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| Date: | 18 April 2023 |
| Portfolio: | Young People, Learning and Leisure |
| The Report of: | 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 28 February 2023:**
 - No decisions were made.
- 2. The following report includes my priorities and delivery progress to date of the new administration:**

2.1 Children's Services

Ofsted Visit

On 3rd March, Children's Services Senior Leadership team met with Ofsted for our Annual Engagement Meeting, which is part of the framework for the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services. The meeting included conversations about our education service, particularly the support we provide to children with SEND, and our social care provision.

We were able to evidence positive educational outcomes for most children in Westminster, with 95% of our schools graded good or outstanding. Whilst we have three schools currently graded as requiring improvement, we were able to talk about the positive work we are doing to assist their improvement journey. We also spoke about the wide-ranging local offer for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and alternative provision.

Much of the conversation focused on social care, and the work we are doing to keep children safe. We were able to evidence the quality and impact of our social work practice, through the performance outcomes and the regular monthly auditing work, that includes getting feedback from young people, their carers and other key safeguarding stakeholders.

Ofsted were particularly interested in the increase of children's cases stepping up from early help to social care, and in child protection and looked after children rates reflecting a greater complexity of need. We spoke about the wide ranging provision for children in care and care leavers and the support provided to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. We were able to talk about the significant investment in our free school lunch offer and extended Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) offer, our continuing support to Ukrainian families and other refugees and emphasised our focus on equalities and inclusion.

We were told by Ofsted to expect a full Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) within the next 12 to 18 months.

Publishing of the Children and Young People's Plan

In January 2023, Westminster City Council and Kensington and Chelsea Council launched their new Bi-Borough Children and Young People's Plan 2023-2026. The plan sets out the vision for Children's Services in both boroughs over the next three years and how both councils will work to achieve better outcomes for children and young people. Underpinning the plan is extensive direct engagement with young people, who shared their views through a series of workshops. Over 130 children and young people were involved and a wider group of residents and partners responded to survey questions. Their input has directly shaped the key priorities for Children's Service over the next three years, which are:

1. All children have the best start in life, needs are identified and supported early, and they are school ready at five.
2. Children and young people have access to high quality education and training opportunities, have good attendance at school and achieve their full potential.
3. Children and young people feel safe, and are protected from serious youth violence, harm, harmful practices, abuse, and neglect at home, online and in the community.
4. All young people, and particularly those who are vulnerable, can realise their ambitions and take advantage of opportunities and life skills which prepare them for adulthood.
5. All our young people feel listened to, empowered, and have opportunities to co-produce/co-design services that affect them.
6. All children and young people are happy and healthy, with access to a diverse range of activities and opportunities to support their physical, mental health and emotional wellbeing
7. Children and young people affected by the Grenfell tragedy continue to be supported.

The plan can be accessed here: [Bi-Borough Children and Young People's Plan \(westminster.gov.uk\)](https://www.westminster.gov.uk/bi-borough-children-and-young-peoples-plan)

School Rolls and Amalgamations

Surplus capacity in our primary schools and its associated financial impact on schools is a continuing challenge in Westminster. A recent London Councils report states that the key driver behind the increasing surplus seen in the majority of London boroughs is a 17% decrease in birth rates between 2012- 2021. As calculated by the October 2022 pupil census, Westminster Council currently has a 25.7% surplus capacity across all its primary schools, and this is projected to increase further. Between 2018 and 2022, 7.5 forms of entry have been removed from primary provision. A form of entry is in most cases a class of 30 children and is removed at the reception point of entry. An amalgamation of two Catholic primary schools (Westminster Cathedral and St Vincent de Paul) took effect from September 2022 and removed a form of entry. A proposed amalgamation of two Church of England primary schools (St Stephen's and St Mary Magdalene's) is currently at the consultation stage and if approved would take effect from September 2023 removing a further form of entry.

The Council continues its dialogue with schools, both dioceses and academy trusts to consider partnerships and possible amalgamations to address the current and projected surplus primary capacity.

Social worker recruitment and retention challenges

There continues to be a national shortage in attracting and recruiting experienced Social Workers. Despite this, we have continued to decrease our reliance on agency staff which is currently at 6% (February 2023), down from 8% in September 2021 and 15% in September 2020. The turnover rate for permanent staff in WCC Family Services from April 2021 to March 2022 was 16.3% compared against a Council wide turnover rate of 27.3%.

