

CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND FAMILIES PDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 6.30 pm on 10 November 2020

Present:

Councillor Nicky Dykes (Chairman)
Councillor Judi Ellis (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Marina Ahmad, Yvonne Bear, Kevin Brooks,
Robert Evans, Christine Harris, Neil Reddin FCCA and
Will Rowlands

Reverend Roger Bristow
Emmanuel Arbenser
Angela Leeves

Also Present:

Councillor Peter Fortune, Portfolio Holder for Children, Education &
Families
Councillor Kieran Terry, Executive Assistant for Children, Education &
Families

14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Joan McConnell and David Hullah.

15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no additional declarations of interest.

16 MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION, CHILDREN & FAMILIES PDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 8 SEPTEMBER 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 8th September 2020, were agreed and signed as a correct record.

17 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING THE MEETING

A number of questions had been received and these are attached at Annex A

18 MATTERS OUTSTANDING AND WORK PROGRAMME Report CSD20117

The report set out the Committee's work programme for 2020/21.

The Chairman invited Councillor Neil Reddin to provide an overview from the recent meeting of the Budget Task and Finish Group.

Councillor Reddin advised Members that, following the budget discussions held earlier in the year, the Group had met to consider elements such as demand, costs and funding.

In relation to placements and safeguarding, it was noted that around 47% of cases received by the Local Authority were deemed to require “no further action”, which officers advised was the expected level. There would always be a need to balance budgetary discipline with the best interests of the children. Referrals were received via several different channels, but this was becoming more manageable than it had been in previous years. With regards to the cost of placements, foster care had always been an issue, however the establishment of the West London Alliance had been of benefit and was working well.

Permanent staffing in the department had increased to 86%. This was extremely positive given that it had previously been at only 42%, and it was highlighted that agency costs could be up to £20k more than the cost of a permanent member of staff. The Local Authority’s caseload promise was a key non-financial factor in respect of both the recruitment and retention of permanent staff. However, the Borough had a flat management structure, which although easier to work under, may not allow as many opportunities for career progression.

Other areas considered had been external funding and the possible role of a contingency fund. A contingency fund was currently been used within the Housing Department, and they would look at how this idea could be progressed. It was noted that the Troubled Families Initiatives was also working very well. It had been suggested that work be undertaken in relation to benchmarking and using the results to inform future decision making.

Councillor Yvonne Bear advised Members that although permanent staffing had increased to 86%, the recruitment drive would continue. It was noted that the benchmarking exercise would allow the Local Authority to crudely see how its costs compared with other boroughs and identify other possible areas for service transformation.

The Task and Finish Group would meet again in January 2021, the date for which was still to be confirmed.

The Committee also noted the need to set a further date for the Youth Engagement Task and Finish Group.

The Chairman confirmed that going forward the Committee would receive interim reports for key areas such as Adoption and Fostering, Private Fostering Arrangements, and the Virtual School.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

19 PORTFOLIO HOLDER UPDATE

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families, Cllr Peter Fortune, attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Committee. The Portfolio Holder gave a brief introduction highlighting the following:-

- Children across the Borough had returned to schools and the Council had worked closely with schools to ensure that the return had been smooth. The Committee were reassured that there was a constant flow of information between schools and the Local Authority. The Portfolio Holder expressed his thanks to schools for all the work they had done and were continuing to do to ensure that schools could remain open and provide children with the best possible education.
- In Bromley, supporting and safeguarding the most vulnerable children was a top priority. Ensuring that vulnerable families received appropriate care and support, both directly from Council services and from our partner agencies during term time and school holidays. The Department was proud of its approach to supporting vulnerable families and providing early help, which had been recognised by Ofsted as a 'significant strength'.
- Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, Bromley Council had prioritised disadvantaged and vulnerable families. From the start of lockdown, almost overnight, a shielding and assistance programme was established to ensure that isolated and vulnerable families had access to support and essentials, including food and medicines.
- Those families known to the Local Authority, continued to be supported via support services and activities including through use of grant funding together with specific Government funding. This support continued throughout the year including holiday periods.
- For any family that is experiencing hardship the LA would use its statutory power under Section 17 of the Children Act to provide financial assistance in terms of goods and services to safeguard and promote a child's welfare, and to prevent children entering the care of the Local Authority. Support was provided as appropriate to each child's needs in relation to essentials which although not exclusive to food could include it.
- Food had also been provided to care leavers as well as funded activities to reduce their isolation whilst being Covid-19 safe. Support had also been provided to foster carers and special guardians to support children in their care with their mental health and wellbeing - to prevent foster placements and special guardianship placements from breaking down during the current pandemic.

