



Children's & Education Services

Building a safe, happy, healthy and successful future for children and young people



MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL



Stable Homes build on love, reform of Children Social Care

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Children and Education Services.
February 2024**



Stable Homes, Built on Love - one vision, six strategic pillars

We published our strategy for Children's Social Care reform on February 2nd 2023, for consultation closing 11th May.

OUR VISION:

For children to grow up in **loving, safe and stable families** and, where that is not possible, **care provides the same foundations**, so that **all children can achieve their potential**.

Pillar 1

Provide the right support at the right time so that children thrive within their families and that families stay together.

Pillar 2

A decisive multi-agency child protection system with agencies working together in a fully integrated way, led by social workers with specialist expertise and knowledge.

Pillar 3

Unlock the potential of kinship care, so wherever possible, children who can't stay with their parents are cared for by people who know and love them already.

Pillar 4

Reform the care system, to make sure we have the right homes for children in the right places. Be ambitious for children in care and care leavers – providing the right support to help them thrive and achieve their potential into adulthood.

Pillar 5

Provide a valued, supported and highly-skilled social worker for every child who needs one.

Pillar 6

Make sure the **whole system continuously learns and improves** and **makes better use of evidence and data**.

Phased Approach to Reform

We set out our long-term plan for reform, with phase one taking place over the Spending Review period (~ March 2025).

Phase One from spring 2023

Over the **next two years**, we will **address the most urgent issues** facing children and families, **setting national direction** and **laying the groundwork** for future reforms.

We will use a “Pathfinder” approach for the most complex reforms in local areas, before we plan to roll-out nationally at scale. A Pathfinder does not test the policy interventions themselves, rather the feasibility of reforms and specific models.

Subsequent Phases from March 2025

We will consider **plans for wider roll out** in the **next Spending Review Period** subject to Phase one outcomes.

This will be about **embedding reform everywhere**.

This will include consideration of legislative changes (subject to parliamentary time) and a wider programme of support.

We will prepare for this in the first phase through consultation and reviewing existing legislation.

Across the strategy we are promoting take up of well evidenced models – for example expanding the Mockingbird model in fostering, or using learning from the Strengthening Families Protecting Children programme in our Family Help and Child Protection reforms.

Sources

[What is the difference between a trial and a pilot? | APM](#)

