

# Children, Environment and Leisure Policy and Scrutiny Committee

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Monday 20 November 2017</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Cllr Richard Holloway</b>
<b>Portfolio:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Young People</b>
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## 1. Children's Services

### Cabinet Member Priority Projects

- 1.1 Working with senior officers, I have submitted three bids for funding from the Leader's My Westminster Programme.
- 1.2 The first bid is focused on improving the council's short breaks offer. Short breaks benefit carers and the young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) they care for. This particular proposal would be aimed at children with SEND aged between 16 and 25 to help them as they begin to live more independently and explore career opportunities. Through this proposal we will offer specialised short breaks to teach young people skills, such as managing budgets and making travel arrangements, vital to independent living. As part of this programme we would also try to develop attendees' workplace skills, such as ICT and interpersonal skills.
- 1.3 The second bid relates to an emerging theme from the Young Westminster Foundation's Needs Assessment (see below), namely that young people are increasingly concerned about crime, victimisation and harassment. With this bid we hope to fund projects that will both increase the safety of Westminster's young people and break the victim/perpetrator cycle. In particular, this bid will fund a project which will help young people produce an educational film about ways to reduce your risk of crime. This bid will also fund a victims programme which will help young victims develop support networks, learn protective behaviours and provide them with anger management training.

- 1.4 The third and final bid I have submitted relates to improving PSHE lessons in our schools. I believe we at the council have fantastic resources to help ensure that these lessons are both engaging and provide the skills young people say they need in order to be better prepared for the transition to adulthood and play a more active role in their communities. As well as disseminating best practice for PSHE amongst our schools, I hope to offer money which schools will be able to bid for in order to deliver new programmes which promote healthy living, mental wellbeing and community engagement.
- 1.5 I hope the Leader will agree to fund all of these bids and look forward to implementing these exciting projects with the young people of Westminster.

### **London Crime Prevention Fund Changes (LCPF)**

- 1.6 The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) has changed the way the LCPF is allocated. These changes mean that Westminster will see a drastic (56%) reduction in its LCPF funds, likely affecting the Integrated Gangs Unit and other services.
- 1.7 As part of these funding changes a proportion of the LCPF was made available for co-commissioned services, i.e. services provided across boroughs. I asked that a bid be submitted to protect our proven IGU services and spread the effective model to other boroughs. However, this bid was not successful. I am determined to find a funding solution for our IGU and will continue to work with Public Protection officers to do so.
- 1.8 Other than the IGU bid we were largely successful and stand to benefit from 5 of the 8 successful co-commissioning bids. In particular, Children's Services will be working with Barnardos to deliver a service aimed at tackling harmful sexual behaviour and peer-on-peer abuse across 4 boroughs. Children's Services will also be involved in a pan-London effort to tackle exploitation of young people by gangs and organised criminals, and an initiative called 'From the Inside Out' to tackle reoffending and improve the resettlement of young offenders.

### **Council Tax Care Leavers Exemption**

- 1.9 Since my last report to this committee I have approved a proposal to provide a council tax exemption for those young people leaving care to live independently. This exemption will apply to any care leaver for whom Westminster is their placing authority and will last for a maximum period of 3 consecutive years.
- 1.10 We estimate that this measure will, once fully implemented (i.e. once it has been running for three years), cost approximately £18,000 and benefit around 25 care leavers each year.
- 1.11 Evidence shows that children in care are at a disadvantage compared to their peers on a whole range of measures. I hope this modest measure will help close that gap.

## **SEN Provision**

- 1.12 There remain challenges in both completing Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and converting the previous SEN Statements to EHCPs for Children with Special Education Needs (SEN), in the timelines required. These timelines are: new assessments to be completed within 20 weeks of a request and all transfer reviews to be completed by 31 March 2018.
- 1.13 However, recently there has been an improvement. Between June and September, the number of assessments completed has increased to 47, up from 16 in the last quarter. Similarly, the proportion of these assessments completed within the 20 week deadline has increased from 19% to 64%. Officers and I anticipate that this improvement will continue as our new Case Management System, which enables more automated tracking and monitoring of casework, is implemented. This is due to be fully implemented by the end of January 2018.
- 1.14 While the percentage of transfers reviews completed in the last quarter fell slightly the number of transfer reviews to be completed fell from 1013 to 688 in the last year. In order to meet the 31 March 2018 deadline we will need to complete approximately 114 transfer reviews per month. It is worth noting that a failure to transfer a child from an SEN statement to a EHCP does not affect the service they receive.
- 1.15 The consultant who has joined us from the Department for Education has informed me that while there are certainly challenges to address in order to meet our EHCPs targets, she is pleased that officers are responsive to her suggestions and progress is being made. We will continue to work with this consultant to deliver our rapid improvement plan for the service.

