

SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL 3 – FUTURE EALING

MINUTES

Thursday 28th September 2017

PRESENT: Councillors: Josh Blacker (Chair), *Munir Ahmed* (Substitute for Rajinder Mann), Theresa Byrne, Paul Conlan, Kate Crawford, Tariq Mahmood, Gary Malcolm (Vice-Chair), Dee Martin, Karam Mohan, Swaran Padma and Ian Proud.

LBE Officers Present:

Harjeet Bains	- Scrutiny Review Officer
Dorothy Duffy	- Strategic Co-ordinator & Programme Lead, Brighter Futures
Hannah Foxcroft	- Team Manager, Connect
Ione Fraser	- Youth Worker
Debbie Gabriel	- Head of Children's Placement Services
Emmi Honeybourne	- Clinical Psychologist
Denise Issacs	- Foster Carer
Kieran Read	- Director of Strategy and Engagement
Sharon Scott	- Principal Social Worker
Lee Teasdale	- Democratic Services Officer
Anna Thomas	- Team Manager, Multi-Agency Support Team

1. Apologies for Absence

(Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor David Rodgers. Apologies were also received from the Children's Services Portfolio Holder Councillor Binda Rai who had advised that unfortunately she was abroad at the time of the meeting but had led the Brighter Futures Programme by being supportive and challenging.

Councillor Munir Ahmed substituted for Councillor Rajinder Mann.

2. Declarations of Interest

(Agenda Item 2)

There were none.

3. Matters to be Considered in Private

(Agenda Item 3)

There were none.

4. Minutes (13.07.17)

(Agenda Item 4)

The minutes of the meeting of 13 July 2017 were considered by the Panel.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 13 July 2017 be agreed as a true and correct record.

5. **Brighter Futures – From Innovation to Transformation** (Agenda Item 5)

The Chair welcomed Dorothy Duffy (Think Family Plus Strategic Co-ordinator & Programme Lead, Brighter Futures) together with colleagues from the Children and Families Directorate to introduce an item detailing the development of the Council's innovative Brighter Futures Programme.

Given increasing budget pressures being felt across public services, it had been vital to consider demand management and behaviour change within this context. The Brighter Futures Programme was therefore developed to include three key components:

- **Early Intervention and Prevention** – Changing early help to focus on preventing looked after children.
- **Children's Services Re-design (Innovation Bid)** – Change at the heart of the social work model – shifting power to children and families, undertaking intensive engagement and workforce reform.
- **Fostering** – Radically improving the performance of Ealing's in-house fostering service.

The project aimed to move from a traditional social care model of working, to supporting young people and their families in and on the edge of care, with a focus on building positive, intensive and consistent relationships.

The funding for the programme had been enabled by a Department for Education Innovation fund. The funding totalled £3.5m over an 18 month period.

An 'Ealing Model' had been developed which would require the reshaping of the workforce so that all children's professionals could work in more dynamic and flexible ways. Multi-disciplinary, co-located teams would provide intensive support with flexible lead professionals with access to wider support and engagement within the community.

Young people would also be involved in developing their own personal plan, choosing a lead professional and access to a personal budget. All would have peer mentor access 24 hours a day. The team sought to move forward as a whole unit rather than working with young people in isolation.

The Model consisted of three theoretical models in combination:

- Anna Freud Centre – Ambit Programme (mentalisation approach for team working with young people)
- South London and Maudsley NHS Trust (Family Partnership Model and Helping Families Programme)
- The Annex Project DDP Network (dyadic development programme and nurturing attachments)

The Ealing Model would be embedded via a six month training programme. Group supervision would give staff an opportunity to discuss and reflect on the work being undertaken with children, young people, families and carers, their values, belief systems (constructs) and the impact that this may have on their day to day work. Daily meetings took place which provided an opportunity for teams to come together and discuss issues before the working day fully began, ensuring that work remained purposeful. Multi-Agency Support Teams (MASTs) had been piloted to test what approach worked best in ensuring a richly textured multidisciplinary approach.

The expansion of the Brighter Futures Programme was detailed. The service-wide transformation had been agreed and the new service had gone live in April 2017. The throughput model was linked to finance and performance and had been developed to monitor demand management and the success of the new way of working. The team was building upon the learnings from and successes of, the pilot teams and incorporating the key changes.