In recent years we have rolled out the Social Work Apprenticeship, and the first cohort of Social Work apprentices will be graduating in 2023. We also continue to work with the Frontline Academy, Step Up to Social Work, the West London Teaching Partnership and our local universities to provide high quality student placements and subsequently recruit the best calibre social workers as well. There is also an extensive package of training and professional development available to staff via the West London Alliance, Firstline, The Staff College and the Practice Supervisor Development Programme.

We are in the final stages of development of the Workforce Development Strategy which seeks to ensure we attract, retain and develop high quality social workers to meet the growing demands on Family Services.

Free School Meals, Food Poverty and the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Programme

In the December 2022 school holidays, the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme and Extended Offer supported 1,417 children and young people in Westminster. 44 local organisations were able to provide 4,845 healthy meals for local children and young people, along with enriching activities such as sports camps (football, basketball, boxing), arts and crafts, adventure play, cooking, dance, music and drama and offsite trips. There was tailored provision offered for those with special education needs and/or disabilities, as well as for refugees and asylum seekers. The HAF programme continues to be an integral part of holiday support from the Council, ensuring vulnerable children and young people have access to fun, enriching activities and free healthy meals. In addition to the HAF programme children eligible for Free School Meals also received food vouchers over the Christmas period.

In December 2022 the Council pledged £2.7mil to support universal free school meals in primary schools in Westminster. With the Mayor of London's pledge to fund universal free school meals in primary schools across the city from September 2023, the Council has committed to expand a free meal offer to further our commitment to creating a fairer Westminster. With just over £3M to fund free school meals for 3-14 year olds, the Council will provide funding:

- From September 2023 to nurseries to provide a meal offer for targeted 2-year-olds as well as all 3- and 4-year-olds in maintained and private voluntary or independent (PVI) nursery settings offering the early years entitlements.
- From January 2023 - September 2023 to primary schools to enable them to offer a hot meal to non-FSM pupils at £3 a day per pupil, thereby establishing a universal meal offer until the Mayor's Scheme starts in September 2023.
- From September 2023 to secondary schools to provide a meal offer to pupils aged 11 - 14 who live in Westminster.

Ukraine Response update

Friday, 24 February 2023 marked the one-year anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and several events took place to raise awareness of the ongoing war, the consequences for displaced Ukrainians and the support the Council is offering to families who have made Westminster home.

With the war enduring for over a year, displaced Ukrainians continue to arrive in the borough – up to 30 families arrive each month. Since the launch of the Homes for Ukraine scheme one year ago, there have now been over 700 recorded arrivals in the borough.

Many but not all sponsors are able to host families for longer than the initial offer of a 6-month placement and in the last 12-months we have supported 66 individuals / households to make homeless applications, 33 of which from the sponsorship scheme. Although we see around one new

presentation each week on average, we have not yet seen a significant increase in approaches but given the wider pressures on temporary accommodation this is nevertheless an area of focus.

In response, we are looking to increase capacity in the Council's Housing Solutions Service to manage the increased demand and be able to offer enhanced support to Ukrainian households placed out of borough. Affordability will always be a challenge for Ukrainians looking to stay in London and to maximise their income, the Council's HELP (Housing, Employment, Learning and Progression) service has established a dedicated offer for displaced Ukrainian families, which includes two support workers recruited from the Ukrainian community.

The following information and work programme updates are in response to requests from the Committee.

Overview of Asylum-Seeking Families (as requested by the Committee)

There has been a well-co-ordinated multi-agency integrated offer of support to the 817 residents (of whom 209 are children) in the eight contingency hotels in the borough. A wide range of support is being provided locally through the dedicated Family Navigators, outreach teams and the three Family Hubs, who are linking residents and families into medical services, schools access, health clinics and a variety of sessions for young families such as stay and play sessions, baby massage and nurture groups. Wider engagement with local voluntary and community sector has also secured access to clothing and food banks, cooking facilities, summer holiday and extra-curricular activities, grants for school uniform and school transport, homework groups and English Language classes for adults. Leaflets have also been developed with Active Westminster and Libraries (example attached below) to provide information and contact details for youth clubs, sports and recreation centres.

Colleagues supporting the contingency hotel residents are liaising with the Ukraine response team to share learning and are scoping options focusing on promoting and expanding the range of support available.

