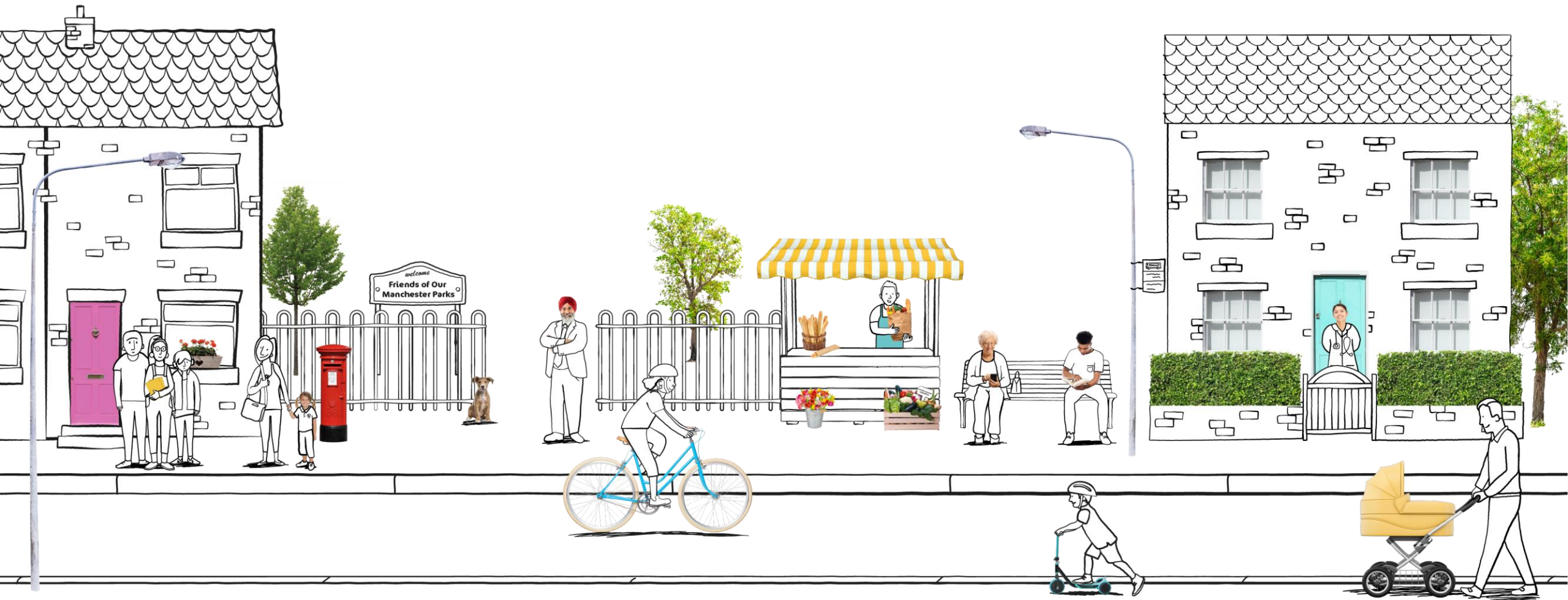


Children's Social Work Workforce update

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 8th March 2023



Our Vision

Manchester's Children's Services priorities - children and young people live **safe, happy, healthy and successful** lives.

To achieve this we require a **stable, talented and confident social work workforce**

Key aspects of the **Recruitment and Retention Strategy** were developed in partnership with social workers, managers and use of the following and available data;

- Data from staff feedback
- Staff engagement
- Exit interviews and
- Research in respect of factors that influence and support the recruitment and retention social workers

