

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Ofsted Subgroup – 2 October 2018

Subject: Post Ofsted Inspection Action Plan - Progress Report

Report of: Deputy Director of Children’s Services

Summary

This report outlines activity undertaken by the service and where relevant its partners to respond to the recommendations from Ofsted following their inspection of Manchester’s children services in 2017.

Recommendations

The Subgroup is asked to note and comment on the improvement work that has been undertaken in response to the Ofsted inspection of Manchester’s children services in November 2017.

Wards Affected:

All

Alignment to the Our Manchester Strategy Outcomes (if applicable)

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Effective Children’s Social Care Services are critical to ensuring the most vulnerable citizens are able to connect and support the drive towards a thriving and sustainable City.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city’s economic success	Ensuring the most vulnerable in our society are given the opportunity to access and achieve in the City is supported by the delivery of a strong and cohesive social care system.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Improving social care services helps build the resilience children and families need to achieve their potential and be integrated into their communities.

A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Improving outcomes for the children's and families across the City, helps build and develop whole communities and increases the livability of the City.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Successful services support successful families who are able to deliver continuing growth in the City.

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

- Ofsted Inspection report into Manchester Children's Services 2017

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Following the re-inspection of Children's Services by Ofsted in 2017 the City Council was required to submit a post inspection action plan to the inspectorate responding to the 12 recommendations outlined therein. The Council met the prerequisite deadline and has been working to deliver the plan along with partners since January of this year.
- 1.2 As part of the new Ofsted ILACS Framework (Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services) progress against the post inspection action plan, an annual 'conversation' between the local authority and Ofsted, our self-assessment and an analysis of our data will inform the timing and focussed areas during a 'focussed visit' and the next full inspection of Manchester's Children's Services.
- 1.3 It is worth noting the post inspection action plan is not solely designed to fulfil a required response to the inspection but is an articulation of key activity mostly identified by the service to ensure continual improvement and development, through the self-assessment; which was noted in the inspection as precise and robust. Therefore a number of areas and actions iterated in the plan are improvements which were already in train or planned by the service prior to inspection. The plan is therefore flexible and dynamic; responding to changing circumstance and developments across the council, service and partnership.

2.0 Action Plan Structure

- 2.1 The action plan is divided according to the individual recommendations from the inspection and includes;
- *The Recommendation* - as specified in the Inspection Report, these are the high level requirements to be achieved
 - *The Strategic Lead with responsibility for delivery against the Recommendation* - where relevant this is on a partnership basis
 - *Performance Management Framework* - which describes the internal reporting placement for monitoring the associated outcomes and metrics aligned to the delivery of the recommendation
 - *Measure* - the specific metrics and data which will be monitored as an indicator of performance against the recommendation, including targets where relevant
 - *Action(s)* - which details the lower level individual pieces of activity defined by the service as necessary to take place to achieve the requirements of the recommendation
 - *Timescale* - being the individual timescales for each of the individual actions to be delivered
 - *Progress Note* - to be updated as necessary by the relevant Lead Officers which allows for effective tracking and monitoring of delivery and scrutiny and challenge of performance against the plan
 - *Partnership Focus* - critical to the delivery of much of the plan and of the wider essential improvements in the service and child protection system,

this field describes any necessary improvement or engagement between the Local Authority Children's Services and partners in order to achieve the required outcome

- *Link Plans* - confirms the associated service Strategy or Policy under which the recommendation is linked to ensure improvements continue
- *Governance* - the responsible body for providing governance and assurance under the existing structures
- *Impact* - critically each of the recommendations includes a clear and direct statement of impact which describes what success would look like in terms of impact on outcomes, workforce and service users overall

3.0 Delivery

3.1 The action plan is underpinned by a principled approach to implementation, monitoring and performance assurance that reflects the following SMART structure:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant
- Timed

3.2 Whilst the ownership of the plan will be held by Children's Services it will be delivered via distributed leadership with specific tasks defined and owned by individuals and organisations which are assigned across the service and partnership.

