ROYAL BOROUGH OF GREENWICH

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY, 17 JANUARY 2019 AT 7.00 PM

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Members:
Councillor Ivis Williams (Chair), Councillors Linda Bird, Angela Cornforth, Gary Dillon, Ann-Marie Cousins, Mariam Lolavar, Anthony Okereke and Patricia Greenwell

External Education Appointees
Monsignor Rothon (Roman Catholic Representative), Pauline Sheath (Church of England Representative) and Pastor Eghafona (Parent Governor Representative)

Under Standing Orders
Councillor David Gardner (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Schools)

Officers
Director of Children's Services, CME/CE Officer, Assistant Team Manager - Attendance Advisory Service, Senior Attendance Advisory Officer, Elective Home Education Officer and Corporate Governance Officer

Item  No.

1  Apologies for Absence

   There were no apologies for absence.

2  Urgent Business

   There was no urgent business.
3 Declarations of Interest

Resolved –

That the list of Councillors’ memberships as Council appointed representatives on outside bodies, joint committees and school governing bodies be noted.

4 Minutes

Resolved -

That the minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Panel held on 8 November 2018 be agreed and signed as a true and accurate record.

5 Elective Home Education Annual Report

The Senior Assistant Director (SAD) Inclusion, Learning and Achievement introduced the report informing the Panel that in England education was compulsory, however school was not and that under current legislation parents had the right to educate their children at home. That Local Authorities had a statutory duty to make arrangements to enable them to establish the identities, so far as it was possible to do so, of the children in their area who were not receiving a suitable education. However, had no statutory duties in relation to monitoring the quality of home education on a routine basis. She highlighted key points and provided context behind figures.

Provide the Panel with a further breakdown by gender on the Elective Home Education data in respect of Year groups 4 and 8, where anxiety was given as the reason by parents/carers for choosing to home educate their child.

Action: DCS

In response to questions raised, the Elective Home Education (EHE) Officer stated that there were a number of failed home visits. That the aim for the upcoming year was to limit the number of repeat visits which would allow focus on more families. Advising that priority of visits were assigned dependent on the result of a child risk analysis.

The SAD Inclusion, Learning and Achievement responded that in relation to the disproportionate number of year 8 pupils being educated at home none were due to lack of school places. That all year 7’s were offered a school place.
The EHE Officer advised that prior to a home visit a questionnaire was sent to the family, a child information form is also enclosed and during the visit, advice is given dependant on need. That guidance packs on elective home education could not be given due to legislation.

In response to questions raised, the SAD Inclusion, Learning and Achievement stated that it is challenged whenever there is evidence to suggest that parents were encouraged by schools to home educate.

Provide further information and figures on the safeguarding referrals that were made.

Action: DCS

6 Children Missing from Education Annual Report

The SAD Inclusion, Learning and Achievement introduced the report. In attendance was the Child Missing Education (CME) Officer and the Assistant Team Manager – Attendance Advisory Service (AAS). She advised the work of the CME Officer was within the AAS and had two main functions, to offer school places to children missing from education and to track those who had disappeared to establish their safety. That when a child goes missing the AAS worked with a range of partners as listed in paragraph 7 of the report. There were 31 CME cases at the time of the report, which was a significant reduction and the new processes in place to ensure that focus was on the right children are discussed in the report. That in terms of ethnicity breakdown of children referred there was a significant piece of work to reduce the figures of unknown ethnicity. Summing up that the actions identified for further improvement during 2018-19 are covered in section 14 of the report.

In respect of identified groups of young people at risk of becoming CME in particular, families of Armed Forces, the SAD Inclusion, Learning and Achievement informed the Panel that they are alerted through the admissions team and advised of the number of families moving back into Woolwich. That there were good links and ongoing work with families of Armed Forces to ensure children get into schools local to the barracks. Also the CME Officer was named contact with liaison officer at the Woolwich barracks.

The Director of Children’s Services clarified the distinction between the cohort of children not attending school and those classified as missing from education. She advised that children’s whose whereabouts were known but
were not attending school was a truancy issue and handled through the attendance service who would conduct visits and take relevant action. Whereas CME were children, who had attended a school and subsequently their whereabouts became unknown or where information was received about a child who was not known to the service.

Provide data on the identified groups of young people at risk of becoming Children Missing from Education, with a breakdown, context and summary around figures to be included in a future report.

Action: DCS

The CME Officer advised that there are guidelines in place at schools regarding the information that parents needed to provide when removing a child from school. However, in some instances such as when parents are disgruntled with a school they may not be forthcoming and provide the required information such as forwarding addresses at which point the child becomes a CME. That the emphasis was about schools getting as much information to allow referrals to the relevant Local Authority in order to establish contact with the family. That once the child has left and a school had visited to establish this, schools would liaise with the CME Officer who subsequently links and liaises with a number of departments and services to establish whereabouts.

The Assistant Team Manager - AAS added that to address attendance issues all schools in Greenwich had guidance on the necessary actions that needed to be followed. That Schools are advised that after 3 days, if there has been no contact with parents, a home visit should be conducted to ascertain the situation which if contact is still unsuccessful would be followed by safeguarding action when advice should be sought from the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) team and Tenancy Advisory Officers. The CME Guidance states that a child becomes a child missing from education if they had not attended school for 20 days but schools are advised to take safeguarding measures as soon as there are any concerns. That the Child Protection Officer is the designated safeguarding lead in each school.

