

2022-2023 End of Year Summary – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Throughout the year, the Committee has considered a wide range of issues which affect children and young people within the city, including the Care Review, Manchester Safeguarding Partnership, Placement Sufficiency, Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and the Social Work Workforce.

At the beginning of the year, the Committee welcomed the news that the recent Ofsted Inspection of Local Authorities Children's Services (ILACS) of Manchester's Children's Services had judged the service to be "good". This represented a significant journey of improvement from 2014, when the Service had been judged as "inadequate" and since the previous inspection in 2017, when it had been judged as "requires improvement". Recognising that there was still further work to be done, the Committee scrutinised the action plan which had been developed in response to the findings from the inspection and received a further report on the progress made so far at their January 2023 meeting. At this meeting, Members agreed that it was important for them to see what was happening in practice, rather than relying too much on what they were told in Committee meetings, and, therefore, in March 2023, Committee Members undertook a visit to the social work services based in Wythenshawe to talk to frontline staff.

At the start of the municipal year, the Committee was still receiving monthly updates in relation to the impact of COVID-19, in particular on schools. At its July meeting, the Committee heard from Al Ford, the Director of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) on the impact of the pandemic on children and young people's mental health and well-being. Although it was decided that the Committee no longer needed to receive monthly updates on COVID-19, Members remain very aware that the impact on children and young people will be long-term and that ongoing action will be needed to support children whose development, education and lives have been affected by the pandemic. Therefore, these issues have continued to be discussed under a number of other items considered during the municipal year. The Committee will also continue to monitor children and young people's mental health services.

Acknowledging the impact that the pandemic had had on children and young people in Manchester, the Council launched "2022: Our Year", a year dedicated to celebrating the successes of Manchester's children and young people, supporting their recovery from the impact of COVID-19 and bringing about lasting, positive changes to their lives. During the municipal year, the Committee has scrutinised the work which has taken place during 2022 as part of "Our Year" and the legacy of this work, including the journey towards becoming a UNICEF UK Child-Friendly City.

In November 2022, the Committee received a report on the Council's anticipated budget position for 2023/24 and draft proposals for services within its remit. Following the announcement of the provisional finance settlement,

the Committee received the final budget proposals in February 2023, prior to their consideration by the Executive, Budget Scrutiny and Full Council. The Committee welcomed how the “investing to save” approach was being successfully used, while expressing concern at the cuts that the Council had been faced with over a number of years and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on Manchester families.

During the year, the Committee has continued to scrutinise the provision of youth and play services. In December 2022, the Committee was invited to comment on the proposed Youth, Play and Participation Service’s commissioning process and framework, prior to its submission to the Executive. The Committee supported the approach being taken, while making a number of comments, including in relation to the balance of youth services and play provision and addressing any gaps in provision, and these comments were passed on to the Executive.

The Committee has continued to consider a wide range of items relating to schools and education, including the Inclusion Strategy, school attendance and attainment (including the impact of the pandemic), the post-16 education, employment and training (EET) strategic plan, school governance and the services provided by One Education. The Committee submitted its views, through the minutes, to the Executive in relation to decisions that the Executive was due to take in relation to Home to School Transport, School Admissions and School Places. Recognising the Council’s declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2019 and the high priority that many young people place on climate change, the Committee continued to scrutinise the work being done by the Council to support the education sector with decarbonisation. It was noted that the Chair, along with the Chair of the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee, had been engaging with Transport for Greater Manchester to ensure a more equitable provision of school buses, which, it was hoped, would reduce the number of car journeys by parents taking children to school.

This year the Committee re-established the Ofsted Subgroup, which considers Ofsted inspection reports for schools, children’s centres and daycare providers and the support provided by the Council to secure improvements in schools and early years settings, in addition to inspection reports and performance information for services for children in need of help and protection, looked after children and care leavers. The Subgroup held four meetings during the year and carried out visits to a number of Manchester schools and nurseries with the aim of sharing good practice. Their meeting papers can be accessed [here](#).