4.0 Recommendations - Progress, Risk and Next Steps

4.1 Recommendation 1 - *Monitor and improve the frequency and quality of management oversight and supervision in all teams. Ensure that supervision is regular, reflective and challenging, and that managers record the rationale for their decisions.*

4.1.1 Systems and processes for supervision recording and monitoring were reviewed. The service has recently commenced a new ICT based tool to support managers to more promptly and accurately record supervision activity whilst allowing middle and senior managers to have better more timely oversight of compliance and performance.

4.1.2 The Service Lead for Safeguarding, through the Quality and Practice Improvement Group and Workforce Strategy Group is refreshing the supervision model and guidance to support more effective scrutiny of quality across children's services. A focussed audit of management and supervision has recently been completed a report and subsequent action plan is yet to be collated. The timescale for the report and action plan to be published is September.

- 4.1.3 In response to supporting our first line managers, a quarter of whom have less than one years' experience in this role the service has commissioned a bespoke Institute of Learning and Management 5 day course. Since the start of the year one sixteen week course has completed with 14 managers successfully completing the course. The course is one which is evaluated well and highly valued by staff. The course will be re -run in due course. The implementation of "About You" has provided further focus on individual aspiration aimed at ensuring the correct learning and development opportunities are delivered to enhance all staff including our first line management staff group. The service is in the process of designing an aspiring management course that will be delivered in the autumn; this course is designed to develop and nurture managers and leaders of the future and is designed to complement both Raising the Bar - a Council wide developmental course and provide further support to staff who are preparing to undertake the National Assessment and Accreditation System.
- 4.1.4 The service has recently completed a recruitment campaign to bring more experienced high quality social work staff into the service. The recruitment campaign aimed at attracting those returning to work, work part time or wished to return to work for time limited periods. We have had some successes in this recruitment campaign despite the challenging recruitment environment.
- 4.1.5 The Department for Education (DFE) has contracted the development of a national Practice Supervisor Development Programme for colleagues newly promoted to a Practice Supervisor role. Manchester are a Local Delivery Partner and, in collaboration with the wider partnership including Research in Practice and the Tavistock NHS Foundation Trust, will develop and deliver high quality continuous professional development (CPD) to newly promoted practice supervisors in the Greater Manchester consortium.
- 4.1.6 Finally the service has developed an assurance and audit tool that will assist in developing our understanding of the quality of professional supervision for social workers working in our children's social work teams. This will be used to improve the quality of professional supervision.

4.2 Recommendation 2 - *Ensure that the work allocated to newly qualified social workers is commensurate with their level of experience and that their caseloads are kept within national guidelines.*

- 4.2.1 Policy and caseload guidance has been revised and circulated which clearly states the caseload expectations for newly qualified social workers who are in their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment.(ASYE) To support this we have strengthened monitoring and oversight of caseloads held by this group of staff. We are also in the process of speaking to all ASYEs to understand their support needs and how this influences the form and type of support provided to this group of staff; these comments will feed into our annual review of the support to this group of staff. We have built into our audit programme an expectation when a case held by a newly qualified social worker is audited this triggers a review of their caseload and supervision arrangements.

4.2.2 Continuing to reduce complex demand through the creation of more effective partnerships in localities and across the whole system is critical to the ultimate outcome of reduced caseloads. Work is progressing to deliver a more localised approach to the delivery of children's services along with partners, with significant, in principle, discussions on an agreed way forward held with Greater Manchester Police, the Local Care Organisation, Schools and the Clinical Commissioning Group. This work will be supported by colleagues in Performance Research and intelligence and reform and innovation, this is an ongoing piece of work.

4.2.3 In addition to our recruitment activity we have also focused on retention to ensure we maintain the level of experience we have developed. To assist in this the service has developed a social work career pathway that is aligned to the National Assessment and Accreditation System roles of Child and Family Practitioner, Practice Supervisor and Practice Leader and linked to our learning and development offer. This has overall been received well by social workers and interest and engagement in this has been good; we believe this will influence our ability to both recruit and retain skilled and experienced social workers. Our engagement in this work has resulted in National recognition from the Department of Education.

