

# CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26 SEPTEMBER 2023

## PRESENT

Councillor D. Western (in the Chair).

Councillors R. Duncan (Vice-Chair), Z.C. Deakin, S. G. Ennis, S. J. Haughey, E.L. Hirst, E.R. Parker, S. Procter, O. Sutton and D. Butt (ex-Officio)

### In attendance

Councillor K. Carter Karen Samples	Executive Member for Children and Young People Director of Education Standards, Quality, and Performance
Sally Smith	Lead for SEND & Inclusion
Mike Kelly	Interim Head of Service – Care Experienced Service
Shona Gallagher	SEND Improvement Lead
Sarah Owen	Assistant Director of Nursing and Quality for NHS Greater Manchester
Emma Brown	Director of Adults
Alexander Murray	Governance Officer
Harry Callaghan	Governance Officer

## APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bennett, R. Paul and D. Acton

## 18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hirst declared that she was a Foster Carer.

## 19. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

No questions were received.

## 20. MINUTES

Councillor Procter noted that their name had been misspelt on occasion in the previous set of minutes.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on the 26<sup>th</sup> September 2023 be approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

## 21. TRANSITION FOR CHILDREN IN CARE

The Interim Head of Service - Care Experienced Service brought the presentation to the Board on behalf of the Head of Service, Cared for and Care Experienced children and young people. The Interim Head of Service - Care Experienced Service started by highlighting the legal framework around care experienced

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young people and ran through some of the duties and responsibilities which came with the legal framework.

The Committee were then informed of the four main care leaver categories, which were eligible, qualifying, relevant, and former relevant, and provided the definition to each of these categories. The national and regional picture was then shared, which included the "Ready or not" OFSTED research, which was published in January 2022, and highlighted the need to improve the support for care leavers. The Interim Head of Service - Care Experienced Service shared the key themes which the report identified, which included a sense of isolation and fear for care leavers and not having sufficient involvement in their pathway planning. Some of the voices of care leavers in Trafford were then shared with the committee, which called for more options around housing and accommodation, clarity about what they were entitled to, and that they felt that 'care leaves us rather than we leave care'.

The Interim Head of Service - Care Experienced Service made the committee aware of the commitment and intention for cared for children and care leavers from the Council, which had been set out in the Corporate Parenting Strategy, and had five strategic priorities. These were Participation and Engagement, Health, Education, Providing and Stable Home, and Preparing for Adulthood. The Committee were then told of some of the commitments already made by the Council on the preparing for adulthood priority, which included developing clearer pathway plans for all young people and updating the care leaver offer.

The Interim Head of Service - Care Experienced Service offered the Committee some of the statistics around the upcoming rise of care experienced young people, due to previously high cohorts of cared for children. The Committee were told that the Council was planning to adopt an opt out model rather than opt in, which had a more proactive reach out offer.

The Interim Head of Service - Care Experienced Service reassured the committee that the Council was monitoring how they measure the services performance and data was shared around how the council planned to measure it. This included monitoring data on how the service keeps in touch with young people after they leave the service and analysing suitability of accommodation for young people. Data surrounding the accommodation of current care experienced young people was provided, with the vast majority classified as residing in suitable accommodation.

The accommodation and support options available to young people leaving care was provided to the Committee. There was a range of options available such as 'Staying Put' (where the young person can choose to stay with their foster carer) and supported lodgings (where they have their own room in a private home). The Interim Head of Service - Care Experienced Service referred to the House Projects, which was a joint commission between Trafford and Manchester City Council's, which had already had seven young people successfully identified.

Finally, the Committee was told of those things already delivered by the service, which had included a service improvement plan being in place and the

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endorsement by the Council of care for and care experience young people being a protected characteristic and shared some of the steps to come on the continued improvement journey of the service.

The Committee was offered the opportunity to ask questions.

Councillor Hirst asked how many care leavers had a continuous personal adviser (PA) from age 18 to 21. The Interim Head of Service - Care Experienced Service responded that they did not have access to the figures, however, they did say there had been a high turnover of PAs but there had been a move to more sustainable figures recently. It was agreed that they would provide the figure after the meeting.

