

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 22 June 2022

Present:

Councillor Reid – in the Chair

Councillors Abdullatif, Alijah, Amin, Bano, Cooley, Gartside, Good, Hewitson, Lovecy, Sadler and Sharif Mahamed

Co-opted Non-Voting Members:

Miss S Iltaf, Secondary Sector Teacher Representative

Also present:

Councillor Bridges, Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People
Councillor Hussain, Lead Member for Race

Apologies:

Councillor Judge

Mr G Cleworth, Parent Governor Representative

Ms L Smith, Primary Sector Teacher Representative

CYP/22/27 Minutes

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2022.

CYP/22/28 Youth and Play Update

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) which provided an update on Manchester's Youth and Play offer and gave an overview of the activities that had been available across the city throughout the school holiday periods. This encompassed the offer from wider partners and stakeholders, including the Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF) funded by the Department for Education (DfE) and targeted at children and young people who were eligible for Free School Meals.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Youth and Play commissioning;
- Youth Hubs;
- Youth participation and democracy;
- Staffing;
- Extra investment; and
- Holiday activity provision.

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

- To welcome the additional funding that the Council was investing in youth provision and the positive framework for moving forwards, noting the challenges facing young people in the city, including deprivation and gangs exploiting young people;
- Concern about young people getting drawn into anti-social behaviour or criminal activity and the importance of youth provision;
- That it would be useful to have more data, including the different proportions of children and young people in different wards and levels of deprivation, which would indicate where more focus was needed;
- That the new model should give opportunities to smaller, grassroots organisations who were doing positive work in wards, as it was felt that previously larger organisations who knew how to write grant applications well had been disproportionately awarded funding;
- The importance of both broadening the number of children and young people with access to support and activities and also providing targeted outreach work to engage with young people in difficulty;
- Territorial issues which deterred young people from accessing youth provision;
- Issues with the commissioning process, including short-term funding and organisations having to come up with new ideas to get funding when what they were already doing was good and should be sustained; and
- The value of providing activities with food to help families who were struggling financially, particularly during the school holidays.

The Lead Member for Race emphasised the importance of fairness and equality in relation to the provision of youth and play services. He asked what factors were taken into account in distributing resources, highlighting the number of children and young people from black, Asian and ethnic minority (BAME) communities in the city and that many deprived families with parents in work were not eligible for the HAF programme.

The Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) reported that, after bringing the activity previously undertaken by Young Manchester back in-house, the Council had decided to continue the existing commissioning arrangements for 12 months while a detailed needs analysis was carried out. He advised that this work would provide the data that the Member had asked for, as at present the most recent data available was from 2018 and did not provide all the detail that both the Member and his service wanted. He advised that it was anticipated that the needs analysis would be completed by the end of the summer and that he intended to bring this information to the Committee. He acknowledged Members' comments about the challenges facing young people in the city, while highlighting the additional funding being invested in youth provision and the positive partnership work with Greater Manchester Police (GMP) and the Community Safety Partnership. He recognised the comments made by the Lead Member for Race and that there were areas which needed to be strengthened, including the need for more BAME-led organisations to be commissioned to provide youth services, and stated that this was a high priority for the service. He advised that, while the existing commissioning arrangements had remained in place this year, there was funding available for some pilot projects and that next year there would be significant opportunity for improvement. A Member commented that BAME-led organisations and organisations which worked with a diverse community were often asked to contribute to consultations and conversations

which took up a lot of their time but resulted in very little so it was important that this engagement was carried through into actions.

In response to a Member's question about localisation, the Head of Youth, Play and Participation emphasised the importance of place-based and ward-based work and stated that he would welcome the opportunity to do a walk round wards with Ward Councillors to gain a greater understanding of their wards and their needs. He also encouraged Ward Councillors to let him and his team know about groups in their ward who were doing great work but had missed out on getting funding so that they could support these small, grassroots organisations and help them to get to a position where they could successfully secure funding. In response to Members' comments, the Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) advised that it was important to get the right balance between universal youth services and targeted provision and between centre-based provision and detached work and that, with the funding that had been secured, and through locality-level discussions, his service could identify where targeted intervention was needed, including work with GMP and the Community Safety Partnership to address anti-social behaviour.

