



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: TUESDAY, 3 MARCH 2026 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Batool – Chair
Councillor Bonham – Vice Chair

Councillor Gregg

Councillor Dr Moore

Also present:

Joycelin Eze-Okubuiro – Parent Governor Representative (Primary)
Nic Plumtree – National Education Union
Sylvia M'cneill – National Education Union
Ezra Mbogo – Vice Chair Young People's Council Representative
Daniella Olugbenga - Young People's Council Representative
Adele Toussaint Saul - Young People's Council Representative
Aaliya Bhayani Young People's Council Representative
Councillor Pantling – Assistant City Mayor for Education

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202. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr Singh Sangha.

203. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they may have had in the business to be discussed.

There were no declarations of interest.

204. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was noted that when referring to SEND policies it was worded that they were to remain embedded, it should have read that they were to be consolidated.

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission held on 20 January 2026 be confirmed as a correct record subject to the above correction.

205. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair suggested that reports be taken as read where possible.

The Chair noted that there would be a short break so that those observing Ramadan could break fast.

206. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

207. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

208. FAMILIES FIRST PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME

The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help submitted a report to update on the Families First Partnership (FFP) programme and the pilot launched in South Leicester.

Cllr Pantling introduced the item noting that a good start had been made. The Head of Service for Family Help and the Disabled Children's Service highlighted points from the presentation attached to the agenda. Key points to note were as follows:

- The Family Help programme was a move to merge the teams within the service area. The consolidation was planned to be in place by June 2026.
- The Family Help pilot was based in the South Cluster of the city. Feedback had included the need for a key focus on internal relationship building, and the importance of training and development.
- There had been a significant increase in referrals since the pilot commenced and more joint visits had taken place.
- A smoother pathway had been developed where prevention work was required.
- Consultancy support had helped to strengthen the focus on partnership engagement.
- Regarding next steps, the pilot would continue and it was hoped that the remaining clusters would be rolled out by spring 2026. Co-production

included the Shadow Boards and the Practitioner's Forum.

- The Multi-agency Child Protection team was due to be rolled out by March 2027, an LLR model would be developed. A strong foundation was already in place.
- There was an established network of meetings for the Family Group Decision Making programme and expansion into other areas of work would ensue, with a focus on embedding Cyber Safety.

In response to member and Young People's Council (YPC) member questions and discussions, the following was noted:

- The Family Hubs offered support via an open-door approach and also signposted to relevant organisations. The hubs were generally well known to the communities and were advertised on the website.
- The branding was evolving and would consist of two clear offers for families:
 - Best Start For Life – early years activity.
 - Family Health – wider social work and family support
- A new website was in development, buildings could be multi-use and would have clear signage, further consideration would be given as part of the re-branding.
- Consent forms were in place and a one assessment, one plan strategy was being formulated.
- Mapping work for all of the clusters was still work in progress and was hoped to be rolled out by early summer.
- Partnership work with schools and youth provision would be strengthened as a key link for young people to access services. A report on the results of the Young People's Survey could come back to scrutiny.
- The teams merger would support the Schools White Paper 2026, with consideration given to how schools relate to the centres.
- There was a concerted move away from bureaucracy lead work with a focus on direct work with families.
- Processes and workflow for case triaging would be considered as part of the pilot.
- It was mandatory for multi-agency child protection teams to consist of a mix of professionals, with child protection cases allocated to qualified Social Workers, while looked-after children were managed separately.
- There was a strong emphasis on recruiting Social Workers, Central Government had awarded an uplift for this purpose.
- Key learning from the pilot included the need to strengthen relationships within the teams and gain insights into joint allocation processes.
- Buildings such as Halford House would remain in use for other children's services.
- Family group conferencing was reinstated and strengthened under the Family Group Decision Making model, with mandatory participation and allocated resources. Police, health, and education partners were required by government mandate to be involved, with existing resources reconfigured to ensure the model became fully operational by 2027.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken into account.
- 3) For the results of the Young People's survey to come back to Scrutiny.

209. SCE PRIORITIES AND PERFORMANCE REPORTS 2026/27

The Strategic Director for Social Care and Education gave a presentation on the fourteen agreed priorities for the Social Care and Education department for the 2026/27 financial year alongside performance ambitions which will be reported on periodically to track progress.

