

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 9 October 2024

Present:

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

Co-opted Voting Members:

Mr G Cleworth, Parent Governor Representative

Also present:

Councillor Reid, Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People
Teacher and Young Carers from The Barlow RC High School

Apologies:

Councillors N Ali and Sadler
Ms S Davies, Parent Governor Representative
Ms L Smith, Primary Sector Teacher Representative
Mr Y Yonis, Parent Governor Representative

CYP/24/45 Interests

Councillor Mandongwe declared a personal interest as a trustee of the Dimobi Children's Disability Trust and Dimobi Women's Trust. Councillor Foley declared a personal interest as an employee of the Carbon Literacy Trust. Councillor Amin declared a personal interest as a trustee of Youth Bank International. Members were advised to declare interests if they were relevant to a specific agenda item.

CYP/24/46 Minutes

Decision

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2024 be approved as a correct record.

CYP/24/47 Young Carers Strategy

The Committee considered the report of the Acting Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) which provided an overview of the refreshed Young Carers Strategy 2024-2030.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Background information;
- Pathways and safeguarding; and
- Priorities for 2024/2025.

The Committee was shown two videos, a video on the new Strategy presented by Manchester Young Carers and an animation 'Arlo's New Friends' which was aimed at helping primary-age Young Carers share their experiences. The Committee welcomed Young Carers from The Barlow RC High School to the meeting.

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

- To welcome the refreshed Strategy;
- Whether it was the strength of the Strategy and what was offered to Young Carers which encouraged more to come forward and had led to the rise in the number of recognised Young Carers in Manchester;
- Under-identification of Young Carers, who were likely to need support, including support with their mental health;
- Parents not wanting their children to be labelled as Young Carers, including regarding it as normal for older children to look after younger siblings and do housework;
- Young Carers' Champions and the role of experienced Young Carers in providing peer support;
- Why 20% of schools did not have a Young Carers' Champion;
- That Manchester Young Carers were significantly more likely than the total Manchester school population to be White British and how this could be addressed;
- Large families where more than one child had caring responsibilities;
- Ensuring that different agencies, including schools and social services, worked together to provide meaningful support; and
- The impact of being a Young Carer on young people's education.

The Young Carers Operational Lead agreed with comments that the Young Carers Strategy and the resources being allocated to this area were likely to be encouraging more Young Carers to come forward, resulting in higher numbers. She advised that Young Carers were celebrated and a strengths-based approach was being taken, avoiding stigmatising them. In relation to parents not wanting their child to be labelled as a Young Carer, she advised that sensitive conversations were needed but that children and young people could access groups and support without accepting the label of Young Carer. She clarified that any adult who had contact with children in any role could become a Young Carers' Champion and that peer support was a natural result of bringing Young Carers in school together.

The SEND Engagement and Young Carers Lead reported that this was a partnership approach so that, whatever organisation came into contact with children and young people, there could be someone there who had received training and could recognise that they were a Young Carer; however, she advised that there were still a lot more Young Carers who had not yet been identified so this work needed to continue.

Regarding the 20% of schools which did not have a Young Carers' Champion, the Young Carers Operational Lead advised that these were schools which her team had not yet had chance to work with on this but that every school which had been engaged with had responded positively. In response to comments about the demographic of identified Young Carers, she reported that work was taking place

across the city and that, as well, as most schools being involved, anyone receiving funding from the Council for youth and play service or half-term activities was required to have an awareness and understanding of Young Carers; however, she recognised that there were barriers for some communities and advised that this was covered in the training. She outlined how awareness and training on Young Carers was being rolled out to a range of agencies, such as libraries, childminders, doctors' surgeries, museums, football clubs and charities. She advised that the Strategy focussed on identifying Young Carers at an early stage, whatever the extent of their caring responsibilities, having discussions with and supporting them, including on self-care and mental health, and, through this early intervention, preventing negative impact from caring responsibilities.

In response to a Member's question about the Young Carers My Plan, a teacher from The Barlow RC High School reported that, when the new version had been introduced the previous year, it had been prioritised for pupils who would be transitioning from Year 11 to Year 12, as it was a particularly useful document at transition points; however, she advised that it would be rolled out across all the different year groups this year.

In response to a question from the Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People, Young Carers from The Barlow said that they would like lunchtime activities to be more than the current twice a week, training for the community and for people to understand the experiences of young carers in the community and school. A Young Carer said that it was good that they knew who to go to in school for support and that Young Carers had a voice at their school.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People advised that a framework was needed across Greater Manchester and that she would be taking this forward, commenting that a national framework would also be beneficial. She stated that places of worship should be engaged with and that she would be discussing Young Carers with the Youth and Play Team. She advised that a lot of Members were School Governors and could support engagement with the 20% of schools which were not already involved in this work. She highlighted the importance of the integration of Children's and Adults Services.

The SEND Engagement and Young Carers Lead advised that there was a risk that being a Young Carer could impact on children's educational outcomes and that this was why the work was taking place to identify Young Carers at an early stage and enable schools to work with families to make sure the right support was in place so that it did not impact on their education.

The Chair thanked the Young Carers for attending the meeting and praised the amazing work they were doing.

Decisions

1. To recommend a Greater Manchester Framework for Young Carers.
2. To recommend that faith groups be engaged with in relation to Young Carers.

3. To welcome that the Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People will be meeting with the Youth and Play Team in relation to this work.
4. To request a list of the 20% of schools which do not yet have a Young Carers' Champion and that Members who are School Governors should raise this with their schools.

CYP/24/48 How is Manchester addressing the impact of disadvantage on educational outcomes for our children and young people?

The Committee considered the report and presentation of the Acting Strategic Director (Children and Education Services) which outlined how the Council aimed to close the gap in educational outcomes for disadvantaged children and young people by working together with schools and partners to take targeted action as set out in the Education Strategy which was published in the summer.

