



London Borough of Hackney  
Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission  
Municipal Year 2018/19  
Date of Meeting Monday, 15th June, 2020

Minutes of the proceedings of the  
Children and Young People  
Scrutiny Commission held at  
Hackney Town Hall, Mare Street,  
London E8 1EA

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<b>Chair</b>	<b>Councillor Sophie Conway</b>
<b>Councillors in Attendance</b>	<b>Cllr Margaret Gordon (Vice-Chair), Cllr Ajay Chauhan, Cllr Humaira Garasia, Cllr Katie Hanson, Cllr Sharon Patrick, Cllr James Peters and Cllr Clare Potter</b>
<b>Apologies:</b>	<b>Cllr Sade Etti and Cllr Clare Joseph</b>
<b>Co-optees</b>	<b>Graham Hunter, Ernell Watson, Shuja Shaikh, Michael Lobenstein, Aleigha Reeves and Raivene Walters</b>
<b>In Attendance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cllr Anntionette Bramble, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Children's Social Care</li><li>• Cllr Caroline Woodley, Cabinet Member for Early Years, Families and Play</li><li>• Anne Canning, Group Director, Children, Adults and Community Health</li><li>• Sarah Wright, Director, Children and Families Service</li><li>• Annie Gammon, Head of Hackney Learning Trust and Director of Education</li><li>• Marian Lavelle, Head of Section, Admissions and School Place Planning</li><li>• Amy Wilkinson, Integrated Commissioning Workstream Director, Children, Young People, Maternity and Families (CCG/LBH)</li><li>• Sophie McElroy, Wellbeing and Mental Health Service in Schools, (WAMHS), Programme Manager, City &amp; Hackney CCG / HLT</li></ul>
<b>Members of the Public</b>	<b>The meeting was broadcast live.</b>
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## **Councillor Sophie Conway in the Chair**

### **1 Apologies for Absence**

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from the following:

- Cllr Clare Joseph
- Cllr Sade Etti
- Justine McDonald
- Luisa Dornelas
- Shabnum Hassan

1.2 Apologies for lateness were received from:

- Graham Hunter

## **2 Urgent Items / Order of Business**

2.1 There were no urgent items and the agenda was as published.

## **3 Declarations of Interest**

3.1 The following declarations were received by members of the Commission:

- Cllr Peters was a governor at a local special school;
- Cllr Chauhan was a member of NEU and a teacher at a school outside the borough.

## **4 School Admissions (19.10-19.30)**

4. School admissions is a standing item which is taken annually within the work programme. The aim of this item is for the Commission to maintain oversight of school admissions processes, to ensure that there are satisfactory arrangements for those children entering primary (reception) and secondary school in September 2020 and that there is sufficient school capacity in years going forward, for which the Council has a specific duty.

4.2 Hackney Learning Trust highlighted key points from the submitted report about the 2020 school admissions process:

- For reception and secondary entry, virtually all (99%) parents applied via the on-line tool;
- A high proportion of parents expressed a first preference for a Hackney school: 96% for primary entry and 87% for secondary applications;
- In terms of meeting parents preferred choice of school, local results were on par with regional averages - 95.2% of primary and 88.3% of secondary school preferences ranked 1-3 were met in Hackney;
- 144 of reception admissions and 303 secondary admissions were out of borough, which reflects the cross-border flow with neighbouring boroughs;
- Children with an EHCP have a separate admissions process; this demonstrated that a majority obtained placements in mainstream settings in Hackney for September 2020.

4.3 In respect of school place planning, there had been a decline in reception class places since 2016. There were however, 37 more children in this year's reception class compared to the previous year. GLA projections suggest that there will be a gradual growth in places with an additional 70+ projected places in 2024 compared to 2019. In terms of secondary place planning, there was sufficient capacity to meet local needs. In future years however, there will be a surplus unless additional pupils from out of borough take up secondary school places in Hackney.

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4.4 How many children with SEND did not get their first school preference at primary and secondary? How many children whose first preference was for a special school were not able to attend?

- Officers did not have data to hand on the first preference choices of children with SEND as this was managed by a different team. This would be provided to the Commission for the next meeting.

**Action:** To provide data on the first preference choices of children with SEND at primary and secondary together with their final placement (including how many children who had a local special school as their first option).

