

# **Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

## **Minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2022**

### **Present:**

Councillor Reid – in the Chair  
Councillors Alijah, Amin, Gartside, Good, Hewitson, Judge, Lovecy, Sadler and Sharif Mahamed

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

Mr G Cleworth, Parent Governor Representative

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

Miss S Iltaf, Secondary Sector Teacher Representative  
Ms L Smith, Primary Sector Teacher Representative

### **Also present:**

Councillor Bridges, Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People  
Andrea Patel, Director of Safeguarding, Manchester Health and Care Commissioning (MHCC)  
Detective Superintendent Chris Downey, Greater Manchester Police (GMP)

### **Apologies:**

Councillors Abdullatif and Bano  
Dr W Omara, Parent Governor Representative

### **CYP/22/21                      Minute's Silence**

The Committee held a minute's silence for the victims of the school shooting in Texas and the children of Ukraine.

### **CYP/22/22    Urgent Business – Ofsted's Inspection of Manchester's Children's Services**

The Deputy Director of Children's Services informed Members about the recent Ofsted Inspection of Manchester Children's Services, which had judged the service to be "good". He outlined the main points within Ofsted's report, which had been published the previous week. He highlighted that Manchester now had one of the top performing Children's Services in the north-west of England and that this represented a significant improvement since the last inspection in 2017. He offered to bring to a future meeting a report which included the Council's action plan for addressing the areas for improvement identified in Ofsted's report.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People recognised the years of hard work that had gone into achieving this improvement, particularly in light of the challenges of austerity and the pandemic, and how Council decisions had enabled this. The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services also praised the staff in Children's Services. He emphasised that, while this was a very positive achievement, the service could not be complacent and would strive for continued improvement and to respond to emerging challenges.

A Member congratulated all those involved in this achievement and recognised the important role of frontline social work staff. The Chair highlighted how the service had worked to improve since it had been judged as “inadequate” in 2014 and made reference to the late Sheila Newman who had been the Executive Member for Children’s Services, overseeing the improvement journey until her death in 2018. The Chair also explained the contribution of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee over this period and her own role in the improvement journey. She also thanked the former Council Leader Sir Richard Leese for his commitment with extra funding for social workers, to reduce caseloads.

## **Decision**

To note the verbal report.

## **CYP/22/23                      Minutes**

### **Decisions**

1. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2022.
2. To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Ofsted Subgroup held on 2 March 2022.

## **CYP/22/24    Manchester Safeguarding Partnership (MSP) Annual Report 2020/2021**

The Committee received a report of Paul Marshall, in his role as the Chair of the Children Executive Board, which provided an overview of what the MSP had done as a result of the safeguarding arrangements, and how effective these arrangements had been in practice.

The main points and themes within the report included:

- Partnership arrangements;
- Communications and engagement;
- Quality assurance and scrutiny;
- Case reviews and learning;
- Workforce development;
- The Independent Chair’s assurance statement;
- Review of MSP Joint Strategic Plan 2020/2021; and
- Strategic priorities 2021/2022.

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

- To welcome the positive achievements outlined in the report, recognising the challenges of the pandemic;

- To request more information on the changes to the quality assurance arrangements;
- Serious Case Reviews and learning from high profile national cases such as the death of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes; and
- Complex safeguarding work relating to young people at risk from serious youth violence, including work with local communities to address this.

The Strategic Lead (Safeguarding and Practice Development) reported that the Partnership had been focused on identifying, understanding and meeting the needs of children and families during the pandemic and making sure that no child fell through the net during that period; however, it was recognised that the focus of the quality assurance function now needed to re-adjust and should extend to looking at the impact and effectiveness of its work. She outlined how learning from high profile national cases was used, checking if the findings from that investigation was true of Manchester, and reported that, when undertaking a review in Manchester, national research would be taken into account.

The Chair highlighted the important role of Health Visitors in identifying and monitoring the welfare of pre-school-age children who were in need of help and protection and suggested that Health Visitors be added to the agenda for a future meeting. Andrea Patel, Director of Safeguarding, MHCC, reported that reviews in Manchester had been positive about the Health Visiting Service but that if any gaps were identified they would be addressed.

