

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

**EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY (O&S) COMMITTEE – PUBLIC MEETING**

1000 hours on Wednesday, 30 March 2022, BMI, Margaret Street

Action Notes

Present:

Councillor Narinder Kaur Kooner (Chair)

Councillors: Kerry Jenkins, Katherine Iroh, Simon Morrall, and Alex Yip

Other Voting Representatives: Justine Lomas, Roman Catholic Diocese Representative, and Rabia Shami, Parent Governor Representative

Also Present:

Councillor Jayne Francis, Cabinet Member, Education, Skills and Culture

Victor Agbontean, Peer Researcher, Youth Service

Pam Armstrong, Parent Carer Forum (PCF) (on-line)

Sabiha Aziz, Chair, PCF

Juliet Faulkner, Senior Youth Worker

Clair Graham, Head of Service Contextual Safeguarding, EMPOWER U Hub,
Exploitations & Missing Team, Children's Trust (on-line)

Jo Green, PCF (on-line)

Faye Higgins, Programme and Change Manager

Pauline Maddison, Interim AD, SEND and Inclusion

Jadieal Millwood, Senior Youth Worker

Ceri Saunders, Acting Group Overview and Scrutiny Manager

Amanda Simcox, Scrutiny Officer

Soulla Yiasouma, Joint Head of Youth Service

Ilgun Yusuf, Acting AD, Skills and Employability

1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

The Chair advised that this meeting would be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's meeting You Tube site (www.youtube.com/channel/UCT2kT7ZRPFCXq6_5dnVnYlw) and that members of

the press/public may record and take photographs except where there are confidential or exempt items.

2. APPOINTMENT OF THE COMMITTEE

The Chair welcomed the new Members to the Committee.

RESOLVED:

Noted the resolution of the City Council appointing Justine Lomas to replace Adam Hardy as the Roman Catholic Diocese representative on the Committee and Councillor Simon Morrall to replace Councillor Saddak Miah for the period ending with the Annual Meeting of City Council in May 2022.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillor Olly Armstrong, Councillor Kath Scott, and Sarah Smith, Church of England Diocese Representative.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

5. ACTION NOTES AND ACTION TRACKER

(See documents No. 1 and 2)

RESOLVED:

- Confirmed the actions notes of the formal meeting held on the 16 February 2022.
- Noted the action tracker and the outstanding items are to be followed up.

6. CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSE)

(See document No. 3)

Clair Graham, Head of Service Contextual Safeguarding, EMPOWER U Hub, Exploitations & Missing Team, Children's Trust was in attendance on-line for this item.

Clair Graham gave the presentation and the main points included:

- A summary of the recommendations in the CSE Scrutiny Report¹ published in December 2014 relating to the Council's role in tackling CSE was given.

¹ <https://bit.ly/3j4pZFF>

- There is a specialised service for CSE in the Children's Trust at the EMPOWER U Hub and this went live in 2019.
- They have in-house multi-agency training and awareness that includes on-line abuse, educational provision and the hospitality sector. Their work around awareness training regarding CSE was provided and included their work in the community.
- Governance: they have a Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Board, an Implementation Board, an EMPOWER U Exploitation and Missing Hub, and commissioned services based on need and demand.
- Local data was provided regarding CSE and criminal exploitation. Currently the youngest child that is being exploited is 10 years old, although the age range is usually between 15 and 17 years old. The tendency is for more females than males being sexually exploited, and mainly from a white background. There is a big difference in the data regarding those that are sexually as opposed to criminally exploited.
- Details regarding the National Child Sexual Abuse Independent Inquiry² was provided. This included Birmingham looking at changing the definition of CSE and reviewing the categorisation of risk and harm, and work around the national shortage of suitable residential care placements for children who are at risk or have experienced CSE. In addition, the police have problems with profiling perpetrators and victims of CSE and work needs to be undertaken.
- Next steps for Birmingham include the review of the overarching Partnership Child Exploitation Strategy which is currently in draft form. This will include communication, awareness raising and reviewing the CSE definition in line with the region.

During the discussion with Members the main points included:

- Details of the Home Office's child exploitation disruption toolkit were given: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-exploitation-disruption-toolkit>
- Examples of raising awareness in communities were requested and Members were informed of the initiative in the Lozells and Newtown areas. Work includes building parents and carers groups, providing training, awareness raising and empowering them to take steps to address the issues. This is a long journey as it takes a long time to build trust. This weekend they have taken 40 parents and carers, whose children have or are being exploited, on a residential weekend.
- The recommendations from the national inquiry came out in February 2022 and they are putting together short and long-term measures and timelines. This is a partnership approach as it is not all about the Children's Trust.

