

Children's and Education Services

The Children and Young People Engagement Annual Report 2020–21

Ensuring effective engagement with our
vulnerable Children and Young People



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“Building a safe, happy, healthy and successful future for children and young people in Manchester”

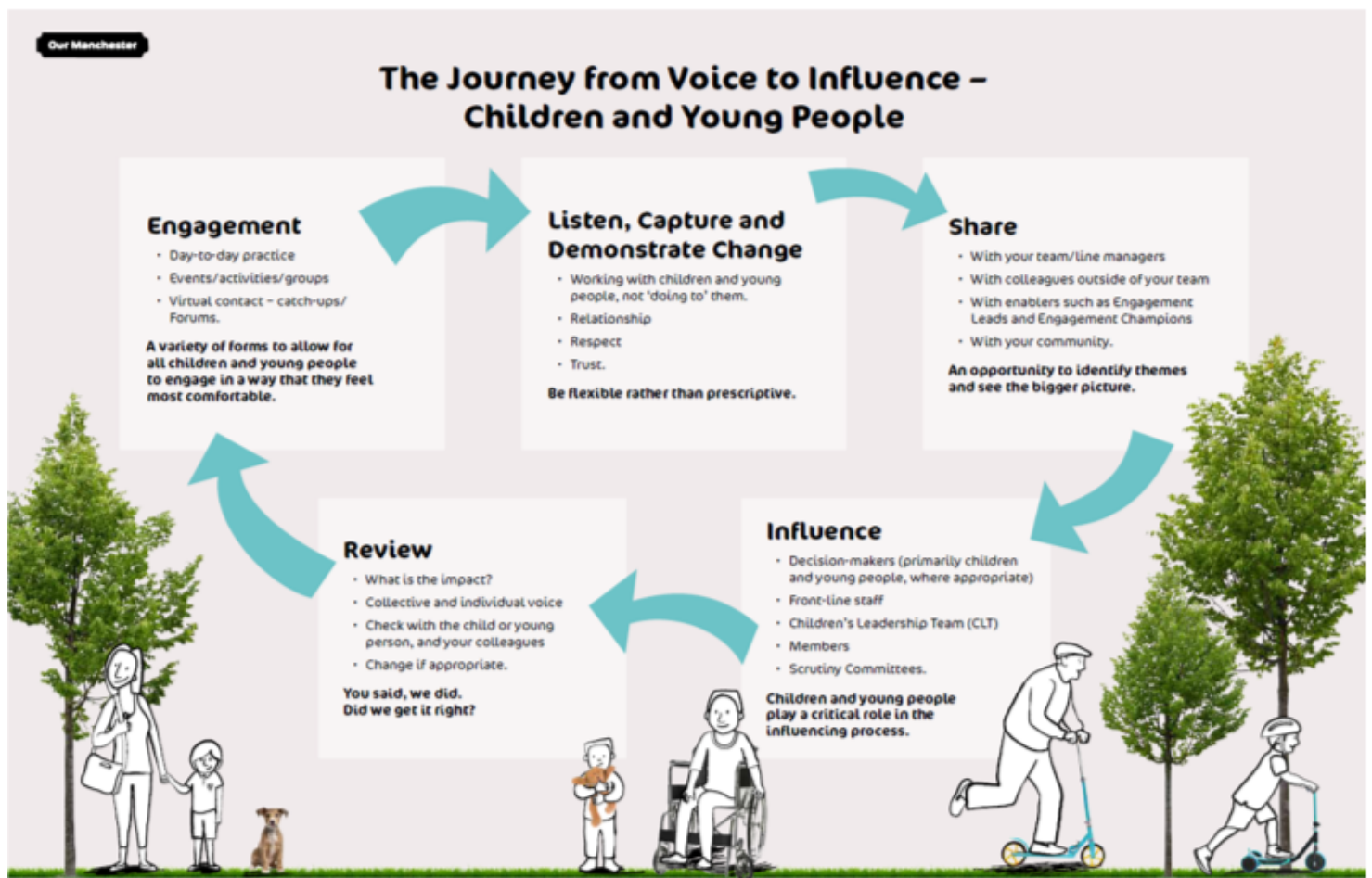
Context & Purpose

Children & young people are at the heart of what we do and to make sure we get things right we have made a commitment to have ongoing conversations, in a variety of ways, to allow for all children and young people to engage in a way and place that they feel most comfortable. Allowing young people to lead in environments that suit them best.

Listening and responding to children and young people is our number one priority; we will:

“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.”

We have a collective responsibility, allowing children and young people to communicate with their professional of choice, ensuring that what we hear is taken to a place of influence. The diagram below demonstrates how we do this in Manchester.



Ongoing conversations help us to keep children and young people at the heart of everything we do.

This report will focus specifically on children and young people in Manchester who are in care, care leavers, children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), young carers, and those young people who are being supported by our youth justice and early help services. It will provide an overview of our engagement activity across the directorate of Children's & Education services and where relevant will include the input of universal services that have supported these cohorts. In turn it will look at what children and young people have been telling us and draw out key themes.

