

**Manchester City Council  
Report for Resolution**

**Report to:** Personnel Committee – 28 October 2020  
**Subject:** New Post: Strategic Lead for Early Years  
**Report of:** Chief Executive

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**Purpose of Report**

To seek approval to establish a post of Strategic Lead for Early Years to take responsibility to lead the development, transformation and delivery of the Early Years strategy and associated priorities.

**Recommendations**

The Committee is requested to approve the creation of a new post of Strategic Lead for Early Years Grade SS1 (£62,531 - £67,676)

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**Wards affected:** All

**Financial implications for the revenue and capital budgets:**

Costings provided are at the top of grade with full oncosts. The difference between the SS1 and grade 12 is £15k. The cost of the new post will be met from the disestablishment of the grade 12 Service Manager post and existing service budget.

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**Contact Officers:**

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**Background documents (available for public inspection):**

None

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 From the 7 February 2018, Children's Services and Education Services were integrated into a single directorate. This followed a review of senior management arrangements by the Chief Executive which resulted in the Strategic Director of Children's Services assuming full responsibility for children's social and education services.
- 1.2 A report was presented to the Personnel Committee on 7 March 2018 which set out strengthened management arrangements for the integrated directorate and included the transfer of early years to children's services. Initially this role was assumed within a SS2 role that was disestablished. However, the longer term leadership arrangements for the early years service was placed on hold whilst the directorate developed plans to integrate the early years and early help offer and understand its relationship with the Manchester Local Care Organisation (MLCO); this work is ongoing. In the interim the leadership responsibilities were assumed by the service manager role holder and an arrangement was put in place since March 2018 for the current service manager, to assume both the strategic and operational leadership role for Early Years. Whilst there is an ongoing need for the role, the intention was for this role to be considered within the context of Children's Services future partnership and collaboration with MLCO. However, in considering it is evident the role is required, policy and the respective staff member welfare the current arrangement cannot continue which in accordance with the honoraria policy must not exceed 12 months.
- 1.3 The integration of the early years and early help offer along with broader plans to develop our collaboration with the MLCO continues to make progress has been delayed due to the impact of COVID19. It was planned for this to be concluded by October 2020 and is now expected for this programme to be concluded by April 2021.
- 1.4 The work undertaken to date is clear due to the regulatory requirements, needs of children and service provision there will be a defined leadership arrangement for the early years service beyond April 2021. This will include the strategic and operational oversight to deliver the council's statutory duties and directorate key priorities relating to Children's Sure Start Centres, Early Years and Start Well Strategy that will and is being delivered in partnership with the MLCO; alongside supporting the transformational activity with the MLCO.

## **2. Context**

- 2.1 Manchester is a large, diverse and complex local authority region with high demand on social care services and in addition a growing school age population, increased needs and a complex education system/family of schools. Since 2014, significant progress has been made within Children and Education Services in improving the services Manchester's children and young people receive. This has seen Ofsted judge Children's Services no longer to be 'inadequate', school attendance across the school system is

better than national averages and the percentage of primary schools judged to be good or better increased. In early years settings 96% are judged to be good or better which previously has been c76% and therefore sustaining this improvement is a priority.

2.2 The early years system is a universal offer that delivers the integrated Early Years Delivery Model (EYDM) working in partnership with health, early years settings and professionals; with links to Manchester's 125 primary schools. The EYDM is delivered through settings, including PVI nurseries, childminders and 38 children's sure start centres operating in 14 neighbourhood groups. The early years and children's sure start centre core purpose focuses on improving outcomes for young children and their families and on reducing inequalities in child development and school readiness; parenting aspirations and parenting skills; and child and family health and life chances.

2.3 Early Years delivery model is underpinned by the following principles:

- Our Manchester behaviours to guide integrated working practices - we will take a relationship and strengths based approach; getting it right the first time and avoid duplication.
- A whole family and / or a whole household approach with one lead practitioner coordinating support across a range of partnership services.
- Simplify our approach using common language and assessment
- Use of the Thrive framework to develop a common approach and shared understanding of risks and needs to support practitioners to work together effectively
- Lean pathways that remove duplication and provide an accessible offer, delivered as close to home as possible
- Informed by research and evidence - utilising and developing integrated IT systems, data/information to inform a systemwide understanding and approach to the identified risks and needs of families.

### **3. Locality Model Programme (Collaboration for improved outcomes)**

3.1 Manchester City Council Children's Services has developed and implemented a Locality Model which focuses on person (child and family) centred outcomes across all sectors. The model has reformed Children's Services to deliver local, place based services on a 1-3-12 footprint; aligned with Bringing Services Together, Integrated Neighbourhood Teams and Manchester's Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MMASA).

3.2 The aim of the programme, parallel to the approach of the Local Care Organisation, is to change the way services are provided to achieve the vision and objectives set out in the Our Manchester, Our Children plan. Services will be delivered with partners committed to an integrated, multi-agency approach with place based teams shaped by locality partnerships who understand the specific complexities of each geographical area. This promotes economies of scale, supports improved services, experience and outcomes.

