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CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 21 JUNE 2023

(7.15 pm - 9.40 pm)

PRESENT: Councillors Councillor Usaama Kaweesa (in the Chair), Councillor Michael Butcher (online). Councillor Caroline Charles, Councillor Jil Hall, Councillor Billy Hayes, Councillor Andrew Howard, Councillor Linda Kirby, Councillor Samantha MacArthur, Councillor James Williscroft, Mansoor Ahmad, Roz Cordner, Becky Cruise and Dr Stannard.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Sally Kenny (Cabinet Lead for Education and Lifelong Learning)

Stella Akintan (Scrutiny Officer), Hilina Asrress (Senior Public Health Principal), Elizabeth Fitzpatrick (Assistant Director for Education and Early Help) and Jane McSherry (Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families) Toby Podger-Taylor (Participation and Engagement Worker), Marakie Tilahun, (Young Inspector). David Michael (Interim Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion.) Maisie Davies (Head of Performance, Improvement and Partnerships) Fiona White, (Nurse Consultant, NHS England). Shelley Heffernan (Head of Clinical Services) Hanan El-Aidouni (0-19 Clinical Lead CLCH)

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 interests

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

4 0-19 HEALTHY CHILD SERVICES UPDATE REPORT (Agenda Item 4)

The Head of Public Service gave an overview of the report. In response to questions it was reported that:

A number of workstreams are being undertaken to support childhood obesity including promoting healthy eating and an active environment. There is a social prescribing pilot aimed at children specifically. Family start will provide support to families on making healthier choices.

There is support available to tackle head lice which is often a seasonal issue. Health visitors can prescribe medication and visit families to provide targeted support when needed.

The antenatal check is not universal. The team deliver targeted work to vulnerable families. The service is offered to those who request it. There is also support available online.

In regard to the success of the breast-feeding clinic it was reported that there is expertise in the community on breast feeding. There is an Instagram page with info, lots of positive feedback. Run one specialist clinic one day a week.

Improving access became apparent during rapid reviews. The team are looking at innovate ways people can ask questions anonymously as well as looking at best practice. People can self-refer, there are drop in clinics and a health matters social media platform. There are three public health young inspectors who will look at these issues during the re-procurement process.

Resolved

The Panel would like an update on re-procurement process to future meeting.

5 CHILDHOOD IMMUNISATIONS IN MERTON (Agenda Item 5)

The nurse consultant gave an overview of the report.

A panel member said it is disappointing we are still behind on uptake rates and asked if advice has been taken from the LGA report on increasing uptake particularly for MMR2. The nurse consultant said they have taken on all recommendations from the report. Barriers include some parents deny consent, some come from abroad and use their own counties immunisation schedule.

A panel member asked if local pharmacies and mosques can administer vaccines. The Nurse consultant reported that pharmacies can do adult immunisations but would need specific training for children. More promotion work is required with mosques.

A panel member congratulated the immunisations team as all measures are on an upward trajectory. There are concerns amongst some groups and some ethnic minority groups who resist immunisations. The Nurse Consultant said anti-vax movement have spread mis-information. Many are still concerned about MMR. The vaccination team provide webinars about childhood immunisations to different ethnic groups.

RESOLVED

The chair thanked the Nurse Consultant for the report.

6 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT (Agenda Item 6)

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

A panel member asked if the rise in re-offending has been linked to cuts in youth workers. The Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families said there are small numbers within the youth offending cohort in Merton and the team works effectively with youth workers to focus on prevention. The team will continue to focus on preventative work as serious offending behaviour is more challenging to resolve.

In response to questions, it was reported that key indicators on roll out of family hubs, can be included in department update report.

The Assistant Director for Education and Early Help said there are no planned school closures as they will be working with schools to manage budgets and pupil numbers.

It was reported there will be regular updates to scrutiny on persistent absenteeism.

RESOLVED

The Chair thanked officers for the report.

7 SELF HARM AND EATING DISORDERS TASK GROUP REVIEW (Agenda Item 7)

The Chair thanked the task group for the work undertaken to gather research in a very sensitive area.

Councillor Linda Kirby, Task Group Chair gave an overview of the report and recommendations, Councillor Hall said preventative work must be undertaken as well as raising awareness. Councillor McArthur said parents need access to support and advice.

The Panel agreed for the report and recommendations be sent to Cabinet for approval.

The Young Inspector said young people want to get involved in decision making and services need to respond to their needs.

Councillor Hayes said this work was a good example of cross party working and commended the commitment of the task group.

RESOLVED

That the report and recommendations will be subject to some minor amendments, following discussions with the task group and Children, Lifelong Learning and Families Department, then forwarded to Cabinet for approval.

8 DEPARTMENTAL UPDATE REPORT (Agenda Item 8)

The Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families gave an overview of the report.

A panel member raised concerns about exclusions amongst girls. The Assistant Director of Education and Early Help said she had met with Headteachers of Secondary Schools to discuss behaviour and exclusions where this issue has been discussed and will share more information in a future meeting.

A panel member asked if there are likely to be any issues with the roll out of free school meals. The Assistant Director of Education and Early Help said they are not anticipating challenges and the central catering contracts will help.

A panel member asked what initiatives have been put in place in schools to help Merton become the borough of sport. The Assistant Director of Education and Early Help said Merton Schools' Sports partnership have events, some schools already have excellent facilities.

9 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 9)

The Chair gave an overview of the selected scrutiny topics and said he would like to include site visits as well as invite service users to give feedback.

Councillor Kirby said she is happy to do a task group review on Female Genital Mutilation as this is a big concern nationally and the rates of conviction are very low. The Chair thanked Councillor Kirby for her interest and said they need to decide best way to look at this issue.

A panel member said we need to look at events to celebrate teachers.

RESOLVED

The work programme was agreed.

The Chair thanked the Scrutiny Officer for many years of service in the borough and wished her well in her new role.