1. Overview & Engagement captured in this report

2020-21 has been a year like no other, Covid-19 has had a significant global impact on everyone, none more so than the lives of children and young people in our city. It is important to note that Manchester has experienced far more restrictions compared to other areas in the country, which in turn has had a greater impact on our most vulnerable children and young people. Our teams have gone above and beyond in making sure that children and young people remain at the heart of what we do despite the challenges that the pandemic has posed. We continue delivering services, albeit differently sometimes.

Although we do not fully know the impact of the pandemic yet, we know that our most vulnerable groups have been disproportionately affected. To mitigate any further setbacks as well as routine support, we will be dedicating 2022 as the 'Year of children & young people'. We have started planning a year to celebrate and engage with and further support children and young people in Manchester. As part of this city-wide campaign of listening and acting together, we will create a programme of activities, opportunities and experiences that will help children and young people emerge stronger and reclaim their future; we also aim to create a legacy and for our city to be recognised by UNICEF as 'child friendly.' A place with young people as part of its DNA.

Our Manchester MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

Children and young people

- Achievement awards
- Assessments and direct work activities
- Children in Care Co-operative and SEND Change Makers groups
- Clothing events for care leavers
- Consultations

- Day to day practice
- Early Help assessments
- Electronic Newsletters
- Events and activities
- Face to face focus groups
- Manchester Youth Council
- Mentoring

- Personal Education Plans/Education Health and Care plans
- Phone calls/WhatsApp
- Reviews
- School visits
- Virtual groups



The illustration shows a street scene with various elements: a school building on the left with a sign that says 'WELCOME TO OUR MANCHESTER SCHOOL', a row of houses, a park area with a bench and a person on a bicycle, and a community hub building on the right with a sign that says 'Our Manchester Community Hub'. There is also a blue bus on the right side of the street.

Service areas involved*

- Alonzi House & Other Residential Settings
- Early Help
- Independent Reviewing Officers
- Leaving Care Service
- Libraries, Galleries & Culture
- Social work teams
- Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND)
- Sure Start Childrens Centres
- Virtual Schools
- Young Carers
- Youth Justice
- Youth Strategy

*Service functions & routine recording methods/databases - Appendix B&C

Surveys & Reports

- PEP Pupil Voice Rec-Year 13 Report 2019 Manchester Virtual School
- PEP Pupil Early Years -Year 13 Report 2019 – 20
- SEND change makers survey and outcomes of OFSTED survey of young people over 16 with SEND
- Impacts of Covid-19 on Children and young people in the United Kingdom 2021

Events & Activities

We have had to rethink how we deliver our events and activities over the last year due to the pandemic. Events and activities continued but just differently. Instead of large events there has been a focus on smaller activities. There has been a mix between virtual and face to face contact to make sure our children and young people are safe, happy and healthy; and to ensure we can provide support where needed. Examples include:

- Cooking & Budgeting sessions for care leavers
- Co-production of a travel hub for young people with special educational needs and disabilities
- Volunteering/Campaigning
- Gardening
- Employability Skills & Mentoring
- Sports
- Virtual Meetings/conversations (1-1 & groups)
- Young people's videos
- Regular welfare calls
- A range of universal provision during school holidays
- Manchester Achievement Awards – awards and prizes delivered to young people's homes
- Monthly meetings in residential homes
- Support not sympathy campaign for young carers
- Refreshed Children in Care Cooperative
- Senior officer and elected member visits to schools and holiday clubs to talk to children and young people.

It is important to note that events and activities are not for everyone, so we regularly have smaller catchups with young people in environments of their choice.

2. How our teams engage with children & young people.

Engaging with children and young people from our vulnerable groups is part of day-to-day practice for our teams, an area which is hugely underestimated but carries so much importance. Frontline practitioners do a great deal of work with young people that has a massive impact on the young person's life. However, this is not always recorded in a way where it demonstrates the amount of work that has been done and, in some cases, it is not always easy to draw out those examples when teams are asked for this information. We are working with over 5,350 vulnerable children and young people plus over 5000 with Education, Health & Care Plans and we have a duty to create opportunities for them to engage in a way that feels right for them. This happens all the time, but we need to get better by evidencing the impact that this has on young people's lives.

As well as day-to-day practice a range of engagement methods are used, we clearly listen to children and young people and adapt our services accordingly and instantly sometimes, but this is not always clearly recorded or shared within teams or wider.

Engagement activity which is working well includes:

- Manchester's Youth Council which includes some of our vulnerable young people. We continue to support others who would like to join. MYC are actively engaged in the Children's board and set priorities as well as commission services.
- Corporate parenting Panel is influenced by our refreshed Children in Care Cooperative. Meaning ALL children in care and care leavers can contribute and in a way that they feel most comfortable, whether that is in person or through other means of their choice.

