

Appendix 1 – Headline priorities for the service

1. Service Context

- 1.1 The Children and Education Services Directorate effectively is responsible for delivering the Council's statutory duties and responsibilities in respect of children in need of help, support and protection. Whilst at the same time ensuring they have access to a high-quality education and learning experience.
- 1.2 In delivering the Council's statutory duties and responsibilities, the Directorate also contributes to other strategies, such as those outlined in Manchester's Children and Young People's Plan, supporting Manchester's Children and Young People to be healthy, well and safe (Healthy, cared for people), enabling clean, safe and vibrant neighbourhoods through promoting the welfare of young people (Neighbourhoods) and reducing demand through reform and enabling our workforce to be the best they can be (Well-managed Council). It also plays a leading role in ensuring our young people are equipped with the skills they need to benefit from the growth of the city (Growth that benefits everyone) and ensures there are sufficient and high-quality places in local schools and early years settings.
- 1.3 The priorities, guiding principles and behaviours of Our Manchester, run throughout all key strategies and approaches being taken forward in the city from the overarching Children and Young People's Plan (Our Manchester, Our Children) through to Early Help, Our Promise to Looked After Children and Care Leavers, All Age Disability Strategy, Inclusion Strategy, Youth Justice Plan, Valuing Young People and Young Carers Strategy; as well as contributing to other strategy/delivery plans to improve the experiences and outcomes for our children and young people.
- 1.4 Throughout the COVID 19 pandemic, Children's and Education services and their partners have sought to continue to ensure the delivery of the services that underpin Our Children's strategy; our strategic objectives are children live safe, happy, health and successful lives. Within the safeguarding partnership the system has drawn from the pre-COVID shared vision for Manchester's children, supported by a range of strategies and approaches to minimise impact of the pandemic on all children.
- 1.5 Since March 2020, the service has operated under the working premise of "business as usual but doing things differently"; transitioning into 'working with agility'. These mission statements reflect the Directorate's commitment to the city's children and young people to ensure their welfare, education is safeguarded and promoted. As such the service has, throughout the pandemic, mindful of relevant health and safety advice, continued to work directly with children and their families and encouraged children and young people to attend their school or setting. It is to credit of our staff, the Directorate has shown significant creativity and flexibility in their approach to service provision in this context, whilst at the

same time supporting the partnerships capacity to continue to develop collaboration in the knowledge that some families require a co-ordinated multi agency level of support to safeguard children.

- 1.6 The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget is not included in the scope of this report. The expected settlement and proposed budget changes will be provided to Scrutiny and The Executive in December 2022.

2. Service Delivery

- 2.1 **Education Services** - This service budget represents the Council's responsibilities for education and learning other than those funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant. It includes school admissions, place planning, home to school transport and school crossing patrols. It also includes some support for children with SEND such as short breaks and respite care, support for inclusion and other groups of vulnerable children and the education of children looked after through the Virtual School.
- 2.2 The City has a diverse population with many communities and 190 different languages spoken. The overall population has continued to grow over the past two decades and Manchester is home to 547,627 residents of which 121,962 are children and young people aged 0 to 17 years - 22% of the population; of which 64% are from an ethnic minority origin. Over the last ten years Manchester's child population has grown at an annual rate of circa 2%.
- 2.3 Within the Manchester school population, the January 2021 census showed that 17.7% of pupils have Special Education Needs. This was made up of 13.4% who have their needs met at SEN (Special Educational Needs) Support level and 4.3% of the school population who have an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP). The census shows that the number of pupils who have their needs met through SEN Support or an EHCP is increasing. The percentages of pupils at SEN Support level and EHCP are higher than the latest national comparison data but in Manchester there is a strong correlation between measures of deprivation and the number of EHCPs. At May 2021 Manchester currently supports 5,159 Education, health and care plans for children and young people up to age 25.
- 2.4 The overall Ofsted outcomes for Manchester in 2021 showed:
- 96% of Early years settings and 92% childminders were judged to be good or better.
 - 88.8% of schools are good or better which is above national average (86.00%) and shows a continually improving system.
 - 92.50% of Manchester primary schools and 69.20% of secondary schools are judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding (with 5 new secondary schools still waiting a judgement).

- all post 16 provision is judged to be good or better in the City
- 2.5 Ensuring children and young people access high quality education has remained high priority throughout the pandemic and the Council have continued their robust quality assurance of schools via quality assurance professionals as well as providing ongoing communication, advice and support for school and setting leaders on a variety of issues throughout this time.
- 2.6 **Children Services** - This Directorate brings together the Council's duties in relation to children in need, child protection, looked after children and young people with care experience (leaving care service). It includes a range of services targeted to support families and help to avoid the need for children to come into care. It also provides short breaks and respite care services for disabled children and their families as well as Youth Justice Services. The budget recognises the costs associated with increased numbers of children requiring help, support and protection and the complexity of their needs. The Directorate's budget approach is built upon four themes:
1. **Cost avoidance** – preventive, timely and edge of care intervention
 2. **Care planning** - and continuous practice improvement
 3. **Commissioning** - collaboration and partnerships
 4. **Service improvement/efficiencies**
- 2.7 Following Ofsted's inspection in 2017 which judged Manchester's Children's Services to no longer be inadequate, the service has continued to make progress and improvements in the experiences, outcomes and quality of services provided to children and their families. The trajectory of continuous improvement has been sustained as reflected in later Ofsted focused visits (in 2018 and 2019), Peer Reviews and a Local Government Association Peer Reviews.
- 2.8 Despite a 28% increase in the City's child population since 2011 the number of looked after children has not increased at the same rate. In March 2011 there were 1,391 LAC and in March 2021 1,371 LAC. This has led to a reduction in the rate per ten thousand from 131 to 111. In terms of national comparisons between 2008 and 2020 Manchester saw a reduction of **2%** in numbers of children and young people in care compared to a **35%** increase nationally over same period.
- 2.9 Our rate of 'children in need' at 360 per 10,000 has decreased by 2.7% since March 2018/19 and is currently below that of statistical neighbours. 17% of children discharged from care in the last 6 months have gone onto be the subject of Special Guardianship significantly larger than our statistical neighbours and English average at 13%. In addition, and attributable to timelier and quality of intervention, over time there has been a significant decrease in the number of children subject to child protection planning, this has reduced by 123 in the last six months, at 45.9 per 10,000 this performance is better than statistical and northwest neighbours.

