

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2023

Present:

Councillor Reid – in the Chair

Councillors Alijah, Amin, Bell, Gartside, Hewitson, Lovecy, McHale, Muse, Nunney, Sadler and Sharif Mahamed

Co-opted Voting Members:

Mr G Cleworth, Parent Governor Representative

Also present:

Councillor Rahman, Deputy Leader

Councillor Bridges, Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People

Councillor Butt, Deputy Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People

Councillor Hitchen, Chair of the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee

Superintendent Chris Downey, Greater Manchester Police (GMP)

Detective Inspector Chris Chadderton, GMP

Apologies:

Councillors Bano, Fletcher, Judge and Ludford

Canon S Mapledoram, Representative of the Diocese of Manchester

Ms L Smith, Primary Sector Teacher Representative

CYP/23/29

Minutes

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2023.

CYP/23/30

Youth Justice Business Plan 2023/24: Preventing and Diverting Children and Young People from the Criminal Justice System

The Committee considered the report and presentation of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which outlined the vision, priorities, performance, and impact being achieved in preventing and diverting children and young people from the criminal justice system.

Key points and themes in the report and presentation included:

- Vision and strategy;
- Governance and leadership arrangements;
- Youth Justice service model;
- Progress against priorities from 2022/23;
- Impact and feedback;
- Priorities for 2023/24; and
- Innovation and developments.

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

- To welcome the progress made and the joined-up working that was taking place;
- How robust was the diagnosis of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD);
- Where schemes used mentors, how were they recruited and trained and did they reflect the culture and heritage of the children they were supporting;
- Requesting further detail of the early intervention work; and
- The over-representation of mixed heritage and black boys in the Criminal Justice system and what were officers doing to try to understand their lived experience.

In response to the question about FASD, the Assistant Director (Early Intervention and Prevention) reported that work was taking place to improve awareness of this from the Early Years. She advised that there was a higher prevalence of additional needs among children in the Youth Justice system and she outlined some of the support available, including speech and language therapy and psychotherapy, as well as the role of Personal Education Plans. She stated that it was important to ensure that children had the right diagnosis and to look behind the behaviour and acknowledged that this was an area for further work. In response to Members' questions, she outlined some of the work taking place in different parts of the city to prevent and divert children and young people from the criminal justice system including community pilots, work in schools and Youth Zones and work by Greater Manchester Police (GMP). She informed Members about the key elements of the early intervention work, which included bringing partners together to identify issues early, co-ordination and leadership, restorative practices and mentoring and looking at the wider offer for the family. In response to a Member's comments, she recognised that the role of communities and families was crucial and outlined some of the work taking place. In response to a Member's question, she confirmed that there were plans to use remand fostering in future. In response to a question about supporting young people into employment, she stated that the service worked with Careers Connect and the Virtual School and a range of partners on this. In response to a further question, she said that she could provide the Member with the requested data on the demographic profile of staff.

The Head of Youth Justice reported that Youth Justice mentors were volunteers from the community, that children were matched with volunteers from their own communities, that they tried to ensure that mentors were culturally appropriate and that they were well-trained. He outlined some of the other support his service offered to children which included a musician-in-residence and an artist-in-residence, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), psychotherapy, including art therapy and drama therapy, specialist Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Restorative Practitioners, who taught children how to problem solve and worked with children on their identity and self-esteem. He stated that this work took place within a participatory youth practice framework and a trauma-informed, strength-based approach.

In response to a Member's question, the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services stated that engagement with children on preventative work needed to start

at the top end of primary school as it was a key stage of transition at which they were becoming more independent and influenced by peers.

Superintendent Chris Downey from GMP informed the Committee about child-centred policing, stating that in many circumstances this included not criminalising the child but that it needed to go beyond this and include taking the right action to prevent them from entering the Criminal Justice system in future, looking at the causes of the behaviour, how to prevent a reoccurrence and consulting with partners to find the right support for the child.

The Head of Youth Justice acknowledged that there was a lot of work to do to address the over-representation of mixed heritage and black boys in the Criminal Justice system. He stated that his service now had a very diverse staff, including in leadership and management roles, which helped to challenge their practice, language and decision-making, and that staff had received extensive training in this area. He stated that the participatory youth practice framework, which underpinned the work of the service, was about fairness, equality, children's rights and understanding children's lived experiences and how that had influenced their presenting behaviours, which staff then articulated to the courts. He stated that his service was collaborating with AFRUCA, to strengthen its approach, including having a Culture and Identity Worker who worked with children on identity and self-esteem. A Member stated that it was important for staff in Youth Justice to receive training to begin to understand and empathise with the lived experience of these children. The Assistant Director (Early Intervention and Prevention) reported that all staff in Youth Justice had attended Let's Talk About Race and Unconscious Bias training as well as work led by staff within the service. The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services reported that the Council was currently undertaking the discovery phase of the Child Friendly City work and that it was likely that identity, including racism and discrimination, would emerge as a key area of importance raised by the children and young people. Therefore, he suggested that the issues raised by the Member could be addressed in the report that the Committee was due to receive on the Child Friendly City work, as this would include how the city was responding to what young people said was important to them.

The Chair suggested that it would be useful for Members to undertake Unconscious Bias training.

In response to a question from the Chair on the use of stop-and-search on young black men, Superintendent Chris Downey acknowledged that this was disproportionate, although in Manchester the data indicated that the use of stop-and-search was intelligence-led, as approximately 20% of stop-and-searches had positive outcomes and around 18% led to arrests, which compared well nationally. He stated that the use of stop-and-search was targeted on crime hotspots and based on intelligence, being proactive in particular areas based on this, but that the result was that young black men were disproportionately stopped and searched and he outlined the work taking place to review why this was happening.