² <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/>

- What more can be done to educate and empower those most at risk was queried. They know what the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and vulnerabilities are, and it is about early prevention and early help provision. The Early Help Service is working with schools which includes exclusions. However, it was felt they need to educate children and parents earlier and undertake more preventative work. It is about building self-esteem and recognising they are being exploited and diverting them. Therefore, there are two lots of work, the preventative work and then it is about supporting those that are entrenched and already involved in exploitation.
- It was felt that some young people are living in fear of what will happen if they speak out and there is a need to get across that there is support for them. It was acknowledged that this is very challenging, and they did a video reaching out to parents³ which they have asked to be played in a wide range of places such as GP surgeries. There can be a stigma with communities not trusting statutory agencies and services, and they would like the parents and carers groups replicated across the city. It is about finding different platforms and ways to get the message across that they are there to help.
- This is a whole partnership agenda and they work in partnership with the Community Safety Partnership (CSP), where they have raised linking mandatory awareness training on exploitation to taxi drivers' licences. They also work in partnership with the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), who have community navigators and educational navigators. Clair undertook to have a discussion with the lead officer for the VRU regarding delivering workshops for elected Members, and she is happy to accompany them.
- Councillor Jayne Francis, Cabinet Member, Education, Skills and Culture highlighted that they needed to identify resources so the initiative can be city wide. They have also recently launched the digital strategy and they need to ensure that everyone has an appropriate way to access information.
- Awareness raising and a lack of reporting was discussed, this included BAME communities and newly arrived families.

RESOLVED:

Noted the update and Clair Graham undertook to have a discussion with the lead officer for the VRU about delivering workshops for elected Members and she is happy to accompany them.

7. YOUTH SERVICE UPDATE

(See document No. 4)

Councillor Jayne Francis, Cabinet Member, Education, Skills and Culture, Ilgun Yusuf, Acting AD, Skills and Employability, Soulla Yiasouma, Joint Head of Youth Service,

³ <https://vimeo.com/552361935>

Jadieal Millwood, Senior Youth Worker, Juliet Faulkner, Senior Youth Worker, and Victor Agbontean, Research Peer attended for this item.

Ilgun Yusuf introduced the item and highlighted that they are involved with early intervention and will be taking this forward. Soulla Yiasouma took Members through the report and the main points included:

- A member of staff is leading on their social media, ensuring each centre has active participation and are focussing on their Instagram account, and looking at a Youth Service website.
- They are looking at branding their youth centres as safe places for young people and are working closely with Clair Graham.
- They have done a video at The Lighthouse around transformation for change (<https://youtu.be/PLEYwVMdzLO>).

Jadieal Millwood runs The Lighthouse, and the Council in partnership with DWP have been leading on youth hubs. There are benefits of young people coming into youth hubs rather than job centres. They have Youth Workers on hand to talk to and signpost to youth employment initiatives on-site and they can engage with Work Coaches.

The Youth Service has four youth hubs for the Commonwealth Games: The Lighthouse, The Factory, Concord and Clifton Road. Projects include delivering specific Commonwealth Games sports.

Juliet Faulkner currently manages the Maypole Youth Centre and the participation team, and Victor Agbontean is a young person working as a peer researcher on the youth violence research project. Victor provided information on how they are working in different ways and getting views regarding youth violence. This included a workshop at The Lighthouse and peer pressure being raised as an issue. Juliet Faulkner provided further details on the project.

During the discussion with Members the main points included:

- The peer action work is a city-wide programme. As this is externally funded through the youth endowment fund, they have to target this in certain areas.
- In relation to the Council's property portfolio, if resources and investment became available then a local youth provision which was walkable would be welcome. However, this would need staffing and it may be possible to tap into local community groups.
- The youth voice and youth participation: they have a strong Youth City Board with over 40 young people and about 25 of these are really active. They have young people at the heart of writing the youth violence strategy and who are active with the Commonwealth Games. They have identified five theme groups: health and wellbeing, climate change, education and employment, youth violence, and infrastructure. The Youth City Board is part of the formal governance and they want to use this increasingly for policy development and service design.
- Each youth hub is different as it is co-designed to recognise local need.

