

## **THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN**

At a meeting of the **CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY, 19TH DECEMBER, 2023** at 6.30 pm in Committee Room 2, Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE

### **MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE PRESENT**

Councillors Jenny Headlam-Wells (Chair), Lotis Bautista, Matt Cooper, Julian Fulbrook, Sylvia McNamara, Tom Simon and Nanouche Umeadi

Co-opted Members Aya Elgool, Sarah Jafri, Guy Pope and Dr Rachel Wrangham.

### **MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ABSENT**

Councillor Shiva Tiwari.

Co-opted Members Margaret Harvey and Samir Qurashi.

### **ALSO PRESENT**

Councillor Marcus Boyland, Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families  
Councillor Sabrina Francis, Cabinet Member Young People and Culture

**The minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting. They are subject to approval and signature at the next meeting of the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee and any corrections approved at that meeting will be recorded in those minutes.**

### **MINUTES**

#### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Shiva Tiwari and Co-opted Members Margaret Harvey and Samir Qurashi.

#### **2. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF STATUTORY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS, COMPULSORY REGISTERABLE NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND VOLUNTARY REGISTERABLE NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS IN MATTERS ON THIS AGENDA**

There were no declarations.

### **3. ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY)**

#### **Broadcast of the meeting**

The Chair made the following announcement: “In addition to the rights by law that the public and press have to record this meeting, I would like to remind everyone that this meeting is being broadcast live by the Council to the Internet and can be viewed on our website for twelve months after the meeting. After that time, webcasts are archived and can be made available upon request.

If you have asked to address the meeting, you are deemed to be consenting to having your contributions recorded and broadcast, including video when switched on, and to the use of those sound recordings and images for webcasting and/or training purposes.”

#### **Ofsted letter in response to focussed two-day visit**

The Executive Director for Children and Learning stated that Ofsted inspectors had praised Camden children’s services staff following the recent two-days focussed visit which was to review Camden’s work with children subject to children in need and child protection plans. In the feedback letter inspectors remarked on the progress made since the last inspection and how children in the borough continued to benefit from experienced leadership with good political and corporate support. Ofsted highlighted the innovative practices carried out in Camden and the cultural competence of many practitioners when carrying out their work. In particular, the inspectors said that staff enjoyed working for Camden, social workers understood the child’s needs and lived experiences well, and children’s voices influenced policy.

### **4. DEPUTATIONS (IF ANY)**

A deputation was received by Anthony Stoll (Chair of Governors at Netley School). Also in attendance was John Hayes (Executive Head at Netley and Head Teacher of Gospel Oak primary), Dorothea Hackman (Vice Chair of Governors at Netley) and Isobel Berwick (Governor at Netley). The subject of the deputation was Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision in Camden and Netley Primary School and Centre of Autism. The full deputation statement was published in the supplementary agenda.

Anthony Stoll summarised the main points of the deputation statement, which set out two requests. A correction was made to the second request which should read as follows: we request that Camden Education be instructed to follow the suggestion for SEND from the 135 partnership (Fleet, Gospel Oak, Netley, Rhyl) to set up a hub for SEND provision similar to the behaviour satellite at Rhyl. In addition to the statement further information was provided on the funding issues; Anthony Stoll stated that if a child required full-time one-to-one help, it cost the school in the region of £33,000 to employ a member of staff, including the on costs. Schools were required to spend

c.£16,000 on each child who required additional support of their budget, where there were 21 children in this category at Netley.

