

**BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL**

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

**1000 hours on Wednesday, 24 November 2021, BMI Main Hall**

**Action Notes**

**Present:**

Councillor: Kerry Jenkins (Acting Chair)

Councillors: Katherine Iroh and Kath Scott

Other Voting Representatives: Rabia Shami, Parent Governor Representative and Sarah Smith, Church of England Diocese Representative

**Also Present:**

Pam Armstrong, Parent Carer Forum

Sabiha Aziz, Chair, Parent Carer Forum

Chris Baggott, Service Lead, Partnerships Insight and Prevention, Public Health

Karl Beese, Commissioning Manager, Adults Public Health

John Freeman, Commissioning Manager, Complex Care & Prevention

Jo Green, Parent Carer Forum

Sue Harrison, Director, Education & Skills

Wesley King, Senior Practitioner, Aquarius

Pauline Maddison, Interim AD, SEND and Inclusion

Richard McVey, Area Manager, Aquarius

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 (on-line)

**1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST**

The Acting 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](http://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. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Cllrs: Narinder Kaur Kooner (Chair); Olly Armstrong; Charlotte Hodivala; and Alex Yip; and Adam Hardy, Roman Catholic Diocese Representative; and Omar Hanif, Parent Governor Representative.

## **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

## **4. ACTION NOTES AND ACTION TRACKER**

(See documents No. 1, 2, and 3).

### **RESOLVED:**

- Confirmed the actions notes of the formal meeting held on 1 September 2021.
- Noted the action notes of the informal meeting held on the 13 October 2021.
- Noted the action tracker.

## **5. AQUARIUS – YOUNG PEOPLE’S SERVICE**

(See documents No. 4 and 5)

Karl Beese, Commissioning Manager, Adults Public Health; John Freeman, Commissioning Manager, Complex Care & Prevention; Chris Baggott, Service Lead, Partnerships Insight and Prevention, Public Health; Richard McVey, Area Manager, Aquarius; and Wesley King, Senior Practitioner, Aquarius, were in attendance for this item.

During the presentation the main points included:

- This is a non-statutory service delivered by Aquarius Action Projects.
- It is a two year contract which ends on 31 March 2023 with a contract value of c.£673,000 per year.
- The key commissioning intentions are to minimise the misuse of drugs, alcohol and tobacco; and reduce risk and vulnerabilities in a holistic approach.
- The Triple Zero City Strategy is for substance use for all ages, for the period 2020 to 2030, and they are aiming to complete the strategy in January 2022.
- The strategy has three key ambitions: zero deaths due to drug or alcohol addiction; zero overdoses due to drug or alcohol addiction; and zero people living with addiction to drugs or alcohol not receiving support to manage and overcome their addiction.

- The Aquarius Young People's Substance Misuse Service works across four quadrants and it is about taking the service to where young people are. They are embedded in existing children's and education services.
- Most of the young people come into the service via professionals rather than self-referral, and they work closely with educational and children's services, so the young people get the help they need.
- The service is delivered predominantly face to face.
- The service may begin as a brief intervention to engage the young person to ensure they go into a position within a few weeks where they have built trust.
- They work with both young people who have an issue with substances themselves and young people who are affected by someone else's substance use.
- Most of the young people they work with now have two or more complexities, and they build their resilience and deliver a range of evidence based interventions.
- They have highly trained staff who have training on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) etc.
- They have a partnership approach and work very closely with a range of services, such as St Basils and Forward Thinking Birmingham.
- They work mainly with 15 – 16 years old and diversion from substance misuse and criminal activity is key.
- More than 50% of young people are from BAME communities.
- Key substances for young people are particularly around the use of cannabis and alcohol.
- They have very good service user feedback and 100% of young people would recommend them.
- They provide added value and wrap around services which they commission.
- Case studies were provided that highlighted they formulated interventions working in a multi-agency approach, building positive relationships with young people to achieve positive outcomes.

During the discussion with Members the main points included:

- The Acting Chair thanked the attendees for the really comprehensive report and commented that the partnership approach they are following is very important.
- There have been a wide range of responses to the draft strategy and one of the key things is that a lot of the respondents would like them to be more realistic regarding triple zero, so that people would have more faith in the strategy, They are looking at this and the ambitions may be altered.
- The contract was extended with it ending on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 and this is aligned with the adults' service. The Triple Zero City Strategy is a city strategy

for people of all ages, and it is nationally recognised that two distinct services are needed, one for children and one for adults, even if you have one provider, as young people have safeguarding issues etc.

