

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held in the Ground Floor Committee Room - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 25 July 2019 from 10:05am to 11:56am

Membership

Present

Councillor Carole McCulloch (Chair)
Councillor Salma Mumtaz (Vice Chair)
Councillor Jane Lakey
Councillor Chantal Lee
Councillor Shuguftah Quddoos
Councillor Maria Watson

Absent

Councillor Azad Choudhry
Councillor Maria Joannou
Councillor AJ Matsiko

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Councillor Neghat Khan	- Portfolio Holder for Early Years, Education and Employment
Nick Lee	- Director of Education Services
Adrian Mann	- Governance Officer
Peter McConnochie	- Head of Access to Learning
Alison Michalska	- Corporate Director for Children and Adults
Naomi Skelton	- Early Learning Specialist
Catherine Smith	- Early Years Programmes Manager
Zena West	- Senior Governance Officer
Michael Wilsher	- Inclusion Officer

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Azad Choudhry	-	on leave
Councillor Maria Joannou	-	on leave
Councillor AJ Matsiko	-	Council business

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

3 APPOINTMENT OF THE VICE CHAIR

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Salma Mumtaz as Vice Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee for the current municipal year (May 2019 to April 2020).

4 MINUTES

Subject to the following amendments, the Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2019 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair:

- (a) under 'Colleagues, partners and others in attendance', Peter McConnochie's role is amended to 'Head of Access to Learning';
- (b) under item 39, four references to 'excellent' Ofsted ratings are amended to 'outstanding';
- (c) under item 41(a), 'September 2017' is amended to 'September 2010'.

5 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee noted its Terms of Reference (as approved at the Council meeting of 20 May 2019) and their implications for its operation during the year.

6 TAKE-UP OF EARLY YEARS FUNDING

Naomi Skelton, Early Learning Specialist, and Catherine Smith, Early Years Programmes Manager, presented a report on the current position relating to the take-up of early years funding in Nottingham. The following points were discussed:

- (a) currently, 15 hours of free childcare or early education for two-year-old children is available per week for 38 weeks for families in England receiving some forms of support. The same provision is available to all families with three and four-year-old children, rising to 30 hours per week for certain working families. The latest participation rates for this provision across the City (for the Autumn Term 2018) reflect the old ward structure, so the data is being re-formatted for the new ward configuration. Take-up of the provision for two-year-olds was 73.4%, which compares positively with the national figure, but uptake at a national level has decreased;
- (b) Early Years is working with the Department for Work and Pensions to make contact with the families of all two-year-old children eligible for the free childcare by phone, by letter, through the Council's Ask LiON website, and face-to-face. This is to ensure that all parents with eligible children know about the scheme, and to discover why some families do not wish to take up their entitlement (or whether they do take advantage of the scheme with a provider based outside the City area). The Families Information Service (FIS) reviews the applications for the scheme and returns data on how and when families apply for places;
- (c) the fact that the provision is free will be advertised more strongly, with an emphasis that placements represent early education – not just childcare. 'Small Steps, Big Changes' (SSBC) family mentors are carrying out engagement work in some wards, while the FIS does outreach at activities and sessions at Children's Centres and distributes information leaflets. A balanced level of detail needs to be provided on the leaflets to ensure that they are both informative and engaging,

and work is underway to ensure that the most important information relating to the schemes is available on a single leaflet. Children in care or with special educational needs and disability are reached through their care providers, including social workers and family support;