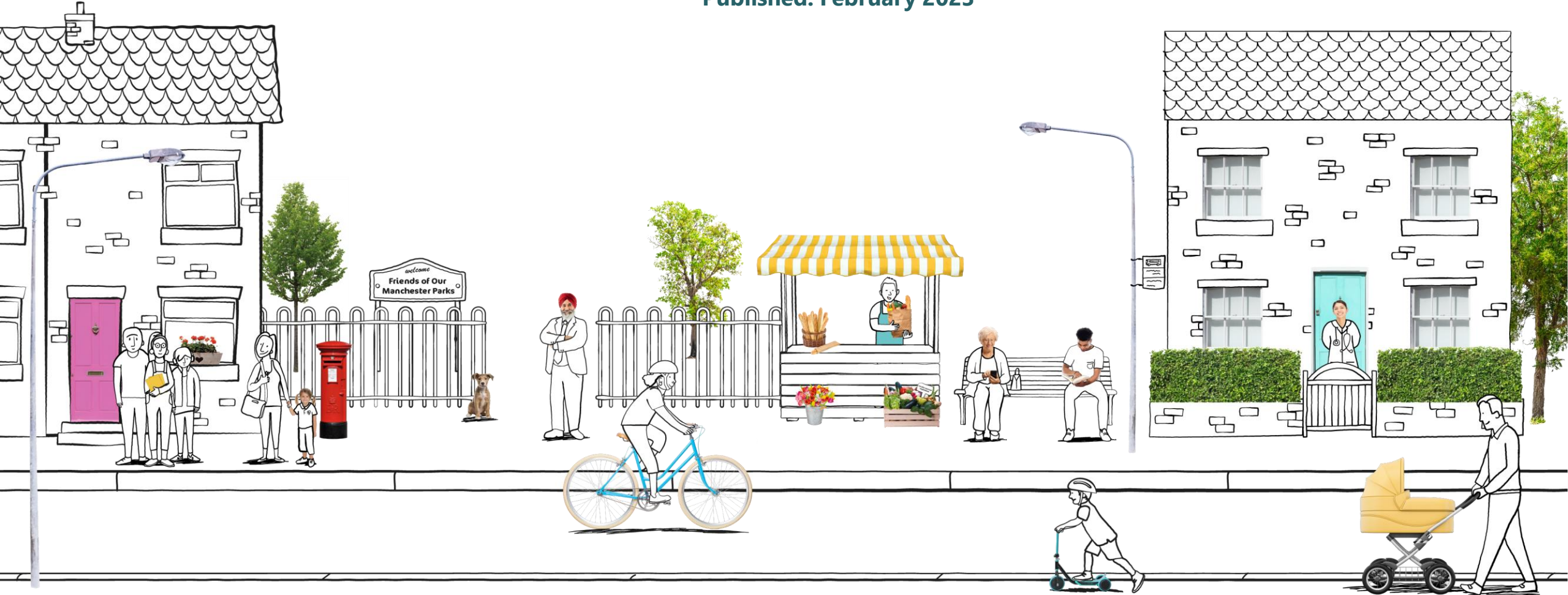
At a time when there is a national shortfall in qualified and experienced Social workers, we intend to continue to make Manchester City Council the employer of choice and achieve our ambitions our children and young people.

National Context

The Government's response Children's Social Care Review

'Stable Homes, Built on Love: Implementation Strategy and Consultation

Published: February 2023



- **Children's Social Care Review** – The DfE published its response in January 2023 recognising the national challenge of recruitment and retention of social workers. Workforce is one of six pillars outlined in the response – 5 year Early Career Framework for Social Workers, boosting Social Worker Recruitment and Retention through an apprenticeship programme, student bursaries/grants and international recruitment.
- **Manchester Children Services recruitment, retention, av. caseloads and development of staff compares favourably with the most recent published data** in respect of vacancies, reliance of agency staff . However, we cannot be complacent and remain determined to be an employer of choice with a visible and accessible leadership team.

The government's response and proposed implementation plan is built on the premise that:

