Report from CEO of KCSC for BVOAG



September 2017

This report is written with the support of BVOAG representatives on behalf of the local voluntary and community sector which covers matters since the last BVOAG meeting.

**School Exclusions**

A number of voluntary and community organisations have responded to requests for help from parents of children that benefit from their services on the issue of exclusions. These organisations have assisted but also wish to express growing concern on this issue because of the potential implications for children and young people and their parents.

The issue has previously been discussed with RBKC Early Years Officers and at KCSC’s Children, Young People and Families Voluntary Organisation Forum. The main issues discussed include:

1. Sixth forms becoming increasingly elitist and whereas in the past most students were able to move on to their chosen local sixth form and stay connected to their community (apart from very specialised courses) now the offer is mainly around A levels for which an A or B at GCSE is demanded. A further cohort of children feel rejected that they cannot continue at the school they have known for 5 years because they feel they are not good enough. They move to colleges and if they drop out they are not picked up as they cannot sign on at a job centre. Parents say they stay at home, get depressed and cause further pressure on families.
2. Sixth forms have been telling young people not to return after a holiday or that their place is withdrawn. This may be for various reasons including low grades. They are not abiding by any exclusions policy and these young people also are not being picked up by other support services.
3. Parents are not given sufficient information when their child is being moved to alternative provision and why. This results in parents and children feeling powerless. Parents are genuinely worried about the effects of alternative provision and tend to avoid it by withdrawing their children from the system altogether. They then look for ‘private’ provision or try to home educate. Again these children are completely lost account of.
4. Some schools are not exploring the full range of options to keep children in school and are pursuing exclusion more readily than inclusion policies. Appeals in some schools, mainly Academies, are run by private contractors who are paid by the school to ‘independently’ run the appeal. However, it is highly questionable if a contractor will find against the school if they want to continue to get work from them.
5. In Kensington and Chelsea there is no specialised legal help. In the past the Law Centre had a part-time education legal person. Since the cut of this post parents have no access to support. Coram are contracted to the government to provide support but they have the contract for the whole of England and have been impossible to get through to on the phone.
6. Letters of complaint to the schools are often simply ignored and not even responded to.

It is for these reasons that we wish to fully explore these issues either within BVOAG at a future meeting or at a separate meeting with the Cabinet member and relevant officers.

**Mental Health**

It is understood that Central North West London NHS Foundation Trust is providing mental health support and psychological therapy to those affected by the Grenfell Fire. How will the council monitor this support going forward to ensure the service being offered is reaching those who need it and is fully accessible?

**Angela Spence**

**KCSC**