

## Manchester City Council Report for Information

**Report to:** Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee - 7 February 2024

**Subject:** Update on progress of the Leaving Care Service

**Report of:** Strategic Director (Children and Education Services)

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### Summary

Manchester Leaving Care Service is the second largest Leaving Care Service in the country within Birmingham being slightly larger supporting 10 additional young people. The Service has over time grown to where it is today currently supporting 29.4% of the GM regions care leavers.

The Leaving Care Service supports a diverse group of young people. Over the last year we have supported and welcomed our former UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children) into the service, now making up a third of our care leaving population.

In March 2022, Leaving Care was graded 'good' by Ofsted. *'Care Leavers in Manchester receive a consistently good service. This is underpinned by a strong child-focused strategy and a clear promise to young people to make sure they are 'happy, healthy, safe and successful' as they move into adulthood'.*

The slide set attached to this report highlights Childrens Services and partners update over the last year and review plans and prioritises for the coming year.

### Recommendations

Scrutiny Committee members are invited to:

1. Discuss the presentation and comment on Manchester's approach to the support given to our Care Leavers.
  2. Recognise the services response to challenges and discuss planning priorities for 2024.
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**Wards Affected:** All

<p><b>Environmental Impact Assessment</b> -the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city</p>	<p>The organisation is committed to reducing the carbon footprint associated with the provision of Leaving Care and participation services to our young people.</p>
<p><b>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion</b> - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments</p>	<p>Manchester Leaving Care service continues to deliver culturally attuned services to all our young people. This includes developing trauma informed practice approach as well as providing service that assist our Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) and former UASC to thrive in the city.</p> <p>Priority is given to linking in our young people into bespoke community activities within Manchester as per an individual's needs. The services are responsive to ensuring individual needs are being met for example communication aids, use of interpreters, space to be able to express individuality and bespoke support, for example LGBTQ+ friendly spaces.</p> <p>Consideration is given to how young people where possible are culturally matched to supported accommodation provision, for example we have bespoke contracts for out UASC and former UASC.</p>

<b>Manchester Strategy outcomes</b>	<b>Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS/Contribution to the Strategy</b>
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Effective support for young people is critical so they can connect, support, contribute and access a thriving and sustainable City.
A highly skilled city: world class and home-grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Ensuring our young people are given the opportunity to access immediate support enables a timely assessment of need to ensure the right support at the right time is provided.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Building a trusted relationship with young people helps builds their resilience, recover from trauma which is needed to enable their potential to be achieved.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Improving outcomes for young people dispersed across the city helps build and develop communities.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Children's Services and partners have responded to ensuring our young people have a high-quality opportunity to live in supported accommodation and forever homes that will help them manage the transition out of care and into the adult world, where they will achieve and be an active member and contributor to Manchester City and local communities.

Full details are in the slide set, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

### **Financial Consequences**

There are no financial consequences outside of wider considerations for Children Services associated with this report.

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**Background documents (available for public inspection):** None

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Leaving Care Act 2000 identifies Local Authorities duties and responsibilities to its young people leaving care. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 extended the duties placed on Local Authorities with each Local Authority having to (but not limited to) an obligation to publish a Local Offer for care leavers, extended duties to young people up to 25, recognising young people as an integrated and integral part of the corporate parenting role. In the revision of Inspection of Local Authority Childrens Services (ILACS) Ofsted included a separate judgement for Care Leavers.
- 1.2 Following the Southwark Ruling, the Leaving Care Service support all Homeless Children In Need and those post 18 that have been placed in care as a result of homelessness.
- 1.3 We have seen an increase in young people who are assessed as 'qualifying' leaving care service who have accessed the service following being subject of a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) and those who have been subject of Private Fostering arrangements.
- 1.4 This year Manchester has seen a growth in its UASC population. Local Authorities have a legislative responsibility to protect and support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and as such are ascribed a 'looked after' status and are particularly vulnerable. An unaccompanied child is entitled to the same local authority provision as any other looked after child, additionally will require help and support to lodge an asylum claim and access specialist legal advice in relation to their asylum claim.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Manchester has 1490 Care Leavers age 16+.Manchester is responsible for 29.4% of all Care Levers across the region.
- 2.2 There are 976 YP allocated to a Personal Advisor aged between 16-25 years old. We co-work 129 young people under the age of 18 with their statutory social worker.
- 2.3 In addition, there are 514 YP open to the service who receive support via our Virtual Personal Advisor & or drop-in services.
- 2.4 There are 478 YP within the service with an immigration status making up 32% of the service, this is projected to be 37% within the year. There are 2 specialist PAs within the New Arrivals Team to support UASC at the point of transition to post 18 permanence.
- 2.5 There are 314 YP aged 23 and above who will exit the service within 24 months.
- 2.6 There are 6 teams in the Leaving Care Service. 5 PA teams, totally 46 FTE PAs and the Positive Housing pathway team consisting of 3 Social Workers

