

# Business and Children's Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	29 November 2021
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## City for All – Young People and Learning Priorities

### 1. Vibrant Communities

#### 3.2 Keep Children at the Centre of Everything We Do

As part of our ambition to put children at the heart of everything we do, Westminster City Council have placed a strong emphasis on improving the wellbeing and mental health of our young people and ensuring our educational activities in our libraries and beyond are available across the length and breadth of the borough. This is complemented by our enhanced cultural offer to young people – through the Holiday and Activity Food Fund as well as the City Lions programme. Over the last six weeks, City Lions have hosted workshops at the Marble Arch Mound and Somerset House, hosted the Youth Council at Kensington Palace while ten of our City Lions are volunteering at the British Film Institute Festival.

The experiences of young people have profoundly shaped their priorities throughout the pandemic. We are committed to ensuring that the voices of young people are incorporated within the services we deliver and as part of this we are refreshing how we engage with young people to ensure that we capture what is most important to them.

#### 3.3 Supporting Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

We have now updated our SEND Strategy for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. The Strategy is in place until 2024 and sets out a number of priority areas, including early transition planning in SEND provision to prevent any service gaps and embedding stronger partnerships with families in the service provision of our partners. The action plan to reduce autism diagnosis waiting times and access to face-to-face speech and language therapy support has now been completed. SEND provision for nursery aged children has significantly expanded following the opening of specialist nursery provision at Hallfield Primary, the expansion of Portman

Early Childhood Centre and increased offer at Dorothy Gardner Nursery. We are working toward increasing provision for school aged children with autism.

## **2. Areas of Focus**

### **2.1 Rainbow Family Centre**

Following an Ofsted inspection on 26 August, Rainbow Family Centre was found inadequate. The inspection concluded that poor management placed children at risk and their educational needs remained unmet. The early years advisory and inclusion service worked closely with the Rainbow Family Centre before the Ofsted inspection took place and the service has been aware of ongoing issues with the provider and raised concerns about the setting following a change of leadership at the beginning of this year. An intensive programme of support was due to be introduced in September 2021 consisting of weekly visits and additional leadership support, however Rainbow Family Centre took the unilateral decision not to re-open following a review of their operations. Visits had taken place and the advisory team was in regular communication with the Centre. In part due to staffing issues, agreed actions were not being fully implemented by the Centre. All children have been found alternative provision and families of children with SEND and other identified needs were prioritised.

### **2.2 Support to Afghanistan families and children**

We continue to provide a high level of support to Afghan families in the borough. All school aged children have been enrolled in school and we are working with head teachers to identify emerging needs and offering support. We have also provided early years and college placements for the younger and older children. Beyond this, we continue to provide a range of activities, including English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and family-based activities, many delivered by our voluntary sector partners and community services as well as our library services. Social workers continue to meet with vulnerable families to provide additional support as appropriate.

### **2.3 Support for families through Family Hubs**

The work of our Family Hubs continues to receive attention, having hosted visitors from the National Centre for Family Hubs, the House of Lords and Treasury officials. These have been opportunities to showcase Westminster's leading work on and best practice across the sector.

Family Hubs continue to play a central role in supporting Afghan evacuees, ensuring that families receive the necessary support and advice from social workers and assessing children's safety, and we are currently reviewing our Early Help offer in order to ensure that children's voices are captured.

### **2.4 Youth Violence**

Following the recommendation from our Youth Offending and Youth Justice Joint Strategic Needs Assessment last year to create a local drugs strategy, we have now contracted public sector consultants BASIS to work with us to develop a drugs strategy that takes a whole system approach to reducing drug-related harm. The strategy will

address the root causes of serious youth violence, sexual and criminal exploitation and more. The strategy will conclude in Spring.

We are working closely with the Metropolitan Police Service to trial their new Knife Crime Prevention Orders (KCPO). The Orders attach conditions to young people that can include curfews and restrictions on an individual's use of social media, travel outside geographical boundaries, as well as explicitly banning them from carrying a knife. An action plan has been developed and will be overseen by the Youth Crime Prevention Board. The Integrated Gangs Unit continues to offer workshops to partners and the local community to help prevent and reduce serious youth violence.

## **2.5 Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Support**

We have secured a premises for our Bridging the Gap project, which is one-to-stop designed to provide mental health and well-being support as well as employability and training services. We are in the process of appointing a provider and are working with our partner services - substance misuse, sexual health, employment, and housing support and advice services - to ensure we have the right support in place for residents of all ages. Central and Northwest London NHS Foundation Trust have committed a senior clinician to operate in the Hub part-time; the housing team have been awarded Changing Futures funding to tackle multiple vulnerability and Bridging the Gap was part of this successful bid. We are exploring co-location options with the Changing Futures team with the view of placing them within the hub. The hub will benefit from a part time clinical psychologist in addition to the new Youth Mental Health Worker embedded in our five Westminster Youth Hubs.