- There had been an increase in demand for the in-house therapy service (THRIVE) which had provided extra practical equipment to support the sessions undertaken with children and their carers.
- For many families who had children with complex behavioural needs including complex disabilities, activities and short breaks together with food had been provided. These families had not been able to access the usual respite care provided by Bromley Healthcare due to Covid-19 and the redeployment of health staff and it was clear that the DEFRA funding had made a substantial difference.
- Grant funds had benefitted many families where parents had found themselves unemployed or furloughed. For many families this had made the difference to their resilience, supporting coping strategies and preventing a further increase in either the Council's care population or the numbers of children subject to a child protection plan.
- Those parents in need of extra support were encouraged to call the MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) helpline so their call could be screened to ensure they received the correct support. The Portfolio Holder explained that individuals often rung for one thing when actually, in conversation with a qualified social worker, the reason was discovered to be different. For example, someone could ring the number asking for advice but actually trying to report abuse, domestic violence or mental health concerns.
- The Early Intervention and Family Support Service had continued to offer support to families throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Initially the 6 Children and Families Centres (CFC) closed for 2 weeks but had been open since and offered a broad range of services across the Borough. All work with families was arranged in advance by an appointment booking system. Some of the work offered and undertaken included:
 - Facebook and Instagram further developed and used to keep families in contact with a wide range of services, activities and support options.
 - Learn and Play developed to meet the Covid-19 safety requirements – operating in Covid- 19 safe 'bubbles' of families depending on the size of the space being used.
 - Healthy Early Years London Silver Awards have been achieved across all six CFCs during this period.
 - Introduction of Light Touch Assessment for Children and Family Centre Support Officers to better understand and support families on their caseloads to ensure better outcomes for families.
 - Family Support Parenting Practitioners (FSPP) had undertaken face to face visits with appropriate PPE; in the family home, the CFC, Schools and other community venues both inside and outside in accordance with COVID safe practice guidance. FSPP undertook virtual visits when it was not deemed safe to undertake face to face visits and had developed creative ways to undertake direct work for virtual visits.

- Domestic Violence Abuse Butterfly cards – 10,000 produced and circulated across wider partner workforce for giving to victims/survivors.
- Parenting online developed – advertised by word of mouth and Facebook /Instagram and emails to colleagues and partner agencies.
- Parenting Workshops online for our PRU school site at Midfield Way, Orpington.
- Regular visits and support to Traveller Sites continued. This included ad- hoc door-stop drops of activity sets for children.
- The CAF team continued to host / chair 'Team Around the Child' meetings both virtually and face to face with the use of PPE where schools have put in place Covid- 19 safety measures.
- CAF team continuing to deliver training virtually.
- In addition, Children and Family Centers had Issued Foodbank Vouchers, provided activities, resources and Healthy Start Vitamin door-stop drops;
- The Council's work with vulnerable children and families continued all year round and, whilst the Department was period of what it had already achieved, it was ambitious to improve.
- The recent announcement from the Government concerning the provision of funding for meals during the holiday was welcomed and the Council awaited further details which would be relayed to the Committee when it was available along with plans concerning how the department would use the funding. This would further add to the existing package of support.
- The Portfolio Holder thanked the community and partner agencies for the support that they had provided.

Cllr Fortune then responded to questions making the following comments:-

- It was clear that going forward, there would be a whole set of new challenges for the Department to overcome and there was now a need to look forward and identify innovative ways of addressing these challenges.
- The most important consideration was that vulnerable families were received the support they required and were treated as individual units.
- The funding received from DEFRA had been spent in line with the conditions of the grant.
- The Council had a clear plan on how issues would be managed going forward. Arrangements were in place that would facilitate close partnership working. Vulnerable children and families were the key focus for the Department.
- Throughout the pandemic schools had worked incredibly hard to support children. During the summer holiday staff had worked tirelessly to ensure that buildings were Covid secure. There was clear evidence that appropriate arrangements had been put in place and where there had been local outbreaks of Covid-19 these had been well

managed.

The Committee thanked the Portfolio Holder for the update.

**20 CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND FAMILIES PORTFOLIO PLAN 2018
TO 2022 UPDATE - QUARTER 2 2020/21
Report CEF20027**

The report presented the Quarter 2 updates of the Children, Education and Families Portfolio Plan 2018-22.

In response to a question concerning the action being taken to address the gap in attainment resulting from the closure of schools due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Director of Education noted that this was an area of concern nationally. Locally, there was a need to ensure that children had not fallen further behind and where there were gaps in attainment the focus of schools was on closing the gap and continuing the good work that had already been taking place before the period of school closure.

The Committee noted that schools in Bromley were doing an excellent job in addressing the gap in attainment. However, it was clear that a one-off intervention was not going to be sufficient and that ongoing intensive work would be required. The Director of Education formally recorded his thanks to Bromley Schools for the excellent work they were doing to already address the gap in attainment and whilst there was still lots more to be done solid progress was already being made.

The Portfolio Holder highlighted that there was a keen awareness of those children who were not reaching their full potential in terms of attainment and efforts to protect children in their education was ongoing.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

**21 PRE DECISION SCRUTINY OF DECISIONS FOR THE CHILDREN,
EDUCATION & FAMILIES PORTFOLIO HOLDER**

The Committee considered the following reports where the Children, Education and Families Portfolio Holder was recommended to take a decision:

**A BUDGET MONITORING 2020/21
Report CEF20034**

The report provided the budget monitoring position for 2020/21 based on activity up to the end of September 2020.

