

## **Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

### **Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 26 June 2024**

#### **Present:**

Councillor Gartside – in the Chair  
Councillors Amin, E Bell, Fletcher, Jafri, Lovecy, Mandongwe, McHale, Muse, Nunney, Sadler and Sharif Mahamed

#### **Co-opted Voting Members:**

Mr G Cleworth, Parent Governor Representative  
Ms S Davies, Parent Governor Representative  
Mr Y Yonis, Parent Governor Representative

#### **Also present:**

Councillor Reid, Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People

#### **Apologies:**

Councillor N Ali  
Canon S Mapledoram, Representative of the Diocese of Manchester  
Ms L Smith, Primary Sector Teacher Representative

### **CYP/24/27 Appointment of Chair for the Meeting**

As the position of Chair was vacant, the Committee Support Officer asked for nominations for a Member to chair the meeting. A Member nominated Councillor Gartside, which was seconded by another Member and agreed by the Committee.

#### **Decision**

To appoint Councillor Gartside as Chair for the meeting.

### **CYP/24/28 Minutes**

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair congratulated Councillor Reid on her appointment as Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People.

#### **Decision**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2024.

### **CYP/24/29 Review and Refresh of Children & Young People's Plan (CYPP)**

The Committee considered a report of the Acting Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) which provided information on the work that had taken place by Manchester Children and Young People's Board to review the Children & Young People's Plan 2021-2024 and to refresh the Children & Young People's Plan for 2024-2027. The Children & Young People's Plan was the strategic plan of the Children and Young People's Board, one of the key partnership boards that underpinned the Our Manchester Strategy.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Contextual information;
- The review of the 2021 - 2024 Plan;
- UNICEF Child Friendly City bid;
- The refresh of the Plan for 2024 - 2027; and
- Next steps.

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

- Ensuring that young people were equipped with the skills that the city needed, in particular young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND);
- The learning from 2021 – 2024 and the data in relation to the priorities, for example, on whether children had a trusted adult and felt happy and safe;
- That there appeared to be less emphasis on climate change in the new priorities, including a suggestion that the wording on this could be strengthened and reference made to the 2038 target; and
- How school exclusions and child obesity would be addressed through the new Plan.

The Director of Education explained that a well-developed approach to skills had been established prior to the pandemic and that work on the Inclusion Strategy and the Education Strategy was reinvigorating this work. She reported that special schools in the city had embraced the Skills for Life approach and built it into their curriculum and highlighted the high-quality post-16 provision at Manchester's special schools. She provided examples of the enterprises that young people at these schools were running, such as cafes and allotments, and encouraged Members to visit. She reported that a lot of work was taking place on supported internships, with about 100 young people with additional needs currently on one of these internships, and plans to grow this further, including a pilot with the Department for Education (DfE) to extend this to young people who did not have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). In response to a question about plans for provision for children with SEND, she advised that this level of detail was not included in the Children and Young People's Plan, which was a high-level document, but that a lot of work was taking place on this and she suggested that officers could bring a specific report on this in the autumn.

The Acting Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) reported that the new priorities were a development from the previous priorities, with many similarities between them. He informed Members that the learning from 2021 - 2024 had been that the Children's Board needed to be a dynamic body with a wide range of representatives and broad agenda so that all organisations and professional groups which worked with children and young people could contribute to the Plan and priorities. He informed Members that the data gathered was both quantitative and qualitative and provided examples of data sources for identifying if children had a trusted adult. He highlighted the data which would result from the Children's Social Care National Framework, which was due to be considered as a later item on the

agenda. He advised that information on the progress made in addressing the Climate Emergency would be covered in the report on the Education Climate Change Action Plan which was due to be considered at the Committee's next meeting. He highlighted that the Environment had been identified as a cross-cutting theme in the 2024 – 2027 Children and Young People's Plan, drawing Members' attention to the graphic at 6.2 in Appendix 1. In response to a Member's question about child obesity, he advised that there was a lot of work taking place in relation to this, particularly in schools, and that this would remain an outcome indicator for the Plan in future. He suggested that the action plan to address this and other indicators of health be considered at a future meeting.

The Director of Education highlighted that Climate Change was being addressed through the work to become a Child Friendly City, which was referenced in the report, and through the Education Strategy. In response to a Member's question on active travel, she advised that this would be included in the Education Climate Change Action Plan report being considered at next month's meeting. She reported that there had been an increase in fixed-term and permanent school exclusions this year, both locally and nationally. She informed Members that her service was doing a lot of work in relation to this, highlighting the outreach offer which special schools and the Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) provided to other schools, targeting this support at the children and young people who were most at risk of exclusion, and the SAFE mentoring programme, funded by the DfE, and advised that the impact of this work would be evaluated. She also informed Members about the Autism in Schools programme and the impact of this in preventing children with autism from being excluded.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People advised that poverty was her number one priority, highlighting practical issues facing many families such as affording heating, food, housing and school uniforms. She suggested that the Committee could consider having themed meetings based on the overarching themes of the Plan. She stated that she would be meeting regularly with senior officers to discuss work in relation to these themes and encouraged Members to approach her about issues of concern to them, including problems with their ward. She highlighted the importance of School Crossing Patrols and safe travel to school.

The Chair welcomed that reducing school exclusions had been identified as a priority and stated that she looked forward to receiving an update on the impact of the work to address this.

## **Decision**

To note the report.

[Councillor Mandongwe declared a personal interest as the founder of the Dimobi Children's Disability Trust, which partnered with Manchester schools.]

