

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24 SEPTEMBER 2024

PRESENT

Councillor D. Western (in the Chair).

Councillors R. Duncan (Vice-Chair), G. Devlin, S. G. Ennis, E.L. Hirst, S. Maitland, E.R. Parker and O. Sutton

In attendance

Tracey Staines	Head of Service for Vulnerable Adolescents
Emma Higham	Population Health Fellow
Kate Shethwood	Public Health Consultant
Andrew Latham	Chief Officer, Healthwatch Trafford
Jill McGregor	Corporate Director for Children's Services
John Brady	Sport and Physical Activity Relationship Manager
John Addison	Governance Manager
Harry Callaghan	Senior Democratic Support Officer
Sophie Tomlinson	Democratic Assistant

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bennett, Z.C. Deakin, S. Procter, D. Butt and F. Hornby

54. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

55. MINUTES

The Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed by the Committee.

The Senior Democratic Support Officer provided an update on the position of co-opted Member on the Committee. The Committee had been informed after the last meeting that the Church Representative co-opted Membership positions and the Parent-Governor Representative positions were statutory and could not be amended.

Church representatives were to be chosen by leaders within their faith, and the Officer informed the Committee that conversations had begun in this area.

For Parent-Governor representatives, these were open to any **Parent-Governor**, in a Governing Body of a Trafford Maintained school. This was those members who had specifically been appointed to the governing body by the parents of the school. If per phase of school, there was more than one applicant, an election was required. The officer confirmed to Members that discussions were taking place to move this forward.

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Finally, the teacher representative positions were not statutory. As such, the definition and scope for these positions could be changed and it had been agreed that a mechanism for these to be looked at could be through the Scrutiny Review. The Senior Democratic Support Officer encouraged Member to either join the Scrutiny Review or ask that their representatives on the group raised this during the process of the review.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Minutes of the meeting held on the 23rd July 2024, be agreed as an accurate record and be signed by the Chair.
- 2) That Members note the update on co-optees.

56. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

One question was received in advance of the meeting from Mr. S. Stonehill;

From reviewing Trafford's Children and Young People's Online Scrutiny Meetings, it is evident that there are significant delays in implementing Education Health and Care (EHC) plans for students. These plans should be completed within a 20-week timeframe. Out of 2,237 students identified for EHC plans, only 52% are receiving their care plans within this period. In some cases, the process is extended to as long as 30 weeks, which is concerning given that the school year consists of approximately 39 weeks. These delays leave students without timely support, which in turn impacts their educational experience.

Does anyone know if the reason for achieving only 52% of these 2,237 EHC plans within the timeframe is due to an increase in the number of learners requiring them compared to previous years, or if it is due to a lack of adequate resources to process them quickly enough? Or is it a combination of both factors? If it is the latter, is there an urgent recruitment program in place to support the EHCP team? Furthermore, if there is a year-on-year increase in students requiring EHC plans, will additional recruitment be undertaken to support the hardworking EHC teams including teaching staff who often have to adapt teaching and learning strategies to facilitate the needs of learners).

From these online meetings, there seems to be a strong focus on data analysis recruitment. While this is important, perhaps a 'back to basics' approach to improving headcount should be considered. Trafford may not rank as high as other boroughs, but considering its size, this number is particularly significant.

The following response was provided in writing after the meeting from the Director of Education, Standards, Quality and Performance;

1. *As at the end of August, there were 3147 EHCPs in place which shows the continued growth in the number of EHC plans issued. This reflects the national position where there has been an 11.4% increase. The growth in Social, Emotional & Mental Health needs has been significant since the pandemic.*

2. *Despite the ongoing increase, Trafford's timeliness figure of 56% for issuing plans has improved from the 2023 reported data and continues to be higher than the national position of 50.3%. Performance is monitored regularly and an action plan to improve our position is in place. This focuses on more targeted tracking and ensuring professionals' reports are in place in a timely way from across education, health and social care.*
3. *Caseloads for the EHC co-ordinators are comparable with other areas across the Northwest.*
4. *Although there hasn't been any additional capacity into the EHC team most recently, a review of the structure of the team has taken place in order to support them in being more effective and efficient, which we hope will enable our timeliness position to continue to improve.*
5. *With regard to the recruitment of teaching staff, it is up to individual school leaders and their governing bodies to make those decisions in line with their budget. The Local Area already provides a comprehensive training package for teaching staff which continues to be adapted according to the needs of our children and young people*

57. INVESTIGATION INTO THE PREVALENCE AND PERCEPTION OF VAPING AND NICOTINE USE IN CHILDREN

The Population Health Fellow outlined the scope for the investigation, due to the concern of the increasing risks and numbers of vaping in secondary schools. The Population Health Fellow provided detail on the study and the means used to collect the data, which had included online surveys. The Chief Officer, Healthwatch Trafford, gave an overview of the responses to the survey, highlighting issues with knowledge on the dangers of smoking and vaping, and the different interventions taken by parents. The Public Health Consultant referred to the Trafford tobacco alliance, which brought together partners on smoking and tobacco control, and informed Members of work done by Early Break, looking at vaping, which had provided specialist support.