and 4 PAs. The Positive Housing Pathway team offers specialist housing advice to all YP age 16+ to prevent youth homelessness and is a specialist service for all care leavers age 18 – 25 years. Additionally, we have 1 participation apprentice and 1 FTE (2 PA's) as EET engagement leads.

- 2.7 Over the last 2 years the numbers of young people the service are actively supporting has grown by 309 young people, 21%. Of this cohort 63% of young people have immigration status.

### **3.0 Service Offer**

- 3.1 The slide set attached to this report highlights the Leaving Care Services' current performance data, developments, proud moments in 2023, challenges and plans for 2024.
- 3.2 The report sets out the continued positive performance of the service to its young people. Manchester continues to perform well and is above national average for young people engaged in EET, those living in suitable accommodation and those remaining in touch with their PA. The number of young people qualifying for support has increased which has resulted in higher but manageable caseloads for Personal Assistants.
- 3.3 Our older care leavers are more engaged and accessing our participation offer and our social events than their younger counterparts. These young people have shared that they see the Leaving Care service as a 'lifeline' where other adults services pathways/ eligibility criteria may not always promote ease of access. In response to this, Leaving Care has developed a more robust and regular face to face drop-in service as well as daily duty response that is promoted to all care leavers aged 16+ however is primarily for our older cohort of young people (21+). This drop in is attended by a range of partners and offers a warm and welcoming social space to young people who may not require an allocated PA for day-to-day support but use the service as a path finder to specialist advice and guidance. This service is also used by young people who have an allocated PA to promote confidence in the 'open door' approach to these group sessions / drop in.
- 3.4 The service has reviewed the relationships with the transitions team within Adults Social Care and there is a renewed commitment to supporting and assisting care experienced young people in a preventative way, in acknowledgement of their increased vulnerability. In terms of future development, consideration of a PA from Leaving Care working across the Childrens/Adults services in order to develop and upskill services to respond to the needs is currently being pursued. We are collaborating with partners to look at a transitional safeguarding model for young people where there are vulnerabilities that do not necessary fit the Care Act defined criteria.
- 3.5 Young people in Manchester live in suitable accommodation and there is a strong framework of supported accommodation available to young people to assist in developing their skills and independence, in October last year our internal provision was formally registered with Ofsted as per Supported

Accommodation regulations. Manchester has good relationships with preferred providers, that continue to be committed to the Care Leaver Housing pledge and recognises the need for continued support post 18 years to thrive in their first tenancy.

- 3.6 For those young people in custody, we are working with Youth Justice following the start of the SHIFT programme to improve opportunities for those young people resettling back into the community after custody. There are currently 13 young people in custody under 21 all young people in custody are supported by their PA.
- 3.7 Leaving Care is involved in the development of an accredited independence programme that will offer all young people the same opportunity to develop skills as part of pathway planning towards independent living. Whilst there are elements of practical and social skills, the focus of the programme is emotional maturity and resilience to live independently. This programme has been written by young people.
- 3.8 The development of the Staying Close team has been integral to providing additional support to our young people who 'need a little bit extra' to help them transition into independence confidently. The team are in the process of recruiting to 2 additional posts which will mean support being offered to 50 young people.
- 3.9 Young people in Manchester are accessing and engaging with education, employment and training opportunities and the service has a reputation for taking the lead in innovative ways to support and guide young people into developing skills, be creative and reach their potential. The EET figures has remained largely stable for the past 2 years for both 18 – 21year olds (63.7%) and our older care leavers (56%) which considering the increase in young people in the service reflects an increase in engagement.
- 3.10 There is a renewed focus on older care leavers and understanding the barriers to them accessing EET opportunities that appear to be prevalent as they grow older. This is being supported by the Multiply programme that is focussed on older care leavers obtaining improved literacy and numeracy skills and boosting confidence to re-enter work or an education environment. There will be two dedicated PAs working part time to implement this programme with a focus on promoting wellbeing, using music, arts, cooking and sports to engage and inspire young people to carry on with meaningful activities.
- 3.11 The health and wellbeing of our care leavers is the leading priority for the service in 2024. The need for bespoke health services for our care leavers is crucial to improving emotional wellbeing across our young people. Without question young people across all ages are presenting with emotional and mental health issues both acute and enduring. It is widely acknowledged that the wellbeing of our care leavers is central to them accessing EET opportunities and improving their self-esteem and economic prospects now and later in life.