- They are part of the national drug monitoring system and more data can be provided. They have engagement plans to ensure young people stay in service and make sure there is pro-active follow up, as it is the consistency over time that makes the difference. They also measure a whole range of areas over a period of time.
- Harm minimisation:
  - They work with parents to help them understand the young person's needs and influence parents so they can make their response more sophisticated based on the situation.
  - If it is the parent that is using, then it is about safe storage boxes and how the young person deals with emergency situations, such as using the recovery position.
  - If it is about their own harm minimisation, then it is about making them aware of how they can reduce substances, who their protective adults and positive peers are, and how to seek support and alternatives to substance use in terms of coping.
- ACES and trauma: it is about making connections to positive peers, supportive adults and supportive services; and agency planning for the future, helping young people to plan the kind of life they want in the future.

**RESOLVED:**

The update was noted and the following information to be provided:

- The referral process for elected members, so they can add this to their resource toolkit when they are dealing with casework, to be provided.
- Data to see young people's transition out of substance misuse is to be provided.

## **6. YOUTH SERVICES**

(See document No. 6)

Ilgun Yusuf, Acting AD for Skills and Employability and Soulla Yiasouma, Joint Head of Youth Service, were in attendance.

Ilgun Yusuf introduced the item and highlighted there was a lot of good news in terms of the update. Also, they are increasingly working across the Council's directorates and, as has always been the case, they are working with stakeholders in the community in terms of the place based approach, and that is beginning to pay dividends.

They value the voice of young people and have the Youth City Board which is now formally constituted and is part of the wider City Board. In terms of the next steps, they are working on a proposal for a stronger youth parliament, and as part of the early intervention work, they have been working on the youth participation project. This includes them looking at youth services across the country, and they want to get to a position where young people can scrutinise the Council's proposals and initiate them, both from a short and long-term perspective.

The Directorate is setting priorities for the next 3 – 5 years and what the roadmap to excellence will look like, and they would like to come back and engage with the Committee on this.

They have won a really important expression of interest for the Partnerships for People and Place project from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, which shows that central government recognise that youth services are important.

Soulla Yiasouma took Members through the report and the key points included:

- Lessons have been learned from Covid: the importance of face to face sessions with young people cannot be replaced and is highly valued; as is detached working.
- The healthy activities programme ran this summer with Bring it on Brum which was about educating young people around healthy living and having the best summer possible. It was nice for Youth Workers to have some fun too. They are continuing this during Christmas, and they hope for funding to run it for the next few years.
- One of the biggest challenges they are now facing is around youth violence. All projects focus on the youth violence agenda and early prevention work. In terms of the early prevention work all the youth centres provide a safe space with trusted adults for young people.
- The Lighthouse is running a partnership called Transformation for Change, funded by VRU, for mentoring and outreach work.
- The Youth Endowment Fund also funded work and research for peer researchers from key areas of the city and they recruited change makers and social change projects. They hope the learning from this will inform the strategy on youth violence.
- They are also working with the Commonwealth Games on outreach work.
- They would love young people to be more involved in shaping provision and holding services to account. They have young people involved in public health and there are Covid champions etc.
- They are involved with the Commonwealth Games and they will be running activities in four youth hubs so young people feel connected and part of it.
- The service has faced horrific funding cuts over the past 10 years, and they have managed to keep going. The past 18 months and Covid has led to greater recognition of youth work and early intervention, with Government now investing. They have exploited the funding opportunities and are in a

position to develop the service. It feels good for youth workers and young people, and they have been able to attract external funding and recruit youth workers, and they see a future for the youth service.

During the discussion with Members the main points included:

- Inclusion and how the service works with young people with varying disabilities such as autism, who find socialising very difficult, was queried. The Acting Chair also highlighted that an e-mail had been received asking how young people with SEND access the service. Members were informed that they have not got a fully inclusive offer for young people with SEND. However, they do work with young people on an individual basis who have autism and anxiety issues. They are also working in the north of the city with Trinity College who work with young people with SEND and are looking at some youth work provision for young people with SEND at Clifton Road.
- The inclusion strategy needs to be inclusive to all young people and it was acknowledged that the language used is important, especially when saying they have a universal service. The Acting Chair highlighted that the commitment for an inclusive service should be there and the Council should be held to account to ensure the Youth Service is fully accessible.
- It was acknowledged that information on the Youth Centres on-line is not great. They have a presence on Instagram and Facebook and a lot of people in the locality know about the Maypole Youth Centre. However, a lot more work needs to be done to ensure young people are aware of this as promoting the work of the youth service is important.
- The process for identifying young people who are at risk of becoming 'Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETS)' was provided and this is a partnership with schools, ensuring the young person is offered a personal 1 to 1 consultation, and the objective is that every young person leaves school with an offer of a place. In addition, the Youth Service works with young people who are known to them or are detached, and they work with partners, such as the early help team, Children's Trust and EmpowerU will refer to them, St Basils and DWP as part of the youth opportunity group etc.
- There will be a formal launch for the roll out of youth hubs on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2022. A bespoke offer for SEND and inclusion will be the next phase and they are using the European Social Fund funding to deliver this.