4.5 Why have a large number of parents in E5 not been successful in obtaining a place in any preferred school?

- 39 parents in E5 were not offered a place in a preferred school at National School Placement day. This in part was because this postcode covered a large geographic area, but in many cases, children did not reach the criteria for admission in local non-denominational schools (e.g. if a sibling did not attend).

4.6 What strategic analysis does HLT undertake in respect of oversubscribed and under-subscribed schools? What are the characteristics of under-subscribed schools and what support is available to schools that are struggling to attract sufficient numbers of children?

- Strategic analysis of oversubscribed and under-subscribed schools is undertaken each year. There is a consistent pattern in those schools which are oversubscribed which tended to repeat year on year. For example, Mossbourne Community Academy is greatly oversubscribed each year, and this year it received over 1500 applications for 216 places, continuing the previous trend. In general, whilst most secondary schools in Hackney are full, most parents get their 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> preference school and are content. A number of transition events are held in year 5 where parents have the opportunity to meet local secondary heads. This process can help to increase local applications; for example, a rise in applications at Our Lady's was attributed to increased parental awareness that the school accepted applications from children from a wide range of faiths other than practicing Catholics.

4.7 What support is offered to parents whose children were not allocated a place in any of their preferred schools?

- All children were offered a school place on National Offer Day, including those where none of the preferred choices were available. Where no spaces were available at preferred school, children were offered a place at their nearest school where there was a vacancy. If parents were not happy with this place, they could contact the department to be placed in another school where there was a vacancy. It was noted that children may remain on the waiting list for higher preference schools which they may take up should a vacancy become available.

4.8 Children with SEND have particular concerns around transition where there may be considerable anxiety for both the child and the parent. How are such parents and children supported? What work is undertaken with local parents of children with SEND who may find it difficult to navigate and assess local opportunities?

- Transition for young people with SEND has been managed by the school improvement team which is in regular contact with secondary schools to ascertain what is offered to children to support the transition process. A range of support is generally available which can include virtual tours, telephone and video calls with the school and other on-line resources. The SEND team liaises with the school to ensure that secondary schools are aware of the young people entering the school and to facilitate engagement with the young people concerned. There is also significant transfer of data to accompany a child's move from primary to secondary school which includes primary CAT assessments and other pupil data.

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- Induction was very important and whilst schools would prefer if this was done face to face, in many instances this was now done virtually. Group sessions with parents are now generally being replaced by on-line sessions. Particular attention is given to vulnerable students who may experience transition difficulties, and HLT has issued guidance to local schools to this effect.

4.9 How does the banding operate in relation to school places?

- Banding takes place to support schools which are oversubscribed to admit pupils with a range of abilities, bands A through to D or E. Local data shows that children who did not get their first preference schools were more likely to be in lower bands (C, D, and E). It was also the case that some schools who were oversubscribed sometimes exhaust their Band A and B waiting list before their Band C and D waiting list. Similarly, when the distance from where the child lives from the school is analysed, band A children will often live further away than band C and D children. As a whole however, schools aim to accept applications in equal proportions from 4 or 5 bands as they apply their subscription criteria (as seen in appendix B of the attached report).

- There have been particular concerns about the preferred school choices for boys resident in E5 and E8. Parents have been engaged in these areas to ensure that they are aware of all the school options for their child and to make sure that they indicate the full range of preferences within the application process. It was important that parents were aware of the admissions criteria for a number of local secondary schools where these were very specific or were restricted to a very localised geographic area.

4.10 What is the impact of a temporary PAN for school numbers?

- As schools are funded on a per pupil basis, it is not financially viable for a two-form entry school to run within an intake of pupils (1 class full and another 1/3 full). It is better financially for a school to operate with one full class than operate with two classes. The decision to CAP entries is undertaken with the agreement of the school and often at the request of schools to help assist in staff planning and effective school budgeting.

4.11 To what extent will Covid 19 impact on the school admissions for September 2020?

- At this time, it was difficult to determine what the impact of Covid 19 would be for school admissions for September 2020. It was acknowledged that school attendance numbers were currently low, but would hopefully increase as the health situation improves and parental confidence grows. It was acknowledged that there would be a number of families who may not feel confident about returning, particularly those that are shielding (parent or child), and that additional support would be required.

4.12 Is it right to assume every child has been given a place in primary or secondary school? What support is available for those children who do not have a place?

