

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

19 NOVEMBER 2024

PRESENT

Councillor D. Western (in the Chair).

Councillors R. Duncan (Vice-Chair), J. Bennett, Z.C. Deakin, G. Devlin, E.L. Hirst, S. Maitland, E.R. Parker, S. Procter and D. Butt (ex-Officio)

In attendance

Jill McGregor	Corporate Director for Children's Services
Pamela Wharton	Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care
Karen Samples	Director of Education Standards, Quality and Performance
Sarah Butters	Head of Education Places, Access and Vulnerable Children
Sarah Russ	Trafford Travel Co-ordination Unit Manager
Shona Gallagher	SEND Improvement Lead
Tracey Staines	Head of Service for Vulnerable Adolescents
Sally Atkinson	Specialist Commissioner - Children's Clinical Commissioning
Kate Shethwood	Public Health Consultant
Harry Callaghan	Senior Democratic Support Officer
Sophie Tomlinson	Democratic Assistant

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S. G. Ennis, O. Sutton and F. Hornby

62. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

63. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held 24th September 2024 be approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

64. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

No questions were received.

65. HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

The Head of Education Places, Access, and Vulnerable Children introduced the report which gave an overview of how the local authority was meeting its duties in relation to the provision of travel assistance for eligible children, young people, and adults to access education and training. Members were reminded that although the report focussed on SEND, provisions were also available for eligible mainstream pupils.

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[The Executive Member for Children and Young People entered the meeting at 18:37]

The Head spoke of the 14% increase in the last two years of the number of SEND passengers and highlighted that this continued to be an area of budgetary pressure. Eligibility criteria was also cited, with the Head acknowledging that a lot of the criteria was set nationally. Trafford however had identified three discretionary criteria within its policy for which there was no statutory duty to provide transport for.

It was drawn to the Committee's attention that new systems had recently been procured to increase efficiencies within the service, including a new system for the management of applications, introduced Summer 2024, which had seen some administrative savings and experience improvements for parents. Additionally, new industry standard software was being rolled out school-by-school to optimise routes, which had seen modest savings. The Head noted that savings had been offset by the increased need for funding.

[Councillor Parker entered the meeting at 18:41]

Work ongoing with regards to licensing was discussed, with the Head noting that spot checks had been implemented, jointly with Licensing and Education as well as DVLA colleagues, at school gates and operator premises. Councillor Hirst identified that some concerning cases had previously been brought to the Licensing Committee, and queried whether these new processes would help with some of those issues. The Head commented that the new procedures would allow it to be identified when a driver's license had expired or been revoked, and to react quickly. The Corporate Director for Children's Services echoed this and emphasised that joint working and quality assurance processes were being strengthened, and that the vulnerability of the children being transported was recognised.

Councillor Hirst asked about children who are new to home to school transport and what was in place to help them with this transition. The Councillor also wondered about families that moved to temporary accommodation and therefore may be further away from school and need to start transport or move out of Trafford. The Members asked whether they would be at risk of losing their provision. The Head confirmed that work happened in partnership with schools for children starting transport, including social stories. Generic social stories had been created which families and schools could adapt out. With regards to families in temporary accommodation, the Head affirmed that moving out of the area does not drop a family's eligibility for home to school transport, but the responsibility for the provision moves to the new local authority. It was also advised that if a family moves further away from their school and a child can no longer travel independently, a new request would be submitted which would be taken on its own merit under the new living circumstances.

Councillor Procter was interested in the appeals that had been received, with the report noting that there had been 35 appeals at stage one, with 6 progressing to stage two (none of which were upheld). The Councillor asked what sort of reasons parents had for appealing. The Director of Education Standards, Quality and Performance responded with examples such as the safety of routes and the length of journey times, with some children being tired when getting to school. The Director also reported that there had been an increase in the number of cases where social, emotional, and mental health difficulties (SEMH) had been cited.

At this point in the meeting, the Vice Chair circulated papers to members with several questions posed by members of the public. It was agreed these questions would be taken away by the officers for consideration, and detailed responses shared with the committee outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That written responses posed to questions provided by the Vice Chair be circulated to members.

66. BEE WELL SURVEY - STRATEGIC RESPONSE AND APPROACH TO FINDINGS

The Specialist Commissioner - Children's Clinical Commissioning was present to answer questions on the findings of the recently published BeeWell Survey. The Specialist Commissioner first provided a brief overview of the survey for the committee. Twelve out of nineteen secondary schools took part in the survey, equating to 63% of Year 10 students in Trafford. Distinctive differences were found in views based on neighbourhood, and there was a measurable deterioration in how young people felt about community spaces, such as parks and leisure facilities. The most notable change was found in the amount of time young people spent on hobbies, which had fallen.

