

<b>Date:</b>	5 December 2022
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Young People, Learning and Leisure
<b>The Report of:</b>	Councillor Tim Roca, Cabinet Member for Young People Learning and Leisure
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- 1. Key decisions made in the preceding period since my last Policy & Scrutiny report dated 20 October 2022**
  - No key decisions have been made this period.
- 2. The following report includes my priorities and delivery progress to date of the new administration:**

### **2.1 Children's Services**

#### Increasing pressure on statutory Children's Services, including increased Child Protection plans and children entering care

Nationally, Children's social care has seen an increase of 10% in demand over the past two years. Tragically, child deaths that have occurred over the pandemic link to both pressures of the pandemic and a shortage of resources in social care. Evidence demonstrates a strong correlation between poverty, deprivation and involvement with social care. Nationally, concerns are being highlighted about the potential for higher demand with the cost-of-living crisis and insufficient funding, workforce shortages, a dysfunctional placement market and the crisis in mental health.

#### *Child Protection*

We have seen an increased need for our statutory services recently, both in terms of the numbers of those we are supporting and the complexity of needs. The most notable increase is in the number of children who are currently subject to a Child Protection (CP) plan, which have risen almost 100%, from 49 in June 2021 to 96 in September 2022 (peaking at 107 this quarter). Compared to the same point last year, there has been a 15% increase in child protection investigations (329 this year compared to 287 at the same time last year). The number of safeguarding strategy meetings that have taken place with the Police in response to abuse and neglect referrals is 22% higher than at the same point last year (622 this year compared to 508 last year). We have also seen an increase in the number of assessments that have identified Mental Health as a factor, from 64 assessments in quarter 1 to 95 assessments in quarter 2 – an increase of 95%. These increases are illustrative of the significantly increased complexity that families are presenting with post-pandemic and likely exasperated by the current cost of living crisis.

#### *Children coming into care*

Over the past three years, our Looked After Children (LAC) numbers have remained relatively stable. However, the makeup of this cohort of children has changed significantly since the pandemic. A higher

percentage of our LAC cohort are children who have come into our care from the local population, and fewer are Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC). This means that we are receiving less in grant funding from the Home Office, who pay for UASC LAC, and the LAC cohort is therefore costing more from our baseline budget.

There has been an overall 85% increase in local adolescent Looked After Children (LAC) entries (aged 13+) post-pandemic during the first two quarters this year compared to the first two quarters of 2020, and numbers of children coming into care remain high with six entries in October. When comparing the 16+ aged cohort across the same periods, the increase is 133%. Young People primarily come into care as a result of abuse, neglect, family conflict and breakdown, and exposure to contextual safeguarding and exploitation risks. Many of these adolescents are presenting to us as homeless with very complex mental health issues resulting in family breakdowns. As a result of these factors, children can present with significant behavioural challenges that can require specialist and costly care placements.

Though there were fewer UASC coming into care after the pandemic, there has been a substantial rise in the number of presentations of UASC in the borough who have come into our care recently. From January to August this year, we saw a total of 10 UASC presentations, which is significantly lower than in recent years. However, we have seen a dramatic increase in presentations in recent months with 8 UASC presentations in September and a further 12 UASC presentations in October, accounting for 67% of our current UASC population. Numbers of our UASC cohort are now more comparable to pre-covid levels and we anticipate that we may continue to see a high rate of UASC presentations in the coming months. This will place a significant strain on the Placements service, on both budgets and the ability to source placements. This is because demand already far outstrips supply and placements are priced to reflect this, within a market which is described nationally as 'dysfunctional'.

The increased numbers of both local and UASC children and young people is a concern for our service, as it impacts on our resources such as Social Worker capacity, Placements and core budget.

#### Family Hubs Deficit

There are three Family Hubs in Westminster, each located in an area of significant need and run by a separate lead organisation (with one of the three being run in-house by Children's Services). Family Hubs are the coming together of providers across a neighbourhood who share a single approach to working with families and their children 0-19 years – in addition to providing our core Early Help Service, Health Visiting services, government-mandated Health Child Programme and maternity services, there are a range of established partners co-located in the Hub such as health and voluntary sector organisations.

