

# **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**12 MARCH 2024**

## **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, R. Paul, S. Procter and O. Sutton

### In attendance

Karen Samples	Director of Education Standards, Quality and Performance
Councillor Karina Carter	Executive Member for Children and Young People
Jill McGregor	Corporate Director, Children's Services
Pamela Wharton	Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care
Kate Shethwood	Public Health Consultant
Catherine Martland	Violence Reduction Co-ordinator
Lamine Sillah-Camara	Young Person – Trafford College
Roshan Singh	Young Person – Trafford College
Silas Ashby	Young Person – Trafford College
Blerta Shira	Young Person – Trafford College
Harry Callaghan	Democratic Officer

### Also in attendance

Michelle McLaughlin	Student Experience Manager – Trafford College
Charlotte Brocklehurst	Student Experience Practitioner – Trafford College

## **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bennett, D. Acton and D. Butt, and Tracey Staines.

## **40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None were declared.

## **41. MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024 be approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

## **42. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

No questions from the public were received.

## **43. PRESENTATIONS BY STUDENTS FROM TRAFFORD COLLEGE**

Students from Trafford College were invited to the meeting to share presentations. Blerta Shira, one of the young people from Trafford College thanked the

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Committee for the invitation and outlined that the presentations included some of the services young people would want any incoming Council to focus on.

Lamine Sillah-Camara presented first, outlining his desire for improved Mental Health Services for Young People in the Borough. This included improved work on preventative measures, establishment of peer-to-peer support, and fostering a sense of belonging for young people. Lamine added further that education and awareness programmes were essential for early identification. He added that this could be established through a mobile app, which resonated with modern young people. Lamine also felt a comprehensive support network and addressing of the gap in Mental Health support, would improve accessibility for Young People to the range of mental health services available.

[Note: Councillor Paul entered the meeting at 18:37]

The Chair thanked Lamine for his presentation and informed him that the Committee recently did a Task and Finish group on Mental Health services, adding that support from young people like Lamine would have been invaluable.

Roshan Singh presented on how young people could benefit from improved environmental decision making in Trafford. Roshan informed the Committee that young people do not have access to enough communal spots to meet and communicate in, which would support students in college to come back after lunch with a refreshed mindset. He highlighted areas such as the Trafford Centre but felt that there should be more local spaces. For example, Roshan mentioned Gorse Hill park, which was near to Trafford College Stretford Campus, however, he felt that this was more oriented toward children, and felt the park could be better advertised. He linked increased accessibility to greenspaces to Lamine's presentation on mental health. Roshan concluded by referring to the imperativeness to preserve greenspace and encouraging biodiversity, which in turn would lead to further social opportunities for young people.

The Chair thanked Roshan for his presentation and cast her mind back to the Pandemic where she felt the air felt fresher and cleaner, with people getting into the environment more. She recognised how more needed to be done in this area for young people, as places like the Trafford Centre were expensive.

Silas Ashby added that there were several parks in Trafford with lots of empty space. Silas felt this space could be embraced, including different plants and notice boards, encouraging young people to notice what was going on around them.

Councillor Procter encouraged the young people to join Friends of Park groups, which could apply for grants for extra funding to improve the area.

Councillor Sutton agreed with Roshan that older teenagers do fall into an unknown space when it comes to parks. Councillor Sutton encouraged the young people to respond to consultations for their local parks, with the youngest age group rarely responding.

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Councillor Ennis felt that public spaces were actively hostile to teenagers, which, alongside the reduction of youth centres in the country over the recent years, meant young people were isolated from places they were able to attend.

Silas said they could get involved with friends of park groups within the College.

Silas Ashby presented on support for Transgender young people in the Borough. Silas felt that work was required to destigmatise the transgender experience. Silas informed the Committee that a recent study had found that 76% of transgender youth had experienced gender dysphoria by the age of seven and 96% had by the age of thirteen. Silas was thankful that the UK education system had made it mandatory to educate children on the topic of LGBTQ+ people in an age-appropriate way, however, was disappointed by the lack of internal services at Trafford Council, only a page on the website listing LGBTQ+ charities. Silas asked the Council to improve the services available within school and the education of school staff, to avoid mistakes made over sensitive topics.

