

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Ofsted Subgroup– 2 February 2016

Subject: Looked After Children, Missing from Care, and Fostering and Adoption

Report of: Interim Director of Children and Families Services

Summary

To provide an update on Looked After Children, including fostering and adoption and missing from care

Contact Officers:

Name: Gladys Rhodes-White
Position: Interim Director of Children’s and Families Services
Telephone: 0161 234 3804
E-mail: g.rhodeswhite@manchester.gov.uk

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report sets out the current performance of looked after children services including fostering and adoption and includes details of services for children who go missing from care.
- 1.2 The report also seeks to advise Members of key developments and improvement work ongoing and that which has been undertaken since the Ofsted inspection in July 2014.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 In the Ofsted inspection in July 2014 of Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers, in the category of ‘children looked after and achieving permanence’ the Local Authority was rated as ‘requires improvement’. The inspection rating overall for the Local Authority was ‘inadequate’.
- 2.2 There are two sub categories, ‘adoption performance’ and ‘experience and progress of care leavers’, within the children looked after and achieving permanence category that Ofsted rate separately. Ofsted rated adoption performance as ‘inadequate’ and experience and progress of care leavers as ‘requires improvement’.
- 2.3 As for all Ofsted inspections, the July 2014 inspection was a snapshot of the service examined over a three week period. Whilst the rating for children looked after and achieving permanence was rated as ‘requires improvement’, in contrast to the ‘inadequate’ overall rating, management review and audit since the inspection found many areas of the services for looked after children that required significant improvement.

3.0 The Looked After Children Population

- 3.1 The Ofsted inspection in July 2014 noted that ‘the local authority is challenged by high and increasing numbers of children entering its care’. The current looked after children population as at 15.1.16 totals 1,248. The number of looked after children at the time of the Ofsted inspection in July 2014 was 1,406. There has therefore been a reduction in the number of looked after children of 158 between July 2014 and January 2016.
- 3.2 Breaking this down, the looked after children population reduced by 104 children between July 2014 and end of March 2015 and it has reduced by a further 54 so far in 2015/16.
- 3.3. The rate of looked after children per 10,000 of the child population was 128 per 10,000 in July 2014. This had reduced to 113 per 10,000 at end of March 2015 and stands at 109 per 10,000 as at January 2016.
- 3.4 The rate of children per 10,000 of the population was and still is high compared to the national average and was and still is higher than comparable core cities. Such

a high rate of looked after children, alongside the knowledge that some children have experienced drift and delay whilst being looked after, and poor adoption performance, all indicate that we have children in care who could be cared for outside of the care system. This has informed the Local Authority's strategy to reduce the number of children looked after through ensuring that only children who need to be in care are in care.

3.5 The reduction in the number of looked after children set out above indicates that we have had some success in this strategy. Work is ongoing to reduce the looked after children population further through supporting children and young people to remain with their birth families and securing permanence outside care for looked after children where this is appropriate, for example through Adoption and Special Guardianship Orders.

4.0 The Workforce for Looked after Children

4.1 The Ofsted inspection report noted that caseloads for social workers were too high and that social workers in looked after children teams have up to 30 cases. The report required us to review the number of cases held by social workers and ensure a sufficient number of suitably experienced and qualified staff.

4.2 Action has been taken to address caseloads through increasing staffing capacity in the looked after children teams and reducing demand through reducing the number of looked after children. The average caseload now in the looked after children teams ranges from 20 in two teams to 23 in the other two teams. We have set a target to reduce average caseloads to between 18 and 20 and therefore have some progress still to be made.

4.3 It is recognised also that the ratio of newly qualified to experienced social workers is very high currently with 33% of our social workers across the service being newly qualified. Action will be taken to address this imbalance in our recruitment activity and a target has been set to limit newly qualified social workers to a maximum of 25%. Between January to March 2016 we also anticipate that 24% of our NQSW will complete their course, becoming qualified social workers.

4.4. The inspection report required us to promote the importance of stable relationships for children with their social workers. We have tried to facilitate improved relationships for children with their social workers through reduced caseloads, and a staff retention package to retain existing social workers, so that relationships are not disturbed by high staff turnover. We are now also moving towards a remodelled service that will seek to reduce the number of times cases are transferred to another team, so that children have fewer changes of social worker. This is an area where significant improvement is still required as children still now have too many changes of social worker.

5.0 Placement Choice and Placement Stability

5.1 Placement choice for looked after children was said to be insufficient in the inspection report. Work is ongoing currently to develop a Placement Sufficiency Strategy for Looked after Children and Care Leavers. This strategy will set out

how the Local Authority will provide a sufficient number and range of local placements to meet the needs of Manchester's looked after children and care leavers. However, a number of actions have been and are now being implemented to improve provision of placements across fostering, adoption and residential sectors and these will be detailed in specific sections below.

