



## Child and Family Support Forum Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2009



**Present:** Tim Ferguson (Manchester Young Lives), Jennifer Richardson, (Routes Project, BHA), Sinéad O'Connor (YASP, HARP), Mike Wild (MACC), Sarah Forster (consultant working with MACC), Ross Grant (VYM), Martin Duffy (VYM), Judith Saffer (De Paul Trust), Claire Kerrfoot (Contact a Family), Lynn Perry (Barnardos)

**Apologies:** Barrington Reeves (Sowing Seeds), John O'Donnell (ReachOut).

**Minutes:** Pauline Clark, MACC.

---

Mike Wild requested that someone else chair the meeting as he felt that as he was reporting back to the meeting it wasn't appropriate for him to chair. Sarah Forster agreed to take the chair.

Minutes of the previous meeting were tabled and accepted. All items on previous minutes were to be updated at this meeting so there were no matters arising.

### **Updates**

---

**My Place:** Martin Duffy from Voluntary Youth Manchester updated the group. Compact challenge has been made VYM board letter to Laureen Donnan, Assistant Director of Children's Services with regards to concerns around the whole process, the response came from Pauline Newman, Director of Children's Services, stating what how it was done and what was done. VYM have been invited to meet with Graham Mellors to discuss matters, the VYM board needs to meet and discuss the way forward. There is a need to acknowledge that the way things were done were not ideal, and that things need to change, finding a positive way to move forward and improve things.

### **Third Sector Strategy**

---

Mike informed the group that there will be a summary version of the general Third Sector Strategy document which will be distributed in the next month to the voluntary sector. There are a group of people working on this document. The idea is to get as many voluntary sector organisations engaged and involved. Then people from the group will begin to produce a Children, Young People and Families Strategy document.

## **Recruitment**

---

Mike reported that MACC intends to go out to recruitment this week in the email bulletin and in other places. Deadline is 1 month from now, interviews at beginning of March and to hopefully have someone in place in April. The person specification has been revised since the last time it was advertised.

MACC is currently looking to recruit new members onto the Executive Committee. MACC is not a charity therefore members are not trustees; they are Executive Members or Directors. Information regarding this will be included in the email bulletin.

## **Children's Board**

---

Mike advised that the Children's Board had met twice since the last Forum meeting in November.

The first was on 15th December and was just after the serious incident in Cheetham Hill so safeguarding was the main agenda item. Pauline Newman is going to step down as Chair of Manchester Safeguarding Children Board and it will have an independent Chair. Pauline's main role will be to receive and monitor reports, and satisfy herself as Director of Children's Services that Safeguarding procedures and practices across the city are of a good standard. There is a Serious Case review process going on regarding the recent incident in Cheetham Hill. There is also a review of how these Serious Case investigations take place going on at the same time.

Mike reported that MACC had been asked to supply a member of staff to sit on the Serious Case review panel regarding the Cheetham Hill incident. He explained that he had felt this wasn't appropriate partly because there is no spare staff capacity in MACC at the moment but mostly because, since MACC is not a frontline provider organisation, it's not something we develop in-house expertise on. MACC has clarified that panel is seeking someone who can put the perspective of the voluntary sector into the investigation and a view on how realistic expectations of voluntary sector safeguarding actually are in the city, and what training is available and how things can be improved. It's unclear whether it is appropriate for someone an individual voluntary sector organisation to sit on the panel. Mike is still waiting to hear if someone else from the voluntary sector can take on this position. They are now trying to take that broader system view and this would need to be handled quite sensitively.

Tagged onto back of this MACC has asked Children's Board to send a formal recommendation to Voluntary Sector Policy and Grants regarding the Infrastructure Support Services contract which is about to go out to tender (the services currently delivered by NovasScarman). This would ask that the new service specification should include support around the development of

safeguarding practice, particularly within small organisations. Voluntary Sector Policy & Grants could use this as a specific criterion. The Children's Board had agreed and this had been actioned in early January.

The Children's Board is has undergone a minor restructure to improve its capacity for performance management: there is now a regular performance report in the form of a large chart with a traffic light system on all the key targets.

There is to be a redesign of the strategic map of the Children's Trust arrangements. There will be 3 broad areas: outcomes and strategy (such as the 14-19 Strategy), implementation (collaborative working, CAF, etc.). and performance (indicators such as school attendance, statemented pupils, Looked After Children, etc.). A diagram is being produced to show all this more clearly which Mike will circulate when it's available. There is a new senior Children's Trust Implementation Manager in charge of this now: Donna Mair who will be attending the Strategic Reference Group next month. It was agreed that it would be good for Donna to come to the Forum in the near future. Mike had done a brief presentation around voluntary sector infrastructure to the Board, with a view to developing a Third Sector Strategy for Children Young People and Families.

