

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 6 March 2024

Present:

Councillor Reid – in the Chair
Councillors Amin, Bano, Bell, Fletcher, Gartside, Hewitson, Judge, Lovecy, Muse
Nunney, Sadler and Sharif Mahamed

Co-opted Voting Members:

Mr G Cleworth, Parent Governor Representative
Mr Y Yonis, Parent Governor Representative

Also present:

Councillor Bridges, Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People
Jordan Navarro, Manchester Parent Carer Forum

Apologies:

Councillors N Ali, Ludford and McHale
Ms S Davies, Parent Governor Representative
Canon S Mapledoram, Representative of the Diocese of Manchester
Ms L Smith, Primary Sector Teacher Representative

CYP/24/15 Urgent Business - Wetherby Young Offender Institution

The Chair invited the Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) to address the Committee on the recent reports regarding the treatment of a young female detained at the Wetherby Young Offender Institution. He stated that following the reporting in the press he had contacted the Governor and had received confirmation that the incident was subject to an internal review and the appropriate safeguarding response had been initiated by Leeds Council. He confirmed that no children from Manchester were involved in the incident.

The Chair commented that both herself and the Chair of the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee would be writing a joint letter to the appropriate bodies to articulate their concerns regarding the incident reported.

Decision

To note the oral update from the Strategic Director (Children and Education Services).

CYP/24/16 Minutes

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2024.

CYP/24/17 SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) Annual Report

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) which provided an overview of the proposed reforms outlined in the SEND

and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan 2023 and how Manchester was working in coproduction with parents/carers, young people and partners across education, health and care to test the reforms.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Providing an introduction and background;
- Information relating to the Department for Education Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Change Programme;
- An update on the Local Area Inclusion Plan (LAIP) and reflections on this;
- A summary of findings from Manchester Local area's LAIP; and
- Conclusions and actions.

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

- The importance of early identification, particularly of hidden disabilities;
- The relationship between screen time and speech and language development;
- The role of Health Visitors in identifying need, especially for those children not in a nursery / early years setting;
- Noting that the increase from April 2024 for eligible working families to be able to access 15 hours of early education from the term after their child's 2nd birthday would assist with early identification and diagnosis;
- The need to consider all good practice in relation to early identification and diagnosis;
- How did Manchester compare to other comparable cities in regard to early identification;
- How would the Local Area Inclusion Plan improve the outcomes of young people;
- What were the reasons for the increase in the numbers of SEND children and how did Manchester compare to other comparable cities;
- The need for more Education Psychologists to meet demand; and
- Calling for adequate government funding to support and deliver the ambitions described in the report.

The SEND Lead commented that the SEND reforms were focused on prevention work and early intervention. She commented that the Local Area Inclusion Plan testing had been launched in September 2023 and that the Plan would provide transparency of this work with all stakeholders included. Actions would be developed and reported against to drive improvements in this area of activity, especially in regard to early identification. She commented that currently 6% of children in Manchester had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), adding that this was comparable to other cities with similar levels of deprivation. She also commented on the impact of the pandemic on children and young people and their development, especially in regard to speech, language and communication.

The Assistant Director of Education referred to the Kickstarter projects that were being delivered through Public Health funding, as part of the wider Making

Manchester Fairer work that had seen additional resources allocated to support young people in the most deprived wards in the city. She commented that they were also working with relevant partners, including CAHMS and Health Visitors more widely on the issue of early identification, noting that appropriate support could then be offered prior to any formal assessment and diagnosis.

The Director of Education referred to an event that had been held recently on Early Years that had included consideration of Special Education Needs. She commented that there was a significant amount of work and activity already underway within early year settings, including childminders on the topic of early identification. The Chair commented that members of the Committee should be invited to any similar future events.

The Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) informed the Committee that discussions were currently ongoing with the NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board regarding Health Visitors and suggested that an update report on this topic be submitted to the Committee at an appropriate time.

The Assistant Director of Education stated that initial teacher training included SEND identification training and this was also included in the Early Careers Framework that newly qualified teachers were required to complete within the first two years of practice. She stated that Educational Psychologist services were commissioned via One Education and individual schools could also commission their own services as appropriate. She added that Educational Psychologists in training, under the supervision of a fully qualified Educational Psychologists were also used. She stated that advice sessions had also been arranged online for schools that were facilitated by Educational Psychologist and these had proven to be very well received. She commented that additional Educational Psychologist support had been provided via the Kickstarter pilot previously referred to.