- 2022 has been dedicated to children and young people; an ambition to be a UNICEF child friendly city by 2024. School visits in preparation for next year have resulted in lots of meaningful conversations with children and young people that will help us shape the service's that we provide for them.
- SEND Services are influenced and shaped by children and young people. Change Makers co-designed the recent children and young people's SEND Lockdown Experience survey, which had over 360 responses from SEND young people across the city.
- A child or young person's voice is included in all Education Health Care Plans.
- Youth Violence research and strategy informed by young people.
- Inclusion Strategy
- Manchester Achievement & Buzz Awards and clothing events with support from the business sector in improving the experiences and outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.
- The Young Carers strategy, co-produced with children and young people, and their voice continues to influence its delivery; voice and asks are clear in the strategy.
- We ensure children and young people are involved in the recruitment and selection of new staff
- Young people are supported to plan and deliver events and activities and play a huge part in their success.

Positive impact of the above:

- Co-production charter for strategies and over 97% of children seen as part of assessment and planning practice.
- 94% of our young people aged 2-17 years have a Personal Education Plan in place; informed by their aspirations and views.
- 96% of 'Our Children' participate in their Statutory Review.
- Meaningful 'in touch' with 97% of our Care Leavers (10% increase).
- 20% reduction in Remand since 2018/19.
- 64% of care leavers engaged in Education, Employment and/or Training.
- 63% schools awarded Rights Respecting status.

3. What Children & Young People are telling us

Covid-19

The impact of Covid-19 is without a doubt the main topic that children and young people have been talking about. It has consistently been identified as an overarching theme and one that has impacted on all other themes that have been identified. It is also important to note that there is some crossover between some of the themes.

What has worked well

Some young people have enjoyed online activities and learning from home, particularly primary-aged children and those with special educational needs and disabilities. Young people liked having a laptop and learning with their families, they felt they could have more quality time together which in turn strengthened their relationships. Some of our vulnerable young people continued attending school throughout the pandemic and liked being in school, especially in smaller groups. They thrived in quieter environments and gained confidence especially as they received more support when they struggled with a specific task. Others felt they had more time to relax and play at home.

'It was good because we got to still remain on task and in a routine but just from home.'

'Young carers really enjoyed lockdown and they learnt better from home, they felt more relaxed and although still challenged, didn't feel under as much pressure as they do in the classroom'.

'I feel that I have people to support me and help when I need it'

Things that have not worked well

Having a clear routine and structure during lockdown has been difficult for some children and young people. This has resulted in a lack of motivation to complete school and college work and or take part in any other activities. Sometimes it has been difficult to concentrate in busy households with children and young people of different ages. Young people have had to change their routines and adapt in whatever way they felt best at the time.

I stay up late because I'm stressing about my schoolwork and exams, it's the only time I get some proper headspace to think and then I'm tired and wake up late...I've got nothing to look forward to'

Sometimes the pressures felt by adults in the household due to loss of income, redundancies and having to home school have been felt by children and young people.

'It's not fair, mum and dad can't work anymore, and it upsets me when I see them upset...I want to help but I don't know how'

'We've missed normality and seeing friends and teachers...'

'YCs have shared they have missed being able to attend lunch time and after school clubs and activities in the community like going to the mosque or going to the gym.'

You Said (Theme)	We did
Covid-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supported young people to create reparation packs to bring positivity to vulnerable groups in our communities i.e., the elderly (Youth Justice)• Doorstep visits to ensure we could see young people face to face where necessary• Provided hampers for care leavers, including food vouchers.• Young carers have been encouraged to attend extra-curricular activities in school and sign posted to attend local events in the community• We held a variety of virtual activities, for example Easter egg hunts for our children and young people. Children were given prizes for completing a questionnaire and Easter eggs were given to all.• For the summer holidays we distributed 'Happiness Bags' to all our school-aged children and young people. This was a small token to acknowledge the difficult year they have had and included mindful messages, books and crafts. There were also individual messages included from their social workers, supervising social workers and others• 'Life after lockdown' - To establish what we can do to help children and young people (Youth Justice)

Education, Future & Aspirations

Children and young people have regularly talked about the interruption that the pandemic and school closures have caused to their education and how this will impact their future. There has been a fear of falling behind or not achieving the results that truly reflect their ability. There has also been uncertainty about opportunities in the future, especially as many young people lost their jobs or were furloughed. The impact of reduced household income and parent/carer redundancies has also been felt by children and young people in those homes.

'I was furloughed and it was hard for me because I like working'

'I don't want to be flopping'

Although initially seen as a novelty, there has sometimes been a dislike towards online learning by some children and young people. They have felt bombarded with information and the regular changes in guidance (attending school/ learning from home) have caused the boundaries to become blurred. This has been further complicated by the mixed messages received through social media.

Transitions to the next destination and the fear of the unknown have been massive for some young people. The opportunity to visit new settings and meet new staff and friends has not been the same, which has added to the existing fears of the unknown.

'I have a lot of social anxiety now and I'm worried about making new friends and fitting in and living up to the standards...social and fashion trends'

Overall, most of the experiences of our vulnerable children and young people have been in line with their peers. However, there are some cohorts where these experiences have been further compounded. For example, unaccompanied Asylum Seekers have been talking about wanting to go to university but not being able to access funds.