The Chair thanked the deputees and invited questions and comments from the Committee. The following was discussed:

- A Co-opted Member stated that despite good staff, the situation described was not tenable. The school was clearly under immense strain and it was understandable the school wanted assurance for future years. The Co-opted Member stated that an Autism Panel had been decommissioned in 2018-19, where it's purpose was to anticipate need in the system, which sounded like a process Netley would have benefitted from in the past.
- A Co-opted Member asked why Netley received more children with additional needs than other schools. It was confirmed by the deputees this was partly because of falling rolls, because there were surplus spaces during the year so children applying for a place had to be given an offer. At the same time, it was perceived by parents that Netley had better provision for autism than other schools, where children travelled long journeys to attend Netley, and parents were not aware that there was as good provision as Netley at other schools.
- The deputees stated that they had 14 children diagnosed with autism in one year group, that in reception 50% of the children were SEND, and the school had to employ 14 additional new support staff. This situation was not tenable going forward in future years and there was no current mechanism to stop the situation to continue.
- A Member asked if Netley was aware of the High Needs Block (HNB) Subgroup and if they could apply to that group to recommend funding allocation. In response, John Hayes stated that there had only been one meeting of the group since being recently established, and despite being invited to the group, he was not invited to that meeting. John Hayes stated that in his view the borough lacked an overarching SEND Strategy, where the current approach had a vision statement but no clear implementation strategy.

The Executive Director for Children and Learning thanked the deputees for their statement to the Committee and recognised that Netley had significant concerns about resources and support available to meeting the needs of SEND pupils. There was substantial work taking place this academic term to meet immediate challenges in the borough, such as around education psychologists, additional specialist teaching resources, top-up funding and capital funding. The HNB Subgroup was part of a broader approach about the needs and pressures across the borough. Education colleagues were working with Public Health to progress a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) in spring 2024 to focus on SEND, which would inform the review of local sufficiency and analysis of the needs across the borough to inform how best to use HNB funding. The development of the strategy would look into whether additional specialist provision was needed in the borough and how to better support mainstream schools.

## **5. MINUTES**

A Co-opted Member stated that on page 8, item 9, point 3, their exact comment referred to the Palestinian genocide; their statement did not use the wording 'middle east conflict' or 'Israel-Gaza war', as written in the minutes of the meeting.

### **RESOLVED –**

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2023, as amended, be agreed as a correct record.

## **6. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR DECIDES TO TAKE AS URGENT**

There was no urgent business.

## **7. CAMDEN SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP - ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23**

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Director Children and Learning.

The Executive Director for Children and Learning was accompanied by Dominic Clout (Independent Scrutineer), David Pennington (North Central London Integrated Care Board) and Paul Ridley (Central North Basic Command Unit of the London Metropolitan Police Service). The report covered the following areas: governance, independent scrutiny and objectives of the CSCP; assurance and overseeing the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements; emerging themes from local serious incidents and reviews; learning from national reviews; regional learning and child Q; Camden's single front door; Early Help; child protection and abuse and neglect; Looked After Children; vulnerable adolescents and risk and exploitations; child exploitation; child trafficking and modern slavery; children going missing; youth violence and knife crime; gangs; transitional safeguarding; the Partnership's response to safeguarding and supporting asylum seeking families; progress against the CSCP's priorities; and the reflections and priorities for 2023-25.

The Chair thanked the Partnership for their report and invited questions and comments from the Committee. The following was discussed:

- A Member stated that black and ethnic children were overrepresented in many key areas and asked if the reasons in the report to explain the inequality and intersectional poverty were backed with research. The Member also asked if professionals had an understanding of the lived experience of those children with an anti-racist perspective. In response, it was confirmed there was a lot of research and learning from reviews through the national panel and other

channels such as the 'What Works' Centre, which looked at reasons for overrepresentation and outcomes for Black, Asian, Minority and Ethnic (BAME) young people. It was important to recognise and understand lived experience and how that impacted families and their life chances and their ability to access support early. The Partnership was signed-up to the anti-racist approach to safeguarding practice and was committed to understand anti-racism. At Camden Council specifically, there were a range of programmes for training and a model of practice and awareness of intersectional oppression. A Member stated they would like to see benchmarks in demonstrating improvement in anti-racism and if there were any case studies demonstrating social workers understanding lived experience.

