

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2018

Present:

Councillor Stone – in the Chair

Councillors Hewitson, T Judge, Lovecy, Madeleine Monaghan and Sadler

Co-opted Voting Members:

Mr A Arogundade, Parent Governor Representative

Mrs B Kellner, Representative of the Diocese of Manchester

Dr W Omara, Parent Governor Representative

Ms Z Stepan, Parent Governor Representative

Co-opted Non Voting Members:

Mr L Duffy, Secondary sector teacher representative

Mr R Lammas, Primary sector teacher representative

Councillor Bridges, Executive Member for Children's Services

Councillor Rahman, Executive Member for Schools, Culture and Leisure

Julia Stephens Row, Independent Chair of Manchester Safeguarding Children and Adults Boards

Apologies:

Councillors Alijah and McHale

Mrs J Miles, Representative of the Diocese of Salford

CYP/18/47 Minutes

The Chair updated Members on the invitation to Damian Hines, Secretary of State for Education, and Vicky Beer, Regional Schools Commissioner, to attend a meeting of the Committee. He advised Members that no response had been received from Damian Hines. He reported that Vicky Beer had advised that it was not appropriate for her to attend a scrutiny committee meeting but that she was working with Council officers.

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2018.

CYP/18/48 Annual Report of Manchester Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) April 2017 – March 2018

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Children's and Education Services and Julia Stephens Row, the Independent Chair of Manchester Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) which provided an overview of MSCB's Annual Report for the period from April 2017 - March 2018. The full report was appended.

Julia Stephens Row referred to the main points and themes within the report which included:

- MSCB's business priorities;
- Challenges and improvements; and
- Future arrangements for safeguarding.

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

- Whether the number of school pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs was under-reported;
- Concern that the Neglect Strategy had not yet been fully embedded;
- When the new safeguarding arrangements would be in place and how a smooth transition would be ensured;
- Whether there was any learning which could be shared from the Home Office's National Prevent Peer Review process; and
- What was being done to improve the response to children who went missing from care.

Julia Stephens Row reported that it was not clear whether the number of pupils with SEMH needs was under-reported, however given the circumstances in the city that she might expect it to be higher and would raise this point with education partners. She advised Members that a lot of work was taking place in schools to support children and young people's mental well-being. She outlined work taking place to embed the Neglect Strategy including training and awareness-raising events and the establishment of lead officers within partner organisations; however, she acknowledged that more work was needed to fully embed the strategy and it remained a high priority. She outlined the work taking place to transition to the new safeguarding arrangements, advising that it was essential to maintain the focus on safeguarding work during the transition period. She advised Members that the new safeguarding arrangements had to be in place by September 2019 and that the plan for these had to be in place by June 2019. She suggested that the Committee receive an update report on the new safeguarding arrangements at an appropriate time, to which the Chair agreed.

The Strategic Director of Children's and Education Services reported that the full report from the Home Office's National Prevent Peer Review was not yet available but that the Council would use this review as an opportunity to learn. He suggested that, when the full report was available, feedback could be provided to the relevant scrutiny committees. He informed Members that the Children's Society carried out return interviews and follow-up interventions in relation to children missing from care and outlined the work of the Missing from Home and Care Panels in monitoring this issue and in taking action in relation to individual children where there were particular concerns.

Decision

To receive an update report on the new safeguarding arrangements at an appropriate time.

CYP/18/49 Leaving Care Service

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Children's and Education Services which provided an update on the progress of activity to reform the delivery of Leaving Care Services.

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

- The decision to bring the service in-house and to postpone the establishment of a Wholly Owned Trading Company (WOTC);
- Consultation and engagement with young people; and
- Human Resources (HR), financial, estates and ICT issues.

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

- The employment and training opportunities available for young people leaving care (our young people);
- The importance of suitable accommodation for our young people; and
- To welcome the appointment of specialist staff.

The Strategic Lead for Leaving Care updated Members on work to recruit to the specialist posts within the service, confirming that these would be permanent posts. The Strategic Director of Children's and Education Services outlined some of opportunities for our young people to enter employment and training. He confirmed that this included apprenticeships but advised that some young people were not yet ready to enter into employment so required additional support to be put in place to enable them to access these opportunities. He also reported that some of our young people went into higher education. He informed Members that Children's Services also worked with the Work and Skills Team to ensure that there was an appropriate offer for our young people. The Chair welcomed the work that Barclays Bank was doing with some of our young people, including those who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and requested that more information on this be included in a future report.

The Executive Member for Children's Services confirmed that ensuring our young people had suitable accommodation was a priority for the Council. He added that he and officers would be able to provide an update on the work taking place to address this when they next reported back to the Committee on the Leaving Care Service.

Decision

To receive an update report in the next municipal year, to include further information on the work that Barclays Bank is doing to support our young people. To note that this report will also include an update on work to ensure suitable accommodation for our young people.

CYP/18/50 Draft Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report 2017 – 2018

The Committee received a report of the Head of Quality Assurance for Safeguarding which introduced the draft Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 2017 - 2018. The report provided an account of the activity of the Independent Reviewing Service between 1 April 2017 and the 31 March 2018.

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

- An evaluation of the practice, plans and arrangements for Looked After Children (Our Children);
- An evaluation of the effectiveness of the IRO service in ensuring the Council as a corporate parent was discharging its statutory duties towards Our Children; and
- Evidence from the views of children and young people, carers and professionals.