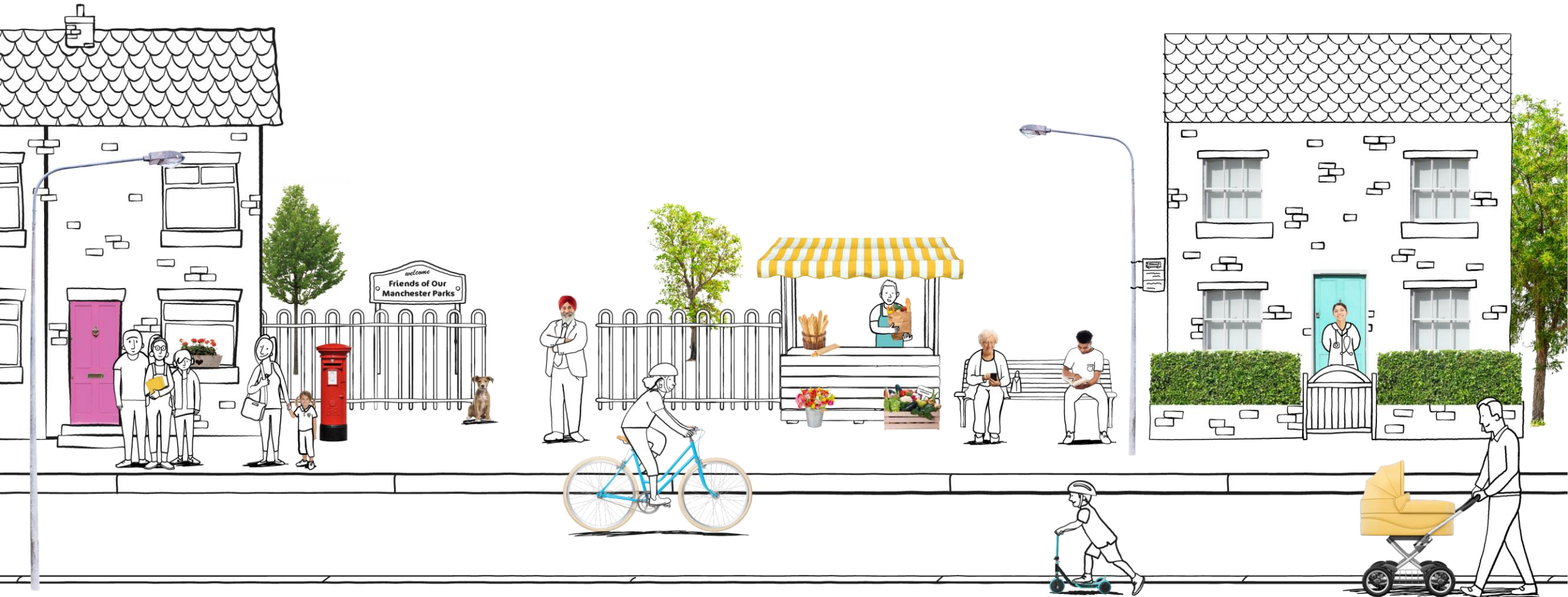
- Children and families should have consistent practitioners and professionals in their lives with whom they can build a relationship.
- We ensure there is an excellent social worker for every child and family who needs one, and
- That the social worker workforce represents the communities they serve at all levels.

No one could disagree with this ambition. The government strategy for achieving this is broadly set out as:

- **More social work staff are needed** - national support for recruitment of up to an additional 500 child and family social worker apprentices
- **Work-life balance, remuneration, how social work profession is supported and valued; recruitment and retention nationally** - DfE will lead work on how to improve case management systems to ensure these work effectively for social workers and deliver good value for money and a National Workload Action Group will be established in early 2023 to identify and address unnecessary workload drivers that do not lead to improvements in outcomes for children and families.
- **Agency staff impact on pay rates, workforce churn and quality of practice and continuity for children**, the strategy proposes clear national rules on how agency workers should be used including acceptable notice periods, references, expected level of post-qualified experience, establishing price rates and increasing transparency on agency usage and costs
- **An Early Career Framework” (ECF) will replace the current Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE)** for child and family social workers. This will include a extending the current ASYE to two years and development of a 5 year career framework. Thus, creating expertise and a cohort of highly trained social workers capable of dealing with the most complex cases and spreading best practice. Expectation is framework will be published by September 2026.
- **Creation of a new Child Protection Lead Practitioner Role for social workers with 5 years post qualification experience.**

