

Manchester City Council Report for Resolution

Report to: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee - 13 October 2021
Executive – 20 October 2021

Subject: Youth and Play Commissioning Arrangements

Report of: Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods

Summary

This report follows the Young Manchester review, which was commissioned by the City Council in December 2020, with a subsequent report presented to Executive in March 2021. That report considered the response to the review and actions proposed to build stronger and more effective arrangements going forward. An alternative delivery model was proposed to be designed and developed in 2021. This report provides a summary of the evidence and research collated during consultation with the wider youth and play sector during the spring and summer and sets out a revised model of delivery for the commissioning of the youth and play sector, which is currently a role undertaken by Young Manchester. The report considers the response to the questions asked of the youth and play sector, as well as information collated from discussions with other Local Authorities in terms of their commissioning and youth partnership arrangements.

Recommendations

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is asked to endorse the recommendations to the Executive.

The Executive is recommended to:

1. To note the findings from the sector consultation and Local Authority research which have informed the future commissioning arrangements.
 2. To agree the option presented for the future commissioning of the youth and play sector, which will enable the Council to a) fulfil its Statutory Youth Duty; b) fulfil the priorities identified in the Our Manchester Youth Strategy; c) align with the priorities and focus of the Children & Young People's Plan.
 3. Delegate responsibility to agree the grant payments for 2022/23 totalling £1.44M to the Deputy Chief Executive & City Treasurer and Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods, in consultation with the Executive Member for Children & Young People and the Deputy Leader.
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Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the decisions proposed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

The recommendations set out will enable the Council to directly influence Strategic Commissioning decisions to ensure that they make the strongest possible contribution to achieving the zero-carbon target for the city.

Our Manchester Strategy Spine	Summary of the contribution to the strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Through the city's varied youth offer, young people have opportunities and access to activities which contribute towards their personal, social and economic wellbeing. The revised commissioning arrangements will enable the Council to develop and strengthen local partnerships to create opportunities for our young people to learn, be active and have fun in their free time.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Through the city's varied youth offer young people have opportunities to develop their life skills to succeed in education and employment, and have opportunities to increase aspirations, achieve and gain economic independence. The revised commissioning arrangements will continue to support young people have opportunities to develop key skills for life which include communication, problem solving, teamwork, self-belief, and self-management.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Young people have opportunities which enable them to think progressively and build resilience underpinned by the principles of equality and acceptance. The revised commissioning arrangements will ensure that young people have access to good quality youth and play provision within their neighbourhoods which encourages a sense of belonging, develops their identity and ensure their voices are heard.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Young people have opportunities to live, lead and enjoy safe, active, and healthy lives. Engagement with young people will ensure that they understand the impact they can make within their neighbourhoods, and the wider community. The revised commissioning arrangements will place a sharper emphasis on this.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Young people are listened to, valued and connected across their neighbourhoods and city. Young people inform continuous improvement and are involved in service design, delivery, and governance. Young people receive the support they need to participate, ensuring representation

	of the full diversity of local people, and those who may not otherwise have a voice.
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Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

The Council's currently provides annual funding of £1.59m to Young Manchester, and this is broken down £1.44m budget for commissioned youth and play activity and a £150k management fee for the work undertaken in administering the programme. It is proposed that the City Council will administer the £1.44m commissioning budget going forward, and the commissioning budget will remain unchanged. The £150k management fee will be used to fund any capacity requirements to take on the function and surplus funds will be utilised to strengthen the commissioning budget.

Financial Consequences – Capital

There are no immediate capital financial consequences arising as a result of these proposals.

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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.

- Children's Scrutiny Committee Report – January 8th 2019
- Children's Scrutiny Committee Report- November 6th 2019
- Valuing Young People's Strategy 2016-2019
- Our Manchester Youth Strategy 2019-2023
- Young Manchester Review Executive Paper – March 17th 2020

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report follows the report that was agreed at Executive on March 17th, 2021 in relation to the Young Manchester Review. The Executive agreed several actions to build stronger and more effective arrangements going forward in order to improve the outcomes for Children and Young People. The principle of developing an alternative delivery model was agreed and that the full implications would be presented back to the Executive for determination.
- 1.2 Following the release of the review report, the City Council & Young Manchester agreed several questions which could be used with the wider youth and play sector to understand what the key requirements were for any future commissioning arrangements.
- 1.3 In order to ensure true engagement with the sector, the Council commissioned Youth Focus NW to lead on the consultation engagement sessions with the sector – this was also agreed by the Young Manchester management team. Young Manchester also had their own engagement session with Youth Focus NW as they are a part of the sector.