The Chair informed the Committee about a project which was taking place in Gorton on complex safeguarding, which involved the local community. The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services informed Members about the multi-agency Complex Safeguarding Subgroup and the links with neighbourhoods teams, GMP and schools. Detective Superintendent Chris Downey from GMP reported that it was a constant challenge to keep young people safe and manage tensions and that he and his colleagues wanted to be able to shift towards understanding the causes of youth violence and focusing on early intervention. He informed Members that he had recently recruited an additional three police officers to work on early intervention regarding serious youth violence and that this work would be supported by Youth Justice and social workers in the Complex Safeguarding Hub. He advised that this work was different from their traditional work on Child Criminal Exploitation and needed a different approach.

In response to a Member's question, Detective Superintendent Chris Downey advised that GMP did look at what similar cities were doing to address youth violence, although still more could be done to learn from good practice elsewhere. In response to another question, he acknowledged that more work needed to be done to engage with local communities, including families affected by serious youth violence and recognised that work with communities had been important in addressing other issues, such as firearm offences. He reported that GMP did communicate with families who had lost loved ones due to youth violence. He advised that, although GMP had a central Independent Advisory Group that covered the whole central area, he felt that a more local approach was needed, including asking local people how they could help with addressing this issue. The Chair highlighted the new Chief Constable's commitment to neighbourhood policing. She

advised that she had already spoken to the Chair of the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee, who would be having an item on Youth Justice at a future meeting, to which she and Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee would be invited.

A Member who was a Teacher Representative informed the Committee how her school was engaging with local partners, including mosques, to address challenging behaviour. The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services suggested that officers provide a report on youth participation and engagement to a future meeting.

Members discussed youth provision, including funding cuts, activities over the summer holidays and the challenge of young people not wanting to cross boundaries into other areas to access youth provision. A Member informed the Committee about a boxing club for young people set up by Moss Side firefighters and suggested that Members could visit this. The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People suggested that the Committee receive a report on youth provision at a future meeting and highlighted the additional £500,000 which the Council was investing in youth provision. He also informed the Committee how local Neighbourhood Teams were putting on events as part of Our Year. He said that he could provide further information on this and encouraged Members to speak to the Neighbourhood Teams in their wards about doing this. In response to a Member's comments about issues in his ward, the Executive Member offered to discuss the specific issues outside of the meeting.

In a response to a Member's question about the impact of the pandemic on children and young people's mental health, the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services outlined the mental health support that had been put in place through schools and through both universal and specialist services. He recognised the challenge of responding to traumatised children and suggested that the Committee might want to consider this at a future meeting.

## **Decision**

To consider Health Visiting at a future meeting.

## **CYP/22/25                      COVID-19 Update**

The Committee received a verbal update from the Education Business Partner which outlined new developments and significant changes to the current situation, particularly in relation to schools.

The main points and themes within the verbal update included:

- The number of positive cases in schools, which had reduced;
- Recent changes, including the end of free regular testing, the expanded list of COVID-19 symptoms and the change in guidance for people who suspected that they had COVID-19;
- The government's withdrawal of the operational guidance for schools on COVID-19 and the incorporation of COVID-19 management into existing health, health and safety and estates management guidance and the

publication of a new document for school leaders called the Department for Education (DfE) Emergency Planning and Response document;

- The continued support being provided to schools by the Council's Education Service and its partners;
- That the Test and Trace Team had become Manchester Health Protection Team and that support would continue and would now cover other diseases, in addition to COVID-19; and
- That there would be a continued focus on Long Covid, in relation to pupils and staff.

In response to a Member's question, the Director of Education reported that individual schools could decide how quickly they resumed normal activities, such as full assemblies or stay and play sessions, which had been stopped during the pandemic. She advised that some schools had found that some of the practices introduced due to the pandemic were beneficial to the smooth-running of the school and would continue. The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People reported that staff absences could be affecting the resumption of some activities but that he expected activities to return to similar to how they had been pre-pandemic and that Members could speak to him or the Director of Education about any specific cases they were concerned about. In response to a Member's question, the Deputy Director of Children's Services reported that Social Workers had been undertaking face-to-face visits throughout the pandemic, while almost making use of technology.

The Chair advised that the Committee would receive a further COVID-19 update at its next meeting and could then review whether or not it was necessary to continue to have updates at every meeting. She noted that the Committee would be receiving a report on examination results later in the year and would be able to assess the impact of the pandemic on these. She suggested that the Committee receive a report on School Governance at a future meeting.

### **Decision**

To receive a report on School Governance at a future meeting.

### **CYP/22/26 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.