

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 22 July 2020

This Scrutiny meeting was conducted via Zoom, in accordance with the provisions of the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

Present:

Councillor Stone – in the Chair
Councillors Sameem Ali, Alijah, Cooley, Hewitson, T Judge, Kilpatrick, Lovecy, Madeleine Monaghan, Reeves, Reid and Sadler

Co-opted Voting Members:

Ms S Barnwell, Parent Governor Representative
Dr W Omara, Parent Governor Representative

Co-opted Non Voting Members:

Ms J Fleet, Primary Sector Teacher Representative
Mr L Duffy, Secondary Sector Teacher Representative

Also present:

Councillor Midgley, Mental Health Champion
Councillor Russell, Chair of the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee
Councillor M Sharif Mahamed, Assistant Executive Member for Children and Schools
Michael Devine, Manchester Health and Care Commissioning (MHCC)
Darren Parsonage, MHCC
Dr Paul Wallis, Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (MFT)
Maria Slater, MFT

Apologies:

Councillors McHale and Wilson

CYP/20/24 Councillor McHale

The Chair informed the meeting that Councillor McHale was ill and that the Committee sent him its best wishes for a speedy recovery.

CYP/20/25 Minutes

The Chair reported that, following the requests at the last meeting, an update on Newall Green High School had been circulated to all Members of the Committee and a letter had been sent to Marcus Rashford.

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2020.

CYP/20/26 Manchester's Transformation Plan for Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing

The Committee received a presentation of Michael Devine, Lead – Children and Young People, Manchester Health and Care Commissioning (MHCC) which provided an overview of the transformation plan for children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.

Representatives from the MHCC and Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (MFT) referred to the main points and themes within the presentation which included:

- The current situation, including access rates to children and young people's mental health services, waiting times and presenting issues and outcomes;
- Wider community children's mental health developments;
- The MHCC-commissioned grants programme to engage the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector and schools in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people in Manchester; and
- M-thrive, the new delivery model of place-based care.

The Mental Health Champion shared her positive experiences of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and how the service had continued to operate through the COVID-19 pandemic. She welcomed the M-thrive programme to improve mental health and wellbeing services for children and young people. She highlighted that most mental ill health issues started before the age of 25 and advised that, therefore, work to improve the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people would make a positive difference to their life chances, as well as preventing further costs later on. She asked what percentage of the budget for mental health and wellbeing was allocated to services for children and young people, which Darren Parsonage from MHCC said he would look into. She welcomed that waiting times were reducing and asked about the waiting time target. Maria Slater from MFT advised that the waiting time target was being reduced nationally to four weeks. In response to a concern raised by the Mental Health Champion about the transition from children's to adults' mental health services, Maria Slater advised that an 18 to 25-year-old offer was being looked into so that young people would not have to transition directly for children's to adults' services.

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

- That Catalyst, an organisation which provided mental health services to children and young people, had been producing a regular newsletter during the COVID-19 pandemic which included a lot of useful resources;
- That young people trying to directly access support online needed a more user-friendly digital front door to help them to access services;
- How this work fitted in with the work to become a trauma-informed city;
- What was being done to support young people presenting with gender dysphoria; and
- Support for young people leaving care.

Maria Slater agreed that a more youth-friendly digital front door was needed and advised that her service was currently working with a company to develop this. She informed the Committee that the online support offer had been increased during the pandemic and that CAMHS had worked with Education Services and third-sector organisations to provide a leaflet to schools on support available.

Dr Paul Wallis from MFT assured Members that a trauma-informed approach was being embedded in M-thrive, including training on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

Darren Parsonage from MHCC reported that the support for young people leaving care had recently been increased to the age of 25 so those young people now had a contact point through their LAC (Looked After Children) Nurse for signposting and support. In relation to young people with gender dysphoria, he highlighted the funding which had been provided to the Proud Trust to carry out work in this area.

The Chair thanked the guests for their contribution. He noted the reference in the report to No Wrong Door and the Alonzi House Hub Mental Health Support, and commented that this was a good initiative which the Committee supported. He also noted the plans related to schools outlined in the presentation, including the plans for a Mental Health Lead in every school and college. He requested that school governors be included in this and that CAMHS and the support on offer be included on the agenda of a future Chair of Governors briefing.

Decision

To request that school governors be included in the plans for schools and that CAMHS and the support on offer be included on the agenda of a future Chair of Governors briefing.

CYP/20/27 5-Year Social Care Workforce Strategy

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which set out the strategic direction of the service and its workforce plan, including an approach to recruitment and retention for the next five years.

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

- The five year strategy for recruiting and retaining qualified social workers;
- The introduction of financial incentives for social work staff;
- An update on the current recruitment campaign;
- Performance management; and
- Service redesign and development.

