

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 31 January 2017

Subject: Greater Manchester Review of Children’s Services

Report of: Strategic Director of Children’s Services

Summary

The purpose of this report is to present an overview of the opportunities being explored for Children's Services across Greater Manchester as part of the 'city deal' secured by Manchester City Council and its partners. Whilst there are clearly opportunities for better cross border collaboration, sharing best practice and developing a self-improving system across the conurbation, there are also challenges which are likely to require further legislative changes.

In addition the content of this report has given due regard to the findings of the 'Wood Report' that was published in March 2016; which is summarised within the National Policy Context section.

Recommendation

It is recommended Committee Members note the content of the report.

Wards Affected: All

Contact Officers:

Name: Paul Marshall
Position: Strategic Director of Children’s Services
Telephone: 0161 234 3804
E-mail: p.marshall1@manchester.gov.uk

Background documents (available for public inspection):

None.

Introduction

The 10 Greater Manchester Local Authority Children's Services have a long history of collaboration within the conurbation and across the region. Subsequently as part of the 'city deal' secured for Greater Manchester, there are greater opportunities to plan, deliver and govern children's services; which will maximise collective expertise, economies of scale and ultimately improve the outcomes and experiences of our children and young people.

The purpose of this report is to present the proposals being developed and considered within the review of Greater Manchester Children's Services; which include the opportunities and challenges associated with the 'city deal' secured by Manchester City Council and the Department for Education Innovation Fund.

The content of this report is structured to set out the national policy context; with a specific focus on the 'wood review' given the potential implications for how agencies work together to safeguard and protect children; learning lessons from serious case reviews and child deaths. This is then followed by the work being undertaken in the Review of Children's Services across Greater Manchester and concludes with a short summary of progress to date.

National Policy Context

The Greater Manchester Review of Children's Services is set within a policy context to drive innovation and growing concern that nationally the quality of services for children are 'not consistently good enough', even in 'good' authorities.

There is also some recognition nationally and locally that the schools' curriculum and skills pathway needs to respond to the growth ambitions of the Northern Powerhouse. Consequently within this and a wider context we have seen a number of ministerial policy announcements over the last twelve months which include;

- The launch of 'Putting Children First' which set out Government's Reform Programme for Children's Social Care for the next five years.
- The introduction of the Children and Social Work Bill which aimed to give Local Authorities the 'power to innovate'- supported by an announcement of £200m innovation funding from DfE.
- The announcement of new separate legal entity, Social Work England, as regulator of social workers as an amendment to the Children and Social Work Bill.
- Proposals for a new funding formula for schools and high needs
- Proposals for a new early years funding plan that will increase the free child care offer for 3 year olds.
- Publications of 'Keep on Caring', the new cross-government strategy that sets out plans to improve opportunities for care leavers
- The announcement of Charlie Taylor's Review of the Youth Justice System.
- A number of Trusts established in response to Local Authorities Children's Services being classified as inadequate.
- Government's re-iteration of its ambition that all schools will become Academies.

In addition, during December 2015 Alan Wood CBE was commissioned by the DfE to lead a review of the role and function of Local Safeguarding Children's Boards LSCB in England and its component parts relating to Serious Case Reviews (SCR) and Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP); reporting the subsequent findings and recommendations to the government in March 2016.

Whilst the 'Wood Report' identified outstanding organisational and effective practice the level of effectiveness was inconsistent overall. The overall messages are clear;

- We need to learn from the body of evidence that already exists from research, Ofsted reviews and the findings that exists in SCRs
- Processes and timid enquiry at practitioner and system level with an unwillingness to challenge partners when the opt out of co-operating and to much acceptance of less than good performance at the level of agency and practitioner.

In respect of the 3 distinct elements of the report (LSCB, SCR and CDOP) the Wood Report recommended;

There should be a move away from a highly prescribed model to a statutory framework which is flexible in how arrangements are established but focused on protecting children. This would potentially lead to replacing the current statutory framework for LSCBs with one that sets out the strategic multi-agency arrangements for child protection.

In addition, applicants for 'devolution deals' should be incentivised to include arrangements for safeguarding children as part of the combined authority arrangement. This would see the 3 key statutory agencies (NHS, Police and Local Government) determine for an 'area' the multi-agency arrangements for protecting and safeguarding children; drawing up a plan that describe how these services work in partnership with other agencies will delivery the new statutory framework.