'I want to speak English and be more independent' (Care Leaver)

You Said (Theme)	We did
Education, Future & Aspirations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Had discussions with schools / colleges and relevant professionals to ensure our young people have the right wrap around support (Virtual Schools) • Created opportunities for young people to safely go into school / college during lockdown on a reduced timetable. • We developed creative and art -based interventions and courses – (Youth Justice) • ESOL tuition arranged and more intake at college to a later date in the academic year to improve education and increase learning • MAES (Manchester Adult Education Service) were invited to events to support care leavers with enrolling for courses (Maths & English)

- Promoted regular communication between education settings and young people during COVID-19 to check on their wellbeing, identify any ways that learning can be enhanced during lockdown, and discuss any worries, including moving to a new school, college, or exam results
- SEND team distributed sensory bags to all children and young people with an Education Health & Care Plan in summer 2020 and winter 2021

- **Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing**

Young people have been experiencing a range of emotions and have told us that they are worried about the following things:

- Missing family members, especially grandparents & birth parents for our children in care & care leavers.
- Fear of passing the virus on to parents and grandparents, especially where extended families live together or near each other.
- Struggling to cope with bereavement and or the fear of losing loved ones.
- Struggling with online lessons
- Making friends in a new school
- Fear of the unknown
- Transitions to the next destination - transition to school and college
- 'Not knowing where I will live in the future'
- Anxiety around Covid-19 vaccinations for parents, grandparents, and young people themselves.

'I have anxiety cos of Covid and feel down, and I'm fed up with online learning, its lonely and I miss my friends'

'I'm not having the jab, I don't trust it'

'I just felt like no one was there'

'I'm always on my phone, I know it's not good for me but I don't know what else to do or where to go...I miss my friends, it's the only way we can catch up'.

You Said (Theme)	We did
Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buddy systems • Work with our partners to get young people the right support, e.g., 42nd Street • Support care leavers through their individual journey and help them reflect and come to terms with the impact that past trauma has on their current wellbeing • Young carers that could not attend school/college received safe and welfare checks via weekly phone calls or home visits • Support young people to their health & immigration appointments (before, during and after) and working with GP's and other medical staff to ensure the young person feels safe at all times <i>'I praise my YP about how well they are doing before, during and after their appointment. I try to make them laugh or smile during my visit. I always listen to what they tell me'</i>

- We followed young people who are at risk and who leave their home at night, to ensure they are safe
- The Virtual School (VS) has provided mentoring from an assistant educational psychologist for those young people experiencing difficulties in school
- Provide a safe space when things get difficult; children can request time themselves at Alonzi House rather than being driven by carers or staff
- Children wanted to improve their communication and self-esteem and were taken on short break holidays to allow them time and space to develop trusting relationships

Inequalities related to race & ethnicity

The murder of George Floyd months after the pandemic sparked global protest, and movements such as Black Lives Matter created conditions to allow children and young people to slowly start talking about an area within their lives which has been difficult to talk about in the past. An area which has raised lots of question marks in their young minds and an area which has created a lot of passion for positive change and equality. The quotes below demonstrate some of their experiences:

"Why do white people think its ok to treat me badly just because of my colour?"

"I can't be me"

"Society says young black lads like me behave in one way even if we don't. I get stopped by the police a lot and every time I see a police van my heart drops, it doesn't matter who I'm with or what I'm doing. I just expect I'm going to have to stop".

"I only realised after BLM that all my teachers were white and that most of the people who support me in different organisations are mainly white as well. What is that saying to young people of colour?"

Manchester is a hugely diverse and vibrant city and there are many of our children and young people that have been affected by inequalities related to race, ethnicity and colour. The pandemic has also further exposed these inequalities.

You Said (Theme)	We did
Inequalities related to Race & Ethnicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Young people's reading groups (YPRG) with authors from diverse backgrounds - Provided young carers with the opportunity to offer their daily prayers whilst in school within the safety of their year group bubble - Provided support to Greater Manchester Police to help them write their strategy for youth engagement; we also delivered the 'Our Manchester Experience' to GMP sharing what children and young people had told us of their experiences with the police - Used creative methods to help children and young people elicit their views about racism and the overrepresentation of black and Asian young men in prison through the production of a short video (Youth Justice) - Created worksheets with the support of young people to talk about their individual identities and societies perception of them: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'My culture, my identity' - 'Just because I am...' (Youth Justice)

Independence, Access, Safety & Inclusion

Young people (mainly secondary age onwards) across all our vulnerable groups regularly talk about their independence, access to information, opportunities and the right emotional and financial support when they need it. They want to feel safe in the choices that they make about their lives, the resources they can access and safe spaces in the communities that they live in. They want to become independent adults and want the support and opportunities to be able to do this as and when they need it. They want to be included in conversations that affect their lives. There is a sense of pride and accomplishment in their achievements despite the difficulties they sometimes face, this is conveyed in a variety of ways and examples include:

- Concerns about future accommodation
- Money
- Access to information that the local authority holds about them (Children in care and care leavers in particular)
- Getting support from people they already know
- Feeling safe when they are out and about
- Recognition for what they do well
- Be included in decisions/planning about their lives.

