

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 13 October 2021

Present:

Councillor Reid – in the Chair

Councillors Sameem Ali, Bano, Collins, Hewitson, Lovecy, McHale and Nunney

Co-opted Voting Members:

Ms Z Derraz, Parent Governor Representative

Also present:

Councillor Bridges, Executive Member for Children's Services

Councillor Doswell, Ward Councillor for Fallowfield

Tracey Forster, Health Visiting, Vulnerable Babies & Child Health Services,
Manchester Local Care Organisation (MLCO)

Jenny Lewis, Health Visiting, Vulnerable Babies & Child Health Services, MLCO

Sheila Davies, Adoption Counts

Kristen Roberts, Adoption Counts

Nicola Marsden, MLCO

Lorraine Ganley, MLCO

Apologies:

Councillors Alijah, Cooley and Sadler

Dr W Omara, Parent Governor Representative

Mr L Duffy, Secondary Sector Teacher Representative

CYP/21/43 Minutes

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2021.

CYP/21/44 Youth and Play

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods which followed the Young Manchester review, which was commissioned by the City Council in December 2020, with a subsequent report presented to Executive in March 2021. That report considered the response to the review and actions proposed to build stronger and more effective arrangements going forward. An alternative delivery model was proposed to be designed and developed in 2021. This report provided a summary of the evidence and research collated during consultation with the wider youth and play sector during the spring and summer and set out a revised model of delivery for the commissioning of the youth and play sector, which was currently a role undertaken by Young Manchester. The report considered the response to the questions asked of the youth and play sector, as well as information collated from discussions with other Local Authorities in terms of their commissioning and youth partnership arrangements. The Committee was invited to comment on the report prior to its submission to the Executive on 20 October 2021.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Developing the new model;
- Sector engagement findings;
- Research findings;
- Future commissioning; and
- Next steps.

The Executive Member for Children's Services reported that Members had previously informed him that they were not aware of what funded youth and play work was taking place in their ward and that this proposal would improve the situation, formalising their involvement in the process and strengthening links between them, the providers and other agencies.

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

- To welcome the report and the involvement of Members in the proposed process and that this should improve the way play and youth provision was allocated across different wards;
- To welcome the division of central Manchester into Central West and Central East and to ask where the boundaries would be; and
- Noting that the youth and play advisory panels for each area would have a Member on the panel, how would they be selected, commenting that it was important that they impartially represented the interests of all the wards in the area, not just their own ward.

The Ward Councillor for Fallowfield highlighted the recent case in her ward of a 16-year-old boy who had been murdered, prior to which there had been warning signs indicating his vulnerability and the involvement of a number of agencies. She reported that issues could start to arise when children were aged around 12 or 13, starting with low level anti-social behaviour, issues at school and child criminal exploitation, subsequently escalating to very serious risk of harm. She expressed concern at the public sector cuts over the years which had impacted on youth provision and the lack of youth provision in her ward and reported that, with the right intervention at an earlier age, many of these young people could be put on a better path in life. She advised that it was important for each ward to have its own youth provision which met the area's needs and that many young people would not travel to neighbouring wards to access provision. She welcomed the proposals in the report, in particular giving Members more of a voice in the allocation of provision and redirecting funds from administration and management processes to the direct provision of youth and play services.

A Member highlighted the role of schools in identifying young people who were at risk of exploitation and violence and in educating young people on child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation through the Sex and Relationship Education curriculum. The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services outlined how the Council engaged with schools over this and offered to bring a report to a future meeting, to which the Chair agreed.

In response to the visit of the Prime Minister and Home Secretary to the Hide Out Youth Zone in her ward, the Chair expressed disappointment that the government had not contributed to the funding of this facility and that the centre had been built with private funding from the businessman Fred Done, with the Council committing to providing funding for ongoing costs.

The Chair outlined questions and issues raised by a Ward Councillor for Hulme which focused on training and development for the youth and play sector, ensuring a fair allocation of provision across different wards, the need for targeted work with young people at risk and how the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector would be supported to secure additional funding.

The Head of Parks, Leisure, Events and Youth advised that the decision to split the central area into east and west had been taken following discussions with the youth sector and that the boundary was still to be determined, in consultation with the youth sector and Ward Councillors. He advised that a role profile would be produced outlining the role of and level of commitment required for Members appointed to the youth and play advisory panels. He reported that this would be shared with Ward Councillors and that, if there were multiple nominations in a particular partnership area, there would be a process for identifying the most appropriate candidate. He highlighted that there was still only limited funding available for youth and play provision, which was probably not sufficient to do everything that Members wanted so there was a need to both lobby national Government for more funding and work with the VCSE sector to leverage in more funding. He advised that work had been taking place to address inequalities in the distribution of youth provision funding in particular wards. He recognised the importance of training and development in ensuring high quality provision and reported that the Council would lead on gaining an understanding of the training needs of the sector, in collaboration with the voluntary sector, and that expertise within the sector would be used to provide this training, as well as bringing in external training where necessary. In response to comments about work with vulnerable young people, he advised that there was a crossover between youth work and the point where other agencies needed to become involved to support young people who had become involved in extremism or gangs. He reported that the deployment of youth work resources would take into consideration how other agencies, such as Greater Manchester Police (GMP), were deploying their resources to work with these young people and that it was proposed that GMP have a role in the advisory and decision-making processes for youth work allocation.

