

**Medway Council**  
**Meeting of Children and Young People Overview and**  
**Scrutiny Committee**

**Wednesday, 14 June 2023**

**7.00pm to 10.08pm**

**Record of the meeting**

**Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee**

**Present:** Councillors: Mandaracas (Vice-Chairperson), Animashaun, Campbell, Gulvin, Hamilton, Jones, Lammas, Pearce, Shokar, Spring and Mrs Turpin

**Co-opted Members with voting rights on educational issues only:**

Lenny Willams (C of E Diocese Representative, Rochester Diocesan Board of Education) and Akinola Edun (Parent Governor Representative)

**Added members without voting rights:**

Victoria Aspin (Teacher Representative), Emma-Sue Willows (Healthwatch Medway), MYC Cabinet Member- Ventsislav Lyubomirov (Medway Youth Council) and Lisa Scarrott (Medway Parent and Carers Forum)

**Substitutes:**

Councillors:  
Lawrence (Substitute for Perfect)  
Myton (Substitute for Jackson)  
Peake (Substitute for Howcroft-Scott)

**In Attendance:**

Maria Beaney, Finance Business Partner, Education  
Celia Buxton, Assistant Director, Education and SEND  
Riley Card, Medway Youth Council  
Ken Dance, Youth Offending Team Manager  
Stephanie Davis, Democratic Services Officer  
Scott Elliott, Head of Health and Wellbeing Services  
Lee-Anne Farach, Director of People - Children and Adults' Services  
Aeilish Geldenhuys, Head of Public Health Programmes  
James Harman, Head of Children's Services Commissioning  
Donna Marriott, Assistant Director, Children's Social Care  
James Williams, Director of Public Health

**41 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Howcroft-Scott, Councillor Jackson, Councillor Perfect, Carl Guerin-Hassett (Headteacher Representative) Clive Mailing (Roman Catholic Church Representative)

**42 Record of meeting**

The record of the meeting of the Committee held on 2 March 2023 and the record of the Joint Meeting of Committees held on 24 May 2023 were agreed and signed by the Chairperson as correct.

**43 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances**

There were none.

**44 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests and Whipping**

Disclosable pecuniary interests

Lisa Scarrott (Medway Parent and Carer Forum) declared a DPI on Item 8a Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme as they had submitted a bid for the Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme. She would not take part in discussion of this item.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

Other interests

There were none.

**45 Medway Youth Justice Plan 2023-24**

**Discussion**

The Youth Offending Manager introduced the report which followed guidance and headings provided by the National Youth Justice Board and was in line with new guidance given to Local Authorities in March 2023. This plan focused on the statutory requirements and areas that Medway was required to report back on and detailed actions in place on how to improve performance.

Members raised several questions and comments which included:

- **Substance Misuse Worker** – it was asked how the appointment of a substance misuse worker that was based in the North East Foundation Trust benefitted the young people of Medway and how this worked in practice. The officer said that quite a few of the young people they

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worked with used cannabis and the impact on their motivation and aspiration due to regular use was diminished. Whilst there was a substance misuse worker linked to the service, there was a commissioning exercise currently taking place on increasing capacity. This exercise was to explore the possibility of employment of a person to a new part time post to work with young people, build relationships and monitor progress rather than linking in with Foundation Trust Service.

- **Child Adolescence Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Worker** - the appointment of a CAMHS worker to the service was welcomed, it was however commented that the threshold for the CAMHS service was high, and it was asked what impact the worker would have on the service. The officer said that the provision of the CAMHS worker greatly benefitted the service due to the high prevalence of emotional mental health issues experienced by the young people they worked with. If a young person that came through the service was assessed as having a need through the mental health screening, this would be managed outside of the National CAHMS threshold, and their needs would be responded to appropriately.
- **Grant Allocation** – it was commented that the grant allocations for 2023/24 had not yet been received and it was asked if there were mitigations in place should there be a reduction in the funding allocated. The officer said that whilst the allocation was not yet known, it was known that there would be an uplift from the previous year and there was no expected reduction in the amount to be received.
- **Police** - it was commented that a Police Officer had not been seconded to the Youth Offending Team since 2022. It was vital that their support be given to the work being carried out by the Youth Offending Service and it was suggested that the Chief Superintendent be written to, to suggest that an officer from the Task Force may be suitable for the role. Officers said that discussions had taken place with the Police colleagues on the Youth Offending Board, and they gave their full support of the new Plan. Additionally, Kent Police were in the process of launching a Child Centred Policing Team and the development of that team and how it supported the delivery of the Police Officer role in the Youth Offending Team would continue to be closely monitored.
- **Reoffending Rates** - in response to a question on what influences were behind reoffending rates as there had been some improvement in some areas of Medway but not others, the officer said that the data received was not case by case data, which made it difficult to determine and understand what the drivers were. There was an Information Officer in post that had been collating data which would enable the team to form a picture and identify trends which would be presented to the Committee at a future meeting.