The project is a response to increasing youth unemployment linked to the pandemic as well as unmet gaps in the system for young people who have significant mental health and wellbeing needs. It is funded through the MyWestminster Fund to run a two-year pilot, and £648,710 has been allocated.

## **2.6 Holiday Activity and Food Fund (HAF)**

Our HAF programme provides disadvantaged children on free school meals with healthy food and enriching activities during the school holidays and continues to be a success. Over the summer, the HAF programme partnered with 33 providers and supported 2,796 young people across the borough. Demand is higher amongst families with younger children and HAF uptake is made up of 65% primary-aged pupils and 35% secondary-aged pupils. The HAF programme will continue until Christmas where young people on free school meals will benefit from one week of provision.

The feedback we have received has been overwhelmingly positive. Parents have reported that the provision over the last eighteen months has changed the lives of their children, boosting their confidence and improving their social skills, emotional intelligence, fitness and well-being. Likewise, the overwhelming response from young people has focused on the enjoyment they had. One young person told us it was the first time he had been on a boat.

Though separate from the HAF programme, the Government has introduced a Household Support Fund which is designed to continue to support young people. We are awaiting further detail.

## **2.7 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. The council has made good progress in bringing those services together in a way that tackles youth unemployment in a more strategic way.

The Westminster Leaving Care team are working with over 300 18-25-year-olds, with 82% of them securing a positive destination. The remaining 18% are NEET. Some of the reasons include young offending or in custody, being a young parent, poor mental health, non-engagement with professionals, or uncontactable. According to the latest data from the London Innovation and Improvement Alliance, 70% of 19-21-year-old care leavers in education, employment or training go on to employment, education or training, which is well above the London average of 59%.

## **2.8 COVID Safety Measures in Schools**

For the first half of the Autumn term, overall attendance in Westminster secondary schools was above the national average by 1.8%. Primary school attendance was marginally below at 0.5% the national average. Schools were expected to facilitate two onsite Covid tests at the start of term and from there on young people have been expected to continue twice weekly lateral flow testing from home. Should a young person test positive they are required to self-isolate and take a PCR test. If this is positive, they must self-isolate for 10 days before returning to school. There is no longer a requirement for young people who have been in contact with someone who has tested positive to self-isolate, but they are encouraged to take a PCR test.

We continue to work closely with schools to support them in the management of COVID-19. The vaccination programme for 12-15-year-olds is ongoing, with Immunisation Teams delivering at least one clinic in all schools by 5 November. NHS England announced recently that parents of can now book young people into local vaccination sites using the National Booking Service and as such some parents are taking advantage of this opportunity rather than wait for schools-based Immunisation Teams. Outbreak management plans remain in place alongside procedures for managing and isolating confirmed cases. Arrangements for young people to undertake remote and online learning remain in place and the council continues to monitor Covid cases on a weekly basis and provide support and guidance for schools and early years settings.

## **2.9 Education Recovery**

Following the universal catch-up premium and National Tutoring programme funding the Government provided councils to support children and young people catch up on missed education last academic year, a one-off recovery premium of over £1 million for this academic year has been provided. Building on the pupil premium, this funding is to help schools support disadvantaged pupils.

The Westminster allocations are summarised below:

	<b>Catch-Up Premium</b>	<b>NTP: School-Led Tutoring</b>	<b>Recovery Premium</b> <i>(provisional allocation)</i>
Local Authority Maintained	644,800	309,488	385,868
Academies	893,120	584,674	704,698
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,537,920</b>	<b>894,161</b>	<b>1,090,566</b>

### 3. 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. The process to amalgamate Westminster Cathedral and St Vincent de Paul schools is underway and our priority is to ensure that the transition for pupils, staff, parents and stakeholders is as smooth as possible.

#### 3.1 Ofsted

Ofsted have begun undertaking inspections and it is likely that more of our schools will be inspected. In preparing for their inspections, all schools are being supported by their School Standards Lead Adviser. Our schools team are working closely with schools to support them during the Ofsted process. Given the number of Outstanding schools we have in Westminster, a number of our schools have not been inspected for some time. At a national level, there is an expectation that some schools will receive different grades than they may be used to, given the impact the pandemic has had on young people.

#### 3.2 Sir Simon Milton Westminster - UTC

Due to continued low pupil numbers, the Department for Education has now taken a decision to close the UTC in August 2022. A listening exercise taking into consideration the views of students, parents, staff and stakeholders has concluded and a final decision will be made by the Department for Education. The site will remain in educational use whatever the outcome of the current discussions and a small number of education providers have expressed an interest. We are confident that activities there will offer technical and practical learning opportunities to young people well into the future.

### 4. **Cabinet Member Decisions (September - November 2021)**

Since the last Business and Children's Policy and Scrutiny Committee, the following decisions have been made.

- SEND Strategy, 2021-24