

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2023

Present:

Councillor Reid – in the Chair
Councillors N Ali, Alijah, Amin, Bano, Bell, Gartside, Hewitson, Judge, Lovecy, Ludford, Marsh, McHale, Muse, Nunney, and Sharif Mahamed

Co-opted Voting Members:

Mr G Cleworth, Parent Governor Representative
Canon S Mapledoram, Representative of the Diocese of Manchester

Co-opted Non-Voting Members:

Miss S Iltaf, Secondary Sector Teacher Representative

Also present:

Councillor Akbar, Executive Member for Finance and Resources
Councillor Bridges, Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People
Councillor T Robinson, Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care
Al Ford, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
Victoria Smith, Greater Manchester Integrated Care
Tom Dainty, Greater Manchester Integrated Care

Apologies:

Councillors Fletcher and Sadler
Ms L Smith, Primary Sector Teacher Representative
Mr Y Yonis, Parent Governor Representative

CYP/23/46 Minute's Silence

The Committee held a minute's silence for all children caught up in conflicts across the world.

CYP/23/47 Minutes

Decision

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2023.

CYP/23/48 The impact of COVID-19 on children and young people's mental health and well-being

The Committee considered a report and presentation of Al Ford, Director of CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) which built on the report to the Committee on 20 July 2022 and provided an update on the exploration of the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people's mental health and well-being. Within this paper evidence suggested that children and young people's mental health and

wellbeing had been substantially impacted during the pandemic, which had resulted in higher prevalence, demand and acuity (complexity) for CAMHS.

Key points and themes in the report and presentation included:

- Information on the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people's mental health and well-being;
- Manchester CAMHS waiting time and demand; and
- CAMHS response and transformation.

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

- To welcome the work taking place;
- Work in relation to development trauma and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD);
- Waiting times and cancelled CAMHS appointments;
- Medication shortages for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD);
- The role of schools in supporting children and young people, and support for schools; and
- The under-representation of males in the children and young people receiving treatment from CAMHS.

The Chair advised Members that the Committee would receive a report on FASD at a future meeting.

Al Ford, Director of CAMHS reported that CAMHS was not commissioned to provide a FASD service but that his service was developing a business case in relation to this as it was recognised that there was a gap in the health system in relation to FASD. He informed Members that children who did not have the typical physical symptoms of FASD were often misconstrued as having autism or ADHD and that the service had a social development clinic which worked with children who were difficult to diagnose and that this clinic could diagnose FASD. In relation to trauma, he reported that Greater Manchester was signed up to be a trauma-informed region and that CAMHS had a whole workforce transformation programme around trauma-informed practice. A Member commented that autism could arise from FASD and that these were connected. She also emphasised the importance of diagnosing developmental trauma.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People suggested that a larger piece of work on FASD was needed, involving both social care and health, and he asked the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services to discuss this further with the Member who raised it and CAMHS outside of the meeting. He expressed concern that children's well-being was not prioritised by the Government during the pandemic and that the COVID-19 Inquiry was not sufficiently focusing on this. He also highlighted the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and rising poverty on children's well-being.

The Chair supported the Executive Member's comments about children not being prioritised during the pandemic.

Al Ford confirmed that the service kept a record of all cancelled appointments, whether they were cancelled by the service or the family, reporting that capacity issues and industrial action had led to some appointments being cancelled. He informed Members that the service had a high level of demand and a finite capacity so had to prioritise children with the highest level of clinical need, meaning that some families were waiting for two years. He stated that he recognised that this was an unacceptable length of time to wait for diagnosis but that the service had been successful in receiving an NHS Pathfinder Pilot Award to develop an under-5s programme, delivering intervention alongside assessment, which was cutting assessment times by 50% and providing help and support upfront. He reported that Manchester Foundation Trust was seeking to stockpile an amount of ADHD medication for the most clinically vulnerable and that prescribers were being encouraged to move away from prescribing branded drugs and use alternatives as well. He informed Members that communications were being sent out in relation to this issue, including to schools, and offered to provide further information on this. He stated that it was hoped that the medication shortage issue would be resolved by the end of the year.

The Executive Member for Healthy Manchester and Adult Social Care highlighted some of the key issues within the report and how he was responding to these, including informing Members about discussions taking place on how the Council could work in partnership with CAMHS on a whole-system approach.