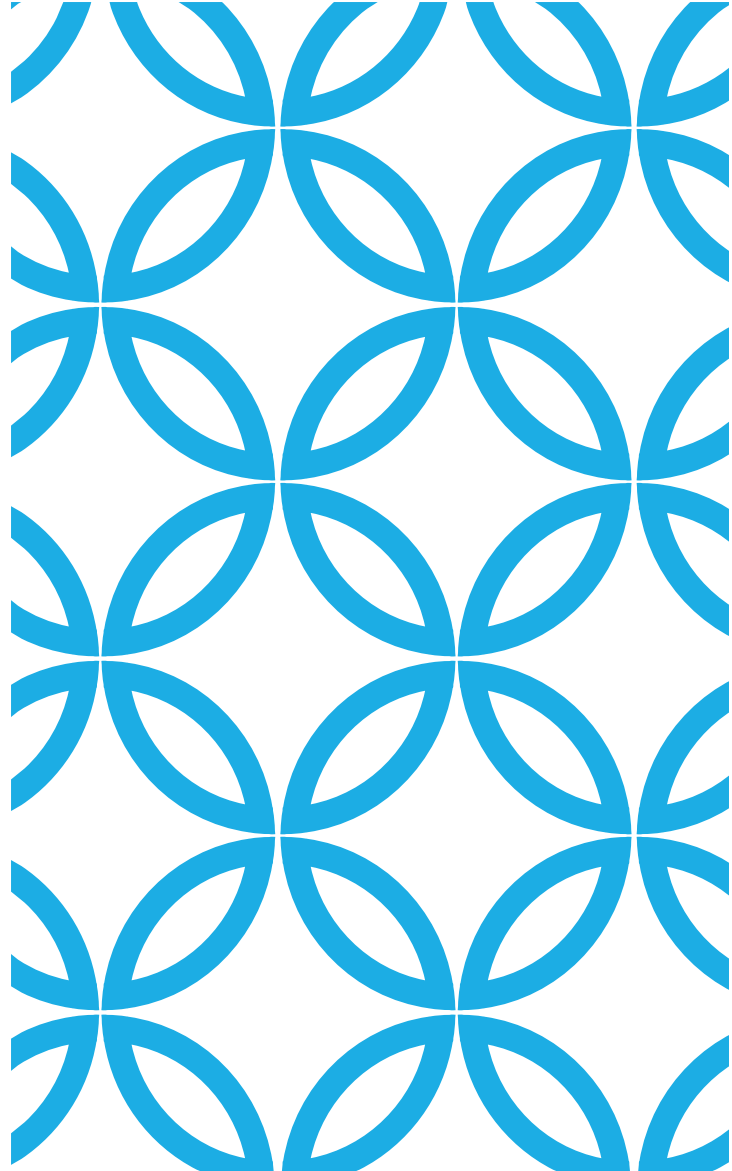


Department
for Education

4 Key National Policies to Support the DfE Reform of Children's Social Care

On 15th December 2023, the DfE published The following interrelated strategies and statutory guidance.

1. A kinship strategy, 'Championing Kinship Care' <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/championing-kinship-care-national-kinship-care-strategy>
2. A Children's Social Care National Framework <http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-social-care-national-framework>
3. Multi-agency statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023' <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>
4. A digital and data strategy and which includes a proposed National Children's Social Care Dashboard. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-social-care-data-and-digital-strategy>



CHAMPIONING KINSHIP CARE
THE NATIONAL KINSHIP CARE
STRATEGY
DECEMBER 2023

KEY MESSAGES

The strategy aims to provide more financial and employment support for kinship carers, improve training for kinship carers, and improve education support for children in kinship care

The strategy also aims to advocate for kinship families, amplify the voices of kinship families in national government, and empower family networks throughout the children's social care system

The plan for implementation of the reforms to kinship care will begin over the next 2 years and the DfE has committed £20m of funding in 2024/25 to.

- Trial financial allowances in 8 Local Authority Areas
- Expand the role of the Virtual School from September 2024 with a focus on advocacy, attendance and attainment.

KEY MESSAGES CONTINUED



New Government guidance has been published which sets out best practice for supporting kinship carers at work, including how to adapt internal HR policies to better support their kinship carer employees



The existing Adoption Support Fund will be rebranded from January 2024 as the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund. No changes to eligibility or scope of the Fund have been made.



Commitment to establishing a new national offer of training and support for kinship carers. Kinship has been awarded a £3 million contract to deliver a bespoke package for all kinship carers in England, including informal carers, launching in Spring 2024.

KEY MESSAGES NATIONAL ACTIVITY

A new National Kinship Care Ambassador will be appointed in Spring 2024 to advocate for kinship carers and work with local authorities.

A National Kinship Care Advisory Board of sector experts will be established to advise the Minister for Children.

Updated local authority guidance to implement family group conferences, enabling every family being offered access to an FGC at pre-proceedings stage. The Government will explore using legislation to mandate this in the future.

New statutory guidance on kinship care will be published in Spring 2024, titled 'Kinship Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities'. Every local authority will publish a policy setting out its approach to supporting all kinship families.

New definition of kinship care has been published to include all arrangements where children live with family or friends.

The Strategy also requires a new data set and building on existing research work to build a better picture of kinship care, including a review of what works to improve outcomes for children in kinship care, to be published in Spring 2024.

