

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 8 March 2023

Present:

Councillor Reid – in the Chair

Councillors Alijah, Amin, Bano, Gartside, Hewitson, Johnson, Lovecy, Sadler and Sharif Mahamed

Co-opted Voting Members:

Mr G Cleworth, Parent Governor Representative

Mr Y Yonis, Parent Governor Representative

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

Detective Superintendent Chris Downey, Greater Manchester Police (GMP)

Andrea Patel, Associate Director of Safeguarding (Manchester), NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care

Stuart Fern, Acting Chief Executive Officer, One Education

Apologies:

Councillors Bell, Cooley and Judge

Canon S Mapledoram, Representative of the Diocese of Manchester

Ms L Smith, Primary Sector Teacher Representative

CYP/23/13 Minutes

The Chair noted that today's meeting was taking place on International Women's Day and recognised all the women who worked in Children's Services and Education and the role of parents in keeping their children safe.

Decisions

1. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2023.
2. To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Ofsted Subgroup held on 18 January 2023.

CYP/23/14 Manchester Safeguarding Partnership (MSP) Annual Report 2021/2

The Committee considered the report of the MSP Children's Executive Chair and the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which reflected adult and child safeguarding business and provided an overview of decisions and actions taken by the partners covering 2021/2022. The annual report aimed to illustrate how the MSP continued to develop an integrated approach to safeguarding across the life course with equal accountability between the three statutory partners (Greater Manchester

Police, Manchester City Council and Manchester Health and Care Commissioning, now Integrated Care Board) together with wider agencies and in cooperation with children and citizens.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Contextual information;
- Partnership arrangements;
- Communications and engagement;
- Safeguarding effectiveness and scrutiny;
- Safeguarding Practice Reviews;
- Learning and improvement;
- Other safeguarding functions and groups;
- Scrutinising MSP arrangements 2021/22 – assurance statement;
- Review of MSP Joint Strategic Plan 2021/2022; and
- Strategic priorities 2022/23.

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

- The establishment of a permanent MSP Steering Group;
- The over-representation of some communities in complex safeguarding and whether this should be a focus in its own right; and
- Work taking place to address homelessness, including the impact of this work on children.

The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services reported that some children were more vulnerable to criminal exploitation, including black boys, and that it was important to consider the context within which it was happening.

Detective Superintendent Chris Downey from GMP stated that data indicated disproportionality in the criminal justice system and that it was important to understand why this was happening. He informed Members about work with Youth Justice to try to understand the causes leading young people to this situation.

The Assistant Director (Safeguarding and Practice) highlighted that this report related to 2021/2022 and the context for the Partnership at that time, in relation to the pandemic, and the decision just prior to the pandemic to create a combined partnership in relation to child and adult safeguarding. She advised that, coming out of this period, it was recognised that some transformation work was needed, strengthening and articulating the vision for this combined partnership, and that the Steering Group was established to give leadership and direction in relation to that. In response to a Member's question, she outlined the work that had taken place to raise the dangers of co-sleeping and how learning from the joint thematic review with Trafford in relation to serious youth violence and exploitation was being taken forward and had influenced the serious youth violence strategy.

The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services advised Members that a lot of work was taking place in relation to Homelessness and that he could ensure that this progress was reflected in the report for 2022/2023. He reported that there

had been a reduction in families spending time in bed-and-breakfast and temporary accommodation, recognising that temporary accommodation was disruptive for children.

In response to a question about training, the MSP Manager reported that training had continued during the pandemic, delivered online, but that the MSP was looking to re-introduce face-to-face training, as they recognised the value of bringing people from different organisations together in one room to talk and share their experience. She informed Members about the development of the e-learning offer and recognised that this was useful for those who could not attend day-time training sessions, such as childminders and volunteers.

In response to a question from the Chair about the impact of the Domestic Abuse Strategy, Detective Superintendent Chris Downey from GMP advised that the number of arrests and prosecutions for domestic abuse in Manchester had trebled. He outlined how in the 47% of cases where a victim of domestic abuse would not support a prosecution, arrests were still being made and civil orders being used to exclude the perpetrator from the home for 28 days. He highlighted the importance of asking the victim what could be done to support them, not solely focusing on getting a prosecution. He drew Members' attention to the Encompass programme, where schools were informed about children living in households with domestic abuse. The Assistant Director (Safeguarding and Practice) highlighted the Safe and Together model for working with families affected by domestic abuse, including reference to behaviour change work for the perpetrator. The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services suggested that the Committee receive a report on Domestic Abuse and Children, including the Safe and Together model, to which the Chair agreed.

In response to a question from the Chair about the reintroduction of GMP's child protection teams, Detective Superintendent Chris Downey advised that these had previously be removed due to the austerity cuts, with the specialist officers re-assigned to deal with all types of crime, in addition to any child protection cases when these arose. He advised that it had been recognised that this had been a loss, that three child protection teams had now been established within Manchester and that the challenge was building up the specialist knowledge again.

Decisions

1. To note the progress of the safeguarding partnership arrangements in the city during this period.
2. To receive a report on Domestic Abuse and Children, including the Safe and Together model.

CYP/23/15 Children's Social Work Workforce update

The Committee considered the presentation of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which provided an update on the Children's Social Work Workforce.

Key points and themes in the presentation included:

- National context, including the Independent Children's Social Care Review and the potential risks and opportunities arising from the Government's response;
- Manchester's current position, including workforce demographics and workforce stability;
- Children's Social Worker workforce priorities; and
- Progress to date.