| Government's Priorities | Manchester City Council's position against the government priorities |
|--|---|
| Increase the number of people becoming social workers | There are 19 SW apprentices (with a view to recruiting 12 more to start in September); 71 SW students (47, + 4 Step-up + 20 front-line) 87 ASYEs. These staff are critical pillars for establishing the future workforce to deliver the service. This level of students on the pathway to social work qualification is the largest in GM and is manageable. We are focused on increasing our capacity to take more students , as a result we are supporting more experienced social workers to be practice educators. |
| Help retain social workers in local authorities | The CSC workforce strategy is focused on retaining social workers post ASYE and recruiting experienced staff from elsewhere. The current vacancy rate 9% . The feedback from exit interviews and staff engagement sessions is informing the CSC workforce implementation plan. Our offer to social workers reviewed regularly to ensure Manchester remains competitive and employer of choice. |
| Use of agency social workers | We currently have 46 agency workers in the front-line, which represents 9% of the social work workforce . Our average annual use of agency staff is 48.9 in post. Agency staff in Manchester are most commonly used for vacancies and maternity cover. Agency staff tend to stay 3 to 6 months and 12 in the last 12 months have been recruited 8 agency social workers to permanent roles. As detailed in previous slides Manchester is working GM authorities to agree a pledge to enable a consistent approach on the use and management of agency workforce across GM. |
| Reduce the amount of office work social workers do and work/life balance | Practitioners in Manchester are supported to reflect the statutory requirements for delivering the best quality for service to children and families . The limiting factors relate to timely access to the right IT equipment; the effective use of business support staff; the number of internal clinics, forums and panels that a child may be discussed at, the efficient alignment of plans across agencies and functions so families only have to tell their story once. We listen to our workforce through various means, such as staff survey, engagement sessions and 1 to 1 session and respond in timely way. Our workers benefit from flexibilities that compare well and a supervision structure and well-being focus that recognises the significant emotional demands of the role. Our workers also enjoy from a wide range of locality based activities to support their well-being. |
| Give social workers more and better training within a career framework | Manchester has an established structure that supports the development of staff following their ASYE year into Advanced Practitioners and first line management. This is matched with a comprehensive development and training offer . We have recognised the need for a clearer career pathway that keeps experienced staff in practice and provides financial incentive linked to quality of practice and development. As a result, a 3 years career path is being developed linked to appraisal and performance. |
| Celebrate social work to attract more people into the profession | Manchester is proud of its growing reputation as an employer of choice. The social work profession and individuals are celebrated locally through staff awards, world social workday and formal recognition . The recent Good inspection from Ofsted will further enhance the view that Manchester is a great place to practice social work. There is more work to be done to reflect this in our recruitment and be creative in our reach and style, including using the voice of our children, families and communities. |

Manchester Children Services Social Worker Profile



Children Services Social Worker Demographic

| Service | ASYE | SW1 | AP | TM | Headcount | FTE | Avg Age | Disabled | Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic | LGB/Other | Male | Female |
|---------------------------|-------|-------|------|------|-----------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------------------|-----------|------|--------|
| Children's Social Care | 102.6 | 121.4 | 84.7 | 64.0 | 483 | 466.6 | 39 | 7.3% | 34.5% | 7.8% | 14% | 86% |
| North | 25.0 | 32.0 | 19.6 | 15.4 | 103 | 99.9 | 35 | 2.7% | 32.5% | 4.2% | 12% | 88% |
| Central | 34.6 | 23.1 | 20.0 | 17.0 | 106 | 103.2 | 36 | 11.1% | 38.9% | 9.1% | 16% | 84% |
| South | 28.0 | 23.0 | 12.5 | 11.0 | 85 | 82 | 37 | 8.9% | 38.6% | 10.4% | 16% | 84% |
| Cared for & Reunification | 9.0 | 19.0 | 14.6 | 10.6 | 65 | 62.7 | 42 | 12.1% | 34.5% | 2.1% | 15% | 85% |
| Fostering | 2.0 | 14.8 | 7.0 | 6.0 | 38 | 37.1 | 43 | 6.1% | 34.4% | 11.1% | 11% | 89% |
| Emergency Duty Service | 0.0 | 0.0 | 5.0 | 1.0 | 6 | 6 | 48 | 0.0% | 83.3% | 0.0% | 17% | 83% |
| Complex Safeguarding | 0.0 | 7.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 21 | 21 | 45 | 0.0% | 15.0% | 7.1% | 19% | 81% |
| Newly Arrived | 4.0 | 2.5 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 10 | 9.5 | 34 | 0.0% | 20.0% | 28.6% | 20% | 80% |
| Safeguarding & Review | | | | | 49 | 45.3 | 48 | 6.8% | 29.3% | 10.8% | 10% | 90% |