- 5.2 It was noted at inspection and is still the case that we perform relatively well compared to the national average for the percentage of children placed more than 20 miles away. However we do know that we place too many children outside of our authority boundary – 61% of children fostered lived outside our area in July 2014 - and that we rely heavily on independent fostering agency placements. Independent fostering agency placements are expensive relative to in-house foster placements and work is on-going to increase the pool of in-house foster carers and reduce our reliance on the independent sector.
- 5.3 We have had success with our strategy to reduce reliance on both the independent residential and independent fostering sector. The number of independent sector residential placements has reduced from 71 to 55 between March 2015 and end of November 2015. In the same period the number of children placed in independent fostering agency placements has reduced from 617 to 546.
- 5.4 Performance on short term placement stability was strong at the time of inspection and is still strong. The percentage of children with 3 or more placements in a year stands currently at 7.5%. This is better than the national average of 11%.

6.0 Fostering Provision

- 6.1 As discussed above, we rely heavily on independent fostering agency placements to meet the accommodation needs of our looked after children. We have had success in reducing the number of independent fostering agency placements and we are striving to expand our pool of in-house foster carers so that we can place more children in-house. In-house placements are more cost effective and more local.
- 6.2 The Council has invested in a significantly improved financial support package for in-house foster carers, on an 'invest to save' basis, as a means to attract new carers and retain existing ones. The financial package is now competitive with other local authorities and independent fostering agencies, making Manchester a more attractive place to be a foster carer. The new fees and allowances were introduced from November 1st 2015 and although this was only two months ago we can already see that it has had a positive impact. The number of enquiries we have received from people wishing to discuss becoming a foster carer has increased and we have received a lot of interest from existing independent fostering agency foster carers who want to transfer and work for Manchester.
- 6.3 In 2014/15 the Fostering Service approved just 16 new foster carers. So far in 2015/16 we have approved 15 and are forecasting that we will have approved around 35 by the end of 2015/16. The impact of the new financial package and

our plans to improve support and supervision to all our foster carers will contribute to successful recruitment outcomes over 2016/17 and we would expect to recruit at least 50 new foster carers over the full year.

- 6.4 The service has targeted recruitment at black and minority ethnic communities in order to increase the diversity of our foster carer pool so as to best meet the cultural needs of the diverse range of children who are looked after. This has included advertising and holding recruitment events in communities with notable BME populations and linking up with BME community and faith leaders. The foster carer population is made up of 20% of carers from BME backgrounds. Of the 20 applicant foster carers currently being assessed a total of 8, or 40% of them, are from BME communities.
- 6.5. The service is striving to improve the all-round offer to our foster carers, not just the financial package. We have introduced regular foster carer forums where the Director of Children's Services and senior managers meet with foster carers to discuss services and current issues, we have established a newsletter we distribute every two months to carers, performance measures to ensure more regular social work visiting patterns have been introduced, and we are implementing a new induction support and supervision package for new foster carers in their first year.

7.0 The Adoption Service

- 7.1 Adoption performance was rated separately as 'inadequate' in the inspection of July 2014.
- 7.2 The inspection report indicated that too few children are adopted and on average for those that do achieve adoption the Local Authority was not securing adoption for them quickly enough.
- 7.3 At the time of the inspection 11% of children had left care via adoption in the previous year. The performance on this measure for 2014/15 had reached 12%. Currently for 2015/16, up to the end of November 2015, 17% of children had left care via adoption, indicating an improving trend. So far in 2015/16 55 children have been adopted and there are a further 55 children currently placed for adoption. We expect that another 20 to 25 of those 55 children placed for adoption will be adopted before the end of March 2016 giving a total figure between 75 and 80 children adopted compared to 67 in 2014/15. This is positive however further improvement is possible and required to ensure that we provide adoption for all children who could benefit from it.
- 7.4 Timeliness in adoption has also improved. At the time of the inspection it was taking on average 740 days to move a child from entry to care to being placed for adoption (the A1 Adoption Scorecard Measure). On the same measure the 3 year average up to the end of 2014/15 had reduced to 599 days. For children adopted so far in 2015/16 the average number of days it took to move them from entry to care to placement for adoption was 525 days, an improvement of 74 days in 2015/16.