- (d) currently, a marketing project is focused on the Clifton wards (where take-up is comparatively low) and a number of stakeholder events are underway. New training processes are being put in place and a review is underway on what information is marketed, and how. A consultation will be held with councillors to identify the best places to advertise the provision and eligibility criteria in a given ward, and colleagues can join councillors at ward events to circulate leaflets and information. Ward maps will also be produced to identify the current location of providers;
- (e) the Committee suggested that advertising could be set up at bus and tram stops, including through scrolling text on the associated electronic information boards. The literature distributed through the FIS should be circulated to libraries (including in languages other than English) and provided to families as part of information packs on pregnancy from midwives. Although some migrant families may not qualify for certain forms of financial support, their children will still be eligible for this scheme, so the family support workers need to ensure that these parents are reached, supported and informed. Outreach should also be carried out with the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee forum, to help these vulnerable children. It is vital that any information on websites is kept up-to-date;
- (f) the Council has a statutory duty to ensure that there is sufficient childcare provision in place, so there are systems for assessing sufficiency, planning and intervention, to make sure that the provision is sustainable. Provider scoring is carried out every six months and reviews are carried out to assess where providers are located across the City, how much space they have and what the take-up is. Data is fed back through the FIS on whether parents who want a place for an eligible child are able to find space at a provider that is sufficiently local and accessible. Engagement is underway to encourage providers to work together in partnership across a locality to support parents, so that a provider that is full can refer a parent to another local provider that has space, rather than putting the family on a waiting list. Where providers have closed, as has been the case in the St Ann's Ward recently, they need to inform the Council, so that additional support can be offered to families in the area seeking places;
- (g) schools funding claims are being transferred onto the Early Years Portal so that all claims can be managed on one system, and schools are being encouraged to check the eligibility of all of their attending children. Improved cross-service working has been introduced as part of the 'Best Start' initiative and the SSBC programme, while ongoing improvements are underway on the use of information systems to ensure that the data collected reflects accurately actual participation. To ensure sustainable provision and to address national issues affecting providers as businesses, support and guidance is available through the Council's Provider Support Framework.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) encourage all councillors to attend the Early Years funding sessions, and to review and offer feedback on the new programme information leaflets;**
- (2) request that provider details, including their locations on ward maps, is forwarded to councillors for sharing in their wards, and that this information is advertised accurately on the Ask LiON website;**
- (3) encourage the exploration of cross-service working with adult education, to support and offer community learning to the parents of children taking advantage of the free childcare and early education provision;**
- (4) encourage outreach with foreign national families and the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee forum, to ensure that any eligible children in these communities have access to the available provision.**

7 SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS AND THE TIMPSON REVIEW

Peter McConnochie, Head of Access to Learning, and Michael Wilsher, Inclusion Officer, presented a report on the pupil exclusion rates for Nottingham schools, the measures in place to seek to reduce exclusions, and the recommendations of the Timpson Review of Exclusions. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the permanent exclusion rate in Nottingham is twice as high as both the regional and national average, while its fixed-term exclusion rates are one-third higher. This position has not changed significantly in recent years. The national data for exclusions is two years behind current and is taken from census returns, while the local 'live data' is not always reported consistently by schools. Steps are being taken to address this through updated data sharing agreements and ICT-based links with school systems;
- (b) fixed-term exclusions are used more regularly in Nottingham than in the rest of the local region and across England as a whole. In total, 40% of all pupils who receive a fixed-term exclusion have been excluded multiple times (and this figure does not reflect pupils put on part-time timetabling or who are sent home temporarily with no formal, legally required record of a fixed-term exclusion). The rate of exclusions from secondary schools (at 7.44 pupils in every hundred) is well above the national average (at 4.62 in every hundred). Exclusions from primary schools are marginally above average (at 0.88 per hundred pupils in Nottingham, relative to 0.62 nationally). However, fixed-term exclusions from special schools are below the national average (at a rate of 4.55 in Nottingham, compared to a rate of 5.09, nationally);
- (c) the local data for permanent exclusions is more current. Although the rate of exclusions has been rising nationally, Nottingham is still well above the average, having the 10th highest number of exclusions per 100 pupils of 152 Local Authorities in 2016/17 (with 101 secondary exclusions and 26 primary exclusions). A significant proportion of pupils excluded have either special educational needs and disability (SEND) or are in receipt of free school meals (FSM), or both. A number of exclusions sometimes occur when an academy school moves between trusts, or when a school is in special educational measures;

- (d) the Committee requested that the data was provided to show the breakdown of the gender and ethnicity of the children excluded, and that the number of SEND and FSM pupils excluded was differentiated. It recommended that the demographic data on the pupil population of each school was reviewed as part of the process of understanding the exclusion rates;
- (e) the 'Inclusion Model' has been introduced by the Council to encourage schools to not exclude pupils, where possible. Ten of seventeen secondary schools are part of the model and have seen reductions in their exclusion rates, but the highest three excluding schools have not signed up. Meetings are held with the head teachers of all of the schools that are part of the Model, and the other schools are invited to attend. Individual meetings are also held with the heads of schools that are not part of the Model;
- (f) since the start of the 2017/18 academic year, there have been 215 permanent exclusions from Nottingham schools. The majority of the pupils excluded were boys and the most common reason for exclusion was persistently disruptive behaviour. The highest number of exclusions occurred in Year 10, followed by Year 8. To support schools, a scheme designed to address and mitigate disruptive behaviour is being rolled out. Work is also being carried out to improve the capacity of school staff to recognise early indicators that a child may have SEND characteristics, so that support can be offered before a formal SEND statement is put in place;
- (g) the Committee suggested that, in the cases of pupils excluded due to persistent disruptive behaviour, support should also be offered to the parents to help them better manage the behaviour of their child more generally, as this could assist in improving their behaviour at school;
- (h) the Timpson Review was commissioned by the Secretary of State for Education in March 2018 to review school exclusions, to explore how head teachers use exclusion practice and why some groups are disproportionately excluded, alongside examining the practice of off-rolling pupils from schools. The review was published in May 2019 and contains 30 recommendations that focus on expanding school responsibility, increasing the role of the Local Authority as a partner and facilitator of local support forums, the development and oversight of in-school units and Alternative Provision (AP), and tackling off-rolling in partnership with Ofsted;
- (i) some ethnic groups are associated with a lower likelihood of being permanently excluded, including Bangladeshi and Indian children who are around half as likely to be excluded as White British children. Children from other ethnic groups are more likely to experience exclusion, in particular Black Caribbean, Mixed White and Black Caribbean, and pupils from Traveller communities. Key groups disproportionately excluded also includes children with SEND, those receiving support from social care and students in receipt of FSM. The analysis produced for the Review shows that 78% of permanent exclusions were pupils who either had SEND, were classified as in need or were eligible for FSM – 11% of permanent exclusions were to pupils who had all three characteristics;