Stability of Children’s Social Work Workforce

The data highlights that the Social Work Recruitment and Retention Strategy is making a positive impact on Manchester by decreasing vacancies, increasing experience, reducing leavers, reducing agency staff creating manageable workloads delivering our vision of a stable, talented and confident workforce.

| | 2022 | 2020 | 2017 |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------------|
| Filled posts | 467 | 444.3 | 432.9 |
| Vacancies | 45.3 | 65.5 | 137 |
| Vacancy Rate | 9% | 13% | 26% |
| No of AYSEs | 67.6 | 113.8 | 113.8 |
| Annual Leavers | 81.7 | 90.7 | 94.5 |
| Annual Turnover | 17.4% | 20.4 | 18.4% |
| Average Caseloads | 15.7 | 17.4 | 15.7 |
| Agency Percentage | 9% | 13% | 26% |

National position on 30th September 2022

Children’s social work workforce report published by the Department of Education on 23rd February 2023.

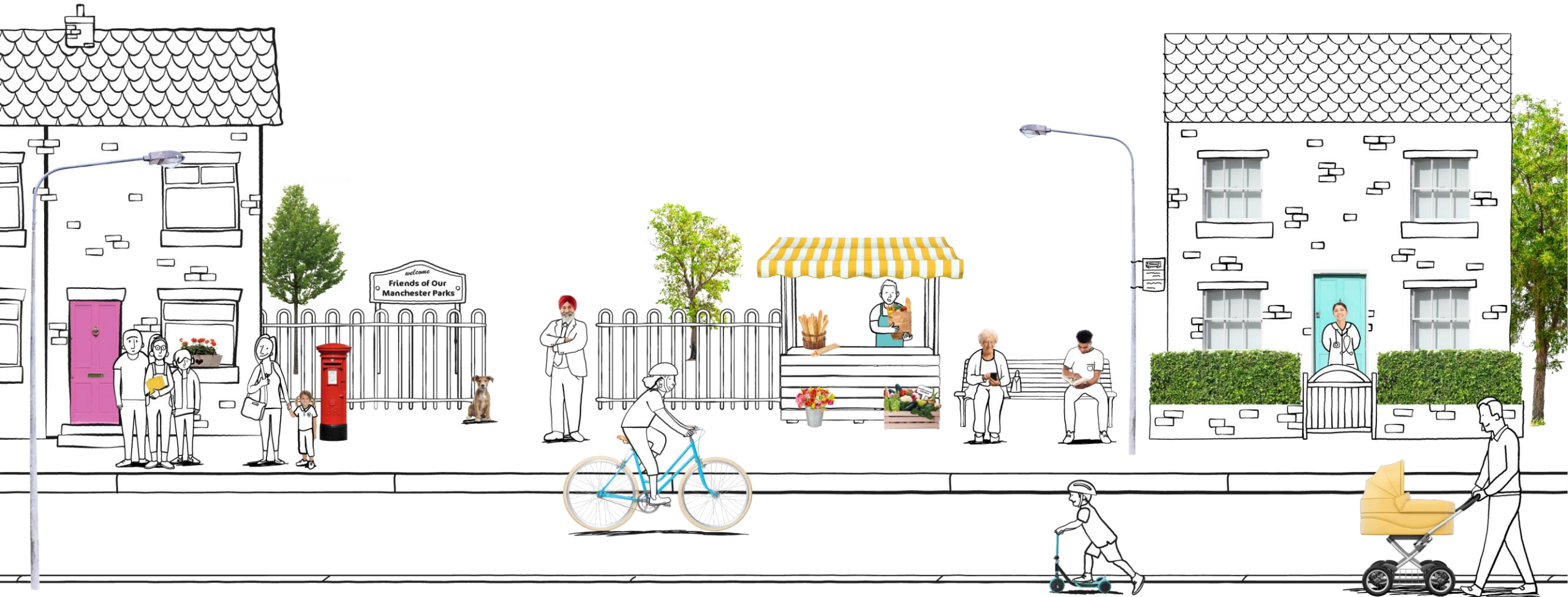
- Vacancy Rates are at 20%, up from the 17% the year before.
- Agency Percentage is at 18% which is up 2% at the same point last year.
- Caseloads remain stable at 16.3.
- There were 5400 Social workers nationally who left the profession which is up 9% from 2021.