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- **Youth Centres** - In response to a question on what was in place to increase Youth Centres in Medway as residents were concerned that there were not enough, officers said that there were currently no plans in place to increase the number of Youth Centres. There was a good youth offer in Medway, with sessions delivered in its centres. Details of this would be provided to the Committee.

### Decision

- I. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the Medway Youth Justice Plan 2023-24 attached at Appendix 1 to the report.
- II. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommended Cabinet to recommend full Council to approve the Medway Youth Justice Plan 2023-24 attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

## 46 Council Plan Performance Monitoring Report and Strategic Risk Summary Quarter 4 2022/23

### Discussion:

The Director of People, Children and Adults' Services introduced the report and with the support of other members of the Directorate Management Team, gave updates relating to the indicators flagged as red within the report.

Members then raised a number of questions and comments, which included:

- **Training for Workforce** - in response to a question on whether the training offer for the workforce as part of the Healthy Schools' programme was being fully utilised, the officer said that this was a universal training service that had been commissioned and was being used by a wide range of professionals which included school staff, health visitors, school nurses.
- **Persistent Absence** – in response to questions on how schools managed issues of persistent absence, officers said that this remained a priority in Medway and they were working with advisors to develop an attendance action plan, through a cross directorate piece of work. Medway was also part of the attendance alliance with monthly monitoring. It was important to note that schools took full responsibility for instances of persistent absence, managed each on a case by case basis and referred to other services for additional support as appropriate.
- **ILACS 7** - concern was raised that whilst there had been improvements, the report indicated that 29% of audits were inadequate and there were continuing concerns about practice. The officer informed the Committee that ILACS 7 relates to audits, was a long-term measure, and that

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work to improve practice was progressing in the right direction. In terms of trajectory, at the beginning of the audit work in 2020, of the proportion of audited cases, 69% were inadequate, 37% required improvement and there were none were graded as good. In the last quarter, in March 2023, of all audits that quarter, 29% were inadequate, 62% required improvement and 9% were good.

### **Decision:**

The Committee noted the Q4 2022/23 performance against the measures used to monitor progress against the Council's priorities and the amended risk register as set out in appendix 2 to the report.

## **47 People Directorate Risk Register Summary**

### **Discussion:**

The Director of People, Children and Adults' Services introduced the report.

Members then raised a number of questions and comments, which included:

- **High Needs Recovery Plan**- it was commented that the risk had been downgraded with control measures in place and it was asked what confidence there was in this decision. The officer said that Medway was part of the special safety valve funding from Government, with substantial support from Government, control measures in place and monitoring, at this time, the risk was appropriately set.

### **Decision**

The Committee noted the report.

## **48 Meeting Theme: Public Health**

### **Discussion:**

The Head of Public Health Programmes and the Head of Health and Wellbeing Services introduced the item and gave a detailed presentation on the tabled reports. The Committee took part in an interactive quiz on Health Inequalities.

Members then raised a number of questions and comments, which included:

- **PEER Support** – a question was raised on provision of local support for breastfeeding as there were variances across Medway on the level of support in place for drop in sessions, with no lead person or support in some areas. The officer said that there were approximately eight peer supporters in post but there was a need for more. Medway Community Healthcare (MCH) provided support to recruit and train peer supporters through the voluntary sector. They were looking at incentives to increase the number of volunteers.

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The Director of Public Health added that it was important to remember that in order to tackle inequality, there was a need to focus on parts of Medway where it was identified a greater need for enhanced support may be required.

It was further commented that it was essential to focus on the 35% of those that had been identified as not breast feeding and to understand the barriers faced. There were some physical barriers that contributed to mothers not breastfeeding, the specialist clinics and universal support from midwives for which demand had increased would assist in supporting some of that cohort of mothers.

- In response to suggestions to explore the possibility of peer supporters being based at ante natal clinics as well as hospitals and looking into a reward scheme to improve recruitment, the officer said that some of the Family Hubs and Start for Life budget was being used to recruit a specialist onsite team which could include a new infant feeding specialist post. This model was currently in place in some hospitals and was being explored to understand how this worked and whether it could be applied in Medway.
- **Early Years Funding** - it was commented that the funding received from Government was welcomed but it was encouraging that the Council was considering the sustainability of investment looking at embedding peer support and upskilling the workforce and that there was funding in place to appropriately support families as the benefits of early stimulation was key to enhanced childhood experience.
- **Start for Life** - it was asked to what extent the programme was developed using the framework and how it would be ensured that both parents of a child would be able to easily access support services. It was crucial to ensure that gender bias and inequality was not reinforced. Officers said that the programme was clear that this was about the family around the child and not just mothers. The work and focus groups that took place was clear that the programme was based on the family unit supporting the infant. Information and support were designed to be inclusive of all, including fathers, same sex parents, grandparents and extended families.
- **Incentives for Families**- in response to questions on what provision was in place to encourage and support families, the officer said there were various programmes such as the cookery campaigns which were running across Medway and would provide a demonstration on healthy food, this was part of the Medway Food Partnership. The Local Authority operated the Household Support Fund for families to apply for on a continual basis based on need. The holiday activity programme ran during the school holidays, with over 5 thousand children having attended in the last year, with free activities provided including access to

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hot food. There was also access to transport links to the centres where these activities took place for those families that were eligible.

