

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 24 May 2023

Present:

Councillor Reid – in the Chair

Councillors Alijah, N Ali, Amin, Bell, Cooley, Fletcher, Gartside, Hewitson, Judge, Lovecy, Ludford, McHale, Nunney and Sadler

Co-opted Voting Members:

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
Councillor T Robinson, Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care

Councillor Bano, Ward Councillor for Whalley Range

Tracey Forster, Lead Manager, Children's Community Health Services (CCHS)

Nicola Marsden, Assistant Director, CCHS

Louise Lee, Lead Allied Health Professional, CCHS

Apologies:

Canon S Mapledoram, Representative of the Diocese of Manchester

Ms L Smith, Primary Sector Teacher Representative

CYP/23/19 Minutes

The Chair welcomed the new Committee Members.

Decisions

1. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2023.
2. To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Ofsted Subgroup held on 15 March 2023.

CYP/23/20 Early Years and Health Visiting Service

The Committee considered the presentation of the Assistant Director (Children's Services), the Strategic Lead (Early Years) and Tracey Forster, Lead Manager (Children's Community Health Services), Central Manchester NHS Foundation Trust which provided an overview of Early Years and Health Visiting.

Key points and themes in the presentation included:

- Start Well Strategy and Partnership Board;

- Start Well presenting needs;
- Start Well data and impact; and
- Family Hubs Programme.

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

- To welcome the joined-up approach and all the different aspects of this work;
- Skills development for staff to help children who are presenting with high needs but have not yet been diagnosed with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND);
- Identification of children with dyslexia and dyspraxia;
- How were Housing colleagues, including social housing providers, involved in this, noting the impact of housing issues on families;
- Concern about recruitment and retention issues with Health Visitors, noting that this was a national problem;
- The location of Family Hubs and how accessible they would be for families; and
- Children arriving from Afghanistan who did not speak English and needed support.

In response to a Member's question about the Making Manchester Fairer Kickstarter Programme referred to in the presentation, the Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People reported that this had only been formally signed off two days ago and that Councillors would be informed about how this would be rolled out. He suggested that the Committee receive a report on Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and families fleeing Afghanistan and other countries where they were facing conflict or persecution, to which the Chair agreed. He highlighted some of the challenges facing Manchester families and some of the work the Council was doing to address this, including stating that he would send Members information on what was happening in Baby Week.

The Assistant Director (Children's Services) confirmed that her service would engage with Ward Councillors in relation to the roll-out of the Kickstarter Programme. In response to a question from another Member, she outlined how the Thriving Babies programme, which provided more intensive support to parents, linked in with the Early Help and Early Years Services, highlighting the increased investment in midwives to identify at an earlier stage parents who would need this more intensive support, and noting that, once they had progressed through the Thriving Babies programme, families would then still need some support from the Sure Start and Children's Centre Core Offer which, having built trust through the Thriving Babies programme, they would feel more able to access.

The Strategic Lead (Early Years) outlined work to increase the skills of the Early Years workforce to work with children with Personal, Social and Emotional issues and identify whether they needed specialist support and to identify children who needed extra support with communication and language and refer them to specialist services, where necessary. The Assistant Director (Children's Services) reported that Education colleagues were leading on work in relation to the Autism and

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) pathway and that further information on this could be provided.

The Assistant Director (Children's Services) reported that housing colleagues were involved in this work in a number of ways, including strategic involvement at board-level, joint work to identify families in need of extra help and support and work to respond to damp and disrepair problems. She highlighted local partnership working between hubs and housing providers, work to make connections in the private rented sector, practical support for families and work to reduce the number of families in temporary accommodation.

The Strategic Lead (Early Years) outlined some of the considerations taken into account when deciding on the location of the Family Hubs, including demographic data, cost-of-living priority wards, Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes, health outcomes, areas of multiple deprivation and the number of children eligible for the two-year-old offer; however, she advised that, while there would be buildings known as Family Hubs, services would be delivered across localities, rather than just from those buildings.

The Director of Education reported that there were currently higher levels of development delays in young children, including gross and fine motor development and speech and language. She advised that one of the biggest challenges at present was identifying what was delayed development because of the impact of the pandemic and what was due to an underlying disability. She reported that a lot of work was taking place in relation to this, including training for schools staff, webinars on the legacy of COVID-19 and access to educational psychologists, as well as targeted work in some schools, including ten intensive support schools which were receiving additional funding for interventions and additional access to speech and language therapy and educational psychology and 48 further schools which were receiving additional speech and language therapy and educational psychology support. She advised that the work at the moment was focusing on giving children what they needed to reach their developmental milestones rather than labelling them as having SEND at this stage as it was difficult to know which children did have SEND and which were not achieving their milestones due to the pandemic.

The Chair welcomed the progress made, the wide-ranging services and continuing improvement. She welcomed that the Council had retained Sure Start Centres when central Government had cut its funding. She praised the Imagination Library in Gorton and suggested that this should be available across the city. She expressed concern about the impact of lockdown on babies and young children and that some children were still not accessing the Early Years Offer. She also highlighted concerns about housing and home safety, advising that she had asked for further information on the impact of selective licensing in relation to her own ward. She also highlighted the importance of support for mothers with breastfeeding.