Some of the highlights from the Brighter Futures Programme to date were brought to the attention of the Panel. In the last year the Programme had won the 'Change Champions' award at the Ealing Employee awards and had also won an Municipal Journal award for reinventing public services.

Positive feedback had been received from Ofsted, highly commending the work of the team. The increase in the number of Early Help Action Plans (EHAPs) completed was up nearly 10% and 80% of families had reported that the EHAP process had made a positive difference. A Risk of Looked after Children Index (ROLI) set was being developed based on a Hammersmith and Fulham methodology – the ROLI would help to flag the risk of children becoming looked after at a much earlier stage than previously, enabling practitioners to fast track interventions.

The fact that MAST teams were continuing to meet Looked After Children reductions 'in targets' by maintaining children with their families in the community was highlighted. This was particularly significant as maintaining contact with a child's birth family was very important. A positive family relationship in childhood hugely increased the chances of a positive adulthood.

Further information was provided on the ROLI. The index identified factors which may indicate a greater risk of children becoming looked after. These included factors such as substance misuse and related mental health issues, repeat domestic violence and non-engagement, missing education and anti-social behaviour.

The next steps for Brighter Futures were highlighted: this included embedding the change of practice sought in 'The Ealing Model', completing the Ealing Children's Integrated Response Service (ECIRS) re-design, rolling out a training and development programme for staff and finalising the framework and parameters for the evaluation of phase 2 of the Programme.

Questions

The Chair thanked officers for the introductory report and invited Panel Members to comment and ask questions.

Councillor Mahmood asked for further information on the sensitivities in terms of intervention.

It was advised that interventions went from a 'light touch' approach up to a point where children could not be controlled because of their behaviour. A software package was used to aid predictive factors on the levels of risk.

Clinical psychologists had taken on an advisory role helping to upskill the MAST teams, providing them with vital training on intervention scenarios.

The Chair asked Denise Issacs, in her capacity as a foster carer, how she had found the transition. Was this something that foster carers had been asking for?

Foster carers had not been specifically asking for changes, however, since the changes had taken place, there had been alterations which had led to significant improvements. The ability to contact team members had been made much easier, everyone that Ms Issacs contacted now was able to pick up on her case. The level of support now provided was reassuring and provided a calming influence when potential situations arose. The training now provided was considered to be powerful. It was understood in a way where carers now knew what to do at the time of any situation as they had been worked through in test scenarios.

Councillor Mohan asked whether all carers had a supervising social worker. It was confirmed that every carer still had an individual worker – who acted as the first contact whenever available.

Councillor Byrne asked if there were processes in place to ensure that all team members were aware of all the live cases. How confident were managers that staff had all the information they required to provide sound advice?

It was advised that whole team meetings would take place in which all live cases were discussed. Input and suggestions would be invited from team members on how best to progress the cases.

Following on from that, Councillor Byrne asked about what would happen if a suggestion was made that led to disagreement with others. Did tensions or conflict ever arise?

It was advised that whilst suggestions were sought and collaborative working promoted, management oversight was still in place, and that they would have the final say on any disputed issues. Framework legislation was in place which had to be complied with and that was always kept in mind, though within the framework there was awareness that no single method suited every child and situation.

The working environment had been designed to allow staff to feel safe in confiding when they were not coping well with a particular case and that they needed help to progress and find the best way forward.

Councillor Mahmood asked if many children were currently in residential care. It was advised that the figure had reduced recently, and there were currently around 24 children in residential care. Sometimes this had to be away from the area as there

were risks related to the original locality that required the residential care to be elsewhere.

The Chair noted that the ROLI included a factor specifically addressing Caribbean and Somali young people and families – why were these communities specifically at particular risk? And was there work that could be done through other parts of the Council that could reach out to these communities?

It was advised that statistics had shown that Caribbean and Somali children were at high risk of becoming involved in crime, thus significantly increasing the risk of becoming looked after. Efforts were made to ensure that representatives of these communities sat on gangs' panels to help officers pick up on issues sooner.

Councillor Ahmed suggested that some cultural issues may be at the heart of these issues. It was agreed that there were contextual sensitivities, such as some Somali children having been traumatised before coming to the UK from the war-torn country. Even if they were born in the United Kingdom, there was often inter-generational trauma from their parents having been traumatised.

Councillor Byrne asked why the issue of parental home-based income was not included within the ROLI. Officers agreed that poverty was a huge issue – the current list however was a test list, and poverty may well be placed onto the list as welfare cuts continued to pinch.

