

JOINT HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE AND LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEES

17 SEPTEMBER 2003

Chair * Councillor Marie-Louise Nolan

Membership: Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Councillors:	* Ann Groves	* Anjana Patel
	Lavingia	* Silver
	* Myra Michael	* Thammaiah

Advisor (non-voting): Dr S Ahmad

Membership: Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Councillors:	* Miss Bednell	* Jean Lammiman
	* Gate	Lent
	* Mitzi Green	* Vina Mithani (1)
	* Ismail	* Janet Mote
	* Mary John	

Voting Co-opted: (Voluntary Aided) (Parent Governors)

† Mrs J Rammelt	† Mr H Epie
† Reverend P Reece	† Mr R Sutcliffe

* Denotes Member present
 (1) Denote category of Reserve Member
 † Denotes apologies received

1. **Appointment of Chair:****RESOLVED:** That Councillor Marie-Louise Nolan be appointed as Chair for the meeting.2. **Attendance by Reserve Members:****RESOLVED:** To note the attendance at the meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Member:Ordinary MemberCouncillor John Nickolay
(Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee)Reserve Member

Councillor Vina Mithani

3. **Declarations of Interest:****RESOLVED:** To note that the following interests were declared:Agenda Item 9: Audit Commission Review of Certain Learning Disability Services – Progress Against the Recommendations

Councillor Mitzi Green declared a personal interest in the above item as her son had been diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome.

Agenda Item 12: Progress on Healthy Lifestyles in Schools Review

Councillor Gate declared a personal interest in the above item as his wife was employed as a nurse practitioner.

[Note: Agenda Item 13: Update on the development of the People First Directorate – See Minute 13.]4. **Arrangement of Agenda:****RESOLVED:** That all items be considered with the press and public present.5. **Minutes:****RESOLVED:** That the signing of the minutes of the Health and Social Care Scrutiny

Sub-Committee meetings held on 8 May, 18 June, and 24 July and the minutes of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee meeting held on 30 July be deferred to the next ordinary meetings of the relevant Sub-Committees.

6. **Public Questions:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no public questions relating to existing agenda items from local residents or organisations under the provisions of Committee Procedure Rule 15 (Part 4B of the Constitution).

7. **Petitions:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no petitions relating to existing agenda items submitted by members of the public/Councillors under the provisions of Committee Procedure Rule 15 (Part 4B of the Constitution).

8. **Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations relating to existing agenda items were received under the provisions of Committee Procedure Rule 16 (Part 4B of the Constitution).

9. **Audit Commission Review of Certain Learning Disability Services - Progress against the Recommendations:**

The Sub-Committees received a report in the name of the Head of Community Care detailing progress made against the Audit Commission action plan submitted to the Audit Commission in July 2002, following an audit of some aspects of the management of services provided by the Harrow Learning Disability Team (HLDT).

An officer advised that since the action plan was completed progress had been made in pursuing some actions but others are awaiting the outcome of a review being undertaken by the National Development Team, a Government sponsored independent agency, which promoted good practice in learning disability services. The officer, in a verbal update to the meeting, advised that the review report had been severely delayed and might be received by the end of the month. In response to questions from a Member, the officer advised that the Council had funded the District Audit report but that the NHS had funded the NDT.

A Member requested further detail on the statement in the officer report that the original Audit Commission report had not fully addressed some aspects of the original remit. The officer advised that it had been hoped that greater attention would be paid to autistic spectrum disorders, particularly Asperger's syndrome, and whether people with Asperger's were most appropriately supported within learning disability or mental health provision. People with Asperger's often had a high IQ and were therefore sometimes more appropriately supported by mental health. Members and the officer present to speak on this item were of the view that the area required further examination. The officer pointed out that a Joint Commissioning Manager for Learning Disabilities had been appointed by the Council and the Primary Care Trust (PCT) to take a lead on such matters.

Members sought assurance that the outcomes of the NDT report would be considered as part of the Council's budget process. The officer assured the Sub-Committee that the financial implications of the recommendations of the report would be given appropriate attention.

RESOLVED: That (1) current progress be noted;

(2) the NDT report be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee when it has been received.

10. **Early Years Special Educational Needs:**

The Sub-Committee received a report from the Executive Director (People First) on Early Years Special Educational Needs services, which detailed current services available to children aged from birth to five years who had special educational needs and their families and plans for the service over the next two years.

In response to a question from a Member, an officer advised that Hillview and Gange were reserved for children at risk and that there were sufficient places available for children with this kind of referral. Members were advised that a significant number went on to enter mainstream provision and that steps were taken to ensure a smooth transition. A number continued to attend specialist provision such as Woodlands.