The Family Hub operational delivery costs are primarily funded from the Public Health grant, the current annual grant allocation is £638,700. A detailed review of the funding model for each Family Hub has found that there is a deficit of circa £255,000 to maintain the current provision; this has previously been addressed through spare capacity in the nursery budgets or one-off payments which is not sustainable. Detailed analysis has shown that the deficit relates to spend on frontline staff who enable the provision to be delivered across each locality, there have also been no inflationary increases to budgets since the launch of Family Hubs. It is not possible to reduce the current spend without impacting upon the level of service, which we recognise is key to delivering a Fairer Westminster in line with the Manifesto.

An investment proposal has been submitted as part of Westminster's Mid-Term Financial Planning process to address the deficit. We expect that this funding will secure the future capacity for the Family Hubs to continue delivering and developing services for families in the context of the Pre-Birth

to Five work, extend the stay and play, early identification and intervention of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and wider partnership offer in collaboration with stakeholders and service users.

#### Cost pressures on Westminster Schools

With rising inflation, pay rises and other cost pressures on schools, we are seeing a rise in the estimated gap between school funding and overall cost pressures on schools. Although there will be a 3.3% overall increase in the Dedicated Schools Grant for 2023- 2024, the Schools Block increase is at only 2.1%, equating to £2.7m, and has to fund an estimated cost pressure of £5.8m across Westminster schools. This cost pressure is made up of estimated pay increases (£4.7m) and other inflationary increases (£1.1m).

In addition to the forecasted gap between schools, funding pressures and the amount provisionally allocated for the Schools Block, we expect to see a further reduction in pupil numbers in our schools which will affect funding. As the Dedicated Schools Grant is calculated based on the number of children on rolls in schools and any additional needs, the reduction in pupil numbers is expected to reduce the Dedicated Schools Grant by £0.7m and schools with falling rolls will have to reduce expenditure accordingly. The School Standards and Finance Teams are in regular contact with school leaders and provide advice and support around budget planning and maintaining a broad, high-quality curriculum offer in the face of funding pressures. Along with schools the Education service also provide advice to Early Years settings and Nurseries that are also facing cost pressures.

#### Cost pressures on Youth Services

The five Youth Hubs in Westminster have raised the issue of the Cost-of-Living crisis over the previous months and the impact this is having and will continue to have, on the running of their organisations. Energy bills for the Avenues hub are likely to increase from £13,000 to £32,000 this year, which represents a 146% increase. This rise is anticipated across the other Hubs. If food and energy prices do continue to escalate this will continue to impact the offer that Youth Hubs can provide and may potentially lead to a reduction in service provision. The Council contributes to the core funding of these organisations (£300,000 in total per annum). Young Westminster Foundation and the Council will continue to monitor the financial situation of the youth hubs and will provide support and guidance to the hubs as needed.

The Council has developed a set of proposals in partnership with the Young Westminster Foundation which will be considered as part of the Council's medium-term financial planning process. These proposals would look to address the increase in demand and complexity within the targeted and universal sector.

#### Investigation at Tresham Centre

A recent national review into safeguarding children with disabilities and complex health needs have revealed serious failures at residential special schools registered at Children's homes. Locally we have two children in such placements, and we have completed independent reviews to satisfy ourselves and the Department for Education that the care being provided is appropriate to the children's needs.

Following a serious incident in which a disabled child was able to exit unsupervised from the Tresham Centre for Disabled Children unsupervised, and found safe and well within 20 minutes, Ofsted visited the centre on 1st November to carry out a full inspection. Initial findings from an internal review of the incident highlighted the importance of health and safety checks and adequate supervision. Ofsted concluded that the site does not meet expectations due to poor security, and work has been underway since the visit to rectify this. Corporate Property expect that all issues will be resolved by Friday 18<sup>th</sup> November, the deadline agreed with Ofsted. There is an ongoing internal review, and Ofsted will make

a follow-up visit. A written notice of our failure to meet expectations has been provided by Ofsted, which will need to be published on the council website.