- 7.5 On the A2 Adoption Scorecard Measure, the number of days to move a child from the date a Placement Order is granted by the Court to the day the Agency Decision Maker for Adoption in the Local Authority makes the decision on a matched family for the child, performance has improved from 261 days in the 3 year average up to end of 2014/15 to 220 days for children adopted so far in 2015/16. This is an improved performance of 41 days.
- 7.6. Improved tracking of children with an adoption plan has been introduced during the later months of 2015. Currently the Head of Service for Fostering and Adoption is chairing weekly tracker meetings to ensure robust monitoring of plans for adoption and to ensure unnecessary delay is avoided.
- 7.7 Performance on adopter recruitment so far in 2015/16 has been disappointing. At the time of writing the service has recruited a total of 20 adopters. The recruitment strategy has been renewed and a new campaign will be launched in January 2016. In particular we will continue to target recruitment for adopters for children from black and ethnic minority backgrounds.
- 7.8 We have been working in partnership in finding adoptive families for children with After Adoption, a voluntary adoption agency, and we have had some success in this initiative in finding families for traditionally very difficult to place children. We no longer undertake 'sequential' family finding activity as this was causing delay and instead all avenues to find an adoptive family are explored simultaneously, locally, regionally and nationally.
- 7.9 The service has been striving to promote and to create 'foster to adopt' placements, where children who are very likely to be adopted are placed with approved adopters who are also approved as foster carers for that specific child. Being approved as a foster carer for the child enables the child to be placed with the approved adopter before the plan for adoption has been agreed in Court, and therefore the child can be placed with its potential forever family much earlier in its life, and sometimes from birth. Once the adoption plan has been agreed in Court the child's placement can be changed from a fostering placement to an adoptive placement, but of course the child remains with the same family and experiences no placement move. We have so far in 2015/16 made five foster to adopt placements and have a further four planned. This compares favourably with just one foster to adopt placement in 2014/15.
- 7.10 In July 2015 the Government announced that local authority adoption services would be forced to merge with other local authority adoption services and/or voluntary adoption agencies to form larger regional adoption agencies before 2020 if they had not already done so. Local authorities developing regional agencies early would be able to bid for development funds to support the development work.
- 7.11 Manchester is working with four other local authorities and two voluntary adoption agencies to form a new larger regional agency. The four other local authorities are Stockport, Trafford, Salford, and Cheshire East. The two voluntary agencies are Adoption Matters and Caritas Care. As a group we have received development funds of £150,000 from the Department for Education (DfE) to

develop the agency. A project team has been formed to undertake the development work and a transition plan is being developed for submission to the DfE which will set out how we will move to become one regional agency between April 2016 and September 2016.

7.12 As part of a larger regional agency Manchester will have access to a larger pool of approved adoptive parents in which to match children who need adoption placements. The larger regional agency will benefit also from a pooling of skills and experience, the development of consistency in practice and policy across the region, and increased buying power, for example in relation to purchasing advertising space or commissioning support services.

8.0 Residential Services

8.1 The Local Authority in Manchester directly operates 4 in-house children's homes for looked after children. In addition we commission two different independent sector providers to operate one children's home each to accommodate our looked after children. In total the 6 homes provide 35 beds for looked after children. This provision has reduced significantly since 2012 (in line with the Authority's strategy) from 16 children's homes and 102 beds.

8.2 All of the four directly run in-house children's homes are currently rated by Ofsted as 'requires improvement'. This compares to the position in July 2014 when we had five directly run in-house children's homes, three of which were rated as 'good' or 'outstanding' and two were rated as 'adequate' which was the previous category equivalent to requires improvement. In terms of Ofsted inspection ratings then our in-house children's home provision has reduced in quality since July 2014.

8.3 Of the two commissioned children's homes, one is rated by Ofsted as 'good' and one is rated as 'requires improvement', indicating a higher quality service across the commissioned homes compared to the in-house provision.

8.4 In addition to the 35 residential beds provided across the four in-house and two commissioned homes, the Local Authority also spot purchases residential placements from the independent sector. As indicated above the number of these placements in 2015/16 so far has reduced from 71 to 55.

8.5 A review of residential services for looked after children is ongoing and its findings and conclusions will inform our strategy for delivering residential care into the future. Our strategy will also be informed by our overall strategy to provide family based care for as many looked after children as possible, and for residential provision to be used only where it is clear that at a particular time a young person cannot manage family based care.

9.0 Education for Looked After Children

9.1 The 2014 Ofsted inspection recognised that over the previous three years there has been a rise in the standards reached by looked after children in primary schools but that the outcomes for looked after children in high schools had

fluctuated much more. The data shows that a significant proportion of our secondary aged looked after children will not achieve age related expectations by the end of Year 11 because of their level of special educational need or disability or because of the stage at which they have entered care from a background of very poor attendance and lost learning which has resulted in them disengaging in education.

9.2 An ePEP (electronic Personal Education Plan) has been introduced since the Ofsted inspection to assist schools and social workers to complete a PEP and to make it easier for the Virtual School for Looked after Children to quality assure them. Since the introduction of the ePEP system the Virtual School is in a much better position to begin to systematically track the termly progress of all looked after children and thus to ensure that all young people are being supported to attend and to learn and to offer support and challenge where this is not the case. Two new teachers were recruited to the Virtual School in December 2015 to increase the capacity for quality assuring Personal Education Plans.

