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## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 22 JUNE 2022

(7.15 pm - 9.15 pm)

**PRESENT:** Councillors Usaama Kaweesa (in the Chair), Michael Butcher, Caroline Charles, Jil Hall, Billy Hayes, Andrew Howard, Linda Kirby MBE, Samantha MacArthur and Dennis Pearce

Co-opted members Mansoor Ahmad, Roz Cordner, Becky Cruise and Dr Oona Stannard

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillor Brenda Fraser, (Cabinet Member for Children's Services) and Councillor Sally Kenny, (Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning)

Dheeraj Chibber, (Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion), Richard Ellis (Interim Assistant Director for Strategy, Commissioning and Transformation), Farah Ikram, Interim Head of Performance, Improvement and Partnerships Elizabeth Fitzpatrick (Assistant Director for Education and Early Help) and Stella Akintan (Scrutiny Officer)

Dawn Hollis, (Head of Immunisations, NHSE/I)  
Ellie Walker-Todd, (Immunisation Commissioning Manager)  
Priyanka Trehan, (Senior Immunisation Transformation Manager).

### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Chessie Flack and Councillor Jenifer Gould attended as a substitute

### 2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest

### 3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

### 4 CHILD IMMUNISATION PROGRAMMES IN MERTON (Agenda Item 4)

NHS Colleagues gave an overview of the report on immunisations for 0-5 years old. A panel member said low immunisation rates were an issue before the pandemic. There is currently an outbreak of Polio, and we need to look at steps to address low take-up rates.

Panel members asked about the target for pre-school booster and if low take up rates are contributing to health inequalities. NHS Colleagues reported that MMR1 in Merton is lower than England but higher than the region. The health community needs to tackle this ongoing concern. A number of initiatives include data cleansing, dealing with population movement and the launch of the Pan London Immunisations strategy will have actions at many levels and reach communities who have not taken up vaccines.

NHS colleagues reported that in addressing health inequalities there are extended opening hours for GP surgeries, pilot on digital appointments and work with local community groups looking at improving newborn health.

In response to concerns about the low take up of vaccines. NHS colleagues reported there is a national focus on immunisations. There is good practice on contact with some seldom heard communities. Proven strategies include good communication messages to communities and training for healthcare professionals.

A panel member asked for future reports to provide statistics on the differences in take up between the East and West of the borough.

A panel member highlighted the importance of using peers to spread vaccination messages.

In response to questions from the Panel about the lessons learnt from Covid and their implications for immunisation, NHS colleagues reported that although this was a pandemic response and required a different approach, there are lessons on data collection and swift responses. The NHS will be collating information on lessons learnt over the coming weeks.

## RESOLVED

The Chair asked for a future NHS report on the effectiveness of the London wide Strategy

## 5 DEPARTMENTAL UPDATE (Agenda Item 5)

The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion gave an overview of the report.

A panel member asked if there has been an overview of safety in schools and if defibrillators are available as there is a campaign to get them into schools. The Assistant Director for Education and Early Help said schools already have single points of entry and phone entry, and schools have their own emergency plans.

The Assistant Director for Education and Early Help said she will provide an answer on defibrillators

A panel member asked about out of hours care. The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion said small numbers of children are received in an

emergency situation. Sutton provide the service and ensure social workers can place children in best place out of hours care.

A panel member said the Ofsted report highlighted out of hours care, flexible needs led housing for care leavers as areas for improvement.

The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion said the department are looking at a need led housing approach. The challenge is the availability of housing stock. There will be further reports on activities to address this in the months to come.

A panel member asked about provision for unaccompanied for asylum seekers from Ukraine.

The Interim Assistant Director for Strategy, Commissioning and Transformation gave an overview of the various routes into the UK via the Homes for Ukraine or unaccompanied minors scheme.

The Assistant Director for Education and Early Help gave an overview of main provisions within the Education White Paper and said more scrutiny on the proposals within the paper from this Panel will be useful in due course.

RESOLVED

The Chair thanked officers for their report

## 6 CABINET MEMBER PRIORITIES - VERBAL UPDATES (Agenda Item 6)

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services gave an overview of her portfolio highlighting her commitment to the safety of women. The Cabinet Member also reported she was attending the Children's Trust, visited the Acacia Centre and recognised the rise in mental health issues post Covid.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning said much good work is taking place in the borough and she will support and challenge schools to do the best they can as well as celebrate the good work taking place and help all schools to become outstanding. The Cabinet Member said her priorities are special educational needs, support for vulnerable pupils and the ongoing improvements related to the Council's Special Educational Needs and Disability Strategy.

RESOLVED

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Members for their updates.

## 7 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT (Agenda Item 7)

The Interim Head of Performance Improvement and Partnerships gave an overview of the report.

A panel member asked if we carry out exit interviews with foster carers to learn from their feedback. The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion said each foster carer is attached to a social worker who conduct exit interviews.

A Panel member asked if the council is seeking foster carers of Ukrainian heritage and unaccompanied minors from Ukraine. The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion consider at all potential foster carers and do not impose limitations based on heritage.

In response to questions on surplus places. The Assistant Director of Education and Early Help said the council are seeking to manage number of school places and not close schools in the context of school budgets.

#### RESOLVED

The Chair thanked Officers for their report

#### 8 WORK PROGRAMME 2022-23 (Agenda Item 8)

The work programme was agreed by the Panel