## **Tri-borough to Bi-borough services**

- 1.16 Hammersmith and Fulham Council took steps to separate itself from our previously successful tri-borough services and structures earlier this year. This change will mean alterations in the delivery of Westminster's Children's Services, previously delivered via the tri-borough models. In the future some services will be delivered on a bi-borough basis with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. I have been working with senior officers to ensure both services users and our employees have as much certainty as possible about the changes to staffing structures and delivery models.
- 1.17 Between 3 October and 2 November we consulted with employees on these changes and our proposed bi-borough structures. We want employees to have a chance to take part in the decision making process and we will review our proposed structures to take into account the consultation's results. We plan to publish our final operating models in mid-November.

- 1.18 This change to bi-borough from tri-borough was not something we wanted. However, we believe there may be opportunities to be more flexible, agile and innovative in dealing with the shared challenges our Children's Services face following this change.

## **2. Schools and Education**

### **School Results**

- 2.1 Examination results remain provisional until December in the case of primary results and January for secondary results. However, these provisional results indicate our schools have again performed well. At GCSE level there was concern that changes to the system might negatively affect school results but most of our schools improved their performance. On the new measures of Attainment 8 and Progress 8 Westminster performed exceptionally. Attainment 8 is a measure of a pupil's average grade across eight subjects. On this objective measure Westminster ranked second for inner London and seventh nation-wide. Progress 8 is a measure of a pupil's improvement, i.e. the pupil's actual attainment compared to the pupil's expected attainment. On this measure, which demonstrates the 'value added' by schools and services, Westminster came top for inner London and fourth nation-wide.

### **School Funding**

- 2.2 The National Funding Formula details have now been finalised and when final school pupil numbers are confirmed we will have a better understanding of Westminster's school funding in the future. It is of course welcome that every Westminster school will gain from these changes but there do remain challenges in relation to school funding.
- 2.3 The first challenge is to ensure that our schools are financially ready for the full implementation of the NFF in 2019/20. From this year onwards the Council will be less able to provide financial assistance to schools as their funding will be solely determined by the NFF. Therefore, we will continue work with schools to get them in as good financial positions as possible going into 2019/20. In particular, I am keen to encourage innovation and cost sharing amongst our smaller primary schools who will face particular difficulties given their small pupil numbers.
- 2.4 The second challenge is the high needs block. High needs funding is money aimed at ensuring pupils with special educational needs get the support they need in schools. Currently this funding is not set to increase with demand. London in particular has experienced increased demand for SEN services and London councils are overspending in this area. Currently, we are projected to overspend in this area by 2019.

## **Pre-school Education Provision**

- 2.5 The uptake of two-year old places has risen to 82% for Spring 2017 from 56% in Summer 2016. Westminster there has a significantly higher take up rate of the targeted of childcare vulnerable 2-year-olds than both the London (55%) and national (71%) average.
- 2.6 This improvement is due to range of further measures the council has taken, from greater promotion and marketing of the provision to parents to streamlining the application process. We have also endeavoured to improve our partnership working in this area.
- 2.7 The challenge now is to maintain these excellent levels of take up of uptake in the future.

## **3. Children's Commissioning**

### **Young Westminster Foundation**

- 3.1 During August and September, the Young Westminster Foundation undertook a borough wide analysis identifying the needs of young people in our city. With the primary research now complete the Foundation's partner organisation Rocket Science will produce a comprehensive report outlining key findings and results. It is anticipated this will be published towards the end of November. Early indications from this work suggest young people like living in the local areas and are happy. Where they have concerns they are around drugs, crime and safety across the borough and anxieties about future opportunities. The full report will provide detail on these emerging themes and inform the Foundation's fundraising strategy.
- 3.2 The Foundation hosted its first formal fundraising event on 9 November at the Taj Hotel with the aim of recruiting ten founding partners and raising revenue to support the Foundation. The Foundation has also expanded its trustee board and now has ten trustees from a diverse range of backgrounds including public, private and third sector. A membership event is planned for 28 November to promote the Foundation to partners and announce the formal membership process, offer and application criteria. Priorities over the next three months include further development of relationships across Westminster City Council's Children Services and Policy Teams, planning for a crowd funding event in 2018 and the identification of a partner organisation to develop the Foundation's long-term strategy and business plan.

### **Troubled Families Earned Autonomy Expression of Interest**

- 3.3 We have submitted an expression of interest to seek 'Earned Autonomy' through the Troubled Families programme. If successful, this bid would allow us to draw down grant funding directly to deliver our Troubled Families and wider early intervention work, rather than receiving the "payment by results" element of the available funding only when certain

Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) targets are met. We believe this 'earned autonomy' will allow us greater flexibility in building on our current approach and ensure our work in this area is best matched to the wider needs of Westminster families as well as the Troubled Families outcomes specified through national targets. This process is at an early stage and further work with DCLG will be needed to determine the full implications of this change before a final decision is taken, should our expression of interest be progressed.