

## **Young People and Children Scrutiny Committee – Ofsted Subgroup**

### **Minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2015**

#### **Present:**

Councillor Stone– in the Chair  
Councillor Cox, Midgley and Reid  
Mrs E Holt, Co-opted Member, Parent Governor Representative  
Mrs M Gadian, Co-opted Member, Teacher Representative

Councillor S Newman, Executive Member for Children’s Services

#### **Apologies:**

Mrs B Kelner, Co-opted Member, Representative of the Diocese of Manchester

#### **YPC/OSG/15/04**

#### **Minutes**

#### **Decision**

To agree the minutes of the Ofsted Subgroup meeting held on 20 January 2015 as a correct record.

#### **YPC/OSG/15/05**

#### **Post Ofsted Improvement Plan Update**

The Committee considered the updated action plan that is designed to monitor the actions identified in response to the issues raised in the recent Ofsted inspection of the Council’s safeguarding arrangements.

The Interim Strategic Director of Children’s Services addressed the Subgroup and provided an oral update. The Executive Member for Children’s Services and the Leader had met with OfSTED in December 2014 to discuss the Draft Improvement Notice- a copy of which was received in January 2015 inviting comments. Comments had been made in respect of the notice but the Final Improvement Notice was still pending. She advised that the Improvement Plan was based upon the draft notice and the Final Improvement Notice was unlikely to deviate from this. The Director told members about a new pilot for Local Authorities in intervention which involved challenge by way of a ‘critical friend’, and mentoring support for the Executive Member. She said this would allow her to better understand the context within which the notice was issued as she had not been with Manchester City Council when the inspection took place.

The Director advised that she would be attending the Investment Board meeting on 25 February 2015 to outline proposals for how the investment should be spent and to request permission for this. She said this had been discussed at Finance Scrutiny Committee and the information could be cascaded to members. She said the fund was still dependent on improvements being implemented, and it was necessary to assume these improvements would be in place in order to agree what the funds could be spent on when received.

The Director explained the work that was ongoing to reconfigure the ‘out of hours’ service to align the work of the Police and Social Care provided by the Council for

both Children and Adults. She updated members on recruitment explaining that an Interim Head of Safeguarding and Interim Deputy Director of Children's Services had been appointed while permanent post holders' were identified. She said the Head of Care would be leaving the Council at the end of February, and the Interim Deputy Director would pick up her work. Members agreed to thank the Head of Care for her work with the Council over many years. A member requested an updated structure chart to include the new posts be circulated to members, which was agreed. In response to members concerns the Director said she was confident that the new interim post holders had the necessary skills and attitudes to make improvements and support the Council through the current period of transition. She stressed that changes had to be made in a planned and sustainable way. In response to a query she assured members that she would remain with the Council until she was satisfied the necessary improvements within Children's Services were in place, which would be at least 12 months time.

In response to members concerns over the high caseloads faced by Social Workers the Director advised that this was still being addressed. She told members that a Social Workers Task Force had been established and the early feedback was positive. She said more information on this would be brought to the next Subgroup after the Improvement Board had next met. She told members that research had recently been completed comparing the terms and conditions of Social Workers in Manchester with other Local Authorities and that we needed to become more attractive as an employer. The Executive Member for Children's Services agreed and noted that more social work posts would be created by use of the Investment Fund. In response to members query's the Interim Head of Children's Transformation & Change explained changes to the funding of agency workers and proposals for an increased pay offer for permanent staff. The Director of Children's Services advised that social workers from the Adults, Health and Wellbeing directorate were helping also. She said that the Council had made a commitment to staff and the Unions to reduce caseloads to 20 for newly qualified social workers and 25 for more experienced staff by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015. The Director said she was engaging with frontline social workers and reviewing cases; and Domestic Abuse was a particular problem at the present time. She said that improvements in service would not necessarily result in reduced referral rates and more work needed to be done with the Police to ensure they were aware when referrals to Children's Social Care were not required.

Members discussed the importance of multi-agency working and case conferences. The Director assured members that every case conference was reviewed and subject to the Quality Assessment Framework. The new Interim Head of Safeguarding would be overseeing this. In response to a members query the Director update members on current developments within the Multi Action Safeguarding Hub (MASH). She said that whilst a basic structure was established in December 2014 work was ongoing to improve and develop the service. New managers had been appointed and a full review undertaken, a further review would be completed in a months time. The Interim Head of Children's Transformation & Change stressed the importance of appropriate flow through and management oversight of MASH. Members re-iterated their desire to visit the MASH service.