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

- The importance of clinical supervision;
- Making the workforce more representative of the communities they served at all levels, noting that in some areas there were higher levels of people without qualifications;
- Request for demographic data at different levels within the service, including senior leadership; and
- What was being done to retain experienced staff.

The Chair stated that she was arranging to meet with the Manchester Adult Education Service to discuss providing paths for people to enter social work.

The Deputy Strategic Director of Children's Services reported that a clinical supervision model was in place in relation to some areas of work, including complex safeguarding, and that good quality supervision was provided by social workers' line managers. He informed Members about the roll-out of Schwartz Rounds, group reflective practice forums giving staff an opportunity to reflect on the emotional and social aspects of their role and offered to provide further information on this at a later date. He agreed to provide Members with the requested demographic data in relation to staff at different levels within the service, while highlighting that there was more work to be done in relation to ethnicity and senior leadership roles. In response to a question about the use of agency staff, he advised that there were 46 agency staff but that these were not evenly spread across the service. He highlighted the apprenticeship vocational route to social work and reported that, as well as recruiting Manchester residents, there was also work taking place to recruit a more culturally diverse workforce. He advised that there had been some improvements with retention and highlighted the career framework and work to develop a post-qualifying programme for staff to support their further development, whether or not they chose to progress into management roles. The Assistant Director (Children's Social Care) explained how the Council utilised its relationship with the universities to attract social work students to come to work for the Council. The Chair expressed concern that the requirement for GCSE mathematics in order to study for a social work degree was a barrier for some students. The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services informed the Committee about the social work apprenticeship programme, developed in collaboration with Manchester Metropolitan University, and reported that apprentices could join the course and do their GCSE English and mathematics studies while they were undertaking the course.

The Chair recognised the progress that had been made so far and highlighted that Committee Members would be able to get a first-hand understanding of the current situation on their visit to frontline social work services, which was due to take place on 22 March 2023.

Decision

To note that the Deputy Strategic Director of Children's Services will provide Members with demographic data on social work staff at different levels within the service.

CYP/23/16 Manchester Our Children Sufficiency Strategy

The Committee considered the report and presentation of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which provided an update on the progress of the implementation of the 2020 – 22 Our Children's Sufficiency Strategy. It reported that the aim of the 2022 – 27 Strategy was to continue to embed the developed practice, sustaining and progressing the partnership approach to deliver innovative models of accommodation.

Key points and themes in the report and presentation included:

- Background information;
- Key outcomes; and
- Implementation timeline.

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

- To welcome how the Council was working innovatively to find solutions in a situation where the market had failed;
- Provision for asylum-seeking children;
- Seeking clarification on unregulated accommodation; and
- Young people from other local authorities being placed in the city.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People suggested that the Committee consider an item on unaccompanied asylum-seeking children at a future meeting, to which the Chair agreed.

The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services explained how the Council was working with partners in relation to placement sufficiency, including joint commissioning with the NHS. In response to a question from the Chair, he reported that 88 children were in external provision and that, while the cost of these placements was high, the Council had reduced its spending by having fewer children in external residential provision and reducing the number of children becoming Looked After. He explained that children's homes were registered with and regulated through Ofsted but that supported housing for young people aged 16 and over was unregulated; however, the Council did scrutinise this unregulated accommodation through its commissioning arrangements and from April 2023 this type of provision would need to register with Ofsted and from next year would be subject to regulation

and inspection by Ofsted. He reported that the Council was engaging with the providers to ensure that they registered with Ofsted.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Strategic Commissioning Lead reported that ethical providers were those which were not for profit or community interest companies or providers who had agreed to a fixed profit margin. She stated that local providers were also encouraged, as well as those which had worked with children previously and those which would commit to delivering social value as part of the contract. She informed Members about the preferred providers framework, which enabled the Council to work with providers that it knew and trusted, providing stability and building positive relationships. She confirmed that it was not uncommon for young people from other areas to be placed in the city and that there was a duty to notify the host authority when this happened. She informed Members that Greater Manchester authorities were working collaboratively on sufficiency and addressing commissioning difficulties and that Manchester had been able to share its learning with other Greater Manchester councils.

Decisions

1. That the Committee will continue to monitor this area of work.
2. To receive a report on new arrivals and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children at a future meeting.

CYP/23/17 One Education Limited - Update on Activities

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Education which outlined developments with One Education since the last report to scrutiny, in February 2015, its range of services currently offered to schools in Manchester and its plans for the future role it hoped to play in the life of school children in Manchester.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Overview of One Education;
- Current operations; and
- Future shape and operation.

Members asked about the main challenges the organisation was facing. Stuart Fern, Acting Chief Executive Officer of One Education, acknowledged comments from the Chair about the challenges presented by the academisation of schools and their use of in-house services; however, he advised that this also presented an opportunity and that One Education could offer consistency of service, expertise and an independent view, based on their breadth of experience. He recognised a Member's comments on the importance of recruitment and retention and highlighted the support from colleagues and the professional development that Educational Psychologists and other professionals could get from working for One Education rather than working in isolation for an academy. He stated that funding was a challenge and highlighted the aspirations outlined in the report to become a charitable organisation limited by guarantee which would enable them to apply for grant and charitable sector funding which was not currently available to them. He referred to One Education's strengths

in relation to pupil services and interventions, for example the music service, and how charitable status would enable them to obtain additional funding to improve children's lives. He highlighted that One Education would be moving their offices to Alexandra House, renting space from the Council. In response to a question from the Chair, he advised that one of the reasons for the choice of location was available parking because staff had to travel from the office to different schools during their working day.

The Chair thanked Mr Fern for attending the meeting.

Decision

To note the report.

CYP/23/18 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.