- Going forward and as part of the early intervention work, they will include looking at the assets and joining up what may appear to be disparate areas.
- The Youth Service does a lot of work with pre-16 year olds and they would welcome sharing the vision with the committee at the next meeting.
- The branding of Youth Centres as safe spaces was welcomed.
- Jadieal Millwood loves working for the Council's Youth Service and is himself a product of the Youth Service. He felt it would be great to see a long-term strategy together with long-term funding, recognising that Birmingham is the youngest city, with the largest Youth Service in the country that is highly regarded nationally and should be resourced accordingly. He also asked whether young people who aspire to be athletes could get free tickets to the Games.
- Food hunger is a serious issue and having food at Youth Centres is important.
- The Youth Service is very good at adapting and the support of the head of service is greatly appreciated as she goes above and beyond.
- Victor Agbontean feels that young people should be involved, and an example of what could be improved in libraries was given. He is part of the Youth City Board and being involved is rewarding and this includes being a flag bearer at Buckingham Palace for the Commonwealth Games.
- Local Councillors should be going into Youth Centres in their wards to hold meetings so young people can be engaged. However, there is a need to develop relationships with young people beforehand to assist with participation.

RESOLVED:

The update was noted and:

- The Peer Researcher(s) to come back and give the Committee an overview and results of the youth violence research.
- The Committee to write to the Commonwealth Games Programme Director to request free tickets for young people who aspire to be athletes.

8. SEND – OBJECTIVE 2: GETTING THE BASICS RIGHT - SENAR UPDATE

(See document No. 5)

Pauline Maddison, Interim AD, SEND and Inclusion, Faye Higgins, Programme and Change Manager, Sabiha Aziz, Chair, PCF, Pam Armstrong, PCF, and Jo Green, PCF were in attendance for this item.

Pauline Maddison introduced the item and highlighted:

- She is the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for this objective.
- It had previously been decided to split this into two parts: SENAR and health, with the health item being discussed at the next committee meeting.

- There will continue to be major changes in terms of SENAR although it may be too early for many people to feel the improvements.
- A big area is improved communication particularly with parents, carers and schools.
- The Government published their green paper regarding SEND and Alternative Provision (AP)⁴ yesterday. It is recognised that the system is failing nationally and matches Birmingham's situation, with some local authorities being in a worse situation. The proposals include a significant look at the assessment and review system that will likely lead to legislative change. Assurance was given that this will not slow down the pace of improvements.

Faye Higgins highlighted information within the presentation, and this included:

- They secured additional funding from Cabinet in August 2021 and progress to date includes recruiting c.70 new officers into the service and they now have over 80 staff facilitating the 10,500 Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs), rearranged the SENAR service, and changed their decision-making processes.
- Members were updated on the quality assurance framework and the progress to date (slide 3, page 43 of the pack).
- The NEXUS case management system will give the ability to have bespoke user dashboards and direct access to the young person's SEND files through portals directly accessed by parents and young people, and professionals, such as schools etc.
- There is a significant amount of work to do on the restructure and they are aiming to go back to Cabinet in September 2022 with a growth bid for the service which is 100% of what they will need to run the service.
- They are meeting with other local authority leaders within those services who the DfE has suggested and this includes Leeds.
- There is a need to review every job description and meeting regularly with union colleagues regarding the restructure.
- The entire West Midlands is struggling to recruit SEND staff. However, they are starting to get approached from staff who work in other local authorities who want to move to Birmingham, as there is support from Cabinet, the Commissioner, DfE and managers, so the investment is there.
- They are on track and they will be providing contact information to parents and carers of their caseworker at the end of April 2022.
- They are still dealing with the backlog of annual reviews and some local authorities are not conducting annual reviews.
- They are working on bringing the assessment timelines back in-line with 20 weeks. However, their health colleagues, Children's Trust colleagues and Educational Psychology service do not have the additional resources, which

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/send-review-right-support-right-place-right-time>

has an impact on the timescales. There is an underspend in SENAR staffing because of delayed recruitment which may be able to assist with this.

- Complaints are being turned around within the 15 days. They have a culture among some parents that those that shout the loudest get the most and they are working with the PCF and others to change this, as previously you had to complain to get some type of service. The complaints now are more around not having enough special school places in the city.
- It is recognised that there are huge pockets of digital poverty in the city and this will be taken into account when introducing the parent portal in NEXUS.
- It will likely take two years to build the structure with permanent staff and allow for the increase in service demand.
- They need to reach out to the young people they are providing a service to and ask them what they need from their caseworkers. Thinking ahead, there could be caseworker apprenticeship opportunities.
- The risks with the implementation of the NEXUS case management system and delays to implementation are being mitigated.
- Officers are focusing on delivering the service in-line with the SEND code of practice as well as trying to deal with the transformation which is a risk.
- The biggest risk in terms of the transformation is finance, and currently no permanent funding is available to secure the SENAR staffing structure post March 2023. However, they are confident when they go with their growth bid to cabinet in September 2022 that the investment will be there to deliver the service.