In response to a Member's comments about the importance of young people influencing decision-making, the Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People advised that local young people would have a say in how money was spent in their area. He acknowledged Members' comments about issues with the commissioning process and outlined how the Council was addressing this, now that it had been brought back in-house. The Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) advised that the revised commissioning approach would be brought to a future meeting.

In response to a Member's comments about the importance of having a stronger network across schools and a lead contact person in schools so that information was effectively communicated, the Head of Youth, Play and Participation informed the Committee that work was taking place to ensure there was a strong youth voice programme across schools and that an update on this would be included in a future report. The Chair suggested that a school representative could be included on the area panels.

The Chair emphasised the importance of play for younger children and of play equipment in parks. The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People highlighted events taking place for National Play Day on 3 August. The Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods) supported the Chair's comments on play equipment in parks, advising that this would not just be the responsibility of the Youth and Play Fund and that consideration needed to be given to how the Council allocated its funding and opportunities for funding from other sources, such as Sport England. In response to a question from the Chair, he advised that there had been a higher number of providers applying for HAF funding this year compared to last year and that there was not expected to be an underspend this year.

Decision

To receive a further report later in the year.

[Councillor Alijah declared a personal interest as the Chair of the Hideaway youth project.]

[Councillor Abdullatif declared a personal interest in relation to her work on youth empowerment for the national organisation, the Anne Frank Trust.]

CYP/22/29 Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services

The Committee received a report of the Deputy Strategic Director (Children's Services) which reflected on the recent Ofsted Inspection of Local Authorities Children's Services (ILACS) of Manchester's Children's Services. The report advised of the overall judgement and provided an action plan in response to the findings from Ofsted on what needed to improve.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- The Ofsted inspection and the judgement of the inspectors;
- Background information; and
- The Council's action plan in response to the findings of the inspection.

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

- The effects of domestic abuse on children, including the importance of raising awareness of this impact and ensuring that children were supported;
- Regarding the point on the action plan about the diverse needs to children, that different protected characteristics needed to be considered separately; and
- The importance of training, including in ensuring that staff were kept up to date with the latest Ofsted standards.

The Deputy Strategic Director (Children's Services) assured Members that Children's Services was actively involved in work on the Domestic Abuse Strategy and advised that consideration was being given to how partners could better work together to support children with the trauma they experienced due to domestic abuse in the family. He acknowledged the Member's comments about different protected characteristics and advised that, while it was difficult to convey the breadth of this in an action plan, the individual needs and identity issues of each individual child were prioritised. In response to a Member's comments about working with parents, he advised that the Council had an excellent co-production model and highlighted that Lyndene had been developed through co-production with parents and in consultation with children. He reported that almost 60% of the Council's social work staff had qualified within the last two years and outlined some of the plans to further develop the training for social workers as well as drawing Members' attention to the service's Workforce Development Strategy, which had been positively commented on by the Ofsted inspectors and by staff who had received training.

In response to a question from the Chair about Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), the Director of Education explained that item 4 on the action plan was an action from the local area Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) inspection in November 2021 which officers had decided to include in this action plan

because it related to social workers' role in EHCPs and training needed to improve this. In response to a Member's comments about the difficulties experienced by some parents whose children needed EHCPs but who did not understand the process or who had English as an Additional Language, the Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People suggested that this could be looked at in more detail at a future date.

The Chair congratulated everyone involved in this work, recognised that there was more work to be done and suggested that the Ofsted Subgroup could look at this in future.

Decision

To note the report.

[Councillor Abdullatif declared a personal interest as a former employee of Women's Aid Federation England.]

CYP/22/30 Manchester Inclusion Strategy Update

The Committee received a report of the Director of Education which provided an update on the implementation of Manchester's Inclusion Strategy (2019-2022) and an overview of the key priorities and next steps for July 2022-July 2025.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Manchester Inclusion Strategy activity since 2019;
- Impact of the Inclusion Strategy; and
- The Manchester Inclusion Strategy beyond July 2022.