The Chair thanked Officers for attending and the report. The Chair raised concern on the data, specifically, that a third of children had reported that they vaped as they woke up. The Chair also asked about the work being done to prevent unregulated vapes being sold. The Public Health Consultant referred to the tobacco alliance and the arrangement which had been organised with licensing to provide funding to eradicate the sale of illegal vapes. This funding had produced services such as 1-to-1 cessation support.

Councillor Ennis asked questions on several topics including; whether there was more required to reach parents through the survey; including children before year six in the survey; the impact of the cost of vaping; and whether more could be done on social media to reach young people

The Public Health Consultant highlighted the primary school findings to have stood out, with the vaping guide and other material being made available to primary

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schools soon. On challenging the cost, the Consultant referred to the balance between encouraging vaping to adults who smoke, and deterring children from taking it up, with the aim to tackle illicit vapes. The Officer informed the Committee that the prevalence of vaping in children had not been predicted. The Public Health Consultant took the good point on social media and was to take it back to her colleagues in Public Health.

Councillor Sutton impressed by the work, asked whether the service was understanding how it worked well, so that it could be used in other areas in the future. The Member did not expect the number of young people under the age of 11 vaping to be large, asking whether public health was aware of any research done elsewhere which had highlighted these issues. The Member finally asked what could be done to reach out directly to school senior leaderships teams (SLTs).

The Public Health Consultant highlighted that learning from the methodology was a live discussion, which was being considered across several different forums. On the data of under-11s, the Population Health Fellow highlighted limited research elsewhere but wanted to understand the vaping habits of these children, echoing her shock at the statistic. Finally, the Consultant informed Members that the vaping guide would be shared, and direct discussions would take place with primary school heads.

Councillor Duncan shared with the Committee an email he had received from a young resident of their opinion on vaping and asked whether tackling mental health issues in young people in Trafford could reduce the level of vaping, highlighting the young persons view that many were aware of the dangers but did not care for the risk.

The Corporate Director for Children's Services found the feedback helpful and reassured the young person that the Council was working hard to ensure that there was several avenues and routes for young people's voices to be heard. The Corporate Director offered to pick up a conversation with the young person or any of their peers to ensure that their opinions were listened too. The JM agreed with Members on the significant research undertaken in the report, highlighting the onus now on officers to provide a challenge to the issues.

The Chair asked what snus was as outlined in the report. The Population Health Fellow informed Members, with its usage slowing growing. Following this response, the Chair thanked the officers for providing the report and responses to the questions received.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the reports and survey be noted.
- 2) That the Corporate Director for Children's Services offer a conversation with the young person by contacting Councillor Duncan.

58. TRAFFORD HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND FOOD PROGRAMME ANNUAL REPORT

The Sport and Physical Activity Relationship Manager provided an overview of the report which had been shared with the agenda. The Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) was a government funded food programme which required the Council to deliver a programme of inclusive activities including a hot meal over the school holidays. The Manager highlighted the key areas of the presentation including the level of monies provided, the services and activities which were available, and the attendances by school holiday.

The fund was designed to support those young people who were eligible for free school meals (FSM), but the Manager did inform Members that local authorities did have discretion to use up to 15% of the funding for children who were not in receipt of free school meals. The Chair thanked the Sport and Physical Activity Relationship Manager for the presentation and opened to Members for questions.

Councillor Hirst asked several questions. Firstly, whether children in care were also eligible for the fund. The Manager confirmed that it was only those on FSM, but highlighted work with Trafford Carers Centre and Grip Adventure, to provide a joint programme. The 15% was used wisely, however, did remark the need to be strict on how the fund was spent.

Following up, the Member highlighted the balance between providing healthy meals and young people being fed so asked how children not liking the food was managed. The Manager raised several workstreams with health colleagues to ensure food was healthy, commenting on how this had improved since coming into post.

