

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2019

Present:

Councillor Stone – in the Chair
Councillors Alijah, Cooley, Hewitson, Kilpatrick, Lovecy, McHale, Madeleine Monaghan, Reeves, Reid, Sadler and Wilson

Co-opted Voting Members:

Ms Z Derraz, Parent Governor Representative

Co-opted Non Voting Members:

Mr L Duffy, Secondary Sector Teacher Representative
Ms J Fleet, Primary Sector Teacher Representative

Also present:

Councillor Bridges, Executive Member for Children and Schools
Detective Chief Inspector Richard Eales, Greater Manchester Police (GMP)

Apologies:

Councillors Sameem Ali and T Judge
Ms S Barnwell, Parent Governor Representative
Mrs J Miles, Diocese of Salford Representative
Dr W Omara, Parent Governor Representative

CYP/19/50 New Committee Members

The Chair welcomed the new Co-opted Members of the Committee, Ms Derraz and Ms Fleet. He informed Members that a third new Co-opted Member, Ms Barnwell had sent her apologies for the meeting.

The Chair informed Members that Councillor T Judge was currently ill and that the Committee sent him their good wishes.

CYP/19/51 Minute's Silence

The Committee and all those present observed a minute's silence for Beth Morgan, Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit Officer, who had recently passed away.

CYP/19/52 Visits

The Chair reported that, as requested at a previous meeting, Members of the Committee had recently visited Barton Moss Secure Centre and Wetherby Young Offenders Institute (YOI).

A Member updated the Committee on the visit to Wetherby YOI, reporting that it was making positive changes. She informed Members about the education provision for the young people, which varied depending on their current attainment level. She advised that more needed to be done to support the transition of young people from

the YOI back into their communities and reported that Members had taken the opportunity to discuss this during the visit, including how the Council could support this work.

A Member updated the Committee on the visit to Barton Moss Secure Care Centre, informing the Committee that this was an excellent resource, which provided a caring environment with effective support and interventions. She reported that the young people were benefiting from the intensive support they received in the centre but that more consideration was needed of how the young people could continue to be supported once they left the centre and returned to their communities. Another Member highlighted the commitment of the staff working at the centre.

The Chair highlighted the number of young people who re-offended and returned to Wetherby YOI or Barton Moss Secure Care Centre and the need to break that cycle.

A Member commented that both these facilities were for boys and that the Committee should also look at female young offenders. The Chair advised that the Committee would consider this when it next received a report on Youth Justice.

CYP/19/53 Minutes

Decisions

1. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2019.
2. To receive the minutes of the meetings of the Ofsted Subgroup held on 16 October 2019 and 13 November 2019.

CYP/19/54 Update on School Exclusions

The Committee received a report of the Director of Education which provided an update on exclusions data held internally in Manchester for 2018/19 and final Department for Education (DfE) published school exclusions data for 2017/18 with national comparisons.

Officers referred to the main points and themes within the report which included:

- Providing a context for school exclusions;
- Describing the widespread multi-agency consultation on the Inclusion Strategy;
- Providing information on how the Director of Education worked with both the primary strategy group and high school heads to engage with schools to focus on reducing exclusions in the city;
- Information on the Support and Challenge Board;
- Information on the Multi Agency Team Around the School;
- Describing the work to improve consistency of inclusion in mainstream schools;
- How Early Help practitioners worked with families where children experienced fixed term exclusions;

- Trauma-informed approaches;
- Summary of permanent exclusions 2018/19;
- Summary of fixed-term exclusions 2018/19;
- Permanent exclusions 2018/19 analysis; and
- Manchester comparison with national and statistical neighbours (2017/18).

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

- Were any pupils on part-time timetables and, if so, how many;
- Future plans for the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU);
- How did Manchester's data on the percentage of excluded pupils with particular characteristics compare to the national average;
- Exclusions for possessing an offensive weapon, the importance of addressing the issue of pupils bringing knives into schools and the impact of this issue on school staff;
- Exclusion of pupils from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, including children from Roma communities;
- The correlation between reductions in permanent exclusions and an increase in fixed-term exclusions; and
- Exclusion of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).