- 3.3 A key strand of this work and an integral element is strengthening and delivering a neighbourhood and community based offer of Early Help through a more integrated, place based delivery of our early years, health visiting and early help services. This has been aligned with the Bringing Services Together, the implementation of the 'thrive' model across the services and strengthened via working in partnership with the MCLO via thematic projects such as 'Smoke Free Homes'. This work is providing the opportunities and the learning for wider changes.
- 3.4 In addition the strategic and operational delivery of early years is aligned to Manchester's Start Well agenda and is being led through the Start Well Board. This board has representation from senior officers for Early Help, Early Years, Health Visiting and Midwifery services alongside wider partners.
- 3.5 The Start Well Board was established to support a system wide focus and consistent approach to the first 1,000 days, linking to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Start Well Early Years Strategy (June 2016) and All Our Health: Best Start in Life (April 2019). The Board is building on the excellent work already taking place across Manchester and is developing a programme of work with consideration of Manchester's Reducing Infant Mortality Strategy and Manchester's Population Health Plan with the aim of:
- Improving health outcomes
  - Ensuring children are ready for school
  - Ensuring a good level of development
  - Reducing infant mortality
  - Reducing inequality
- 3.6 The Start Well Board supports the Children's Community Health Services LCO vision for 'every child in Manchester to have the best possible health' alongside the overarching partnership vision for the city; Our Manchester, Our Children – building a safe, happy, healthy and successful future for children and young people.
- 3.7 It needs to be acknowledged that the delivery of early years and early help is much broader than solely City Council services, for example private providers, alongside the voluntary and community sector provide an offer of support to children and families. The delivery and relationship based practice, underpinned by a consistent evidence base, ensures children start school ready to learn etc.

#### **4. Strategic Lead for Early Years**

- 4.1 The Strategic Lead for Early Years post has been and continues to be a critical role in supporting the directorate to achieve its strategic priorities of ensuring children and young people in Manchester are safe, happy, healthy and successful. As outlined previously the post holder has a lead role in developing an integrated, placed based, delivery offer with early years, early help and the MLCO. The posts key responsibilities include:

- Lead responsibility for the delivery of the Sure Start Children Centres and the Greater Manchester Early Years Delivery Model.
  - To lead delivery of GM School Readiness in Early Years
  - To lead strategic planning and delivery of key multi-agency strategies such as workforce, communications and information sharing.
  - To contribute to the Directorate Business Plan Objectives, Children and Young People Plan, Health and Population Plan and Corporate targets and vision, by leading the development of strategic plans and ensuring that objectives within all relevant plans are met.
  - Lead responsibility for the commissions of Early Years interventions including the core offer, parenting pathway and communication and language.
  - Lead representative for Ofsted and Quality Outcomes to drive Children's Centre improvement and ensure that outcomes for Early Years 0-5 yrs are improving and measured by school readiness and a Good Level of Development.
- 4.2 The delivery of these priorities and outcomes will contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan, Children and Young People Plan and Budget Strategy.
- 4.3 Throughout COVID-19 a strong partner commitment to our Start Well priorities was maintained with an increasing focus on ensuring the health, development and well-being of babies born during Covid-19 was prioritised. The Strategic Lead for Early Years undertook a key leadership role to adapt and redesign the early years offer in recognition of this priority group and a range of evidence-based programmes are being delivered.
- 4.4 The Strategic Lead for Early Years has ensured that the Sure Start core offer has been maintained and that vulnerable and priority groups are prioritised. By effective partnership working the Strategic Lead has ensured that antenatal visits, food packages, parenting support and advice and guidance remained in place. Targeted support was provided to three-year-olds to support school readiness and starting school and this work is continuing with a joint project with primary schools to support communication, speech and language development.
- 4.5 The recommissioning of priority Early Years and parenting programme commissions are scheduled for 2020/21. The Strategic Lead will have a pivotal role in revising the current commissions, engaging providers and stakeholders and generating a truly joint approach to service provision with MHCC/MCLO in future commissions. Our delivery arrangements reflect a mixed model of internal and commissioned arrangements and the contract monitoring, quality assurance and outcomes and impact being achieved will be led by the Strategic Lead.
- 4.6 As we progress in 2020/21 the Strategic Lead will ensure the ongoing adaptability of the Early Years service in relation to the pandemic, will ensure that our neighbourhoods have a universal and targeted offer in place and that the early years workforce is supported and developed to provide quality outcomes for children and families.

**5. Comments from Trade Unions**

5.1 These will follow.

**6. Comments from the Director of HROD**

6.1 In establishing the grade and salary commensurate for the role, the Council's Job Evaluation Process has been applied. The Director supports this proposed change in the Directorate's establishment and commends it to the Committee.