Finally, Councillor Hirst noted that most activities were group based and asked whether there were any solo activities provided. The Manager responded that there was nothing outlined currently, but mentioned work underway by grip adventure to provide SEND provision activities, with a desire to provide this further should funding continue in the future.

Councillor Maitland asked whether there was any provision in Davyhulme ward. The Sport and Physical Activity Relationship Manager responded that the closest provision would be Trafford Handball Club in Urmston, with the focus of the fund often being directed to specific areas. The Manager encouraged applications from all areas. Councillor Maitland felt communication of the programme could be improved, to ensure that residents in Davyhulme knew of the provision in Urmston.

Councillor Maitland asked whether the Council was pushing provisions to provide healthy food, highlighting the danger of over processed food. The Manager responded that very little was ultra processed food provided and reiterated that the standard had improved.

Councillor Ennis asked whether the 15% could be used for anyone impacted by the 2-child benefit cap. The Sport and Physical Activity Relationship Manager responded that this funding could go to any child in hardship, but did not have the

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data specifically. The Manager was to share this with Councillor Ennis outside of the meeting.

The Chair raised her concern for those just above the threshold for support. The Sport and Physical Activity Relationship Manager felt that during monitoring checks in the past, it seemed as though some of the fund was being used for these young people by providers. The Corporate Director for Children's Services felt a deep dive on how the 15% was being used would be valuable and offered to discuss this with the Sport and Physical Activity Relationship Manager after the meeting.

Councillor Devlin asked whether there was any overall information which could report back the overall impact of the funding. The Manager responded that when considering the programme moving forward, this was to be considered to ensure that it was being used as effectively as possible.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the report, his time, and the responses.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the Sport and Physical Activity Relationship Manager provide Councillor Ennis with data on if any funding was being used by young people impacted by the 2-child benefit cap.
- 3) That the Corporate Director for Children's Services offer support to Sport and Physical Activity Relationship Manager to look at in more depth how the 15% of funding was being used.

59. TRAFFORD YOUTH JUSTICE BUSINESS PLAN 2024-2025

The Corporate Director for Children's Services opened by providing context to the report. This was the first time the business plan had come through Scrutiny and was critically a statutory document. Through section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, each local authority had to formulate and implement an annual youth justice (YJ) business plan setting out how the service would be funded and delivered.

The Head of Service for Vulnerable Adolescents, who was responsible for writing the business plan, spoke through the journey, areas of reflection, and the next steps. The Head of Service outlined the main aim of the YJ service, to prevent and reduce reoffending, recognising how the current day landscape of YJ had changed completely since 1998. The Officer also referred to the YJ Board being focused on a modernisation scheme for the service, the number of partners, the development of the service over the last three years to be tri-part, involving the statutory service, a new diversion service, and a prevention service

The Head of Service provided some of the key strengths of the service, with a particularly proud moment coming through the work done with victims and keeping the work in house. The need to understand the impact on the community was

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recognised. The Head of Service also shared the key challenges for the service which had been outlined within the report.

Regarding the next steps for the service, the Head of Service outlined how the overarching focus for the service was on promoting education and aspirations to young people. There were also plans mentioned to continue developing the offer and taking a focus on violence and harm on social behaviour.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the report and their enthusiasm for their work. Councillor Duncan named the plan as phenomenal and complimented the report. The Head of Service thanked both Members.

Councillor Parker asked what work was being done on prevention of sexual violence and what was being done with supporting victims of this. Providing context, the Corporate Director for Children's Services responded that approaches to this in Trafford could not be blanket, with the YJ service at Trafford being small and the cohort of young people being small, data could be adversely affected.

Regarding direct work, the Head of Service for Vulnerable Adolescents highlighted a tri-x policy across Greater Manchester looking at this, and the officer spoke through the process which took place when cases of sexual violence were presented. The Head of Service also highlighted the Good Lives Model across GM, but also reassured Members that the service was already on the lookout for new and different models to make use of. For victims, the Head of Service highlighted support from a specialist practitioner who worked with victims who had been harmed, but also worked with experts externally, due to the specialist nature of the work.

Councillor Hirst was interested in young people with SEND being disproportionately within the service, and representing Old Trafford, referred to ongoing group violence with Hulme. The Member asked what parents could do for their children if they were out of school, awaiting an assessment and on the fringes of becoming involved in gangs. The Head of Service for Vulnerable Adolescents responded that parents could refer into the YJ service, with an established multiagency panel, meaning all those who enter YJ received significant access and support. The Head of Service added that this process would involve identifying those with SEND.