#### Bayswater Progress Update

Services across the council have held scoping discussions around Community Hubs and the ambition for the Bayswater site to be the first of these hubs in the borough. As a result, leadership on the re-opening of Bayswater has been transferred to the Communities team. Children’s services will continue to work closely with colleagues in Communities on the development of any provision involving our service.

#### Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and the take-up of funded childcare places

The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment was published in October, which assesses the quality, availability, and affordability of childcare in the borough. Key findings for Westminster are that:

- The take-up of Free Early Education among three- and four-year-olds in Westminster is low and has only seen a slight recovery in 2022 from the fall in 2021 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- However, the take-up of the free education offer for targeted two-year-olds from the most vulnerable families has increased from 62% to 65%. This marks a recovery from the drop seen during the pandemic and is in line with London averages.
- There are some concerns about the geographical distribution of childcare places and whether families can find suitable options in terms of price and hours. The northeast of the borough has a higher ratio of population to places than the south suggesting that families in the north are more likely to have to travel further or have fewer choices.
- The quality of maintained nursery schools has improved, and now 100% of maintained nursery schools in the borough are rated as good or outstanding.

<b>Age</b>	<b>WCC Percentage take-up of Eligible Children</b>	<b>Inner London Percentage take-up of Eligible Children</b>	<b>England Percentage take-up of Eligible Children</b>
Age 2	62%	62%	72%
Ages 3 and 4	48%	76%	92%

Key areas of focus over the next year will be:

- Seeking to improve availability and range of options for families looking to take up the early education entitlement for Targeted Two-year-olds.
- Increase awareness of the entitlements to Tax-Free Childcare in the borough.
- Collecting better and more comprehensive information from providers in the borough about their offer, capacity, and cost to families.
- Increase engagement with families in the borough to promote free early education entitlements and better understand the issues that suppress uptake.
- Sustaining and improving the Out-of-School provision in the borough and families' access to information about it.

For further information, the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment can be found here: [WCC CSA 2021-22 \(openobjects.com\)](https://www.westminster.gov.uk/openobjects.com)

#### Preparation for Inspections

We are currently preparing for an annual conversation with Ofsted as part of the Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework and a Youth Offending Service Inspection.

In June 2022, Children's Services received a themed focused visit by Ofsted, looking at Extra Familial Abuse. Ofsted Inspectors were positive about Westminster's consistent quality of social care practice. As part of the Ofsted Inspection framework, we will have two annual Engagement Meetings with Ofsted in December; the Education meeting on 13th December, and the Social Care meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> December. In these meetings we will discuss our progress against each service's priorities and areas for development. The visits will not change our existing 'Outstanding' grade. Following the annual meetings, an update will be provided at the next Policy and Scrutiny Committee.

The Youth Offending Service (YOS) was last inspected by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation in 2015 when it was part of the Tri-Borough Youth Offending Service alongside the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) and London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham (LBHF). Both RBKC and LBHF have been inspected individually in 2021 and 2022. Anticipating that the announcement of an inspection is likely to be imminent, Westminster YOS along with the Youth Crime Partnership Board and partners in the Local Authority have been undergoing preparation for when the announcement takes place alongside taking learning from other boroughs that have been recently inspected to inform practice and procedure locally.

#### Social Care Workforce Capacity Update

We have seen a rise in vacancies in Children's Services Social Care workforce, with 10 current vacancies for case-holding social workers – 67% more than in Quarter 1 this year. Whilst we are seeing a reduction in our reliance on agency staff, we are seeing a rise in the number of posts being filled by Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWS). This, in addition to remaining vacancies, has affected the distribution of complex cases. Our more experienced Social Workers are holding more caseloads with a higher level of complexity, due to the inability to allocate some of this work to the NQSWS until they have increased in their confidence and competence.

We are currently developing our Workforce Development Strategy (2023-2025) to address the current pressures on the workforce; improving recruitment and retention, professional development, career progression and staff health and wellbeing.