Al Ford reported that Manchester Thrive in Education was currently providing support to 35% of schools in Manchester but that there was a commitment in the NHS long-term plan to cover all education settings, while recognising that this required a major workforce expansion. He informed Members that Manchester was further ahead on this work than most areas and that, as long as the national Government remained committed to this agenda, he was confident that all education settings in Manchester would have a Mental Health Support Worker within the next 5 to 7 years. He informed Members about a pilot project taking place in the Pupil Referral Unit, advising that education settings with greater need were being prioritised for quicker and more intensive support. In response to a question from the Chair, he informed Members that some primary schools were already covered by Manchester Thrive in Education and that all education settings in Manchester could contact the Mental Health Support Team Leads to obtain consultation support. He reported that schools could access CAMHS digitally or by telephone and that schools were encouraged to have a Mental Health Champion in their senior leadership team who could act as a conduit between the mental health support system, including CAMHS, and the school. In response to a question from the Chair, he offered to circulate contact details to schools via the local authority, in case any were not clear on who to contact with regards to mental health issues. He recognised that the large-scale transformation programme would require a large communications strategy to ensure schools were aware of the changes and how to access to the right support.

In response to questions from the Chair, Victoria Smith, Greater Manchester Integrated Care, reported that most of the schools already covered by Manchester Thrive in Education were secondary schools and that expansion had to be incremental as there was not capacity to provide this to all schools at present,

although other support was available to all schools. She confirmed that schools did not pay for Manchester Thrive in Education but could pay for additional support.

In response to a Member's question about looking for alternative approaches and best practice from elsewhere, Al Ford reported that his service was a national pathfinder on a number of initiatives and was happy to taking learning from elsewhere. In response to a Member's question, he provided information on the Adoption Psychology Service, advising that the service provided support to children living up to 40 or 50 miles from Manchester, and he offered to provide additional information on this service. In response to a further question, he provided information on the well-being support available to CAMHS staff. He reported that the under-representation of males in those receiving treatment through Manchester CAMHS reflected the national picture and that the service had a 16+ service which provided outreach to teenagers who were not accessing its services. The Chair commented on the level of suicide among young men, the other support which was available such as CALM and some of the ways that could be used to communicate this, such as billboards and social media.

The Chair expressed concern at the increase in students struggling with mental health and that teachers were having to deal with these issues on a regular basis. She also expressed concern at the increase in eating disorders. Al Ford reported that eating disorders had worsened due to the pandemic, when families had been unable to access early intervention and prevention, but that post-pandemic there was still a higher prevalence of eating disorders, not only in Manchester, for a range of reasons, including the increased pressures on children and young people. In response to a question from the Chair about staff absences, he reported that a third of his service's absences were due to stress and anxiety and that the service was providing programmes of work to ensure that its staff stayed healthy and in work.

In response to a question from the Chair about Educational Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services reported that 78% were completed on time, which compared favourably to comparable local authorities, and that this was at a time of increased demand, without additional resources. He suggested that the Committee receive a report on children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) at a future meeting.

Decision

To note the report and support actions that enable services, including education settings, to collaborate effectively to meet the emotional wellbeing and mental health needs of children and young people.

[Councillor Nunney declared a personal interest as an employee of Manchester Foundation Trust.]

[Councillor Reid declared a personal interest as a Governor of Manchester Foundation Trust.]

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which provided an overview of work for Manchester to become internationally recognised as a 'Child Friendly City'.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Background information;
- Main issues;
- Governance;
- Development stage; and
- Delivery stage.

The Committee watched a short video which provided an overview of the emerging themes throughout the Discovery phase of this work.

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

- To welcome the report and the video and the approach being taken;
- To welcome the wide expansion of the number of schools in Manchester which were Rights Respecting Schools from the three schools which had initially signed up for this;
- That this was building an expectation among young people that their voices would be heard and raising a generation to be active citizens;
- That climate change was a very important issue for children and young people, the effect of car fumes on children's health and that children and young people needed positive actions that they could take to address climate change and to see the outcomes of this;
- Making the city centre Child Friendly, including the advertisements on display;
- The importance of play and ensuring that inclusive play was at the centre of every development in the city; and
- Timescales for the action plan and the delivery stage.

