

The Quality of Practice in Children's Social Care

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Manchester's children and young people population

130,570 children aged 0-18 years old

Over 80,000 school aged children educated across 185 schools (inc. 55 Academies and 13 Free Schools)

148 languages spoken in the city's schools, and 41.9% with English as an additional language.

43% eligible for FSM (increase during pandemic)

Manchester's children and young people in need of help, support and protection:

- 5,436 referrals (first 8 months)
- 5,286 Children in Need, of which:
 - 620 have a disability
 - 549 Subject to a Child Protection Plan
 - 1,427 Looked After Children
 - 1,242 Care Leavers



Quality of Practice – what is it?

Quality of practice' is not an area of activity that is so easily 'measured/weighed. It is better understood as:

- the application of theory,
 - professional judgement,
 - evaluative skills and
 - experience in day-to-day practice,
- and then how this is then applied in the building of relationships, mobilising internal/external resources to co-develop plans with a degree of healthy skepticism, professional curiosity and a contingency should progress against the desired outcome not and/or is unlikely to be achieved.

If we can achieve this we would expect to see the positive impact of our work on outcomes for Manchester children.



How do we know the quality of our practice?

- **External**
 - Ofsted Inspection
 - Peer review
 - NW Sector challenge
 - Invited 'Critical Friend'
- **Internal:**
 - Management over-sight
 - Quality Assurance Framework:
 - Data
 - Audit and moderation
 - Observation of Practice
 - Feedback from children and families
 - DCS Challenge
 - Partnership performance and scrutiny and audit
 - Member scrutiny and challenge
 - Practice alerts



External:

- **Ofsted / CQC SEND inspection** 22nd- 25th November 2021– positive feedback with the formal letter setting out the detail
- **LGA Peer Review:**
 - Permanence planning 18th – 22nd October 2021– strong ambition, vision and commitment, greater consistency of our best practice needed
 - Youth Justice Service 15th – 18th November 2021– *“We found a positive mix of skill, experience, enthusiasm and commitment within the service, which was being utilised to best effect to achieve improved outcomes for children and young people”*
- **NW sector challenge** – focus on delivering consistently high standards, and drive for continuous improvement and reflective learning. Operational model to support consistency whilst remaining responsive. Visibility of Manchester’s children during the pandemic recognised. Strength in the stability and visibility of the leadership team

External:

- **Independent Critical Friend** – thematic review of 3 areas of service:
 - Domestic abuse in the context of Children’s Services ‘front door’ – realignment of practice model and partnership – “ *The overall quality of practice in a significant number of cases where domestic abuse featured was good*” – ambition to continue improvement
 - Children with a Disability - impact of pandemic significant – practice improvement supported by review findings and has given pace to strategic focus and restructure to development of a multi-disciplinary service allowing alignment to locality based operational response.
 - Fostering Service – significant improvement, with “*evidence of effective joint working and communication resulting in support to the carers and child*”

All external evaluations identified that Manchester leadership knew ourselves well and previously identified areas of challenge have made progress.

What we know currently

Internal:

- Audit:

Judgement	2019 (Sept – Dec)	2020	Jan 2021 – Oct 2021
Outstanding (%)	4(1%)	16 (2%)	30 (4%)
Good (%)	99 (35%)	347 (38%)	383 (45%)
Requires Improvement to be Good (%)	142(50%)	479 (52%)	393 (46%)
Inadequate (%)	41 (14%)	82 (9%)	47 (6%)
TOTALS	286	924	853

- Steady increase of improvement in judgements of service, very few children identified as receiving a poor service that does not meet practice standards
- 6 golden threads: compliance to expectations well embedded, good practice in direct work with children and visibly incorporating practice models and research into assessments, want to evidence quality and impact for children more consistently, including greater confidence in analysis and judgment.
- Some disparity in outstanding judgments given in different services, little change in moderation – as practice has improved the bar has been raised higher impact and outcomes

Internal:

- We continued to see children throughout the pandemic and will not change from this position as a priority
- The strength of our partnership both in achieving good outcomes together for children and being a critical friend to the service needs further development
- Pandemic has brought opportunities – accelerated the use of different ways to communicate with children in addition to face to face, as well as additional impacts for children – increased isolation and vulnerability
- We want to get better at how we record our assessments and interventions with families in a strength based, trauma informed way
- Plans for children better reflect the multi-agency contribution and contingency planning is more evident
- We evidence how we have understood the history in families and how this has impacted on the child and informs future intervention and planning
- Practitioners work with great complexity and establish effective working relationships with families

Impact for children

Children tell us that they know their social worker, most like spending time with them and want to see them more and don't like it when they leave.

Young people say they want and feel respected and like being supported in making their own choices

More children want to understand their plan and have an opportunity to write their own outcomes and priorities to keep them to be safe, happy, healthy and successful.

When children are in our care their families remain very important to them and we can do even better at helping them develop how their time with them can happen

Children tell us they don't like to change schools where they lose contact with friends and feel safe and familiar there and we can do better in considering how we understand their worries about this and helping support them

Many of our children told us they feel happy and well cared for and supported by us

Some children want us to use different ways too keep in touch with them in-between visits

How we will drive continuous improvement and learning

- Audit – done with practitioners so they are a learning experience that is strengths based
- More systematic observations of practice – DCS down
- Shift to quality – e.g. not just that you've seen a child, was it meaningful, purposeful, what did it achieve, what was the impact, how will this inform your professional view
- Ownership of performance and quality of practice within the locality throughout service
- Management over-sight - Skill in writing impact statements -
 - What was the issue for the child – evidence based
 - What are the options /choices
 - What does experience/ research tell us –likely impact
 - What evidence was weighed up, what on balance led to your decision
 - What do you expect the impact for the child to be, when will you see this
 - What is your contingency plan
 - When will you review success

How we will drive continuous improvement and learning

- Priority investment in Team Managers:
 - Training and development
 - Review of golden threads
 - Coaching, mentoring, reflective supervision skills
- More systematic feedback from children and families
- Create an excellent workforce for the future:
 - Apprenticeships – x7
 - Develop the best students as Manchester employees
 - Great support, learning and development offer for new social workers in their first year (over 100)
 - Career and talent development including leadership programmes

Questions?