The Chair agreed with everything Silas had said. The Chair was pleased to hear that LGBTQ+ education was now on the curriculum but agreed that work clearly need to be done in supporting the training of staff to greater understand the issues faced.

Councillor Procter was appalled around the Government decision to no longer provide medication to suppress puberty for trans children, which would make transition much harder for young people. Councillor Procter offered for Silas, and any other young people, to reach out to her if they needed any support.

Councillor Duncan thanked Silas for presenting this issue and related to things that Silas had said. He too offered his personal support to any young people at Trafford College having related issues.

The Executive Member for Children and Young People spoke of some of the events she attended in her role. The day after the meeting, the Executive Member was attending the Council Talkshop at Sale Waterside, meeting the Rainbow Reflection group and staff from the Proud Trust where they would be delivering a presentation. The Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care added to this, reporting that the Council's Youth Engagement Service had been working closely with the Rainbow Trust to earn an accreditation that highlighted that services operate with the understanding of the challenges faced by children and young people in the LGBTQ+ community. The Director would take back the lack of promotion and communication regarding this, to push the recognition of this accreditation further.

Councillor Ennis thanked Silas for sharing their experience. Councillor Ennis was glad to hear that the work on the lack of internal LGBTQ+ services was underway.

The Director of Education Standards, Quality and Performance added that she would take the feedback from Silas back to schools and school leaders in the Borough, including the scope for workforce development and training opportunities for teachers.

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Councillor Paul also thanked Silas for the presentation and offered support if they wanted to reach out.

Councillor Sutton thanked Silas for the presentation and recognised how difficult it must be to speak up about these issues. Councillor Sutton referred to the Gender Recognition Act now being 20 years old, and as imperfect as it may have been, if people were only just realising trans people exist, then trans people were not the problem. He highlighted the support from Councillors cross-party in the room, despite hostility in the wider political climate.

Silas finally added how they were glad to hear from allies across Trafford Council.

Blerita Shira provided the final presentation, highlighting the limited job opportunities for young people. Blerita recognised that without a strong economy, young people would struggle to find meaningful employment, such as internships, job fairs or subsidised employment schemes. Blerita added that this leads to financial instability for young people and limits their career prospects. Blerita felt it was important that youth were provided with opportunities such as funding for placements, travel bursaries, and youth focused initiatives to help with economic issues faced. Blerita referred to discrimination for young people in hiring processes, with requirements for roles not being met by young people due to not having the relevant education and experience. Blerita wanted the Council to create workshops for small businesses to attend and offer work experience. Blerita also mentioned the rise in under-35's off work with chronic sickness, linked to the Mental Health crisis. Blerita concluded by asking the Council to provide further investment for skills training and education on vocational training.

The Chair thanked Blerita for their presentation and felt it had given Councillors and Officers food for thought.

The Corporate Director, Children's Services responded that Trafford College had recently hosted a Trafford-based business event, with the Council looking at what partnerships could be entered. The Corporate Director added that it had proved to be a powerful morning, following partnership and political commitment from those in attendance.

Councillor Hirst acknowledged how proud she was of all the young people for being able to come to the meeting and talk on the topics they had.

The Chair concluded the agenda item by thanking the young people and staff from Trafford College for attending. Following this, Members and the young people took a photo for the College's social media. The Student Experience Manager at Trafford College thanked officers and Members of the Council for the invitation.

**RESOLVED:** That the presentations and contributions from the young people be noted and considered.

**44. WORKING COLLABORATIVELY TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE EXPLOITED OR INVOLVED IN KNIFE & VIOLENT CRIME**

The Corporate Director for Children's Services introduced the report which had been circulated with the agenda. The Corporate Director hoped that the report outlined the range of initiatives taking place across the Borough to address serious youth violence. The Committee were also informed that the term, serious youth violence, whilst being clumsy, was national policy terminology. The report also outlined the partnership work the Council undertook with a range of providers.

The Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care added further their hope that the report outlined the breadth of work ongoing, as well as the corporate, strategic, and operational grip in place to prevent and reduce violence and knife crime.

The Violence Reduction Co-ordinator proceeded to speak to the report, touching on the different approaches taken by the service towards violence reduction. A recent Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) had looked at the potential cost of violence for Trafford. In 2022/23 this cost stood at around £71million. The Violence Reduction Co-ordinator role, uniquely, sat within the Public Health team at Trafford, with a focus on a preventative model to look at violence reduction.

The Violence Reduction Co-ordinator also highlighted the many systems which could impact upon the risk and protective factors for violence. The Committee were also informed that the 'Greater Than Violence' strategy referred to in the report was written and awaiting final sign off. The Trafford approach was to take a two-pillar approach of prevention and response.

The Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care provided an overview of data in the report. This included data on the level of serious violence in Trafford perpetuated by young people and data on the number of young people who were victims of violent crime. The Youth Justice Service had recently seen an increase in the young people arrested and charged for violent offences, which was a concern despite numbers still being low. The Violence Reduction Co-ordinator stressed the importance to exercise caution when looking at data due to differences across the Borough.

The Violence Reduction Co-ordinator added that the JSNA had identified young people coming into the youth justice system at a younger age, and as such, the service had begun providing workshops in primary schools, which had been evaluated to be effective by Greater Manchester Police.

The Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care highlighted the detailing in the report of the number of Boards and Forums working on youth crime. These had a strong approach to information sharing. Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester, Kate Green had visited the Complex Safeguarding Hub recently, and was impressed by the level of information the service had in each locality. Collaborative work was also taking place with Manchester City Council colleagues.

The Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care finally spoke of the redesign of children's services in Trafford in 2021, and how this had brought together teams

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under the vulnerable adolescent's service, which had increased understanding in the area. The Director spoke to the case examples included within the report.

The Director summarised by saying that the Council was now more aware of the issues for children and young people, and a desire, alongside police colleagues, to jointly prevent further incidents and to work collaboratively.

The Chair asked the young people still present whether they felt safe when out in the community. Blerta Shira responded that as a woman, after dark she did not always feel safe, finding that it was on the responsibilities and morals of others to ensure everyone could feel safe. The Violence Reduction Co-ordinator responded that it was a priority as part of the violence reduction service to create safe spaces for young people and that the feedback would be taken away.

The Executive Member for Children and Young People also attended the event with Kate Green and felt that many young people reported feeling unsafe along the Metrolink lines. The Executive Member also shared a success story which was shared at the event.

The Corporate Director for Children's Services referred the Committee to page 31 in the document pack, which the Corporate Director hoped gave an indication of the commitment to sustain and maintain the Council's youth provision, which included the detached youth work team, Street Talk.

The Chair asked Members if they had any questions for officers.

Councillor Parker highlighted that the report noted that exclusion from school was one of the most significant factors for young people being vulnerable to exploitation. As such, Councillor Parker asked if Trafford was utilising all services of support before exclusions took place. Councillor Parker asked further how the Council was guaranteeing that schools were trauma informed.

The Director of Education Standards, Quality and Performance responded that the education service had an exclusion officer, who worked closely with schools and the young person to ensure that exclusion was a last resort and could be prevented. The Director did inform Members however, that the fundamental issue was that the decision lay with the Headteacher. The service was monitoring schools which proved to be hotspots for exclusion to ensure that all avenues were being explored. Members were reassured that in comparison to other areas, exclusions remained low.

The Corporate Director for Children's Services also responded that this fed into their role, with the DMT performance clinic monitoring the data as well. Regarding schools being trauma informed, the Corporate Director informed Members that a Bridge Conference led by the Virtual School recently took place which was about being attachment aware and trauma informed. The Committee were also told of an attachment aware programme being piloted called 'Belong', which was also being piloted by Liverpool and Middlesbrough local authorities.