9.3 The Virtual School is working to ensure through the PEP process and through its advice, guidance and training, that all children and young people are being supported to make at least expected progress at all stages of their learning and to achieve best possible end of Key Stage outcomes and where ever possible to achieve or exceed age related expectations.

9.4 In January 2016 Manchester had 77 looked after children in early year's provision, 203 aged between 16 and their 18th birthday and 852 in Reception to Year 11. Of the school aged children 419 attend 126 Manchester schools and 433 attended 220 schools outside Manchester located across 39 different local authorities. The majority of these young people attend schools within a 20 mile radius of Manchester but there are a significant number of young people who live and attend school much further away.

9.5 There will be a separate and full report detailing educational attendance, progress and attainment for looked after children presented to Executive Members in February 2016.

10.0 Health of Looked After Children

10.1 Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires are carried out annually in relation to looked after children to assess their emotional wellbeing. There has to this point not been sufficient use of and analysis made of the questionnaires. We are planning in the coming months to introduce a new system for use of the questionnaires which involves undertaking it on children one month after their entry to care and then one year later and yearly thereafter. We especially want to measure changes in the scores for individual children from when they come in to care to a year later in order to measure the hopefully positive impact of care on the child's emotional wellbeing, and to take corrective action where improvement in emotional wellbeing is not evident.

11.0 Children Missing from Care

- 11.1 The July 2014 inspection report required the Local Authority to ensure that return interviews for children who go missing from care are conducted by an independent person in accordance with statutory guidance’.
- 11.2 Manchester City Council currently commissions the Children's Society to deliver a Missing from Home(and Care) Service - the value of this annual contract is £174k. The arrangement was subsequently revised in November 2014 to include the completion of Return Interviews.
- 11.3 On average per month there are between 300-400 reported incidents of a child going missing from home or care. This includes our young people who are placed in out of authority placements. A significant proportion of these young people have repeat episodes of going missing and children in care are three times more likely to go missing.
- 11.4 Every young person who is reported missing and then returns will receive a Safe and Well check from a Police Officer and this should be followed up with an Independent Return Interview (IRI) within 72 hours so that the young person has the opportunity to talk about their experiences and the reasons for them going missing can be established and any safeguarding concerns addressed.
- 11.5 The current position in Manchester is that there is a potential requirement for approximately 200/250 return interviews to be offered per month coming through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and there is also a potential for 150 return interviews required for Manchester looked after children and young people living outside the city boundary. The Children’s Society only had capacity to undertake on average 60/70 per month.
- 11.6 To address this deficit from January 11th three internal staff will be redeployed to work within the MASH as additional Missing from Home and Care Workers to complete Independent Return Interviews. The workers are highly skilled in working with children. Two of them will have a focus on completing the out of authority interviews. The Children's Society has now shifted their resources from their Direct Work Contract and will have 3.5 workers completing IRIs. A worker had already been deployed from the MASH to assist with IRIs. In total there will be 7.5 workers completing IRIs which is a significant increase in capacity.
- 11.7 Each worker has been set a target of completing 15 interviews a week. This will equate to over 400 a month. Approximately we have 400 reported missing from home or care incidents a month internally and out of authority. With this extra resource we will meet our requirement. There will always be some young people who will refuse an interview despite the perseverance of workers. We will be recording where a return interview has been offered but not accepted.
- 11.8 A worker has also been deployed to assist the Missing from Home Coordinator in the quality assurance of return interviews. Every return interview will be subject to an audit process. This is to gain an understanding of themes occurring and will enable young people to be linked to one another particularly around CSE issues. Key professionals will be alerted to any significant issues. This worker will also have a key focus on out of authority placements. Themes

and trends from the IRIs will be evidenced in the Missing from Home and Care monthly report. The capacity of this worker will be kept under review.

- 11.9 Daily and monthly Mi-care reports are now being received by the MASH on the number of looked after children who are reported missing including those placed out of authority. This information is cross referenced with the missing notifications sent to the MASH from Greater Manchester Police which is received on a daily basis. Therefore there is an accurate picture of the number of young people reported missing. These reports are also shared with social workers.
- 11.10 Where a looked after child is placed at distance from Manchester a spot purchasing arrangement will be considered if it is not feasible for a Missing from Home Worker to visit the placement for a return interview.
- 11.11 Overall performance will be monitored through the Missing from Home (and Care) Action Plan in weekly performance meetings. A review will take place at the end of March 2016 to assess the quality, impact and outcomes of the Missing from Home Service

12.0 The Independent Reviewing Service

- 12.1 The inspection in July 2014 noted that in relation to care plans for looked after children, 'there is insufficient challenge from the independent reviewing officers to address drift in plans and lack of reports to reviews.' The inspection report also noted that the independent reviewing officer escalation process was not effective.
- 12.2 Action has been taken to improve the IRO service. Practice standards have been introduced in relation to challenge and the dispute resolution and escalation process. The dispute resolution process has now been built into the Mi-Care electronic recording system and we have seen a steady increase in dispute resolution escalations, indicating the IRO's are increasingly challenging poor practice and delay and drift.
- 12.3 There is now an increased emphasis on the IRO hearing the child's voice and messages, themes and patterns that emerge from what children and young people communicate to IROs will be fed back to service managers and included in the IRO annual report.