- (j) the Government has made six key commitments following the Timpson Review: to make schools accountable for the outcomes of permanently excluded children; to establish a practice programme which embeds effective partnership working between schools, Local Authorities, AP and others; to work with sector leaders to rewrite national guidance; to call on all partners to review information on children who leave school and to use the data to understand trends; to work with Ofsted to define and tackle the problem of off-rolling; and to extend support for AP;
- (k) the Education Directorate in Nottingham has begun to review the implication of the recommendations with schools and academies locally. The current school cohorts have been reviewed to identify the children at the greatest statistical risk of exclusion, and the 'Inclusion Model' is focusing on the schools in the areas that have the highest populations of children from groups that are disproportionately excluded. 48% of the children most at risk of exclusion have contact with the Priority Families Team already, while 57% have had contact with at least one Council service and one-third have had contact with at least two. There are 449 pupils who have at least five of the eight factors related to a high risk of exclusion, and these pupils may need additional support. Information relating to high-risk pupils has been shared with the schools, which have a duty to identify these pupils and provide appropriate additional support;
- (l) a 'Fair Access' panel is in place and termly inclusion meetings are held with head teachers, in addition to monthly inclusion forums. The Education Directorate is being restructured so that it can respond effectively to every exclusion, with weekly exclusion review meetings now in place and reviews undertaken by the Education Improvement Board, and address issues of off-rolling. The cost and outcomes of AP are under review, while joined-up working is in place with social care, to enable early intervention into schools when needed;
- (m) any exclusion is at the discretion of a school's head teacher, and any challenge to a school's exclusion practices can only be made through Ofsted. However, the Council is able to assist families with children at risk of exclusion, while councillors can support any appeals made by a family against an exclusion and challenge schools on their exclusion rates. Fundamentally, although the Council has no control over whether or not a child is excluded, the Council is responsible for children not in school. The 'Inclusion Model' represents a drive to reduce exclusions and a new escalation process will be put in place from September to challenge schools considering the exclusion of a pupil. In light of the Timpson Report, every effort will be made to engage and build positive relationships with schools and central Government to address the findings.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) encourage councillors to engage with any schools in their wards that have high exclusion rates and to help to publicise the negative effects of exclusions;**
- (2) support Children's Services to engage with the consultation to support the recommendations of the Timpson Review, and to seek to re-establish community between school head teachers;**

- (3) request further information on the breakdown of demographic and characteristics data on the pupil population of each school; the gender and ethnicity of the children excluded; the number of SEND and FSM pupils excluded, individually; and the statistics for pupils from the Traveller community;**
- (4) strongly encourage schools to provide early support to the children most at risk of exclusion following the positive work carried out on understanding risk factors, and for schools to widen their definition of risk factors;**
- (5) invite the Priority Families Team to attend a future meeting of the Committee.**

8 WORK PROGRAMME, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY

Zena West, Senior Governance Officer, presented the proposed work programme for the 2019/20 municipal year, as per the agenda. The Committee aimed to review the findings of the Independent Inquiry into child sexual abuse and the current situation relating to children and young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities at its November meeting, and to consider the promotion of academic excellence and the future resourcing of the Education Improvement Board at its January meeting.

9 FUTURE MEETING DATES

RESOLVED to meet on the following Thursdays at 10:00am:

- 26 September 2019
- 28 November 2019
- 30 January 2020
- 26 March 2020