RESOLVED: That the Portfolio Holder be recommended to:

- 1. Note that the latest projected overspend of £1,792,000 is forecast on the controllable budget, based on information as at September**

2020;

- 2. Agree to the release of the carry forward funding as set out in section 5 of the report.**

22 PRE DECISION SCRUTINY OF REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE LEADER

The Committee considered the following report where the was recommended to take a decision:

A CONTRACT AWARD: BROMLEY COMMUNITY WELLBEING (CAMHS) Report CEF20030A

The mental health and emotional wellbeing of children was as important as their physical health. Good mental health allowed children and young people (CYP) to develop the resilience to cope with whatever life threw at them and grow into well-rounded, healthy adults. This statutory service had been procured to ensure that Bromley's children and young people were supported with a service that promoted, supported and protected positive mental health and wellbeing.

The current service was delivered by Bromley Y who had held the contract for the service since 2014. The existing contract had reached its maximum number of extensions, with the final extension ending in March 2021, necessitating the procurement of the new service. On 10th July 2019 2019, Executive had given approval to proceed to procurement of the community mental health and wellbeing service, to enable continuity of provision via a new contract with revised specification from 1 April 2021 as detailed in Gateway Report ECH19067.

In accordance with the Council's financial and contractual requirements, the report set out the results of the tendering process and sought the Leader's approval to award the contract. The report should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Part 2 Report.

In response to a question concerning what could be done to make the referral process more effective, the Interim CAHMS Commissioner explained that the key starting point was establishing a uniform and universally valid message shared through the professional system (including education, primary care and the voluntary sector) setting out the pathways for accessing services. The new service model included a universally available single point of access which would assess referrals into the system (regardless of how they were made) and develop an indicative management plan. Irrespective of how the referral was managed there would be a support package available to service users upon referral which would provide information and links to other resources available, with the aim of supporting service users in managing and maintaining their own mental health and wellbeing It was envisaged that the

new model would lead to a higher take up of services across all communities across the Borough.

RESOLVED: That the Leader be recommended to Award the Contract for the provision of the Bromley CYP Mental Health and Wellbeing Service as detailed in the accompanying Part 2 Report. The proposed contract will commence on 1st April 2021 for a five-year period with the option to exercise the two possible extension periods not exceeding 4 years (2 years + 2 years).

**23 BROMLEY SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL
REPORT 2019-20
Report CEF20031**

The annual report of the Bromley Safeguarding Children's Partnership (BSCP) covered the period from April 2019 to March 2020. It was a statutory requirement for safeguarding partnerships to publish this report under Working Together 2018. In line with statutory guidance and best practice, the report would be submitted to the Chief Executive, Leader of the Council, the local police and crime commissioner and the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care.

The Independent Chairman of the Bromley Safeguarding Partnership introduced the report explaining that it had been a year of transition for the Partnership. The Committee noted that the Safeguarding Partnership's response to the Covid-19 pandemic had been a positive, although it has been a difficult period.. The challenges posed by the pandemic had forced partners to use technology in a way that was unimaginable only a year ago. The report in the agenda pack outlined the work and reviews undertaken by the Partnership during the year. As the Partnership neared the end of the reporting year it had recognised that it was going into a crisis scenario in terms of the Covid-19 pandemic and had taken action to test contingencies, meeting with key partners from statutory and non-statutory sectors and focusing on an agenda around the health and wellbeing of the work force and trends around issues emerging from the lack of line of sight created by the pandemic.

The Committee noted that one of the key achievements was the ability of the Partnership to create a 'lessons learnt' paper in the early weeks of the first lockdown which provided an overview of the early and emerging themes. It was recognised that it may have been helpful to have shared this paper more broadly, including with PDS. These lessons learnt had also been used to develop a minimum standards survey around planning by partners for a potential second wave.

The Partnership was now giving consideration to a more collaborative approach to scrutiny of safeguarding arrangements and was looking to chair a bi-annual Scrutiny Board.

The Chairman of the Safeguarding Partnership, in response to a question, noted that within some partner organisations there had been a tremendous turnover of staff which had contributed to uncertainty within the Partnership. Levels of attendance at meetings were now improving, and this was something that was closely monitored and challenged.

Members of the Committee were reminded of the risks that came with the exponential increase in the use of technology and social media arising from the impact of the pandemic. Almost everyone now had a greater online presence and with this came threats to those more vulnerable members of society which should not be ignored. Members of the Committee were encouraged to download the Safer Schools App that had been developed by the Partnership as this provided helpful advice and guidance regarding online safety.