- Every child has been offered a school place for September 2020, including those who have applied late. Although a few late applications were still being received, it was expected that all late applications would be offered a place irrespective of whether this was for reception entry or secondary transfer.

The Chair thanked officers for the report and for responding to questions from the Commission.

## **5 COVID 19 Response and Recovery (19.30-20.45)**

5.1 The Commission is continuing to monitor the impact of COVID 19 upon children and young people and the subsequent response of the Council and its partners. This item was split into three parts:

- 1) Views of Hackney Youth Parliament;
- 2) Briefings from Hackney Learning Trust and Children and Families Service;
- 3) Impact of Covid 19 on young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Hackney Youth Parliament

5.2 Five representatives from Hackney Youth Parliament (HYP) presented to the Commission highlighting a number of ways in which Covid 19 had impacted on children and young people locally.

**Representative 1**

- Although young people are equally affected by Covid 19 they do not receive as much information or updates as regularly or as fully as adults.
- If HYP was able to receive more regular updates, then representatives would be able to cascade this information out to a wider range of young people.
- Engagement by schools and teachers was varied, where young people reported that teachers were not checking up with them as much as they'd expected or liked.
- It was also suggested that school communication was too focused on parents, who may not always have a detailed understanding of what children are studying, how they study and the wider assessment and examination processes.
- Young people needed to be involved more in conversations with the school, particularly decisions that affect them and their future (e.g. around exams and assessments).
- Whilst authorities have listened to young people, there was a desire to see more practical steps to respond to the issues that they had raised.

**Representative 2**

- It was clear to young people that schools had reacted very differently to lockdown, and that on-line teaching support and pastoral care systems put in place varied from school to school. Some schools had not allowed pupils to directly contact their teachers because of safeguarding concerns, this blurred communication between the pupil and the teacher which meant that study programmes and study priorities, or how courses and examinations may change as a result of Covid 19 were not clearly understood.
- Young people had reported that they had been set work which was not related to their programmes of study or had not extended them to help them reach their expected level of attainment. This had left students feeling disorientated and disengaged.
- Prolonged educational disruption was problematic as this had led to a sense of disengagement among young people. As schools were beginning to reopen to more children, young people were concerned as to how schools would help them transition back, assist them to catch up and progress them with their academic plans and aspirations. This was a widespread concern which was causing considerable anxiety and stress among young people.
- Young people were not clear how schools were going to support those who had got behind in their work, or whether additional support would be provided to allow them to catch up. Young people were concerned that the school may not allow them to continue in classes if they had fallen behind.
- As a priority, schools should protect the mental health and academic future of young people going forward.

**Representative 3**

- Schools should be contacting young people more regularly or consistently not only to set work, but also check on their wellbeing and how they were coping.
- Students without access to laptops or other digital devices had found it difficult to access course resources on-line. This issue was likely to be much larger than reported as young people and their families may be embarrassed to acknowledge this with the school.
- Some children's ability to study has been restricted because they were young carers, or were required to care for people who were shielding at home, or needed to undertake other household duties. With everyone at home, children often did not have a dedicated space to study and were required to share study areas with their siblings or work spaces with their parents.
- There was also a concern that children who were entitled to free school meals were still getting vouchers for food whilst they were studying at home.

Representative 4

- Young people were worried about examination processes for this year and the use of teacher assessments to determine GCSE grades instead of exams. As the Black Lives Matter protests had highlighted, many statutory services, including education services were institutionally racist or unconsciously biased which disadvantaged young people from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic (BAME) groups.
- Young people were concerned that there would be little or no action to respond to issues raised by BAME communities if those people in places of power did not acknowledge or try to understand the discrimination or the disadvantage they experienced.

Representative 5

- The views presented were reflective of the broad experience of young people across Hackney, and young people were very concerned about academic progression, whether this be to secondary school, the next academic year or to another institution.
- The lack of engagement by schools had left young people alone with their thoughts too frequently, which combined with a cessation of youth provision had led to them feeling stranded and not knowing which way to turn. Young people were using social media as a way to engage with others and to share their views and experiences which had been helpful.
- The degree to which young people had been affected by the death of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement should not be underestimated. Young people were frustrated and overwhelmed by the issues that were being raised and how racial discrimination impacted on their daily lives.
- The representative had received an upsetting and racist email from her school, but had received support in dealing with this via the HYP support workers. It was acknowledged that not all young people would have such support however, and further support was needed for young people at this time. It was noted that a helpline had been set up but it was not clear how well this had been promoted amongst young people.
- Whilst HYP representatives indicated that it was positive to be told that they were valued by the Council and that it was important that their voice was heard, overall, there was a feeling that they were underutilised, particularly in the current pandemic when young people have many unanswered concerns. The representations of HYP were central to the voice of young Hackney, and it was hoped that the Commission could look into issues that had been raised and help identify what steps are necessary to help young people move forward.
- HYP representatives thanked the Commission for the opportunity to share their views and experiences.