13. Summary

13.1 In summary, the following are key improvements that have been made:

- Social worker caseloads have reduced in size
- The looked after children population has reduced by 158 children since July 2014
- Our use of independent sector residential and independent sector fostering placements has reduced
- Recruitment of in-house foster carers is slowly beginning to improve

- The number and percentage of children adopted is increasing
- Children are achieving adoption more quickly
- The virtual school has put improved quality assurance and tracking processes in place
- The independent reviewing officer service is beginning to challenge poor practice and delay.
- Additional capacity and improved processes have been established to ensure that all children who go missing from care have a return interview.

13.2 The improvements detailed above are the start of our improvement journey. Further improvement is needed in all of those areas. In addition significant improvement is still required in the following areas:

- The looked after children population is still too high. Too many children who are in care could be cared for outside of care
- Quality of care planning is still very variable
- Too high a proportion of our social workers are newly qualified
- The in-house fostering service requires rapid expansion to provide local high quality cost effective foster placements and to reduce what is still a big over reliance on independent fostering providers. In addition the quality of support and supervision and wraparound care for foster carers requires significant improvement, although action is now in place to address this.

Manchester City Council Report for Information

Report to: Ofsted Subgroup – 2 February 2016

Subject: Progress Update re Early Help

Report of: Strategic Lead for Early Help
Superintendent Sarah Jackson, GMP

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide a progress update on the implementation of the revised Early Help delivery model and the Early Help Assessment (EHA). Concerns have been raised over when the model will impact on demand, as front door activity in relation to contacts and referrals for social care intervention remains high, and the number of early help assessments being registered is low.
- 1.2 This is within the context of considerable investment in Early Help Services from MCC and a new Levels of Need and Response Framework which was approved by MSCB in July 2015. Key issues will be highlighted along with recommended actions to improve understanding of the current system and to improve performance.

2.0 Investment in Early Help

- 2.1 There is considerable investment in early help by MCC, partner contributions have not been quantified, given the priority attached to Early Help in the Children's Improvement plan and in meeting our commitments to Government on the second phase of the Troubled Families Programme. Current plans are to invest approximately £5.8m each year from 2015/6 to 2018/19 in Early Help and Troubled Families (this includes £861,000 for Families First an edge of care intervention).
- 2.2 The investment is funding posts such as Early Help Coordinators, Early Help Advisors, additional social workers in the MASH, and early help key workers to deliver the targeted support to families. The investment is directly linked to the strategic approach to reduce demand on statutory services and achieve delivery of savings associated with the reductions in looked after children.
- 2.3 This investment is funding a new delivery model delivered by the 3 Early Help Hubs and is providing advice, guidance and coordination of early help activity covering levels 1 – 4 of the new Response and Needs Framework . The model includes both the direct delivery of support and interventions to children and families and new triage and guidance functions. Capacity building with partners to support early help activity at the lower levels of need is a key feature of the model.

3.0 Early Help Delivery

- 3.1 The early help hubs went live on the 28th September 2015 and it is early days in terms of delivery of this model to evidence impact across the whole system. The added value of the hubs in terms of advice, guidance and as a gateway to targeted interventions is being recognised by partners, and demand within the hubs is increasing.
- 3.2 The volume of activity in the early help hubs relating to enquiries, advice and requests for support within the hubs has steadily increased. In the first quarter telephone calls doubled to 775 in December. Overall the triage and advice functions dealt with 1,129 early help enquiries in December. Hits to the on line 'Help and Support' Manchester directory increased from 215 in September to 2,152 in October, and then levelled to 1,857 in November 215 and 998 in December.
- 3.3 Focused improvement work to strengthen the front door and the MASH arrangements has been undertaken. This work has included training and development for contact officers on thresholds, early help, and the introduction of a screening team within the MASH to provide advice, consultation and screening. This has resulted in an increase in the number of contacts sent directly from the front door for early help, with 450 sent in November 2015 , a 50% increase compared to June15 .
- 3.4 However, referral activity for statutory social work assessment remains high ; although the trend is reduced from 12 months ago contacts and referrals to CSC remain stubbornly high, an average of 3,000 contacts per month. In November 2015 this was then translated into 1,248 referrals, a small increase from the previous month.
- 3.5 The key referrers are GMP, Education and Health and referral data is being shared so partners can interrogate their own performance. It is too early to see how decision making is changing at the front door and in the MASH as a result of the early help offer. Activity in the early help hubs in the first months indicates advice giving, signposting and telephone queries was a significant part of the triage activity and was potentially diverting activity away from the front door.
- 3.6 Step up and step down arrangements from the MASH and early help hubs are in place and sampling of cases in December and by Ofsted during the Improvement Visit in January 2016 confirmed that threshold levels are being appropriately applied.
- 3.7 There is further work to do to ensure that all partners understand the changes introduced by the new Levels of Need and Response Framework. There have been briefings to GPs, schools, VCS, homeless staff, and midwifery covering the early help assessment and needs and response framework. It is taking time for the new processes and system to translate into change. These are whole system changes that involve fundamentally different ways of working for many agencies and this will take time to embed as many agencies are still defining their revised protocols as a result of the revised needs and response framework.