In terms of whether more could be done by elected representatives, the Chairman of the Safeguarding Partnership emphasised that there was always more that could be done. Going forward, more effective collaboration would be useful. The Committee also noted the importance of the direct line of sight from the Council's leadership. The BSCP Independent Chair and the Chairman discussed the value of a PDS Chair attending the new bi-annual Scrutiny Board. The BSCP Independent Chair agreed to send the Chairman details of the first meeting and Terms of Reference.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

24 UPDATE ON THE STRATEGIC REVIEW OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL PROVISION Report CEF20019

The report provided an update on the actions taken to respond to the findings and recommendations from the Strategic Review of Alternative Provision (November 2019).

The Director of Education introduced the report explaining that the review of alternative provision had been undertaken in order to identify what more could be done to support those children that may require alternative provision within the finite funding envelope that was available. Members noted that Bromley schools had been fully engaged throughout the process of the review, recognising it as an area of key priority. The Director of Education highlighted the importance of earlier intervention and outreach support, ensuring that support was provided to children where there was potential placement breakdown which would lead to a risk of school exclusion. Members also noted the importance of the principle of the money following the child. Ensuring the availability of resources to support a child where there was a possibility that they may need an onward journey and a fresh start at a new

school. Finally, the Committee recognised the importance of reintegration, ensuring the availability of effective intervention for children who did require alternative provision so they could be reintroduced, with appropriate support, to mainstream education if appropriate.

In response to a question the Director of Education confirmed that the review was one way the Local Authority was seeking to respond to the high number of secondary permanent exclusions within the Borough however the review aimed to go much further than that. There was a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) around primary and secondary exclusions and the Director of Education confirmed that the expectation was that there would be a reduction in the levels of exclusions across the Borough as a result of the interventions arising from the review. Performance data was reported to the Committee on a quarterly basis and as a result of the commitment demonstrated by secondary school leaders the Director was confident that there would be a reduction in rates of permanent exclusions from secondary schools.

Members noted that the interventions planned for addressing secondary exclusions would build upon the successful work that had been implemented in response to previously unacceptably high levels of primary exclusions including outreach support which could take a number of forms. The Committee noted that a Secondary Outreach Programme had already been commissioned.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

25 PERFORMANCE REPORTING - CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY DATASET **Report CEF20026A**

The report presented the regular update on the performance of services for children.

Members expressed concerns around the ongoing pressures around social worker caseloads and it was agreed that following the meeting the Committee would be received a comprehensive update setting out the many initiatives being implemented to address caseloads, details of the current rates of social worker retention, and where available comparative data for other London Boroughs to set the London context.

The Chairman noted that social worker caseloads represented a challenge for a number of local authorities and within the context of London, Bromley's had a high rate of permanent staff (with a number of services within Children's Social Care that had 100% permanent staff) and comparatively low caseloads.

In relation to the indicator of the timeliness of Education, Care and Health Plans (ECHPs), the Committee noted that the performance indicator had moved from red to amber. During the Covid-19 pandemic the Council had legal powers to use exceptions to the Children and Families Act and these had been used very sparingly and only where appropriate (for example when

it had not be possible to receive the professional advice from partners in time to complete the assessment). Performance on the indicator had improve despite the challenges presented in recent months. Further investment had been made and there was now a specific team in place to undertake new assessments and two teams undertook annual reviews for those children that had an ECHP. The Director of Education highlighted the exponential increase in the level of need experienced in terms of ECHPs. The requests for assessments were themselves increasing at an increasing rate with a roughly 14% year-on-year increase in the numbers of ECHPs leading to significant pressures. For some time the DfE SEND Review had been expected and was currently delayed due to Covid-19, however it was hoped that there would be some system changes that would seek to address the challenges faced by every local authority.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and that an update around social worker caseloads and staff retention be provided to the Committee following the meeting.

**26 EXPENDITURE ON CONSULTANTS 2019/20 AND 2020/21
Report CSD20110**

At its meeting on 8th October 2020, the Executive, Resources and Contracts PDS Committee considered a report on expenditure on consultants across all Council departments for both revenue and capital budgets. The Committee requested that the report be considered by all PDS Committees.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

27 EDUCATION INFORMATION ITEMS

The Children, Education & Families PDS Information Briefing comprised one item:

- Children's Services Risk Register
- Children, Education and Families Contracts Register and Contracts Database
- PART 2 Children, Education and Families Contracts Register and Contracts Database

RESOLVED: that the Information Briefing be noted.

28 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) (VARIATION) ORDER 2006, AND THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded during consideration of the items of business listed below as it was likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if

members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information.

**The following summaries
refer to matters involving exempt information**

**29 EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN, EDUCATION & FAMILIES
PDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 8 SEPTEMBER 2020**

The exempt minutes of the Children, Education and Families PDS Committee meeting held on 8 September 2020, were agreed and signed as a correct record.

**30 PRE DECISION SCRUTINY OF PART 2 (EXEMPT) EXECUTIVE
REPORTS**

The Committee considered the following Part 2 (exempt) report where the was recommended to take a decision:

**A PART 2 CONTRACT AWARD: BROMLEY COMMUNITY
WELLBEING (CAMHS)**

The Committee noted the Part 2 information contained within the report.