'I feel helpless sometimes when lots of professionals turn up, making decisions that affect my life, I want to be included in what happens in my life and when'

'I want my own place and make my own decisions'

"My universal credit payments are not enough."

" I have a right to access the information held about me since I went into care."

"Being a young carer is sunshine and rain, 99%happy 1% sad'

You Said (Theme)	We did
Independence, Access & Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We increased the leaving care allowance by £20 in line with the Universal Credit uplift and will be keeping this in place. • The children at Rodney House could not get into the city centre so we brought the Evolve performance to them, with funding from Reading Friends • Supported young People from GMCDP (Greater Manchester Council for Disabled People) Young Creatives with their performance which will be showcased in December • Apply for gym passes on behalf of our young people • Support to manage expectations of what is realistic at 18 • Provided recipes, ingredients, and cooking equipment so that children could cook and bake during lockdown • We have used what children and young people have told us to continue to improve our service; we have prioritised making sure children have face-to-face meetings, helping them plan their visits (IRO's) • With the help of young people and partners, we are co-producing a travel hub with a range of services and tools to support YP to access the places they want to go safely • We have issued weekly newsletters about what is available for children with additional needs and their families to do over the summer holidays • Promote accessing the wider network of services available to young people through youth centres and community-based projects • We have facilitated various free activities for children and young people across the city, including youth clubs in north, central and south Manchester • We help children and young people articulate their voice in the way they feel comfortable and shape our services in response to that, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Youth Justice service supports young people to tell their stories through videos and art • Young people are now part of the Our Manchester Disability Plan Board and feed in specifically to the transport workstream • Several young carers are on the Young Carers Partnership group to ensure they are key partners in both the development and the delivery of the Young Carers offer • Young carer champions plan to take the work forward in settings • We changed the language we use with our young people, e.g., changing 'Reparation' to 'helping the Community' - we are committed to reflect on and change our language to ensure young people feel part of the conversation

It is important to note that the environment & climate change only came up in organized group activities within schools and settings and although this is one of the key themes universally, it is not the case amongst our vulnerable groups.

4. Did we get it right?

Theme	Feedback
Covid-19	<p><i>Xxxx told me she was excited to meet me, I asked her why and she replied, 'I don't know really, people have been helping us a lot and its nice'.</i></p> <p><i>'It was good to have the young carers meetings where we get to have fun and build new friendships'</i></p> <p><i>'We enjoy being part of the Support not sympathy project'</i></p> <p><i>'xxx is over the moon to receive an award, his beaming face says it all, he's currently online choosing the toys & games to buy with his vouchers!!!'</i></p> <p><i>'She also kept in touch weekly to see how we are doing and if we needed anything else as this was very important to me to have someone listen and encourage you'</i></p> <p><i>'We thank and appreciate everything that you did for us'</i></p>
Education, Future & Aspirations	<p><i>"Schools tried hard to make sure everyone had access to tech during lockdown, but we had to share a laptop between our family, it was difficult to manage'</i></p> <p><i>'We missed out on our education due to being in bubbles, I've had to stay back a year to catch up and get my grades up, it's not what I wanted to do'</i></p> <p><i>'Thank you so much for all the support, checking in on myself and the kids during lockdown and bringing the activity packs to keep the children busy. Also, for your time and help with the completion of forms. I was completely lost with my daughter's additional needs and didn't know where to go I now with your help and support have appointments in place. I just want her to be able to go to school. I can now look forward to her going to school and getting the helps she needs. Once again thank you so much for all the support you have given us'</i></p> <p><i>'Creative and arts-based interventions and courses not only increased young people's self-esteem and confidence but also helped them develop their aspirations and confidence' – Youth Justice.</i></p>
Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing	<p><i>'You helped to take a lot of our worries away just by being a higher power(!) You gave us some control back'</i></p> <p><i>'It helped to know that there was someone I could turn to if I wanted to talk but would also not try and force me to talk if I didn't feel like opening up.'</i></p> <p><i>'School made sure we were happy' 'lots of goodies, prizes and opportunities'</i></p>