### **RESOLVED:**

The update was noted, and the following to be included in an update to the Committee in February or March 2022:

- How communications for the Youth Service have been improved (the website and social media etc).
- Information on the youth hubs (to include how they will be different).
- Update on the peer research and social action programme, and how the Committee can support this.

- The Youth Strategy.
- The Directorate's priorities and the roadmap to excellence.

## 7. SEND

(See document No. 7)

Sue Harrison, Director for Education and Skills; and Pauline Maddison, Interim AD for SEND and Inclusion; Sabiha Aziz, Chair of the Parent Carer Forum (PCF); Pam Armstrong, Parent Carer Forum and Jo Green, Parent Carer Forum were in attendance.

The main points made during the presentation included:

Sue Harrison, Director for Education and Skills:

- They have come as a team and as the Director she is pleased that they have a strong PCF to work with.
- They understand what co-production looks like and work closely together to get better outcomes for children.
- There are key pieces of work they want to be delivered even if they were not under a directive.
- John Coughlan is the Commissioner and they have had the first board meeting which went well.
- They are expecting the Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) to be agreed imminently by the DfE. The APP needs to respond to the Ofsted report and is critical, but it is not the only work they need to do as there are more things they need to improve and develop outside the APP.
- The four objectives are key: System Leadership; Getting the Basics Right; Working Together Well; and Pathways.
- They will bring a SEND roadmap to the Committee.

Sabiha Aziz, Chair of the Parent Carer Forum:

- There have been discussions about understanding co-production and inter-agency working together: education, social services and health.
- Maria McCaffrey is leading as the co-production officer and the PCF are working closely with Maria who has been tasked to produce a report by the end of the year. Tony Bovaird from UoB has also been brought in as he is a co-production expert, and the PCF has been feeding in and is a "critical friend".
- The co-production event didn't happen due to Covid. However, they were able to have an hour event to discuss co-production as this means different things to different people. The main aim is to have a Birmingham shared definition of co-production and this work is ongoing. This was integrated in September's Carrs Lane event, which was hybrid and very well attended. The workshop worked better than the presentations and they have used this to

shape future events. They will be having one virtual and one central event this term and the co-production agenda will be part of the roadshows.

Pauline Maddison, Interim AD for SEND and Inclusion:

- Of the four objectives, two are moving well and two haven't really started. Although a lot has been done on Getting the Basics Right, there is still a long way to go before the Assessment and Review service is operating as it should be.
- We were out of line with other authorities in relation to the number of staff in SENAR and caseloads. They have appointed new case officers, but there is a lot of churn, so keeping a full complement of staff is difficult as all local authorities are fighting for the same experienced people. Pauline is aware that the Committee is interested in the training programme for the SENAR staff.
- The difficulty for us is that there are no school places available, with very few special school places and very few good or outstanding schools, which means more parents going through the appeals process which is longer due to Covid and this is a national problem.
- They spend a lot of time consulting with schools, particularly mainstream schools who are sometimes slow in responding as to whether they can meet the child's needs. Parents without an EHCP can get into a mainstream school quicker than those with an EHCP as they have a right to a place in mainstream school, whereas schools can turn down a child with an EHCP on the basis that they cannot meet their needs.
- The table in the report states 152 children were out of school, however this changes on a daily basis and is currently 146 children. In July 2021 they had no idea how many children were not in school and so rigorous investigation was put in place and they are now confident of the figures.
- Up to 25 hours home provision is provided and they will continue to rigorously monitor this group.
- They are on target for producing a draft SEND sufficiency strategy and will be in a good position to apply for funding in the spring when categories are announced for the DfE £2.6bn capital pot announced recently.
- Capital estate of the Council: they are working with colleagues to see if some special schools can free up spaces and increase temporary accommodation capacity. They are also working with mainstream schools about having more resource bases, e.g., they need 10 new secondary resource bases for autism alone. They are also talking to special schools and all independent schools in and around Birmingham.

