

# Childrens Scrutiny presentation

# Presentation content

- Decision making in practice focusing on early permanence, family time and the legal gateway process.
- The role and function of the Independent Reviewing service.
- Engagement and participation of children and young people.
- Quality of care planning, including pathway planning.
- Providing stability and permanence for children.
- Risk management with specific focus on the role of the complex safeguarding hub .
- Health data and impacts on children
- Permanence and placement stability
- The virtual school contributing to preventing NEET

**Our Principles**

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.

**Relationship Focused Practice**

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**

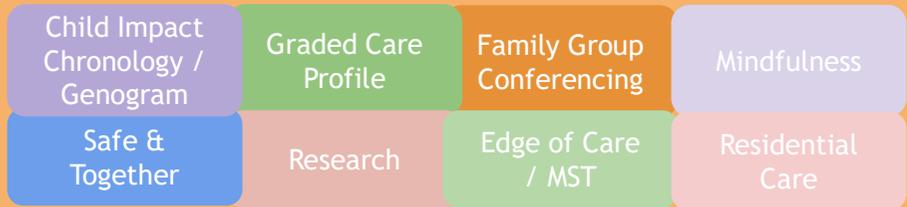
**Signs of Safety**

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 it’s own, individual environment.



**Evidence Based & Knowledgeable**

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.



**Our Behaviours**

**Intentional & Passionate**

**We Work With:**  
↳ Children, families, our partners, communities and each other with a shared understanding.



**We Work skillfully:**  
↳ Asking our best questions and taking time to listen to children, families, and partners to understand their stories,



**We Work to enable:**  
↳ Using our knowledge, professional curiosity, making the best of opportunities to promote impactful. change.



**We Work to Strengthen:**  
↳ Identifying, and building on what is working well. Being open, informed and responsive, validating strength and using healthy challenge,

**Our Impact**

**Goals & Objectives**

↳ 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.

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

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

# Our Children

- We believe our practice has matured and grown we are confident, ensuring children and families are given the right help at the right time at the earliest opportunity.
- Our Golden Threads has been the constant in our work through the pandemic, most notably the embedded practice of 'Working With..' not 'Doing To'.
- Our data evidences this strongly by significantly over-performing the national trend in reducing our Child Protection cohort (reducing the rate per 10,000 from 81 in March 2018 to 46 in March 2021 whilst the national average decreased from 45 to 43 over the same period) and maintaining a stable Children in Need population (rate per 10,000 in March was 433 in 2019, 434 in 2020 and 432 in 2021).
- This least interventionist approach extends to the levels of confidence in ensuring taking our children into care is a last resort, only when all other avenues have been safely exhausted. (Looked After Children numbers reduced from 1,407 in March 2020 to 1,371 in March 2021)
- The level of planning, scrutiny and confidence in making decisions about care has improved, utilizing a robust pre-proceedings process

# Permanence Planning

- Securing permanence for children at pace – practice priority during pandemic to not allow pandemic to impact on securing children loving homes.
- Each month a peer audit exercise completed on all children entering care.
- Permanence Policy, practice and procedure embedded - supported by internal audit and a forthcoming LGA peer review arranged to test practice further.
- The number of both Special Guardianship Orders and Adoptions in the year (61 and 29 respectively) were lower than 2019/20 (65 and 52). This can be explained by a decrease in court capacity during lockdown and subsequent significant delays in the court process, which is a regional and national issue.
- However, the number of children on a Placement Order at the end of March 2021 increased from 50 in March 2020 to 74 and the number of children placed with their prospective adopter awaiting an Adoption Order from Court increased from 22 to 40 over the same period, indicating strong performance despite pandemic.
- 79% of our children have a permanence plan for in place by 2nd LAC review. We are focusing on improving this
- There is strong multi agency planning evidenced in our planning for children informed by audits, which also confirm an improvement in the quality of assessments.

# Family time

- The Family Time Service have reviewed their assessment tool with legal and senior social workers making it more robust and consistent with current practice using the SOS (Signs of Safety) model.
- Family time has increased its offer from virtual (March 2020) to all school age children having increased to weekly and up to 90 minutes. For babies and children not of school age this is now twice weekly.
- Staff have undertaken a significant programme of training, a review of the service including the future shape of the service is ongoing.
- Family Time is currently recruiting to 3 x FTE posts.
- Family time service is currently working with 213 families.
- We have listened to families and are working with staff and Trade Unions to further develop our family time service to align to the wishes, views and needs of our children and families .