The Chair of the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee informed Members that her Committee's HR Subgroup had considered a report on this issue in October 2019. She commented that officers had previously not been in favour of offering retention bonuses and asked why a decision had since been made for social workers to be offered financial incentives to stay with the Council. She also asked how the workforce strategy would fit in with the work on racial equality.

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

- The use of agency staff;
- Social work caseloads;
- How many social work staff were shielding and what impact was that having on the service; and
- Race equality in relation to the service's staff and children and young people.

The Deputy Director of Children's Services reported that there had been a significant reduction in the use of agency staff, which had included successfully recruiting a number of agency staff to become permanent Council employees. He advised that reducing the number of agency staff was beneficial from a financial perspective and in enabling the service to build a different culture. He informed Members that the strategy to retain social work staff was not just about financial incentives but about professional and organisational development and providing a career pathway. He reported that, as the pandemic had resulted in more home working, it had highlighted more longer-term opportunities for the service to use agile working and that this would be useful in recruiting and retaining social workers with caring responsibilities, particularly women.

The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services advised that the use of agency staff, staff retention and turnover would be used as measures of the strategy's success and he suggested that the Committee might want to receive a further report on the impact of the strategy in 12 months' time. He reported that the proposed retention payment was different from that which had been previously proposed as it was on a sliding scale of payback and linked to the service's ambitions.

The Deputy Director of Children's Services advised that the average caseload across the locality and permanence teams was 18 and that very few social work staff had a caseload of over 23, although he acknowledged the complexity of some of the work staff were dealing with. He reported that approximately 16 staff were shielding for medical reasons but advised that this was not impacting on the service's ability to carry out its responsibilities.

The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services reported that the service had a high proportion of staff from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups but that, at present, too few were in senior positions and that the service was working to address this. He suggested that Members might want to look at this issue in a further report, to either this Committee or the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee. The Chair commented that this would be discussed in the work programming session, which was taking place after the meeting. The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services informed Members that work was also taking place to address issues faced by BAME children and young people, for example, that that they were disproportionately likely to be in the criminal justice system.

Decision

To note the report and that this area of work would continue to be monitored through this Committee and the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee.

CYP/20/28 Children and Education Services response to COVID-19

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which provided an update on the impact, progress and response of schools, children and education services to the presenting challenges of COVID-19; with a specific focus on the support being provided in respect of planning for the start of the new academic year in September 2020.

In relation to the aim of becoming a zero carbon city, the report stated that, as part of the preparation for the start of the academic year in September 2020, parents and carers were being encouraged to walk, use public transport and cycle to work; making use of and accessing schemes that supported such approaches.

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

- Feedback and learning from schools as they had increased the number of pupils attending;
- Government guidance on school attendance from September 2020;
- Proposed approach for Manchester schools in September 2020;
- Challenges; and
- Children's Services.

The Assistant Executive Member for Children and Schools provided an overview of the impact of the pandemic on schools, children and families and how the Council and schools had responded. He advised that it was important to ensure that diverse communities across the city were aware of the guidelines on sending children back to school in September and that it was also important for schools to keep developing remote learning in order to be prepared for a possible second wave of infections.

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

- Whether there was any data on children and families not engaging with schools during lockdown;
- Whether the number of families choosing to home school might increase as a result of the lockdown period;
- Recognising the hard work of schools and the support the Council had provided to them during the pandemic;
- Concern about the additional financial costs for schools in responding to the pandemic; and
- How information about the full re-opening of schools from September could be best communicated to families.

The Director of Education informed the Committee that the Council did not have figures on families not engaging but that schools were doing welfare checks and

taking additional measures where necessary, including carrying out doorstep visits. She reported that schools had been informed how to access information and advice where there were serious concerns about a family. She informed Members that, where children were not on a school roll, for example because they had just moved into the area, welfare checks had been carried out by Council staff and, where requested, an education offer had been made available through One Education. She reported that digital access, particularly access to wifi and data, was one of the biggest challenges, although schools had been working hard to enable their pupils to access education, including delivering work packs to pupils who could not access them online. She informed Members that schools were being required to produce a business continuity plan by the end of September 2020 on how they would provide education continuity in case a group of pupils or the entire school had to remain at home due to an outbreak of COVID-19.

The Director of Education agreed that the number of families choosing Elective Home Education (EHE) might increase as some families had found that this approach had worked for them but that it needed to be made clear to them that this would not include the access to remote learning being provided by their school during lockdown. She also reported that the Council was working on a summer campaign on school attendance in advance of schools re-opening to all pupils in September. She advised Members that the Frequently Asked Questions document for parents, which was appended to the report, had been translated into a number of community languages. She reported that she would circulate these translated documents to the Committee Members and asked that these be shared as widely as possible.

Decision

To consider this further at the Committee's next meeting in September 2020.

CYP/20/29 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.

Decision

To note the report.