5.3 The Chair thanked HYP representatives for attending and sharing their views on how Covid 19 and school closures had impacted on their education. The Chair acknowledged that the Commission could do better to utilise the skills and experiences of HYP representatives, and to ensure that their views better guide and inform the priorities and work of the Commission. The Chair agreed that it would be helpful to meet HYP representatives to ensure that the Commission used the voice of young people effectively and ensure that young people can continue to contribute positively and productively.

**Agreed:** The Chair and Vice Chair to meet with HYP representatives and lead officers to discuss and agree engagement and involvement of young people in the work of the Commission.

5.4 HLT thanked young people for their open and honest contributions highlighting some of the concerns that young people had with education provision during the current pandemic.

- HLT acknowledged that current circumstances made it very challenging for year 11 and year 13, who had been expecting to do exams this year and the frustration and uncertainty that cancellation had caused. Local schools and other institutions were working hard to maintain and develop options for young people going forward.

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- HLT had provided advice to local schools which stipulated that young people should be contacted once a week, and those with vulnerabilities more often. This contact should be focused on pastoral support rather than the distribution of educational resources.
- Schools have developed a wide range of resources which have been delivered on-line, either live or recorded. Schools have also developed text-based resources for children who cannot access on-line resources. It was acknowledged that not all students would be able to access these resources equally.
- In terms of school contact, schools should have a contact number through which children can reach out to school staff (though this may not be direct).
- Inequality of access to IT equipment was a concern for many schools. Although the government scheme would help bring additional IT hardware to local young people in need (those with a social worker and those in year 10 entitled to FSM), this would only partially meet the totality of local need. The Council is keen to supplement local provision further through a local scheme, as it was likely that on-line learning would continue in some form for some students in the months ahead.
- Every child entitled to FSM should be getting vouchers unless they have gone back to school.
- HLT were aware of the evidence around unconscious bias and the impact this may have on predicted grades for children and young people. When the teacher assessment and predicted grades process for exams was announced, HLT provided additional guidance to local schools to help reduce unconscious bias. Teachers had been restricted to base their assessments on work that had been completed by students by a set date, which it was acknowledged had caused a lot of anxiety among young people. Authorities will have to wait until August 13<sup>th</sup> and August 20<sup>th</sup> when A Level and GCSE results will be respectively published, when these results will be looked at in greater detail. The government has indicated that students will have the opportunity to sit cancelled exams in the autumn though no further details were present at this time.
- HLT also acknowledged that more could be done to include HYP into the voice of young people and would engage with representatives to see how this could be improved.

### Questions

5.5 It had been noted that young people were not getting enough information at the moment. Were there any particular areas where young people required more information and in what form would they prefer this information?

- HYP had held a number of round table sessions with young people, from these it was clear that there were a number of information gaps. Firstly, further information was required on how schools planned to help them catch-up with studies. Secondly, additional information and guidance was needed for the grading systems being used to appraise students to reassure students that these were fair.
- There was a perception that whilst many council bodies listen to the voice of young people, little action resulted from their contributions. It should be noted that HYP representatives aim to represent the voice of young people locally, so this lack of action was disappointing.
- Some young people need more advice and support in using IT systems which was fully acknowledged in moving to on-line communication and teaching.
- Young people also noted that pastoral support and care for the wellbeing of young people was inconsistent both within and across schools.

5.6 Given the stresses and anxieties that young people described from school closures and wider impact of Covid 19, the Commission sought to assess if young people had tried to access mental health or emotional wellbeing services to help them?

- A HYP representative noted that most services were now on-line which might present challenges and that young people would react and respond differently. Although still in need of support, a friend of the representative had cancelled their referral to First Steps when they realised that this was now an on-line service. It was suggested that young people may not engage with such mental health services as they had done before because these were now on-line.

