

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2020

This Scrutiny meeting was conducted via Zoom, in accordance with the provisions of the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

Present:

Councillor Stone – in the Chair
Councillors Sameem Ali, Chohan, Cooley, Hewitson, Kilpatrick, Lovecy, Madeleine Monaghan, Reeves, Reid and Wilson

Co-opted Voting Members:

Ms S Barnwell, Parent Governor Representative
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
Councillor Rahman, Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure
Tracey Forster, Health Visiting, Vulnerable Babies and Community Health Services
Lisa Sanchez, Health Visiting, Vulnerable Babies and Community Health Services

Apologies:

Councillors Abdullatif, Alijah and McHale

CYP/20/49 Minutes

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2020.

CYP/20/50 Early Years

The Committee received a presentation of the Strategic Head of Early Help, the Early Years Strategic Lead and Tracey Forster, Lead Manager, Health Visiting, Vulnerable Babies and Community Health Services. The presentation provided a progress update on the priorities and delivery from Early Years and partners during the coronavirus pandemic.

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

- Strategic priorities;

- The impact of the pandemic on Early Years settings;
- The financial impact of the pandemic;
- The Early Years Service's response to the pandemic;
- The performance and impact of the Speech and Language Pathway;
- The performance and impact of the Parenting Pathway;
- Work to support school readiness; and
- The Health Visiting Service, including its performance and its response to the pandemic.

The Chair clarified that the budget savings referred to in the presentation slides were officer proposals at this stage.

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

- To praise the way that the services had adapted in response to the challenges presented by the pandemic, as well as the impact and outcomes of their work, which had been outlined in the presentation;
- How many Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) families had the service been in contact with regarding speech and language support;
- To note from the presentation that 120 daycare settings were open and to ask how many settings there were in Manchester in total;
- The challenges that new parents were experiencing during the pandemic; and
- The limitations of health visitors only speaking to parents on the telephone rather than seeing them and whether any alternatives were being used, for example, Zoom meetings.

The Early Years Strategic Lead clarified that 120 daycare settings were now open, out of a total of 130 settings. She reported that uptake of daycare places was being monitored on a weekly basis and that this was 20% lower than the previous year, which was due to parental choice and fear of perceived risks. In response to the question about BAME families and speech and language support, she advised that she did not have the figures to hand but could provide this information outside of the meeting. She outlined how the Early Years Service had responded to the needs of new parents during the pandemic, including baby groups, which had been taking place since September 2020, outreach work and projects with partners, such as work with Manchester Art Gallery to provide sensory boxes.

Tracey Forster agreed that, where possible, face-to-face contact was best for health visiting. She reported that most contacts had been swapped to telephone contact during the pandemic but that the option of appointment-only clinics had been retained and that staff had Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to carry out home visits, where this was needed. She informed Members that the service could also use online video meetings to speak to families but that this was not been heavily used, although it had proved useful for observing and providing advice on feeding. She advised that telephone contact had been the main means of contact during lockdown but that health visitors had made a note of families where they felt that face-to-face contact would be most beneficial and, from June onwards, those families had been prioritised to receive home visits or to be invited in for a clinic-based appointment. She advised that families who were not known to the service, for example, families

who had recently moved into the city and first-time parents, had been prioritised for these face-to-face contacts.

Decision

To thank Manchester's health visitors for the excellent work they are doing and to thank everyone involved in the Early Years work for their contribution.

[Ms Barnwell declared a personal interest as a Member of Manchester Parents Forum]

CYP/20/51 Early Help Evaluation (2015 - 2020)

The Committee received a report and presentation of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which provided an overview of the Early Help evaluation and its findings.

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

- Presenting needs of families that had been worked with;
- Evidence that support had led to reduced needs; and
- How investment in Early Help and a 'whole family' way of working could help support wider city priorities and strategies.

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

- To welcome the preventative approach being taken and the impact that had been made, in particular the number of children kept out of care;
- The difficulty in demonstrating what a preventative approach had achieved;
- The financial impact of the pandemic on families and what work was being done, including to help families who could become at risk of homelessness due to rent arrears;
- The availability of parenting classes during the pandemic;
- Whether the Early Help Hubs had connections with local food banks; and
- Whether Early Help was working with housing providers.

The Strategic Head of Early Help informed Members that work was taking place at a Manchester and Greater Manchester level to prevent and alleviate homelessness. She outlined the support available to families in rent arrears or experiencing other financial difficulties, including provision of advice on benefit entitlement and on debts, as well as work on gambling harm reduction, which had become an area of increasing concern during the pandemic.

The Strategic Head of Early Help reported that there was a high demand for parenting support and this was being provided through a range of means including online parenting support, one-to-one support, interactive video guides, a telephone helpline and small socially distanced parenting classes in Sure Start centres. She reported that there were a number of food clubs which were based at Sure Start

centres and that the three locality-based Early Help Hubs were well-connected with local food banks, although she would welcome the opportunity to expand those links.