- 3.8 To support the change work, targeted work has been undertaken with GMP, a key referrer, to review how thresholds are being applied and to look at how screening within GMP can be improved. This will enable frontline officers to obtain advice and guidance within their own organisation on thresholds and levels of need prior to a request for intervention for social care.
- 3.9 A joint MSCB and Early Help multiagency event was held on 20th January 2016 and focused on early help, application of thresholds and need and the improvement journey. Over 200 people attended and feedback is being collated to inform the improvement journey. The Levels of Need and Response Framework will be reviewed in March by MSCB; it is envisaged there will be minor amendments only based on the feedback received.

4.0 Key workers

- 4.1 The investment in early help includes the provision of key workers and delivery of the Troubled Families Programme. We have aligned the Troubled Families 2 Programme with the offer of early help and located the early help key workers within the early help hubs. Our target is to engage with 1,363 'troubled families' in 15/16 and we are using the TF2 investment to support and develop partners to deliver key workers. This includes supporting family support models in schools and developing new services with Registered Providers and PCSOs. We currently have 4 school models involving 18 schools and a number of Registered Providers who collectively are supporting 140 families. We are in the process of evaluating this partner key worker role and anticipate the evaluation will be completed by March.
- 4.2 In relation to our in house provision the investment funding provides 97 key workers providing family interventions and 27 key workers providing a bespoke step down service for social workers (family in need services). This investment delivers the Troubled Families Programme and includes both the direct delivery of key workers for families with complex needs and Team Leader support to partners such as schools and registered providers who are providing a key worker role.
- 4.3 Currently Early Help key workers are providing support to 685 families; this includes 570 Adults and 1,112 children. Of note is the number of cases where a FIP key worker also has an allocated children's social worker. This currently accounts for 69% of the FIP case load and has increased by 10% since September. This will be reviewed as part of the 2016/17 budget proposals to reduce duplication and to realign FIP key workers to early help activity.

5.0 Early Help Assessments (EHA)

- 5.1 The number of early help assessments is low comparative to the size and needs of Manchester. In October 2015 a new Early Help Assessment (EHA) was implemented and is the replacement for the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). Partners and MCC are adjusting to this new strength based approach and are being supported by Early Help Advisors (EHAs) and Early Help Coordinators (EHC) with the new processes.

- 5.2 The current picture of EHAs is improving with 122 registered in December an improvement from 82 in the previous month but there is further work to do. The number of EHAs registered with MCC falls well below the target of 300 agreed by the Children’s Board. There has been considerable investment by MCC both in terms of leadership, and in the workforce to support a new delivery model to provide targeted and coordinated support for early help. This is now in place; what is also needed is for all partners to embed the approach within their own organisations and to link this to the new needs and response framework.
- 5.3 There are some early indications of improved outcomes as a result of the revised EH approach such as:
- Positive feedback about the strengths based approach from those agencies that have transitioned to the EHA.
 - Improved Information sharing and triage, resulting in the application of more appropriate interventions with new partners such as GMP, Registered Providers, VCS organisations undertaking early help assessments.
- 5.4 Manchester has been hindered in its approach by inappropriate usage of the MCAF as it was predominantly used as a referral tool and supported a culture of referring to CSC without evidence of previous early help activity. It is going to take some time to change this culture and behaviour. Other LAs have previously insisted no referral to social care without an accompanying MCAF. This approach has merits in terms of increasing numbers but will not improve quality or achieve the behaviour change needed.
- 5.5 The design of the Needs and Response Framework and Early Help assessment was a collaborative piece of work between individuals across statutory and non statutory agencies. Each contributed to the design and content, and in fact, the agency specific indicators recorded within each aspect of life were authored by their own professionals. The Early Help Launch in July 2015 was supported and led by strategic leads from Health, GMP, MCC, Education and the VCS. The Needs and Response Framework and Early Help Assessment were later presented to the MSCB and Children’s Board and received full endorsement from partners.
- 5.6 However, the sign off at a strategic level did not translate to operational delivery across all agencies, which further supports the need for strategic leads to drive traction within their own organisation. Ensuring team leaders in all organisations support and understand the new approach, the early help delivery model and the needs and response framework is crucial if we are to achieve the required changes. The MSCB/Early Help Event held on the 20th January focused on team leaders and operational managers to ensure their buy in and commitment to the strategic approach and improvements required. Feedback from this event is being collated and will inform improvements.
- 5.7 There are strong governance arrangements in place to monitor Early Help. An Early Help Operational Board is in place and agreed at the January meeting that targets should be set for each agency in relation to the EHAs. Performance