The Director of Education advised the Committee that schools could use part-time timetables as a short-term intervention in agreement with parents or carers but that it should not be used to avoid an exclusion. She informed Members that the Council arranged for schools to be visited by an independent quality assurance officer and that part of this now included asking the school about the use of part-time timetables and providing the Council with data on their use. She reported that the Council would also be asking schools to inform them about every pupil they put on a part-time timetable as an intervention; however, she advised that she did not yet have complete information on the use of part-time timetables in Manchester schools, as data was still being gathered. The Executive Member for Children and Schools suggested that data on the use of part-time timetables be included in future reports.

The Director of Education reported that the Inclusion Strategy included plans to review the continuum of provision relating to the PRU and other alternative provision but that this work was still at an early stage.

The Head of School Quality Assurance and Strategic SEND reported that national figures for 2018/19 were not yet available. She informed Members that there had been 12 exclusions from Manchester schools for possessing an offensive weapon but, as this was not a category in the DfE's statistics, this could not be compared with a national average. The Executive Member for Children and Schools reported that a range of partners were working to address the issue of youth violence and suggested that the Committee receive a report on this.

The Head of School Quality Assurance and Strategic SEND advised Members that, while pupils from BAME were still disproportionately represented in exclusion figures, the degree of disproportionality had significantly reduced for many pupil groups; however, she advised that some of the figures related to small cohorts of pupils.

The Director of Education commented on the correlation between the reduction in permanent exclusions and the increase in fixed-term exclusions, advising that some pupils were now receiving fixed-term exclusions rather than a permanent exclusion which indicated that the school was still working with them to keep them within the school and avoid a permanent exclusion. She informed Members that her service was undertaking a piece of work with schools to promote a consistent level of support for pupils with SEND across Manchester schools. She reported that the Support and Challenge Board worked with schools regarding their SEND provision. She informed the Committee that her service was working to improve the timeliness of the completion of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) for pupils with SEND. In response to a Member's question, the Head of School Quality Assurance and Strategic SEND informed the Committee that a breakdown of permanent and fixed-term exclusions of pupils with SEND would be included in the service's Annual SEND Report.

Decisions

1. To note the report and the reduction in permanent exclusions.
2. To note that the Committee will continue to monitor this issue through regular reports.
3. To receive a report on work to address youth violence.

[Councillor Stone declared a personal interest as a governor of the Manchester Secondary Pupil Referral Unit.]

CYP/19/55 Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) 2018/2019 Annual Report

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which presented the 2018/2019 Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service for Our Children (Looked After Children).

Officers referred to the main points and themes within the report which included:

- Providing an introduction and background to the report;
- Describing the priorities for the IROs and the Safeguarding Improvement Unit through 2019/2020;
- The approach to practice improvement;
- Strengthening participation;
- Activities to actively seek feedback;
- Promoting stability;
- Strengthening oversight of Pathways Plans; and
- Our Manchester Permanence Practice Promise.

The Strategic Lead for Safeguarding and Practice Improvement clarified that the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children in March 2018 was 66, not 26 as stated in the report.

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

- Whether a child's extended family could attend their Our Children Review if the parents were not attending;
- What support was available to family members or other carers who were looking after a child through a Special Guardianship Order (SGO), particularly grandparents or other older family members; and
- The reduction in the number of children visited by their IRO and what the figures were for children under the age of 12.

The Strategic Lead for Safeguarding and Practice Improvement informed Members that the views of the young person were centred in their review so, if they wanted a member of their extended family to attend, the IRO would do their utmost to enable that to happen.

The Deputy Director of Children's Services informed the Committee that every child who was subject to an SGO had an SGO Support Plan, tailored to the needs of the child and, where applicable, to the needs of the carer. The Executive Member for Children and Schools acknowledged that SGOs could require a different type of support from fostering and he suggested that he meet with Councillor Cooley, who had raised this issue, and relevant officers to discuss this further.