	<p><i>'I used to have issues with my mum, we used to clash a lot. I could call my worker and get the help. I asked for space and they supported me. I had to be removed from the house and have time at the Alonzi to sort myself out... my relationship with mum has now improved, I think learning how to self control my anger has got better.'</i></p> <p><i>'They taught me how to feel better about myself and how to calm myself in troubling situations.'</i></p> <p><i>'xxx has really benefitted from Alonzi's intervention. She seems happier in herself, and we have seen a massive improvement in her emotional wellbeing.'</i></p> <p><i>'It was good to stay in touch with everyone and have someone to talk to outside school and family. Everyone struggled during lockdown but staying in touch and knowing someone was there to talk to helped me'</i></p> <p><i>'It was good to know that everyone had ups and down in lockdown, not just me'</i></p>
<p>Inequalities related to Race & Ethnicity</p>	<p><i>'A young person from the YPRG attended an author event showcasing 3 young black writers. She said it was very inspiring for her to see young black women as professional writers and felt it gave her the confidence to aim high. She could recognise herself in those writers'</i></p> <p><i>Families were extremely grateful that their children were given the opportunity to pray in school and said the contributions made all the difference to emotional wellbeing.</i></p>
<p>Independence, Access & Safety</p>	<p><i>'The children loved the last performance, and it was pitched perfectly'</i></p> <p><i>GMCDP will showcase their performance work at the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) in Manchester Central Library on 3 December 2021.</i></p> <p><i>Two siblings who were given the cooking package described how they spent all day cooking and were really proud to serve the rest of the family a cooked dinner.</i></p> <p><i>Work from Birchfield has been recorded and will feature at our launch of support not sympathy campaign for young carers and will be a key resource to directly influence change for other schools to follow the example.</i></p> <p><i>'I like coming to your centre to see my mam and dad, nobody knows me here. You are always smiling and make it fun. I can decide what I want to do, it makes me feel happy'</i></p> <p><i>'97% of children engage in their review, which shows how they feel invested in'.</i></p> <p><i>'I feel safe when I'm at x and x's house. They look after me well and they stick up for me when I need them. I love being part of the family. They help in any way they can to help support me. I love everyone so much. I have everything I wanted....x and x made me feel like I am part of their family.'</i></p>

It has been a challenging year for young people and the professionals who work with them, getting things right at a time where the full impact is not completely understood has not been easy. Nevertheless, our teams have been flexible and consistent in making sure support is provided to children and young people as required.

There have been some areas which have been more difficult than others. For example, inequalities related to race and ethnicity is a theme which is compounded by many varied factors and will mean different things to different young people, whether it is their individual experiences, experiences of their friends and family, experiences with professionals or authority figures or a combination of all. An area which requires a great deal more understanding and work.

"We have the challenge ourselves to embrace difficult conversations about inequality and racism in order to equip ourselves with the skills to talk to children about their experiences and the impact they have on their perception of themselves and the world around them" Youth Justice manager.

5. Next Steps.

Children & young people will remain at the heart of what we do and to ensure we get things right we will:

- Continue to have collective responsibility to allow young people to work with their professional of choice. Engagement and participation with children and young people will be everyone's business.
- Recognise day to day practice as a key part of Participation & Engagement with vulnerable children & young people. Events and activities will be used as additional opportunities for engagement.
- Ensure all teams and partners that we work with have a clear understanding of our new engagement framework (*A Journey from Voice to influence*).
- Ensure all our teams have clear mechanisms in place to regularly review what children and young people are telling us and share the learning wider, taking it to a place of influence, especially if further support is required
- Ensure all service reports include what children and young people are saying, what we have done in response to that and how we have checked that we have got things right.
- Ensure all children & young people are aware of all opportunities and have the choice to engage and collaborate in a way that feels comfortable to them.

- Ensure all teams contribute to large events and consultations.
- Engagement & participation to be wide reaching and not tokenistic.
- Incorporate the themes identified into service plans:
 - Covid-19
 - Education, Future & Aspirations
 - Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing
 - Inequalities related to Race & Ethnicity
 - Independence, Access & Safety
- Demonstrate evidence and impact of all participation and engagement activity to inform practice.
- Ensure service areas collate details of their service-user demographics (age, gender, ethnicity, locality) to enable us to look out for patterns or variations.

To achieve these objectives, we will:

Ensure everyone has a good understanding of our engagement approach

Ensure everyone understands and puts into practice the new engagement framework 'The journey from voice to influence - Children and young people'

Incorporate the responsibility for engaging with children and young people into everyone's role (fits with the 'Our Manchester behaviours')

Create communities of practice to progress engagement projects and create positive change

Provide guidance, support, share best practice, and current ideas on how to engage successfully with children and young people and how to share what children and young people are telling us

Establish a consistent approach to recording the voice of our children and young people

Collate the learning from our engagement and use it to influence our delivery plans



Recruit and support a network of Engagement Champions – with an aim of having at least one per team

Develop information channels that ensure everyone can access the full range of activities, services, and information

Work across all our partnerships and services to build an effective communication and engagement network, ensuring we all share and utilise the learning from our engagement activities

Service Delivery Plan 2021


Children and Young People's Participation and Engagement

Mission Statement

- To increase the voice and influence of Manchester's children and young people with a particular focus on those who need additional support.
- To ensure wherever possible our universal engagement opportunities are inclusive of all children and young people.