5.7 How do young people feel about their return to school? Did they have any anxieties? Would children want to attend summer schools and feel confident and safe to do so?

- Young people were generally worried about returning to school because of the pandemic and the risks that this posed. This was likely to be an ongoing situation and young people would need to prioritise their mental health and wellbeing to enable them to see this through. To improve wellbeing though, young people needed face to face contact and social interaction that schools offer, so it was important for children to return as soon as practicable.

- In respect of summer school, it was suggested that this may not sit well with young people who feel that a major part of their life has been taken away by the pandemic in recent months and they may be reluctant to forgo the summer vacation. Young people as a priority wanted stability, and as a priority, wanted to understand more about how they were going to be supported to transition back into school over and above additional summer school provision.

#### HLT Briefing Paper

5.9 HLT presented the key points from the briefing which included:

- Although it was evident that school numbers were increasing, total attendances remained a fraction of the local school roll. Numbers would increase further as schools expanded provision to take in year 1 and year 6 pupils as per government guidelines. It was noted that there were 1,400 children attending from years 1 and 6.

- The number of vulnerable children and children of key workers in school had also increased from around 1,000 to almost 1,600 in recent weeks.

- The number of children attending childcare settings was approximately 2,500 which was a significant increase from previous reports.

- Although these were significant increases in school attendance, in total these would only comprise of about 10-15% of total school numbers if everything was open.

5.10 There was no clear guidance from the government as to what was expected from schools in relation to catch-up sessions or the provision of summer schools specifically. An announcement was expected in regard of summer provision though this would unlikely to replicate school provision, but more focused on engaging and involving young people to allow them to reconnect. It is likely that such provision would be voluntary.

5.11 It was also unclear what the position of schools would be in September and if there would be a full return of pupils. The most likely scenario was that all year groups would be back for some time from September, though this may be mixed with on-line and home learning. There were still many uncertainties to enable schools to plan effectively for a September return.

#### CFS Briefing Paper

5.12 The position of CFS had not changed significantly from the previous update.

Services continued to be provided predominantly on-line, though more face-to-face contacts were being undertaken with children and families. Relaxation of lockdown restrictions had enabled social workers to meet children and families in parks and open spaces where this was appropriate.

5.13 In line with other services, Young Hackney had recommenced direct visits where this was safe and appropriate. Although most youth work interventions were delivered remotely, the number of detached youth work visits to where young people congregate had increased to six sessions per week. Young Hackney was exploring the re-opening of local youth hubs or in external spaces as lockdown restrictions ease and how many young people could be accommodated within social distancing restrictions.

5.14 Although there had been an increase in recent weeks, the number of referrals for children's social care continued to be significantly below usual referral rates. The recent rise in referrals was attributed to the improved oversight of children as the number of



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children returning to school increased. The number of children on Child Protection Plans was also rising, though this was a result of children not being taken off plans, as meaningful engagement and support to help parents change had been limited over the lockdown period. A similar situation was happening within the family court systems where it was more difficult to conduct necessary assessments cases to progress through the system. Within the Youth Justice System there is a growing backlog of young people waiting to for their cases to be heard in Court, which means that there are delays in providing any support and interventions that those young people might benefit from.

### Questions

5.15 Are schools obliged to present risk assessments to the council?

- The council has risk assessments from all schools which have extended their opening to more students and they have been assessed by the health and safety team. The risk assessments cover a wide range of issues to ensure that the schools are safe for teachers, children and parents.

5.16 Are schools obliged to tell the council if there is a Covid outbreak? Does the council have the power to close down schools where there is an outbreak?

- If there was a symptomatic case in a local school, then that adult or child would be expected to quarantine for the required time period and to seek a test to confirm this. If the test was positive, all contacts in their 'bubble' would have to quarantine for 14 days. The schools and settings have been very clear about this process and there has been significant input from local the Public Health team.

5.17 What plans are being made to support schools to restart schools in September?

- A government announcement was expected to provide additional funds to help children catch up over an extended period of time, though no details had been confirmed as yet. Schools were aware that children's education had been affected by school closures and were working on plans to mitigate and off-set any disadvantages.

5.18 There was a concern that increased inequality in educational outcomes of local children would result from the impact of Covid 19 and school closures. How detailed a picture did HLT have of how school closures had impacted on vulnerable children and the measures taken by schools to mitigate this?