Sabia Aziz highlighted that the PCF are working closely with Faye Higgins and Pauline Maddison on delivery and a lot of work has been done. However, they are still getting feedback from parents that the impact isn't being felt on the ground yet.

In relation to finding a local authority with similar numbers to Birmingham, the PCF has buddied with Somerset and Sabia can link officers up with them.

The role parent link will play moving forward and silo working was queried. Faye Higgins stated that the role is evolving as the service evolves, and the service will play a key role moving forward. They will be looking at using them to provide support and deliver training to SENCOs.

As per the Government Green Paper there may be a national EHCP template and there will be a need to align the transformation work with the Government's Green Paper.

During the discussion with Members the main points included:

- It is important to keep an eye on the number of agency and interim staff as this is where a lot of the money is going.
- Although this is a long journey there are elements, such as reviewing templates, that they are aiming to complete by September 2022, which they

are currently on target for. However, it could be another 18 months before every family feels the difference.

- They are looking at how they rebrand the service.
- Whether there were any structures in place for apprenticeships was queried. Objective 4 is split into two, pre-16 years old and post-16 years old, and Ilgun Yusuf is leading the post-16 and within this are apprenticeships for young people with SEND, and staff development which includes recruitment and retention. Therefore, young people can become involved via different strands of the Accelerated Progress Plan.
- Officers are working with Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs), so concerns are not raised too late.
- They are sending out regular SENAR updates through the PCF and on the local offer website. They are also seeking permission from parents that they can contact them via e-mail so they can send an update to them.

RESOLVED:

The update was noted, and the following was requested:

- Feedback and follow-up information on NEXUS case management system as the Committee had been given assurances regarding the 365 Travel Assist IT system that may be cancelled.
- Information on where the interim funding has been spent.

9. WORK PROGRAMME

(See document No. 6)

The Chair highlighted that Ilgun Yusef had committed to coming back and updating the Committee on the Youth Service and peer research, and it was agreed that the committee reconvene after the AGM with an informal meeting to discuss ideas and agree the work programme.

RESOLVED:

The Youth Service and peer research to be added to the list of items to be carried forward to discuss at an informal meeting of the Committee.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair highlighted that an e-mail had been sent to Members regarding attendance at the April committee meeting. This was because she was mindful that one of the agenda items was about mental health and wellbeing, which is an important topic, and wanted to ensure there was good attendance at the meeting next week.

The reason for sending the e-mail prior to this meeting was because the send-out was before this meeting. The results were three Members wished for the meeting to continue, four Members were supportive of postponing the items until June 2022,

and the remaining Members did not respond. As a result, the April agenda items have been moved to the next committee meeting, so there can be a fuller committee attendance. The next meeting is pencilled in for 15th June 2022 at 10am.

RESOLVED:

The meeting scheduled for Wednesday 6 April 2022 at 1000 hours was cancelled.

11. REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS RECEIVED (IF ANY)

None.

12. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

Cllr Alex Yip raised a number of concerns regarding the Weightman's report which had been covered by the Birmingham Mail on 11 March 2022.⁵ This followed a request for an independent report to be commissioned at Full Council (it was part of a motion agreed when the Committee's Home to School Transport Inquiry report was debated on 15th September 2020).⁶

Three matters were highlighted by Cllr Yip:

- Whether the Committee could look at the four recommendations at the next meeting as it was felt that it was important for Scrutiny to look at these to ensure they were fully completed.
- Concerns about answers given to questions raised at Full Council.
- Issues concerning how, and when, this confidential report had been shared, or otherwise, with the press and other stakeholders A timeline setting out when the report had been shared was requested.

Cllr Yip suggested the need for either an investigation or a discussion at the next committee meeting. The Chair commented that legal advice would need to be sought and that this should be discussed further with the new committee, after the local elections in May.

The Chair thanked Rabia Shami, Parent Governor Representative for her commitment as this was her last committee meeting due to the term of office expiring.

⁵ <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/staff-failed-criminal-checks-drove-23337963>

⁶ https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/18141/home_to_school_transport_council_report_-_post_council

13. AUTHORITY TO CHAIR AND OFFICERS

RESOLVED:

That in an urgent situation between meetings the Chair, jointly with the relevant Chief Officer, has authority to act on behalf of the Committee.

The meeting ended at 12.27 hours.