The Chair requested information on training available and whether it took place in twilight hours. The officer advised that training was provided at a variety of times of the day, and was mostly 95% full. SENCOs were required to complete levels 1-3 of the training; a level five course was planned. The team was able to meet the demand for training.

A Member enquired as to the provision of services available in school holidays. The officer advised that play schemes included provision for children with special needs, including the provision of trained staff to give additional support to these children. Portage was available 52 weeks of the year.

A Member requested information on the provision for supporting the language needs of children who were asylum seekers. The officer informed the meeting that a service level agreement with the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service was in place to assist with meeting these needs.

A Member asked whether there was opposition from parents and carers when referrals were recommended. The officer advised that a times there were, but that staff were able to work with parents and carers and to present the referral as a positive experience for the child. Other facilities were also available including drop-in provision and toy libraries so that the centres were also recognised as community centres.

A Member noted that in the past there had been a problem providing sufficient speech and language therapy. The officer advised that a good working relationship had been developed with speech and language therapists and Northwick Park Hospital, who were also working in the early years and childcare setting to identify at an early stage those with speech and language delay. It was hoped that an assistant to work with pre-schools would be jointly funded. A national re-grading of speech and language therapists had improved recruitment; quarterly monitoring was taking place with Northwick Park Hospital, which had not identified any significant difficulties recently.

Members appreciated the diagram included within the report detailing the referral routes for pre-school provision and enquired whether the diagram was available for parents. The officer advised that she hoped to be able to publish information for parents and professionals and that work was underway to present the information in an appropriate format. The Sub-Committee requested that all Members of Council be sent a copy for information when it was completed.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

11. **The Gatsby Project - Report on Completion of Project:**

The Sub-Committees received a report from the Executive Director (People First) outlining progress made with the implementation of "Taking Care of Education" (The Gatsby Project). The report highlighted some of the preliminary headline findings of the evaluation of the project. The Project Director advised that a bid had been submitted to the Gatsby Charitable Foundation for a further three years of funding of the project, and that he was hopeful that the bid would be successful. Social Services and Education officers had been working closely together to meet the educational needs of Children Looked After.

The Chair noted that the National Children's Bureau (NCB) researchers believed that a considerable amount of work needed to be undertaken before Children Looked After became part of mainstream policy and practice. The Project Director advised that Council growth would help to address the matter, along with the development of Children First. The Chair also noted that a number of the young people contacted by the researchers were unaware of the Personal Education Plan Process. The Project Director advised that this was being addressed through training sessions for social workers to impress on them the importance of involving young people and relevant professionals. The role of independent reviewing officers was being developed to ensure the effectiveness of the plan.

A Member asked about the role of governors. The Project Director advised there was a recommendation in Social Inclusion Unit report that LEA governors have designated responsibility for Children Looked After.

A Member was disappointed that a network of designated teachers had not taken off. Members expressed support for the development of such a network. An officer advised that a fixed network would be difficult to achieve as not all schools had Children Looked After on roll all of the time. There were many areas requiring a designated governor or staff member.

A Member enquired as to how officers perceived the future role of the Corporate

Parenting Group. The Project Director advised that new guidance was expected shortly from the Secretary of State. Members requested that the guidance be circulated via the Information Circular when it became available.

A Member requested information on whether carers received numeracy and literacy support to enable them to better support Children Looked After. The Project Director advised that workshops had been run showing carers how to support children in their care and these had been well attended.

A Member noted the increase in educational attainment by Children Looked After since 2000. The Project Director advised that the national picture was mixed, and that the sustained progress made by Children Looked After in Harrow was unusual by comparison. Further work was required to improve the number of Children Looked After achieving five grade A*-C at GCSE level.

Members were impressed with the work exhibited at the Harrow Arts Centre and Civic Centre that had been produced by young people who had attended a pilot after school club run at Gayton Library and requested that this be conveyed to the young people involved.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

12.

Progress on Healthy Lifestyles in Schools Review:

The Sub-Committees received a report from the Executive Director (People First) providing an update of progress following a review carried out by the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee during 2002-03. The Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee had discussed the recommendations of the review at their meeting held on 24 July 2003.

The Interim Director of Education introduced the report and advised that the appendix to the report detailed current progress on the recommendations made by the review group.