- In relation to Child Q, a Co-opted Member asked for an update on the progress of implementing the recommendations from the review following the incident. In response, it was confirmed that Hackney CSCP referred the serious incident to the national panel. In Camden, partners spoke to teachers and completed a review of searching policies in schools. Schools said at no circumstance did they want the Police to search pupils on their premises, but there were some extremely limited cases where this could happen and Police Officers had to be given discretion where necessary. A plan had been agreed with schools and it had been assured by the Police that children should never be treated as adults.
- A Co-opted Member noted there was a level of mistrust among minority groups in the statutory partners, and safeguarding in general, where they did not feel supported enough to discuss concerns in fear of penalisation.
- In relation to section 5.1, emerging themes from our local serious incidents and reviews, a Member stated that children not known to social services and in elective home education (ELE) was a perpetual safeguarding challenge for local authorities. Issues arising usually routed from lack of information sharing or confidence among colleagues in raising concerns. In response, it was confirmed that the Partnership had asked colleagues to be more proactive and nuanced in speaking to families. There were restrictions in the framework in the actions that could be taken by statutory services, therefore a refreshed inquisitive approach was necessary.
- In relation to section 7, Early Help, a Member asked for further information on the proportion of Early Help referrals which fell under Early Years and whether there was a similar trend of increase and/or disproportionality as seen in Youth Early Help referrals. It was confirmed that a written response would be provided to the Committee.

#### **Action By - Director of Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding**

- A Member stated that the intersectional aspects of the safeguarding report did not mention LGBT+ young people and asked how they could be included in future reports, procedures and policy. In response, it was confirmed that the Partnership wanted to engage with more groups and partners in general, including LGBT+ groups. This was an area of complexity, therefore a nuanced and focussed approach was needed to focus on specific children's needs and their context. Children's needs were at the centre of focus and the Council would continue to

work with Camden schools and Camden Learning who would continue to provide advice and support to schools. Within schools there was student voice in the community, routes to external agencies, and pastoral support. These comments would be considered in next iteration of the report.

- In relation section 19, reflections and priorities for 2023-25, a Member asked for more information on the impact of anti-racist training, if there were any benchmarks in demonstrating improvement in anti-racism, and if there were any case studies showing that social workers understood lived experience. In response, it was stated that there was training for staff, but it was hard to see the impact if the culture of the organisation was not regularly checked. All statutory partners carried out audits on their casework and it was part of the quality assurance framework to see if practice met values. Practitioners should understand the experience of a child and there were key foundations set up to support this and the organisation had to keep a commitment to those values. Through the process, it was key to hear feedback from families and young people.
- In response to a Member asking what specific internal work the Police was doing to increase the trust of global majority young people in the Police, it was confirmed that the Baroness Casey Review published in March 2023 was frank about the shortcomings of the Met Police culture and informed how the Met Police could make changes. There was a plan in place and there was an improving culture transforming where staff felt able to report wrongdoing and raise issues anonymously. Also, a Diversity Equality Unit had been set up. It was confirmed that it was difficult to quantify the effects of the changes at this stage, but there had been a lot of work with staff and organisations to turn the tide, but it was acknowledged there was a lot of work outstanding. Once there were more results to present, further information on progress could be incorporated into a future report with more Camden specific outcomes.
- The following safeguarding risks to vulnerable children were noted as newer dimensions for the CSPC to consider: digital GPs causing a further decreases in visibility of children in ELE to services; children increasingly missing from education due to the social contract between parent and school being disconnected during the pandemic; the effect on families of the cost of living crisis creating tensions in the home which could lead to neglect and abuse; and the increasing number of families in temporary accommodation being less visible and able to access services.
- In relation to maintaining the visibility of vulnerable children who were ELE, a Member asked for further information on Camden's systems in supporting vulnerable children in ELE and if there was any learning from external good practice. The Member stated that even in robust systems, vulnerable children could fall through the net. In response, it was confirmed that it was crucial to raise awareness and keep track of those children that were known to be vulnerable and the needs of parents. There had been work happening to review all children known to ELE and to cross-check services, and the Council would step in when safeguarding risks were identified. Colleagues were encouraged to have a proactive mindset and be professionally curious to piece together stories. Officers confirmed they would provide a written response to the Committee on further

information on Camden's systems in supporting vulnerable children in ELE, including learning from external good practice.