Support for Afghan Families resettled in Westminster (as requested by the Committee)

Bridging hotels in Westminster closed in spring 2022 and most Afghan evacuees have been accommodated outside the Borough. There are seven Afghan families resettled in Westminster, for each of whom there is an extensive, dedicated support package provided by our commissioned floating support service Single Homeless Project (SHP). Support begins pre-tenancy with essential items purchased prior to the family's arrival, the family are greeted upon arrival with an initial food-shop and basic tenancy overview, and then the SHP worker is on hand five days a week as a single point of contact for whatever the needs of the family are, but generally includes:

- Financial support and benefit sign-up
- Essential item purchase and grant applications for domestic items
- GP and dentist registration
- Support accessing specialist services, e.g., psychological support
- Biometrics
- Tenancy support
- Signposting to ESOL classes and employment services (e.g., Westminster Employment Service)

Westminster Libraries & Archives Overview (as requested by the Chair)

The Libraries & Archives Service plays an integral role in delivering cultural learning opportunities for children, young people and families in the borough. Children's programmes run by the Libraries & Archives Service over the past year are as follows;

- Libraries hosted the Holiday Activities and Food programme across Church Street, Paddington, Pimlico, Queen's Park libraries in partnership with Sports Westminster to deliver physical activities and healthy food for children receiving free school meals throughout Easter, Summer, and Christmas holidays.
- In addition to hosting Holiday Activities and Food activities for children in the summer and Christmas holidays, the Library Service ran a Summer Reading Challenge, themed 'Gadgeteers'. This challenge ran from 9th July to 12th September to engage children and young people with science and curiosity through reading to help maintain literacy through the summer, with 800+ participants across both boroughs.
- To support our Ukrainian refugee families, Ukrainian children's books were purchased and distributed to Brompton, Kensington Central, Paddington, Victoria and Pimlico, to give good geographic coverage and access throughout Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea.
- The '1066' Covid recovery project run by Westminster Archives ran sessions in schools to re-engage children with love of learning through comparing their experiences with life in 1066, both teaching history and reflecting on world events and mental health. Delivered to a total of 2075 children over two years.
- A Bi-Borough exhibition on Windrush was hosted at two libraries and Westminster City Hall, where school groups visited to learn more about the lived experiences of those moving to Britain.
- Westminster Archives hosted 20 Year Six children as part of the annual Takeover Day, where the children took over the jobs of the conservator and education officer for the day.
- In September, six 'Library Labs' workshops focusing on Science Technology Engineering and Maths ('STEM') were held for children to experiment, play, and explore new STEM toys and books.
- Applications for funding have been approved to develop a digital playground in Church Street Library and North Kensington Library, which will be delivered in partnership with Public Health colleagues and funding is being led by London Sport.
- Libraries held a wide range of regular on-site activities for children including: under 5s sessions; chess, Lego and games clubs; art & crafts activities; music sessions; homework, English and Maths clubs; bi-lingual sessions including French, Spanish and Japanese.
- The 'Victorian Era – Play, Learn, Connect' project run by Westminster Archives ran a community engagement project which reached 854 people. In addition to these sessions, free tickets to Kensington Palace were secured with 35 tickets distributed to Children and Young people at Tresham Centre, 12 tickets for disabled students at Westminster College and 30 tickets for year 4 students at St Gabriel's Primary school
- Westminster Music library partnered with Neurodiversity Learning CIC to deliver an art and music workshop for 30 children.
- Libraries facilitated the Spine festival in partnership with Apples and Snakes. Poetry Workshops working towards the Arts Award were held at Paddington and Maida Vale libraries.

To support Afghan families (prior to the closure of the hotels see item 8 above):

- Westminster libraries distributed Bookstart packs to Afghan families. The packs distributed provided resources for children ages 0 and 5 years old.
- Additional books and online resources in Arabic and Farsi were procured and distributed to Brompton, Kensington Central, Church Street and Paddington libraries, with a collection of Arabic and Farsi books gifted to families at the King Solomon Academy welcome events and hotel outreach activities.
- Libraries facilitated a range of games and arts and craft sessions, providing children with craft activities to take away and explore with their families.
- To support Afghan families in accessing key information, libraries hosted outreach activities that supported families in registering for library membership and provided access to vital council and community information and services in community languages.
- Church Street Library facilitated a Community Kitchen which created a sense of belonging and community. The kitchen empowered the community to come together, cook and share meals together with other families.