Mike was unable to attend the January meeting as he was off sick, but he had spoken to Shirley Adams who reported that the Board had taken on some new members (e.g. schools) and had apparently spent the meeting looking over old ground, so the next meeting will move forward and get back on track.

## **Safeguarding**

---

Ross fed back about the development of safeguarding training. He has been working with Andy McLean and Tony Brougham at the City Council to look at the training available for voluntary sector organisations around Safeguarding. While it's felt that all safeguarding training needs to be multi-agency, multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary, what the voluntary sector currently gets is felt to be watered down and inappropriate as it is focused on internal Council procedures. Ross is working to develop training which responds to the specific needs of voluntary sector – it may be that specific courses around working with young people and working with children are needed. Above all, getting more people from voluntary sector organisations on safeguarding courses would be a big step forward.

As a first step, the City Council is offering four standard safeguarding courses specifically for the voluntary sector. These will be ad at Victoria Mill on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> and Friday 20<sup>th</sup> February and Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> and Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March. (They have already been promoted through VYM and MACC bulletins.) Ross said that this might or might not be the right course but until

people attend these courses and give feedback on quality, relevance, location, etc. no judgement can be made. The City Council and VYM are trying to encourage a useful dialogue around this. A question was raised as to when training takes place, does the team then have a database around who they have had to turn down due to lack of capacity? Ross was unsure agree to follow this up.

The City Council has purchase 1000 licences for an e-learning package around Safeguarding. This will be trialled over the next 12 months and reviewed. 300 of these licences have been offered to voluntary, community and faith sector. It takes around 2 – 3 hours to complete. Contact Ross for more details via email at [voluntaryyouthmanchester@gmail.com](mailto:voluntaryyouthmanchester@gmail.com).

Sinéad reported back on the District Safeguarding Forum she attends. They are looking at how they can disseminate information of the serious case review around Baby P in Harringey. It has been identified that most workers are unaware that when making referrals to agencies, the worker has to give a professional opinion on the referral form and be specific if s/he feels that the child is at risk, the nature of the risk, etc. This is not simply the facts identified by the organisation, but the views / concerns of the individual worker as a practitioner. Sinéad highlighted recent information around drug and alcohol safeguarding procedures: this provides clear guidance that you cannot help a child of drug or alcohol dependent parents, without first supporting the parents to enter detox, and unless you consider how the children will be cared for whilst the parents are in detox.

Mike informed the group there is a great deal of policy and procedure information around Safeguarding at present and that he will circulate this in the near future.

### **Consultancy Work**

---

Sarah Forster reported on the work she has been engaged to do by MACC around developing the role of the district panel representatives and general issues around networking and representation within the districts. She has been working to develop a profile of what's happening in each district and how the voluntary sector representatives role on the district panels are working. She is in the process of meeting all the representatives and talk to them about the work they are doing and will report back at a future Forum meeting.

## Commissioning

---

Information sharing about what the groups had all heard/learnt around Commissioning. Mike produced a folder which had been compiled around the recent Commissioning process and evidence that had been gathered: this recorded, for example, issues raised by Mike and Ross at the “Voluntary Sector Investment Subgroup” which had been steering the process and the responses and actions. Also recorded were things that had been changed without the voluntary sector being engaged. Mike intends to engage someone on a consultancy basis pull together all this data and undertake a review of what happened and what didn't work for the voluntary sector during the Commissioning process. This will include talking to groups for their perspectives and feedback and will form a report to contribute to a full review of the process by all partners.

There followed a discussion in which each organisation present shared their views and experiences of the process in order to provide evidence for the report. (These are not reproduced in full here but will be included in the report) Comments made included:

- The specifications were confusing and the application form didn't match the specification.
- There was a general lack of clarity in the whole process.
- No context given and no framework and no indication what would be an acceptable measurement with regards to [outcomes model]
- There seemed to be a lot of questions posted and very few clear answers.
- Concerns around youth commissioning process and, specifically about how judgements were made on bids.
- Most have not had the kind of constructive feedback they requested and had received rather generic letters.
- Nobody knows for sure who was on either the Parenting and Family Support nor Youth Work panels.
- Outcomes, outputs and objectives – there wasn't a consistent approach with anything that's used nationally or otherwise, which led to a feeling that the commissioners don't actually understand it.
- One group felt they'd been successful because they didn't pay too much attention to the specification and instead just wrote what they were going to offer.