Key points and themes in the report and presentation included:

- The Manchester context;
- The impact of disadvantage on educational outcomes;
- Action to reduce the impact of disadvantage on educational outcomes;
- The Manchester Education Strategy; and
- Cultural capital.

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

- To welcome the work that was being done;
- The impact of the pandemic and lockdowns, noting that schools in Manchester and the north-west had been particularly badly affected;
- Engaging with parents who did not view school as important, for example, parents who allowed their children to skip school;
- The benefits of free activities such as music and swimming;
- That some families who were above the threshold for free school meals were still struggling financially but did not receive the same support;
- The gap at Key Stage 4 between disadvantaged and less disadvantaged pupils;
- Writing skills;
- How much impact could the Council have when so many children attended academies, rather than local authority-maintained schools; and
- The importance of Early Years and school-readiness.

The Director of Education reported that, while educational outcomes had been negatively impacted by the pandemic, they were now improving year-on-year. She reported that during the pandemic, when schools had not been open to most children, this had most negatively impacted the more disadvantaged children. She advised Members that Manchester had been particularly badly affected due to higher levels of deprivation and longer lockdowns and that, while schools made their best efforts to educate pupils at home, for many children the conditions at home were not conducive to learning. She advised that some children were still not attending

regularly since the pandemic. She informed Members that writing skills had been particularly affected by lockdowns, as these skills were more difficult to teach through online learning than other key skills such as reading and mathematics, and she advised that schools were working hard to address this.

The Assistant Director of Education informed Members about work with the Education Endowment Foundation and the Manchester Research School to identify the barriers to writing and reported that the Council had recently been granted some funding for an Improving Early Writing programme, targeting schools in the most disadvantaged areas and pupils whose writing skills were not developing, advising that this programme would start in January 2025. In response to a Member's question, she advised that research indicated that cursive writing was beneficial for children. She reported that Manchester had a strong Early Years sector with 97% of settings judged to be good or better, that the Council supported the quality and sufficiency of the sector, and that the Kickstarter, which was the next item on the agenda, focussed on Early Years. In response to a Member's question, she advised that there was a large body of research on cultural capital and the impact on attainment and success in the workplace.

In response to comments about working with families, the Director of Education advised that working with the whole family was central to the Kickstarter Project and was achieving positive outcomes and that work to improve attendance in Wythenshawe involved the Family Hubs and Children's Centres and work with parents. In response to comments about eligibility for free school meals, she reported that, in Manchester, the children who were not eligible for free school meals (after Key Stage 1) and who were not classed as 'disadvantaged' were not 'advantaged' but that eligibility was based on national criteria. She reported that her service worked with all schools, including academies, and that academies were generally very supportive of this work, highlighting the case study in the presentation focusing on the work of Manchester Communication Academy in Harpurhey. In response to a Member's question, she advised that the aim of this work was to reduce – and then eliminate – the gap in outcomes between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children but that a range of other measures were also monitored, for example, destination data and the number of young people who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). In response to a Member's question, she informed Members about BREE (Bringing together schools and employers) which was being launched later in the year, advising that further information was in the Post-16 Education Employment Training Strategic Plan 2022-25 – Progress Update report which had been considered at the previous day's Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee meeting. In response to a question on supplementary schools, she advised that there was an expectation that school sites should be part of the community and available for community use. In response to a question about Alternative Provision and the use of minibuses for residential trips, she advised that she would check with the Commissioning Team on this.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People highlighted the pressures on teachers and retention issues and reported that white working-class boys were under-achieving. She reported that the Leader was in discussions with the new Government about what Manchester needed to address child poverty and the issues facing the city, advising that the new Chancellor of the Exchequer had

announced free breakfast clubs for primary school children. The Executive Member outlined a number of other issues that she would be lobbying the Government on, including changing the curriculum, overhauling Key Stage 2 Standard Assessment Tests (SATs), universal free school meals and changes to government-funded childcare.

Decision

To receive an update on the Improving Early Writing programme at the Committee's January 2025 meeting.

CYP/24/49 Making Manchester Fairer Children's Kickstarter Scheme

The Committee considered the report and presentation of the Director of Education which provided a progress update on the implementation and delivery of the Making Manchester Fairer Kickstarter Scheme - Improving Health Equity for Children and Young People – Children's element.

Key points and themes in the report and presentation included:

- An overview of the model;
- The impact of the scheme; and
- Plans for Year 2 (2024/25).

In response to a Member's question, the Assistant Director of Education agreed to provide a list of the ten schools which were receiving intensive support. Members discussed children with hearing problems, including those waiting for NHS treatment, the impact this could have on their education and speech and language development and whether a more joined-up approach with health services was needed. The Assistant Director of Education acknowledged the impact of hearing problems and stated that she would look further into this issue, including speak to Speech and Language Therapists about how this was picked up. The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People advised that she would raise this through the Health and Wellbeing Board and with the Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care.

In response to a question about children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) transitioning to adulthood, the Assistant Director of Education reported that the Preparing for Adulthood Team started planning for this for children with SEND from around the age of 14, working in partnership with other services, and that young people with SEND could stay in education until the age of 25. She outlined some of the pathways available to them, including courses at mainstream and specialist colleges and schools, supported internships and work experience.

Decision

To receive an update at a future meeting.

CYP/24/50 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.

Committee Members were invited to join the Ofsted Subgroup. Councillor Collins agreed to join the Subgroup. The Director of Education advised that officers would provide an update on changes to the Ofsted inspection framework at the Subgroup's next meeting.

Decisions

1. To note the report and agree the work programme.
2. That Councillor Collins be appointed to the Ofsted Subgroup.