A Member who was Lord Mayor during Our Year shared her experiences of the positive work that had taken place and emphasised the importance of listening to children and young people's voices. The Chair and other Members shared their experiences of taking part in the engagement with children and young people. The Chair also commented on the important role that Social Value could play in this work.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People emphasised the importance of engaging with young people in a respectful and non-patronising manner, including explaining obstacles to implementing a suggestion and collaborating on finding solutions. He provided an example from his ward about partnership working to ensure that public spaces were designed in way which provided an environment for children to play. In response to a question from the Chair, he confirmed that the launch event would be at the Council meeting in January 2024.

The Strategic Director of Children and Education Services informed Members that supporting more schools to become Rights Respecting Schools was part of the Children and Young People's Plan. In response to a question about choosing the final three 'badges' from the five key top themes, he reported that innovation and creativity would be used to select the final three badges and that these would be announced in January 2024. He reported that the timescale for creating the development plan was two to four months and that officers were already giving consideration to the content of the plan, although it could not be populated until the three badges were decided. He reported that Cardiff had recently become the UK's first Child Friendly City and that it had taken the city about five years to achieve this status but that Manchester already had a lot of positive things in place in relation to participation and engagement and youth and play services so was already further along the journey. Therefore, he would hope Manchester would be able to progress a bit more quickly. In response to a Member's question, he recognised the challenge in changing officers' ways of thinking and approach to work across all Directorates across the Council. He informed Members that there were people acting as Champions and Ambassadors across the Council's Directorates, as well as in partner organisations, that training was important to help shape this and that the training needed to result in sustained changes in ways of working.

Decisions

1. To support the promotion of initiatives/programmes within areas of responsibility that create activities, opportunities and celebrate the success of Manchester's children and young people.
2. To endorse and support Manchester's journey in becoming a globally recognised child friendly city.

CYP/23/50 LADO Annual Report 2022 - 2023

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which provided an overview of the LADO Annual Report, which was included at appendix 1. The Annual Report provided an overview and analysis of the work of the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) in the management of allegations against adults who worked with children in a paid or voluntary capacity in Manchester, for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. This included how effective the safeguarding partnership was in discharging its statutory responsibilities. The report considered the learning and development over the last twelve months and set priorities for 2023-2024 against this.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Background information; and
- The priorities identified in the Annual Report which were:
 - To safely and effectively support employers whilst managing the LADO demand;
 - To raise awareness and develop the training offer to the children's workforce; and

- To build on the performance framework, to quality assure activity to focus on learning and improvement.

The Chair reported that recent safeguarding training had highlighted the role of the LADO. In response to a Member's question on the take-up of the training referred to in the report, the Service Lead (Safeguarding) informed the Committee that they had now started gathering data on this and would be able to include it in the LADO Annual Report from next year, advising that it was important to compare this data against the agencies which were seeking advice and guidance from the LADO.

Decision

To note the report.

CYP/23/51 Revenue Budget Update 2024/25

The Committee considered the report of Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer which informed Members that the Council was forecasting an estimated budget shortfall of £46m in 2024/25, £86m in 2025/26, and £105m by 2026/27. After the application of approved and planned savings, and the use of c£17m smoothing reserves in each of the three years, this gap reduced to £1.6m in 2024/25, £30m in 2025/26 and £49m by 2026/27. This position assumed that the savings approved as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy in February 2023 of £36.2m over three years were delivered.

The report provided a high-level overview of the updated budget position. The Committee was invited to consider the current proposed changes which were within its remit and to make recommendations to the Executive before it agreed to the final budget proposals in February 2024.