Information on SENCO (Special Education Needs Co-Ordinator) arrangements across the borough (as requested by the Chair)

Special Education Needs Co-Ordinators (SENCOs) are qualified teachers who oversee the strategic development of SEN policy and provision with their school(s) and ensure implementation of SEN policies on a day-to-day basis. All state-funded schools in England, including academies and maintained nurseries are required to have a SENCO, with some smaller primary schools sharing a SENCO to work across schools. A small group of local SENCOs have worked together to peer review Special Educational Needs (SEN) Information Reports and make recommendations on how they can be improved across the Local Area. Outcomes are then shared on the Local Offer which can be found here: [SEND Local Offer | Westminster FIS](#)

The Early Help Family Hubs are deeply integrated partnership with schools, SENCO, SEND services across 0-25 age range and offer multiple opportunities to identify need and provide an integrated response across that age span.

All schools receive an allocation of support from our Educational Psychologists to develop their SEN practice and are part of a SENCO network, which is convened by the local authority to develop skills and capacity, as well as share good practice across the area.

School Inclusion Strategy - a review of the current inclusion strategies and future plans (as requested by the Chair)

The Bi-borough School Inclusion Strategy was launched in October 2022. Delivery of the strategy ambitions is a partnership endeavour involving schools, our alternative provision provider Ormiston Academies Trust and the wider voluntary sector. Progress is overseen by the Education Partnership Board, chaired by the Executive Director for Children's Services. Some key recent developments include:

- Continued support to schools to develop inclusive practice through the roll out of trauma informed training which embeds whole-school practice that seeks to understand and develop tailored responses to pupils' behaviour. There are 5 schools that have received the Think Trauma accreditation to date.
- Increased range of behaviour outreach interventions available to support young people at risk of exclusion which complements our existing offer via our Early Help service. Ormiston Academy Trust will be rolling out an in-school pilot at Harris Academy St. John's Wood.

Funding have been received from the Violence Reduction Unit to fund mentoring programmes which will work in Beachcroft Alternative Provision Academy and the Westminster Education Centre, which precludes short-term placements.

- Mainstreaming the transitions pilot delivered by Ormiston Academy Trust to target young people at particular risk during transition from primary to secondary school following an evaluation which identified the positive impact the intervention had on the young people participating.
- We are in the process of agreeing a two-year funding package with Ormiston Academy Trust for both alternative provision and behaviour outreach. The funding strategy, agreed by Schools Forum, ensures that costs to the Local Authority, High Needs Block (part of the Dedicated Schools Grant) and schools are managed within the current financial context but also provides Ormiston the security to invest in staffing and curriculum including enrichment, at Beachcroft and the Westminster Education Centre.

Overview of Pre- birth to Five Strategy Review (as requested by the Chair)

The overall ambition of the transformation programme was to offer a better experience of pregnancy to five services for parents and improve outcomes children, whilst delivering value for money. To achieve this, the aims were:

- to strengthen targeted work with parents in greater need, ensure there are clearer management arrangements across the partnership, bring together the Best Start in Life, Healthy Child Programme and School Readiness principles;
- To improve school readiness, speech and language development and early identification of need
- to reduce duplication across the services responsible for delivering the pathways and identify efficiency;
- to reshape the Healthy Child Programme and reduce the cost of delivery models for universal families to allow an additional contact at 3-4 months;
- to deliver financial savings.

Among other achievements, the programme has:

- delivered annual savings of £250,000 in WCC in 2021-2022,
- procured a new health visiting contract with significant stakeholder input into the new specification which sits as part of our early help and family hubs services,
- engaged over 300 families and 50+ practitioners throughout the transformation process, including in depth interviews with targeted families,
- developed and implemented an integrated service model bringing health visiting and early help closer in working practices,
- established a Transformation Partnership Board that has been successfully running for several years and
- co-designed a new whole-family intensive offer with health visitors, midwifery, early help and the Voluntary and Community Sector for families with additional vulnerabilities.

Increased complexity and demand in Frontline Social Work

A separate briefing which focuses on this topic has been shared with the committee.