LOCAL IMPLICATIONS

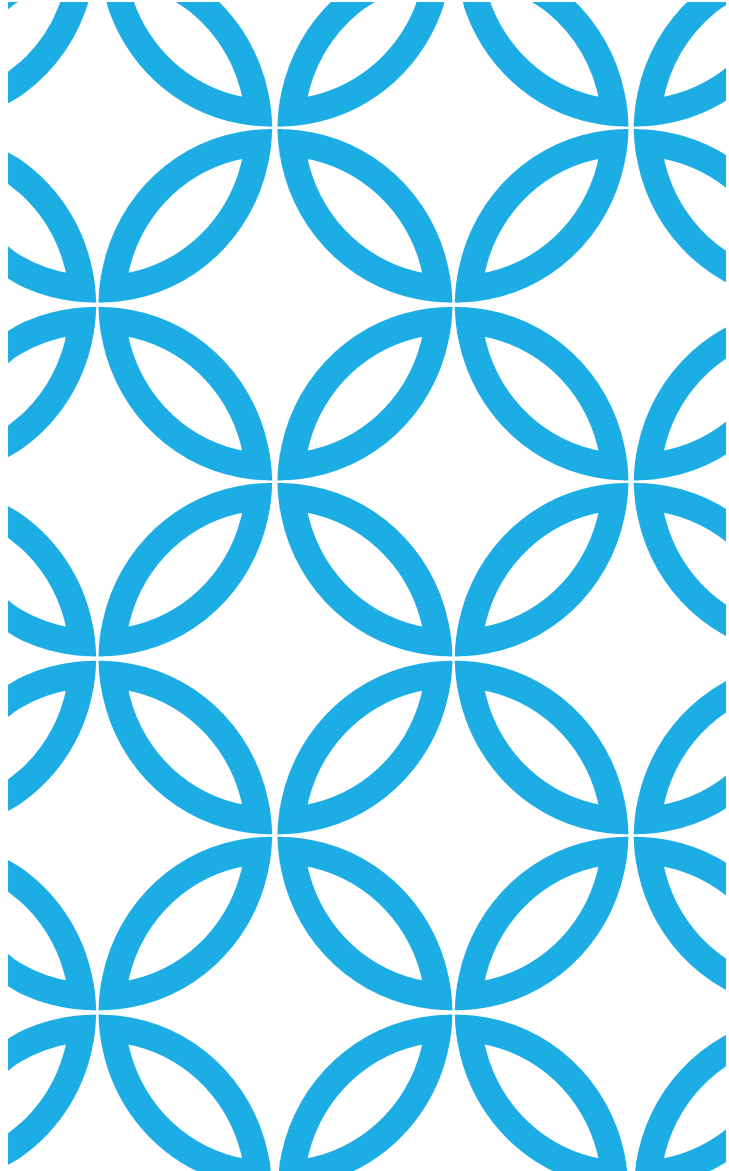
Manchester City Council is a Fostering Friendly employer has invested in promoting and enabling 'kinship care'; supporting 850 carers.

A Kinship Care policy and offer is currently in development.

Virtual School resources and capacity is currently being evaluated and reviewed to respond to the pending new duties.

There will be financial implications associated with this strategy and associated duties and responsibilities.

To date the DfE has only confirmed additional funding for the Virtual School.



CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Statutory guidance on the purpose, principles for
practice and expected outcomes of children's social
care

THE FRAMEWORK

The National Framework become operational with effect from 15th December 2023 with 24 months to pilot and 'embed'.

The Framework aligns the **purpose** of local authority children's social care with the **principles** by which children, young people and families should be supported, the **enablers** that should be in place so the system is effective, and the **outcomes** that should be achieved so that children and young people can grow up to thrive.

It provides useful and detailed expectations in the form of statements how leaders, practice supervisors and practitioners deliver the framework.

The National Framework is to be read alongside Working Together 2023 and SEND Code of Practice.

ENABLERS AND OUTCOMES

There are 3 enablers:

Multi-agency working is prioritised and effective

Leaders drive conditions for effective practice

The workforce is equipped and effective

There are 4 outcomes:

Children, young people and families stay together and get the help they need

Children and young people are supported by their family network

Children and young people are safe in and outside of their homes

Children in care and care leavers have stable, loving homes

PURPOSE

Articulation of senior leaders, practice supervisors and practitioners Roles to **understand what is expected of their work with children, young people and families.**

