

**JOINT MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE
AND THE HEALTH SOCIAL CARE AND HOUSING
SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 22 September 2015 at 6.30pm

WRITTEN MINUTES – PART A

Present: Councillor Sara Bashford and Carole Bonner (Chairmen)
Councillors Sean Fitzsimons (Vice-Chairman), Margaret Bird, Simon Brew, Bernadette Khan, Matthew Kyeremeh, Andrew Pelling , Michael Neal, Joy Prince and Andy Stranack

Also in attendance:

- Councillor Alisa Flemming, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Learning
- Councillor Shafi Khan, Deputy Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Learning
- Councillor Louisa Woodley, Cabinet Member for Families, Health and Social Care
- Councillors Oliver Lewis and Andrew Rendle

Members of the Croydon College young people's committee:
Francis Uwagboe, Kristoff Kerr, Imranar Rahman, Vikky Brench, and Khadija Francis

A36/15 Welcome and Apologies for absence

Apologies were received by Councillors Jamie Audsley, Matthew Kyeremeh, Pat Clouder, James Collins, Vinoo John, Dave Harvey and Elaine Jones.

A37/15 Minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2015 (agenda item 2)

RESOLVED THAT: the minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2015 be signed as a correct record.

A38/15 Disclosures of interest (agenda item 3)

There were none.

A39/15 Urgent business (agenda item 4)

There was none.

A40/15 Exempt items (agenda item 5)

There were none.

A41/15 Co-option of the young people's committee for the 17 November meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee (agenda item 6)

Cllr Sara Bashford proposed that the young people's committee be co-opted to lead the 17 November meeting. This motion was seconded by Cllr Simon Brew.

RESOLVED THAT: the group of young students from Croydon College be co-opted onto the Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee for its 17 November meeting.

A42/15 Children and young people affected by domestic violence (agenda item 7)

The following were in attendance:

- Ian Lewis, Director, Children and Family Early Intervention and Children's Social Care
- Paula Doherty, Strategic Manager, Troubled Families and Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence
- Alison Dalton, Health Visiting Implementation Plan Development Lead
- Frederick Clarke, Mighty Men of Valour

Officers gave a brief introduction to the report, highlighting the strategy based on the four Ps (Prevention Protection Provision Partnership), the joined-up approach to addressing the needs of children and young people and the fact that the message is being disseminated that tackling domestic violence is everyone's business.

Members were advised that tackling domestic violence had become one of the council's top priorities.

Officers pointed to national research demonstrating the significant impact on children and young people of experiencing domestic violence, directly as well as indirectly as witnesses to it and undertook to share this with members. They explained that the strategy sought to protect the parents in order to protect the children, and pointed to the borough's multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) and the Troubled Families programmes as key tools to tackle cases of abuse. They added that significant work was being done to tackle Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Members asked the representative of Mighty Men of Valour, a community group providing support to local men, many of whom are fathers, to provide an overview of the work of the group. They were advised that the association had received referrals from social services to provide support through a programme of six sessions aiming to help individuals move away from a pattern of aggressive behaviour and abuse. The programme had been launched about two years before and been supported by the Council, but referrals had fallen in numbers in recent months. He reflected that domestic violence seemed to increase during pregnancy and that the organisation had done some work with men on tackling this trend.

Members were advised that staff underwent regular training on safeguarding issues

and had good links with the Family Justice Centre. The representative of the Health Visiting service explained that its staff did not only assess the health of prospective mothers but also their relationships and parenting capacity, and provided preventive support through routine visits to mothers-to-be and “new birth visits” to all mothers who had recently given birth. A member of the committee observed that not all mothers seemed to get such visits and questioned officers on “Did Not Attend” statistics. Officers stated that it was very unusual for a mother not to have a “new birth” visit.

Members heard that council officers had initiated a domestic violence awareness raising programme in Croydon College, the “Croydon College Ambassadors” programme. A student from the college spoke briefly about her participation in this initiative, which aims to reach a large number of people at no additional cost. All Ambassadors will be trained to understand service pathways to tackle domestic violence cases. Members asked about young people’s readiness to tackle confidentiality issues. Officers explained that the Ambassadors’ training programme had been developed with young people, and that it aimed to address challenging issues such as confidentiality and to provide support through effective supervision.

In addition to the Ambassadors’ programme, officers have organised a large number of road shows and other initiatives to disseminate messages regarding domestic violence as widely as possible. and training courses on detecting domestic violence and sign-posting relevant services had been carried out with council staff e.g. receptionists, caretakers, contractors, etc.

Questioned on the effectiveness of partnership work on domestic violence, officers explained that extensive training had been provided about three years before to various partners to strengthen the borough’s partnership approach to tackling domestic abuse. This had included bite size training for staff further removed from this issue, to enable them to understand the issues and what they could do about them in their positions. Members were advised that council officers were currently working with integrated commissioning staff to develop anti-domestic violence procedures and were promoting the white ribbon campaign, Men Against Domestic Violence .