The Chair of the Parent Carer Forum made reference to the Social Attention and Communication Surveillance (SACS) tool for the early identification of autism pilot. He commented that this had been successful in early identification and improved diagnostic pathways for young people. He stated that discussions were currently ongoing with Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust with the intention to roll this out across the city. He also referred to the success and benefits of the Dingley's Promise Early Years Inclusion Project.

The Director of Education advised the Committee that a new specialist school would be built in north Manchester with the completion date expected in the summer of 2025, with it opening in the September of that year. She said that the school was being built by the Council and this would then be transferred to the Prospere Learning Trust, noting the positive comments from the Committee regarding the provision at the Grange School that they also ran. In addition, she made reference to the increase in specialist provision that would be provided within two existing mainstream schools.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People made reference to the positive response and action taken in Manchester on the issue of SEND, making reference to the collaboration between the Public Health and Education. He

commented that this was in the absence of government direction or support on the issue. He stated that despite this, Manchester through the involvement in the Local Area Inclusion Plan Pilot had taken the opportunity to inform national policy. He commented that it was important to recognise and acknowledge the significant pressures all partners were experiencing that could curtail full delivery on the ambitions described.

Decision

To note the report.

CYP/24/18 Child Friendly City Update

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) which provided an update on work to become a Child Friendly City, including information on the chosen 'badges' for Manchester to focus on, the mandatory badges and the action plans for progressing and evidencing progress against each respective badge.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Manchester's badge selections;
- Mandatory badges; and
- Delivery stage.

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

- To welcome the report and the work taking place;
- To welcome the number of children and young people who had been involved in the discovery phase of this work;
- To emphasise the importance of children and young people being able to influence policies and strategies that affected them and discussion of options of ways this could take place, such as a children and young people's assembly;
- That planning was a key area where the voices and needs of children and young people needed to be integrated into decision-making on developments across the city;
- Positive comments about the children's rights training;
- That Councillors needed to ensure that they listen equally to the voices of children and young people as to the voices of adults, in particular, in relation to the development of local areas;
- The positive impact on pupils and the city of schools becoming Rights Respecting Schools; and
- Barriers to young people gaining work experience.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People agreed that it was important that children and young people be involved at the highest level of decision-making and outlined some of the work which had been taking place to identify the best way to do this, in particular, the development of Area Youth Forums

in different parts of the city. He advised that further consideration would be given to how the Forums could be brought together on a citywide level and have input into scrutiny meetings and Council meetings. He highlighted that the work to become a Child Friendly City was much wider than Children's Services. He informed Members about conversations which were taking place with colleagues in Strategic Development, who were looking into how young people who could be more involved in local design and advised that all Ward Councillors had a responsibility to ensure that the voice of children and young people was taken into account in decision-making and that the children's rights training would assist with this.

The Director of Neighbourhood Delivery reported that Manchester had a strong Youth Council, which would continue; however, he advised that there was a need to introduce better engagement with a wider range of young people at a neighbourhood level so the Area Youth Forums would be rolled out from March 2024, working with youth providers in the area. He reported that parks were important to young people and connected strongly with the top three badges identified by Manchester's children and young people for the city to focus on are (Safe and Secure, Place and Healthy) and that work was taking place on the mechanisms through which young people would be consulted on parks and open spaces. He advised that consideration was also being given to the best ways that different groups of young people, such as those with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), could be engaged with.

The Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) reported that children and young people had said that the areas where they lived were important to them which was why the initial work was focused on this. He advised that the Child Friendly City work was intended to result in long-term changes in the culture, planning and decision-making in Manchester, beyond achieving the accreditation.

The Chair reported that the Council had passed a motion to become a Co-operative Council and advised that this approach should be incorporated into the work to become a Child Friendly City. She also highlighted the role of the police in treating children and young people with respect. She emphasised the importance of Members going into schools and colleges to speak to children and young people, as many had done during Our Year, stating that Members and officers should continue to do this. She cited an example of work to create a park on disused land and advised that, when new apartment blocks were being developed, small parks and play areas, including ones which were accessible for disabled children, should be built, using Social Value. She also highlighted the role of Play Streets.