The Corporate Director for Children's Services highlighted close work with schools, one in particular with a high number of SEND students. The Corporate Director added that the Head of Service had underplayed the level of work which had taken place, highlighting the range of preventative measures and service outlined within the report. The success of drawing in further funding was also applauded. The Corporate Director did outline the challenges of ensuring that the accessibility, breadth and depth of intervention and support which was available, was not confusing for parents. Finally, the Corporate Director informed Members of a dedicated workstream looking at disproportionality.

Councillor Hirst felt a simple flow chart could be produced for parents to consider who they can approach to get support. The Corporate Director for Children's

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Services felt this was a great suggestion and raised work on adolescent safeguarding which they were excited by.

Councillor Devlin was interested in how the service worked with families to recognise the impact of issues within families. The Member also asked how the service worked with the Early Help offer within the Council. Councillor Devlin also asked how wider determinants such as housing and employment were considered in the service.

The Head of Service for Vulnerable Adolescents confirmed that all assessments included parents, with conversations taking place with all parties involved separately. These discussions then formed a plan which included strength based and person-centred approaches. If the issues led to a breakdown within the family, the Head of Service referred to mediation sessions which were undertaken. The JM referred to the second meeting of the CYP Partnership Board, which was establishing a clear approach to how to develop the early help offer. The Corporate Director for Children's Services was pleased by the support for this across the Council, with the Public Health Consultant outlining the Public Health link within the service.

The Chair thanked the Head of Service for providing the plan to the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Youth Justice Business Plan, be noted.

60. FEEDBACK FROM THE OFSTED FOCUSED VISIT ON THE 'EXPERIENCES OF CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE'

The Corporate Director for Children's Services presented the report which outlined the outcomes of the Ofsted focussed visit for care experienced young people. The Corporate Director highlighted how this was the first time since 2019 this had taken place due to the service no longer being in special measures. The officer recognised that it would be disingenuous to suggest that the Council was not aware of the work to do.

The Corporate Director gave an overview of the areas of strength highlighted, which had included the work done with 16- and 17-year-olds, whilst also mentioning the difficult topics which were raised such as transitions. The Corporate Director concluded by reassuring Members that the service was not complacent regarding the work which was still to be done.

Councillor Hirst remarked on her personal experience, with seven children within the aftercare service, three of which were parents themselves and raised the different treatment which was received. Of the 100+ foster children the Member had cared for, 80 of them had had parents who had been in care, so asked that more work was done on intergenerational support.

The Corporate Director for Children's Services thanked the Member for their support, recognising that a higher proportion of young people in care were also parents. The Corporate Director felt more needed to be done on workforce development to identify a young person's needs and strengths, with work ongoing

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which looked at whether a bespoke service was required for those care experienced young people who were parents.

Councillor Hirst was glad to hear of the Council taking a strength-based approach and identifying the good in young people. The Corporate Director recognised that the service had not fixed any issues with the approach but recalled how she felt as a first-time parent recognising the support one needs at that time. Councillor Hirst was glad to hear how passionate the Corporate Director was on the topic.

Councillor Ennis outlined one area for improvement as effective coordination of joint working to prevent homelessness, highlighted work beginning at the Combined Authority level, and asked the Corporate Director what the areas of approach she felt needed to be focused on for homelessness prevention.

The Corporate Director for Children's Services responded that the recommendation focussed specifically on 16- and 17-year-olds recognising the sharp focus it had at a Greater Manchester level. The Corporate Director outlined visits from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), which had provided feedback on the process. The work being undertaken was in conjunction with adult's services, to ensure the whole workforce was aware. The Corporate Director concluded that a steering group had been established on how the work should be undertaken, with a detailed and dedicated plan in place.

The Chair thanked the Corporate Director for the report.

RESOLVED: That the outcomes of the focussed visit within the report be noted

61. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair raised the busy work programme.

Councillor Maitland asked whether a report from the youth engagement service would be worthwhile. The Corporate Director felt it might be worthwhile to hear on the work from the Youth Network instead. The Chair suggested proposing this again in the next Municipal Year due to the busy current Work Programme.

The Corporate Director raised an assurance document being worked on whilst she held interim statutory responsibilities, which could come to the Committee in the future to provide assurances subject to how long the interim arrangements went on.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Work Programme be noted.
- 2) That a report on Youth Engagement be considered in the next Municipal Year.
- 3) That a report on the interim statutory arrangements of the Corporate Director Children's Service be considered, subject to the length of time in which she holds them.

The meeting commenced at 18:30 and finished at 20:36.