# Legal Gateway Process

- **Appropriate referrals continue to be made to Legal Gateway**
- **Increase in pre proceedings decisions** We have seen an increase each quarter in the decision to issue pre-proceedings Increase of 7 cases (25 children) than previous quarter.)
- **Quality of Practice** – There is improved consistency of practice across the city. We have seen the number of cases being deferred or not agreed for Legal Gateway lower compared to previous years.
- **Review of our LGW and pre proceedings processes against the PLWG best practice guidance** indicates that Manchester is already working in line with most of this recommended guidance but aims to make further improvements.
- **Review of our pre proceedings work with the other GM authorities via PLO subgroup project** indicates that Manchester is leading GMA in pre proceedings work in terms of data collection, tracking and analysis of performance/ outcomes for children, although there is more to do.
- **Responses in relation to Public Working Group** – Legal and social work group commenced working on standards, performance measurement tool and learning to support practice development.

# Effective Decision Making

- Alongside staff we reviewed our principal assessment tool the child and family assessment
- 88% (July) of Our children visited by their allocated social worker.
- 90% of assessment visits to children taking place face to face
- 95% of children are seen alone to ensure social workers have a good understanding of their daily lived experiences.
- Our assessment model Signs of Safety is well embedded and recognised by OFSTED as such
- Assessments in timescale are 86.6 % in time ,overdue reports are tracked
- Quality Assurance of visits to children indicates that social workers are undertaking direct work with the children and have a good relationship with children.

# Role of the IRO & CP Chairs



## Influence of Role

- IRO are responsible for ensuring Children and Young People's review meetings take place in a timely manner and work alongside children and young people so that all relevant people are involved.
- Children and young people are encouraged to actively engage and participate in their meetings, this includes to chair the meeting themselves or co-chair meetings with the IRO.
- IRO make sure that the planning for children is of a good quality and that the local authority is effective in its role as a “corporate parent” to Our children and young people in care. IROs ensure that interventions are effective, and that permanence is achieved in a timely manner and is robust in its planning.
- IROs focus on driving aspirations for children and ensuring that they are healthy, happy, safe and successful, by ensuring we write child friendly accounts of meetings and decisions that can be understood by children and young people.
- When there are practice issues IROs will seek to resolve the issues with Social Workers in the first instance to improve the outcomes for children.

# Impact of role of IROs in Manchester

- Strong **footprint** of IRO on children's files with oversight of progression of plans between reviews. This allows for early identification of any practice issues.
- IRO involved in monthly **audits and feedback** of Our Children with regular learning sessions for the service around areas of improvement. Findings feed into the overall monthly quality assurance report around learning, impact and development for service.
- **Links between localities and IRO service** is strong with Safeguarding Managers attending each localities "Close the Loops" and contribute to the agenda and locality planning.
- When there are **practice issues** IROS resolve the issues with Social Workers in the first instance to improve the outcomes for children. Over the last twelve months the key themes for resolution have been on quality of care plans, implementations of the Care Planning or decision making and ensuring children have up to date assessments and records.



- **96% of Children and Young People participated in their review meeting in 2020/2021.**
- **IRO s raise on average 70 practice issues per month that are resolved in a timely manner and impact monitored to see progression for children.**
- **LAC reviews in timescale 97.4%**
- **IRO have regular monthly supervision.**

# Participation and Engagement (Voice & Influence)

## Collective responsibility of all professionals

- Participation & Engagement - part of day-to-day practice, is variable and wide ranging not just an isolated activity with small numbers of children. Engagement Champions in all teams to ensure the voice of our children and young people .
- Regular oversight over what children & young people tell us which in turn influences service design.
- 94% of our young people aged 2-17 have a Personal Education Plan in place and their views, wishes and feelings are regularly captured and acted upon.

## Refreshed Children in Care Council (Cooperative)

- All 'Our' looked after children, young people and care leavers are part of ***'Manchester's Children in Care Cooperative'*** and supported by their professional of choice to lead via their natural 'comfort zones' as and when they want to and in a way that suits them best..

## Regular Events & Consultations

- Engagement & participation is wide reaching and not tokenistic.
- Year of the Child
- Our Manchester Experience designed by children and young people for children and young people.