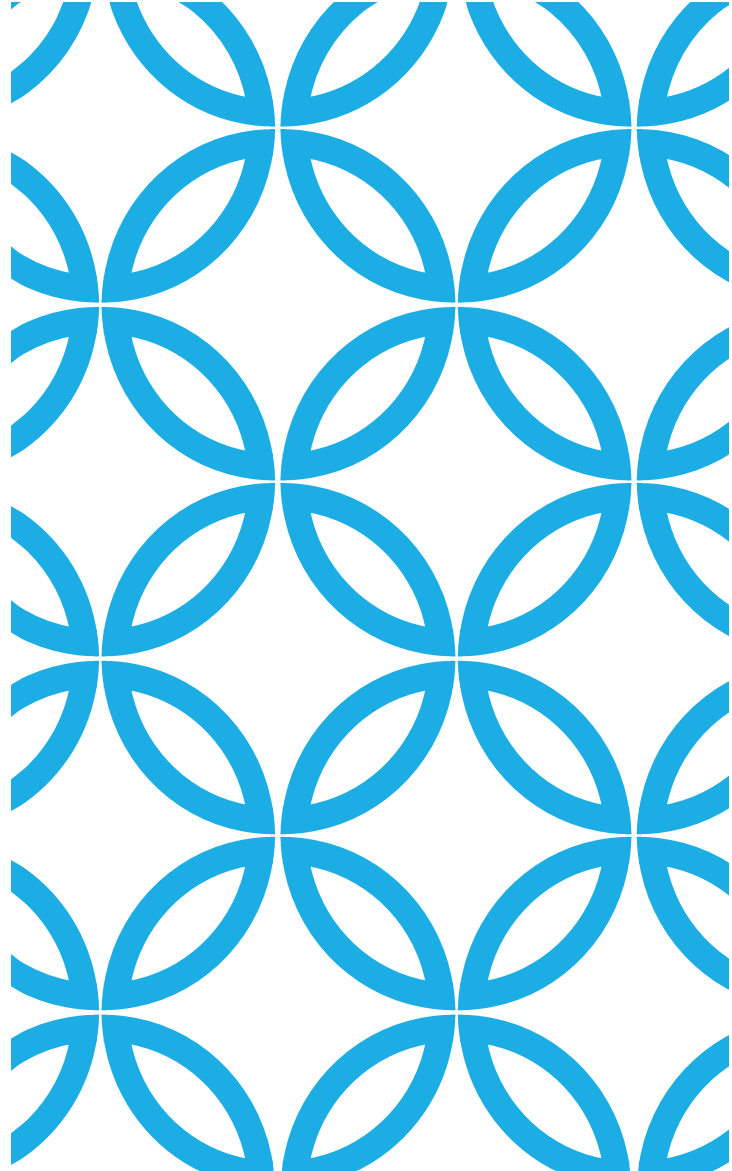
It should be used in the design and delivery of services, and should underpin the interactions between practitioners and children, young people, and families.

It is intended the guidance is used to increase accountability, reflect, learn, and improve practice to achieve good outcomes.

THE DASHBOARD

The National Framework will be supported by the **Children's Social Care Dashboard** (the Dashboard), which will bring children's social care data together in one place to understand progress towards the outcomes of the National Framework.

The Dashboard will serve as a **learning tool**, which should enable local authorities to reflect on their own practice over time, as well as to learn best practice from others.



CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE NATIONAL DATA FRAMEWORK

KEY MESSAGES/ CHANGES AND TIMESCALES



DfE have proposed an initial set of indicators which will be published in a public dashboard in early 2024 based on data they believe is currently available.



There are also plans this year to develop a 'private' dashboard which will incorporate more timely data. Early adopter LA's will be enrolled to help develop this



A 2nd set of indicators are being developed by DfE for potential inclusion in the future based on data not yet collected by the sector.



In terms of mechanisms for dataflow, DfE envisage a pipeline direct from LA case management systems to DfE to populate both the public and private dashboards in the future, no timescale set for this as yet

LOCAL POLICY IMPLICATIONS INCLUDING PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Ofsted will be 'rebalancing' their inspection framework to consider the government's plans around social care reform.

The initial set of indicators have been RAG rated by PRI. Those indicators rated orange and red will require potentially significant development work to allow reporting.

It is anticipated at least 5 current indicators will need to be reconfigured and 9 will require significant developments to meet reporting requirements.

The additional 35 data measures will take the number of indicators currently reported on for children social care to 381.

The existing Performance Management Framework/Scorecards used within children and education services will need to be remodeled.

Some indicators require partner data specifically from GMP and NHS. To be determined.

To date there has been no additional funding identified to support the proposed changes.

Green	Existing indicator already reported on	21
Orange	Additions/amendments required to existing report	5
Red	Significant work required to build new report	9

WORKING TOGETHER TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN 2023: KEY CHANGES

January 2024



KEY MESSAGES

Key updates introduced in Working together to safeguard children 2023: a guide to multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children relate to:

- Multi-agency expectations for all practitioners.
- Working with parents and families.
- The roles and responsibilities of safeguarding partners.
- The role of education and childcare providers,
- Multi-agency practice standards.
- Support for disabled children.
- Tackling harm outside the home.