**Action By - Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion**

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

**8. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE & CULTURE: DECEMBER 2023**

Consideration was given to the report of the Cabinet Member for Young People and Culture.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for their report and invited questions and comments from the Committee. The following was discussed:

- In response to a Member asking how variable funding streams were for youth justice services, it was confirmed that grants for youth justice services varied year on year. Camden was able to keep caseloads low using effective interventions and benefited from years of investment in the Integrated Youth Service. If risks decreased, there would be a reduction in some funding streams, therefore there had to be consideration in keeping the system sustainable in future years.
- In relation to a Member raising the difficulties in children accessing mental health services and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), it was confirmed there was a CAMHS practitioner in-house who provided advice and guidance for staff working with families. Mental health for young people was a broad area, where sometimes it was an acute medical response required, or other times it would be supporting children through times of instability. There were challenges in how the Council joined up with social care and ensuring the right professional was paired with a child at the right time. Camden compared well to other local authorities, where the Tavistock and Portman services were seen from others as a great model and Camden was investing additional money for innovative services. It was recognised there was high demand for mental health support in schools.
- In relation to mental health, a Co-opted Member raised the serious and frequent situation of children self-harming, stating there had been a huge increase in the last couple of decades and it should be seen as a crisis. To help children and parents, the issue required proactive leadership in Camden. In response, the Cabinet Member stated that they would link up with the Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care in how they could cross-work on this issue. It was noted there were many new pressures facing young people today, including social media, and the Council and schools recognised the significance of mental health for young people. It was confirmed that the Council's annual

health report 'Step into Our Shoes' on adolescent health would be circulated to the Committee which had a section on mental health.

**Action By - Director of Public Health**

- A Member asked for case studies on Youth Early Help family casework interventions. In response, it was stated that Camden aimed to keep families together. The family casework involved visits, engaging different professionals, working out needs of a family and creating tailored packages. Each family was taken on an individual basis and was supported as required and there was no target to complete casework within a specific number of weeks. The programme had been in place for a period however there was not specific data, but there were cases that could be given as examples. Officers confirmed they would provide case studies on Youth Early Help family casework interventions.

**Action By - Director of Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding**

- A Co-opted Member asked what Camden was doing to combat islamophobia, stating that they knew children in the borough who were experiencing that abuse in public spaces, such as Hampstead Station, and asked what was being done to support those children. In response, it was confirmed that as part of the community cohesion work and work with schools these areas were addressed, and there was also work with the inter-faith networks. Secondly, the Co-opted Member asked for case studies, statistics and information on the nature of the cases the Youth Justice Service Prevent Teams received. In response, it was confirmed the Team took a trauma informed approach to young people and it was a small number of young people who they were involved with. It was agreed the Committee would be provided with case studies, statistics and information on the nature of the cases the Youth Justice Service Prevent Teams received.

**Action By - Director of Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding**

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

**9. UPDATE OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR BEST START FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

Consideration was given to the update paper of the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families.

The Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families presented the update paper which covered the following areas: Ofsted focused visit; Families First for Children (FFC) pathfinder and sector led partnership bids; upcoming Department for Education (DfE) visit; Children and Learning all-staff event; Education Strategy



Board; Children's Trust Partnership Board (CTPB); staffing changes; Annual Public Health Report; SEND quality assurance; Camden Inclusion Forum (CIF); SEND - co-production; and the High Needs Sub-Group.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for their update paper and invited questions and comments from the Committee. The following was discussed:

- In relation to the Annual Public Health Report, a Member stated that there were areas raised in the report that should be looked at closer by the Committee, such as mental health, healthy eating in school meals provision, and addictive substances. It was confirmed that the school meals contract was being reviewed by a subgroup and there would be consultation with schools.
- In relation to the Camden Inclusion Forum on 28 November 2023, which explored High Needs funding models that facilitated timely interventions for children with exceptional special educational needs, a Co-opted Member asked for more information on what was learnt at the Forum and how good models discussed at the Forum could be adopted by Camden. It was confirmed a written response could be provided to the Committee.