Stability of Children’s Social Work Workforce

| | Children's Locality Teams 2022 | | | | Cared for children 2022 | | | |
|-------------|--------------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| | <1 Years | 1-2 Years | 3-5 Years | >5 Years | <1 Years | 1-2 Years | 3-5 Years | >5 Years |
| ASYE | 48 | 22 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Level 1 | 3 | 52 | 15 | 14 | 1 | 11 | 8 | 5 |
| Level 2 | 5 | 8 | 34 | 22 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 8 |
| Grand Total | 56 | 82 | 54 | 42 | 13 | 15 | 14 | 14 |

| | Children's Locality Teams 2020 | | | | Cared for children 2020 | | | |
|-------------|--------------------------------|-----|-----|----|-------------------------|-----|-----|----|
| | <1 | 1-2 | 3-5 | >5 | <1 | 1-2 | 3-5 | >5 |
| ASYE | 47 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| Level 1 | 4 | 53 | 40 | 13 | 0 | 13 | 4 | 8 |
| Level 2 | 3 | 9 | 30 | 18 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 6 |
| Grand Total | 54 | 82 | 70 | 34 | 9 | 21 | 12 | 14 |

Children's Social Worker Workforce Priorities

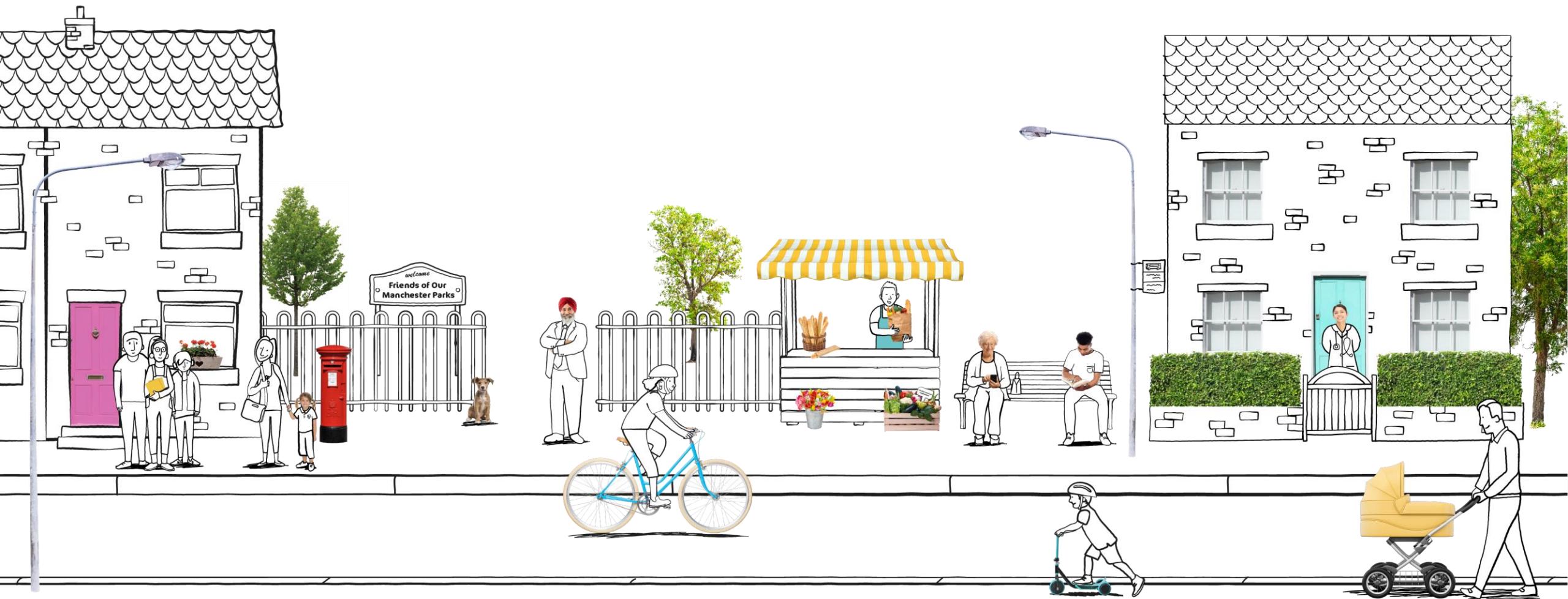


- **Recruitment processes** Manchester to have robust and modern recruitment practices to attract experience and talented social workers
- **Manchester City Council's offer** to Children's Social Care workforce to ensure Manchester remains competitive across to GM and North-West.
- **Development opportunities** robust social work career pathway, culture of continuous learning, high support high challenge
- **Influence Social Work Teachings/Training** across GM universities maintain effective relationships and increase number of student placements
- **Wellbeing Offer** Social Workers are happy and healthy
- **Reduce reliance and agency social workers** - ongoing work on retention of social workers will reduce social workers leaving, consequently less dependent on agency social workers.

- **Reviewed recruitment and recruitment practices** – local and national recruitment campaigns and effective use of social media, branding Manchester as the employer of choice
- **Our offer is reviewed** – benefits, pay, retention payment, support and wellbeing – we retained 74% of workers who had received the retention payment
- Our recruitment panels reflect the diversity of our workforce and community
- Successfully recruited 25 experienced social workers through international recruitment campaign
- **Increased the capacity to take on more students** – at present 52 students on placement
- Strengthened our offer Induction and ASYE programme to ensure best possible start for our staff

- Increased Advanced Practitioners' posts to ensure our NQSW are supported to learn and develop
- Continuous learning and developing opportunities
- Strong and stable leadership and management support
- Continuously engaged with staff and respond to feedback, enabled more time with our C&F
- Family friendly employer effective use of flexible/agile/hybrid working based on a set of principles
- Developed mindfulness/wellbeing offer

Summary



Potential Risks and Opportunities Arising from the Government's Response— A Look Forward