Our Achievements	Our Priorities	How we deliver them
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50 Engagement Champions across the directorate. New Our Manchester Experience for Children & Young People. Children & Young people's voice to influence framework. The Skills for life framework Manchester Achievement Awards New Children In Care Cooperative New engagement models within each service area including regular activities. Regular analysis of views expressed by children and young people in their Personal Education Plans Manchester Youth Council - Make your Mark. Up to date electronic information on MCC website including regular service broadcasts. Youth Ambassadors 'Change Makers' - SEND The Young Carers Ambassador programme Digital work in special schools (Digital Advantage) Young person's participation & engagement framework - Youth Justice. Serious Youth violence research - Youth Justice. <p><small>(Please note this is not a complete list - engagement activity changes and varies according to the needs of children and young people).</small></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the views of children and young people are used to inform service delivery and wider agendas which impact on all young people. Ensure that there is collective responsibility across our services for engaging with children and young people in a strength-based way. Adopt a tell us once approach, avoiding the need for children and young people to repeatedly provide us with information that is already held. Strengthen the voice of our children and young people by delivering a range of engagement opportunities, ensuring that these are inclusive and representative. Ensure that children and young people are represented on groups and boards in a way that is appropriate - children and young people led and not tokenistic. Create opportunities for children and young people to take part in collaborative projects, i.e., co-designing their own plans and activities. Ensure engagement opportunities are used to address the things that children and young people have told us, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact of Covid-19 Inequalities related to race & ethnicity. Education, Future & Aspirations. 	<p>Collective responsibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each team to share what children and young people are telling them within their team and wider to influence change. A network of engagement champions linked to each team. Communities of practice to progress engagement projects. <p>Create a menu of engagement opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year of the child - 2022 a year dedicated to Children & Young People. Phase 1: Listening to CYP in their environments to plan for 2022. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buzz Awards - Universal Targeted Events - Based on specific cohorts Manchester Achievement Awards - Our Children <p>Develop a programme of activities in environments children and young people naturally feel comfortable (some of these to be universal)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Manchester experience for children & young people. Ensure our vulnerable groups are supported to attend all universal activity. Corporate parents to attend where possible. <p>Create a programme of clear pathways for young people at the point of engagement with clear and consistent outcomes which support the development of skills for life.</p> <p>Clear induction & training for all opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentoring/Shadowing Interview Panels Apprenticeships Opportunities to influence service change <p>Smart reporting to inform service planning and practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easy reads for young people, staff and members Annual report to include 'you said' 'we did', 'did we get it right?' (All service areas to contribute). Up to date & concise electronic information



The diagram shows a vertical flow of strategy levels: Greater Manchester Strategy, Our Manchester Strategy, Our Corporate Plan, Council Business Plan, Council Budget Report, Service Plans on a Page, Team Plans, and About You. A 'Our Manchester' logo is at the bottom.

Description of service areas that engage with children and young people

Alonzi House

Alonzi House offers support to parents, children and young people who need some help during times of crisis. It's a safe place for children and families, where they are listened to, and their voice is clearly heard. Alonzi House also provides a weekend service, where respite beds can be offered to young people on a case-by-case basis if necessary.

The overall aim of Alonzi House is to help children and young people to stay with their families and reduce the number going into care.

Early Help

Early Help is essential to improve the life chances of Manchester's children, young people and their families. The aim of the Manchester Early Help Service is to build capacity in communities that will prevent crime, support education and enterprise, and keep children, young people and their families healthy and safe. They aim to do this by working with other agencies, and directly with individuals from local communities.

Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs)

The primary tasks of the IRO are to ensure that the care plans for our children and young people fully reflect their needs, wishes and feelings, and to ensure that the actions set out in the plan are consistent with the local authority's statutory responsibilities. As a corporate parent, each local authority should ensure that it looks after the children and young people as a responsible and conscientious parent would.

The appointment by local authorities of an IRO is a statutory requirement.

Leaving Care Service

The Leaving Care Service provides a statutory service for young people aged 16-25 years who have previously been or are currently looked after by Manchester City Council.

The service helps young people who want some help to live independently and make their own decisions about how they want to live.

When young people in care reach the age of 16yrs, they get a personal adviser, whose job is to make sure young people get everything they need to enter the next stage of their life.

Libraries, Galleries and Culture

The Children and Access Team in Manchester Libraries supports a citywide programme of engagement, education and cultural events, to tie in to both local and national priorities.

Read Manchester is a separate entity, supported by Education and Libraries, with the purpose of encouraging reading for pleasure across all groups in the city.

Manchester City Council liaises with culture and arts partners to deliver a mix of universal and targeted engagement opportunities for young people, in school, out of school, and at cultural venues in the city.

Manchester Youth Council

The Youth Council is a forum that represents the views of young people. Run by young people for young people, it ensures they have a voice, enabling them to make their views heard and be involved in decision-making.

Residential setting (children's home)

A residential setting is a home for children and young people who can't live with their own families.

In a residential setting, sometimes also known as a children's home, children will live with a few other children. There is a team of workers whose job it is to look after the children living in the home.

Every children's home has a manager, who makes sure that good care is taken of all children and they are kept safe from harm. All children have a social worker who visits to make sure everything is okay. All children and young people also have a personal key worker in the home.