**31 UPDATE ON THE STRATEGIC REVIEW OF ALTERNATIVE
EDUCATIONAL PROVISION PART 2 APPENDIX**

The Committee noted the Part 2 information contained within the report.

32 PART 2 EDUCATION INFORMATION ITEMS

The Committee noted the Part 2 reports within the information briefing.

**33 PART 2 PERFORMANCE REPORTING - CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY
DATASET**

The Committee noted the Part 2 information contained within the report.

The Meeting ended at 8.35 pm

Chairman

Children, Education and Families PDS Committee 10th November 2020

Agenda Item 4b– Questions to the Portfolio Holder

Questions from Alisa Igoe

1. Will Bromley Council join the campaign run by Marcus Rashford, FareShareUK and supported by numerous Councils and Local Authorities across the country and Bromley businesses, in providing Free School Meals during the holidays for children attending Bromley schools?
2. Could you please tell us how many school children attending Bromley schools are entitled to Free School Meals and how many of these children claim and eat those meals.

Reply:

1. In addition to the support already provided by Bromley services, the Government has announced funding will be provided to the Council for the Covid Winter Grant Scheme to provide further food and support for families over the holiday periods. Details are awaited
2. 5,896 at Spring Census 2020. The take up of FSM data is held by individual academies and is understood to be high in Bromley.

Question from Natasha Crawford

What specific provisions are going to be put in place for children at risk of food poverty outside of term time while we are in the midst of a global pandemic? Despite confirming that FSM vouchers/ provisions will not be provided in the October 2020 half term break, no further detailed information on specific provisions in lieu of this are detailed on your website. 4,500 children claimed free school meals in 2019 and more than 20% of children in Bromley live in poverty – figures that are likely to increase as a consequence of the pandemic.

Reply:

In addition to the support already provided by Bromley services, the Government has announced funding will be provided to the Council for the Covid Winter Grant Scheme to provide further food and support for families over the holiday periods. Details are awaited

Question from Ric Piper

Please could you explain - Why are you not supporting Free School Meals during holidays?

Reply:

Bromley Council is providing a range of support to children and families in the borough both in and out of term time.

This includes; short breaks for disabled children, including food; issuing of vouchers to families; food and emotional support to care leavers; utilising Section 17 powers to support families in hardship including support for emotional wellbeing for families.

We are committed to supporting vulnerable children and their families all year round and are proud of the range of support that we provide. Further details of some of the support on offer can be found on Bromley's website at the following link:

https://www.bromley.gov.uk/press/article/1691/support_for_vulnerable_children_and_families_all_year_round.

In addition to the support already provided by Bromley services, the Government has announced funding will be provided to the Council for the Covid Winter Grant Scheme to provide further food and support for families over the holiday periods. Details are awaited.

Questions from Sian Stickings

1. Given the fact that the Covid-19 pandemic has drastically cut the income of many parents, will Bromley Council join the campaign initiated by Marcus Rashford, and supported by numerous charities, and extend the provision of Free School Meals during the holidays for the duration of the pandemic?
2. How many children attending Bromley schools are currently registered to receive Free School Meals in term time, and what is the equivalent pre-pandemic figure?

Reply:

1. Bromley Council is providing a range of support to children and families in the borough both in and out of term time.

This includes; short breaks for disabled children, including food; issuing of vouchers to families; food and emotional support to care leavers; utilising Section 17 powers to support families in hardship including support for emotional wellbeing for families.

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In addition to the support already provided by Bromley services, the Government has announced funding will be provided to the Council for the Covid Winter Grant Scheme to provide further food and support for families over the holiday periods. Details are awaited.

2. There were 5,896 pupils eligible for a free school meal at the Spring 2020 Census i.e. January 2020 data. Updated data will not be available until the Autumn Census is published.

Questions from Verity Susman

1. How much would it cost Bromley Council to extend free school meals to cover a one week school holiday?
2. Exactly what amount (both the percentage proportion and financial sum) of Bromley Council's allocation from the Government's £63 million local welfare assistance fund has been spent on feeding children in receipt of free school meals during the holidays?

Reply:

1. To provide all eligible children with a voucher at £2.30 per day would cost the Council £68k per week. To provide a voucher of £15 per week would cost £88k per week. The Council has not received sufficient funds from Government to meet the cost of free meals in the October half term.

In addition to the support already provided by Bromley services, the Government has announced funding will be provided to the Council for the Covid Winter Grant Scheme to provide further food and support for families over the holiday periods. Details are awaited.

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2. Children Social Care received 160K funding from 279K Defra funding which was not specified for free meals which is indicative of the fact that the funding had to be spent **before** half term. Breakdown as follows:

Short Breaks for Children with Disabilities where the overnight and health provision was closed due to C19 – this money was available to increase care packages to support parents i.e. extra carers going into family homes etc.