Councillor Hirst asked about the offer from the service to eight weekly visits for care leavers and whether this was face to face or if something like a text message would count. The Interim Head of Service - Care Experienced Service was very clear that visit should be every eight weeks as a minimum. Councillor Hirst asked if there was a target in place for this to be achieved. The response was that this should have been in place. Councillor Hirst responded that it was not.

Councillor Hirst asked how the voices of young people had been captured. The Interim Head of Service - Care Experienced Service responded that the Aftercare Forum had provided many of these responses. Councillor Hirst asked how many care leavers engage with the forum. The Interim Head of Service - Care Experienced Service responded that this was between six and eight.

Lastly, Councillor Hirst asked how those at university's voices were being captured. The Interim Head of Service - Care Experienced Service responded that the eight-weekly meeting with their PA's gathered this voice, which was then fed into their pathway plans. Councillor Hirst felt that there needed to be alternative times offered for the aftercare forum to meet, due to 4pm not always working for people due to work commitments for example. The Interim Head of Service - Care Experienced Service felt that the member raised a good point and promised to go to colleagues at the advocacy service with this feedback.

Councillor Ennis raised that they felt that language such as former relevant was quite triggering and it should be changed. Councillor Ennis also asked if the Interim Head of Service - Care Experienced Service could provide further detail on how a young person becomes categorised in the care leaver categories within the legal framework. The Interim Head of Service - Care Experienced Service explained how a young person becomes eligible. Around the language used, the Interim Head of Service - Care Experienced Service informed Councillor Ennis that the language, such as former relevant, was what was used within the children leaving care act. Councillor Haughey asked if the Council could not use this language. The Interim Head of Service - Care Experienced Service responded that it was an eligibility status laid down in law, but assured Councillor Haughey that this was not language which was used in conversation with care leavers, and was only used on the system.

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Councillor Ennis asked if there was any data around care leavers under 25 who were paying council tax. The Interim Head of Service - Care Experienced Service responded that there was none as there was a discretionary exemption in place in Trafford.

Councillor Haughey felt that it was great that many care experienced young people had moved onto higher education, but asked what the relationship was like between Trafford and these further education institutes and whether it was incumbent on the young person to announce their status to access additional support. The Interim Head of Service - Care Experienced Service responded that on the UCAS application form there was a question around if an applicant has been in care. The service asks young people to think about ticking this as they could receive additional support if they did. Councillor Haughey asked where they go back to during non-term time. The Interim Head of Service - Care Experienced Service responded that the Council was statutorily required to provide accommodation when they are at home.

Councillor Duncan said that it was clear that these young people would like the best help in adulthood. They questioned whether the opt out phrasing could be reconsidered as they felt that it seemed contradictory. The Interim Head of Service - Care Experienced Service responded that this was not meant to be misunderstood and was trying to do the most to keep care leavers within council support until 25.

Councillor Duncan asked a further question around the eight-week meetings and whether it was clear that this should now all be done face to face. The Interim Head of Service - Care Experienced Service responded that it was clear to staff that all meetings should be face to face.

Councillor Parker asked if the level of support in the pathway plan was impacted by where people are accommodated. The Interim Head of Service - Care Experienced Service replied that many young people did choose to go back home and live with their former foster carers with the pathway plan influenced by where they live. However, they did affirm that the plan could be influenced by all things.

The Chair finished by saying that the service was about wanting for care leavers the same things one would like for their own children.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Interim Head of Service - Care Experienced Service provide Councillor Hirst with the data surrounding how many care leavers had a continuous personal advisor from aged eighteen to twenty-one.
3. That the Interim Head of Service - Care Experienced Service provide feedback to colleagues at the advisory service around alternative times for the Aftercare Forum to meet.

**22. TRANSITIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH EHCPS**

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The Director for Education Standard, Quality, and Performance informed the Committee that they felt the report showed that the Council recognised the importance of transition for young people in Trafford, however, admitted that the service was aware that there was work to be done.