School Meals

The Head of Contract Services was present at the meeting to give an update to Recommendations (i) and (ii) which specifically addressed school meal provision. An additional pack was circulated to Members of the Sub-Committees at the meeting, which detailed the Packed Lunch and High School Service and included information on nutritional standards and menu examples. The Head of Contract Services advised that all menus had been subject to review by the community dietician to ensure that all recipients benefited from a nutritionally balanced diet.

Samples of the existing tuck boxes as well as some developmental menus had been brought to the meeting for Members to examine. The packaging had been tested in 1993 and the only viable options had been a brown paper bag or a cellophane box. The paper bag was discounted at the time and the cellophane box adopted and used since then. The box was now being reconsidered because of waste disposal issues. Some schools may have separated the contents of the boxes to allow self-selection, but this risked reducing the nutritional integrity of the meal.

The tuck boxes had originally been provided to 55 school accounts; currently tuck boxes were provided to 41 school accounts. Thirteen (including Cedars) had introduced hot meals. The schools had organised hot meal provision themselves through one or more contractors.

A Member pointed out that there appeared to be little difference between the Halal and vegetarian tuck box and pointed out that a Halal diet did not exclude meat. He suggested that a Halal meat option be made available.

Availability of drinking water

The Interim Director of Education pointed out that the practice of supplying drinking water was well established in first and middle schools but that it was more difficult to achieve in high schools. A trial was planned in one school, and he advised that high schools would need to solve the matter within each school setting. It was intended that the practice be rolled out to other schools after the trial. Members requested precise details of the trial. Members discussed the provision of water fountains and alternatives such as water coolers and in-line filtering to taps.

School nurses

Further to recommendation (v), a Member expressed the view that school nurses were better managed as a primary care service rather than as part of acute services. In Harrow the North West London Hospitals Trust (NWLHT) currently had responsibility for school nurses. The Chair pointed out that Members were aware that Harrow's arrangement was unusual and advised that the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee had been invited to nominate a Member to contribute to NWLHT's current examination of the role of school nurses.

Other areas

A Member was pleased to note that the peer-counselling scheme provided by Relate had been maintained and extended.

A Member enquired as to whether parents had been involved in the process of the promotion of healthy lifestyles (recommendation (vii)). The Sub-Committees were advised that this recommendation would be addressed in the forthcoming term. A newsletter would be sent out, which would also be sent to Members.

A Member enquired as to the local provision for screening of asylum seekers who would be attending the borough's schools. The Chair advised that the question was health-related rather than education-related and requested that the Advisor to the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee be contacted for a response and that the reply be circulated to all Members of both Sub-Committees.

The Sub-Committees agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee an update on the recommendations at the end of the current school year.

RESOLVED: That the progress report be noted.

13.

Update on the development of the People First Directorate:

The Sub-Committees received a report from the Executive Director (People First), charting the progress of the Council Directorate and the services for which it was responsible. Regular updates were being sent to Members of Council, schools, governors and all Education and Social Services staff.

The Directorate was divided into the themes of Children's Services (including children, young people and families), Learning and Community Development (promoting learning throughout the community), People First Strategy (to include service planning, review and support services) and a transitional theme of Community Care (promoting independence for adults and older people).

The transitional department covering Community Care was predicated upon the national imperative for bringing together services for adults and older people in a seamless way. Work was being undertaken by officers of the Council and the PCT, which might lead to the relocation of these services within the PCT. However, further considerable work was to be undertaken before proposals would be put to Members.

The Director of Children's Services would carry the statutory responsibility for Social Services and the Director of Learning and Community Development would carry the statutory Chief Education Officer role. The Executive Director (People First) emphasised that the Directors should not be referred to by their statutory responsibilities but by their titles and their line management responsibilities within the Council structure. A recent Government Green Paper entitled "Every Child Matters" implied that the Council's structure for People First was being commended, albeit the Government wished to consult on the potential for merging the statutory roles.

On 1 October all Education and Social Services teams would be relocated within their new Departments in the Executive Directorate in their current form, and consultation would then take place as to future configurations of service to meet service user requirements.

Members requested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive an update on all directorates, including this report, at its November meeting, and that the update be circulated to all Members of Council.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

[Note: Agenda Item 13: Update on the development of the People First Directorate – In relation to the above item and for the avoidance of doubt, Councillors Miss Bednell, Mitzi Green and Silver confirmed to the joint meeting that each of them had served as a Member of the Chief Officer Appointments Panel (General Purposes and Licensing) for the purposes of Chief Officer appointments made to the People First Directorate.]

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.35 pm, closed at 9.26 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR MARIE-LOUISE NOLAN
Chair