£100,000

Staffing/Training £30,000

Equipment for children £18,000

Activities for children £7,000

Food/Vouchers for children £5,000

Assistance and Shielding Support - £119,000

Questions from Laura Vogel

1. How is Bromley Council ensuring children in low-wage and disadvantaged households are receiving enough nutritional sustenance during school holidays?
2. Will the Council explain the impact holiday hunger has on children in education settings, both children affected by hunger and other students in the classroom, and does the Council agree that Bromley residents are best served when school children are all fully nourished so schools can focus on learning?

Reply:

Bromley Council is providing a range of support to children and families in the borough both in and out of term time.

This includes; short breaks for disabled children, including food; issuing of vouchers to families; food and emotional support to care leavers; utilising Section 17 powers to support families in hardship including support for emotional wellbeing for families.

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Questions from Erica Short

Given the government have voted not to extend free school meals over the school holidays, and that they have indicated that councils have been allocated resources to ensure children are adequately fed over school holidays, could the committee please outline how those resources have been allocated, how those eligible for free school meals have been targeted, and how they plan to address this in the Christmas holiday?

Reply:

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Questions from Rachel Davis

Please could the Committee state whether it is their intention to provide meals to school children who receive free school meals during half term and the Christmas holidays?

Reply:

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This includes; short breaks for disabled children, including food; issuing of vouchers to families; food and emotional support to care leavers; utilising Section 17 powers to support families in hardship including support for emotional wellbeing for families.

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In addition to the support already provided by Bromley services, the Government has announced funding will be provided to the Council for the Covid Winter Grant Scheme to provide further food and support for families over the holiday periods. Details are awaited.

Questions from Carol Denyer

The government have unequivocally told the public that they have allocated local authorities with funds to provide food poverty support for school aged children over the half term. Could you inform the public, the first instance

- (a) were these funds ringfenced?
- (b) how much was LBoF allocated? and
- (c) how was this allocation spent?

Reply:

1. Bromley Council is providing a range of support to children and families in the borough both in and out of term time.

This includes; short breaks for disabled children, including food; issuing of vouchers to families; food and emotional support to care leavers; utilising Section 17 powers to support families in hardship including support for emotional wellbeing for families

We are committed to supporting vulnerable children and their families all year round and are proud of the range of support that we provide. Further details of some of the support on offer can be found on Bromley's website at the following link:

https://www.bromley.gov.uk/press/article/1691/support_for_vulnerable_children_and_families_all_year_round.

In addition to the support already provided by Bromley services, the Government has announced funding will be provided to the Council for the Covid Winter Grant Scheme to provide further food and support for families over the holiday periods. Details are awaited.

- a) Children's Social Care (CSC) received 160K funding from 279K Defra funding which was not specified for free meals which is indicative of the fact that the funding had to be spent **before** half term.
- b) £279k – 160K to CSC

c) Breakdown as follows:

Short Breaks for Children with Disabilities where the overnight and health provision was closed due to C19 – this money was available to increase care packages to support parents i.e. extra carers going into family homes etc. £100,000
Staffing/Training £30,000
Equipment for children £18,000
Activities for children £7,000
Food/Vouchers for children £5,000
Assistance and Shielding Support - £119,000

Questions from Emma Martin, Chair, Bromley Brighter Beginnings

- 1) Will you extend the Bromley Welfare Fund so that it is not limited to people in the first six weeks in a new home?
- 2) Will you increase the funding available to domestic abuse refuges in the borough?

Reply:

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- 1) The Bromley Welfare Fund is accessed by Early Intervention and Family Support for white goods / beds etc. We access other grants also if a family require essential items unavailable from such means. CSC will assess the need and provide such items where need is identified.
- 2) Yes. We hold a contract with Bromley, Croydon Women's Aid who provide services for those who are experiencing and fleeing from domestic violence. In response to the Covid Pandemic we worked with BCWA to ensure that they could access any additional support required and that residents could remain in situ for an extended period of time. We have recently extended the contract for a further 12 months in order to ensure that the service provision can be maintained effectively during these very uncertain times. As part of the contract extension BCWA requested a small financial uplift and this was agreed.

Questions from Sarah Buck

I am asking why you do not support giving poor children in Bromley free meals during the school holidays during this pandemic? So many parents have suddenly found themselves unemployed and unable to feed their families.

Reply:

Bromley Council is providing a range of support to children and families in the borough both in and out of term time.

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In addition to the support already provided by Bromley services, the Government has announced funding will be provided to the Council for the Covid Winter Grant Scheme to provide further food and support for families over the holiday periods. Details are awaited

Questions from Zoe Knight

1. Has the government given specific funding to councils for free school meal funding in the holidays?
2. If not can Bromley council fund the free school meal scheme for Bromley children.

Reply:

1. No
2. Bromley Council is providing a range of support to children and families in the borough both in and out of term time.

This includes; short breaks for disabled children, including food; issuing of vouchers to families; food and emotional support to care leavers; utilising Section 17 powers to support families in hardship including support for emotional wellbeing for families.