Councillor Malcolm made reference to the Syrian refugees recently placed in the borough. What was being done to address and pre-empt their trauma risks?

It was advised that when children were first placed into care, particular attention was paid to undertaking a very quick assessment of their needs. Schools in Ealing were also very engaged in making sure that counsellor support was available. The training programme for foster carers included training on dealing with traumatic backgrounds from foreign settings. There was also awareness training on radicalisation and the Prevent Agenda to address any early concerning signs, but that had to be balanced with a need to not 'frighten away' potential foster carers.

Councillor Mahmood asked if the Council was achieving its targets on fostering and adoption numbers.

It was advised that the Council was not achieving the sought after targets and unfortunately this was the position for all London councils. Work was taking place looking at the potentials around undertaking joint working with three of Ealing's neighbouring authorities. The Council was being as innovative as it could be, engaging in modern strategies such as digital marketing – however there was no 'magic bullet' – house space and rooms were a massive issue in London, many potential foster carers just did not have the room required.

Councillor Mahmood followed up by asking about the sort of encouragement being offered to potential fosterers.

It was advised that officers were being as creative as they could, looking at those with real potential as foster carers and helping them with necessary home redesigns where this was feasible, and moving them to larger properties if at all viable.

The Chair highlighted that of course the best result of all was early intervention stage that lessened the need for foster carers in the first place. Officers agreed, stating that this was obviously the most cost effective way as it provided better results for all.

Panel Members were then taken through a MAST Case Study concerning a 17 year old who was very high functioning and had been violent towards their parents. The Panel was taken through the ground supervision work in the case and the ongoing supervision following that. The importance of daily meetings in such cases was highlighted. These meetings allowed for discussion about how each day would be filled and allowed staff to unload and get support for some of the more traumatic and stressful elements of their work. Staff had become very engaged with self-development and the benefit of this had been seen in a reduction in staff turnover.

Councillor Byrne referred to adolescent mental health and the cuts seen in Children's and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAHMS) services. Did officer still receive support and were the same levels of references still received from them?

Council officers worked alongside colleagues in CAHMS and this ensured that there was no replicating of services between the two.

Councillor Mohan noted that post-placement was always a hot topic. How do officers go about ensuring proper post-placement support? It was advised that funding was in place to provide support for adopters.

The MAST youth work programmes were highlighted to the Panel. The programmes offered the opportunities to build relationships with young people out of the social care setting, which helped to change the dynamic of how young people related to the service. Sessions were offered on a wide range of interests such as arts, music, sports, fashion and away day trips.

Councillor Martin asked about how success was measured in a qualitative sense.

It was advised that during Phase 1 of the Programme there unfortunately had not been time to undertake a proper evaluation. Ealing's Chief Executive had noted that he would like to see a proper evaluation take place. Officers had part integrated family star evaluation into processes, this helped officers to view outcomes and satisfaction levels at the end. Carer and child questionnaires were also undertaken, and significant levels of hard data were in place.

Councillor Martin asked if information was in place regarding improvements in educational attainment, as this was an important and interesting area to note.

It was confirmed that looked after children had a closely monitored education. They did not achieve at the same level as other students. A key factor of this was that these were children being moved around a lot and thus did not have a stability and consistency in their education.

Councillor Martin then asked about what frustrated the work of the department. Were there elements where other services could be helpful?

It was advised that the European Social Fund and Troubled Families were working on a joint employment programme to support families back or into work. As part of this, Think Family Plus was looking to develop a council wide Triage system where all referrals for employment advice could come through a central point – or triage and then be allocated out to relevant services

The Chair asked if there were families that were touching other services that should be highlighted with children's services at an earlier stage. Were there elements that should be going into the ROLI that were not seen?

It was advised that the most vital element to be highlighted was finding out about children who were at risk of gangs, it was important that this information was shared at the earliest possible stage.

Councillor Kate Crawford asked about mental health issues for those who had now left care. Was there a risk that young people were slipping through the net once they were back in a home setting?

It was advised that officers had a responsibility to keep in touch with care leavers until the age of 25 if they were in education. It was felt that overall there was a far greater need sadly than could be met, so officers tried to work with families to prevent escalating need. There were also efforts to ensure that they were engaging with other support and community services so that they did not 'slip through the cracks'.