2.0 Developing the New Model

- 2.1 The Council currently contracts with Young Manchester to deliver the following objectives:
 - To sustain a Youth and Play commissioning programme across the city which ensures all young people have sufficient access to services that contribute to them leading Safe; Happy; Healthy and Successful lives.
 - To ensure young people have sufficient access to high quality universal Youth and Play services with funding being prioritised for areas of most need, identified through a robust needs' analysis using weighted funding formulas.
 - To leverage to secure additional third-party investment which supports the sustainability of youth and play services across the City.
 - To ensure service users feel they have an active role in decision making processes to ensure services meet children and young people's needs.
 - To capture and provide quantitative and qualitative data and measure impact.
 - To communicate and promote young people services across the City.
- 2.2 Since March Officers have been working alongside the sector and undertaking research of other Local Authorities to ensure that any future arrangements:
 - build on the strengths and progress made by Young Manchester;
 - reduce operational overheads and remove any duplication to ensure more funding reaches grassroot organisations who are working directly with children & young people;
 - ensure a citywide youth advisory board works alongside the current Neighbourhood based youth partnerships to provide the sector with a stronger voice which advises the Council and informs commissioning

- practices, therefore increasing engagement from across the sector;
- place data and insight at the centre of decision making; and,
- provide more direct control to the Council over its own resources.

2.3 The financial year 2021/22 is being utilised as a transitional year to ensure no youth organisations are impacted by the changes other than the positive benefits which will be derived from an alternative model of delivery.

3.0 Sector Engagement Findings

3.1 Youth Focus NW were commissioned as an independent, regional organisation to lead sector engagement sessions across the City.

3.2 They met with the existing youth & play partnerships, Young Manchester, Sector Leaders Group and the Detached Youth workers group

3.3 Themes collated from the feedback are highlighted below:

Partnerships: Building on the strengths of Young Manchester it is clear that the sector values the youth & play partnerships, which have been established over the past 4 years. Partnerships need to be an equal process, and not return to hierarchal processes of the past. There is a need to continue the partnerships in order to continue the support to the smaller organisations.

Investment: The Voluntary Sector have concerns around the short-term funding for the youth and play sector, citing that Young Manchester provided the security of 2-year funding, as opposed to the one year / short term funding streams often offered by the Local Authority. There was an ask to try and align funding streams, which would reduce the amount of work for small organisations. The majority of the responses highlighted the value in working in the youth & play partnerships in situ, but acknowledge that the current partnerships are all operating at various levels and provide varying levels of support.

Training & Development: Through the engagement sessions and direct sessions with the Sector Leadership group, there is a need for more formal, qualification-based training across Manchester, with a recognition that there has been a hiatus in the youth work degree courses being offered in the City. There is also an overwhelming view that the sector could provide some of this training as well as skills-based training – utilising the knowledge and experience which exists in the City already. It is also needs to be acknowledged that Play work is just as important as Youth work, with a clear focus of developing those skills and expertise.

Relationships: The sector feedback highlights that there is a need to have a more collaborative, equal relationship between the City Council and VCSE organisations, one which is based on mutual respect rather than commissioner and commissioned. This relationship should acknowledge the skills and experience within the sector, starting from a point of acknowledging that the sector understands their areas and what is needed.

4.0 Research Findings

4.1 As part of the research into different approaches to youth & play commissioning, officers spoke to Heads of Youth (or equivalent) in five other Local Authorities, as well as Head of Service from across Manchester City Council, to understand what works well and what is needed.

4.2 Key themes from the research were:

Partnerships: Successful partnerships work when all organisations have something to bring to the table; For example, in Blackburn with Darwen, the Local Authority has entered a 3-way partnership with Onside and the VCS – the three organisations work together to provide infrastructure and funding support to smaller organisations. In all areas, working in locally placed based partnerships was seen as being beneficial. There was a clear acknowledgement that there will be different partnerships based on the relationship / topic, for example, specialist providers or localised provision.