against targets will be reported to the Children’s Board, chaired by the Lead Member for Children’s Services. An action plan to focus and drive the work of the Operational Board is being revised.

- 5.8 We have identified 3 school champions to provide sector led leadership. Each locality lead has identified a cluster of schools who will be meeting in early February to focus on early help. The continued development of the clusters will be lead by the schools with the aim to strengthen the Early Help offer from schools and to increase the number of registered EHA’s. This will be achieved through the sharing of best practice, intelligence, resources, and peer support and challenge. An audit of Early Help Activity in schools is currently being undertaken by the three locality leads to support this work and will report back in March.
- 5.9 Early Help will be an essential part of the School Improvement Quality Assurance Framework and will be assessed during the annual quality visit. This will provide challenge and support on the contribution and evidence of early help activity including early help assessments from schools. An event for Head teachers will take place on the 24th February and will focus on the role of schools and early help and picking up the pace of the improvement journey. Leadership and support for early help is provided via a Schools and Early Help Reference Group. Targeted work to identify those schools who do not undertake any early help assessments is underway, support along with challenge, will be provided.
- 5.10 To ensure early years is at the heart of the delivery of early help a number of proposals to strengthen links operationally and strategically between early years and the early help hubs have been proposed. The intention is to ensure that the contribution and delivery of early years is firmly embedded within the offer of early help and that a targeted approach to particular cohorts is achieved. This will include a shared performance dashboard for early help and early years and evidence of lower level early help activity.
- 5.11 Partnership work with a range of health colleagues including health visiting, schools nurses, midwifery and CAMHS is underway. This involves both agreeing the contribution and delivery from health services to the early help hub model and alignment of assessment processes. Superintendent Sarah Jackson is leading some partnership work to agree how assessments in health can be included as part of early help activity and to embed the strength based conversation approach across the sector. Reducing duplication for families and practitioners will be essential but getting this right will enable us to significantly increase the number of early help assessments.
- 5.12 Following feedback some practical changes to the EHA will be completed in February and this will enable the EHA to be used both to capture strength based conversations as evidence of early help and to support Team Around the Family Meeting for families who require more coordinated and targeted support.
- 5.13 To drive up the pace of improvement we will establish an EHA Task and Finish Group in February led by Sarah Jackson. This will address, numbers, quality and audit arrangements. The EHA Champions Network will be reinvigorated in February to support this work. Audit remains a critical area to help drive our

improvement activity and audits on thresholds across the Child's journey will be proposed. MASH will also audit cases stepped down into early help to provide feedback and reassurance on thresholds.

5.14 A review of the Early Help Delivery Model including commissioning arrangements, effectiveness and impact of the model and new strategic approach is underway. This review is being led by the MCC Reform and Innovation Team and will include some external sampling of cases and support plans. The review is being led by the Director of Adult Services and will report back to the Improvement Board in March.

6.0 Next Steps:

- Dip sample cases at the front door, MASH and Early Help Hubs to test out application of the levels of need and thresholds
- Review the Needs and Response Framework by March with a view to promote a strengths based Early Help Conversation at all levels on the continuum
- Work with Early Years to transition from the current CAF case planning documentation to the EHA and strengthen the alignment of early years and early help.
- Monitor use of targets by each partner organisation via the Children Board
- Amend the EHA recording form so that each section is incrementally shared with the EH Hubs at the earliest opportunity (e.g. Conversation on a page, Plan on a page etc)
- Implement recommendations arising from the review of early help delivery model.

7.0 Summary

7.1 Scrutiny members are requested to note the progress and areas for improvement in relation to early help.

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Ofsted Subgroup –2 February 2016

Subject: Information on numbers of social workers, including new appointments and leavers

Report of: Interim Director of Children’s and Families

Summary

To provide an update on the social care workforce outlining the numbers of new appointments and leavers.

Recommendations

None, report is for information only.

Contact Officers:

Name: Gladys Rhodes-White
Position: Interim Director of Children’s and Families Services
Telephone: 0161 234 3804
E-mail: g.rhodeswhite@manchester.gov.uk

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The following information has been provided to provide a brief outline of the Social Care workforce.