The Strategic Head of Early Help advised that evaluations and feedback from families were used to demonstrate the value of investing in preventative work which would improve outcomes for families and result in savings later on. In response to a Member's question, the Early Help Project Manager explained that police data about offences relating to a particular address in the 12 months prior to an intervention and in the following 12 months demonstrated the impact of this work in reducing offences.

The Executive Member for Children and Schools advised that the evidence presented demonstrated that it had been a good decision to continue with the early intervention work and, in response to Members' comments, he suggested that in future it would be useful to clearly articulate the savings from this work in the evaluation.

In response to a Member's question, the Early Help Project Manager offered to provide information on the number of families concerned, in relation to the data on areas of the city and the sustainability of impacts, as only percentages had been provided. The Chair requested that he send this to the Scrutiny Support Officer for circulation to all Members of the Committee. In response to a question from another Member, the Early Help Project Manager advised that officers would look at analysing data broken down by sex and ethnicity.

The Strategic Head of Early Help informed Members that registered housing providers were a key partner in Early Help but that stronger connections were needed with the private rented sector. She reported that she would take this issue to the next partnership board meeting.

Decisions

1. To recognise the success of Early Help.
2. To ask officers to consider how Councillors could help with this work and to circulate a note to the Committee Members on this.
3. To request that the Early Help Project Manager provide information on the number of families, in relation to the presentation slides on areas of the city and the sustainability of impacts.

CYP/20/52 Children and Education Services Proxy Indicators March 2020 - October 2020

The Committee received a presentation of the Deputy Director of Children's Services and the Strategic Lead (SEND and School Improvement) which provided proxy indicators in relation to the performance of Children and Education Services.

The Deputy Director of Children's Services referred to the main points and themes within the presentation, which included:

- The rate of Children in Need;
- The rate of Child Protection Plans (CPP) and the percentage of children required a second or subsequent CPP; and
- Average Social Worker caseloads.

The Strategic Lead (SEND and School Improvement) provided an overview of the education data within the presentation. She also informed Members about changes to the way school attendance was being recorded, which meant that the attendance figures could not be directly compared to the previous figures. She reported that the Department for Education (DfE) had introduced a new attendance code of 'X', which was used if a pupil was self-isolating or a group of pupils had been sent home due to a COVID-19 case within the group. If a pupil tested positive for COVID-19, she advised that they would then be classed as 'I' for ill. She reported that pupils with the 'X' code were not classed as either present or absent so were excluded from the overall attendance figures. Therefore, she informed Members, while the school attendance rate was 94% overall, only 84% of pupils were present in school.

The Executive Member for Children and Schools informed Members that he had written to the Secretary of State, recommending that national assessments should not take place next year and should be replaced by teachers' assessments, as some pupils had been required to spend a number of weeks self-isolating while other pupils had not been affected by this. He expressed concern that Manchester children could be disproportionately affected compared to pupils in areas with lower infection rates and also that pupils from less privileged backgrounds would have already been disadvantaged when studying at home during the first lockdown. In response to a question from the Chair, the Executive Member stated that he had not yet received a response to his letter. A Member advised that it was important for Members to lobby on this issue.

A Member commented that, while social workers' caseloads had increased recently, they were still a significant improvement on the situation a few years ago.

In response to a Member's question, the Deputy Director of Children's Services advised that there was no comparator data available on Children Missing from Home.

In response to a Member's question, the Director of Education advised that the Children Missing from Education referred to in the presentation slides were children whose families had recently applied for a school place, as new families were moving into the area all the time, and they were still in the process of being offered a school place. She advised that some children were offered places through the In Year Fair Access Protocol and, for others, the School Admissions Team would look for the most suitable vacancy for a maximum of four weeks before offering a place. She also advised that, where a child had an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), her service had to consult with the school prior to offering the place.

Decision

To thank officers for the presentation.

CYP/20/53 Holiday Provision Evaluation

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods and the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which provided an evaluation of the summer and half term offer following the agreed proposal to enhance the offer during the COVID-19 pandemic. The report stated that all youth providers were working alongside young people to understand what impact their lives had on the environment.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- The objectives of the summer and half term offer;
- Its implementation;
- Statistics on the sessions and attendees;
- Outcomes;
- Holiday hunger;
- Young people's feedback; and
- Next steps.

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

- To welcome the focused, targeted offer that had been made available to young people;
- To request a ward breakdown of the take-up of these activities; and
- Would there be any activities over the Christmas holidays for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).

The Head of Youth Strategy and Engagement advised that every ward, with the exception of the city centre wards, had had provision available on most days and that she would provide Members with the requested information. She reported that all providers were now asked to make their provision inclusive of children with SEND and that officers had worked with providers to ensure they understood how to do this, although some activities specifically for this group had been provided at Debdale Outdoor Centre. She reported that she was currently working with Manchester Active and Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) on an offer for the Christmas period and that she would share this with the Committee. The Chair praised the provision for children with SEND at Debdale Outdoor Centre.

Decisions

1. To thank everyone involved in this work.
2. To note that the Head of Youth Strategy and Engagement will share with Committee Members a ward breakdown of take-up of the holiday provision and the offer for the Christmas period, once this has been finalised.

CYP/20/54 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.