

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 JULY 2021

PRESENT

Councillor D. Western (in the Chair).

Councillors Mrs. P. Young (Vice-Chair), J. Bennett, Miss L. Blackburn, J. Dillon, S. J. Haughey, S. Longden, A. New, A.M. Whyte and Dr. K. Barclay (ex-Officio)

In attendance

Jill McGregor	Corporate Director of Children's Services
John Addison	Governance Manager
Naomi Kelso	Principal Solicitor
Karen Samples	Director of Education Standards, Quality and Performance
Zoe Sweeny	Early Years Service Manager
Pamela Wharton	Director of Early Help and Children's Social Care
Fabiola Fuschi	Governance Officer

Also Present

Councillor Hynes, Executive Member for Children's Services
Councillor Carter, Lead Member for Education

1. ATTENDANCES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Acton, Carey and Maitland.

2. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

RESOLVED that the membership of the Committee, including the appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman, as agreed at Annual Council on 26th May 2021 be noted.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

RESOLVED that the terms of reference of the Committee as agreed at Annual Council on 26th May 2021 be noted.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no public questions received.

6. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee was minded to approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 16th March 2021

7. UPDATE ON OFSTED REPORT MAY 2019 - INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES

The Committee received a presentation of the Corporate Director of Children's Services on the latest developments on the Improvement Journey: the plan to improve Children's Services in Trafford, following the Ofsted inspection in March 2019.

The Senior Officer as well as the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services were in attendance to present the update and answer the questions of the Committee.

Officers outlined the improvement journey so far and the most recent areas of focus. They also informed of the latest visit of the Ofsted in March 2021, the recent review of the Department for Education (DfE) in May 2021 and the feedback received.

Officers informed Members of the positive outcomes achieved so far such as the Ofsted recognition of the strengthened front door access services and children being seen regularly through the pandemic. Officers also illustrated the areas for improvements, such as the instability in the workforce, and the measures in place to address this issue such as the strategy to retain social workers and the recruiting campaign which would be launched this month.

Members sought and received clarification on a number of matters such as the scope of the focus visit. Officers informed that the focus visit had been carried out to determine how well the services had managed during the pandemic.

With regards to the recent Ofsted focus visit, Members asked about practice on decision making and the evaluation of information available to stop repeat requests for help and delay before receiving the right service. Officers informed that a strong focus on access services had led to a significant reduction of re-referral rate from 30% to 19%. Officers added that the Child Impact Chronology programme had gone live. This programme supported the understanding of the impact of an event on a child, to inform the quality of assessment and the action plan.

Members expressed concern with regard to the high number of agency staff utilised in the service and asked whether, with regard to overall staff turnover, exit interviews were being conducted. Officers confirmed that exit interviews were standard practice. Officers reassured the Committee that workforce stability was one of the key priorities. The Council adopted an Investing in People Strategy and work was ongoing to increase the number of permanent members of staff: six front line practitioners had been appointed, three student social workers had confirmed that they intended to remain in Trafford and six more social workers had been shortlisted. In addition to this, sessions were conducted to encourage staff agency to permanently join Trafford.

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Members asked about the feedback provided by care leavers with regard to access to health and wellbeing services and how the Ofsted would assess progress and effectiveness of change. Officers informed the Committee that the redesign of Children's Services had been presented to the Forum on Care for Children. One of the presentations was on the Child Journey Meeting where partner agencies would get together to look at the child's experience in light of the No Wrong Door methodology. With regards to progress against the Ofsted's recommendation, another visit would take place in October 2021 to look at Help and Protection services and the annual conversation would take place in January 2022, to agree the areas for inspection in spring.

Members sought clarification about what action was being taken to understand and address the variable quality of service provision. Officers informed the Committee that, although the increase in service demand and the challenges associated with a service redesign, in April, May and June, a good number of audits had been completed. Lunch and Learn sessions had been delivered to address particular issues and packages of support had been put in place. One of the outcome of the service redesign would be that practice managers would have the wholesale responsibility for the quality of practice within the team and training course to support them in this roles had been put in place.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted and a further update be presented at the next meeting of the Committee.

8. SCHOOL READINESS UPDATE

The Committee considered a progress report of the Director of Education Standards, Quality and Performance on school readiness, including the impact of Covid-19 and strategies in place to support school readiness.

The report author attended the meeting accompanied by the Early Years Service Manager, the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services and the Lead Member for Education.

Officers informed the Committee that Trafford had a strong Early Years sector with a very high quality provision. The majority of children achieved a good level of development which was above national average. Targeted work had taken place in some areas of the Borough where children were performing below the national average in the three prime areas of learning. Officers outlined the strategies in place to support school readiness.

The Committee sought and received clarification on birth rates in Trafford and how these affected the provision of school places. Officers explained that the Council planned for school places and considered different data sets. Officers added that local authorities across Greater Manchester worked together through a social media communication campaign to remind parents to apply for school places. Although there was a national decline in birth rates, Trafford, because of its buoyant Early Years offer, was not directly affected by this issue.

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Members asked about how schools were supporting children and families with the anxiety caused by Covid-19 pandemic and managing the risk of sending their children to school. Officers informed the Committee of the multi-agency work to support families throughout this period. Many different services such as the Behaviour and Attendance Support Team worked together to increase family confidence and supported schools to get the right message to the community. However, compared to other Greater Manchester authorities, in Trafford, school attendance stayed high and remained high.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

9. DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22

The Committee looked at the draft work programme for 2021/22 and discussed some matters which might be reviewed during this municipal year:

- To receive a regular update on Children's Services Improvement Journey following the Ofsted inspection in 2019;
- To receive the response of the Executive on the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Task and Finish Groups;
- The impact of Covid-19 on Early Years Foundation;
- The impact of Covid-19 on Looked After Children;
- Task and Finish Group on Children and Adolescents Mental Health Services (CAMHS);

10. URGENT BUSINESS (IF ANY)

There were no items of urgent business received.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and finished at 8.00 pm