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

- A request for clarification of the timescales for the final report to be produced;
- That some of the terminology used in the report (for example, Looked After Children rather than Our Children) was not in line with the terminology that young people had asked to be used and to request that this be amended in the final version of the report;
- Discussion of the figures in some of the graphs, in particular why the number of Our Children had decreased and then increased again;
- To question the validity of the IRO survey referred to in the report as only 16% of Our Children had responded and to ask whether an alternative format, for example, an app could result in a higher response rate; and
- To ask how the learning from young people's complaints was taken forward.

The Head of Quality Assurance for Safeguarding informed Members that the draft report would be considered at the Corporate Parenting Panel's meeting on 21 November 2018 and then, following any amendments, a final version would be published on the Council's website. She agreed that the terminology used would be amended in the final version of the report, to use the terms which Our Children had requested be used to describe them and their circumstances. She also advised that officers would strengthen the commentary around some of the graphs to make the information clearer. The Strategic Director of Children's and Education Services informed Members that the number of children who were looked after had decreased in 2016 – 2017 following the establishment of a permanent, stable leadership team. He advised that, at that time, there were children who were looked after but did not need to be and the service had focused on permanence planning and in ensuring that only those children for whom it was necessary entered the looked after system; however, he acknowledged that the numbers had risen again and informed Members that the numbers had risen nationally, regionally and locally. He suggested that the Committee might want to look at this in more detail at a later date. The Chair suggested that Members could look at this during a less formal session, outside of the Scrutiny Committee meetings.

The Head of Quality Assurance for Safeguarding reported that, while the service would have liked a higher response to the survey, the responses received were still important. She advised Members that it had been a short paper survey but that officers would look at using technology, including the Mind Of My Own (MOMO) app, in future. She outlined how complaints from children and young people were dealt with, advising Members that they were offered an advocate to support them through the complaints process. She assured Members that learning from complaints was acted on, which could involve incorporating learning into the development programme for staff or reviewing procedures.

Decision

To request that a session be arranged outside of the formal Scrutiny Committee meetings for Members to examine the number of children becoming Looked After and the reasons for the changes in the numbers.

CYP/18/51 Manchester Curriculum for Life

The Committee received an oral report of the Director of Education which updated Members on the pilot of the Manchester Curriculum for Life.

The Director of Education informed Members that the pilot had been launched in July 2018 and that over 30 schools, settings and youth providers were involved in testing the framework. She reported that the Council was also working with some foster carers who were interested in piloting the framework at home and advised that her team was developing challenges which children and young people could complete at home. She outlined work that had taken place since the Committee considered a report on the Curriculum for Life in July 2018, including developing the branding and creating a toolkit, and reported that these were now being tested as part of the pilot. She advised the Committee that her team was now arranging visits to the schools and other settings taking part in the pilot. She informed Members about the summer holiday reading challenge, linked to Read Manchester. She also reported that her team was working with the Assistant Executive Member for Schools, Culture and Leisure on how the Curriculum for Life could link in with the city's cultural offer.

Decisions

1. To request that examples of the branded materials being tested in the pilot be circulated to Committee Members.
2. To request a further report in approximately 12 months' time.

CYP/18/52 Attainment Headline Outcomes 2018 (provisional)

The Committee received a report of the Director of Education which provided a summary of the 2018 provisional outcomes of statutory assessment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5.

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

- The context of the outcomes at each key stage;
- The outcomes; and
- Next steps.

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

- Work being undertaken to address the gap between EYFS outcomes in Manchester and the national average, including how the take-up of Health Visitor assessments through the Early Years Delivery Model (EYDM) could be improved;
- Concern that some Key Stage 2 results had been annulled due to maladministration of the assessments in two schools and whether schools were under too much pressure to achieve results, leading to children not receiving a broad, rich education;
- That the figures suggested that children performed well in some subjects, such as mathematics, earlier in their school life but that this had declined by Key Stage 4 and what were the reasons for this; and
- To recognise the progress that had been made and to commend the work of staff in Manchester schools and the Council's Education Service under challenging circumstances.

The Director of Education informed Members that colleagues in Manchester Health and Care Commissioning (MHCC) were producing a business case to their Board on whether health visiting in the city could be increased. She reported that the Council was looking at whether other staff within the EYDM such as Outreach Workers could do more to encourage families to take up the health visitor assessments and how Early Years and Early Help could work more closely together to address this. She reported that the EYDM was introduced in April 2015 so the first cohort of children under this model hadn't started school yet and that the Council would need to see what the outcomes were for these children. She informed Members that 95% of Early Years settings in Manchester were now judged by Ofsted to be good or better and that there would now be a focus on working with them, in partnership with schools, on areas like literacy so that children were school ready.

The Director of Education reported that Ofsted had now acknowledged that there was too much focus on results and that a broad, balanced curriculum was important. She informed Members that Ofsted was reviewing its framework in light of this. She advised the Committee that those children currently at primary school and those at Key Stage 4 were different cohorts of pupils who were being educated under different curricula so it was hoped that positive outcomes in mathematics would be reflected at Key Stage 4 as this cohort of pupils made their way through the education system.

Decisions

1. To recognise the progress that has been made, to commend the work of staff in Manchester schools and the Council's Education Service under challenging circumstances and to ask the Director of Education to pass this message on to headteachers.

2. To note that the Committee will receive a further report with the final, confirmed results.

CYP/18/53 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. The Chair confirmed that he would discuss with officers a suitable date for the Committee to consider the Annual Adoption and Fostering Report.

Decision

To note the report and agree the work programme.