- 2.10 In addition, there has been a reduction in the number of children and young people subject to child protection plans from 787 at the end of 2018/19 to 731 at the end of 2019/20 and increased the percentage of child protection conferences held within 15 days of the start of the Section 47 enquiry from 78.4% in 2017/18 to 88% in 2019/20.
- 2.11 The improvements in both Children and Education Services have in part been associated with continued and strengthening partnerships that support even greater collaboration and robust leadership; underpinned by an effective performance/assurance framework. A recent Local Government Association peer review indicates that IT and Business Support offers will be subject to reviews to ensure service needs are met.

3. Priorities for this year and next:

- 3.1 In recognising the disruptive and detrimental impact of the Covid19 pandemic on children and young people in respect of their emotional, social and educational development. In September 2020, the City Council Executive resolved to Manchester City Council to dedicate 2022 to the city's children and young people; branded as '2022, Our Year'. This will involve working in partnership with the public and private sector to celebrate their resilience and successes whilst creating opportunities to have experiences that contribute to helping them build a successful future. This will be a key part of the City's covid recovery. Engagement from our children and young people has shown that there needs to be a strong focus on education, environment, health and equality, diversity and inclusion in the delivery of the plan. The ultimate ambition will be for Manchester to be recognised by UNICEF as a Child Friendly City by 2024.
- 3.2 The Children and Young People's Plan 2020 - 2024 - translates the Our Manchester priorities into a vision for 'building a safe, happy, healthy and successful future for children and young people'. The Directorate are passionate about children and young people. This is reflected not only in the way the Directorate work with them, but in all aspects of our service planning, commissioning and delivery of services. This is a value-based approach that involves a relentless drive and focus on improving all areas of children's and young people's lives, underpinned by a strength based, can do attitude.
- 3.3 To support the delivery of the city's strategic priorities the Children and Education Directorate Plan outlines the following key priorities for the next 2 years:
1. Recognise and value the voices of children and young people in all areas of our work, listening to them and responding to what they tell us
 2. Support and develop children's readiness for school and adulthood embedded in an approach to early intervention and early help
 3. Everyone's a leader - an empowered, capable, confident and stable workforce; effective in the management of risk, performance and planning for children

4. Continually improve outcomes for all children and 'close the gap' against the national attainment averages
 5. Greater collaboration and partnerships consolidate children's services locality model to support and promote children living in stable, safe and loving homes - achieving 'permanency' to safely reduce the number of children looked after and/or in need of a statutory service.
 6. Ensure there is a sufficient range and choice of high-quality early years, school, college and youth provision for all children and young people
 7. Develop and implement a specialist service/offer for children with complex needs.
- 3.4 A timely intervention preventing the unnecessary escalation of children's needs is still a key Directorate priority, as is the range and choice of provision for those children who are looked after by the Council and our care leavers. The Directorate operates within a national context of a changing regulatory framework which has an increased focus on.
- 3.5 Maintaining the Directorate's commitment to the quality of social work practice and management oversight and ensuring the education system is inclusive, delivers good or outstanding schools and meets the needs of all learners. This requires the Directorate to adapt, anticipate and respond to the challenges with purpose and focus.
- 3.6 The budget options for savings have been informed by the Directorate Budget approach to deliver safe, effective and efficient services, the progress and impact of the services to date. This approach has been developed by thinking through the way in which the Directorate can meet its statutory duties and make the maximum contribution to the priorities for the city, as set out in the earlier parts of this report. In some cases, this is by increasing the pace of implementing the already identified reforms and services improvements as a way of making financial savings by reducing demand for expensive, reactive services. In other cases, this is by choosing options for service reductions which will have the least damaging impact on the achievement of our priorities.

4. Key actions on tackling diversity and inclusion

- 4.1 The Directorate works together with Manchester's citizens and our partners to understand our diverse communities, improve life chances, and celebrate diversity. There is a commitment to understanding and addressing the effects and impacts of its activities for the diverse range of people using the service. To achieve the Directorate is committed to undertaking where required and monitor equality analysis of new or altered functions, to ensure they are accessible and inclusive and do not cause adverse equality impacts. The Directorate will use the Council's Equality Impact Assessment framework to do this. It will strengthen evidence bases to show the differential experiences of individual identity groups in Manchester accessing Council services, remove barriers and proactively respond to make these as fair and equitable as possible.

- 4.2 Education services provide support and challenge to schools to address gaps in attainment and disproportionality in attendance and exclusion between black, Asian and other ethnic minority groups in the city. They are encouraging all schools to sign up to the Diverse Curriculum Charter developed by Afsal Khan and developing a plan in collaboration with Teaching School hub and school leaders to ensure the school workforce and school leadership better reflects the diversity in the city.
- 4.3 As an employer the Directorate seeks to ensure a fair and inclusive working environment which recognises, values and responds to the dynamics and opportunities of a diverse workforce. The Children's Services Plan has five key focus areas of: reverse mentoring, recruitment, training, mentoring and personal development opportunities for all and having ongoing and transparent conversations about race equality.