In response to a members query the Director said that ongoing work with partners was encouraging a clearer understanding of referral thresholds and the services available for early help. She said the Council was developing 'early help hubs' which would be multi-agency teams based in localities that could provide an early help offer to minimise and complement the need for referrals to Children's Social Care. The Director confirmed that youth workers would be included in this.

**Decision:**

1. To circulate information from Finance Scrutiny pertaining to the Investment Fund
2. To receive further information on the Social Workers Task Force at the next meeting of the Subgroup.
3. To thank the Head of Care for her work over many years with the Council
4. To request the Committee Support Officer circulate the new structure chart to members

**YPC/OSG/15/06**

**Ofsted Reports for Schools**

The Senior Schools Quality Assurance Officer addressed the Subgroup explaining that overall it was a positive picture. She said Manchester Local Authority were 27<sup>th</sup> in the league table of local authorities where children attended a good or outstanding primary school. Primary Schools in Manchester were particularly good, but we were still below the national average for the proportion of children attending good or better schools at Secondary School level. She summarised the main points of the report provided.

The Committee Support Officer circulated the OfSTED report of Haveley Hey Community School which had recently been inspected and graded 'Good' by OfSTED. The Senior Schools Quality Assurance Officer talked through the key points of the report and responded to members queries.

The Senior Schools Quality Assurance Officer summarised the key points of the report that had been received from OfSTED regarding St Paul's which had recently been inspected and graded as inadequate. She confirmed that the report was now in the public domain although it had not yet appeared on the OfSTED web-site. The Committee Support Officer agreed to circulate the report to members following the meeting. She said that the trust would establish a Strategy Group and she had been invited to work with them to address the identified weaknesses. The Executive Member for Children's Services explained that the previous Head Teacher of St Paul's had been replaced and the new Head Teacher had a different leadership style. Members discussed differences of leadership concluding that no style was necessarily better or worse but that other aspects of the way school's were run may need to reflect this and it may take time to implement changes. A member stressed the importance of ensuring all schools received the necessary support including those schools that were supporting other schools.

Members welcomed the report and agreed to write to Collyhurst Nursery School and Sacred Heart PS Gorton which had both improved from good to outstanding to

congratulate them. Members noted that they would look at school inspections in more detail at the next meeting.

### **YPC/OSG/15/07                      Work Programme**

The Subgroup considered the Work Programme. The Chair asked that Schools be considered as the first item at the next meeting. The Committee Support Officer noted that she had circulated responses to previous recommendations and will update the work programme and circulate.

#### **Decision**

1. The next meeting of the Subgroup will be 17 March 2015.
2. The Committee Support Officer will update the work programme and circulate.

### **YPC/OSG/15/08                      Exclusion of the Public**

A recommendation was made that the public be excluded during consideration of the next item of business

#### **Decision**

To exclude the public during consideration of the following item which involved consideration of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of particular persons and public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information

### **YPC/OSG/15/09                      Post OfSTED Improvement Plan Update: Case Studies**

(Press and Public Excluded)

The Committee considered a confidential report of the Interim Strategic Director of Children's Services which included detailed case studies of Children's Services social work cases. Whilst names and personal details had been removed the Director asked that the report be restricted to members only to prevent individuals being identified. The Director introduced the report and explained that these were examples, not necessarily representative of the cases received across Children's Services. The Interim Head of Children's Transformation & Change explained the pale text had been recently added as the cases had been reviewed. She noted that many of the comments were negative but there were positives, and positives would be highlighted more going forward.

Members discussed the detail of the cases and the learning that could result from them. Members noted that whilst social work cases were reviewed on an ongoing basis it was easier to review in hindsight and make recommendations that may not be apparent at the time. The Director agreed and stressed the importance of reflective practice for social workers to ensure good practice in case work. Members discussed in detail the complex nature of social work and the interplay of different factors which impacted on whether social services support was required or not. The

Director said that common themes arising from Serious Case Reviews were drugs and alcohol, domestic violence and mental health issues. Members stressed the important role that partners such as the Police and Schools had to play in identifying cases suitable for referral to social services, and complementing any support the Council provided.

**Decision:**

To note the report