

Our Manchester, Our Children

Working With Children and Young People and Their Families During COVID-19

*'Business as usual',
and working
differently when
needed...*



Our Practice in Manchester

Manchester Children's
& Education Services



Our Principles

Relationship Focused, Strength Based Practice

The basis for change lies within the child's family relationships and network. Relationship focused practice engages with existing networks to build resilience and capacity to resolve difficulties and end harmful behaviours. It is non-judgemental, respectful engagement that honours children's families and our own experiences, building on strengths and working together, with our partners, to develop empowered supportive and problem-solving networks.

We work together with children, residents and local services, and across public services like schools, health services, housing and the police, to do everything we can to build a safe, happy, healthy and successful future for Manchester's children and young people and their families.

Our Approach

Signs of Safety

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Evidence Based & Knowledgeable

Signs of Safety has been adopted by Manchester City Council Children's Services as the overarching practice framework for all of its work with children and families. This purposeful and collaborative way of working recognises families strengths and expertise to develop their own solutions to promote the safety and wellbeing for children and young people. Applying a stance of critical inquiry, asking our best questions to gain detailed, behavioural information, with examples, not making assumptions, remembering every family functions in their own, individual environment.

Our work is informed and purposeful through the use of tools, complementary models, and research to evidence decision making and the most appropriate support and interventions.

Research

Child Impact
Chronology &
Genogram

Safe &
Together
model

Graded Care
Profile 2

Mindfulness

Family Group
Conferencing

Edge of
Care / MST

Residential
Care

Parenting
Programs

Our Behaviours

Intentional & Passionate

We Work Skilfully:

↳ Asking our best questions and taking time to listen to children, families, and partners to understand their stories.

We Work With:

↳ Children, families, our partners, communities and each other with a shared understanding.

We Work to Strengthen:

↳ Identifying, and building on what is working well. Being open, informed and responsive, validating strength and using healthy challenge.

We Work to Enable:

↳ Using our knowledge, professional curiosity, making the best of opportunities to promote impactful change.

Our Impact

Goals & Objectives

↳ Ensure children and families are safe, can aspire, succeed, live well and grow up healthy and happy.

↳ To build increased resilience within children and families, ensuring children have a voice and opportunities to contribute in their community.

↳ For all children to have the opportunity grow up having fun, opportunities to take part in leisure and culture activities, and having good social, emotional, and mental wellbeing.

↳ Provide stability for children to allow them to have healthy, meaningful and supportive relationships, with less children living away from their families.

Using the Growth model, we have learned to adapt practice accordingly in best interests of children



3 Stages of Pandemic Response

Response to pandemic and initial crisis management

Priority worries and concerns

New ways of working that did not impact on core of our work - ie visiting and safeguarding children;

Decrease in Demand for our services and worries regarding 'hidden harm';

Continuing child protection, children in need review and Court processes;

Protecting staff from harm and potential for transmission;

Organisational engagement and development - introduction of new mantra - *Stay Safe, Stay Connected, Stay Informed*

Organisational and Practice Response

Revised Home Visit Policy immediately to ensure no child went unseen, creation of risk registers and trackers

Local partnership meetings including housing, Health, Neighbourhoods, Schools and GMP;

Early switch to use of technology and remote reviews and remote Court Hearings;

Use of and continual supply of PPE, welfare resources and connectivity via remote access

Weekly bulletins with useful information resources to assist in unknown territory for all



Creative Responses in Practice

- *Creative use of technology - phone calls, video calls, whatsapp, tours of houses via video, doorstep visits if necessary*
- *Local partnerships working together to identify children at risk, including with schools, neighbourhoods, police, housing, voluntary agencies;*
- *Sharing practice/experience(s) via Greater Manchester networks*
- *Re-designing office spaces to be covid-safe and working to strict rota systems;*
- *Continuation of core business in relation to tracking, meetings*
- *Multiple sources of information and resources for Practitioners - google workspaces, online practice space (OPIM.ONLINE);*
- *Risk assessment flow charts, guidance and national best practice*
- *Locality teaching mornings sharing best practice examples continuing remotely*



Creative Responses in Practice

- *Packs made up for children to use in between visits to fulfill our direct work commitments to children;*
- *Reading stories and engaging children in the same way via video call;*
- *Greater use of the app Mind of My Own - where children tell us directly through the app;*
- *Meetings in outdoor spaces - both visits and family time (Contact);*
- *Supporting food parcel deliveries;*
- *Providing laptops and internet access to those most in need;*
- *Kooth & other emotional wellbeing support mechanisms promoted and used with our children and young people;*
- *Promotion of Local Offer - reaching out to parents and carers;*
- *Evidence informed by weekly performance and assurance reports matching performance of pre-pandemic in all areas including:
Visits, Plans, Assessments*



Quality Assurance and Performance

Contact/Referral has returned to pre-pandemic levels and has increased steadily since March/April due to robust partnership arrangements:

City-wide	April	July
Contacts	3142	4385
Referrals	433	688
Strategy Meetings	315	423

Performance and Quality Assurance has continued to maintain pre-pandemic levels.

