

## **BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL**

# **EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (O&S) COMMITTEE – INFORMAL MEETING**

**1000 hours on Wednesday, 12 January 2022, Online**

### **Action Notes**

#### **Present:**

Councillor: Narinder Kaur Kooner (Chair)

Councillors: Katherine Iroh, Kath Scott and Alex Yip

Other Voting Representatives: Rabia Shami, Parent Governor Representative, and Sarah Smith, Church of England Diocese Representative

#### **Also Present:**

Councillor Jayne Francis, Cabinet Member, Education, Skills & Culture

Pam Armstrong, Parent Carer Forum (PCF)

Sabiha Aziz, Chair, PCF

Carolyn Daly, Co-chair, BAFGM

Rachel Edwards, Communications & Engagement Lead, SEND, Wellbeing & Inclusion

Lisa Fraser, AD, Education and Early Years

Jo Green, PCF

Sue Harrison, Director, Education & Skills

Pauline Maddison, Interim AD, SEND and Inclusion

Maria McCaffrey, Co-production Officer

Alan Michell, Head of Service, Admissions, Attendance, Exclusions and Pupil Tracking

Ceri Saunders, Acting Group Overview and Scrutiny Manager

Amanda Simcox, Scrutiny Officer

Christine Wellington, Co-chair, BAFGM

### **1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST**

The Chair advised that this meeting would be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's meeting You Tube site ([www.youtube.com/channel/UCT2kT7ZRPFCXq6\\_5dnVnYlw](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCT2kT7ZRPFCXq6_5dnVnYlw)) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there are confidential or exempt items.

## **2. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Adam Hardy, Roman Catholic Diocese Representative, and the Chair advised that we are awaiting a replacement representative due to Adam having retired. Apologies were also submitted on behalf of Omar Hanif, Parent Governor Representative, and Cllrs Olly Armstrong and Kerry Jenkins.

## **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Alex Yip declared an interest as he is a Deputy Chair of governors at Wilson Stuart School, which is a special needs school.

Also, Councillor Alex Yip expressed his dissatisfaction with the committee meeting being an informal meeting rather than an in-person formal meeting, and it was agreed to discuss this offline.

## **4. BIRMINGHAM AGAINST FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (BAFGM) ANNUAL REPORT (10.00 - 10.30)**

(See documents No. 1 and 2)

Christine Wellington and Carolyn Daly, Co-chairs of BAFGM, were in attendance and gave the presentation. Members were informed that they work with partners to enable children to remain safe and to reduce the risk of FGM. Information regarding the legal context, including FGM protection orders, and the numbers of referrals and contacts was also given.

It was highlighted that there are no ongoing prosecutions for FGM or related offences in Birmingham, and nationally there were 6,590 individual women and girls where FGM was identified during the period 2019 to March 2020. In addition, they provided details of how they are working in partnership and some of the initiatives.

During the discussion with Members the main points included:

- The Chair highlighted that it really makes a difference when someone from within the community passes the message on.
- They have community involvement, although this has slipped due to Covid. However, the Women's network is out in the community, and they are confident that they are going to continue to make headway.
- Officers feel quite strongly about the survivor's account, as this is so impactful when raising awareness, and they have made a lot of links with survivors.
- The reasons for the low number of prosecutions was questioned, and it was speculated that people are not coming forward because they are fearful.
- They are upskilling social workers and other professionals on applying to the family court for FGM Protection Orders (FGMPOs). Schools can also apply for these.

- The aftercare that is provided to help survivors of FGM to cope with the long lasting effects include survivors being referred to appropriate victim groups, and universal services such as mental health services where needed. It was felt that there is not enough support available within the UK and the City, with some victim groups having to stop their activities due to funding issues.

The Chair thanked the officers for their attendance, and she was pleased they are working towards more community engagement, and the offer from the Cabinet Member to assist with protecting our young children and changing mindsets in schools.

#### **ACTIONS:**

The Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Culture offered her support in getting the message out to schools. Officers will make sure that this is fed back to the BAFGM group on education.

### **5. SEND (10.30 - 11.15)**

(See document No. 3)

Sue Harrison, Director for Education & Skills; Pauline Maddison, Interim AD for SEND and Inclusion; Maria McCaffrey, Co-production Officer; Rachel Edwards, Communications & Engagement Lead, SEND, Wellbeing & Inclusion; Sabiha Aziz, Chair of the PCF; Pam Armstrong, PCF and Jo Green, PCF were in attendance for this item.

The Director for Education and Skills highlighted that they could not have done the work without the PCF, as they are key partners in their work across the Accelerated Progress Plan (APP), especially in relation to co-production.

The AD for SEND and Inclusion commented that the focus for this meeting is the third objective: Working Well Together. Each objective has two Senior Responsible Officers (SROs) overseeing the development of the work. It was expected that at least one would attend the Scrutiny meeting. Unfortunately, Deborah Brooks, the Transformation Director, Commissioning, who is working with Jo Carney, NHS Birmingham and Solihull CCG's Director of Joint Commissioning, on this objective has given her apologies. However, Maria McCaffrey is the co-production Officer for this objective and is in attendance.

