


<b>Cabinet</b>  1 December 2015	 <b>TOWER HAMLETS</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Melanie Clay – Corporate Director LPG	<b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted
Scrutiny Review– Literacy across Early Years, Primary, Secondary and Adult Learning	

<b>Lead Member</b>	<b>Councillor Rachael Saunders, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education and Children’s Services</b>
<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Gulam Hussain, Corporate Strategy and Equality
<b>Wards affected</b>	ALL Wards
<b>Community Plan Theme</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No

### Executive Summary

This report provides recommendations from and an action plan in response to a scrutiny review on the support for literacy provided by the council across Early Years, Primary, Secondary and Adult Learning. The sessions engaged experts from the Institute of Education, Research and Practice in Adult Literacy, practitioners and officers from neighbouring London Boroughs as well as teachers and school leaders within the borough.

### Recommendations:

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Consider this report of the scrutiny working group and agree the action plan in response to the review recommendations.

### 1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 In 2008, the National Literacy Trust published a report entitled ‘Literacy Changes Lives’ concluding that poor literacy was prominent in the profile of a disadvantaged adult.
- 1.2 A report published by the KPMG Foundation in 2006 entitled ‘The long term costs of literacy difficulties’ highlighted that the cost to the taxpayer of addressing poor literacy up to the age of 37 was between £44,797 and £53,098 per person, or £1.73bn to £2.05bn per annum.

- 1.3 In light of the financial pressures faced by the council the economic evidence suggesting the significant role of literacy in improving economic, social and health outcomes for individuals, the review sought to understand the current approach and levels of support on offer to all age groups in the borough to support the development of adequate and functional levels of literacy.
- 1.4 The review was underpinned by three core questions:
- a) What are the key causes of underachievement and how can attainment be sustained?
  - b) What are the interventions available to all teachers to identify and tackle poor literacy in children?
  - c) How effective are the adult learning provisions in identifying and reaching out to learners with poor literacy?

## **2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 To take no action. This is not recommended. The proposed response includes activities which would support the local authority in meeting a range of statutory duties which include general duties to ensure the wellbeing of young people and reduce inequalities and encouraging the use of early years provisions. The responses also support the objective of improving academic attainment at Key Stages 1-5 and develop a greater understanding on the impact of functional illiteracy in the borough. A timetable for delivering the recommendations has also been agreed by officers. The action plan is outlined in Appendix Two.
- 2.2 To agree some, but not all, recommendations. All of the recommendations are achievable at little additional cost to the organisation.

## **3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT**

- 3.1 The scrutiny review took place throughout February and March 2015, led by Cllr Denise Jones, then-lead member on the committee for Children, Schools and Families.
- 3.2 Literacy is noted to have a significant impact in improving life outcomes ranging from better employment prospects, health and wellbeing outcomes and economic benefits to the taxpayer.
- 3.3 The 2011 Skills for Life Survey suggests 21.5% of the adult population of Tower Hamlets is functionally illiterate (with a reading age below 11 years old).
- 3.4 In addition to high levels of adult illiteracy, results from 2015 suggests approximately 12% of students did not achieve a Level 4 in reading and writing at Key Stage 2 whilst approximately 35% of learners left secondary school without 5 A\*-C grades which included English and

Maths. At the Early Years stage, results from the 2014/15 academic year show the borough to be below the London average.

- 3.5 The review coincided with changes to the education and skills systems in the UK, underpinned by a greater focus on literacy and numeracy and the development of essential skills to support employability. It drew on evidence from headteachers in the borough, specialists in Early Years and Adult Learning and professionals supporting learning services in neighbouring boroughs.
- 3.6 The report with recommendations is attached at **Appendix One**. Twelve recommendations have been made:

**Recommendation 1:**

Continue to fund the operation of Local Authority nurseries.

**Recommendation 2:**

Improve the quality of online information available on the council's website including making available information and videos on the impact of early years learning.

**Recommendation 3:**

Support the development of early years hubs to promote good practice through clusters of providers.

**Recommendation 4:**

Support the identification of grant streams and corporate sponsors to ensure the continued availability of the Reading Recovery programme in Tower Hamlets.

**Recommendation 5:**

Explore opportunities in conjunction with the Idea Store Learning Service to support the development of higher literacy skills amongst Support Staff in Early Years, Primary and Secondary settings in the borough.

**Recommendation 6:**

Develop and implement a pilot Academic English programme at Key Stage 3 and assess the impact on learning outcomes.

**Recommendation 7:**

Make available to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee findings of the commissioned research and relevant action plans to address underachievement amongst White British students.

**Recommendation 8:**

Undertake a small research project to understand the range and effectiveness of academic interventions for learners of all backgrounds currently attending Pupil Referral Units.

**Recommendation 9:**

Undertake a review of the successes of the Triage tool at the end of Year 1 and report findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Recommendation 10:**

Undertake a review of health literature developed to support those with poor literacy and assess the impact on the patient experience and the success in affecting the management of health conditions. The findings of this review are to be reported to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Recommendation 11:**

Healthwatch Tower Hamlets undertake a research project to scope existing work on health literacy in the borough and its impact on the health of local residents, and identify areas for improvements. The findings of this research are to be reported to the Council's Health Scrutiny Panel and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Recommendation 12:**

Include improving Health Literacy as a strategic issue in the development of the new of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy in 2016/17.

