

## **Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

### **Minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2017**

#### **Present:**

Councillor Reid – in the Chair

Councillors Sameem Ali, Alijah, Collins, Hewitson [CYP/17/52 - CYP/17/55], Lone, Lovecy, Madeleine Monaghan [CYP/17/54 - CYP/17/57], K Simcock and Taylor

#### Co-opted Voting Members:

Mrs B Kellner, Representative of the Diocese of Manchester

Mrs J Miles, Representative of the Diocese of Salford

Ms M Neall, Parent Governor Representative

#### Co-opted Non Voting Members:

Ms J Gudgeon, Primary sector teacher representative

Councillor S Newman, Executive Member for Children's Services

Councillor Flanagan, Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources

Julia Edwards, Manchester Foster Care Association

Tracey Forster, Central Manchester Foundation Trust (CMFT)

Karen Fishwick, CMFT

Reko Smith, Manchester Young Carers Group

#### **Apologies:**

Councillors T Judge and Stone

Mr L Duffy, Secondary sector teacher representative

### **CYP/17/52 Minutes**

Councillor Lone informed Members that her apologies had been omitted from the minutes of the Committee's meeting on 10 October 2017.

#### **Decisions**

1. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2017, subject to the above amendment.
2. To receive the minutes of the Ofsted Subgroup meeting held on 17 October 2017.
3. To receive the minutes of the Road Safety Around Schools Task and Finish Group meeting held on 17 October 2017.

### **CYP/17/53 Budget Refresh 2018 – 2020**

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services, Director of Education and City Treasurer which set out a proposed budget refresh process for 2018-20, including proposals for scrutiny of Directorate Budget and Business Plans.

The Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources introduced the report, highlighting the main points and themes, including:

- The reasons why the budget needed to be refreshed; and
- The budget refresh process.

Some of the key points which arose from the discussions were:

- Concerns about the impact of the roll-out of Universal Credit on families; and
- The pressures on the budget for children's services.

### **Decision**

To consider the refreshed version of the Children's Services Directorate Budget and Business Plan Report and Delivery Plan and the Locality Plan at the Committee's meeting on 30 January 2018.

### **CYP/17/54 Foster Carer Report**

The Committee received a report of the Head of Service (Looked After Children) which provided an overview of the business and activity within the Council's Fostering Service in 2016/17. It also detailed service developments and improvements that had occurred in the year and those that were planned moving through 2017/18.

Officers referred to the main points and themes within the report which included:

- The use of different types of placement for Looked After Children (LAC);
- The role of the Fostering Panel;
- Recruitment of foster carers;
- Support and supervision for foster carers; and
- The Staying Put and Supported Lodgings Service.

Some of the key points that arose from the Committee's discussions were:

- Diversity of foster carers and the Fostering Panel;
- Reasons for the variable quality of assessment reports for connected person foster carers;
- Recruitment and retention of foster carers;
- What support was available where a foster carer identified signs of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or learning disabilities in a young foster child;
- How the Council could learn from other local authorities; and
- How contracts for fostering care support services were awarded.

The Strategic Director of Children's Services advised that social workers had the necessary report-writing skills but that the Fostering Panel had raised its

expectations of the assessment reports and the standards were being driven up. The Head of Service (LAC) reported that the Council had foster carers from diverse backgrounds but that this still did not match the diversity of the local population or the children requiring foster care placements so the Council was working to improve this. He advised that the diversity of Fostering Panel members was improving and that the Council was currently looking to recruit a young person who had previously been Looked After to the Panel. He outlined some of the reasons why foster carers had been de-registered, for example, because they had adopted the children they had previously been fostering or had retired. The Strategic Director highlighted that foster carers were on the whole not leaving due to dis-satisfaction with fostering for Manchester. The Head of Service (LAC) reported that, in addition to being a partner within the Regional Adoption Agency, the Council was working with other local authorities to improve fostering services, including being involved in the regional 'You Can Foster' campaign. He advised that children received a medical assessment when they became Looked After and that any issues should be picked up during this or subsequent medical checks; however, foster carers could also raise any concerns through their social worker. The Strategic Director highlighted the universal and targeted health services which were available for LAC. He reported that contracts were awarded based on a combination of quality, cost and social value.

The Committee listened to a number of issues raised by Julia Edwards from the Manchester Foster Care Association which included:

- Support for Special Guardians;
- Clarity on the criteria for foster carers to progress from Band 1 to Band 2;
- Comparisons between the support provided to foster carers by the new provider Foster Talk and the previous service;
- Three cases in which complaints against foster carers were not dealt with quickly enough ;
- That children could be allocated a number of different social workers within a relatively short space of time;
- The difficulties for her organisation caused by uncertainty over whether they would be awarded contracts to provide training or other services; and
- That new contracts were still not in place for Emergency Out of Hours Carers and multi-link disability schemes.

The Strategic Director requested that Julia Edwards send him the list of her concerns for him to look into and advised that he would provide Members with an update on this in a future report.

## **Decisions**

1. To receive a further report at an appropriate time, to include information on the success of the Council's fostering service's recruitment and retention activity and an update on the number of children for whom the Council have secured a 'permanent' placement.
2. To note that the Strategic Director of Children's Services will respond to the Manchester Foster Care Association's concerns and, where appropriate, will provide Members with an update on the issues raised within a future report.

