

Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 10 February 2016

Agenda item:

Wards: All

Subject: Update on Developments Affecting Children, Schools and Families Department

Lead officer: Yvette Stanley, Director of Children, Schools and Families Dept

Lead members: Cllr Maxi Martin, Cllr Martin Whelton

Forward Plan reference number: N/A

Contact officer: Paul Ballatt, Assistant Director, Commissioning, Strategy and Performance

Recommendations:

A. Members of the panel note the contents of the report.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. The report provides members of the panel with information on key developments affecting Children, Schools and Families Department since the panel's last meeting in January 2016.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1 Members of the panel will be aware of the bomb alerts which have disrupted schools in Merton, across London, nationally and in France. The schools affected in Merton included Raynes Park, Ursuline, Wimbledon College, Harris Merton, Ricards Lodge and Bishop Gilpin. These incidents clearly created anxiety and disruption although schools, the council and the police responded well together to minimise the impact on school communities. These alerts appear to have been a combination of co-ordinated recorded messages and copy cat hoaxes and Avon and Somerset Police have been asked to lead a national investigation. At a London level, the DCS is in close contact with senior colleagues in the Metropolitan Police to consider learning from these events and future responses. The council is also reviewing its guidance to schools on responding to critical incidents in light of the threats.
- 2.2 A number of school inspection reports have been published since the last update report. Perseid Special School has retained its rating of outstanding although Beecholme has received a judgement of inadequate. As is required by regulation, an academy sponsor will now need to be identified for the school and the council is working closely with the Department for Education towards this end. Parents and staff of the school have been kept fully informed. Officers are also examining closely the findings of the inspection to inform future school improvement activity.

- 2.3 Brightwell children's home has also received its regular inspection and although the report has not yet been received, verbal feedback on progress made since the last inspection was positive.
- 2.4 Yet another new inspection framework for children's services has been published by Ofsted. The Joint Targeted Area Inspection, to be undertaken jointly by Ofsted, CQC, HMIC and HMIP, will focus on the response by local agencies to all forms of child abuse, neglect and exploitation at the point of identification and will include a detailed examination of the functioning of Multi-agency Safeguarding Hubs, case tracking of assessment and planning activity, the effectiveness of protective responses and risk management and a thematic 'deep dive' into a particular area of safeguarding practice including for children at risk of child sexual exploitation, children missing from home, care or education. This inspection will not be rolled out nationally at this stage but will be undertaken on a risk basis or where a local authority area is thought to have particularly good practice in these issues. Merton is currently preparing a self evaluation and an evidence pack for this inspection.
- 2.5 Ofsted has also recently consulted local authorities on a new inspection framework to examine local areas' effectiveness in identifying and meeting the needs of disabled children and young people and those who have special educational needs. This framework is likely to go live from Spring 2016 and Merton will, as ever, prepare prudently.
- 2.6 The council is currently holding a consultation on school admissions arrangements for 2016-17. Views are being sought on a number of potential changes to arrangements and details of these proposed changes and rationale are contained at **Appendix One**.
- 2.7 Central government has indicated that the Troubled Families Grant to Local Authorities, which Merton has used to implement the successful Transforming Families programme locally, will be reduced in 2016-17. Although details have not yet been provided, officers have been planning to enable the service to be sustained, albeit with lower capacity. Because of the effectiveness of the service to date, the council has been provided with additional funding in the current year. Future funding for the service will be supported by continuing payment by results from central government. In the last few years, the Transforming Families service has been a key element of our approach to minimise the escalation of need for young people who are at risk of entering local authority care or who are engaged in significant criminal/ anti-social behaviour. It is anticipated that the service will retain its focus on these young people in future years.
- 2.8 The department is currently refreshing its Target Operating Model (TOM) documentation which is supporting the next phase of our service transformation and the delivery of the savings the department is required to make over the next two to three years. In addition to an overarching departmental level document, specific TOM documents are being refreshed in respect of early years and children's centres; education and preventive and statutory integrated services. Key elements of the department's approach include reviewing thresholds for services and focusing resources on our statutory duties; streamlining access points for service users; increasing use of new technology to improve efficiency where possible; delivering service

specific change projects; reviewing the department's property needs and refreshing our workforce strategy. Significant re-organisation of the department's functions will also be required. The panel has already received details of some of the major project work in process or planned to deliver our TOMs and further updates can be provided at later meetings.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1 None for the purposes of this report.

4. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

4.1 None for the purposes of this report.

5. TIMETABLE

5.1 N/A

6. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 No specific implications from this report.

7. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 No specific implications from this report..

8. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

8.1 No specific implications from this report.

9. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1 No specific implications from this report.

10. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 No specific implications from this report..

11. APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

11.1 N/A

BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1 None

