

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15 MARCH 2022

PRESENT

Councillor D. Western (in the Chair).

Councillors Mrs. P. Young (Vice-Chair), J. Dillon, S. Maitland, A. New, A.M. Whyte and D. Acton (ex-Officio)

In attendance

Councillor Hynes	Executive Member for Children's Services
Jill McGregor	Corporate Director of Children's Services
Jude Brown	Strategic Lead Practice Improvement and Learning
Jane Hynes	Public Health Programme Manager
Laura	Student attending Trafford College
Ann	Student attending Trafford College
Liberty	Student attending Trafford College
Stephanie Ferraioli	Governance Officer
Alexander Murray	Governance Officer

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bennett, Miss L. Blackburn, T. Carey, S. J. Haughey and S. Longden

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

28. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

No questions were received.

29. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held 9 February 2022 be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee.

30. PRESENTATION FROM TRAFFORD COLLEGE

Three students from Trafford College named Laura, Ann, and Liberty who were all members of the Equalities Council and the Green College Assembly. Each student presented information to the Committee on issues that concerned them.

Laura informed the Committee of the advantages of having a healthy lifestyle. Laura suggested that reducing the cost of gym membership for the under 20's would go a long way to encourage a fuller involvement in sports activities, reducing stress, improving mental health and an altogether better lifestyle, which would lead to more happiness and reduce the risk of disease.

Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee
15 March 2022

Councillor Maitland was not aware that a student discount was not available at leisure centres and asked Laura if they were having to pay the same as adults. Laura answered that young people under twenty, including students, were having to pay the same as working adults. The Executive Member for Children's Services thanked Laura for coming and providing the Councillors with the information, as she had learned a lot.

Ann spoke to the Committee about the cost of transport within Greater Manchester from a student's perspective. The Committee were informed of the importance of public transport for students and the costs associated with using the service which ranged from £50 to £80 a month. Ann explained how the tram was a far better way for young people to commute to college, but it was very expensive. Busses were cheaper but the routes and frequency meant that the journey took far longer. Ann proposed that the "Our Pass" should be extended to include trams as well as busses to aid young people to attend college.

Councillor New agreed with Ann about her comments on the issues with the public transport system. Councillor New added that Partington was a particularly stark example of having a lack of public transport options, with only one bus route for the whole community. Councillor New thanked Ann for bringing people's attention to the issue and suggested that Ann support and look to be involved with the plans to improve public transport suggested by the Mayor of Greater Manchester.

Liberty spoke to the Committee about climate change and noted the council's plan to be carbon neutral by 2038 and the government's plan to be carbon neutral by 2050. However, Liberty stated that those plans were not enough to keep the global temperature to less than 1.5 degrees. Liberty informed the Committee of actions individuals and the council could take in order to reduce carbon emissions, which included switching to LED lights, making sure new builds were more energy efficient, installing solar panels on new builds, and improving recycling.

Councillor Maitland agreed with Liberty's points and spoke of the ways that she was trying to address her carbon footprint. The Executive Member for Children's Services thanked Liberty for expressing her points about the threats of climate change and the actions that could be taken in a very powerful way. The Chair thanked Laura, Ann, and Liberty for bringing those very important topics and their suggestions to address the issues to the Committee's attention.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the information be noted.
- 2) That Laura, Ann, and Liberty be thanked for attending the meeting and for bringing the issues and their suggestions to the Committee's attention.

31. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

The Strategic Lead Practice Improvement and Learning gave a brief overview of the report that had been circulated to the Committee. The service was starting to experience more stability. The work culture and workloads had previously been

identified as the reason for staff leaving. The most recent data showed the reasons staff were leaving had changed, with most staff listing personal reasons such as financial requirements. Additional checks had been brought in to ensure new starters were given a full induction to support them in their role. The Committee were informed that recruitment was a national problem for all public services, not just social care.

The Strategic Lead Practice Improvement and Learning recognised that the number of agency staff was too high. The Committee were informed of schemes the service had brought in to convert agency staff to council staff. Work was also ongoing regionally which looked to put a cap on the cost of agency staff. The Strategic Lead Practice Improvement and Learning concluded by detailing the work the service was doing to increase recruitment within the service and the most recent appointments, which included two heads of service.

Following the overview Councillor Dillon asked whether all social workers received EHCP training. The Corporate Director of Children's Services responded that some training on EHCPs had been delivered during the practice fortnight in November. Changes were being made to the system to make it easier for social workers to view children's EHCPs. In addition, two briefing sessions on SEN were being held and a detailed training plan was being developed for all staff.

Councillor Acton welcome the change in reasons for leaving and what the service had done to bring about the change. The Strategic Lead Practice Improvement and Learning detailed the changes in approach around supervision and support provided by managers, which included the introduction of the supervision framework. The Corporate Director for Children's services added that Ofsted had noted the improvements in supervision and support for staff during their recent visit.