Firstly, the Director for Education Standard, Quality, and Performance highlighted the importance of 'starting early', which should seek to understand the interests, strengths, and motivation of children with special educational need (SEN) and how this was key to securing lifelong success. The Committee was made aware of the Council's commitment to a programme of professional development, with a significant number of practitioners working in private, voluntary and independent (PVI) providers, having already achieved the level 3 Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCo) award. The Committee was assured of the desire for a strong pathway around transition for the youngest into school, and some data was provided in the report on the improved early years outcomes which have been seen in Trafford over the past year.

The Director for Education Standard, Quality, and Performance proceeded with the transition between year six and seven, and how, in Trafford, this was an interesting and complex picture. The Director for Education Standard, Quality, and Performance informed the Committee that they had met recently with both the Trafford Parent Carer Forum and the new Headteacher at Sale High, with transition and inclusivity for those children with SEN being important in the secondary sector, as this was often a time which saw an increase in Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans, due to worry and anxiety about what lies ahead for children with these needs. The Committee was also made aware of a drive for an inclusion collaborative between headteachers and SENCo's across Trafford to meet the needs of these young people.

The Director for Education Standard, Quality, and Performance referred to preparing for adulthood (PfA), and how the service sought external validation from Paula Thompson-Jones, a SEND inspector, who was commissioned to show Trafford where they needed to improve. They referred the Committee to the findings of her report, which provided a tough reading. However, the Director for Education Standard, Quality, and Performance assured the Committee of how the Council had been committed to embracing and working on getting the improvements in place.

The Director for Education Standard, Quality, and Performance spoke about the Lived Experience panels (LEAP), which was launched by the Trafford Parent Carer Forum, and had provided an opportunity to hear the lived experience of those families. The Director for Education Standard, Quality, and Performance spoke on some of the data received from these lived experience interviews, with mental health coming through as a real concern for families during transition and transitioning into adulthood.

The Director for Education Standard, Quality, and Performance shared ambition four within her report, which was "We will ensure that our young people with SEND have the same opportunities as all young people, so that they could have the same life outcomes". They then spoke of how this was the driving force behind

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those improvements. In the report, some of the pathways that were in place were provided, as well as some of the work that had been ongoing around supported internships and the SEND Employment Forum, which had received funding in recent months, and shown an improvement and action plan in place sitting around employability and the use of supported internship in Trafford. The Director for Education Standard, Quality, and Performance shared how they felt this was an important move going forward.

Finally, the Director for Education Standard, Quality, and Performance concluded how they felt the report showed the service was clear that things need to change, and that it had identified the steps which are to come to make sure that these improvements take place. The Committee was offered the opportunity to ask questions.

The Chair was happy to see some previous recommendations from the Committee being implemented in these improvements.

Councillor Procter asked what the delay between a request for an assessment for an EHC plan, an assessment taking place, and then the plan being implemented. The Lead for SEND and Inclusion responded that statutory time scales for a decision to be made was six weeks, however, with an increase in parental referrals in recent time which can be sent in with little detail, these can take longer. The service was aiming to make sure that information from the school was provided at the first instance to save time. Data was to be shared with Councillor Procter around how many are done in six weeks.

Secondly, Councillor Procter expressed her issue about the data from children moving to adulthood, and how they felt children were being let down. Councillor Procter insisted that they did not want to see this sort of data again and asked how the service was going to evaluate whether the plan they put in place make a difference moving forward. The SEND Improvement Lead responded that the ambitions plan which had been put together for SEND, was having its actions aligned with performance metrics. One of the problems for PfA at the time was that young people's voices were not strong enough, so the biggest measure for success will be around how the service could understand these voices more clearly. The Director of Education Standards, Quality, and Performance came in and informed Councillor Procter that the service had strengthened governance, leadership, and oversight. Councillor Procter responded that she was most interested in the lived experience.

Councillor Sutton asked if there was enough work being done at the year six / seven stage, as they felt that more work was being done on starting early and preparing for adulthood. The Lead for SEND and Inclusion responded that there was an increased at secondary stage, however, it was a change of key stage where the increases were seen.