To be implemented by December 2024.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES



- Reinforces that successful outcomes for children depends on strong multi-agency partnerships.
- Reinforces the importance of building positive, trusting and cooperative relationships with children and partners.
- Strengthens multi-agency safeguarding arrangements including clarifying the roles and responsibilities of safeguarding partners including the roles of senior leaders, chairing arrangements, scrutiny etc.
- Emphasises the role of education and the importance of voluntary, charity and social enterprise organisations in safeguarding.
- Highlights the importance of information sharing including changes to probation and prison sections.
- Introduces reporting of care leavers deaths up to the **age of 25**

SUMMARY OF CHANGES CONTINUED



- Outlines the role of education and childcare settings in supporting children and keeping them safe is strengthened especially in relation to early help.
- The approach to working with families has been strengthened including outlining the role of **family networks**, including use of family group conferences in decision making and supporting children.
- Clarifies that a **broader range of practitioners** can be the lead practitioner for children and families receiving support and services under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.
- Clarifies the children's social care and multi-agency responses in respect of extra-familial harm
- Clarifies the role of children's social care in respect of disabled children and families, children in mother and baby units (in prisons) and children at risk from people in prison and people supervised by the probation service.
- Linking to the National Framework WT 2023 introduces multi-agency child protection standards.

A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

A new chapter highlighting the importance of strong multi-agency working and the expectations of practitioners, managers and leaders.



- Share the same goals
- Learn from each other
- Have what they need to help families
- Acknowledge and appreciate difference
- Challenge each other.

Informed by four principles when working with parents and carers:

- Building effective partnerships including the importance of building strong, positive, trusting and co-operative relationships
- Being respectful, non-blaming, clear and having inclusive verbal and non-verbal communication that is adapted to the needs of parents and carers
- Empowering parents and carers to participate in decision making by equipping them with information, keeping them updated and directing them to further resources. This includes emphasising the role of family networks including undertaking family group conferences.
- Involving parents and carers in the design of processes and services that affect them.

MULTI-AGENCY SAFEGUARDING ARRANGEMENTS

Outlines new roles and responsibilities relating to the three safeguarding partners (the Local Authority, the Police and the Health Service – ICB). – 2 Key Roles

Lead safeguarding partner (LSP)

- The LSP is the head of each statutory safeguarding partner agency e.g. for a LA – the Chief Executive, police – Chief Constable
- The LSP is responsible for holding their own organisation or agency to account, speaking and making decisions on behalf of their agency, and meeting the statutory and legislative duties of their agency.
- LSPs from different agencies are jointly responsible for the proper involvement of all relevant agencies, and should work as a team, as opposed to as a voice for their own organisation.
- Local Authorities should implement a Designated Social Care Officer (DSCO) role to improve links between SEND and Children Social Care systems.



LOCAL IMPLICATIONS



Strength in the partnership which reviewed its Safeguarding arrangements in and embedded a 'scrutineer' role. This positions the partnership positively to respond to the revised statutory guidance.

An opportunity to strengthen how services across the partnership are working with families and embracing the standards.