- It is clear that most children have lost a whole term of teaching and possibly up to 6 months contact with their peers. Whilst schools may have previously been able to support individual children who had missed time through illness, the current situation would require a whole school approach and more comprehensive programme to mitigate the unequal impact of Covid. Schools and teachers were aware of the widening gap between students and were keen to address these, though it was acknowledged that to bring classes back on track in their curriculum and study programmes would require many hours of additional tutoring. Tutoring would help to reduce the gap as this has shown to be successful and the idea of using volunteers would be helpful and should be taken forward. It was noted that this was happening on-line, but could be extended further.

5.19 Aside from schools, is the CFS working with any other partners to help increase oversight of young people to mitigate the drop in referrals for children's social care? Has the safeguarding partnership board reviewed local child protection systems developed in response to Covid 19 restrictions?

- CFS was still getting children's social care referrals from key agencies such as police and health services and was working with partners to maintain awareness. There has been information disseminated to the public via Hackney Life and Hackney Citizen to maintain community awareness of children's social care and there has been an increase in referrals from this source. The NSPCC had been funded by the government to run a national awareness campaign and run a helpline.

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- In terms of the wider safeguarding partnership, additional information was being provided through multi-agency partners. Regular meetings were taking place among these partners to further understand what services remained open, how services were operating and the referral systems into these services.
- The Independent Chair of the safeguarding partnership was actively engaged with police, health and HCVS to ensure that there was a coordinated partnership response to Covid 19 in respect of safeguarding.

5.20 Could the HLT provide an update on the Government scheme to get laptops to vulnerable young people?

- There are two groups of young people for whom the laptop scheme is focused, which include those children who have a social worker and those children in year 10 in receipt of FSM. Social care services will identify those children most in need of laptops and these will be distributed through schools. Laptops were due to be delivered in the next week.

5.21 How will children who may be shielding (or who live with a relative who may be shielding) and who therefore may not be able to attend school when these reopen be supported? How will schools make sure that all children have the same educational opportunities in this context?

- HLT was aware that schools were already having to balance teaching children physically in the classroom with those who are at home and require on-line support and tutoring. It was hoped that there would be creative solutions to some of these issues, for example, livestreaming lessons to children that cannot attend. Schools are responsible for all their children and would want to make sure that none were missing out.

5.22 The Chair thanked all officers preparing briefs for the Commission and for attending and responding to members' questions. The briefs from HLT and CFS were useful and the Commission would like to continue with these. It was suggested that growing inequality in educational outcomes was a significant concern for young people, schools and other stakeholders and that it would be helpful to assess this in greater detail at the next meeting.

5.23 A number of questions were also posed by the Commission for which there was not time to respond. The Chair requested that these should be presented to HLT for a written response for the next meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> July.

**Agreed:** That HLT is requested to provide written responses to the questions set out below for publication at the next meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

1. Evidence presented at the meeting suggest that the on-line education provision has been inconsistent across local schools. What data does the HLT have around local provision? How can it support local schools to help children to transition back to school and catch up?

2. Had there been any verification of teacher assessments to ensure that these were not subject to unconscious bias?

3. Has there been any assessment of how other local facilities and spaces can be used to support children's re-attendance at local schools?

#### Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

5.24 Following discussions on 20th May 2020, the Commission agreed to focus this meeting on the impact of COVID 19 on children and young people's mental health and emotional well-being and the response of local mental health partnerships. The Integrated Commissioning team had prepared a briefing and officers summarised the following key points:

- CAMHS were concerned at the low number of referrals into the local services: there has been an approximate 50% decline in referrals;

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- A RAG rated system had been developed for those children most at risk of harm and those children rated as most at risk (red) continued to be seen face-to-face (where necessary) throughout this time;
- All services were now open, had been restructured to extend their virtual offer and were taking new referrals. In this context, it was felt that there was good capacity across the system and that service promotion was needed to help boost referrals.
- There was a crisis service which operates 9am to 9pm and this would hopefully be extended to 24 hours 7 days a week in the next 12 months. The operation of the Crisis Line had helped to divert attendances from A & E.
- WAMHS is still functioning and continues to support local schools, teachers and school staff virtually and digitally. There are currently 38 participating schools and a further 29 will join in September 2020 (moved from April 2020);
- Kooth is the digital offer through CAMHS and a summary of one month of activity was provided in the report. Early analysis showed some very promising results;
- It was known that there had been a gap around bereavement services and funds had been diverted to create a dedicated child and family support through St Josephs with a wider community-based offer being developed.