4.3 Recommendation 3 - *Ensure that children in need cases are regularly reviewed and that progress is measured and recorded in supervision by manager and analysed in updated assessments.*

4.3.1 The Service has revised Child in Need Policy and Practice Guidance which has revised the routine review timescales for these cases. This has been accompanied by the implementation of new management guidance on effective supervision and review of child in need cases. Both have been distributed across the service and the key changes and requirements delivered directly to staff through their line management and team structures.

4.3.2 Monthly children in need Panels chaired by Service Managers with Early Help representative present ensure wider community supports are utilised. The purpose of panel is to review all children in need who have been receiving a service for over 9 months and to ensure appropriate SMART planning is in place leading to clear exit plan. Panel also reviews of all cases open to Duty and Assessment that have been open for 3 months following the 45 day assessment and cases that are planned to transfer to Locality. This is a management quality assurance process to ensure the right plan for the right child at the right time. Actions for the meeting are inputted into the child's electronic case file as management oversight.

4.3.3 Our monitoring and oversight arrangements for those children receiving services who are assessed as children in need of help and support identifies those children who do not have a written plan of support as well as identifying those children who have not been visited within timescales. This data is scrutinised weekly in teams and is used in supervision to ensure children are visited timeously and there is relentless focus on those issues that require to be addressed to improve the circumstances of children.

4.4 Recommendation 4 - *Improve the quality of assessments so that the lived experiences of children are fully understood and inform plans. Ensure that plans set out clear and measurable outcomes for children based on comprehensive assessment, and that their effectiveness is regularly reviewed.*

4.4.1 The Social Work Consultants (professional role in the service - not agency staff) have completed a SMART planning development session and supporting materials for Social Workers. The roll out of this programme will be implemented in September 2018; supported by a revision of guidance and available practice examples of 'good' assessments.

4.4.2 An overarching challenge that runs through much of the development activity for the service, is that we are able to intelligently track, target and evidence impact of our learning and development activity. The Strategic Lead for Quality Assurance and Workforce Learning and Development Strategy Group, supported by ICT and HR colleagues, is exploring new mechanisms for capturing learning and development ensuring mandatory training required for different roles is undertaken within timescales.

4.5 Recommendation 5 - *Review practice in triaging domestic abuse notifications and ensure that frontline police staff have clear guidelines on when children at risk from domestic abuse should come to the attention of the local authority.*

4.5.1 The responsibility for this recommendation is largely practice improvement within Greater Manchester Police (GMP) however there is a requirement for strong partnership working between GMP and the Strategic Lead for Early Help. Together the relevant individuals from the Council and the Police have delivered 3 multi-agency workshops which have undertaken a systems review of the process for notification, identifying strengths and weakness; within Police practice affecting performance in this area. The output of this work has partly resolved the issues of triaging with locality duty social work teams providing support to assist with the triage process. GMP has trained an additional 8 officers to assist in this area of work.

4.5.2 A more sustainable approach to this issue is part of the reform of the front door and MASH arrangements; GMP will be moving resources to support locality based arrangements with an enhancement to the early help hubs with potential testing of this approach early in 2019.

4.6 Recommendation 6 - *Improve the quality of assessments of privately fostered children and ensure that they are rigorously reviewed.*

4.6.1 Revised guidance has been issued to staff on what good assessment and a good review looks like for privately fostered children. The Service Manager with responsibility for this area had developed a series of briefings and tools for staff prior to the inspection which have been rolled out.