The Chair asked whether there was opportunity for service users and staff to provide feedback to the service. The Corporate Director of Children's Services informed the Committee of the introduction of live audits, which involved visiting service users to gather their feedback on the performance of the service. Surveys were used to try and gain feedback but the return rate was low. The social workers health check was on way that staff could provide feedback and there was also the annual council wide staff survey. The Executive Member for Children's Services added that the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum were two service user groups who gave regular feedback and challenge to the service.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

32. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF FOSTER CARERS

Although tremendous work was being done by the current carers who were very loyal to the service, challenges remained in recruitment and retention. The service received a good level of enquiries from potential carers but not enough went on to become foster carers. The service was looking to utilise digital media to advertise further.

Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee
15 March 2022

Most of Trafford's children in care were over 10 years of age and a large proportion had been in a placement for over 2 years, with a number being placed with the child's family. One of the main areas that Trafford struggled was the placement of sibling groups so in those cases Trafford had to go out to the private foster care providers.

Benchmarking had been conducted with other local authorities and Trafford's level of approvals of foster carers did appear to be lower than the other respondents. Although work needed to be done to see whether other authorities included placements within families, as Trafford excluded those placements from their data.

Following the overview, Councillor Maitland asked whether Trafford had looked further afield than just Greater Manchester for ideas of how to improve recruitment and retention. The Corporate Director for Children's Services responded that the service had worked with Trafford Housing Trust to look at work being done nationally to identify areas of best practice. Other Local Authorities across Greater Manchester were keen in seeing the outcome of this work, with a view to possibly adopting it.

Councillor Dillon asked how the decision on where a child would be placed was made. The Corporate Director of Children's Services went through the selection criteria that was part of the council's rigorous selection process and the Committee were assured the allocation of placements was needs led.

Councillor Acton noted foster caring represented a reduced cost compared to other forms of provision. Councillor Acton expressed his disappointment that Trafford was one of the lowest performing authorities when it came to recruitment and urged the need to find out why. The Corporate Director for Children's Services responded that the recruitment rate was below where they wanted to be. Trafford had aimed to recruit 15 during the year but had only recruited 4 so far with 4 more being trained.

Councillor Acton asked whether putting additional resources into the foster carer service to provide the support they needed would lead to overall savings. The Corporate Director of Children's Services agreed that it was an area where the Council could invest to save. The Corporate Director then informed the Committee of the support offered to foster carers and the plans to enhance the offer.

Councillor New spoke about the advertisements for foster carers and how she felt they were not realistic enough and failed to recognise the pressures that they are likely to face. The Corporate Director for Children's Services spoke of the way foster caring had changed over the years to the point where service mainly needed foster carers who could look after older children and sibling groups. The change in the demographic of children in care had led to foster carers needing higher levels of emotional resilience and skills.

Councillor Maitland asked how many children were placed with internal foster carers and how many were placed with external foster carers. The Corporate Director of Children's Services responded that Trafford had 372 children in care 101 were placed with internal foster carers, 113 were living with family members,

and 75 were living with parents. 32 were placed with independent foster agencies but while it was more expensive than internal provision it was as high as external residential placements.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

33. HEALTHY WEIGHT AMONG CHILDREN

The number of overweight children in the borough was very high and there was no strong evidence base to support what worked to help children lose weight. A number of schemes were being run nationally which would give good data, unfortunately that information was not yet available. While there was a lot of data on the impact of exercise, behaviour, and diet for adults there was not similar data available for children.

The Committee were informed of the schemes Trafford were undertaking which included working together with Foundation 92 to reach primary schools children and their families to talk about wellbeing and mental health. A more specific programme advising on food, mental health and self-esteem was due to start in April. Trafford were also in contact with Tameside Council, who were running one of the national pilot schemes, to share their data.

The Committee were informed of the work within Trafford being done around the delivery of the Healthy Weight strategy and in light of economic factors, such as increased food and energy prices. The food standards agency was looking to pilot schemes with environmental health teams across the country to ensure food standards were being met within schools and Trafford hoped to be selected.

Councillor Young asked whether it was known which areas children were overweight so that resources could be focused upon young people in those areas. The Public Health Programme Manager responded that it was known in Trafford where obesity was more prevalent and it was possible to focus work in those areas.

Councillor New spoke about the role of parents and the importance of having parents who were able to cook. The Public Health Programme Manager responded that the family programme being run by Foundation 92 took a whole family approach to address childhood obesity.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

34. SCHOOL FUNDING

RESOLVED: That the item be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee.

The meeting commenced at 6.45 p.m. and finished at 8.43 p.m.