- **Data** - in response to a question on how data was used to develop the incentives in place, officers said that many of the incentives were data driven. National studies on child obesity showed that a healthy child performed better academically. There was a direct correlation between access to parks and open spaces and usage by families, and the Council had a responsibility to ensure provision of safe open spaces for use across Medway.
- **Speech and Language** – it was asked what impact the Covid Pandemic had and what was being done to address issues faced by parents in access to support. The officer said that health visitors continued to carry out checks and there had been a small reduction in children hitting some developmental milestones at the 2.5 year check. As a result, there was aspiration to develop an early intervention programme in order to improve the offer for families. The Council has been running a campaign called “Grow Through Play” which provided families with simple fun ideas to promote language rich environments and communication to improve developmental milestones for their children.
- It was further asked what was being done to reconcile the offer in schools against what was being offered through the programme as there was limited provision in schools. There was concern that capacity was being taken away from schools through the family hubs. The officer said that one of the challenges was children not being identified early enough and then starting school which then put pressure on school resources. The funding allowed for the utilisation of the funds for voluntary sector to be trained in order to intervene early with the aim of reducing pressure on more specialist services in the long run.
- **Measure of success** - in response to a question on how success of the programme was being measured and how to minimise duplication in services, officers said that there were several measures of success including reduction of escalation from early help to social services, increase in breastfeeding rates and ensuring more children were school ready at the time they started reception class. There were a range of measures of outcomes in place, but improvement in these outcomes over the next two years would not necessarily be seen as some of them would be long term trends. Part of the process of measuring outcomes was through data, some of which was already recorded at national level which provided the ability to track trends. It was important to note that Start for Life was a Department for Health and a Department for Education funded programme and the Local Authority had to demonstrate the impact of the funding received, this included capturing the profile of the number of families that accessed services.

Prevention of duplication was key which was why the programme was not developed in isolation. There were stakeholders from a wide range of

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services including the voluntary sector, mental health, maternity commissioning, midwifery, education and early years, who all understood the offer in place and ensured that there was minimal duplication within their respective services.

- **Accountability** - in response to a question on who in this multiagency approach, was accountable and responsible for the programmes, officers said that the Local Authority was accountable for delivering the programme. The Director of Place, Children and Adults' Services was the responsible officer and as a result governance for the programmes was through the Council's Early Help Board.
- **Training in schools** - in response to a question on what the training offer was for staff in schools to have one on one conversations with families, officers said that there was free training in place to support people in being better Medway champions, accessible training for staff in schools to enable them to have difficult conversations with parents and talk about weight with confidence. Training on style and subtle use of language to break down barriers. The programme on obesity was a community based approach with all people in position of trust such as faith leaders, encouraged to access the training available.

The Director of Public Health said the emphasis was about looking at a whole system approach and not for schools to be made totally responsible for tackling issues as they were just one element of the partnership in tackling issues of obesity.

- **Raising awareness** - in response to a question on how to better engage students whom since the covid pandemic may have become more reclusive and reluctant to speak up about their needs, officers said that getting the message across was one of the biggest challenges. There was investment in ensuring that Start for Life was clear about the offer and how to access support. There was currently work being done on exploration of building a single access page that refers families to other services. Schools were being encouraged to utilise their existing streams of access to promote the offer for families and Medway Champions were also being asked to spread the message on what is available.

### a **Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme**

#### **Discussion:**

Discussion of this Item can be found at minute number 48.

#### **Decision:**

The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted this report.



**b Infant Feeding Strategy**

**Discussion:**

Discussion of this Item can be found at minute number 48.

**Decision:**

The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted this report.

**c Child Obesity**

**Discussion:**

Discussion of this Item can be found at minute number 48.

**Decision:**

The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted this report.

**49 Work Programme**

**Discussion**

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report and drew Members attention to the work programme and advised the Committee that whilst the work programme indicated that the 5 December meeting would take the Draft Capital and Revenue Budgets 2023/24, this was an error as it was the Draft Capital and Revenue Budgets 2024/25 that would actually be considered.

It was confirmed as indicated in the work programme report that a Performance Data Workshop session would take place on 24 July on Childrens Social Care.

A discussion took place on the venue for future meetings, and it was agreed that as of 3 August 2023, meetings would take place at Gun Wharf

**Decision:**

The Committee agreed to:

- a) Note the work programme as set out in appendix 1 to the work programme report.
- b) Note the business considered by the Committee during 2019-23 as outlined in appendix 2 to the report.
- c) Note the recommendations as set out in appendix 3 of the Committee way of working report of 2 March 2023.

**Chairman**

**Date:**

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