July average in percentage

- CP Visits: 96%
- Our Children Visits: 99%
- CIN visits: 89%
- Assessments in timescale: 96%

Locality Leadership teams complete weekly assurance and performance reports. Team have devised additional dip-sampling and gatekeeping during pandemic period to assure quality of work, throughput and outcomes including the following areas:

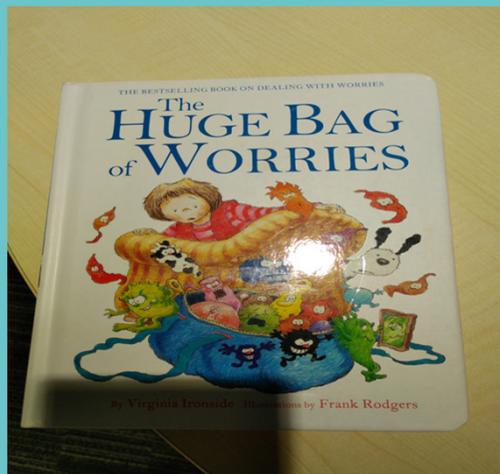
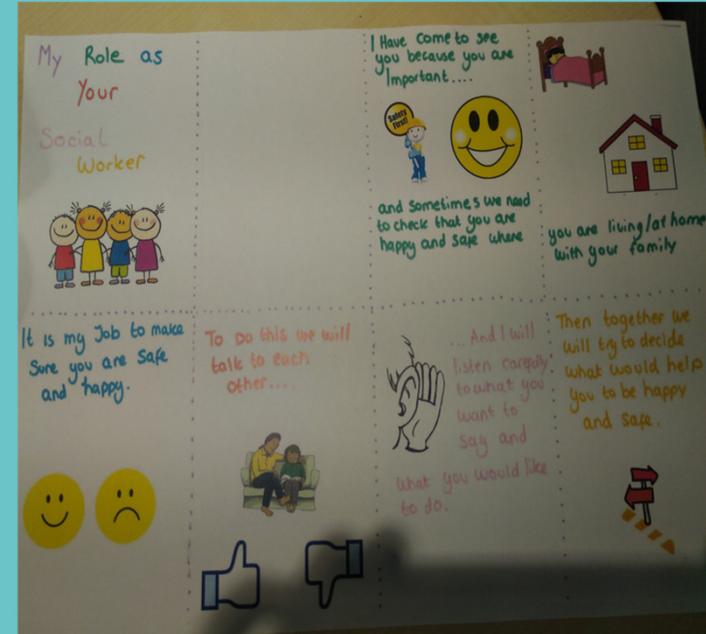
- Assessment, Core Groups, CIN Meetings and Plans; completed and ongoing, Court Evidence and Permanency Planning; Risk Registers

Our cycle of Quality Assurance Framework has continued uninterrupted including:

- Auditing
- Moderation
- Reporting on quality of case work;
- Close the Loop sessions;
- Learning and Teaching days in localities to develop staff



Creative ways we engage our children and families in Direct Work

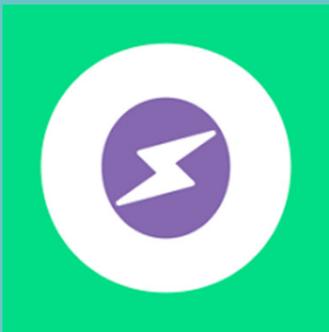


“What I'd like to be different - I wish Corona never came”

“My school/ college - I prefer being in school to being at home, I prefer being with friends and teachers than at home. I like being in school. Miss B is my favourite teacher in school.”

“My school/ college - Coming to school at first was weird because it would normally be full.”

“MY HOBBIES/ ACTIVITIES - I AM GOOD AT STAYING AT HOME BECAUSE OF COVID-19”



"My friends - Still seeing my friends in the lock down. Not seeing the whilst at (carers) house. I have a phone so we speak on there."

"My family - I would like to see my family more. I would like to see my dad more."



"Where I live - I am getting a new house tomorrow. We are in a hotel, Mummy and daddy are on the bottom bunk, I'm in the top bunk and Archie sleeps in the single bed."

"A PLACE I GO - WE COULD NOT GO ANYWHERE FOR EID."

"My family - I feel that before the virus, we could see each other a bit more. We try to speak on Facetime as much as we can, my nanna, grandad, dad, aunty and cousins."

"Something I achieved - I am happy about passing my IT creative Imedia GCSE I am also very happy about getting a work experience placement but because of the lockdown I don't know how it will work out."



Next Steps

- *Robust Preparation for September and children's return to school - Potential for increase in demand for services and preparedness for potential for further local restrictions;*
- *Flexible and adaptive safeguarding teams ensuring staffing is commensurate in our Advice and Guidance Hubs with Police colleagues;*
- *Contingency plans to flex with demand to ensure needs are met and staffing is right at all times to respond to community need;*
- *To ensure pre-existing relationships with schools help prepare for children's return;*
- *Continuing to develop and foster the culture of a valued and committed social work staff group as Covid restrictions continue;*
- *Advanced talks with Health to have a co-located mental health professional in our Advice and Guidance Service to hold live conversations about emotional health of children;*
- *Increased GMP presence in Advice and Guidance hubs to reflect potential for greater demand and need for strategy meetings and joint decision making;*
- *Not 'standing still' - progressing as a service to deliver better services*