In response to comments from the Chair, the Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) informed Members about work to challenge the criminal age of responsibility. He highlighted Greater Manchester Police's Child-Centred Policing Plan for Manchester and reported that the Chief Superintendent for Manchester would be invited to be one of the Child Friendly City Programme Champions. He expressed a commitment for businesses to be involved in this work and reported that young people were a priority group for Social Value. He advised that Social Value could provide not just resources but also opportunities, such as work experience, particularly for children who were less well served and who did not have these opportunities.

The Child Friendly City Lead welcomed Members' comments and stated that officers would make sure that they were reflected in the action plans.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People acknowledged the difficulties with obtaining work experience and advised that the Council was investing in a dedicated resource to match businesses with schools and colleges.

Decision

To welcome this work, noting that Members' comments will be reflected in the final action plans.

CYP/24/19 Manchester Sensory Support Service Commission

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) which provided an update to a previous paper brought forward in March 2022 in which Executive gave approval for officers to identify a future provider for Manchester Sensory Support Service through an open tender process. The process had now been completed and the contract for this service had been awarded to Big Life Schools Multi Academy Trust. The process of transferring the service to this new provider had been initiated and the plan (subject to due diligence) was that it will be completed by September 2024.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Background information;
- Future governance of the Sensory Support Service;
- Considerations in the specification for a new managing organisation;
- Performance indicators and reporting requirements;
- Outcome of commissioning process; and
- Proposed timeline.

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

- What experience did Big Life Schools Multi Academy Trust have in running similar services;
- What monitoring would be done of the service, especially for those students taking their GCSEs;
- Where would staff working in the service be located; and
- Why had the decision been taken to move away from the Lancastrian Sensory Support Service.

The Assistant Director of Education stated that there would be no change to the frontline service provided to students, including the delivery of careers advice and the family support workers, adding that this was included in the service specification as part of the procurement process. She confirmed that TUPE arrangements for existing staff would be applied and if there was a failure during the due diligence process that this would result in a retender process, with no disruption to service. She commented that commissioning mechanisms were established to provide ongoing assessment

and evaluation of service delivery post transition. She commented that the service had outgrown the Lancastrian Sensory Support Service. She said that the staff, who were agile workers were currently based in Alexandra House and details of where staff would be located in the future was yet to be finalised, adding that staff and trade unions would continue to be consulted with.

Decision

To note the report.

CYP/24/20 Education Strategy

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) which described a draft education strategy for Manchester from 2024 to 2030.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Contextual information;
- An overview of the draft education strategy, which was appended to the report; and
- Next steps.

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

- To strongly support the draft Education Strategy;
- To welcome the list of opportunities that children and young people educated in the city would have access to, the focus on the development of the whole child, not just on examination results, and that this would address the divide between the children who had greater access to these opportunities and those that currently faced barriers to accessing these opportunities;
- The increasing numbers of children with SEND and that the reasons for this should be investigated;
- Ensuring equity across different parts of the city;
- The challenges presented by contaminated land in the city when building new schools or leisure facilities and the need for good links with Planning;
- How the Strategy would address potential challenges such as changes of Government and of national education policy;
- Addressing disparities and ensuring equitable access to educational opportunities and experiences;
- The importance of raising the aspirations of all children and young people and that schools needed to have the same aspirations for all pupils and not expect less from children from disadvantaged backgrounds;
- The importance of soft skills; and
- The importance of intersectionality and that disadvantage was not only about pupils who were receiving Free School Meals.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People reported that the Strategy outlined the vision for education in Manchester and advised that there would be more detailed plans on how this would be achieved. He informed Members about work that was already taking place to identify ways to remove the barriers that prevented some children and young people from accessing the experiences listed in the Strategy, for example, the cost of residential trips.

The Director of Education informed Members that disadvantaged children in Manchester did significantly better than those in other parts of the country but that there was still a gap between the outcomes for disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children. She highlighted the importance of cultural capital in improving outcomes and in supporting schools to provide that offer to all pupils. She reported that business involvement in the Child Friendly City work provided the opportunity to access both funding and opportunities that children would not otherwise have. She advised that the vision and approach set out in the Education Strategy could be taken forward, regardless of changes in Government and national education policy.

Decision

To support the draft Education Strategy.

CYP/24/21 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.