[Councillor Collins declared a personal interest as a Board Member of the Manchester Foster Care Association.]

### **CYP/17/55 Early Years Update**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Education which provided a summary of the additional 30 hours early education funding for working parents and its implications for the city and a review of the impact of Stages 3, 4 and 5 of the Early Years Delivery Model.

Officers referred to the main points and themes within the report which included:

- Eligibility for and uptake of the 30 hours free childcare for working parents;
- The implications of the additional funded hours for schools, childcare settings and the city; and
- Health Visitor performance.

Some of the key points that arose from the Committee's discussions were:

- Whether parents on zero hours contracts could access the 30 hours free childcare for working parents;
- The effectiveness of strategies to improve school readiness;
- The take-up of the 30 hours free childcare in the city, including across different communities and ethnic groups, and the impact on child development of young children not being stimulated;
- The financial implications of the 30 hours free childcare; and
- The quality of early years provision.

The Director of Education informed Members about the Greater Manchester School Readiness Strategy. She advised that Manchester was further ahead in implementing the Early Years New Delivery Model than other local authorities in Greater Manchester. She informed Members that year on year more children were starting school in Manchester with a good level of development but that there was still a gap between Manchester and the national average. The Executive Member for Children's Services emphasised the importance of children being school ready by the time they started in Reception Year, while acknowledging the achievements of Manchester primary schools in helping those who were not school ready to catch up during the primary phase. The Early Years Service Manager reported that 94% of 3 year olds were accessing a nursery place and outlined work to increase this take-up. The Director of Education reported that most Manchester schools already offered nursery provision including offering full-time places so there was already a high percentage of three and four-year-olds in the city accessing nursery places; however, she advised that if parents accessed the Government's Free Early Education Entitlement this provided the schools with additional funding. She also advised that she would investigate the eligibility of parents on zero hours contracts for the 30 hours free childcare for working parents and inform Members. The Chair expressed concern that a minority of early years providers were inadequate and advised that the Ofsted Subgroup would continue to monitor this.

## Decisions:

1. To note the report.
2. To request that the Director of Education investigate the eligibility of parents on zero hours contracts for the 30 hours free childcare for working parents.

## **CYP/17/56 Young Carers Strategy 2017-2019**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Education which introduced the Young Carers Strategy 2017 - 2019 which was launched in July 2017. The report outlined the background, the current context and progress since the launch of the strategy.

Officers referred to the main points and themes within the report which included:

- Young carers pathways and safeguarding;
- The role of Early Help in supporting young carers; and
- The 'Be Bothered' campaign to highlight some of the key challenges facing young carers in Manchester.

Some of the key points that arose from the Committee's discussions were:

- Schools' understanding of and support for young carers;
- The definition of being a young carer, including different cultural expectations of children, for example, in larger families;
- Concern about 'hidden' young carers;
- Concern that cuts to services for adults could result in increased pressure on young carers and the need for links between adult social care and children's services to identify and support young carers; and
- The importance of supporting young carers beyond the age of 18.

Reko Smith advised Members that his organisation, Manchester Young Carers Group, wanted to improve teachers' understanding of the issues facing young carers and to develop support networks around young carers. The Head of Youth Strategy reported that five Manchester high schools were working towards achieving the National Young Carers Award. She also informed Members that the Targeted Youth Support Service was working with eight high schools to set up support groups for young carers and the aim was to double this over the next year. She advised Members that there was some good practice within Manchester schools which could be built on and shared across other schools. The Executive Member for Children's Services advised that young carers groups in schools would encourage hidden young carers to come forward and speak to other young people in a similar position to them. She welcomed that the definition of caring within the Young Carers Strategy encompassed activities such as housework and caring for younger siblings. Reko Smith advised that other local authorities in Greater Manchester had dedicated support services for young carers and that his organisation wanted to work with Manchester City Council and other partners to develop a centralised, young person-led service for young carers. The Head of Youth Strategy reported that a Memorandum of Understanding had been put in place between children's services

and adult social care on working together around the issue of young carers. The Executive Member for Children's Services advised that she had asked officers to look into providing support to young carers up to the age of 25, in a similar way to how care leavers were supported.

### **Decisions**

1. To thank Reko Smith for his contribution to the discussion.
2. To note the Strategy and to recognise the importance of supporting partners to improve the identification and support for young carers, including linking in with work to support vulnerable adults and recognising the importance of supporting young carers, two-thirds of whom are female, up to the age of 25.

### **CYP/17/57 Overview Report**

A report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit was submitted. The overview report contained key decisions within the Committee's remit, responses to previous recommendations and the Committee's work programme, which the Committee was asked to approve.

In response to a Member's question, the Chair advised Members that the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee would be receiving a report on Youth Justice, including young people in custody, at one of its future meetings and asked the Scrutiny Support Officer to check when this report was scheduled and inform Committee Members.

The Chair also informed Members that this was Ms Gudgeon's last meeting and recognised her contribution to the Committee.

### **Decisions**

1. To note the report and approve the work programme.
2. To ask the Scrutiny Support Officer to check when the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee would be considering the report on Youth Justice and to email this information to Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.