During the discussion with Members the main points included:

- The Acting Chair found it frustrating and depressing that many of the key areas picked up in the report have been subject to discussion at this Committee over the last 2 – 4 years. These issues have been raised and the



Committee has had really in-depth discussions and reports from officers. This includes EHCPs, school places and honest parental engagement and involvement. However, the Ofsted assessment means positive action will come from it and we need to be getting the basics right. The Acting Chair thanked the Director for the work that has been undertaken and her honesty, particularly with parental engagement.

- Cllr Kath Scott was delighted to see efforts on SEND sufficiency and that this is being joined up with the funding bids to the DfE.
- It was felt there is an issue with funding free schools and independent schools as they have so much autonomy and can reject children once term is underway. The Director commented that they all have a moral purpose to educate children and it is part of her role to have conversations with head teachers about how the child's needs can be met. There is also a need for legislation when schools don't play ball, so they are legally accountable.
- The Home Bridging Team should be congratulated for the tremendous effort they make with children who have suffered trauma in the school environment. However, it was felt they need more support to enable them to have better ways to engage with these children.
- The training of the new SENAR staff should be more than what is in the legislation and it should include the journey of children (0 – 25 years old) to help staff understand the lived experience of parents, so staff become empowered to deliver and support parents and children. Members were informed that they work with the PCF to support staff and they have a strong SENCO network, so they have a fairly good understanding of trauma and SEND. They need to be more joined up so staff understand the whole picture. Also, how they relate to the parents, with staff being empathetic is being built into the training programme and the PCF are supporting them on this.
- Objective 4 and data tracking was queried. Officers have no right to information from schools such as school targets and schools use different systems. There is the DLP programme, £14m over two years from the high needs block to improve the skills and commitment of schools to meet SEND and they are really struggling with mainstream and special schools to get a system to track. This has been exacerbated by Covid as they have had no national data. There are hidden exclusions but they do have the NEETS information.
- The local authority is not allowed to run new schools, including special schools. The running of any new school will be put out to competition and the final decision on who runs the school belongs to the Secretary of State.
- The Acting Chair highlighted that there is talk about DWP introducing new rules for students claiming universal credit which could make it more difficult for young people to achieve good outcomes.
- Jo Green, PCF, asked how a young person is supported if they are not picked up by the Home bridging team. School provision is not provided if the child has a place and they need to be better at joining services and partners.

- Care needs to be used when officers say that parents are choosing to keep their child off school, especially if attending the school would cause the child mental health issues and trauma. Also, elective home schooling is not always quite what the phrase suggests.
- Sarah Smith has been on the Committee for six years and finds the Acting Assistant Director's approach refreshing, providing factual information and noting more to be done. A request was made for the APP and measurable impacts triangulated with parents, so this is backed up by parents.
- SEND is on the agenda for every committee meeting and it would be useful if the four priority areas can be broken down. The Acting Chair was happy for the officers to decide how best to do this, as long as all the priority areas are covered, as the Committee does not want to be in the same position again.
- The Acting Chair is more than happy to have the PCF and parents at future committee meetings, and this will be discussed with the Chair. Also, if there is anything that needs to be raised in-between meetings then these can be brought to the Committee's attention.

#### **RESOLVED:**

The update was noted and the following to be provided:

- Details of the consultation from the DfE which is proposing to take the last bit of money from local authorities for school improvement.
- Whether schools are reporting absence correctly and the Council not always being aware that child is not in school. This includes drilling down on the data for off-rolling, exclusions and absences.
- The APP and measurable impacts triangulated with parents, so this is backed up by parents.

## **8. WORK PROGRAMME**

(See document No. 8)

The work programme was discussed, and the following are to be added:

- The Chair has asked for CSE and school exclusions.
- The Youth Service in February or March 2022.
- Update on Hunters Hill and it may be appropriate to have this at the January 2022 committee meeting under the school attainment and school attendance item.

Members can e-mail the Chair and scrutiny officers if they want anything added.

The Committee could look at pursuing mental health as an item and it is an area for good joined up working as the mental health service has been discussed at the Health and Social Care O&S Committee (<https://bit.ly/3nHqwjv>).

**RESOLVED:**

The work programme to be updated accordingly.

**9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**RESOLVED:**

The next meeting is on the 12<sup>th</sup> January 2022 at 10am.

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

None.

**11. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

None

**12. 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.

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The meeting ended at 12.12 hours.