**Action By - Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion**

- In relation to the Annual Public Health Report, A Co-opted Member asked for more information on what Camden was doing to regulate the sale of vapes and alcohol to prevent children from acquiring them. The Cabinet Member stated that these subjects were covered within PHSE classes and by headteachers speaking to students at school, but the issue of regulating sales was in the area of trading standards. It was confirmed a written response could be provided to the Committee.

**Action By - Director of Public Safety**

The Committee noted the update.

**10. CAMDEN YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2023-25 (SP/2023/15)**

Consideration was given to the report of the Cabinet Member for Young People and Culture, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities and the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families.

The report outlined the priorities for the Youth Justice Service over the next 2 years 2023-25, provided an overview of progress from the previous plan, referenced national and regional priorities, and how Camden sought to deliver on our priorities. The report was firstly presenting to scrutiny, then would report to Cabinet, before final sign-off at full Council.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Members for the report and invited questions and comments from the Committee. The following was discussed:

- A Co-opted Member stated that the statistics in the papers showed that occurrences of youth cautioning was disproportionately high for BAME young people. In response, it was stated that it could be viewed as a positive step that those young people were not being criminalised and were trusting and working with the service. The service had been working with the Police custody teams, and the result could be seen in those young people not ending up with a criminal record, where the use of 'no comment interviews' had helped with the direction of non-convictions. This was part of a wider system, which also involved Health, considering how those young people were represented and had advocacy when in court. Staff had training on awareness of adultification, intersectionality and identifying need, and ensuring young people were being adequately represented. The professional space was encouraged to challenge fellow professionals and to ensure the young person was the focus.
- In relation to remands and the difficulty in identifying placements, with the example in the report where remand for a 15-year-old highlighted the difficulties with shortages of placing younger children with an offending profile in children's homes, a Member asked what happened next for children in similar circumstances and what were the safeguards. In response, it was confirmed there were many considerations, including the nature of release and remand. In the process, there would be a planning meeting, consideration for the wider family unit and how they could support their child, support in short term accommodation and whether they were living with family members, and working with partners in safeguarding. There were risks attached with children being released and it was important to not overidentify risk and ensure the right practitioners were involved and the right information had been shared to ensure the right outcome was achieved.
- A Co-opted Member asked for clarification on the statistics within the Camden Youth Justice Service Plan 2022/23, Education section, Statutory School age: Up to age 16 cohort June 2023 section, on the following points: what were the five out of 17 children of statutory school age doing who were not being offered the mandatory 25 hours; why were some children taking up less than the 25 hours; what kind of provision was being offered to the children with an EHCP; and what was the category of 10 children, of which three have EHCPs. It was confirmed that a written response addressing those questions would be provided to the Committee.

**Action By - Director of Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding**

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

#### **11. INSIGHT, LEARNING AND IMPACT REPORT - QUARTER 2 2023-24**

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Directors of Adults and Health, Children and Learning, Supporting Communities and Corporate Services.

The Executive Director of Children and Learning stated that this was the first iteration of the new performance report. In the new insight, learning and impact reporting, directors had set out the key issues of focus. The Children and Learning directorate narrative could be found in section 4.

#### **RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

#### **12. CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKER 2023/24**

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Director Children and Learning.

Committee Members collectively made general comments on the style of reports to Committee. To improve future reporting to the Scrutiny Committee, they would like to see:

- More reporting of the outputs and impacts of intervention
- More case studies and illustration of real evidence
- More details on the strategies and less detail in the report on a whole vision and values
- More information on benchmarking (statistical comparators and regional and national benchmarking)
- Less emphasis on the details of operational activities and more reporting on the strategic outcomes of activities
- Shorter presentations

#### **RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

#### **13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING AND FUTURE MEETING DATES**

The following remaining meeting dates of the municipal year were noted:

- 18 January 2024
- 26 February 2024

- 13 March 2024 (additional meeting)

**14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THE CHAIR DECIDES TO CONSIDER AS URGENT**

There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at 9.20 pm.

**CHAIR**

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**MINUTES END**