

# CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10 JULY 2018

## PRESENT

Councillors Miss L. Blackburn (Vice-Chairman), T. Carey, J. Dillon, J. Holden, D. Jerrome, A. New, J.R. Reilly, D. Western (in the Chair), G. Whitham and A. M. Whyte.

### In attendance

Cathy Rooney	Director of Safeguarding
Karen Samples	Interim Director Education Standards, Quality and Performance
Peter Forrester	Head of Governance
Alexander Murray	Democratic and Scrutiny Officer

## APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Coupe, D. Acton and R. Chilton.

### 1. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the Membership of the Committee for the 2018/19 Municipal Year as listed below be noted.

Councillors Denise Wester (Chairman), Linda Blackburn (Vice Chairman), Jayne Dillon, Daniel Jerrome, Adele New, Thomas Carey, Jonathan Coupe, Graham Whitham, John Holden, Amy Whyte, John Reilly, Robert Chilton (Ex-Officio), and David Acton (Ex-Officio).

### 2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee received a report detailing the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee's Terms of Reference

RESOLVED: That the Terms of Reference be noted by the Committee.

### 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of personal interest were made;

- Councillor Carey in relation to his employment within Trafford as a teacher.

### 4. SOCIAL CARE ASSESSMENT READINESS

The Director of Safeguarding delivered a presentation to the Committee which detailed the self-assessment work that Trafford did every year to ensure that they were prepared for inspections. The Committee were told that Trafford used peer

**Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee**  
**10 July 2018**

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review and challenge programme developed by North West Association of Directors of Children's Services (NWADCS) to assess their services annually. The document was also used by Trafford when conducting their annual conversation with Ofsted inspectors.

The presentation included the key Children's Social Care statistics and listed the key areas for creating an environment where social work could flourish. The Director of Safeguarding then went through the different types of work that Children's Social Care did, highlighted the key parts of that work, and listed the areas that were being developed. Following the presentation the Director of Safeguarding informed the Committee that the Council's duty of care was being extended to include children up to the age of 25 and that this was bringing new challenges.

After the presentation, the Committee were given the opportunity to ask questions. A committee member asked what the criteria were for a child to be placed outside of the borough. The Director of Safeguarding told the Committee that the children who were placed in out of borough placements would have been placed with an in house foster carer followed by an Independent Fostering Agency. If that placement failed the Council would usually try placing the child at few other independent fostering agencies. If none of those placements worked then the child would be placed within residential care within the borough. If that placement did not work then the Council would look at out of borough placements to try to find one that worked.

Children would also be placed in an out of borough placement if it was believed that staying in the area was not an option e.g. they were involved with a local gang. The Committee were informed that there had been an increase in the number of children who are involved in gang related issues. In these cases, the children had to be placed in a secure placement which cost the Council around £7000 a month. Trafford had recently needed to place a child into secure accommodation as they had been committing crimes in the area.

The Committee were told that other children have to go into specialist placements due to mental health issues or when staying in the area is a risk to their safety. The Director for Safeguarding assured the Committee that out of borough placements were the last resort for Trafford. However, once a child was in an out of borough placement and settled the Council avoided moving them as a change could have serious detrimental effects.

The Vice Chairman asked how long it took for a foster carer to be ready to take on a child. The Director of Safeguarding responded that it took around 6 months to go from an expression of interest to the point where they are ready to look after a child. The Director of Safeguarding then went through the stages that prospective carers have to go through in order to become a foster carer. The Stages included the completion of multiple assessments and concluded with the prospective foster carer being considered by a Council panel and then agency decision makers.

Another Committee Member asked whether performance data benchmarked against Trafford's neighbours and statistical neighbours could be provided. The

Director of Safeguarding stated that the Council collected this information as part of the peer challenge and sector led improvement and confirmed that the information could be provided for the Committee.

A Member asked what the reasons were for the recent increase in the number of Court orders. The Director of Safeguarding explained that the increase was a result of an increase in placements with parents which had been seen across North West. The Committee were informed that these placements were court orders that state that there are issues within the home in question but that the children are to be left at home and with support from the local authority.

