

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 19 June 2018

Subject: Delivering the Our Manchester Strategy

Report of: Executive Member for Children's Services

Summary

This report provides an overview of work undertaken and progress towards the delivery of the Council's priorities as set out in the Our Manchester Strategy for those areas within the portfolio of the Executive Member for Children's Services.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note and comment on the report.

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Scrutiny update

Our Manchester, Our Children is the plan for Children in the city and it is our aim that they are safe happy and healthy. That drives all of the other priorities.

Improvement journey

We have a moral and legal duty to the children in our care - to help them to be safe and to build a future for themselves. To that end, my main priority is to continue to improve our services. We have been on an improvement journey since 2014 and whilst we are happy that there have been improvements- and that OFSTED recognise this- we are not happy with where we are and there is more to do.

We have a post- Ofsted plan with clear recommendations which came to last Scrutiny and which action is well under way on. I will be challenging senior officers to demonstrate that these changes have had an impact.

Our improvement journey takes place within the context of austerity which is hitting Council budget's hard, and benefit changes which put families under pressure and increases the number of complex problems in our city.

There are still a lot of challenges to embed the fundamental changes that have been introduced. We are moving towards earlier interventions with better outcomes and I will be seeking reassurance that these changes- such as Early Help and Edge of Care support- are having an impact.

There are a number of priority themes which I will be focusing on under our improvement journey

1. Staffing- the recruitment and retention of staff, providing staff with effective management and bringing caseloads down for newly qualified staff. I have already met with teams in one of the locality areas to discuss issues they face and will continue this.
2. Listening to Young People - to make sure that children are listened to and inform practice, understand their own lives and have access to Independent Visitors. This leads to better outcomes for young people and is a perfect example of embedding Our Manchester in practice. It is also a key part of the agenda of the Corporate Parenting Panel which I chair and I will be looking at ways to ensure that young people are heard throughout the design of the new leaving care service.
3. Pathways – As well as focusing on permanence for our young people, designing and implementing an innovative new model for our leaving care service is a priority for the coming months following the paper at Executive. This will give the Council greater control over the care leaver service and allow us to focus on care leaver pathways. This was a key commitment in Labour's local election Manifesto for Manchester. The proposed model will have our young people at its heart- working within the service and serving on its management board. I will be dedicating a lot of my time on this to ensure that the new service has the right focus and is able to improve services for children leaving care. There is also a piece of work

undertaken jointly with housing on care leavers accommodation and I will be prioritising this to bring forward plans for supported accommodation options for care leavers. Both of these pieces of work will be progressed in the next 6 months.

4. Demand- reducing demand on social work through earlier interventions and better outcomes as well as more effective triage will be a focus for me and something which we need to get right. I will be seeking assurance that our investment in this is having an impact and will be working with senior officers to review our front door procedures.
5. Placements- We are still using too many high cost placements despite best efforts. Last year 100 more of our children were placed with internal foster carers but we need to recruit more if we are to meet our ambitious targets. Evidence shows that outcomes are better for children and we will be redoubling our efforts to meet these targets in a creative way. I have already met with managers from the foster carer recruitment team and will be prioritising this work.

Early Years

Our Early Years offer is well established, with a rolled out Early Years Delivery Model integrated with Health Visitors. However there are concerns about the take up of the offer- particularly with the 9 month and 2 year check ups- and I am worried that the most in need in our city could be missing out. I will make sure that we look at targeted ways increase take up through home visits and breaking down barriers to appointments. We are exploring school leadership of the model based on local areas and this has the potential to increase take up and improve outcomes.

We have ambitious plans to integrate Early Years and Early Help and this will be vital if we want to intervene early in the life of a child- to support families to stay together where appropriate and to lead to better outcomes for children. This is key to our Manifesto commitment to build on Sure Start's Labour roots and to support families who need the most support. This ambition needs further work and I anticipate it coming back to scrutiny at some point within the year once proposals are firmer.

Poverty

An overriding concern for me is the level of poverty in the city. Years of austerity have put families under enormous pressure- particularly changes to benefits such as the sanctions regime and the rollout of Universal Credit. I will working jointly with Sue Murphy who leads on the family poverty strategy to do all we can to protect vulnerable families and to help them out of poverty.

Work underway

I have already begun this work- I have been holding weekly meetings with the DCS and other senior officers and analyse a scorecard of key performance indicators. I have begun to attend Children's Board, GM Children's Board and the Manchester Safeguarding Children's Safeguarding Board and I will meet with the Chair of the Board to discuss issues of concern. I chair the monthly Corporate Parenting Panel and will ensure that it is an effective way to improve outcomes for Our children and to hear from

young people themselves. I have begun a programme of visits to teams across the service to engage with staff about the challenges they face.

Timescales

Much of this work is underway and will be ongoing but within the next 12 months I will review our early intervention strategies and our triage procedures to be assured that our interventions are having an impact. During the next 6 months I will have led the introduction of the new care leavers service leading to improved outcomes for young people and will see an improved accommodation offer brought forward. Over the next 12 months I will focus on foster care recruitment and retention and bring forward a revised plan for attracting and keeping foster carers and placing our children with Manchester foster carers.

Our Manchester

Our Manchester principles have driven many of the changes in Children's Services to date- including Early Help, Edge of Care and Signs of Safety practice model. Promoting the voice and influence of our young people throughout the service and in specific areas like the new Leaving Care Service will help to embed that culture change. We are part way through an improvement journey with much left to do and my priority will be to address the issues we need to do to improve whilst looking at radical and creative solutions where necessary.