The presentation slides are attached to the agenda, additional points raised were as follows:

- Regarding children's residential provision, Holly House had been opened in the previous year, and Hillview Home was due to open. There was also approval for the funding for two further homes, jointly funded with the DFE.
- For each of the priorities and performance ambitions there would be a quarterly report, a draft report would be based on quarter four of 25-26.

In response to member and YPC member questions and discussions, the following was noted:

- Work was underway for a code of ethics relating to AI. Other local authorities were seeing successful outcomes in use of AI which had performed well in line with Ofsted. There were good resources available for AI, with some funding from government reforms being used for support.
- The number of EHCP applications had reduced, which helped improve the availability of resources for developing initial plans. Reviews required joint working across partners, and processes were under review due to a significantly higher-than-average number of cases requiring amendments.
- A revised dashboard would provide clear figures for the commission to view.
- Senior Managers would commence scenario planning for Local Government Reorganisation.
- Regarding the Social Care Academy, the Head of the academy had been recruited, a Social Care practice week was planned for November in preparation for the launch.
- Savings targets had been delivered and services reconfigured, resulting in an underspend. This, alongside uplifts from central government, created a positive position for reinvestment. However, there was a need to avoid uncontrolled growth, particularly in high-cost provision, and to

prioritise investment in frontline services as part of the wider strategy.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken into account.
- 3) For members to be invited to Social Care Academy Launch.

210. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT

The Strategic Director for Social Care and Education submitted a report setting out the Social Care and Education Department's improvement ambitions with regards to equality and diversity over the 2026-27 year.

Key points to note were as follows:

- There had not been a formal approach for a number of years and it was now felt that something more concrete was needed.
- Many Global Majority staff had now been on leadership training.
- An initial action plan had been produced with an inclusive decision-making forum.
- Work had been done with outside agencies.
- A maturity matrix had been produced on where it was aimed to go on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) as a department.
- The question had been put to staff over what would need to change or the department to be the best version of itself. This would be mapped against the maturity matrix and a plan to deliver would be produced.
- It was aimed to be a good, inclusive place to work, where people felt they could succeed.
- Progress could be reported on quarterly.

In response to member and YPC member discussion, the following was noted:

- It was noted that there was a need to be upfront about doing things differently and there was a need to ask what needed to change. There was a need for cultural change, and only through committing to change and seeing it through would the change be seen.
- Lots of work had been done around the YPC around psychological safety and how people could share views. The Inclusive Decision-Making forum fell to all staff in the department, this helped open things up in a similar way to how it was done in the YPC.
- In response to points raised about unconscious bias, it was stressed that there needed to be awareness to the fact that racism existed and that people could test themselves and that conversations could be had on biases. There was a need for people to reflect and change. If these issues were not talked about, people would be left with prejudices.
- In response to points made on inclusive decision making, it was

explained that it was about getting more eyes onto issues and co-producing decisions, opening them up to checks and balances. This was a cultural change over time and there was a need to give opportunities for more people to be involved.

- In terms of communication and language, there was an open dialogue about how people felt and perceived things, and if there wasn't an open conversation, things did not move forwards. It was necessary to open the option of change which needed open dialogue, and it was necessary for people to feel safe and have conversations to feel included.
- With regard to a query about how the Council's approach compared to those of other Councils, it was noted that whilst some Councils were taking different approaches, the Council wanted to take an EDI approach. Work was being undertaken with external organisations, and the Organisation Diverse by Design had helped provide tools for dialogue.
- In terms of tangible indicators might be that the expected outcomes have been achieved, this could be shown in workforce progression and representation, particularly at senior levels where it was aimed to be more representative. Additionally, there was a need to be more aware of things that seemed like they were disproportionate to the local population in the community.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken into account.
- 3) That quarterly updates be provided.

211. HNB REPORT

The Chair referred to the High Needs Block (HNB) report, outlining the amendments made in response to the January Scrutiny meeting. The report was taken as read.

In discussion with members, it was noted that:

- The Council could be in a better position on the HNB due to government funding.
- The Longest and Average Wait times for Special School Placements would be ascertained.
- Ofsted had picked up on the Council Special School sufficiency planning and recognised that all possible was being done.
- The Designate Specialist Provisions (DSP) programme had created 300 extra places.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.

2) That the report be presented to the Executive and the response from the Executive be brought back to the Commission.

212. WORK PROGRAMME

A report on outcomes concerning adventure playgrounds could come to the Commission.

The work programme was noted.

213. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There being no other business, the There being no further business, the meeting ended at 19:51