## **CYP/24/30 Kinship Care**

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) which presented Manchester's response to the first ever National Kinship Care Strategy for England and its commitments to Kinship Carers and Communities.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- The benefits of kinship care;
- What was known about Kinship Carers and Kinship Children, nationally and within Manchester; and
- Main issues and how the Council was responding to them.

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

- To welcome the report, noting the benefits of children remaining within their family;
- What support was available for Kinship Carers in caring for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND);
- Raising awareness of Kinship Care in Asian communities;
- The geographical spread of Kinship Carers;
- That housing was often an issue for family members who would be willing to become Kinship Carers and what was being done to address this; and
- Positive comments about an Eid party for refugees organised by the Council.

The Assistant Director (Provider Services) reported that, where a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) was being applied for, a plan was developed, in consultation with the proposed carer, and presented to the court. She advised that carers could apply to the Adoption Support Fund for assistance with supporting additional needs. She informed Members that the new Strategy would make it easier for families with SGOs to access support. She reported that there were few breakdowns of SGO arrangements in Manchester and she encouraged Members that were aware of any specific cases they were concerned about to contact her outside of the meeting so that she could look into this. She reported that her service was working in partnership with the Housing Service to identify solutions to housing issues and that they were seeking feedback from Kinship Carers and other recruited carers on the housing issues they faced. In response to Members' comments, she clarified that Kinship Carers did not have to be a relative of the child and could be, for example, family friends, teachers or community members; however, the majority of Kinship Carers were grandparents.

In response to a Member's question, the Service Lead (Fostering) confirmed that the proportion of Looked After Children in Kinship Care arrangements had increased. She reported that there were a number of Asian children living with Asian Kinship Carers and that a lot of work was taking place with Asian communities at present to raise awareness of fostering in general. She advised that her team were always open to doing more of this and that they would include reference to Kinship Care to increase awareness of this. She reported that the areas where there were the

highest number of Kinship Carers correlated with the areas where more children were coming into care.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People informed the Committee of the work of MP Andrew Gwynne to secure improvements for Kinship Carers and she highlighted funding and housing issues. She advised that many families were likely to have informal arrangements in place which were not known to Children's Services and that awareness should be raised of formal arrangements.

The Acting Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) drew Members' attention to the relationship between this work and the priority in the Children and Young People's Plan "to make sure children and young people are kept safe and feel safe in their communities". He clarified the difference between the formal role of Kinship Carer and informal care arrangements.

## **Decision**

To note the report.

## **CYP/24/31 Domestic Abuse and Children**

The Committee considered a report and presentation of the Acting Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) which provided information on the approach being taken to support Manchester's children who had been impacted by domestic abuse.

Key points and themes in the report and presentation included:

- Values and aims;
- The Domestic Abuse Children's Directorate Action Plan;
- Local Domestic Abuse Clinics;
- Safety plans;
- Domestic Abuse Toolkit;
- Key operational, strategic and partnership meetings; and
- Impact of this work.

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

- Community trauma, for example, the impact of young people witnessing violence in their local community;
- The psychological impact of domestic abuse on children;
- Repeat perpetrators of domestic abuse; and
- The pressure and emotional impact on Social Workers and how they were being supported.

In response to a Member's question, the Acting Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) reported that the three localities for the Domestic Abuse Clinics were Longsight, Wythenshawe and Harpurhey. In response to the Member's point about community trauma, he advised that, while this did not fall with the scope of the Domestic Abuse work, this was an important point about how organisations

understood and responded to the impact of adverse experiences in the community. He reported that Council staff were increasingly aware of this and used this knowledge in their interactions with children and young people who they engaged with, and that schools had a very important role in this, advising that school leaders had responded positively to adverse experiences affecting their pupils; however, he informed members that there was room for improvement in how children and young people were supported which required the Council and schools to work with communities on the best way to do this.

The Assistant Director (Central Locality) advised that the Domestic Abuse Toolkit would include peer-on-peer and child-on-adult abuse. He informed Members about work taking place in relation to trauma-informed practice, including working closely with schools. He reported on work with perpetrators to change behaviour patterns. In response to comments on support for families affected by domestic abuse, he highlighted the role that Early Help could play, alongside other partner organisations.

The Acting Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) outlined how Social Workers were supported through professional supervision, a culture of camaraderie and support and initiatives such as a therapy dog, mindfulness, psychologist debriefings, collective circles and the employee welfare scheme.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People reported that a lot of progress had been made on how domestic abuse was responded to, including support for the children affected, but that funding cuts to policing had had a negative impact.

## **Decision**

To note the report and to receive an update at an appropriate time, including on work with schools.

## **CYP/24/32 Children's Social Care National Framework**

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) which provided information on the Government's strategy for reforming children's social care (Stable Homes, Built on Love), including the introduction of a new Children's Social Care National Framework and a new Children's Social Care Dashboard.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Background information;
- The Department for Education's (DFE's) proposed indicators, based on the information available at present, and identified gaps; and
- The Council's response.

In response to comments from the Chair, the Performance and Insight Manager (Children's Services) reported that the national dashboard would be published on an annual basis but the Council would also have a monthly dashboard, for internal use, which would not be in the public domain. She informed the Committee that, in

addition to the data gathered for the dashboard, the Performance, Research and Intelligence (PRI) service also monitored softer outcomes, and Early Help.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People highlighted how in 2014 the Committee had not been aware of the extent to the issues that Children's Services was experiencing, until it was judged to be inadequate by Ofsted. She emphasised the importance of the Service being open and transparent with the Committee and the Committee effectively scrutinising officers and the Executive Member. She encouraged Members to approach her with any issues they became aware of.

### **Decision**

To request a further report at an appropriate time as the dashboard is developing.

### **CYP/24/33 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.