MACC has compiled a list of questions around the process, for example:

- requested a list of technical difficulties about process: where the different funding streams and requirements might not match. Asked for in September, it was promised but never supplied.
- Training for panel members - didn't happen.

- Parent & Family Support workshop stated that a voluntary sector observer would be allowed on the panel - didn't happen.

MACC had gone through all the paperwork that had been issued and found a number of mismatches. For example, there was no confidentiality agreement form in the pack even though it was referred to in the information about completing the application.

Mike reported that he had been in touch with the Commissioning and Procurement Unit at NAVCA (National Association of Voluntary & Community Action) after last meeting. Their team also works with the Public Law Project. They have reviewed the local paperwork and sent advice on issues for the local review to consider.

Children's Services also want to do some kind of review but are unsure how and when. It was agreed that our own voluntary sector review should contribute to a review by all partners. Areas to cover should include:

- Partnership working.
- Process, paperwork and marking systems that were put in place.
- Information and communication.
- Decision making – in particular how the panels operated. For example, did panel members declare any interests and how was this recorded?
- Timescales: what happened to condense the process so much?
- What have people learned if anything?
- What are the positive impacts?
- What are the negative impacts?

## Feedback and Information Sharing

---

- **Contact a Family** – Have begun work on establishing parent participation forums having gained funding to develop this work.
- **Reconnect** – Waiting to hear if funding from Manchester Housing will be available to continue to run mediation programme. Also waiting to hear if they are successful in their bid to the Parenting Fund.
- **Volunteering Network / CN4M** - Martin explained that he has been doing some work as a freelance consultant for CN4M, on developing the volunteering infrastructure in Manchester. There is to be a consultation event around this on Thursday February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2pm – 4.30pm at Cross Street Chapel and also around the value of volunteers and what they contribute in Manchester.
- **VYM** – Ross expressed concerns that the impending restructuring of Youth Service will have a major impact on provision throughout the city. The service will be split into the 6 Children's Services districts of but with a

small core group which they hope will be completed by the end of July – there do not appear to be any formal proposals so far and there has been little or no engagement with voluntary sector.

Ross also fed back on the Workforce Strategy Partners Programme. They are trying to put together a toolkit around various aspects of staff development, whilst also responding to some of the issues from the workforce profiling report and the visioning event last year. The Children's Services Workforce Planning section have agreed to help adapt a toolkit originally developed for schools to make it relevant for the voluntary sector. VYM have therefore set up a session on 18<sup>th</sup> February and want to invite 8 groups from the children and young peoples voluntary sector to take part in a review exercise. Workforce Planning have agreed to pay backfill costs for attendees. It's also hoped that some those groups attending might be willing to form an advisory group. Ross invited groups to contact him if they were willing to take part.

- **MYL** – both the thematic groups Tim normally attends seem to have ceased. The Play Partnership has not met for quite some time. Tim said he was unclear how information is being disseminated to groups by commissioning panel reps as he had heard nothing. Sinéad stated that she was relatively new to the role as District Representative for the voluntary sector and had only just found out that she was supposed to be disseminating information, but meeting notes are being added to the MACC website. Mike explained that the roles of the panels are becoming very unclear and seemed to be turning into a district forum – hence the work being done by Sarah Forster to clarify how the Forum can work at a district level. Sinéad also explained that each district is working on different priorities and in different ways and so there is no set formula for passing on information to groups from these panels. Mike reported that MACC will set up a page for each district on the MACC website and so that the representatives can provide up to date information which is then accessible to all.
- **Routes** – looking at how structures in Children's Services such as referral systems and admissions relating to disabled children, how to signpost to appropriate person when no one knows who is dealing with which area of responsibility within Children's Services. Parents don't know where they stand with regards to education unless the child is statemented. Also working more closely with new arrivals families, and families who have begun process of assessment towards a statement and then had to return back to home country, only to find that when coming back to Manchester they have to begin the process all over again from the beginning. Contact a Family agreed that the statementing process is causing confusion and difficulties in accessing education. It was agreed to look at this further outside the meeting.
- **Barnardos** – have 2 new projects, 1 family group conferencing service, staff have now been recruited and ready to start based in Hulme. The

second project tackles worklessness and improves the employability of people from BME backgrounds. This will offer help with common spoken English in the workplace and vocational mentoring/befriending. Will also be promoting people returning to teaching after a break. Staff being recruited for this project now.

- **YASP** – are now partners in the National Outcome Pilot. Youth access and social welfare are key areas.
- **One Parent Families Manchester** – Mike reported that he had received information stating that this group has changed its name following the recent merger and is now known simply as **Gingerbread**.

**Date of next meeting:**

---

Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> March, 10am – 12noon, at MACC office.