Opportunities

- National campaign regarding social work as a profession of choice is an opportunity to promote Manchester as a local authority of choice.
- Local career progression framework is in place with financial and developmental incentives for the workforce. With improving retention rates this places Manchester in a strong position to contribute to any government defined career structure and continue to build a confident and talented workforce.
- The innovative approach in Children Services and developing 'Thriving Families' model creates further career pathway and apprenticeship opportunities.
- Regional and sub-regional collaboration is strong.

Risks

- Recognition, financial support and a nationally agreed framework is positive benefit but without nationally agreed framework presents a risk and may undermine local authority retention/recruitment.
- An extension of the ASYE year to 2 would impact on the capacity of the workforce where complexity of children and caseload levels are capped. There is also potential for the requirement of 5 year+ level of experience for practitioners to be a vulnerability. This would support the need for developments to retain staff.

Manchester's Children Services Current Position

Manchester Children Social Care is evidently an employer of choice - with high numbers of student placements, low vacancy rates and reducing staff turnover and increasing retention; achieved by a comprehensive development programme and career pathway Position that is delivered through a restorative approach and visible leadership.

We remain committed to building a stable, confident and talented workforce by;

- A clear and coherent workforce strategy that reflects corporate priorities and values diversity in our workforce
- Continue to maintain effective relationship with universities to influence and shape courses and offer of practice placements.
- Continuous review of our 'offer' to ensure we remain comparative and employer of choice across GM and Northwest.
- Review and refine the Social Work apprenticeship programme (the next cohort is September 2023)
- To review current recruitment processes to look at efficiencies and explore more creative recruitment methods and practices
- To review retention incentives for our existing workforce; informed by data/intelligence to be more reflective of the city's demographic at every level and approach to agile working arrangements
- Continuing to engage with national and regional collaboration and initiatives; responding to national and local policy opportunities such as those arising from the independent review of children social care, family hubs and evidence based practice models.

Recommendations

Scrutiny Committee Members are asked to consider the government's response to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, the local context and are recommended to;

- 1. Recognize and comment on the progress that has been made to date**
- 2. Consider, comment on and support the proposed priorities to continue to strengthen the approach to recruitment, retention and development of qualified Social Workers**