## **2.2 Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES)**

### Supporting residents' skills development

The results for WAES learners studying in the last academic year have now been finalised. We are delighted to report an overall achievement rate of 92%. This is an improvement from 88% last year - with good progression to further learning and/or work for the majority of learners. Key areas to highlight include our ESOL programmes at 92% and Applied Computing at 93%. High-performing vocational areas include Childcare at 92% and Teaching Assistants at 91%. With the exception of ESOL, the programmes that learners study are at Levels 1 to 3, with those who achieve Level 3 successfully progressing to work.

### Supporting Ukrainian Families

Our work in this area has continued, with over 160 Ukrainian learners now in mainstream classes that will support them to develop their English language and digital skills, enabling them to progress to work and or develop a greater sense of belonging in the UK. We are working in partnership with the Ukraine Social Club to also support families. So far, 37 individuals have taken part in Saturday family learning courses at the Ukraine Social Club – including regular conversation classes and a UK Schools information session. We are also working with partners to provide enrichment activities,

which have included a trip to a Royal Philharmonic Concert and have future plans for a visit to Lords Cricket Ground, Cutty Sark and the British Museum.

## 2.3 Culture

### Cultural Project Updates

- **Westminster City Save** - resident offers for Somerset House and Puppet Theatre Barge are available and a call out for cultural offers has been sent to the cultural network to help drive festive discounts.
- **City of Sculpture** - Triacontahedron by Anthony James was installed in Berkeley Square in September. Marshmallow Dew & Fingery Eyes by Camilla Bliss is due to be installed in Soho Square Gardens; Khadine, Bruno Catalano in Riverside Walk Gardens and Sister by David Breuer-Weil in Hanover Square subject to planning permission.

### Health and Wellbeing Cultural Programmes

Out and About, the council scheme for residents over 65 to attend free community events at cultural venues, is being set up by both Policy and Libraries to restart following a pause during Covid-19. It is expected the programme will run from January to March 2023.

A £119k bid has been submitted for UK SPF funds that would invest in a programme of projects to support social prescribing and culture projects to support the wellbeing of vulnerable residents, building on existing good practice. This would encourage more connections between local cultural services and its four primary care networks so GPs to refer more patients to beneficial cultural social prescribing activities which could include dance classes, art therapy and music workshops etc.

### Cultural Regeneration

Strand-Aldwych will be activating their new public space and creative quarter for London on 6 December with a North Bank BID commission, The Voiceline, by artist Nick Ryan. This will launch a cultural programme for 2023 (under development) to be delivered by local stakeholders. Active partners with the Curation and Activation Working Group include Somerset House, North Bank BID and King's College, Society of London Theatre, St Mary's Le Strand, LSE, Courtauld Institute and London Design Biennale.

West End cultural partners including The Photographer's Gallery, ICA, Donmar Warehouse and Somerset House have agreed to take part in the proposed Creative Enterprise Zone activity in Harrow Road to create more career and workspaces opportunities for young Harrow Road residents. Local arts partners Paddington Arts and Grand Junction are leading activities in the £70 second stage bid submitted to GLA on 24 October, which would unlock future Mayoral investment and capital opportunities. King's College and Northbank BID have been key financial partners for the management uplift of the public space.

### Arts Council Cuts

In 21/22 the Arts Council invested £52,475,285 into 34 organisations in Westminster. From 23/24, they will fund 20 organisations with annual grants totalling £28,985,254 to deliver the government's levelling-up agenda. The scale of these 45% cuts is significant, and effects multiple Westminster institutions, most notably the English National Opera (ENO). ENO are being offered transition funding over three years to help them develop a new business model with a base in Manchester. A letter has been sent by the Leader to Michelle Donelan, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media

and Sport, to highlight the potential negative impact on the visitor economy and London's reputation as an international cultural centre.

## **2.4 Leisure**

### Seymour Leisure Centre

Stage 2 of the detailed design has been approved with the planning application due to be submitted in early December 2022. The design incorporates separate gendered changing facilities following community feedback.

### Everyone Active Contract

Draft legal terms for the new Deed of Variation to the contract have been shared with SLM, with a Minimum income Guarantee (MiG) agreed with both parties that takes into consideration new centres such as Church Street and Jubilee, as well as London Living Wage which will be issued to impacted Everyone Active staff from start of new DoV.