7 Children Missing from Home and Care Annual Report

The Director of Children’s Services introduced the report. She stated that the report gave a range of information about children who go missing from Home and Care. That the Greenwich Safeguarding Children Board (GSCB) have a Missing Group that looks at the work in detail that ensures the responses to missing children are quality assured and there is understanding of the cohort of children who go missing. In respect of partnership working
that, this was strong and a missing fact sheet for young people, parents / carers and professionals had been published. That in instances of children missing on a number of occasions they were referred to Greenwich Risk Adolescent Safeguarding Prevention (GRASP) a multi-agency panel which included the Police, to share information across services about adolescents effectively and in a timely way in order to reduce harm.

In response to questions raised, The Director of Children’s Services informed the panel that the number of times young people went missing from Home over 24 hour period in 2017/18 is as indicated in paragraph 8.5 and those missing from Care indicated in paragraph 9.1 of the report.

The panel requested data on where young people who go missing from Home and Care over 24 hours had been.

**Action: DCS**

The Director of Children’s Services advised that the three annual reports presented to the panel covered different cohorts of children and care was needed before making assumptions that they were the same children.


**Action: DCS**

In response to questions raised, The Director of Children’s Services stated that it was a statutory requirement for Return Home Interviews (RHI) to take place, however the proportion of children taking it up was low. That previously emphasis was on where the children had been rather than the underlying reasons why they had gone missing and there was need to understand both. She advised there was ongoing work, to have much more meaningful interviews, which initially were to be conducted by an independent person, but as the uptake had been low, it was being reviewed as to whether the involvement of known persons to the child would obtain better results.

8 **Joint Targeted Area Review Action Plan**

The Director of Children’s Services introduced the report. She advised that the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) took place in February 2018, which looked at the multi-agency response to children who go missing, who are at risk of child sexual exploitation and who are at risk of criminal and other forms of exploitation through gangs. That the JTAI identified areas of practice strength that included strong partnership, strategic arrangements, high profile
work that lead to development of new and innovative approaches such as GRASP as well as additional strengths as listed in paragraph 3.2 of the report. It also identified areas for further development and that a very detailed action plan was submitted to Ofsted and was being monitored by the Strategic Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Group (SMACE). There had been a lot of work in Greenwich with the Leader, Lead Members alongside Police and the Directors of Community Safety, Children’s Services and Housing to develop a different model for this cohort of children that covered not just gangs but also children exploited. Adding that it was a high priority and they continued to keep in touch with other work happening in London and across the country.

In response to questions raised, the Director of Children’s Services stated that there had been a number of changes, which occurred since the JTAI. That the Borough Command Unit had changed from one to three boroughs and the new safeguarding arrangements put equal responsibility on the Police, Health and Local Authority. Meaning the police had much more statutory responsibility for being involved in safeguarding and the analysis of the cohort of children in need of protection including contextual safeguarding. That there was now a lead officer for safeguarding.

With regards to the Multi-Agency Action Plan, the Director of Children’s Services advised that it had been scheduled for further review but this had not yet taken place.

The Director of Children’s services advised that Members who wished to visit the Point or to meet with a group of young people to discuss the services on offer were welcome and this could be arranged on request.

9 Children and Young People Plan Quarter 2 2018/19 Performance Monitor

The Director of Children’s Services introduced the report. That the Performance Monitor for Quarter 2 covered July to September and highlighted performance areas that either needed attention or had significant performance concerns. She added that the main performance concerns related to the education outcomes at Key Stage 4, which would be looked at in detail at the next meeting of the Panel.

Provide the Panel with a written response on the changes in 18/19 to the definition of self-harm.

Action: DCS
The SAD Inclusion, Learning and Achievement stated that they were linked in with Thrive London and had done training on mental health first aiders, which would be rolled out to schools.

In response to questions raised, the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services and Schools stated he had visited 35 schools and would be providing a summary of observations.

10 School Attendance and Persistent Absence

In response to questions raised, the Senior Attendance Advisory Officer stated that not all schools were accountable to Local Authorities (LA) and there were Service Level Agreements with academy schools, that if they wished to buy into LA they could and it was promoted that they do. However, academies are required to provide their data back to the LA through the school census.

The Senior Attendance Advisory Officer Clarified that the ‘G’ code was unauthorised holiday taken in term time and there was a persistent year on year growth on this in Greenwich. That although many other LAs issued Penalty Notices for 5 days unauthorised absence, Greenwich did not, however in cases of cumulative absences did. She informed the Panel that a future proposal regarding penalty notices would be presented back. Further adding that although persistent absence was slightly higher than it had previously been, Greenwich was still above the national average for attendance.

11 Commissioning of Future Reports

The Chair advised the Panel of the work programme for the upcoming meeting.

The SAD Inclusion, Learning and Achievement stated that three Head teachers were invited to attend the next meeting of the Panel to discuss outcomes, challenges and the strategies they had put in place for 2019.

The Director of Children’s Services advised that the fairness commission would no longer be coming to the Panel; however, some of the work that came out of it in relation to the progression partnership would be incorporated in the Education achievement and standards report.
The meeting closed at 9.08 pm

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Chair