

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee - 8 March 2023

Subject: Manchester Our Children Sufficiency Strategy

Report of: Strategic Director of Children and Education Services

Summary

Considering the national challenges surrounding the provision of care placements for children, the purpose of this report and supporting presentation is to provide an update on the progress of the implementation of the 2020 – 22 Our Children’s Sufficiency Strategy, which was presented to scrutiny committee members in September 2022. The aim of the 2022 –27 Strategy is to continue to embed the developed practice, sustaining and progressing the partnership approach to deliver innovate models of accommodation.

It is the intention of the strategy to enable Manchester City Council maximise the right accommodation for the right children. The work has governance through, the Children and Education Directorate Leadership Team and Joint Commissioning Group which has membership from Manchester Integrated Care Board, Care Organisation and Adult Social Care.

We know that there are unprecedented demands on children’s social care, the recent reports from the Competition and Markets Authority and the Independent Review of Children’s Social Care published in 2022, outline a series of issues and concerns relating to sufficiency and the prospect of profiteering from children’s care placements. In Manchester we have worked hard to mitigate this and are ‘bucking’ the national trend in the average ‘unit’ costs and continue to develop an exciting range of provision around our families and children, such is our commitment to ensure our children are cared for by skilled and talented people who are passionate about meeting their needs, have the right home, in the right place at the right time enabling them to have a safe, happy, healthy, and successful future.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to consider and comment on the approach, progress and implementation of the 2022-27 Sufficiency Strategy.

Wards Affected: All

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

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments

The Strategy will ensure that the directorate delivers inclusive services that meet the needs of our diverse communities, through the commissioning of a diverse range of accommodation, co-producing and developing models with our children and families.

| Manchester Strategy outcomes | Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS/Contribution to the Strategy |
|---|---|
| A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities | Continuing to improve accommodation will contribute to improving educational outcomes, aspirations and job opportunities for our children and contribute to Manchester's young people becoming happy, safe and successful adults. |
| A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success | A sufficiency of high quality accommodation for our children will provide the stability to enable future generations to contribute to the City's economic success. |
| A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities | Continuing to improve accommodation will contribute to improving educational outcomes, aspirations and job opportunities for our children and contribute to Manchester's young people becoming happy, safe and successful adults. |
| A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work | Improving outcomes for children and families across the city helps build and develop communities. |
| A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth | Investment in accommodation will enhance the City's attractiveness to potential residents and contribute to the development of high quality neighbourhoods. |

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 proposals within the strategies will manage the cost of accommodation for Children's Services. The cost will be met from the existing children's placements budget.

Financial Consequences – Capital

None

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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.

Our Children's Sufficiency Strategy 2022 – 27
Scrutiny Committee report September 2022
Commissioning behaviours and Principles

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In September 2020, Manchester published their 2020 – 22 Our Childrens Sufficiency Strategy developing the right services at the right time in the right place. The Strategy was a clear direction to children’s social care providers in relation to how and where Manchester would meet the accommodation needs of our children. Alongside the Strategy we published our Commissioning Behaviours and Principles which embedded our approach towards ethical and trusted providers, sharing how we plan to work together to achieve better outcomes for our children.
- 1.2 The sufficiency strategies have been the result of collaboration with young people, service providers, finance, education, housing and health partners. This has strengthened our approach to delivering innovative accommodation models. We know creating new residential children’s homes will not provide our children with the right accommodation and be ‘sufficient’ to meet their needs. We are committed to working with existing and ethical providers to develop bespoke models to ensure that our children are able to access the existing provider offer and that this is of a high quality to meet their needs.
- 1.3 This report sets out the progress and implementation of the 2022 - 27 Strategy.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Local Authorities have a responsibility under the Sufficiency Duty within the Children's Act 1989, to ensure that they have enough provision to meet the needs of their children and young people who are looked after. To achieve this Manchester works in partnership with young people, their families, providers and partner agencies to ensure that there is a robust and quality choice of accommodation.
- 2.2 The duty to cooperate underpins our role as Corporate Parents and applies to all partners. That services are based on the ‘if this were my child’ principle and starting by making sure young people have a safe and stable place to live, that they are economically sound; with the opportunity and support to be successful.
- 2.3 The attached presentation outlines the work that has been completed. Key outcomes include:
 - Manchester numbers of Looked After Children have reduced to 1385 of which 63% have been looked after for over 18 months.
 - Decommissioning and re-commissioning services to ensure quality and maximised delivery.
 - Increased number of children living in Manchester and in particular those with care experience living in supported lodging and accommodation including 24 Young people receiving tenancies through House Project which is an innovative approach to creating ‘forever homes’ and beyond 18 years of age.

- Strengthened joint commissioning arrangements with the NHS for specialist and complex children and young people.
- Accommodation models continue to be developed with ethical partners.
- 'Care Consultants' have been recruited to support and ensure the 'voice' of young people are reflected within commissioning and decision making.
- No children in emergency/B&B accommodation since 2017.
- More children placed in GM/Manchester to maintain relationships/connections with their community, support networks to create greater stability in a safe, secure and loving homes.
- Only 7% of our children live within a residential setting.

2.4 This has been achieved through a passionate and enthusiastic team of staff and partners who together are committed to improving the experiences and outcomes of children and budget (cost avoidance, care planning, commissioning, and efficiencies). Specifically, for the purposes of this report;

- An effective 'Edge of Care' approach (avoiding children becoming unnecessarily looked after).
- Focus on securing timely plans of 'permanence' (safe, stable and loving homes) and working with children and their families (connected carers and family group conferencing).
- Continual improvement in the capacity and practice of social work staff to engage and plan effectively with and for children.
- Multi agency resource panel and Joint Commissioning Group – provided planning and shared ownership of commissioning activity and risk.
- Post 16 Hub – supporting the pathways to independence and post 18 accommodation.
- Commissioning of the Lodge, foyer model of accommodation and increased partnership working with adult social care, housing and homelessness services.
- Enabling Independence Accommodation Strategy and Housing Strategy – ensuring that care leavers, vulnerable young people and their families have the right accommodation to meet their needs.
- Social value and ethical procurement embedded across practice. Increasing offers to Manchester and creating value for money. Open book accounting and scoring profit margins as standard.
- Monthly placement oversight clinics across social care and commissioning
- Commissioning behaviours and strategies giving clear market insight to Manchester's needs.
- Joint working with Greater Manchester (GM) and NHS colleagues.
- Creating GM House project collaborative and successful bidding Staying Close grant and DfE Capital grants, sharing good practice and creating opportunities for our care leavers placed out of borough.

2.5 The delivery model within the 2022-27 Strategy will require investment to ensure our sufficiency needs are met. These will be into the Take a Breath, mockingbird, short breaks overnight respite and the transitions accommodation for LD/autism. The investment has been considered and included within the budget planning cycle.

2.6 These evidenced based invest to save models will ensure we have a quality accommodation models which can meet the needs of our most complex young people when they need it most. It will enable young people to have greater choice for their move on accommodation, received an integrated delivery model to ensure we understand their needs and enable the young person to achieve stability in their future accommodation I ensure value for money and the ability to meet future demand.

3.0 Recommendations

3.1 Recommendations appear at the front of the report.