Investment: All Local Authorities were still receiving direct funding within their budgets, however, distinct recognition that it was not enough to provide a sufficient offer which is why partnerships were important. In Lancashire & Birmingham, the youth team receive direct commissions from the Public Health team with the acknowledgement that good youth work can reduce some of the public health requirements in later years. It is fair to acknowledge that all the areas directly provide youth work but do provide direct grants to the VCSE sector for specialist work, such as, detached youth work.

VCSE Support: The research and the review findings highlighted the need to ensure there are support mechanisms which provide infrastructure support to the sector, particularly those smaller organisations. Whilst there is an acknowledgement of the strength of the place-based partnerships systems which are already in operation in Manchester, there is still a requirement to ensure all organisations have access to this support, not just those who receive funding.

5.0 Future Commissioning

5.1 Some respondents involved in the engagement have expressed concern that if any future arrangements are delayed it will create uncertainty for organisations across the City, which in turn will have a negative impact on children and young people.

5.2 The engagement work has also highlighted that prior to any new commissioning arrangements being established there needs to be an update of the needs analysis which underpins the funding allocations, in order to ensure the current perceived inequalities are reduced. The last needs analysis was undertaken by Young Manchester in 2019 and set out in Appendix 1.

5.3 Any future commissioning arrangements would need to be underpinned by a programme of workforce development and strategic leadership – both of which

have been highlighted as a high priority during the Young Manchester Review and the Sector Engagement sessions.

- 5.4 Following the engagement that has been undertaken it is proposed that the commissioning arrangements for Manchester City Council funding for youth and Play activity is directed under a new model, with the Council's role to administer, manage and provide continued support to all organisations involved in the delivery of the wider youth and play offer. The proposed new arrangements would see providers within the 6 youth and play partnerships and Neighbourhoods supported directly by their Area Youth Lead to submit applications for youth and play funding. These applications would be reviewed by a local youth advisory panel, who would make funding recommendations to the Youth Commissioning Board
- 5.5 The new arrangements will align seamlessly with the recent changes to the Youth, Play & Participation team. By establishing this format for commissioning, the service will be able to ensure stronger alignment of funding allocated from youth and play commissioning to those investments made, e.g. Community Safety Partnership / Neighbourhood Investment Fund. By bringing services together it is anticipated that the following benefits will be derived:
- Place-based commissioning will be embedded, which would be approved by a panel of individuals who are based and have in-depth knowledge of the area.
 - Area youth leads would work alongside the current youth and play partnerships and MACC to provide support to organisations to complete funding applications and develop good working practices. Providing organisations with a link MCC officer, therefore reducing duplication for the sector.
 - Place-based commissioning would further ensure that funding streams offered via the Local Authority could be streamlined which would maximise resources, financial and otherwise, as well as, reducing the additional stress placed on smaller organisations.
 - Provide the City Council with increased influence over the effective deployment of its own resources.
- 5.6 The approach proposed would require a commissioning manager who would sit within the Youth, Play & Participation team and oversee the place-based commissioning processes. This would ensure a standard commissioning process for all youth and play funding streams.
- 5.7 The revised approach will also reduce the amount of funding spent on management fees, therefore increasing the amount which could be redirected to the sector to support training and development opportunities, particularly in those areas that were identified as needing improvement in the recent review.
- 5.8 In order to ensure a standard commissioning process and respond to the need for more place-based commissioning, it is proposed that each area would make funding recommendations to the Youth Commissioning Board. The

youth and play advisory panels would have impartial representatives. These representatives will bring knowledge and neutrality. It is envisioned that the panel will source individuals from the following areas:

- Elected Members, Youth Council / Area Youth Forum, Area youth lead, Youth & Play Partnership, Schools, Neighbourhood Team, GMP.

The youth and play advisory panel would provide recommendations to the youth commissioning board which would have the following representatives:

- Manchester Youth Council – Shadow Exec, Executive Member for Children & Young People, VCSE Rep, Director of Neighbourhoods, Strategic Lead – Parks, Leisure, Events and Youth, Head of Youth, Play & Participation, and Director of Education.