**All teams Contribute to Annual Children & Young People's engagement report.**

## The Journey from Voice to Influence – Children and Young People

### Engagement

- Day-to-day practice
- Events/activities/groups
- Virtual contact – catch-ups/ Forums.

**A variety of forms to allow for all children and young people to engage in a way that they feel most comfortable.**

### Listen, Capture and Demonstrate Change

- Working with children and young people, not 'doing to' them.
- Relationship
- Respect
- Trust.

**Be flexible rather than prescriptive.**

### Share

- With your team/line managers
- With colleagues outside of your team
- With enablers such as Engagement Leads and Engagement Champions
- With your community.

**An opportunity to identify themes and see the bigger picture.**

### Review

- What is the impact?
- Collective and individual voice
- Check with the child or young person, and your colleagues
- Change if appropriate.

**You said, we did. Did we get it right?**

### Influence

- Decision-makers (primarily children and young people, where appropriate)
- Front-Line staff
- Children's Leadership Team (CLT)
- Members
- Scrutiny Committees.

**Children and young people play a critical role in the influencing process.**



# Care planning Dip sampling evidence

- Most care plans show detailed insights into children's circumstances and needs.
- Workers are working hard to achieve permanence in all care plans. There are Permanence Planning meetings are the norm
- There is little evidence of any drift or delay in care planning and plans are clear and focused.
- The contribution of SSWs and multi-agency partners is not always evidenced, but the views of children and parents are clear and helpful.
- The cultural and identity needs of children as well as contingency planning need to be better evidenced within care plans (although may be evidenced elsewhere).
- There is generally very good compliance and there was only one out of timescales.

# Improving care planning Impact

- There is increased support to our newly qualified staff as we notice an increased contribution from Advanced Practitioners to plans
- Voice of the children and parents are helping to shape plans
- Multi agency planning is evident
- Drift and delay is significantly less evident and is challenged
- Permanence policy is driving effective care planning
- Workers show good insight into the needs of children (QAF)
- More Permanency planning meetings informing plans
- Increased placement stability
- Early contingency plans are being pursued to avoid disruption for the children
- Cultural needs identified better

# Care planning Pathway Plans

- 86% of our young people have pathway plan updated in the last 6 months. 14% of our young people have pathway plans updated by their workers and going through quality assurance process by their managers.
- From our quality assurance work on pathway plans, it notes that our workers have effective relationships with young people and their views are taken into consideration in planning, with further evidence of good coordination between agencies to offer support and supporting young people build/maintain relationships with birth families.
- Young people's pathway plans cover holistic needs such as accommodation, education and emotional wellbeing. However, we will continue to focus on the quality of pathway plans and its impact on young people as well as timeliness of updating pathway plans.

# In-Touch with Young People

- We are in-touch 91% of our young people, as per statutory timescales of at least every 8 weeks. However, contacts with young people are driven by their assessed needs outlined in their pathway plans.
- 92.5 % of young people we were in touch in the last 8 weeks, however we have been in touch with the vast majority of this cohort in 8 to 12 weeks. 1.5% (13) of our young people the service is not genuinely in touch due to young people living abroad/deported, whereabouts unknown and refusing to engage or keep in touch.
- All our 16/17 year- old young people have visited by their allocated social worker.
- As Covid 19 restrictions are lifting Personal Advisors are in undertaking more face-to- face meetings with our young people.
- The quality assurance process indicates that PA are having meaningful contact with young people i.e. ascertaining their wishes and feelings, having high aspirations and quality of relationship with their PA.
- In-Touch will continue to be a priority for the service as we want to ensure all our young people are supported and we maintain good quality relationships with them.

# Stability and Permanence

- We have recently refreshed our foster care Recruitment and Retention Strategy and recruited a new manager to lead on this aspect.
- We have reviewed our training offer to our foster carers and are in the process of commissioning a new training contract.
- there is an increase in the use of permanency planning meetings for children across our localities and permanence teams, a total of 922 meetings have taken place since April 21.
- Permanence planning meetings are used to drive the plans for children and bring together the team around the child who are responsible for aspects of the care plan.
- We are improving our system to ensure children are matched and placed permanently
- Where appropriate children are matched to their care givers providing a sense of belonging to the family and stability for their continued care.