Key points and themes within the report included:

- Updates on the refreshed position including progress in reaching a balanced budget, reflecting preliminary savings and investment options;
- The government was expected to announce the Autumn Statement on 22 November 2023, but no major changes were expected;
- Government funding for 2024/25 would be confirmed in the provisional finance settlement, expected late in December 2023;
- The accompanying report set out the priorities and officer proposals for the services within the remit of this committee. This included a reminder of the savings proposals identified as part of last year's budget setting process (£36.2m across three years) and additional savings for consideration (£2.5m from 2024/25). As far as possible these were aimed at protecting the delivery of council priorities and represented the least detrimental options; and
- There remained a forecast shortfall of £1.6m next year. Any further reduction to the underspend this year would reduce the need to top back up General Fund reserve in 2024/25 and help bridge this shortfall. In addition, the Collection Fund position would be finalised in January and the final levy amounts from GMCA confirmed.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources expressed concern at the cuts to local authority funding over the last 14 years, the impact of inflation and the uncertainty caused by one-year financial settlements from the Government, which the Council would only be informed of in December. He called on the Government to adequately fund local authorities and to provide a financial settlement for a number of years, rather than a year at a time, to enable local authorities to plan ahead. In response to a Member's question about the use of reserves, he reported that the Council had a general reserve fund of £25 million and would need to use some of this during the year to meet in-year pressures but that this would need to be replenished the following year. He reported that after 2026/27 all the smoothing reserves would be depleted and the Council would only have its general reserve fund remaining.

Decision

To note the report.

CYP/23/52 Children and Education Services Budget 2024/25

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services which set out the priorities for the services in the remit of the Committee and detailed the initial revenue budget changes proposed by officers. The Committee was invited to consider the current proposed changes which were within its remit and to make recommendations to the Executive before it agreed to the final budget proposals in February 2024.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Service overview and priorities;
- Service budget and proposed changes;
- Use of reserves;
- Grants;
- Commissioning and procurement priorities;
- Workforce implications; and
- Equality and anti-poverty impact.

The Head of Finance (Children, Education and Schools) informed the Committee that, since the report had been published, officers were no longer considering consulting with schools on a 0.5% transfer from the school block to support High Needs Block pressures for the next financial year, although it might be something that would need to be considered in 2025/26.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Director of Education confirmed to the Committee that the Council was continuing to claw back money from schools with excessive budget surpluses in order to support the High Needs Block.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People supported the earlier comments made by the Executive Member for Finance and Resources, under the previous budget item. and also expressed concern at profiteering in children's placements, the Government's handling of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and the lack of funding for school buildings; however, he welcomed that Manchester

had managed to reduce its number of Looked After Children and had a more stable workforce than other areas.

The Chair highlighted the progress that had been made since 2014, including the valuable role of edge of care services, while expressing concern at the cuts to Council budgets. She stated that the level of cuts was unsustainable and that it was having a negative impact on children and families who were also being badly affected by Universal Credit cuts, increasing heating bills, rising rents and the cost-of-living crisis.

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

- To welcome the focus on early intervention and cost avoidance;
- To express concern that deprived areas of the country were most affected by budget cuts;
- To thank officers for their outstanding work, in the face of significant cuts;
- Concern about school budgets, in particular how schools would manage to fund the agreed pay rise out of their existing budgets; and
- The importance of ensuring that as far as possible Manchester children were placed through providers which shared the Council's values and were not profiteering.

In response to a request for clarification on workforce implications, the Strategic Director of Children and Education Services reported that there were no workforce implications from the budget proposals but that a lot of funding came from grants which were for a limited period of time, which presented a risk and challenge for the service to manage.

In response to the question on ethical providers, the Deputy Director of Children's Services explained how values and behaviours were built into the Sufficiency Strategy, with mechanisms to support that. He reported that the need for changes in the market was also recognised in the Government's Stable Homes, Built on Love strategy.

The Executive Member for Early Years, Children and Young People advised Members that, having to fund the agreed pay rise out of existing budgets, as well as dealing with inflation, effectively represented a budget cut for schools. He also expressed concern that the Department for Education had miscalculated its school settlement for Manchester so at short notice Manchester schools had been informed that they would receive £3.8 million less than they had anticipated.

The Director of Education informed the Committee that the miscalculation was due to an error on pupil numbers. She reported that in a small primary school the difference would be approximately £1000 and for the biggest secondary schools it would be around £94,000. She advised Members that a report on this would be considered by the Schools Forum.

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources shared the Member's concern that urban, deprived areas had been disproportionately affected by Government cuts,

stating that if Manchester had received a fair settlement, it would be £70 million per year better off and that he wanted Manchester to be treated fairly by the next Government.

The Chair noted that the Committee would receive a further budget report in February 2024.

Decision

To note the report.

CYP/23/53 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.

Decision

To note the report and agree the work programme.