2.0 Numbers of social workers, including new appointments and leavers:

2.1 The current, total number of Social Workers, as of January 2016 is:

Position	Headcount	FTE
Social Workers	270	260.31
Team Managers	24	24
Total	294	284.61

2.2 The current number of vacancies, as of January 2016, is outlined below:

Position	Headcount	FTE
Social Workers	6	5.5
Team Managers	2	2
Total	8	7.5

2.3 The total number of new starters from April to December 2015 was 79. This is comprised of 78 Social Workers and 1 Team Manager.

2.4 The total number of leavers from April to December 2015 was 29. This is comprised of 27 Social Workers and 2 Team Managers.

3.0 Conclusion

3.1 This information has been provided for information relating to the current social care workforce as of January 2016.

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Ofsted Subgroup –2 February 2016

Subject: Update on the briefing from the Department for Education
Improvement Notices

Report of: Interim Director of Children’s and Families Services

Summary

To provide an overview of the announcement relating to changes for the Department
for Education Improvement Notices

Contact Officers:

Name: Gladys Rhodes White
Position: Interim Director of Children’s Services
Telephone: 0161 234 3804
E-mail: g.rhodeswhite@manchester.gov.uk

1.0 Introduction:

- 1.1 The synopsis below provides an overview of the Prime Ministers announcement: 'We will not stand by – failing children's services will be taken over' (14th December 2015) and the potential implications of this for Manchester City Council.

2.0 Synopsis of the Prime Minister's announcement:

- 2.1 The Prime Minister's announcement states that any local authority judged inadequate by Ofsted must show significant improvement within 6 months, or be taken over, by high-performing local authorities, experts in child protection and charities brought in to turn the Local Authority's children's services around. These interventions range from external agencies acting as sponsors, the appointment of a commissioner (new service leader) to forming 'trusts' to take over authorities deemed to be failing.
- 2.2 This process of intervention in the form of the appointment of a commissioner will occur in those local authorities who fail to show signs of improvement within 6 months of an 'inadequate' judgement – it will also occur in authorities that have received more than two 'inadequate' ratings in the previous years and for authorities within which an 'inadequate' rating identified wholesale inadequate services and evidence of corporate failure by senior leaders and managers.
- 2.3 This announcement applies to new inspection findings and will not be applied retrospectively to Manchester's previous judgement of 'inadequate' for Children's Services in September 2014. However, there is a potential impact upon the Ofsted re-inspection of Manchester's Children's Services, due to take place in the summer of 2016. This could lead to following potential outcomes depending on the judgement given.
- 2.4 If the re-inspection delivers a 'requires improvement' judgement on a previously inadequate council, the DfE will continue to provide supervision and support for 12 months to ensure that improvements remain on track, at which point they expect to be able to reduce the level of scrutiny.
- 2.5 If the re-inspection delivers an 'inadequate' finding for Manchester, a commissioner will be appointed to assess what action is required and the strength of the leadership to make the necessary rapid improvements. The commissioner would oversee the running of Children's Services and have the power to: direct the authority to make urgent improvements; recommend the abolishment of the existing improvement board arrangements; oversee the takeover of children's services by a high-performing local authority and ultimately whether to recommend removing powers from the Council to introduce a Trust arrangement.
- 2.6 The DfE Improvement Advisor has confirmed that these arrangements would apply to Manchester, and other authorities that have failed to make sufficient progress over two years whilst subject to intervention. This approach will be

without expectation in the aim to create a more robust and consistent approach to failing authorities.

- 2.7 This announcement makes clear that there will be no flexibility for those authorities failing to demonstrate improvements in line with Ofsted's inspection judgements. A further 'inadequate' judgement for Manchester will have significant consequences on the reputational integrity of the Council and it is clear that the appointment of a commissioner will be made to consider next steps on behalf of the Minister.

3.0 Further measures in the announcement:

- 3.1 Manchester welcomes the announcement of over £100m to attract more high-calibre graduates into social work, something we are working towards with our involvement in the successful Frontline programme since 2014.
- 3.2 The announcement detailed the urgent review of Local Safeguarding Children Boards. The Manchester Safeguarding Children Board is currently undergoing a review of its effectiveness and we are working with the Chair of the board David Ashcroft to ensure its rapid development.
- 3.3 The announcement also highlighted work with the country's 6 best performing local authorities; North Yorkshire, Hampshire, the Tri-Borough of Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea, Hammersmith & Fulham, Durham, Richmond & Kingston and Leeds, to give academy style freedoms to high-performing authorities. Manchester is currently working with Leeds who will assist our improvement journey by offering hands on support. It has been acknowledged that this work remains unaffected by the announcement and we are pleased to be working closely with Leeds to continue our improvement journey.