The Specialist Commissioner went on to discuss how the findings of the survey had been implemented, advising the committee that there had been widespread information sharing across many teams in Trafford including Housing, Education, and Health and Social care. Partners had been asked to take the BeeWell survey findings into account when producing plans. Information was also being centrally collated into an action plan held in the Children's Commissioning team.

The floor was then opened for questions, with the Chair commenting on their concern about the gap with the North neighbourhood and asked whether there was anything specific to this area within the action plan. The Public Health Consultant agreed that this research is helpful for how it highlights inequalities such as in the North of the Borough, and advised that there was lots going on to target support activities, including the development of family help models, but they could come back to the committee with more specific information.

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Councillor Parker expressed that the report was very interesting and insightful but noted that the data on the Central neighbourhood could be misleading due to the low response rate, as only one school participated, which was a Grammar school. The Special Commissioner agreed with the Councillor that it was important to recognise the economic disparities in Central and consider this when creating strategic plans and assured the Councillor this was understood.

Councillor Devlin praised the survey and voiced it would be beneficial to bring positive stories back to constituents about the work being done off the back of the report. The Specialist Commissioner agreed and confirmed this could be done.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That the Public Health Consultant provides members with more information on targeted support activities in the North neighbourhood.
- (3) That the Specialist Commissioner considers how positive stories can be taken back to constituents.

67. ANNUAL REPORT ON COMPLEX SAFEGUARDING

The Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care opened the item by providing a brief introduction to the report. The Director noted that Greater Manchester had eight complex safeguarding practice principles that the service worked towards, expressing pride in the work carried out in this area alongside Greater Manchester colleagues. It was emphasised to the Committee that the children and young people supported by the SHINE (Complex Safeguarding) service were amongst the most vulnerable in Trafford.

An overview of some of the key strengths and reflections presented in the report was provided by the Head of Service for Vulnerable Adolescents. The Head of Service expressed that the Greater Manchester Complex Safeguarding Hub was a real strength for Trafford, as it helped to understand themes and trends of exploitation and thus target resources appropriately. The Safeguarding Hub was also very current with research, the findings of which was shared across the ten Local Authorities.

The Head of Service identified that there was a stable team of practitioners and social workers within the service, and that this stability helped children and young people build and maintain relationships with their practitioners. Practitioners had also conducted outreach efforts to engage with communities and raise awareness about exploitation, receiving a positive response from the community.

Positive feedback from children and young people detailing the experiences they had within the service was discussed. It was identified however that feedback rates from children, parents, and carers was still low – having increased 10% to

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reach 46%. The Head of Service voiced there was still work to do to digitise the feedback process to encourage more engagement.

Finally, the ongoing priority areas for the service were discussed, including the need to further develop how to support children who are neurodiverse, have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), are from mixed heritage backgrounds, or are in alternative educational provisions. In addition, further work on transitional safeguarding as well as supporting children earlier by linking in with family help hubs and building closer relationships with schools, were raised as priority areas.

The Chair praised the report for being helpful and informative, and opened the floor to questions from the committee. Councillor Hirst complimented the report and the reflections, commenting on the importance of recognising areas that needed to be developed. The Councillor asked for more information on the approach to victim blaming, how this looks with other agencies, and the effect this had on children. The Head of Service informed the Committee that training had started with partners regarding victim blaming, and that while changing culture is slow, a difference had been noticed regarding the language that was being used about children and young people.

Councillor Hirst also queried the capacity in the service, and whether there was a waiting list for children to access support. The Head of Service assured that although there was a protected caseload for SHINE social workers, there was no waiting list. The Corporate Director for Children's Services remarked that there had been further investment into SHINE in the last four to five years which had grown the team.

Councillor Maitland wondered if it was possible to have a breakdown of figures by neighbourhood, which the Head of Service advised could be included in the next annual report. The Corporate Director for Children's Services reminded the committee that ward-level data may look different depending on what area was assessed, such as where children lived or where they went to school.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (2) That ward-level data is included in the 2024-2025 annual report.

68. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair raised the busy work programme and proposed that any suggestions for topics could be put forward for the next municipal year. The Chair also took time to thank the officers for their hard work on the reports that had been submitted to the committee over the year.

RESOLVED: That the work programme be noted.

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The meeting commenced at 18:30 and finished at 19:42.