4.6.2 To ensure continued oversight and scrutiny of the improvements expected

from the revised guidance and staff development materials an Independent Reviewing Officer, from the Safeguarding Improvement Unit has been identified to conduct specific and routine audits and case sampling activity of private fostering cases. This will generate regularly reporting into the Quality Practice Improvement Group on any identified themes, in addition to direct engagement on specific actions and improvements in individual cases. The first of these audits has taken place and reported amongst other more detailed findings that practice in children's social work remains inconsistent. In response to this and the continued challenge to achieve consistency of high quality practice, the service has taken the decision to identify a group of staff who will act as 'specialists' in this work to drive further improvements and share learning/good practice. This will be supported by the audit tool for Private Fostering which has been developed by the Strategic Lead for Safeguarding.

4.7 Recommendation 7 - *Identify and then increase the number of children who receive support from an independent visitor or independent advocate at child protection case conferences, or at statutory reviews for children looked after.*

4.7.1 The promotion of the advocacy service for Looked After Children which was in place at the time of the inspection is fully embedded and performing well. Take up of the offer of advocacy by looked after children is tracked and promoted. The Inspection noted benefits in extending this offer to those children on Child Protection Plans.

4.7.2 Following the inspection a pilot programme was launched whereby advocacy was offered via parents to children subject to a Child Protection Plan on an 'Opt Out' basis. The pilot was launched on 1st February 2018 and ran through to the 1st April 2018. Reports from the pilot evidenced a positive impact of advocacy but take-up, though improved on previous years, was not accelerating as anticipated within the service. Subsequent to this the Children's Rights Service was recommissioned and the requirements for advocacy to be offered to all children made subject to children protection plans on an 'Opt Out' basis have been built into the new service contract.

4.7.3 The Service and the new Provider have jointly developed an action plan to increase participation of children and young people at case conferences including developmental sessions with staff on promotion and engagement with advocacy.

4.8 Recommendation 8 - *Ensure that plans for permanence progress without unnecessary delay.*

4.8.1 *Our Manchester, Our Children - Securing Permanence: Policy, Procedure and Practice* is a new Permanence Policy that has been developed in partnership with Coram Innovation as part of national research/practice. This guidance and policy will be implemented during August/September 2018. The Policy introduces a framework of procedure, practice and guidance that requires front line social work staff to utilise monthly Permanence Planning meetings in

partnership with Fostering colleagues and Adoption Counts to avoid all unnecessary delay in attaining permanence for children in our care. It is also central to the Children's Services Budget Savings/recovery plan.

4.8.2 The policy focuses on key aspects of Permanence including:

- Roles and Responsibilities;
- Key Principles in Permanence Planning;
- Understanding Options for Permanence;
- Assessment and Planning;
- Identifying the best option for every child; and
- Tracking Permanence.

4.8.3 The practice guidance is built around 5 key process points in the child's journey to Permanence:

- Preparation for Gateway Panel;
- Permanence Planning Meetings;
- 2nd LAC Review;
- Monthly Permanence Tracking Meeting; and
- Final Care Planning.

4.8.4 Monthly senior manager tracking meetings will be held in each Locality to monitor and scrutinise progression of Permanence Plans for every child from Pre-Proceedings onwards. Quarterly thematic reports will be submitted to the Directorate leadership team to evaluate impact and review framework accordingly. In addition to front line social work innovation, further work has been implemented with Coram Innovation in Fostering, including performance surgeries with permanent fostering family finding function, recruitment and assessment of foster carers and innovative practices such as Fostering Activity Days.

4.8.5 Coram Innovation will assist with implementation city-wide, including training of front line staff, facilitating and modelling good permanence planning meetings and initially co-chairing Monthly Tracking meetings until December. In addition, a highly regarded commissioned 3 day course from Research in Practice in relation to planning for permanence which was delivered to circa 30 members of front line staff in June and July 2018.

4.9 Recommendation 9 - *Ensure that high-quality work to help children to understand their life experiences is given priority for all children looked after.*

4.9.1 Revised guidance for the undertaking of 'life work' and engagement with young people has been completed. This includes a range of supporting exemplar resources. The combine resources will now be consulted upon with young people and other stakeholders for further development and completion at which point they will be delivered to frontline staff and aligned to the overall service learning and development programme. The oversight and assurance around delivery will be factored into the existing and refreshed Quality

Assurance Framework.