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

- To welcome the progress made with this work and that exclusion was now the last resort;
- What were the opportunities for children who had been excluded to get back into mainstream education;
- The adultification of black children and a request for a breakdown of exclusions by ethnicity;
- Increasing numbers of families choosing Elective Home Education and statutory changes in relation to this; and
- Resource provision in mainstream schools for children with emotional and behavioural needs and the need for a trauma-informed approach.

In response to a question about support for homeless families, the Director of Education advised that children from these families were not a specific category within school data and that families did not always inform school of their circumstances; however, she advised that work was taking place to address the impact of poverty and to poverty-proof the school day and she reported that she would give further consideration to how this particular group could be supported. The

Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People informed Members that his Deputy Executive Member was undertaking work in relation to poverty, schools and inclusion and that he would discuss this further with her. The Chair highlighted the issue of homeless families being placed in accommodation in a different area, with the children being a long distance from school and separated from their friends.

The Director of Education advised that there was resource provision for children with social, emotional and behavioural needs in three mainstream primary schools in the city. She highlighted work to change the way children in secondary schools accessed Alternative Provision, including attending Alternative Provision part time, while still attending their own mainstream school. She outlined how the range of options available for schools could be used as an early intervention to prevent children from being excluded and keep them in their mainstream school.

The Virtual School Head reported that the Virtual School had been promoting a trauma-informed approach with schools and would be working with them on relationship-based behaviour policies. She informed Members about the work to re-purpose the Pupil Referral Unit to ensure that, where a young person had to be excluded from school, this was done well and led to a positive trajectory for the young person.

In response to a Member's comments about difficulties in getting places at nearby schools, particularly for refugee families arriving in-year, the Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People suggested that this be focused on in a future report on School Admissions, to which the Chair agreed. In response to a Member's question, the Director of Education advised that she would circulate the details of the point of contact within her service for refugee families.

The Director of Education advised that her service did have data on exclusions by ethnicity and that this could be included in a future report on Attendance and Exclusions. In response to the comments about Elective Home Education, she informed Members of a requirement within the Schools White Paper for families to notify the Local Authority of their intention to home educate their child. The Chair expressed her concerns about Elective Home Education and requested a report on this to a future meeting.

Decisions

1. To receive a report on School Places and Admissions, including a focus on in-year admissions and refugee families.
2. To receive a report on Elective Home Education.
3. To receive a report on Attendance and Exclusions, including a breakdown of exclusion data by ethnicity.

CYP/22/31 COVID-19 Update

The Committee received a verbal update from the Education Business Partner which outlined new developments and significant changes to the current situation, particularly in relation to schools.

The main points and themes within the verbal update included:

- The latest figures on COVID-19 cases in schools;
- Positive feedback from school leaders on the new model, which provided support in relation to all infectious diseases;
- How the Council was continuing to support schools; and
- Supporting schools in relation to staff and pupils affected by Long Covid.

Members discussed that some schools had not returned to the ways of working they had had before the pandemic, for example, in some schools different year groups were still starting and finishing school at different times, which could be difficult for parents. The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People reported that some schools had found that some of the practices they had adopted due to the pandemic worked well for them and they had decided to retain them; however, he asked Members to contact him if there were any practices in individual schools that a large number of parents in the community were unhappy about. The Chair expressed concern that some schools might not be meeting the requirements for the number of school hours. The Education Business Partner highlighted that COVID-19 cases were rising and that some schools could be keeping these measures in place to protect staff and pupils but agreed that conversations could be had with individual schools where needed and that a balance needed to be found.

In response to a Member's questions about doctors' appointments and vaccinations, the Education Business Partner advised that she would communicate these to the Health Team and ask them to respond to the Member.

The Chair advised that this was the last time that the Committee would have a regular monthly update on COVID-19 but that the Committee would look at aspects of this in future, for example the impact of the pandemic on children and young people's mental health.

Decision

To note the verbal report.

CYP/22/32 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, noting the reports requested under the previous agenda items.