The Chair of the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee welcomed the report, while recognising that there was more work to be done. She asked officers about Manchester children attending schools outside of the city's boundaries and

joined up working across local authority boundaries. She also commented on the importance of embedding the poverty strand of equalities into this work and expressed concern about understaffing in the Complex Safeguarding Hub.

The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services assured Members that there were protocols for working across local authority boundaries and good relationships and communication with neighbouring authorities.

The Chair highlighted the role of and responsibility of schools in managing pupil behaviour, in partnership with families, communities and partner agencies, and how behaviour by Looked After Children was responded to and how that differed from the ways families might treat their own children who had committed a minor offence at home. She informed Members about the planned visit to Wetherby Young Offenders Institution in September. She expressed concern that a request to visit Barton Moss Secure Children's Home had not been approved. She also commented on the impact of the pandemic and delays in court hearings.

The Deputy Leader emphasised the depth and breadth of the work taking place and the complexity of the context this work was taking place in. He highlighted the impact of child poverty and commented, that, while Making Manchester Fairer would work to address this, more investment from the national Government was also needed.

Decision

That Unconscious Bias training be made available to Members.

CYP/23/31 Serious Youth Violence

The Committee considered the report and presentation of the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods which outlined the vision, priorities and performance measures for the city set out in the Serious Violence Strategy.

Key points and themes in the report and presentation included:

- The national and local context;
- Governance and connectivity;
- Serious violence in Manchester;
- The Serious Violence Strategy, including the consultation and learning from reviews;
- Priority areas of activity;
- Implementation plan;
- The Serious Youth Violence Framework, a multi-agency method and holistic approach; and
- Measures of success.

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

- The use of "joint enterprise" against Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic young people;

- The treatment of young people who were arrested;
- The link between school exclusion and youth violence; and
- The context of these problems, including the city's large criminal economy, the demand for drugs from students and young professionals coming to the city, the need for large number of vulnerable young people to be exploited to support this, the challenges facing young people growing up in Manchester and the attraction to those young people of seeming to be able to make easy money.

Superintendent Chris Downey from GMP advised that joint enterprise was only rarely used and that he would endeavour to find the figures requested by the Member on its use by GMP and provide them to him. He acknowledged a Member's comments that being arrested could be a very traumatic experience for a young person, although, he advised, that in some situations, it was necessary. He stated that the use of handcuffs was now limited, rather than routine, that there were Mental Health professionals in custody suites who assessed everyone who was brought in and that young people would also have an "appropriate adult" to support them, either a family member or friend or someone from the commissioned Appropriate Adult service.

The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services highlighted that the Committee would be receiving a report on School Inclusion at its next meeting. He reported that work was taking place with GMP and colleagues from across Greater Manchester to make improvements in relation to young people held in custody, including reducing the number of young people placed in custody suites and reducing the length of time they were held there.

In response to a Member's question about work with faith groups, the Community Safety Lead stated that it was recognised that voluntary and community groups, including faith groups, had a wealth of expertise and skills and that they contributed to this work, and she provided an example of this work. She acknowledged the Member's comments about the wider context of serious youth violence and reported that the Joint Needs Assessment of serious and organised crime sought to understand these issues, looking at statistics and connections, and that work was taking place to respond to these different elements, for example, through the GMP Challenger Team and through the Complex Safeguarding Hub. She also recognised the importance of learning from best practice elsewhere and stated that the Greater Manchester Violence Reduction Unit had the resources to seek out and share best practice.

The Chair emphasised the importance of engaging with Manchester NHS Foundation Trust on this issue. She commented on police working with schools, expressing concern that the current arrangements were not working and asking the Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People to follow this up. She also expressed concern that it was easy for children to buy knives over the internet.

Decision

To note the report.

The Committee considered the report and presentation of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which summarised the partnership arrangements in place in Manchester to respond to children at risk of exploitation, including practice model, governance and assurance activity. In addition, key performance and assurance data articulated the progress and impact of the CSH in Manchester.

Key points and themes in the report and presentation included:

- An overview of the CSH and its purpose;
- The referrals to the CSH;
- Governance arrangements;
- Complex Safeguarding Team offer;
- Impact;
- Missing from Home and Care; and
- Priorities for the future.

In response to Members' questions about children missing from home and care, the Assistant Director (North and Complex Safeguarding) reported that the data was monitored in a monthly and annual report and that there had been an increase after the pandemic, with children being out in their communities more, noting that there was also always a rise in figures during the summer as children stayed out when the evenings were lighter. She reported that there were no missing children in Manchester who had not returned, stating that missing children were tracked and that there was a process, including strategy meetings, to ensure that they knew where children were.

In response to a Member's question about social media, Detective Inspector Chris Chadderton from GMP stated that there were a lot of referrals in relation to this. He reported that his service had Digital Media Investigators and that social media was monitored, within the legislation, to recover evidence and identify perpetrators seeking to abuse children. The Chair expressed concern that artificial intelligence could be used to abuse children.

The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services reported that, when children had been missing for a period of time, there was an internal mechanism to escalate this and that, when there were frequent episodes of an individual child going missing, the reasons for this were looked into. He reported that online grooming and exploitation was a key priority area for the Safeguarding Partnership, looking at how to raise awareness of the dangers and put safeguards in place.

A Member stated that the previous Committee visit to the offices at Greenheys Police Station had been useful and suggested arranging a further visit.

Decision

To endorse the proposed priorities for 2023/34.

CYP/23/33

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 informed Members that the date of the October meeting was likely to be moved.

Decision

To note the report and agree the work programme.