### Questions

5.25 Can further detail be provided about the nature of the drop in referrals to CAMHS? Can you verify if the move to digital platforms has contributed to a drop in referrals as young people have suggested?

- There has been a significant drop in referrals to all children's services, which was a result of early messaging within the Covid 19 awareness campaign. A lot of counter messaging work had now begun to ensure that people were aware that services are open and taking referrals and that these were safe to use.
- Some children may have previously struggled emotionally to go to school such as those on the autistic spectrum, and therefore school closures may have provided some relief and contributed to a decline in referrals. Similarly, fewer children were accessing their GP which further reduced referrals.

5.26 Was CAMHS expecting a surge in demands for services and how was the local partnership preparing for this?

- It was noted that the number of referrals had been increasing recently and that a surge was anticipated in the coming months. Clinical leads were meeting to plan for the expected surge and to enable services to respond through a whole systems approach. There was also an emphasis on working towards addressing a young person's needs in a more holistic way which may reduce the need for crisis interventions. A guide to services was being developed in relation to the Thrive Model which was detailed within the report.

5.27 Has there been any mapping or analysis of children who may have 'fallen off' local support systems as these moved on-line?

- Although this was an important question this data had not been collected as yet, but would be provided to the Commission for the next meeting.
- All services were holding risk registers and were actively contacting families and if children had been referred, it is likely that these would continue to be held somewhere across the partnership. The anxiety is for those children who did not get as far as a referral into the system.

**Agreed:** That further information is provided on the number of referrals which may have been lost in the move to virtual platforms across CAMHS.

5.28 Is there any planning for a second wave of infections of Covid 19 and how may this affect service delivery?

- This was difficult to predict if and when a second wave of infection may arise. Local services would have the experience of the first wave which will put them in good stead to respond to any resurgence in infections. There is no clear idea when this may occur which inhibits planning for this eventuality.

5.29 What work has been undertaken to support schools in their communication and support to young people in their role in providing pastoral care.

- WAMHS had switched to an on-line approach to deliver its programme of support. Normally a CAMHS would attend a school on a weekly basis and work to a wellbeing and mental health action plan developed by the school in partnership with CAMHS and HLT. In light of Covid, this has been put on hold. Multi-agency work was continuing to operate to support children. A teacher that has concerns about a young person will still have access to a CAMHS worker to have a conversation about that child from which decisions can be made about how to take any concerns forward.
- In primary schools, the CAMHS worker has been hosting coffee mornings for parents to help them to talk through any difficulties that they may be experiencing.

5.30 In respect of Kooth, are other boroughs using this and how well was it working there? How inclusive is this service?

- The service was already using up to 2/3 of the commissioned capacity which would suggest that there is very good usage of the service by young people at this stage. It was hoped to increase commissioning capacity to help extend support from this platform in the future.
- Officers did not have data to hand on the accessibility of Kooth to young people with SEND and would be provided for the next meeting.

Agreed; Further information on the accessibility of Kooth to young people with SEND to be provide for the Commission

The Chair thanked officers for attending and responding to questions from the members of the Commission.

## **6 Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission - 2020/21 Work Programme**

6.1 An outline of the work programme for the Commission for 2020/21 was provided. The report detailed the following:

- Standing items for inclusion (at page 45)
- One of items agreed from 2019/20 (at pages 46-47)

6.2 As there was a need to focus work on the response and recovery for Covid 19 - there would be reduced capacity to scrutinise other topics at Commission meetings going forward. In this context, it will be even more important for the Commission to prioritise those issues it wishes to scrutinise in the year ahead.

6.3 To support the development of the work programme, the Commission would meet with Cabinet Members and consult senior officers as to how the Commission can contribute to the ongoing scrutiny of Covid 19, and the development of the broader work programme going forward. The Commission would also seek the input of other stakeholders in this process.

6.4 Members noted the outline work programme.

## **7 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

7.1 The draft minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2020 were agreed by the Commission.

## **8 Any Other Business**

**Monday, 15th June, 2020**

8.1 There was no other business and the meeting finished at 9.00pm

Duration of the meeting: 7.00 - 9.00 pm