2.2 Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES)

WAES Strategic Plan 2023-28

Following extensive consultation with internal and external stakeholders since last year, the WAES Strategic Plan is now almost reaching completion. The draft strategy was presented to WAES Governors at their Board meeting on 7 February 2023 and the Governors have given in principle approval to proceed. The Cabinet Member has agreed that the Strategy should be presented to the Policy and Scrutiny Committee.

The collaborative approach taken has enabled us to align this strategy with the Fairer Westminster Strategy, and other Council Strategies, for example, the Economic Development Strategy, which will support jobs and skills growth for residents and entrepreneurship and business support. Other key links include supporting residents' health and wellbeing, equipping residents with the skills to improve their situation during a cost-of-living crisis, tackling inequalities and enabling inclusion and supporting wider cultural and social engagement.

Partnership with Schools

Our work with schools is restarting, with a view to rebuild the family learning programmes that we deliver to support children's attainment, particularly in ESOL, maths and literacy. So far, we will be using our Multiply funding to support additional maths delivery at Christchurch Bentinck and Edward Wilson Primary Schools. Further outreach to schools will be undertaken during the rest of the academic year to expand the programme.

Supporting Employers and Employment

Recently, we have been working closely with the Strand Palace Hotel on upskilling 17 of its hospitality staff in response to customer feedback. The programme is designed to support staff that have English as a second language to understand cultural norms that are expected and to help them expand their vocabulary to support them in their work and with future promotion.

We continue to work with our trusted partner Adult, Education, Employment and Training (AEET) and are delivering entry-level construction programmes. They have good progression to work, in addition to bespoke employability programmes in retail and hospitality (SWAPs) at Nine Elms, with good progression to employers like Abercombie and Fitch, Rare Restaurants and Royal Garden Hotel scheduled. These are well attended and have good achievement rates.

In February 2023, we jointly hosted an online event with the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry to engage with employers in its membership to explore how we can support them with extended training for new and existing employees.

Progression Week

WAES held the Term 2 Progression Week from 6 March to 10 March 2023, providing a full week of workshops and talks for our learners to help support their learning development, progression options and career aspirations. This term, our Progression Week coincided with National Careers Week and International Women's Day. General themes across the week covered women in work and #EmbraceEquity for gender equality to celebrate International Women's Day. This is of note for WAES, as over 70% of our learners identify as women. We were able to further promote progression to Higher Education, Digital, future careers in Sustainability, delivered some Hairdressing and Makeup tasters and much more. We held 28 workshops across the week, with 694 learners attending.

Creative and Cultural Apprenticeships

WAES has recently positioned itself within Westminster as the provider of choice for Creative and Cultural Apprentices. WAES tendered for and secured the contract with National Archives to deliver the Level 7 Archivist and Records Manager offer. The programme is due to start mid to late summer, with an initial 10 apprentices and an additional 20 joining at a later stage. A press release has gone live via WAES communications. We are recruiting appropriately qualified professionals to deliver the programme.

2.3 Leisure

Leisure Centre pre-paid membership numbers

January 2023 reported the highest number of pre-paid memberships since March 2020. February 2023 reported a further increase in pre-paid members with a total of 20,636. Further details include:

- Five centres reported increased or sustained total pre-paid members between January and February.
- Little Venice and Porchester reported decreased pre-paid members between January and February.
- Little Venice pre-paid members reported a decrease at (1,001) in February. This is the lowest number of pre-paid members since March 2021 (982)

The overall % change for pre-paid memberships across the leisure contract is at -9% usage from the start of the financial year April – Feb 2023 compared to the same period in 2019/20. Further details include:

- Paddington recreation ground (+8%) and Queen Mother (+2%) all reported a positive % change compared to the same period in 2019/20.
- Little Venice pre-paid members reduced further in February to -33%.
- Moberly is consistent at an average of 97% through the financial year.
- Marshall street continues to average just 56% of pre-paid members from the start of the financial year April – Feb 2023 compared to the same period in 2019/20.

Seymour Leisure Centre

Seymour Leisure Centre development is nearing stage 3, where the project will go for planning permission. Stakeholders have expressed a desire to have more wet side space and expressed concern that plans reduce the space impacting on provision. Cabinet Members have decided on a way forward with the refurbishment. This includes leaving the existing main pool as-is in terms of dimensions but undertaking a full renovation and access enhancements. There will be no learner pool with this option, but the wet-side capacity will remain the same.