

## **Minutes of the Meeting of the Hidden and Extreme Harms Prevention Committee held on 20 February 2024 at 7.00 pm**

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**Present:** Councillors Gary Collins (Chair), Augustine Ononaji and Cici Manwa

**Apologies:** Councillors Daniel Chukwu (Vice-Chair), Assistant Director of Education and Skills, Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help

**In attendance:**  
Michelle Cunningham, Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager  
Michael Dineen, Assistant Director Counter Fraud, Enforcement and Community Safety  
Daniel Jones, Head of Looked After Children  
Rhiannon Whiteley, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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Before the start of the meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being live streamed and recorded, with the video recording to be made available on the Council's Youtube channel.

**1. Apologies for Absence**

**2. Minutes**

The minutes of the Hidden and Extreme Harms Prevention Committee held on 22 June 2023 were approved as a correct record.

**3. Items of Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

**4. Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

**5. Corporate Parenting Committee Annual Report 2022/23 (Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children)**

The Head of Looked After Children introduced the report. He explained that Thurrock Council has a duty to children in the area who have no parents available to care for them. Central Government sets the limit for how many Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children each Local Authority should hold.

Thurrock Council's limit is 44, if they go over the limit they will seek to transfer the children to another Local Authority.

The following key points were highlighted: -

- Members queried the current national figure of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. The Head of Looked After Children confirmed this was 5570 at the end of 2022 which is the latest data available.
- Members queried what is in place to Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children are not vulnerable to county lines. The Head of Looked After Children confirmed they will have regular social work visits to build a relationship. There are a range of placement options available and some children will be placed in foster care. An initial assessment will be completed to find out how the children got to the UK and to find out what they want to do next. Concerns may be raised if they say they want to go to visit Big Ben as sometimes that means they plan to meet someone.
- The Head of Looked After Children clarified that missing episodes can sometimes mean a teenager has stayed out over their curfew and was at a party or a friend's house. It does not necessarily mean that their whereabouts is not known.
- Members queried what happens if children are found with someone inappropriate. The Head of Looked After Children confirmed that a Strategy meeting would take place.
- Members queried the age assessment process. The Head of Looked After Children responded that a full detailed has to be completed. Often children due to their difficult life experiences may look older than they are.
- Members queried if X-rays could be taken to determine age. The Head of Looked After Children responded that the Home Office is looking at medical tests that could be completed to determine age. However, someone with a very specific set of skills would be required to complete an age assessment on bone structure.
- Members queried if Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children are placed together. The Head of Looked After Children responded that it generally depends on the placements available on the day. There are a set of providers who are used to working with this cohort of children.
- Members queried how the children can access therapy. The Head of Looked After Children confirmed that an initial health assessment will be completed to determine the child's needs. If the child is showing signs of distress the social worker can make referrals and they should get a screening test within 5 days.
- Members queried if any children opt to return home. The Head of Looked After Children stated that generally they feel home is unsafe and the idea of returning would therefore not be appealing.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1.1 That Members of the Committee are advised of the potential harms faced in relation to Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children presenting to Thurrock and review the work done to safeguard them.**

*At 19.29 The Head of Looked After Children left the meeting*

## **6. Thurrock Council's Response To Prevent Duty**

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership (TCSP) Manager introduced the report.

The following key points were highlighted: -

- TCSP are working to improve the quality of referrals. The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager stressed that she did not want to discourage people from making referrals if they did not have much information however often the quality of information provided in the referral will help professionals to make better decisions from the start. Monthly training is offered to everyone in the Council by My Learning and examples of a good referral are shared.
- Training and Venues is a key priority. Members queried what is meant by venues. The TCSP Manager stated that the regional counter terrorism team are looking to provide some training and will invite those who let premises/ venues to ensure they are not being used for radicalisation purposes.
- Thurrock has a high level of reports for hate crime in relation to Prevent referrals. TCSP and the Police work hard to encourage reporting of hate crime. Thurrock has lots of Hate Crime Ambassadors who are training to make reports to the police.
- Thurrock has a low Prevent referral rate. A high level of hate crime can indicate a vulnerability is present.
- Members queried where Thurrock's Hate Crime Ambassadors can be found. The TCSP manager confirmed that there are lots across the Council in various departments, there are some in the Housing department. There are some at MIND and Thurrock Lifestyle Solutions. The TCSP Manager invited members to complete the training to become Hate Crime Ambassadors. The Police have also completed a training package to become Prevent Champions. Thurrock Council will look to have one across all areas of the Council.

### **RESOLVED:**

- 1.1 That Members of the Committee note the current performance and areas for development as measured by the self-assessment audit completed using the Local Government Association Toolkit and Channel Panel self-assessment completed in April 2023.**

- 1.2 That Members contribute to discussion in relation to the development of Thurrock's refreshed Prevent Strategy 2024/2027 and are satisfied it provides a local response which is proportionate to the current terrorism and extremism threat.**
- 1.3 That Members of the Committee are assured that appropriate governance is in place to ensure that through the Community Safety Partnership the risks outlined in the Counter Terrorism Local Profile are routinely reviewed and responded to as appropriate.**

As it was the last meeting of the municipal year the Chair thanked Members and Officers for their assistance.

## **7. Work Programme**

No items were added to the work programme.

**The meeting finished at 7.53 pm**

Approved as a true and correct record

**CHAIR**

**DATE**

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact Democratic Services at [Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)**