5.9 It is proposed that Elected Members play an active role as follows:

- Championing the revised approach in communities and play a supportive role with community organisations so that they are reminded of the parameters and limitations of the Commissioning Fund.
- Ensuring strong alignment with the deployment of other community-based funding at a ward level.
- Identifying suitable Elected Members to participate in the Advisory Panels. These will be Members who:
 - bring an understanding of neighbourhoods and communities to the process;
 - bring enthusiasm and energy but also have knowledge and expertise in relation to the area of work and are able to act objectively; and
 - not employed by an organisation or a board member of organisation delivering activity in response to the Strategy in the locality.
- It is proposed that nominations are made by Ward Councillors in each partnership area.

6.0 Conclusions and Next Steps

6.1 The proposed new model of delivery will build on the existing strengths and progress made over the last four years, it will reduce operational overheads and seek to remove duplication. In time it is anticipated that more funding will reach grassroot organisations who are working directly with children & young people. The new arrangements will ensure that place-based commissioning will be embedded, which would be approved by a panel of individuals who are based and have in-depth knowledge of the area and will also provide the City Council with increased influence over the effective deployment of its own resources.

6.2 The following next steps are proposed.

- Exploration of implications for the current employees within Young Manchester and establish a clear plan for managing an orderly transition.
- Development of a robust needs analysis which is produced in conjunction with children, young people, providers and elected members - commencing this autumn.
- Development of future youth, play and strategic leadership commissioning processes, which are based where possible on 2-year funding agreements.

6.3 In order to ensure the above points are completed fully and robustly, it is recommended that Council extends the current commissioning arrangements in place for a one-year period. All current arrangements issued under the Youth & Play fund end on March 31st, 2022. Whilst the one-year extension would be with the same organisations under the same monitoring requirements, new grant agreements will be issued and managed via the City Council Youth, Play & Participation team. The proposal is to agree and execute all grant funding arrangements for 2022/23 by end of December 2021. As per existing agreements, all grant funding contributions will be subject to providers evidencing appropriate match funding. The organisations that were previously funded by Young Manchester and their work in in each ward is set out in Appendix 2.

7.0 Contributing to a Zero-Carbon City

7.1 The recommendations set out will enable the Council to directly influence Strategic Commissioning decisions to ensure that they make the strongest possible contribution to achieving the zero-carbon target for the city.

8.0 Contributing to the Our Manchester Strategy

(a) A thriving and sustainable city

8.1 Through the city's varied youth offer, young people have opportunities and access to activities which contribute towards their personal, social and economic wellbeing. The revised commissioning arrangements will enable the Council to develop and strengthen local partnerships to create opportunities for our young people to learn, be active and have fun in their free time.

(b) A highly skilled city

8.2 Through the city's varied youth offer young people have opportunities to develop their life skills to succeed in education and employment, and have opportunities to increase aspirations, achieve and gain economic independence. The revised commissioning arrangements will continue to support young people have opportunities to develop key skills for life which include communication, problem solving, teamwork, self-belief, and self-management.

(c) A progressive and equitable city

- 8.3 Young people have opportunities which enable them to think progressively and build resilience underpinned by the principles of equality and acceptance. The revised commissioning arrangements will ensure that young people have access to good quality youth and play provision within their neighbourhoods which encourages a sense of belonging, develops their identity and ensure their voices are heard.

(d) A liveable and low carbon city

- 8.4 Young people have opportunities to live, lead and enjoy safe, active, and healthy lives. Engagement with young people will ensure that they understand the impact they can make within their neighbourhoods, and the wider community. The revised commissioning arrangements will place a sharper emphasis on this.

(e) A connected city

- 8.5 Young people are listened to, valued and connected across their neighbourhoods and city. Young people inform continuous improvement and are involved in service design, delivery, and governance. Young people receive the support they need to participate, ensuring representation of the full diversity of local people, and those who may not otherwise have a voice.

9.0 Key Policies and Considerations

(a) Equal Opportunities

Equality impact assessments will be carried out in relation to the revised commissioning arrangements and any associated staffing and structural changes.

(b) Risk Management

These proposals require regular engagement with Young Manchester and the youth and play sector to manage risk.

(c) Legal Considerations

These proposals will require new legal agreements to be drawn up between Manchester City Council and Young providers.