Councillor Procter asked how the Council was going to evaluate the turnaround programme and monitor its success. The Director for Early Help and Children's

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Social Care responded that the programme had governance arrangements nationally and this was reported on a quarterly basis, ensuring that the Council was using the grant as best as possible. The Corporate Director for Children's Services added that this meant the Council would not be marking its own homework, rather, being subject to a national evaluation.

Councillor Paul referred to a recent attack on a young boy in a park and wanted to know what the Council was doing to tackle Hindu phobia. The Corporate Director for Children's Services agreed to take this case offline. The Corporate Director did add that they hoped the principled approach across the services' work provided some assurances in terms of any form of discrimination. The Director for Education Standards, Quality and Performance would take this back to the Council's Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) which contains faith representatives from all faiths.

Councillor Ennis was encouraged by the data led approach in Trafford and asked whether the Council felt their strategy had joint up with all relevant partner agencies or if there were any gaps in information sharing. Councillor Ennis added further what was driving the increase in exclusions in SEND young people.

The Violence Reduction Co-ordinator responded that when the JSNA began, all specified authorities were engaged from the beginning, with communication taking place back and forth throughout. A serious violence group had also been formed, comprising of those specified authorities to ensure that the work continued. The Corporate Director for Children's Services added that joint work information sharing was also supported through the co-location of different services, such as the complex safeguarding team being located at a police station.

The Director of Education Standards, Quality and Performance responded that it was difficult to tell what was driving the rise in exclusions for SEND young people. The Director added that some cases were due to children having an unmet need. Schools' ability was also mentioned, predominantly in the secondary sector, with the primary sector generally managed well. The Director felt that there was a combination of issues at play. The Director finished by reassuring Members that it was something the service was keeping an eye on within the SEND Ambition plan.

Councillor Hirst referred to her past as a foster carer and her engagement with the service in its different guises. Councillor Hirst felt that in the past the prevention service had been focused on parental involvement, and whether, as part of the prevention service now, if the service were still working with parents.

The Director for Early Help and Children's Social Care responded that engagement from the youth justice service very much took a family first approach. Furthermore, a Parent Support Commission Service was to be procured, with an ambition of the Director's being to have parents delivering support for other parents going through situations they may have experienced in the past.

Councillor Hirst was glad to hear this and highlighted the number of bespoke services available now, in comparison to the past. Councillor Hirst asked how the

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Council shared the information to professionals, parents, young people, and carers so that they were aware of the offers available.

The Violence Reduction Co-ordinator responded that this happened in different ways. This included face to face engagement, a professional's guide for children and young people which had been designed to be a quick flip through document which could be distributed, as well as the development of an online resource called a padlet, and an online notice board to direct people to different sites. The Corporate Director of Children's Services added that having a strategy looking at serious youth violence and what the data was telling the service, would be helped by the range of different services available.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the contents of the report be noted.
- 2) That the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and collaborative understanding of youth violence in Trafford, be noted.

**45. TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION IN THE 2024/25 MUNICIPAL YEAR**

The Chair highlighted appetite to establish a task and finish group looking at SEND Tribunals which had been agreed at the previous meeting. This was not to start until the next Municipal Year, and asked Members if they had any items they would like to be considered for the next year.

Councillor Procter felt that something needed to be brought on support for Trans-Children in school following the presentation from the young person earlier in the meeting.

Councillor Sutton referred to the Council's Constitution and how the Committee could include co-opted members. Councillor Sutton felt that in the run up to the new year, the Committee could look again at adding co-opted members to the Committee. Councillor Sutton also asked if it could be looked at to amend the Constitution to include further co-opted members such as support staff representatives.

The Chair responded that reach out had taken place in the past to get Governors to join the Committee, to no avail and highlighted the difficulty to get these Members.

The Corporate Director for Children's Services had contacted the Council's legal services to see what the process was for co-opted members, as any co-option was subject to a transparent and fair process.

The Democratic Officer added that Co-opted members could be looked at again in the new Municipal Year.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That Councillor Procter's suggestion be considered at the setting of the Work Programme before the next Municipal year.



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- 2) That the Committee and Democratic Services look at Co-opted Members again before the next Municipal year.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and finished at 8.09 pm

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