

Manchester City Council Report for Information

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

Subject: Update on Government's strategy to reform children's services
Stable Homes, Built on Love

Report of: Strategic Director (Children and Education Services)

Summary

In response to the Independent Review of Children Social Care, during February 2023 the government published its response and strategy for reform; Stable Homes Built on Love.

Stable Homes, Built on Love, has 6 ambitions of reform.

1. Family Help
2. Keeping children safe
3. Supporting families to help children.
4. Make better care for children in care and care leavers,
5. Children to have great social workers.
6. Improving the whole system for children and families.

As part of its reform programme, on 23rd December 2023 the government issued the following key strategies and statutory guidance.

1. Championing Kinship Care
2. Children Social Care National Framework
3. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
4. Digital and Data Strategy

The attached presentation includes links to the above publications, a short summary of the key elements and critique of local implications.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

1. Consider and comment on the presented information and planned local response.
 2. Seek further updates on progress for each specific area of reform and include in the committee's work programme for 2024/25.
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Wards Affected: All

<p>Environmental Impact Assessment -the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments</p>	

<p>Manchester Strategy outcomes</p>	<p>Summary of how this report aligns to the Our Manchester Strategy/Contribution to the Strategy</p>
<p>A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities</p>	<p>Effective support for young people is critical so they can connect, support, contribute and access a thriving and sustainable City.</p>
<p>A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities</p>	<p>Building a trusted relationship with young people helps builds their resilience, recover from trauma which is needed to enable their potential to be achieved.</p>
<p>A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work</p>	<p>Improving outcomes for young people dispersed across the city helps build and develop communities.</p>
<p>A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth</p>	<p>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.</p>

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

To be determined.

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.

Update on the Independent Review of Children's Social Care
<https://democracy.manchester.gov.uk/documents/s35812/Care%20Review%20Presentation.pdf>

Childrens Workforce Presentation

<https://democracy.manchester.gov.uk/documents/s39074/Childrens%20Workforce%20presentation.pdf>

1.0 Introduction

1.1 As part of the government's plans to reform children social care and wider system, on 15th December 2023, 3 key strategies and the revised statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 were published. These documents.

- *Propose practical and financial support to promote and support kinship care.*
- *Outline the purpose, principles, enablers, and outcomes for children's social care to achieve so that children and their families can thrive.*
- *to promote the 'system' to embed new standards, strengthened governance and clarity as to partnership working to provide help, support and protection to children.*
- *Outline how the government will support information sharing and improve data services, produce a national dashboard of key data and promoting innovation in this area.*

2.0 Background

2.1 The background document is the information presented to Scrutiny Committee members on 12th October 2022. This presentation outlined the key recommendations and an analysis of the government's strategy Stable Homes, Build on Love and Manchester Children's Services readiness, which is positive.

3.0 Main issues

3.1 The attached presentation outlines the key issues from the aforementioned strategies, statutory guidance and local implications for children social care, the data/reporting systems and wider partnership.

3.2 The Championing Kinship Care Strategy outlines the governments ambition to promote and support kinship carers with practical and financial support. Manchester City Council actively promotes kinship care, having increased Family Group Conferencing capacity, supporting over 600 carers, and providing specific support from the Virtual School and a specialist fostering team. However, presently beyond indicating there will be 8 national pilots there has been no announcement of any additional funding to support the successful implementation. This is a significant challenge.

3.3 In respect of the Children Social Care National Framework whilst it is yet to be published there is a proposed dataset that will be published and available nationally. This will bring transparency to the progress and impact of children's social care, although it will be important to understand the 'narrative' that surrounds the respective local authority and respective indicators.

- 3.4 In addition, the National Framework outlines the roles of key contributions to delivering a safe and effective children social care service, this has been welcomed. As a result of this guidance, a review of key practice guidance and policies will need to be undertaken to ensure they are contemporaneous and support local deliver and reform of children’s social care. This will be progressed by the Deputy Director, Children Social Care.
- 3.5 In respect of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, there is clarity provided in respect of a local authority’s duty under s17 Children Act 1989 and the ‘lead professional’. This provides an opportunity to reimagine how services for some children such as those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) can be delivered. Subsequently work will be undertaken to explore and develop these opportunities and the Manchester Safeguarding Partnership will develop an action plan to deliver changes. This will be reflected and reported in the Manchester Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report 2023/24.
- 3.6 Finally, the governments Digital and Data Strategy presents an ambitious set of proposals to improve the way information is shared and promote innovation with regards to supporting practitioners in the daily activities. However, this is dependent upon providers being able to adapt and modify their systems and therefore presents some significant challenges. In addition, no funding allocation has been announced which without will be significant barrier to success in the current climate of austerity. Notwithstanding this, Manchester City Council’s children services is working with our digital suppliers to develop several initiatives to capture the ‘voice/contribution’ of children to their records and use of AI (artificial intelligence).

4.0 Recommendations

4.1 The Committee is recommended to:

1. Consider and comment on the presented information and planned local response.
2. Seek further updates on progress for each specific area of reform and include in the committee’s work programme for 2024/25.

5.0 Appendices

Presentation