SEND

SEND children and young people's strategic participation is effectively supported, and there are effective mechanisms to enable the strategic participation of individual SEND children and young people. The participation of young people, both individually and collectively, is thoroughly embedded in culture and practice.

Social work teams (children in care and children in need)

There are 15 Duty and Assessment teams and 21 Court and Locality teams across the city that work with children and families in need.

At the initial stages they complete child and family assessments, support children in need under S17 and children in need of protection under S47 (Children Act 1989). They also look after those children who cannot live within their birth families.

- North locality: six Duty and Assessment and seven Court and Locality teams
- Central locality: five Duty and Assessment and eight Court and Locality teams
- South locality: four Duty and Assessment and six Court and Locality teams.

In addition, there is a Citywide Migrant Children's team and a Citywide Children with Disabilities team based in central, as well as a front-line team in the south in terms of students.

Sure Start Children's Centres

Offer activities and a range of services for parents and children under 5 years with a focus on improving outcomes and reducing inequalities between families in greatest need and their peers in:

- child development and school readiness.
- parenting aspirations and parenting skills
- child and family health and life chances

Virtual schools (children in care)

Manchester Virtual School supports and champions the education of all children and young people in the care of Manchester, regardless of where they are living.

They are responsible for supporting some 1,400 children aged 2–18 years, and link with the leaving care service to provide ongoing advice and support for education, employment and training up to the age of 25, reaching a further 905 young people.

Young carers

Young carers are people up to the age of 18 who have a caring role for a family member or loved one. The service is developing and promoting the agreed strategic approach to identifying and supporting young carers in Manchester through partnership working, as outlined in the Young Carers Strategy. They work with all agencies to ensure a universal offer of support and that statutory functions are fulfilled.

Youth Justice

Manchester Youth Justice is a forward-thinking relationship-focused service – a multi-agency team that is embedded in each of the three localities. Its key principles are trust, participation and change. In 2017, in collaboration with Manchester Metropolitan University, young people designed an engagement framework,

Participatory Youth Practice, which underpins the approach to interventions with children, young people and their families.

They assess the risks and needs of children and their families, and co-design multi-agency holistic interventions that build on strengths. They are trauma-informed and responsive to the complex and changing needs of children and their families in Manchester.

The service empowers children to realise their ambitions and provides the opportunities and support to access and achieve their potential.

Appendix C

A list of service databases/routine recording methods

Alonzi House and residential settings

All the sessions with young people are recorded on Liquidlogic, including wishes and feelings. Also, children and young people complete questionnaires/feedback forms.

Care Leaver Service

All electronic files are on Liquidlogic. There are specific areas on care leavers' files where the voice of the young person is asked for, these include the 'In-Touch' form (this is an 8-weekly form for personal advisors to complete for all care leavers – it is one of the key performance indicators) and Pathway Plans. Staff also record the voice of the young person in their case notes.

A monthly newsletter also includes young people's voices.

Early Help

The voice of the child or young person is recorded on Liquidlogic, Early Help Assessments – or both – depending on the team within the hubs. Partners generally record on Early Help Assessments and within their own agency systems, e.g. CPOMS in schools.

Libraries, galleries and culture

Separate reports and service feedback folders.

Manchester Youth Council

Youth Voice feedback template and reports

SEND

Work with partners to support them to capture the voice of children and young people to ensure it informs their services and strategic approach. The voices of children and young people are captured in reports/presentations to the SEND board, Children's Board and appropriate partners.

Social work teams

Assessments and activities are recorded on Liquidlogic and the E-PEP system.

Sure Start Children's centres

Upon receipt of a referral or self-referral, Early Years Outreach Workers carry out a strength-based conversation and if appropriate set up an electronic case file. Outreach workers add to the case file as additional contact is made and as work is carried out with the family. Depending on the outcome of the strength-based conversation Outreach Workers may go on to complete and register an EHA (Early Help Assessment). A separate spreadsheet is used to monitor our EHA activity i.e. needs identified, interventions accessed and impact.

Recently moved from using a standalone Estart Data Base to using Liquidlogic Early Help Groupwork to register and monitor the engagement of our children and families and will shortly be using the casefile function within Liquidlogic Early Help to capture and monitor our Outreach Worker case work with families.

Virtual schools

Use the E-PEP system for schools and social workers to record the opinions of children and young people in their individual PEP plans. This is monitored by the virtual school team. Information is taken and recorded in the internal database system, and feedback is given to appropriate partners.

Young carers

Work with partners to support them to capture the voice of children and young people to ensure it informs their services and strategic approach. The voice of children and young people are captured in reports/presentations to the SEND board, Children's Board and appropriate partners.

Youth Justice

Have a child view (case recording system) – this captures sessions and case notes. The AssetPlus YJB-approved assessment and planning tool is also used to incorporate the self-assessment of children and young people and allows for analysis of risk and planning.

Making It Right panel – The child and carer co-design their intervention plans with volunteers from the community.

Youth Justice also elicit the views of children and young people to inform the design and delivery of the service by engaging them in a session called 'If you had the power to change Youth Justice, what would you do?'.