**Recommendation 13:**

Explore the use of the Triage tool developed by the Idea Store service within health settings across the borough.

- 3.7 The Triage tool referred to in recommendations 9 and 13 has now been discontinued, and so activity to review its success and explore broadening its use cannot be pursued. The Idea Store Learning service will pursue other options for targeting its services to those in need of support.

- 3.8 The scope of Recommendation 1 is restricted by the financial priorities of the Council.
- 3.9 The report with recommendations is attached as **Appendix One**. The action plan which accompanies the report is attached as **Appendix Two**.

#### **4. ANY IMPLICATIONS**

##### **4.1 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**

- 4.1.1 The recommendations in this report cross a number of areas within the Children's Services, Adults Services and Communities Localities and Culture Directorates. It is expected that recommendations in this report will be implemented within existing resources in each Directorate.

##### **4.2 LEGAL COMMENTS**

- 4.2.1 In respect of the recommendations contained in the report, the Council has a duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness by virtue of section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999. This is known as its Best Value Duty.
- 4.2.2 The Council's functions in relation to children include a duty under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 and section 175 of the Education Act 2002 to make arrangements to ensure that its functions are discharged having regard to the need to promote the welfare of children. Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 introduced a general duty for local authorities to promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need, including children with disabilities. The Council's general duty to promote high standards of education in respect of primary and secondary school students is set out under section 13A of the Education Act 1996.
- 4.2.3 The Childcare Act 2006 ("the 2006 Act") imposes a number of duties on local authorities. The general duty contained in section 1 of the 2006 Act is to (a) improve the well-being of young children in their area; and (b) reduce inequalities between young children in their area in respect of various matters, including physical and mental health and emotional well-being, protection from harm and neglect, education, training and recreation, the contribution made by them to society and social and economic well-being.
- 4.2.4 By section 3 of the 2006 Act, a local authority must make arrangements to secure that early childhood services in its area are provided in an integrated manner, which is calculated to facilitate access to those

services, and to maximize the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children. “Early childhood services” are defined by section 2 of the 2006 Act, and includes “early years provision” for young children – i.e. the provision of childcare for a young child. In deciding what “arrangements” to make under this section, a local authority must have regard to (a) the quantity and quality of early childhood services that are provided, or expected to be provided, in the area; and (b) where in that area those services are provided or are expected to be provided.

4.2.5 Under related regulations, the Local Authority (Duty to Secure Early Years Provision Free of Charge) Regulations 2012, the Council must secure free early years provision for 15 hours per week, 38 weeks per year, for all 3-4 year olds and eligible 2 year olds.

4.2.6 Section 193 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 inserts a new s116A into the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, which places a duty on the Health and Wellbeing Board to prepare a joint strategic health and wellbeing strategy in respect of the needs identified in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. The duty to prepare this plan falls on local authorities and the Clinical Commissioning Group, but must be discharged by the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Board must have regard to the Statutory Guidance on Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies published on 26 March 2013, and can only depart from this with good reason.

4.2.7 The Health and Social Care Act 2012 also amended section 221 of the making reports and recommendations about how local care services could or ought to be improved. Section 226 of the 2007 Act sets out that the Local Healthwatch have an additional reporting power enabling them to refer matters relating to social care services to the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which must then have regard this information.

4.2.8 In the exercise of its functions, the Council must with the public sector equality duty to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010, the need to have regards to equality of opportunity and the need to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic, including ethnicity, and those who do not.

### **4.3 ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS**

4.3.1 The recommendations contained within this report aim to advance equality of opportunity for residents of the borough to secure access to high quality learning facilities.

4.3.2 Implementing the recommendations in this report will support the Local Authority to deliver on its Community Plan priorities which include a vision of delivering a ‘Prosperous Community’ and a ‘Healthy and

Supportive Community'. The recommendations also seek to aid the Local Authority in widening access to early years learning for some of the most disadvantaged 2 year olds, as determined by the eligibility criteria, within the borough.

#### **4.4 SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT**

4.4.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the report or recommendations.

#### **4.5 RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

4.5.1 There are no direct risk management implications arising from the report or recommendations.

#### **4.6 CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

4.6.1 There are no direct implications of crime and disorder as a result of the recommendations of this review.

#### **4.7 EFFICIENCY STATEMENT**

4.7.1 Recommendations 2 encourages the council to explore more effective ways of deploying existing resources to improve the quality of communication in advertising access to early years settings.

#### **4.8 BEST VALUE IMPLICATIONS**

4.8.1 The Scrutiny Review supports the Best Value duty by setting out a number of recommendations which aim to support improvement, informed by consideration of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The report recommends that work be undertaken to assess the effectiveness of existing health literacy work and that the Executive seeks to identify grant streams and corporate sponsors to ensure the continued availability of the Reading Recovery programme in Tower Hamlets.

### **5 CONCLUSIONS**

Cabinet is recommended to agree the action plan contained as Appendix Two, which responds to the review's recommendations.

**Appendix One:** Scrutiny Challenge Session – Contract Specification and Management in Tower Hamlets

**Appendix Two:** Action Plan