# Outcomes for our Young People

- The majority of our children and young people (82%) are supported within family-based care arrangements
- The impact of our effective care planning, placement finding and matching functions has led to a reduction in the number of children experiencing 3 or more placement moves, reducing year on year from 2017/18 from 11% to 6.8% as at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. This, like the measure above, outperforms many of our regional and statistical neighbours
- Staying close to the people and places that matter most to children such as family and school is important . Of our children in care 83% are placed at a distance less than 20 miles from their home address,
- There are 73 children in "staying put" arrangements
- For a small number of children and young people they have experienced instability and unplanned endings. On occasions it has been a challenge to find a placement for children with multiple, high risk presenting needs

# Stability and Permanence

- Children placed out with the local authority boundary has been gradually decreasing from 58% in March 2016 to 51% in March 2021.
- 2.2 % LAC aged under 16 looked after for 2.5 years and in the same placement for at least 2 years, or placed for adoption is 68.6%.
- Children with 3 moves or more is 7% with the national average at 9.3%, this shows that children are in the main provided with stable and secure care givers who stick with them and help them to develop and grow in their care.
- Brothers and Sisters from the 1/4/21:
  - There were 69 children (26 brothers and sister groups) with a plan to live together out of these: 60 children (21 sibling groups) placed together 3 children (1 sibling group) not placed together 6 children (2 sibling groups) still searching for placements



42 additional accommodations for UASC from charitable providers, identifying a saving of £500K per annum on existing provision

**September 2021**



12 properties have been identified for care leavers and children looked after in the financial year 20/21

**Complete**



A further 25 homes for life properties with RSL's have been identified for 21/22

**September 2021**



A Foyer model of accommodation for 30 young people

**Commence October 2021**



Reconfiguration of Supported Lodgings to meet the needs of young people aged 16 years

**Commence October 2021**



Relocated a childrens home into Manchester for 3 young people with LD / autism who were placed out of borough, and increased shared care provision by 3 FTE

**July 2021**



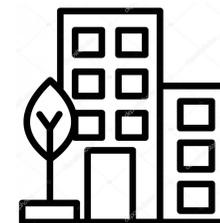
Re commissioning Olanyian as a 5 bed home to support our children to live locally

**August 2021**



8 stepping stone accommodations for 18 years as low level support to ensure tenancy ready (Bramcote)

**Complete**



6 stepping stone accommodations with low level support to ensure tenancy ready (Beehive)

**Complete**



Preferred Provider Framework to work innovatively to support young people in their home for life

**Commence November 2021**

# Managing Risk - Complex Safeguarding Hub

- Our complex safeguarding hub has the highest referrals in relation to young people at risk of Child Criminal Exploitation (59% in 20/21) and the majority live at home in the community (78% in 20/21) - similarly reflected in end of year caseload where **79%** receiving an intervention lived at home
- The hub provides opportunity for preventative intervention, enabling young people to remain in their communities and reducing number of children becoming Looked After
- Interventions are a trauma informed relational model, building trust and resilience alongside multi agency work to support young people and disrupt perpetrators.
- The Achieving change together model is an intensive relational model implemented in 2018 . Through empowering young people , using advocacy and building personal resilience evidence demonstrates we can reduce young peoples vulnerability to exploitation
- Impact with the cohort evaluated – reduction in missing by **72%**, reductions in mental health concerns by **53%** and a decrease in substance and alcohol misuse by **50%** with a projected economic and social savings of **£300K**

# Health indicators for children looked after for more than 12 months at 31st March

	2017/18		2020/21
Looked After Children with Up To Date Immunisations	88%		82%
Looked After Children with Up To Date Under 5yrs Development Checks	100%		100%
Looked After Children with Up To Date Health Assessments	89%		87%
Looked After Children with a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire	88%		81%
Looked After Children identified with Substance Misuse issues	9%		5%

# Manchester Virtual School

- We know that engagement in EET (education, employment and training) is a strong protective and success factor for our most vulnerable children and young people, and therefore via the EPEP, we are collecting data about the assessment of the RONI (risk of NEET indicators) of a child becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) from Year 7 (age 11) onwards.
- THE Virtual school are using this data to target support and undertake preparatory work with those high risk RONI children towards and into positive Post 16 destinations, by identifying their areas of occupational interest and ensuring that they receive appropriate CEIAG (Careers Education Information, Advice and Guidance) work experience opportunities and mentoring to enable them to access employment opportunities and further study.
- This activity also links with the wider Manchester strategy around Skills For Life where young people are able to demonstrate their capabilities around Communication, Team Work, Problem Solving, Self Management and Self Belief.