4.9.2 The service continues to use and develop its approach to its Social Work practice model Signs of Safety. This model provides a framework that supports direct work with children and their families in an attempt to develop professionals and children's understanding of their life experiences. This approach is supported by our practice standards which in turn is analysed through supervision and our auditing activity.

4.10 Recommendation 10 - *Improve the quality of pathway plans so that they reflect the individual needs of the young person, including their educational needs, and so that the required actions are measurable.*

4.10.1 Prior to the inspection the service had already taken a policy decision to increase the oversight of pathway plans in two ways. The first was to incorporate the commissioned services quality assurance framework to the mainstream service arrangements, aligning audit and case sampling processes and tools.

4.10.2 Secondly, new arrangements were put in place to extend the oversight of care planning, by the Independent Reviewing Officer service, into the first post-18 review of the young person's pathway plan. This will provide more consistency for the young person and grip on quality and smoother transition as the child's care plan moves into the young adults pathway plan. These arrangements are now firmly in place and effectiveness will be reviewed on an ongoing basis through the Quality Assurance Framework.

4.10.3 In addition, our Leaving Care Service provider, has delivered specific training to their staff in respect of review and completion of a Pathway Plan.

4.11 Recommendation 11 - *Ensure that there are effective arrangements in place to support care leavers with their health needs and to enable them to have an up-to-date summary of their health history when they leave care.*

4.11.1 Colleagues in Manchester Foundation Trust, Safeguarding and Looked After Children Nurse service have been meeting with the strategic lead for Care Leavers to resolve two aspects of this recommendation. Firstly that care leavers have a history of their health progress in this area about accessing recording and availability of the information has been made. The second part of the task is proving more challenging in that care leavers should be provided with up to date and relevant information about health services in their area, this work is ongoing and being tracked by the Corporate Parenting Panel. It is planned an audit/questionnaire with our children will be undertaken prior to the end of the year.

4.12 Recommendation 12 - *Expedite plans to improve swifter access to suitable accommodation for all care leavers.*

4.12.1 A Needs analysis and options paper has been completed for care leavers in

relation to the projection of accommodation requirements over the next 3 years. The Needs analysis will be presented at the Strategic Housing Board and the Homelessness Officers groups for consideration of the projected demand and further discussions on a multi-agency approach to meet this demand are to follow. However, we have provided 6 properties for care leavers from Registered Social Landlords, which includes two independent tenancy starter training flats for Our Children leavers. The other 4 places are used as a move on scheme for care leavers. Further proposals have been put forward and accepted for 6 self-contained flats for our children who require medium to high level support. 15 Care Leavers were offered Band 1 housing status. 22 of Our Children have been provided within their own accommodation since July 2017.

4.12.2 Currently Manchester Children's services are proposing a pathway to discuss accommodation for Our Children as part of the Homelessness Strategy Group in the coming weeks. Some of our young people will be ready to discuss their future aspirations including where they see themselves living once they leave care through the *Young People's Future Housing Panel* (name to be chosen by Our children) which is an innovative pilot due to commence in late November 2018. The panel will be for young people aged 15½ plus who are thinking about where and how they would like to live when they leave care. Making sure our young people start independence at the right time and in the right place provides the best chance for a positive journey to adulthood and will support the best possible life chances.

4.12.3 In conjunction with Adult service we will ensure Our children do not end up homeless by combining a joint adults and children pathway to housing solutions. This work is due to commence at the end of August and we hope to have the report by mid-September 2018.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 The service and where appropriate its partners have completed a range of activities that contribute to delivering the 12 recommendations made by OFSTED during their inspection of Manchester's children services in 2017 (see attached action plan).

5.2 It is the focus of the service along with our partners to evaluate the impact of these changes/developments with regard to the lives and outcomes for children and their families, these will be reflected in the services self-assessment (completed bi-annually) and service plan.