Furthermore, new statutory arrangements should be developed to require health, local government and Police to make clear their leadership responsibility for multi-agency arrangements; including the identification of a 'chief officer' in each agency for ensuring full collaboration with those statutory arrangements. This arrangement should be underpinned by all areas being required to move towards these new ways of working within a prescribed period; at which point the underpinning legislation for LSCBs will cease.

Finally the establishment of a national learning framework, body and accredited reviewers will lay the foundations to create a more effective model of learning from the deaths of children; which considers both the local and national findings.

Greater Manchester Review of Children's Services

Proposals for a whole system review of Services for Children in Greater Manchester were presented for consideration to the Wider Leadership Team in April 2016. This included a vision for a whole system approach that considers children of pre-birth

age to 25 years and within their family and community. The scope of the proposals considered the following areas of service delivery;

1. Integrated Early Help and Health
2. Education and Early Years
3. Youth Offending
4. Looked After Children
5. Complex Safeguarding
6. Care Leavers
7. Quality Assurance/Governance

A devolution/innovation Expression of Interest was submitted to DfE in April 2016; since which time there have been ongoing discussions between the Director of Children's Services and the DfE Innovation programme team to refine the proposals and associated funding requirements. These discussions have led to a strengthening of proposals around governance and shared accountability including a proposal for two Governance Boards (a GM Standards Board and an Education and Employability Board).

In addition, the DfE advisors have expressed enthusiasm for the Greater Manchester proposal to include an element of sector led improvement to enable GMCA to support practice improvement at an individual Local Authority or GMCA level.

Whilst, it is not envisaged the Secretary of State's power to intervene in failing authorities will be devolved, it is acknowledged intervention would have to be proportionate and that GMCA will have the opportunity to drive self-improvement and early intervention when weaknesses are identified. This will of course require wider engagement with DfE lawyers and Ofsted in the context of the development of the new inspection framework.

With regards to the Education proposals DfE Schools policy leads have indicated they are committed to an ongoing dialogue around the issues of pupil place planning, school improvement, and the role of the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) within the GM context.

Progress

Following the publication of the Woods Review the Government has considered and referenced the findings and recommendations contained within the Woods Report in the national policy 'putting children first'. Whilst there has been no immediate or direct action within the Children and Social Work Bill due before Parliament it is proposed a stronger statutory framework for multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, creating greater accountability for the three key agencies of health, Police and the local authority is created. Within this it is proposed there will be no obligation to have an LSCB. However, there will be a duty on the 3 key statutory agencies to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and jointly identify and respond to emerging needs and priorities.

In addition the three agencies will also be required jointly to produce and publish a plan which will set out how they will carry out this duty; including how they will work

with other agencies, what the resourcing for the arrangements

It is also proposed with the Children and Families Bill to establish a new national framework for inquiries into cases of serious harm to children; which will replace the current system of Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) and miscellaneous local reviews with national and local child safeguarding practice review. These reviews will be overseen by a national Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel which will make sure that reviews are commissioned are proportionate to the circumstances of the case they are investigating; and support the development of both national policy and local practice through the to be established What works centre (proposed within the Putting Children First policy),

In respect of the Greater Manchester Review of Children's Services a final position and commitment from the DfE is pending. Notwithstanding this where additional capacity/resources are not a barrier to progress the Greater Manchester Directors of Children's Services have continued to work in partnership with key stakeholders to progress the following areas of activity in relation to Early Help and Youth Offending Services;

- A safeguarding officer along with admin support is now in place in Wetherby Young Offenders Institution and there is strong engagement with institution to help drive improvements.
- Co-commissioning services across GM youth offending services to develop a commissioning framework to be in place later this year in relation to sexually harmful behaviour and speech and language therapy.
- Opportunities to establish a GM secure estate for young offenders
- Building on the recommendations within the Lord Laming paper entitled 'In Care, out of Trouble' GM is planning to review LAC arrangements in Youth Justice System across in order to identify good practice and areas for improvement.
- A common youth offer integrated with Early Help, Co-commissioning across GM Youth Offending Services and a GM Youth Court Offer.

In addition work has continued to develop and draft Integrated Health and Early Help strategies. This work has involved consultation and engagement of strategic health colleagues.

In conclusion, Children's Services within Manchester is actively working in collaboration with colleagues across the region to respond positively to the changes in national and local policy; ensuring the welfare, opportunities and experiences of the children and young people are enhanced and benefit from the presenting opportunities.