

The Executive Director of Children Families and Education informed the Sub-Committee that the aspiration was to have the best possible children's service. They were consistently working on the development of quality social work practice through a strong performance culture with robust training, supervision and leadership support. The priority was to develop a sustainable workforce which was challenging as they had 40% vacancy rate.

It was asked what was being done to entice good quality social workers to Croydon and retain staff. Members were informed that there were many routes that were being explored, a Social work academy had been created and a welcome package to rival other LA's had been introduced. They were also working with Brick by Brick on projects to incentivise through Housing. Exit interviews were been conducted to gather intelligence on why staff took the decision to leave and the information gathered included financial issues, challenges with travelling across the vast borough of Croydon. Some social workers left due to the complexity and challenges of cases.

A Member questioned the level of caseloads and manageability. Officers responded that caseloads had decreased significantly, in assessments the average caseload was 15 and in social with families it was 14. It was also evident that whilst caseload had reduced, the complexity of cases remained a challenge which resulted in complications in providing quality intervention.

A Member suggested that consideration be given to Child, Adolescent Mental Health Services be based at schools due to the crucial role they play as a service. Officers responded that a team around a school scheme was being developed and trailblazer pilots were being conducted. A number of schools had been identified and signed up to the pilot where professionals such as psychologists will be based at the schools.

The Chair suggested to the sub-committee that discussions and thought be given to how Scrutiny of the service would look like following the final Ofsted Inspection and how the committee could constructively engage with the work of the partnership.

On discussions of the four options suggested, the following was noted:

- A blended view of the options should be considered as all options were relevant.
- Consideration could be given to following a model that may have been successful at another LA
- A monitoring and evaluation role should be taken as well as exploring how the committee fits in with work that was being completed by others such as corporate parenting.

Members extended their thanks to all staff in Children's Services for their hard work, dedication, continued efforts and going the extra mile for the families they support.

The Chair thanked officers for their attendance and responses to questions.

In Reaching its recommendations Sub-Committee came to the following **Conclusions:**

1. The Sub-Committee will need to take a blended view of future monitoring including a basket of Key Performance Indicators and some thematic reviews
2. The Sub-Committee need to rank subjects for thematic review by distance from the core roles and the seriousness of the impact on those affected
 - a. The next meeting of the Scrutiny Network will provide useful information on how others do this.
3. There will be no no-go areas
4. The visit programme is important and should continue
5. The Sub-Committee would welcome the opportunity to be able to influence and add value to the work of the Children's Improvement Board

The Sub-Committee resolved to **Recommend:**

- That the Executive Director for Children Families and Education and Chair of the Children's Improvement Board work with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Sub-Committee on the future work programme for Scrutiny.

55/19 Effective Data Sharing

The Chair informed the committee that it had been decided that this tem would be taken at a later meeting in the 2019/20 cycle.

56/19 Interim Report of the Task and Finish Group: Exclusions and Offrolling in Croydon Schools

The Chair of the Task and Finish Group, Councillor Jerry Fitzpatrick introduced the report and update on the following:

- The five Members conducting the review had contributed well

- The quality of support and support provided by the officers in the Education department be commended.
- It was evident that there were concerns shared by all agencies on this matter.
- The Council had limited agency in terms of education matters, they can monitor and enforce as appropriate.
- There has been delays experienced by the Task and Finish group in their progression of the consultation which had been prepared by the group but had not been conducted to date due to obstacles experienced with the Councils Comms team approach.
- It was important that a meeting with the Councils Comms team take place to discuss progression of the consultation in order to prevent further delay to the final report.

Following further discussions, the following was noted:

- It was suggested that the ramifications and impact of exclusions was not fully understood by teachers and school governors.
- School governors have limited awareness of managed moves, fair access as well as permanent exclusion.
- It was important that the idea of the scale of the problem and understanding was important and that the final report provide a balance of where Croydon was on this matter in terms of good and bad outcomes. It was also important that the inability to source information is highlighted in the final report.
- It was important to note that when done well, managed moves can work in Croydon as there were officers who worked tirelessly to ensure that the process was seamless in order to improve outcomes for children.
- There may be a correlation between mental health and exclusions and it was important to explore alternative ways to get support into the school environment where children spend a lot of their time.

The Sub-Committee agreed to:

(i) to note the report;

(ii) to extend the life of the TFG in order to enable it to complete its receipt of evidence from relevant stakeholders, such as education professionals, parents/carers and pupils/students as agreed by the Sub-Committee at its meeting on 12 March 2019; and thereafter to prepare and present its final report.

In reaching its recommendations the Sub-Committee came to the following

Conclusions:

1. It was disappointing to note that the work of the Task and Finish Group had been delayed due to the lack of communications and engagement support for the consultation process of the Review.

The Sub-Committee resolved to **Recommend to Cabinet:**

- a) To endorse the Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local Government and Combined Authorities, which included the need for local authorities to ensure that support is provided for scrutiny to ensure it has a profile in the wider community; and
- b) That communication and engagement resources are made available to support the work of scrutiny.

57/19 What difference has this meeting made to Croydon's Children

- The discussions that took place on identifying and improving capturing the voice of the child at each meeting was constructive;
- In-depth honest information on the ongoing journey as part of the improving plan was valuable;
- The discussion and details provided by CALAT was informative;
- The leadership from Cllr Fitzpatrick was beneficial to the Task and Finish group;
- The inability for the October Monitoring Visits Ofsted letter to be shared/ published during the pre-election should be taken into account as the sub-committee was unable to discuss its findings;
- It was important to note that that Children's Improvement Board's performance indicator was not included in the report and without this the Sub-Committee was unable to challenge and hold to account;
- It was important that the Sub-Committee receive effective data in order to be able to appropriately hold departments and services to account therefore a complete set of the Improvement Board performance indicators must be included in future presentations to Scrutiny, if necessary in Part B;
- It was important that the Sub-Committee engage in discussions on what scrutiny and monitoring of the improvement journey going forward and post Ofsted would involve.

58/19 Work Programme 2019/2020

The work programme for the remainder of 2019/20 was noted.

The meeting ended at 9.19 pm

Signed:

Date:

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