In response to a Member's comment about the number of Health Visitors and suggestion that the Government should be lobbied on this issue, the Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People advised that this was part of a wider problem with a lack of Government strategy on the NHS workforce, rather than being limited to Health Visitors. He suggested that he discuss with the Executive

Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care how to proceed with this. The Chair highlighted that there were also issues with recruiting childcare workers. She suggested that a broader workforce strategy report, including health visiting and childcare workers, could be requested, noting that consideration would need to be given to which scrutiny committee would receive this report.

Decisions

1. To request a further report at an appropriate time.
2. To request that the Committee receive a report on Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and families fleeing Afghanistan and other countries where they were facing conflict or persecution.
3. To request a report on workforce strategy, noting that further consideration will be needed on the scope of the report and which scrutiny committee should receive it.

[Councillor Alijah declared a personal interest, having accessed Early Help Services.]

CYP/23/21 Children's Community Health Services

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which provided an overview of CCHS and a short summary of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, considered the national and CCHS position post-COVID-19 for children and shared the current areas of focus for CCHS.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- CCHS within the Manchester Foundation Trust and Manchester Local Care Organisation;
- An overview of CCHS;
- The CCHS response to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Post COVID-19/living with COVID-19, the national position for children and the CCHS position;
- CCHS areas of focus; and
- Partnership workstreams.

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

- The Asthma Friendly Schools Project
- The take-up of baby immunisations;
- The Impact of the pandemic on young people's social and emotional development and the impact of dealing with this on the mental health of staff in schools and Alternative Provision;
- The impact of poverty and the cost-of-living crisis on children and families;
- The response to child obesity; and
- Children using e-cigarettes.

Nicola Marsden, Assistant Director, CCHS, reported that factors affecting the schools identified for the Asthma Friendly Schools Project were lack of green space and busy roads, which impacted on asthma. The Assistant Director (Children's Services) informed Members about partnership work on asthma, including Adult Social Care and Neighbourhoods Directorate, which was focused on prevention.

Nicola Marsden reported that GPs were responsible for baby immunisation and that there had been a lower uptake since the pandemic and that work was taking place at a local and national level to ensure positive, consistent messaging on immunisation. In response to a question about the HPV vaccine, she advised that there were concerns about the level of uptake of this, along with other vaccines; however, this was about to change from a two-immunisation programme to a one-immunisation programme which should have a positive impact on uptake. She also confirmed that, since 2018, the HPV vaccine had been available to both boys and girls. She recognised the Member's comments about the impact of the pandemic on young people's social and emotional development, commenting that similar issues were being seen by Health teams, and advised that the Healthy Schools Team were supporting schools with these issues. She advised that a lot of studies were taking place on the mental health impact of the pandemic.

In response to Members' comments and questions in relation to eyesight, Tracey Forster, Lead Manager, CCHS reported that a vision screening programme took place in Reception year and she noted that increased use of small screens during the pandemic, as well as increased screen time, could possibly induce myopia at an earlier age. The Chair stated that schools should encourage families to get their children's vision tested regularly.

In response to a Member's question about "ghost children", children who had not returned to school after the pandemic, the Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People suggested that this be considered in a separate report, to which the Chair agreed.

In response to a question about hearing tests, Nicola Marsden reported that there was a national programme for vision and hearing in Reception year and that there was also an audiology service available from newborn to 18 years of age and that health professionals going into schools could provide advice and signpost to services, as appropriate. In response to the question about obesity, she reported that Healthy Schools Programme shared positive messages and information on healthy eating and that the National Child Measurement Programme in Reception and Year 6 identified obesity issues. She informed Members about the Healthy Weight Team, which helped children who were severely obese through a 12-month programme of support for the child and their family, stating that the staffing team for this had been increased. She advised that the school nursing team and GPs could also provide help and advice. In response to the question about children vaping, she advised that healthy lifestyle messages were being shared and that initial research on the effects of e-cigarettes was concerning.

Decision

To receive a report on school attendance and, in particular, work taking place in relation children who have not returned to school after the pandemic.

[Councillor Nunney declared a disclosable pecuniary interest as an employee of Manchester Foundation Trust and left the room for this item.]

CYP/23/22 Re-establishment of the Ofsted Subgroup

The Committee considered the report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which provided the Committee with the proposed terms of reference and current work programme for the Subgroup. The Committee was asked to re-establish the Ofsted Subgroup for the municipal year 2023 - 2024 and agree the terms of reference, work programme and membership of the Subgroup.

Decisions

1. To re-establish the Ofsted Subgroup for the 2023 - 2024 municipal year and agree the terms of reference and work programme.
2. That Councillor Lovecy be appointed as Chair of the Ofsted Subgroup and that Councillors Bano, Bell, Fletcher, Hewitson, Ludford and Reid and Mr Yonis be appointed to the Subgroup.

CYP/23/23 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.