The Executive Member for Children's Services highlighted the role of GMP and the Community Safety Partnership in addressing serious issues such as those raised by the Ward Councillor for Fallowfield, including the development of the Serious Violence Strategy, which Members would also be involved in.

In response to a question from the Ward Councillor for Fallowfield, the Head of Parks, Leisure, Events and Youth reported that over the previous two years Young Manchester had secured approximately £200,000 to £250,000 a year in addition to the funds that the Council had provided them with and that it was anticipated that it would still be possible to access these types of funds under the proposed new arrangements and, where the Council could not apply for particular funds directly, VCSE sector organisations could host those funds.

In response to a point from the Chair about some VCSE organisations being more knowledgeable about how to successfully apply for funding than others, the Head of Parks, Leisure, Events and Youth advised that the new commissioning arrangements would be as streamlined as possible, while ensuring high quality youth work and appropriate safeguarding measures, and that organisations would be supported in getting to the position where they could apply. The Chair suggested holding events in different areas to encourage VCSE organisations to apply for funding for youth and play work.

Decisions

1. To receive a report on Sex and Relationship Education in schools, including how child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation are addressed through this.
2. To receive a further report on Youth and Play commissioning arrangements at an appropriate time.
3. To endorse the recommendations to the Executive that:

The Executive is recommended to:

1. To note the findings from the sector consultation and Local Authority research which have informed the future commissioning arrangements.
2. To agree the option presented for the future commissioning of the youth and play sector, which will enable the Council to a) fulfil its Statutory Youth Duty; b) fulfil the priorities identified in the Our Manchester Youth Strategy; c) align with the priorities and focus of the Children & Young People's Plan.
3. Delegate responsibility to agree the grant payments for 2022/23 totalling £1.44M to the Deputy Chief Executive & City Treasurer and Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods, in consultation with the Executive Member for Children & Young People and the Deputy Leader.

CYP/21/45 Start Well Strategy - 1001 Days

The Committee received a presentation of the Strategic Head of Early Help, the Strategic Lead (Early Years) and Tracey Forster, Lead Manager, Health Visiting, Vulnerable Babies and Child Health Services, MLCO, which provided an overview of the Start Well Strategy.

The main points and themes within the presentation included:

- The Start Well Partnership Board;
- The vision and principles of the Strategy;

- The current picture;
- The offer;
- The workforce; and
- Next steps.

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

- To welcome the good, innovative work taking place;
- The take-up of Healthy Start vouchers;
- Smoking around hospitals;
- What work was being done to encourage breast-feeding; and
- The Health Visitor Service, including vacancy levels and whether home visits were being carried out, rather than virtual meetings with families.

The Chair praised the work of her local Sure Start Centre. She also highlighted the positive work in her ward, including the Imagination Library and work to bring a range of services under one roof and suggested that these be introduced elsewhere.

The Strategic Head of Early Help advised that the take-up of Healthy Start vouchers was around 66% and that this had been identified as requiring further promotion, looking at all the organisations and professionals who had contact with pregnant women and new mothers and identifying opportunities to inform them about the scheme. She reported that the Go Smoke-Free Pilot started at the ante natal stage so hospitals were involved with this work and she advised that she would communicate the Member's point about smoking around hospitals to the steering group.

In response to comments from the Chair about the impact of the reduction in Universal Credit and rising fuel prices on families, the Strategic Head of Early Help acknowledged that addressing this would be a challenge. She reported that, throughout the pandemic, there had been an increase in families asking Sure Start staff for advice and guidance and a lot of that had been linked to financial issues and poverty and she outlined some of the support provided to alleviate hardship, for example, providing meals to children accessing services in the Sure Start Centres and through links with food clubs.

The Commissioning Manager advised that 91% of Health Visitor posts were currently filled and that the service was half-way through a 4-year-plan to invest in training nurses to become Health Visitors. He reported that visits were now taking place face-to-face again but that the service had also been praised for how quickly it had mobilised earlier in the pandemic to undertake checks remotely.

Tracey Forster from Health Visiting, Vulnerable Babies and Child Health Services informed Members that the service had received significant funding about 3 years ago to set up an Integrated Infant Feeding Service in north Manchester, which provided advice and support on breastfeeding to new mothers and that the data showed that this had increased breastfeeding levels in that part of the city. She advised that the Health Visiting Teams provided support on breastfeeding in central and south Manchester but that additional funding had now been received which

would enable the service to review its model for breastfeeding support in central and south Manchester.