The Acting Service Lead (Safeguarding Improvement Unit) reported that the service did not currently have IRO visit figures broken down by whether the children were under or over the age of 12 but that they would look at this. She informed Members that the service was using different methods to engage with children who did not want to meet with their IRO, such as the Mind Of My Own app, and would continue to identify ways to better engage with Our Children.

The Executive Member for Children and Schools encouraged Members to attend the Corporate Parenting Panel's meetings and informed them that the Corporate Parenting Strategy was currently being reviewed.

Decision

To receive a progress report in six months' time which provides an update in relation to the service position on driving permanence and practice improvement.

CYP/19/56 Manchester Safeguarding Partnership

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which provided an update to the report and presentation to the Committee on 5 February 2019, which had outlined the proposals to respond to the statutory guidance contained in Chapter 4, Working Together 2018 Improving Child Protection and Safeguarding Practice for Children and Young People. It detailed the progress since February 2019, the new arrangements and plans to continue this work.

Officers referred to the main points and themes within the report which included:

- Describing the legislative requirement for change;
- Describing the Manchester Safeguarding Partnership's vision;
- Describing the key activities and events since February 2019;
- Information on the Manchester Safeguarding Partnership structure;
- Information on the various established subgroups and their remits;
- An update on business planning;
- Moving forward; and
- Review of new arrangements.

A Member informed the Committee about the recent visit to the Complex Safeguarding Hub, which some Committee Members had attended. She reported that Members had been impressed with the way it was working as a multi-agency team and the level of information staff had been able to provide in response to Members' questions. She welcomed the work taking place to disrupt activity relating to the exploitation of young people and to support the prosecution of perpetrators. She also highlighted the innovative work of the Achieving Change Together programme, which enabled young people to develop strategies to safely remain in their own communities.

Other points that arose from the Committee's discussions included:

- How well the Liquid Logic case management and reporting system was working in practice; and
- How young people who went missing from home were dealt with.

The Strategic Lead (Complex Safeguarding) outlined how the Achieving Change Together programme worked and highlighted some of its key principles, including enabling a young person to develop one trusted relationship with a member of staff, understanding all elements of the young person's life and enabling the young people to see that they could set and achieve goals. She advised Members that her service was assessing the impact of the programme.

The Deputy Director of Children's Services assured Members that the issues which had arisen with the transition to Liquid Logic were all ones which had been anticipated and planned for.

The Strategic Head of Early Help reported that having a co-located team at the Complex Safeguarding Hub of police officers, social workers and voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners facilitated the response to young people who went missing from home. The Strategic Lead (Complex Safeguarding) informed Members about work to update the Greater Manchester Missing From Home guidance, including consideration of the definitions of absent and missing. She advised the Committee that this included consideration of the appropriate processes for 16 and 17 year olds in the care of the local authority who were going off to spend time with their family where the family were not considered to currently present a high risk to them. Detective Chief Inspector Eales from GMP outlined how GMP dealt with missing from home reports, including risk assessing each case, having officers allocated to dealing with missing from home cases and working with partners to understand why that young person might have gone missing and how the case could be quickly progressed. He advised Members that high risk cases would be reviewed

by a Detective Inspector and hourly reviews would be carried out to ensure that everything was being done to ensure the young person was found and safely returned.

The Executive Member for Children and Schools informed Members about the feedback from the two peer reviews of the Complex Safeguarding Hub, highlighting the positive feedback on GMP's role. He welcomed that the Committee had regularly scrutinised the work of the Complex Safeguarding Hub and suggested that it would be useful for them to continue to do so.

Decision

To recognise the progress that continues to be made in respect of the Complex Safeguarding Hub and the response to Child Sexual Exploitation and for the 2019/20 annual Complex Safeguarding Report to have an emphasis on quality of practice and impact.

CYP/19/57 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.