The Chairman asked how these court orders were managed by the Council. The Director of Safeguarding explained that those court orders required a large amount of work from the Council and due to the unique circumstance these cases presented a number of difficulties for social workers.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the update be noted.
- 2) That benchmarking information be provided to the Committee.

## **5. EDUCATION ASSESSMENT READINESS**

The Interim Director Education of Standards, Quality and Performance informed the Committee that she had attended a meeting that morning where it had been agreed that the self-assessment methods for education were to change so that they would align with those practiced within the Social Care. This meant that they would start using peer review and challenge model to continuously improve.

The Interim Director Education of Standards, Quality and Performance then delivered a presentation to the Committee which showed an overview of the key performance data for the Council. The presentation then went on to describe the Council's position in relation to early years/school readiness, standards at all key stages, and special educational needs. The presentation also covered which areas the Council was performing well, where the Council needed to improve and how the Council was to achieve the improvement.

Following the presentation the Committee were given the opportunity to ask questions. One Member asked how attainment of pupils was tracked throughout their education when they moved around the borough or into a different area. The Interim Director of Education Standards, Quality and Performance responded that when trying to 'close the gap', the Council mainly looked at children in early years, which the Council had a good level of data for. The Interim Director of Education Standards, Quality and Performance acknowledged that it became more difficult to track children's progress when it came to children transitioning from one school and another. She assured the Committee that the Council worked hard to track children throughout their education so that the efficacy of their work could be measured.

Another Member enquired as to the powers the Council had to challenge academies. The Committee were told that Officers from the Council meet with the

**Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee**  
**10 July 2018**

---

Regional School Commissioners on an annual basis and that is the main mechanism through which the Council is able to affect the practices of academies.

The Vice Chairman asked how many children were educated outside of the area. The Interim Director of Education Standards, Quality and Performance was not certain of the figure but knew that not many Trafford Children left the borough for school as more came from outside of the area to attend Trafford schools. In the north of the borough there were a few who went across into Manchester to attend secondary school but not a significant amount.

Another Member of the Committee asked what research had been done on the education attainment gap and what the reason was for the gap. The Interim Director of Education Standards, Quality and Performance explained that the reason for the gap was not clear and there was a lot of research ongoing locally, nationally, and internationally to work out the reason for the gap and how to overcome it. The Council had pockets of data which were held by the data team. The data team 'drilled down' into that data and analysed the differences in attainment in order to identify any patterns that existed and RAG rate children who would be at risk of underperforming.

The Chairman mentioned that a piece of work had been done by the main Scrutiny Committee which had looked at closing the gap and this Committee could follow up on that work. The Committee requested that the report of the Scrutiny Committee be sent to Members for information.

A Member then asked the Council made sure that the pupil premium was used properly. The Interim Director of Education Standards, Quality and Performance responded that applying for the pupil premium was not the Council's responsibility but the responsibility of schools governing bodies. The Council supported schools by providing training for governors so they are aware of what the school can claim for and how to do it. The Council did provide challenge by asking schools to explain their use of the pupil premium and the Council also tried to collaborate with schools and share learning.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the update be noted.
- 2) That the report of the Scrutiny Committee on closing the gap be sent to Committee Members.

## **6. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Director of Safeguarding informed the Committee that there were four main areas where the Council interacted with Children and Young People. These four areas were Social Care, Education, Mental Health, and through Partnership working. The Director of Safeguarding suggested that the Committee look at an element of each of these areas at each meeting.

The Chairman thanked the Director of Safeguarding for the suggestion and asked Members to list any items that they could add to the work programme for the year. The Members suggested Education, Health and Care Plans including Tribunals

**Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee**  
**10 July 2018**

---

and Exclusions, Healthy Young Minds, activities and facilities available to children, children's centres, communication between the Council, the community and new parents, Child Protection Plans, and Care Leavers to be added for items at meetings during the year.

The Councillors agreed that a task and finish group should be formed to look into Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services. The Chairman stated that the Committee would have one Task and Finish group as the topic of SEND was very broad and could require a lot of work by the Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the items listed above be added to the work programme for the 2018/19 municipal year.
- 2) That the Committee form a Task and Finish Group to look at SEND services.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and finished at 8.33 pm