There was a need to be more focussed on the types of plans that were being created, so that a clear framework was established and families would know what they needed to do in the event of a crisis further down the line.

Lots of work went into building up the resilience of families, educating them on the proper channels for guidance and support and giving them the confidence to approach such services.

Councillor Martin asked that, in light of expected reductions in costs, were the current targets considered to be realistic.

It was agreed that it was a very challenging environment, but the 'do nothing' scenario would leave the service in a considerably worse position. It was important that the department focussed on the long term view, at that the work being done at present would reap benefits further down the line.

Councillor Martin asked if statistics could be made available on the ethnicity, age and gender of all children in care, and where they were located. It was confirmed that this information would be fed back to the Panel.

Councillor Martin then asked if there were any groups who were harder to place. It was advised that teenagers were usually harder to place – particularly with educational factors that had to be taken into account.

Councillor Proud queried as to whether any carers currently looking after one child would be willing to take more.

It was advised that some work had recently been undertaken on this and discussions had taken place with foster carers. The maximum the Fostering Regulations allowed was three children with one carer, though there were exemptions allowed in specific cases.

Councillor Mohan asked about the sort of incentives offered to social workers to take up employment with Ealing Council.

It was advised that Ealing Council offered a fantastic level of on-going training and support which was now getting recognition and placing the Council as a notable good place to work. Staff were retained and kept interested through training that specifically interested them. In some cases key housing arrangements were made.

The Chair thanked officers, asking them if they had any final thoughts on how the programme had worked. Had there been lessons learnt on what could be done better for future programmes?

It was confirmed that the work to set up the innovation pilot had been intense from receipt of Innovation funding in January 2015 to the go live date of the pilot teams in June 2015. This required officers to be heavily involved in the service transformation on top of their day jobs which although exhausting was do-able for the short term but would not be feasible over a longer period of time.

The learning process was ongoing and officers would need to support each other and face up to the challenges together. It was felt that the department were 'almost like a family' and all felt that a support network was in place

The Chair then invited the Director of Strategy and Engagement to make some closing remarks.

He stated that it had been a huge and challenging programme to attempt but it was now beginning to deliver real results. The evidence base had shown that it was credible to think that the department could achieve these better outcomes.

Getting the balance of ambition right had been a significant learning experience, but such a sense of ambition had also been found to be quite motivating and galvanising. A learning experience had been that some key people sometimes needed to be freed up from their day jobs to help really drive the Programme. This was obviously hard to enable given the Council's current financial position so finding the right balance on the spectrum had been a key challenge. The staff in the department were up to the challenge and had shown positivity about the new way of working, though understandably there had been some nervousness about their future.

The Chair then thanked all present for their contributions and drew the item to a close.

Resolved: That

- (i) the report on the development of the Council's innovative Brighter Futures Programme be received; and

- (ii) the relevant statistics be fed back to the Panel on children in care through the Scrutiny Review Officer.

6. Panel Operations 2017-2018 (Agenda Item 6)

The Chair advised Panel Members that the next meeting would focus on the commercialisation and assets programme. The Chair advised that possible expert witnesses at the meeting could include the New Local Government Network and the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce (RSA). Other boroughs undertaking such ventures could also be spoken to about their experiences.

The Director of Strategy and Engagement stated that speaking with the New Local Government Network may be worthwhile but did not see much benefit in inviting the RSA. He made reference to Broadway Living as one of the big internal projects and suggested that the scope of the discussion be agreed by the Chair with Executive Director Keith Townsend.

The Chair pointed Panel Members towards the briefing note, where Councillor Rodgers had expressed concern about some of the Councils that were engaging in outsourcing programmes however he suggested that the Panel should consider inviting a representative from the Co-operatives Council Innovation Network (CCIN) to the meeting.

Councillor Conlan stated that he agreed with Councillor Rodgers' suggestion to invite the CCIN and felt that it would be beneficial to the meeting.

The Chair asked that Panel Members feedback to him and the Scrutiny Review Officer with any further suggestions.

Resolved: That

- (i) the Panel note that updated work programme; and
- (ii) the New Local Government Network and the Co-operatives Council Innovation Network be invited to attend the next meeting of the Panel.

7. Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 7)

The Panel were advised that the next meeting of the Panel would take place on Thursday 30 November 2017.

Councillor Josh Blacker, Chair.

The meeting ended at 9.00pm.