Maria McCaffrey gave the presentation and highlighted this had been presented to the SEND Improvement Board and there has been some progress since then. The Working Well Together objective is primarily about co-production with families; it is the golden thread that runs through the whole SEND reforms and cuts across all of the four objectives. They are in the process of setting up a voluntary sector partnership group and are delivering a series of workshops to families, and the engagement events will be reported back in due course.

The important element is that this is a three pronged approach, with a working partnership agreement across education, health and care, and a summary report will be presented to the SEND Improvement Board.

The co-production framework is due to be drafted and developed at the end of February 2022, and delivered over two years, with the focus on building good and positive relationships as a baseline.

During the discussion with Members the main points included:

- It is important that as we progress with the other objectives this objective is integrated, and that it keeps coming back to Scrutiny as part of the conversation.
- The Chair will encourage other groups working on the SEND agenda to engage with the PCF or officers, so it is a holistic community.
- Although it is too early to discuss in practice how co-production would factor in the different stages of the child's progression, early thinking is that they it will be about "person centred planning" and the early identification of the child and their needs, with them being supported through every stage.
- It was proposed that the future Scrutiny committee meetings follow the cycle of the SEND Improvement Board, which would mean the following being brought to the committee meetings:
  - February 2022: the performance dashboard, and the cycle of regularly monitoring the Dashboard can be discussed at the next committee meeting.
  - March 2022: Objective 2: Getting the Basics Right.
  - April 2022: Objective 4: Pathways and Objective 1: Systems Leadership to be discussed nearer the time.
- As the whole objective in terms of parental engagement and satisfaction had not been covered at the meeting, it was agreed that there will be a commentary on this at the same time as the other objectives are being discussed.
- The Director would like to attend Scrutiny meetings with health colleagues, who are contributing as much as they can, but this is being restricted because of Covid.

#### **ACTIONS:**

The update was noted, and the items and objectives for the next Scrutiny committee meetings were agreed.

## **6. SCHOOL ATTAINMENT AND SCHOOL ATTENDANCE (11.15 - 11.55)**

(See document No. 4)

Lisa Fraser, AD for Education and Early Years and Alan Michell, Head of Service for Admissions, Attendance, Exclusions and Pupil Tracking were in attendance for this item and gave the presentation. Officers emphasised that the data comes with significant health warnings and caveats because of the difficult and different times due to Covid. The presentation also focused on attainment at key stage four only because the DfE has only published key stage four. School improvement is delivered on behalf of the Council by the Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP).

Officers highlighted that they have put in a significant amount of effort and support into helping schools develop their outbreak management plans, and their health and safety arrangements, and they closely monitor absences due to Covid through the daily returns, and the absences in Birmingham schools have been lower than nationally.

During the discussion with Members the main points included:

- Exclusions will be discussed at the February committee meeting and there is more work that urgently needs to be done around primary exclusions.
- The fast track to attendance has a very clear process, and it is a staged approach, with schools being key as they lead on this.
- Legal action for school absences is the last resort and this is continually reviewed and evaluated to make allowances for the Covid context.
- Schools are expected to make provision for monitoring attendance through their budgets.
- The Council gives advice and consultancy around the general approach to attendance as well as individual cases, and there is a raft of information and guidance from the DfE that officers steer schools to access.
- There is a very clear policy for Children Missing Education (CME), where the child's whereabouts is unknown.
- It a requirement for all schools to make regular returns on part time timetables.
- There is a referral process if anyone is concerned that there has been any illegal activity with off rolling. This would then be investigated, and officers are pleased that the numbers are incredibly low.
- It is a particularly challenging time for schools in terms of the number of teachers who are isolating or who are absent due to Covid, and the outbreak management templates, which have been agreed with teaching unions, clearly outline the steps schools should take.

### **ACTION:**

The update was noted, and school exclusions will be discussed at the February committee meeting.

## **7. WORK PROGRAMME**

(See document No. 4)

The work programme was discussed, and the agenda items for the next committee meeting are:

- Birmingham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report.
- SEND Update: the dashboard to be discussed.
- School Exclusions: to include SEND exclusions and cross departmental work with SEND services to support this agenda.

Mental health is it to be discussed at the April committee meeting.

### **Actions:**

The work programme to be updated accordingly.

Members to e-mail the Chair and / or scrutiny officers if they want anything added.

## **8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 16 February 2022 at 1000 hours, and the Chair advised that she has had a discussion with Christian Scade, Interim Head of Scrutiny and Committee Services, and there may be a more suitable room available at the BMI, and whether they can have a safe face to face meeting, subject to government guidelines, will be explored.

## **9. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

None

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The meeting ended at 12.08 hours.