



City of Westminster

Business and Children's Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 19 July 2021

Report of: Councillor Timothy Barnes

Portfolio: Cabinet Member for Young People and Learning

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City for All – Young People and Learning Priorities

1. Vibrant Communities

1.1 Keep Children at the Centre of Everything We Do

In March we hosted a 'Here to Listen' event which provided young people with a platform to share any concerns they may have. Further events are planned to take place with parents and community groups later in the year. There were a number of concerns raised by young people including violence against women and girls and a lack of awareness of the services available to them. Young people told us they felt safer in Westminster than elsewhere in London and we are proactively working with them to agree the best way forward to strengthen the communication we have with them.

Westminster Creative Collective project has also been established to mark children's experiences during the events of the past year, including lockdown and the Black Lives Matter movement, in a series of creative projects and exhibitions. The project is a joint effort between the children services, libraries and the economy team, as well as the Saatchi Gallery. The exhibitions will initially be online as part of a City Lions virtual gallery and exhibited in four Libraries (Victoria, Reference, Paddington and Queens Park). Additionally, a community mural has been created at the Church Street Library. We have had over 200 pieces submitted and selected 120 pieces to be displayed in the 4 libraries from the 28th June for one month, after which 30 pieces will be selected to be displayed in the Saatchi Gallery from the 9th – 30th August. An event to celebrate the work is scheduled for 26th August.

1.2 Transform our Pre-birth to Five Programme

Our transformation plans, workstreams and strategies for our Pre-Birth to Five Programme have now been agreed. As part of that exercise we consulted staff members and the community through engagement workshops. Doing so has been invaluable. We are also currently working with Central London Community Healthcare partners to modernise and digitise our health visiting offer.

According to the latest figures from the Department for Education, the number of two-year-olds taking up funded education in Westminster through Free Early Education Entitlements has fallen by 2 percentage points from last year. This is a smaller drop than seen in elsewhere in London, meaning that two-year-old take-up in Westminster in January 2021 was well above the London average despite Covid-19. Take-up among three- and four-year-olds in Westminster continued to follow the downward trend also seen in London and England. Fewer than half the estimated number of Westminster children entitled to the universal offer were registered to take up a funded place in Westminster this January. The Early Education and Childcare Service is introducing a

number of promotional and communication strategies to increase take up of FEEE places across the borough.

1.3 Improve our Offer for Children with Special Needs and Disabilities

Following the principles of co-production, we are currently working with key local stakeholders to refresh our Local Area SEND Strategy for the period 2021-2024. This is due to be published in September 2021. There is an ongoing focus on reducing waiting times for autism diagnosis and improving access to face-to-face speech and language therapy support. Work is underway between Children's Services and the CCG on these two areas of improvement and an action plan is being finalised.

2. **Areas of Focus**

2.1 Pimlico Academy

We continue to support Pimlico Academy. There has been a change in the senior leadership team and we are working with the new interim Principal to reset the culture at the school, ensure the needs of pupils, teachers and residents are better understood and met, and drive improvement.

2.2 Sir Simon Milton Westminster - UTC

We remain in regular communication with the Department for Education and UTC over the colleges status and support.

2.3 Laptop Distribution – Digital Futures Programme

Through our Digital Futures Programme and together with the Department for Education we have been working closely with partners to ensure that all children in the borough have access to digital devices and the internet. The Department for Education has subsequently made more devices available to schools and an additional 316 devices have been secured for children attending Westminster schools – bringing the total to date to 5565 since the program began.

2.4 COVID-19 Picture in Schools

Regular, twice-weekly testing has been available for all schools and colleges – including staff, parents and support bubbles. Separately, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency announced earlier this month, on Friday 4 June, that the Pfizer vaccine is safe for use in 12-15-year-olds.

Covid cases in WCC for the period of 4th Jan – 11th June			
Setting type	No. of cases in pupils	No. of cases in staff	Sum of Total
Independent	7	4	11
Secondary	10	1	11
Primary	29	28	57
Special	2	6	8
Nursery / Early Years & Children's Centres	23	40	63
Special	1	0	1
Grand Total	72	79	151

2.5 Holiday Activity and Food Fund (HAF)

Westminster City Council has been allocated a total of £709,120 for the provision of a school holiday food and activity offer between 1st April and 31st December 2021. In January 2021, we had 6,862 children eligible for free school meals attending council-maintained schools in the borough. Department for Education funding seeks to improve the holiday experience of disadvantaged children who receive free school meals, aged 5-16, through the delivery of free holiday provision, including healthy food and enriching activities which support their wellbeing and wider educational attainment. A minimum provision will be available for the equivalent of at least 4 hours, 4 days a week over 4 weeks in the summer, one week in Easter and one week at Christmas this year.

2.6 Youth Unemployment

Westminster City Council has a comprehensive offer of more than 40 services across the council to tackle youth unemployment, including employment support, mental health services, physical activity and social care. Due to the ongoing effects of the pandemic, 12% of residents aged 18-24-year-olds are currently not in unemployment. Since March 2020 our claimant count has also increased and the number of 16-17-year-olds not in education, employment or training has risen to 64. This is from a very low base and the numbers are still low enough that we can develop individual support plans for all of our young people.

2.7 Youth Violence

The Youth Offending Service and the Integrated Gangs and Exploitation Unit are working closely with young people across Westminster. This work is supported by family therapists who take a whole family approach to reduce risk of youth violence and we continue to deploy a specialist sexual violence practitioner to work with young women at risk of sexual harm and exploitation.

Across family services, there is significant work ongoing to address issues of serious youth violence at the earliest opportunity. This includes an inclusion pilot, led by Early Help services in partnership with local VCS organisations and schools which works with pupils at risk of exclusion.

2.8 Education Recovery

All schools have received catch up funding allocations in the autumn and spring terms this academic year and a further allocation will be made this term. This funding is being used to support the schools catch up programmes, particularly enhancing the intervention programmes that they have in place for children and young people who have fallen behind in reading, writing and mathematics during the lockdown. Through this grant the average primary school will receive around £6,000 extra, and the average secondary school around £22,000 extra. There will also be additional resourcing for teacher development and training so that they have the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of children and young people who have fallen behind in their learning.

Westminster Archives and MoD Theatre delivered interactive workshops to support the mental health and wellbeing of young people, with over 40 sessions running until July. Officers are also currently working with schools and cultural partners to explore opportunities to strengthen the catch-up offer using the Holiday and Activities Fund.

2.9 Primary School Capacity

We continue to proactively work with a number of schools to manage pupil number shortfalls, particularly in primary schools. Schools have already taken positive action to reduce risk, including attracting more pupils, filling vacancies, managing financial shortfalls, restructuring and permanently reducing published admissions numbers. We continue to work with schools and are supporting them find long-term solutions.

3. Cabinet Member Decisions (May – June 2021)

Since the last Business and Children's Policy and Scrutiny Committee, no notifiable decisions have been made. The following are for determination:

- Victoria Business Library
- Alternative Provision and Behaviour Outreach Contract Award