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In addition to the support already provided by Bromley services, the Government has announced funding will be provided to the Council for the Covid Winter Grant Scheme to provide further food and support for families over the holiday periods. Details are awaited.

Questions from Julie Ireland

1. What would the cost to the council be to provided all children who normally receive free school meals with a voucher for support with food costs during half term?
2. How much money has Bromley Council received from central government to support children in half term who normally receive free school meals and how was this spent?

Reply:

1. To provide all eligible children with a voucher at £2.30 per day would cost the Council £68k per week. To provide a voucher of £15 per week would cost £88k per week. The Council has not received sufficient funds from Government to meet the cost of free school meals in the October half term and Christmas holiday periods.

Bromley Council is providing a range of support to children and families in the borough both in and out of term time.

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2. No funding received for this specific purpose

Questions from Amanda Stone

1. As Bromley Borough Foodbank was able to help support the council to meet the needs of food and toiletry support to those experiencing financial crisis during this pandemic, what is the long-term council plan for the probable increased and deeper level of need for 2020 - 2021"
2. Using data provided by government, social services and charities, how likely is there to be an accessible financial welfare assistance plan within Bromley to ensure that people can gain access to emergency funds required due to the effects and economic difficulties arising from Covid19?

Reply:

Bromley Council is providing a range of support to children and families in the borough both in and out of term time.

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In addition to the support already provided by Bromley services, the Government has announced funding will be provided to the Council for the Covid Winter Grant Scheme to provide further food and support for families over the holiday periods. Details are awaited

The long term impact of Covid-19 is not yet known, but we would expect needs to increase. In addition to the Bromley Council services, the DWP who have set up hubs to support and ensure grants available.

Bromley Council will continue to signpost to support available in the community, as we do now.

Questions from Sarah Jowett

1. How many additional children in Bromley have become eligible for FSM since March?

2. How much money have the council spent on feeding Bromley children between March 1st 2020 and October 31st 2020?

Reply:

1. Data will not be available until the publication of the Autumn Census 2020.
2. It is not possible to disaggregate this data.

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In addition to the support already provided by Bromley services, the Government has announced funding will be provided to the Council for the Covid Winter Grant Scheme to provide further food and support for families over the holiday periods. Details are awaited.

Question from Cllr Marina Ahmad - relating to Item 8a (Contract Award: Bromley Community Wellbeing (CAMHS))

What steps are being taken to ensure that BAME young people access and receive the same level of mental health and wellbeing services as other young people in the borough?

Reply:

Health inequalities as experienced by BAME and other communities and groups are a priority in the mental health and emotional wellbeing agenda, and it is essential that health systems and individual commissioners across the system and providers delivering services ensure that they do all in their power to advance equalities within physical and mental health service delivery.

Health inequalities have serious impacts on different communities including BAME and these impacts have been exacerbated by Covid 19. This is especially important with mental health services where there are obvious and

pervasive negative societal attitudes to mental health and wellbeing. Whilst the service will be universal in scope, and accessible to all children and young people in Bromley, the service will seek to target those children and young people in Bromley recognised as being at higher risk of having mental health and emotional wellbeing challenges, including CYP from BAME communities.

The specific needs of Bromley communities, including BAME communities are outlined in Section 1 of the specification which sets out the context and imperatives for the work including the Government's Green Paper, NHS Long Term Plan and the ongoing impacts of the current Covid 19 pandemic situation.

The revised specification at the heart of the ongoing procurement process builds upon existing provision with a refocussing of the offer for CYP from communities that may experience particular challenges or need to have their access and communication needs addressed. Some communities may themselves have a highly negative view of mental health issues and be uncomfortable in discussing and addressing mental health and wellbeing issues and accordingly there is a strong emphasis in the new service model to explicitly call out stigmatising attitudes, assumptions and behaviours.

As has been reported both nationally and regionally the current Covid 19 situation has had very specific and damaging impacts on BAME communities, visible, most notably, through the disproportionate mortality figures experienced by BAME communities. Section 1 of the specification notes: "In June 2020 Professor Kevin Fenton noted in the Public Health England report on the impacts of Covid 19 on Black and Minority Ethnic communities that "It is clear from discussions with stakeholders that COVID-19 in their view did not create health inequalities, but rather the pandemic exposed and exacerbated longstanding inequalities affecting BAME groups in the UK....There is a legal duty and moral responsibility to reduce inequalities."

Accordingly, the service specification addresses the issues raised above in a number of ways:

1 Service Delivery Model – THRIVE The core clinical model is derived from the Anna Freud Centre's THRIVE programme has a "needs based" rather than "tiered service offer" approach and recognises at its core that the individual life experiences, contexts, assets and challenges of individuals are a result of the subtle and gross interactions between innate characteristics (including culture, race and economic status, communication and access needs including disability and ESOL requirements) are central for an assets based approach to assessment and care.