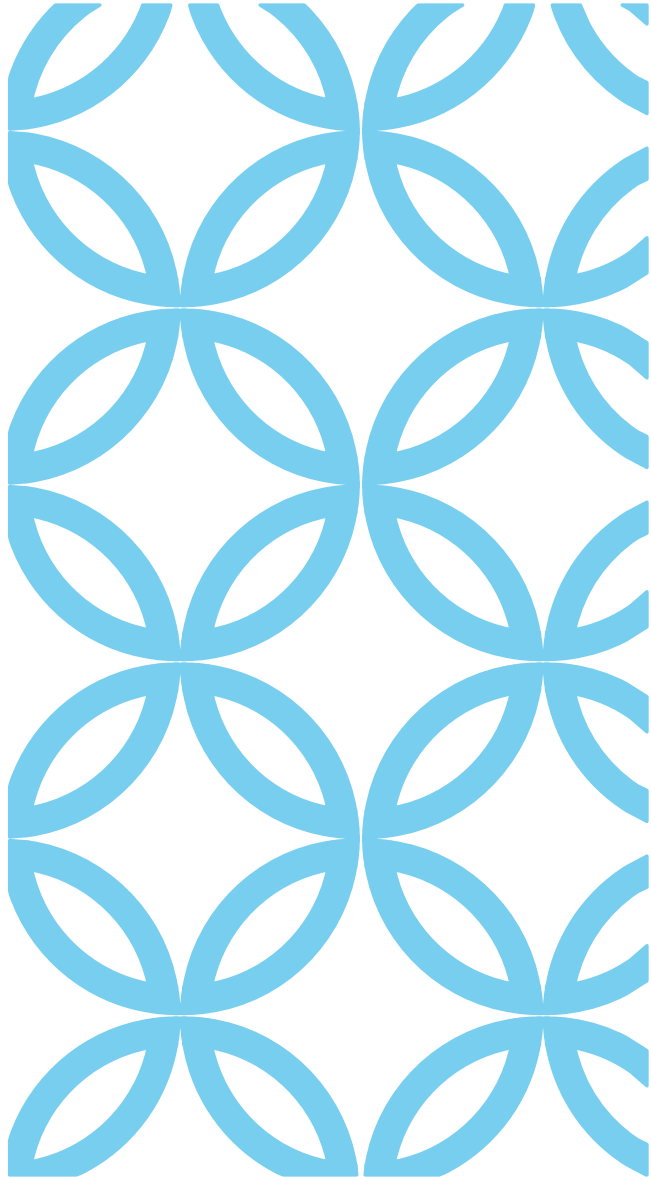
The inclusion of Care leavers within the sphere of Serious Child Practice Reviews is welcomed.

An opportunity to further strengthen the profile, contribution and inclusion of VCSC and School Leaders within the Safeguarding Partnership.

An action plan is currently being developed to coordinate the changes and implementation.

It is anticipated there are potential additional financial implications with the addition of care leavers inclusion in Serious Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews.

There is work for the MSP Leadership and Accountability Board which is attended by, or representatives of the 3 Statutory Chief Officers to consider further strengthening the partnership and relationship with the community based voluntary sector.



CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK + SOCIAL CARE DATA & DIGITAL STRATEGY

KEY MESSAGES/ CHANGES AND TIMESCALES

- 3 strategic objectives outline the key focus between now and 2025
 - Supporting a strong data culture and leadership
 - Supporting systems and technology to meet sector need
 - Improve the data we collect, share and use
- Raise the capabilities of digital systems used in children's social care to overcome current shortcomings in data sharing
- Make improvements by establishing standards and principles to provide more consistency in case management systems, data and data sharing processes
- The DfE will also evaluate existing resources such as the NHS Spine and the Child Protection Information Sharing service (CP-IS)
- And there will be a focus on developing improved technology which can capture the voice of children, young people and their families, reducing the need to repeatedly tell their story and ease transitions
- DfE will work with Social Work England alongside ICO advice to develop its ability to share information. Also aim to help local safeguarding partnerships to use data sharing agreement templates and governance arrangements
- There will be a pilot to link DfE and family courts data to better understand national picture of permanent kinship care arrangements

LOCAL IMPLICATIONS



The Strategy could be a significant opportunity to help develop data in children's social care if it involves practical support around data improvement, ICT infrastructure as well as advancing management information system maturity and information sharing.



Welcome the focus on reducing administrative burden and attempts to automate data collections.



There is potentially a significant risk to and reform of Manchester's data infrastructure, system supplier(s) and stability.



The sector is hamstrung by the capabilities and maturity of case management providers, it remains to be seen how much DfE can influence private sector providers of case management systems to advance their technology.



There is the potential to lead to additional burdens on data collection in the short to medium term as digital capabilities and technology catches up with the ambitions of the strategy.



There is no identified funding for this strategy and for which the costs could be significant.

SUMMARY

1. The nationally published Kinship Carer Strategy and statutory guidance play a critical part to the governments vision to reform children social care and system, together there is a need to review policy, practice guidance and safeguarding practice and governance arrangements.
2. Manchester has invested in key areas of activity ie support for kinship carers, family group conferencing and has a comprehensive performance reporting.
3. Whilst a small amount of funding been available from the government. However, the proposed changes will bring additional burdens and require financial funding.
4. To ensure a coherent response a programme approach will be established to review guidance, develop policy and supporting strategies.
5. The MSP is developing a clear action plan to coordinate and deliver the respective changes.