Possibly as a result of the above initiatives, officers were able to confirm that footfall at the FJC was high and that reporting rates to the police had risen. Officers also stated that 60-70% of FJC service users had children, who could also use their services.

In answer to a question on ethnicity-specific domestic violence issues, officers stated that they were reviewing the Equality Impact Assessments to reach all communities in Croydon in a culturally sensitive way.

Officers were questioned about talking therapies. They explained that this was provided through the FJC, the Troubled Families programme and through Local Councils funded support. Members also heard that support was available from a dedicated young people’s violence advisor (YPVA), whose role included building capacity within the organisation.

Members noted that domestic violence was a significant factor regarding taking young people into care. Officers stated that there were no significant figures on this factor, but commented that 60-70% of assessments for safeguarding featured an element of domestic violence.

Officers were questions regarding the underdevelopment of targeted services for Caribbean and South Asian children affected by domestic violence. They replied that the FJC, Victim Support and RASASC were involved in doing so and that training was taking place to ensure that practitioners were aware of domestic violence issues among these communities. In addition, awareness raising among these communities was taking place through outreach and publicity campaigns.

Members asked what provision was available in educational establishments to tackle domestic violence. Amongst other measures, officers explained that all schools in the borough had been asked to nominate a domestic violence link person who would be responsible for providing training, support and information, and disseminate news of any new legislation and their implications to all staff. So far, 80 out of 120 establishments had nominated link persons since the summer and chairs of governors were being contacted in schools which had not done so.

Members expressed concerns that some women had not had neonatal health visitor appointments and stressed the need to ensure that such cases did not fall through the gaps. It was observed that many such mothers were from transient communities which had weak links with local services.

A member of the co-opted young people's group asked officers about one to one therapies and was given assurances that they were available, as well as family therapies.

Members enquired how the academic performance of domestic violence was affected. While officers stated that there were no statistics on this matter, they highlighted a group of young carers whose parents had been affected by domestic violence, and whose educational achievement was being monitored through an information sharing arrangement with the borough's virtual school.

Members asked whether officers felt that the domestic violence strategy was successful. Officers stated that there were still gaps in the action plan, that the priority remained to protect the parents in order to protect the children and that any emerging issues were referred directly to children's social care services. In addition, a survey on family support services was being rerun to identify any areas for service improvement. Officers undertook to share the domestic violence action plan with members after the meeting.

In conclusion, members commended the work of the officers involved in tackling domestic abuse and its effects on children and noted the progress made notably in training a wide range of stakeholders to detect domestic violence. They stressed the need to include children's issues in the borough's domestic violence strategy to ensure that their needs were being met particularly as children and young people rarely had an opportunity to voice their needs to relevant services.

A43/15 Child and adolescent mental health services (agenda item 8)

The following were in attendance:

- Ian Lewis, Director, Children and Family Early Intervention and Children's Social Care
- Brenda Scanlan, Director of Integrated Commissioning Unit and Adult Commissioning

- Sam Taylor, Joint Head of Integrated Commissioning (Children and Families Partnership)
- Jo Fletcher, Service Director for Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (SLaM)
- Stephen Warren, Director of Commissioning for Croydon CCG
- Clare Brutton, Senior Pathway Redesign Manager, Croydon CCG
- Karen Stott, Off the Record
- Kim Bennett, Croydon Drop-In
- Ann Sneddon, Chair of Croydon Drop-In

Officers introduced the report and highlighted the significant increase in funding to deliver a transformation plan by mid-October. They stated that improving emotional wellbeing was now a top priority for the children and families partnership and that some real progress had already been delivered in some areas. However, they admitted that the commissioning of CAMHS services was currently very disparate in the borough. Officers suggested that this was an opportune moment for Scrutiny members to contribute their views regarding the CAMHS strategy before it was submitted for approval.

Representatives of the voluntary sector were invited to give an overview of their services.

Members were advised that “Off the Record” offered counselling to young people aged 14-25, and were involved in the young carers’ project and in a BME mental health project. They had provided services to 478 young people last year, as well as 117 refugees and asylum seekers and over 500 young carers. The organisation had long had concerns about the capacity of local services to meet the emotional wellbeing needs of local children and young people, particularly in Tier 3 specialist services, and had worked hard to try and meet growing demand for mental health services for this age group. They highlighted their online service initiatives, which had been really welcomed by young people and observed that a pilot a year ago had led to greater numbers of young Asian, female and LGBT service users had made use of these online services.

The representative of the “Drop-In” service spoke of services provided to anorexia sufferers. She stated that if a young person or their family had concerns regarding anorexia, they could self-refer to voluntary sector services. The Drop-In’s Mobile “Talk Bus” was seeing its footfall increasing, and also offered counselling to address substance misuse and sexual matters. Members heard that the “drop-in” approach had greater contributed to a decrease in Did Not Attend rates.