In response to a Member's question about meeting the diverse needs of different communities, the Strategic Head of Early Help advised that Sure Start was a mixed model that involved a range of voluntary and community sector partners which helped it to reflect the community of the area they were working in. She advised that work was taking place to offer parents and grandparents support with improving their English, which would then increase their confidence in engaging with services, such as the two-year-old early years offer. In response to a further question, she advised that work was taking place to develop and deliver services for families who had recently arrived from Afghanistan.

Decision

To note the presentation.

CYP/21/46 Adoption Counts Annual Report 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021

The Committee received a report of Adoption Counts which fulfilled the obligations in Adoption National Minimum Standards (2011) and Adoption Service Statutory Guidance (2011) Adoption and Children Act 2002 to report to the "executive side" of the local authority.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Working with Manchester;
- Performance;
- Disruptions;
- Quality of reports;
- Adoption support;
- Recruitment of adopters; and
- Practice developments in Adoption Counts.

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

- The impact of court delays;
- The recruitment of prospective adopters; and
- Positive experience of the process for people being assessed and prepared for becoming foster carers or adoptive parents.

The Deputy Director of Children's Services confirmed that, due to the pandemic, there had been delays in children's cases being heard, whether that related to adoption or other matters, and that this had had a negative impact, although it appeared that progress had since been made. He advised that there were plans to discuss this issue with the local Family Justice Board, looking at some of the delays and identifying practical joint resolution to speed this up.

Sheila Davies from Adoption Counts informed the Committee that there was an ongoing recruitment strategy, as well as work taking place around National Adoption Week the following week, with a lot of this aimed towards Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities as children from these backgrounds were waiting longer to be matched. The Chair suggested that billboards across the city could be used.

Decision

To note the report.

CYP/21/47 Managing Allegations against Adults who work with children - Local Authority Designated Officer Annual Report 2020-2021

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Lead (Safeguarding and Practice Improvement) and the Service Lead (Safeguarding) which provided an overview of the management of allegations in Manchester and the role of the Designated Officers between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2021.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- The service and legal context;
- Overview of enquiries and referrals data - 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021;
- Managing allegations;
- Service reflection;
- Service achievements; and
- Key priority areas.

In response to a Member's question about the differences in enquiry and referral levels between different sectors, the Strategic Lead (Safeguarding and Practice) advised that her service provided training to different agencies throughout the year to raise their awareness, looked at changes in patterns and compared statistics with those across the north west to identify any outliers which might be a cause for concern.

Decision

To note the report.

CYP/21/48 Update on COVID-19 and the impact on the opening of schools and colleges

The Committee received a report of the Director of Education which provided an update on the return of children and young people to education following the summer break and the arrangements in place in schools and colleges to report and manage COVID-19. The report had a particular focus on the work over the summer to ensure that young people in year 11 had a destination for September and ongoing work to reduce the numbers of young people in the city not in education, employment or training (NEET).

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Key changes from the previous academic year;
- Numbers of positive cases;
- School attendance; and
- Post 16 and NEET young people during the pandemic and work to support this group.

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

- Whether any more up-to-date data on cases was available as the figures in the report only went up to 1 October 2021;
- Should face coverings be re-introduced in schools rather than waiting for infection rates to rise before taking further action; and
- How transitions from Year 6 to Year 7 had been managed.

The Education Business Partner advised that the latest figures showed a reduction with 191 cases, 168 positive children, 23 positive adults and 91 adults isolating. She advised that officers met regularly with colleagues in the city and across Greater Manchester to look at case rates and discuss whether new instructions should be issued across schools or whether to continue with the individual plans for each school. She confirmed that the Council could only provide advice to schools on the use of face coverings.

In response to a question about the vaccination of young people, Lorraine Ganley from MLCO reported that the vaccination of 16 and 17-year-olds was being delivered through Manchester Health and Care Commissioning and the Primary Care Network Vaccination Hubs but that they were looking at delivering vaccinations to 12 to 15-year-olds through schools. The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services informed the Committee that so far 38% of 16 and 17-year-olds in Manchester had had their first COVID-19 vaccination.

The Director of Education informed the Committee about work that had taken place to support children who were transitioning from Year 6 to Year 7, including the transition read. She reported that very high COVID-19 infection rates had affected plans for face-to-face activities in transition week but that many schools had made alternative arrangements. She advised that pupils transitioning to Year 7 appeared to have settled in well and attendance rates for Year 7 were very high, which was part of a positive trend for attendance rates in Manchester schools, which were currently significantly higher than the national average.

Decision

To note the report.

CYP/21/49 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 and agree the work programme.