Councillor Sutton asked a further question regarding the transition between year six and year seven, about how things were dealt with if circumstances were to change after the February deadline for referrals, up until the end of the school year. The Lead for SEND and Inclusion responded that parents would usually

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contact the school or EHC coordinator if things were to change, however, most things that may come up in between would not necessarily change the destination for the children, it would rather require additional planning to look at the provision.

Councillor Sutton asked a similar question around what happens if significant changes happen in the PfA stage. The Lead for SEND and Inclusion responded that communication was key and there was an understanding that improvements needed to be made. However, it was also about managing expectation about what change of setting might have been required.

Councillor Ennis asked about Key Stage four outcomes with only 17% of children with an EHC plan achieving a grade five to nine in English and Maths, which was below the national average, but also a decrease from 2021, and questioned if this was a concern. The SEND Improvement Lead responded that the data could often be cohort dependent and felt that when you look at the data in Trafford it was very good when compared to many other local authorities which were well below the national average. The Director of Education Standards, Quality, and Performance that the progress 8 scores, was the most significant indicator, as it showed the progress which was being made by children with SEN. They were to share the data following the meeting.

Councillor Duncan referenced ambition 4, and asked what activity and playgroups are allocated for SEND children, and what provision there was for this. The Director of Education Standards, Quality, and Performance responded that this data can be provided, but said that sometimes there was sufficiency issues, however, when this had happened, providers had been asked to help and provide support.

Councillor Deakin asked about how communication would be improved, and if there were any quick fixes which could have been had. The Director of Education Standards, Quality, and Performance replied that one piece of improvement which the service was trying to clear up quickly was the communication around transitions deadlines, so families had all the dates and arrangements to hand. The SEND Improvement Lead felt that it was important to communicate expectations and timelines, so that families know when they are to expect update. They affirmed that there was an understanding that clarity needs to be improved.

The Chair thanked the officers for the report.

Councillor Procter asked about co-opted members and if there had been any progression on this. A Governance Officer responded that there had been some interest, and the Director of Education Standards, Quality, and Performance would contact governance services to get contacts with the relevant schools.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Director of Education Standards, Quality, and Performance provide Councillor Procter with the data around decisions on EHC plans were decided within the six-week deadline.

3. That the Director of Education Standards, Quality, and Performance provide Councillor Ennis with the Progress 8 scores data.
4. That the Director of Education Standards, Quality, and Performance provide Councillor Duncan with the data around early years provision for children with SEN.
5. That the Director of Education Standards, Quality, and Performance speak with governance services around co-opted members.

**23. TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT ON ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

The Chair provided an update to the Committee on the CAMHS task and finish work from the previous meeting. There had been some minor changes to the document and asked the Committee if they would be happy to allow this report to be amended as a delegated decision. The Committee approved the report to be authorised.

RESOLVED: That the Committee approved the amendments to the task and finish work.

**24. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair ran through the work programme for the next meeting, and asked if the Committee was happy with the programme as it was. There was no response from the Committee and was taken as approved.

RESOLVED: That the Committee approve the work programme for the next meeting.

**25. URGENT BUSINESS (IF ANY)**

The RAAC Report listed below was accepted as an item of urgent business prior to the meeting as it was a topical item which the Chair felt was of importance to the meeting and could not be left until the next meeting due to the urgency.

**26. RAAC REPORT**

The Director of Education Standards, Quality, and Performance set out some of the things that have been considered since 2018, with the Department for Education (DfE) considering the issue over that time. The Trafford school's capital team have had a firm grip on the issue for some time. The Council was responsible for thirty-nine schools, and none needed any temporary changes to the school or disruption to education. Two schools were identified by the DfE, Altrincham College and Sale Grammar, however, this had been identified a few months before and mitigation had be in place.

The Director of Education Standards, Quality, and Performance affirmed that good learning was being taken from this, and contingency planning had begun to be put into place.



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RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and finished at 7.59 pm

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