These challenges can include issues arising from awareness of and attitude to available services, prior experiences of service offers, confidence in presenting and requesting care, and attitudes of care providers.

The specification is explicit on the need to engage with and support a diverse range of communities including but not limited to Tackling Stigma, Suicide prevention, awareness of service offer, Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing

(MHEW) for BAME, LGBTQ groups, CYP with SEND, CYP with Neurodiverse needs, CLA, care leavers, fostering and a range of other activities aimed at improving the local population's awareness of and ability to cope with MHEW issues.

2 Universal Proportionalism Alongside this the specification is clear on the need to develop an offer in line with Sir Michael Marmot's Institute for Health Equity's "Universally Proportional" delivery ethos to ensure that communities who experience additional barriers to access, engagement and support receive additional targeted support alongside generic service delivery that encourages and supports engagement from as wide a spectrum of communities as possible. This will ensure that CYP from BAME communities are as empowered and supported to access the service offer as other groups and specifically targeted with supportive outreach works.

3 Values Based Recruitment to ensure over time that the service workforce "is drawn from individuals who are representative of those communities in line with our shared Equality Duty."

4 Service Leadership: the specification is explicit in its requirement for named service leadership responsible for shaping and driving works with priority groups, and ensuring the offer for these groups is strengthened through the identification of service leaders for the following core cohorts/agendas: Safeguarding, CYP with SEND/Neurodiversity requirements, Children Looked After/Care Leavers, CYP from BAME communities

5 Communication Support: The service specification is clear on the need to meet the wide potential range of communication and wider access requirements including but not limited to CYP from BAME communities who may have English as a second or Other language, alongside the wide range of needs arising from neurodiverse and disability issues.

6 Engagement, participation and co-production: Engagement is a central requirement for the ongoing development and effectiveness of the service and is achieved through a number of mechanisms including the co-produced annual Service Iteration Plan and the explicit requirement to ensure that CYP from BAME communities are included in the co-production exercise. The specification states: "It is essential that the co-production mechanism takes into account the different needs and communication and learning requirements of CYP, Parents and carers across a wider range of different needs, including the priority cohorts of vulnerable CYP (linking SEND, neurodiverse, LGHBT, children looked after and care leavers and CYP from BAME communities. Without appropriate planning, engagement tools and specialist insights they will remain *"Seldom Heard and Seldom Seen"*. The service must ensure appropriate planning and capacity are available to support works with these groups, in either general engagement and communication works or as targeted cohorts linked to specific areas

7 Service Iteration Plan: As mentioned in 5 above, the service must deliver an annual co-produced SIP, with the first one required by May 2022 focussing on

the development of the 0 to 25 extended age group offer that flows from the NHS Long Term Plan. This will have a significant impact on the way in which transitions into adult services are managed. The negative experiences of CYP from BAME communities are well understood.¹ and we have an opportunity to develop a sustainable, high quality and effective transition solution as a core component of the new service age range requirement

8 Digital Offer: The communication, language and neurodiversity of CYP must not act as a bar to accessing opportunities to engage with service of development's and especially the co-production of services they will themselves use. A key component widening access to the service will be the expanded digital offer alongside the ability to flex provision between face to face and online modes of engagement given the local circumstances with regards to Covid 19 and Service user needs. This will also be of relevance to Children Looked After, (who nationally have a high proportion of CYP from BAME communities) in Out of Borough placements who may wish to access the "home "support offer for Mental health and wellbeing alongside any provision where they are living.

9 Outcome Measures and KPIS: Alongside a range of qualitative and quotative outcome measures and KPIs the specification has several indicators that will ensure that commissioners are well placed to understand the service activities, reach, and impacts. Though the indicator sets are designed to provide universal service activity and outcomes performance data the BAME community specific indicators are listed below.

Indicator	Outcome Measure	Frequency of Reporting
3	Increase access for Black and Minority Ethnic Groups against baseline. Baseline to be established (by the commissioner) in the first year and reasonable target negotiated	Annual with Quarterly update
4	Increase in access for CLA/CLs against baseline Baseline to be established (by the commissioner) in the first year and reasonable target negotiated	Annual with Quarterly update
Key Performance Indicators		
1	Equalities data set collection – 100% of all CYP referred into the service.	Quarterly

¹ See http://www.netscc.ac.uk/hsdr/files/project/SDO_FR_08-1613-117_V01.pdf for one example of the BAME CAMHS transition experience mapping.

	<p>Specific subsidiary notes to be provided on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BAME Population, presentations, interventions and outcomes. • Maternity service liaison • Links into Safeguarding/MASH referrals • Quarterly profile of service user protected characteristics. 	
2	<p>Equalities Monitoring: The Equalities Act³⁴ defines nine “protected characteristics”</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Age; 2 Disability; 3 Gender reassignments; 4 Marriage and civil partnership; 5 Pregnancy and maternity 6 Race; 7 Religion or belief 8 Sex 9 Sexual orientation. 	Quarterly

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