- 3.12 There is currently no dedicated offer for care leavers in Manchester as the responsibilities of the named nurse and the Cared for Children CAMHS services ceases at age 18 years. This is a limitation when raising the profile of care leavers in a bid to address the inherent health inequalities that exist in this cohort of young people. This is on the agenda for the Corporate Family forum and a Care Leavers Health and Wellbeing strategy is in draft format at present.
- 3.13 The 2024 calendar of participation events includes a weekly physical activity such as a walking group or 5 a side football training and tournaments that are well attended. There are strengthening links with community health services and they are routinely invited to Leaving Care service briefings to promote their use with PAs.
- 3.14 In addition, the Leaving Care service is developing a trauma training module for use across partners such as police, health and housing to promote the need for a considered and trauma informed engagement and support pathways for care leavers. There is ongoing work with our young people, police and housing colleagues to develop the content that both PAs and young people can co-facilitate to ensure co-production remains central to this.
- 3.15 There are challenges with mental health services, particularly where young people had additional social, and communication needs as to whether adults or mental health to meet the primary need. The renewed relationships between Leaving Care and the Transitions team have improved over the past 6 months and have had an immediate and positive impact; ongoing development work has been identified earlier within this report and is a real strength.
- 3.16 The service has responded to this by ensuring all PA's have undertaken 'Beyond Psychology' trauma informed practice. This has been well received within the service and has built up resilience and confidence within the service to be able to support our young people. The training has also been rolled out to Cared for Children's service, which is already providing a 'common' language for children and young people and a common methodology across social workers and PA's when supporting children and young people.
- 3.17 There is now a well-established Care Consultation group that are employed by the council to meet, devise and develop the corporate strategy and lead on improvements on behalf of all care experienced young people in the city. The Corporate Family forum has replaced the previous board meetings and these are entirely led by young people under the four work streams of young people being 'happy', 'health', 'safe' and 'successful'.
- 3.18 These young people are consulted on all areas of policy and procedure that links to the improvement work under these guiding principles and conditions for young people who continue to grow, thrive and develop.
- 3.19 Over the past 12 months, the care consultants have led on projects to improve knowledge and skills of professionals to ensure they recognise care



experience as a key consideration of a young person's identity. This was achieved by delivering talks and training to a range of council departments and this now is being developed to upskill police, housing and health colleagues. In addition, they have campaigned for an increase in the First Home Grant of £1,000 and all care leavers now receive additional funding when they secure their first tenancy as a result. In addition, Manchester has provided additional funding to offset the impact of rising inflation and cost of living for care leavers and this was achieved via their representations at the Corporate Family forum. This group of young people is well established however needs to diversify and grow in 2024; to include younger children and those from different cultural backgrounds. As these care consultants reach 25 years, we are considering developing a mentoring role to support continued engagement to represent older cohort as well as younger people that are involved in the service.

- 3.20 The services plan for the coming year are centred around 4 themes, permanence, equality and diversity, education training and employment and wellbeing. These themes are underpinned by the Manchester Childrens plan guiding principal of *'We all want to live in the place we call home with the people and things that we love, in communities where we look out for one another, doing the things that matter to us'*.

#### **4.0 Recommendations**

- 4.1 Scrutiny Committee members are invited to:

- Endorse Manchester's approach to the supported given to our Care Leavers.
- Recognise the services response, to challenges and planning for 2024.