The representative of Off the Record added that its own counselling service was accessed entirely through self-referral and that young people often came to this service through recommendation from other young people. The service could also be contacted online through Facebook and Twitter.

Members asked what impact the increase in funding was likely to have and were advised that approximately 100 cases were likely to be picked up from the current waiting list for mental health services. In addition, officers listed the new posts due to be funded through this additional funding.

Officers highlighted the Croydon demographic, with large numbers of looked after children, unaccompanied asylum seeking children as well as the largest youth population in Croydon, which had created significant demands for mental health

services. It is estimated that 20% of young people have a mental health need at some point in their youth. Officers added that investment in these services had not previously kept pace with the population growth and that the forthcoming increase in funding should bring Croydon back to the same funding position as the other boroughs receiving mental health services from SLaM.

Members were advised that the report entitled "Future in mind" signalled a move away from a tiered approach to mental health services towards early prevention, working much more closely with schools as well as the voluntary sector.

Officers were questioned about funding provision for asylum seeking children and young people who had experienced trauma. They explained that the Home Office grant did not cover any such provision but that special services were commissioned from SLaM in recognition of these mental health issues with far shorter waiting times than other young people.

Members were advised that officers were exploring possible efficiencies to make the most of the new funding, including creating a single point of contact for these services and shifting to permanent staff appointments, which are less costly and more efficient than agency staff.

Representatives of the voluntary sector spoke of the uncertainty they were experiencing as the local authority was about to recommission voluntary sector mental health services, placing a question mark over their element of funding. Such groups were still dependent on such commissions despite the fact they secured funding from other sources too. Officers commended the contribution of Off the Record and the Drop-In to children and adolescent mental health services and stated that they were hoping to create stability for these services by commissioning them for a period of three years.

Members turned their attention to mental health services for young people entering the criminal justice system. They were advised that there were dedicated services in the Youth Justice Team to tackle the needs of young offenders.

The borough's autism champion, Cllr Andrew Rendle, was invited to give an overview of work done on this mental health condition. He stated that the number one priority for the Autism partnership group was to secure prompt diagnoses. The group had highlighted the need to raise awareness of the condition with GPs and the BME community, which they admitted might have different perspectives on this condition and how to address it. A member of the public also highlighted the fact that autism in girls often went unrecognised and highlighted the need for training to overcome this. Officers explained that some training for GPs was being designed by a psychiatrist and that work was being conducted with community outreach groups to give BME groups a better insight into issues surrounding living with autism. In addition, members were advised that the increased interest in autism has led officers to add an agenda item on this condition to a forthcoming meeting of the health and wellbeing board.

Members were advised that new funding had been allocated for eating disorders and that national guidance had been partly underpinned by work carried out by SLaM on these conditions. The guidance states that urgent cases must be seen in two weeks - soon to be shortened to one week - and that all such cases must be seen within four weeks. Officers stated that this was financially effective as such practice led to less hospital referrals and less

backsliding into the condition. The guidance adds that the service must accept self-referrals. Moreover, the borough plan to offer telephone guidance by an experienced clinicians to sufferers and their families.

Officers were questioned on the waiting list for Tier 3 and 4 mental health services. They added that the new funding would hopefully enable them to bring currently long waiting times down to a maximum of 18 weeks for all by April 2017.

Members questioned officers regarding consultation on the proposed transformation programme. They asked whether a voice would be given to service users. Officers replied that a number of consultations had taken place, some of which had involved Off the Record and the Drop-In service. Officers had also consulted looked after children, unaccompanied asylum seeking children and schools. They stated that the hardest to reach group were the borough's affluent private schools, which had been unwilling to engage with this agenda.

Members asked for assurances that BME group would have equal access to mental health services. Officers replied that the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment of 2013 had identified under-represented groups of service users and that the Equality Impact Assessment for the Transformation Plan would identify potential imbalances. In addition, outreach was planned through the BME forum. To make services more universally available and help develop resilience in children, it was also planned to provide whole school interventions in cognitive behaviour therapy. However, it was acknowledged that there remained low levels of BME mental health staff.

To conclude, members agreed that:

- the significant increase in funding was welcomed
- the contribution of the voluntary sector in providing mental health services to children and young people and addressing growing demand was recognised and members hoped that future funding would continue to support their services
- self-referral to mental health services was critical to tackle emerging problems quickly and effectively
- consultation from all relevant stakeholders in the borough was actively encouraged
- Scrutiny members would monitor the progress and implementation of the transformation plan and its outcomes

A44/15 Scrutiny work programme (agenda item 9)

Members confirmed the work programme for the rest of the year, including the Local Action Mini-Review to be conducted by Cllr Matthew Kyeremeh on exclusions in Croydon.

The meeting ended at 9.28pm