

Children, Environment and Leisure Policy and Scrutiny Committee

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Report of: Cllr Richard Holloway

Portfolio: Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Young People

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1. Children's Services

SEN Evaluations and Transfers

- 1.1 The Special Educational Needs (SEN) Service is undergoing structural changes following the transition to Bi-Borough. Once these changes are complete new cases will be allocated to the appropriate team and existing cases will be transferred to these new teams. This transition is expected to be completed by April.
- 1.2 In order to complete Education, Health and Care (EHC) transfers in accordance with the central government March target a greater emphasis has been placed on this work this quarter. Early data indicates that we are again expecting to improve on the number of transfers completed. The service has commissioned additional capacity in order to assist with meeting this transfer deadline. This has led to a dramatic increase in the number of plans drafted. There remain 293 transfers to be completed, as at 8 March, of these 145 have been drafted and sent to parents for agreement.

My Westminster Projects

- 1.3 The Cabinet Member Report for the My Westminster Programme has now been formally approved. Funding for the two-year-long projects has also now been confirmed. The My Westminster Stay Safe project has been allocated £75,000, the Life Skills Lessons project has been allocated £80,000 and the Life Skills Short Breaks project has been allocated £72,000.
- 1.4 Officers are continuing to develop these initiatives, consult with stakeholders and begin the procurement process for delivery where required.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

- 1.5 The number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) currently being cared for in Westminster has again increased and now stands at 71, meaning 43 children are waiting to be transferred to other local authorities. I am concerned that the transfer process has not been timely, putting pressure on council services and delaying these children finding permanent care provision. While Westminster has been granted £185,000 in additional funding, this is a smaller amount than other local authorities who are less over their 0.07% national quota.
- 1.6 I have written to the Home Office to raise these concerns and request a meeting on this matter. I hope we will be able to work with the Home Office, as we have done to establish a Pan London Rota for those UASCs over 16 years old, to ensure these children are supported in the most effective way.

2. Schools and Education

School Results

- 2.1 The Department for Education released the finalised GCSE performance tables. Westminster schools performed very well against three key measures.
- 2.2 The percentage of young people achieving the expected GCSE grades in English and Mathematics in Westminster was 75%, well above the national average of 59%. This level of achievement was the second highest in London.

- 2.3 Westminster also has the second highest scores in London on the Attainment 8 measure. Attainment 8 calculates a child's educational accomplishment using grades across 8 main subjects. On this measure, Westminster had a score of 52.6 compared with a national average of 44.6.
- 2.4 Westminster did exceptionally well on the new Progress 8 measure. This score measures the progress a child makes from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4, when compared with peers of similar abilities. On this measure, Westminster was the best Local Authority in London and third in the country as whole.

Westminster City School

- 2.5 Westminster City School has moved into its new building. This building replaced the previous annexe on the site and was completed in February. Due to this work the school is now in a position to offer an additional 100 places. The project was jointly funded with the school Trust. The Trust contributed to the costs of building the top floor, and the Trust is now able to relocate its offices there. This project was completed on time and on budget.

St Marylebone Bridge Special School

- 2.6 Agreement has now been reached with the Education & Skills Funding Agency on terms which will enable the school to be re-built in bespoke premises at Third Avenue. This is now confirmed as the preferred site. The Council is committed to decanting the school while the works take place and has identified two options in the north of the city which are able to offer the necessary space. Feasibility studies and planning assessment are being undertaken for these options. On completion, the school will offer 70 places. Costs of the decant are being met by the Department for Education.

3. Children's Commissioning

Passenger Transport Re-procurement

- 3.1 I formally approved the Passenger Transport Procurement Strategy in January. The strategy recommended a joint commissioning exercise between Children's services and Adult Social Care for the provision of transport services for children, young people and adults in Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea. Extensive consultation and

engagement was undertaken with parents, carers, schools, day services and key stakeholders, and the feedback was incorporated in to the strategy and service specification.

- 3.2 As existing contracts for minibus services are in place until Summer 2019, the minibus procurement exercise will be conducted from October 2018. The procurement for taxi services is underway, the deadline for tenders is 12 March 2018 and to date a total of 26 providers have expressed an interest. A panel including parent representatives and a head teacher will evaluate tenders, and providers who meet the Council's standards and requirements will be appointed on to a framework.

Young Westminster Foundation Needs Analysis

- 3.3 In February 2018 the Young Westminster Foundation (YWF) launched their borough wide Young People's Needs Analysis, which we commissioned last year. Key components of the research and engagement were designed and undertaken by the young people themselves acting as peer researchers. In addition to the peer-to-peer interviews and focus groups, over 230 further responses to the survey were received.
- 3.4 The needs analysis looked to understand the needs and issues affecting young people (aged 8-25 years old) in Westminster. The analysis found that young people were overall positive about growing up in Westminster, and ranked themselves, on average 4.1 out of 5 in terms of happiness. However, four themes of concern were identified by young people, these were; crime and safety, the local environment, health and wellbeing and access to opportunities. Key findings from this research demonstrate that personal safety and fear of crime are a significant issue for young people; that young people are increasingly concerned about poor air quality and the impact this has on their long-term health, and finally; that young people expressed concern around their access to opportunities within Westminster in relation to jobs and housing as they grow older. The needs analysis report sets out the role that YWF will play in collectively addressing each of these themes over the coming months.
- 3.5 The Council will consider these findings and is already taking steps to address the key themes through My Westminster Projects, such as our Stay Safe initiative, and the My Westminster City Lions.

- 3.6 These findings will also support YWF to engage key partners and stakeholders as they look to increase investment in the sector as well as ensuring that the youth services for the future are best positioned to meet local needs and priorities.

Supporting Families Earned Autonomy Expression of Interest

- 3.7 A bid was submitted by the City Council on 14 February 2018 to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government. This outlined plans for the remaining two years of the local Supporting Families programme, should “Earned Autonomy” status be granted. Earned Autonomy would enable funds not yet claimed through the national Troubled Families payment by results framework to be delegated in advance and invested in an agreed service transformation programme focusing on multi-agency early help and service integration. It is understood that the Ministry will be communicating a decision on all bids for Earned Autonomy in mid-March 2018.

NEET Tracking Service

- 3.8 The tracking of employment, education or training destinations for young people aged 16 and 17 and reporting on young people who are NEET (not in education, employment or training) is a statutory service. The NEET Tracking Strategy was approved in February 2018 and will look to go out to open tender in March 2018. The service will deliver the statutory reporting requirements whilst also identifying and supporting young people that are NEET to reengage into meaningful activity. The tender exercise is scheduled to run throughout April. In addition to this, a fixed term, in-house role will be introduced on a pilot basis to support young people with EHC plans to progress into structured and sustained employment. The new SEN Employment Pathway Coordinator will be located in the Bi-Borough SEN department, working closely with colleagues in the Economy Team and local schools and colleges. Recruitment for this post is due to commence shortly.