

Manchester City Council Report for Resolution

Report to: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 22 May 2024
Executive – 5 June 2024

Subject: Corporate Parenting Co-operative Strategy

Report of: Strategic Director (Children and Education Services)

Summary

The purpose of this report is to inform Manchester City Council Executive of the changes and developments we have made to the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

Manchester's Corporate Parenting Strategy was due to be refreshed last year. This was an opportunity not only to develop our strategic direction but to implement changes in the way that the Corporate Parent role is delivered for our children.

Manchester City Council is underpinned by a children's rights approach in how we shape and deliver services for the children and families we serve. This is personified in our drive to achieve UNICEF Child Friendly City status. An example of how this has been reflected in practice is the move from a traditional Corporate Parenting Committee to a more radical child led Corporate Family Cooperative, named as such by Our Children and Care leavers to reflect their expectations and desires.

The strategy encompasses this approach, namely that the voices, needs, priorities and rights of children are an integral part of our public policies, programmes and decisions.

The role that people, places and organisations play in looking after children is one of the most important things they do. Cared for children and care leavers have the same fundamental needs as us all – to be loved, cared for and feel safe, this includes how we promote and support recovery, resilience and well-being, respectful of past trauma but not allowing it to define and limit the child's future.

Everything we have done in forming the strategy in coproduction and consultation with our cared for children, care leavers, colleagues and partners is based on the core value that we all want to live in the place we call our 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. To reflect our approach in Manchester our Care Consultants have asked that we define the Corporate Parenting responsibilities delivered through the strategy as the **Manchester Corporate Family Cooperative** (MCFC). It will be referred to in this way throughout the rest of the report and in all relevant documentation.

The statutory framework for the strategy applicable to Local Authorities and Partner agencies is established in section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017. It is also an important part of the Ofsted Inspection framework and the Corporate

Parenting Principles are referenced in Ofsted’s Inspecting Local Authority Children’s Services framework.

In Manchester we have high aspirations for what our children and young people can achieve and how we can support this together. What this means is that:

‘Our children have the right to expect everything from a corporate family that would be expected from a responsible and good family’.

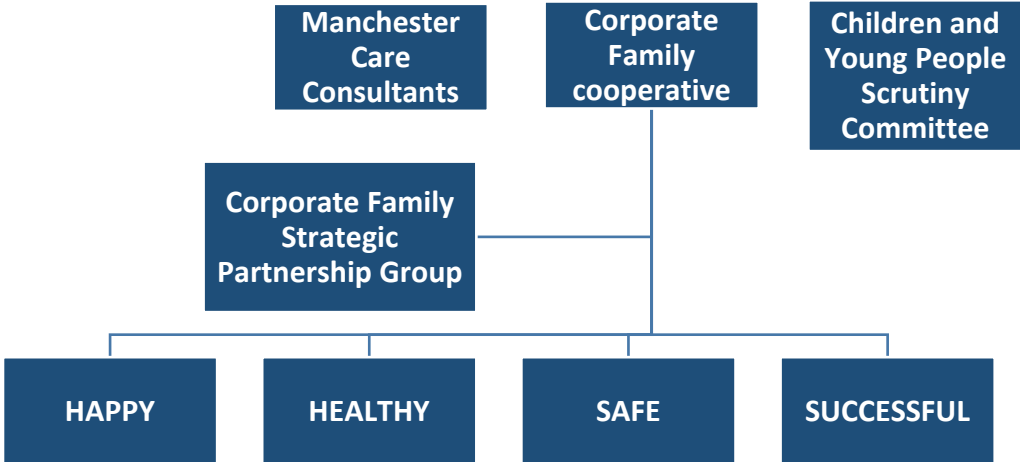
We will support our children to be Safe, Happy, Healthy and Successful.

This drives us to ensure that our children and young people who are cared for, have fun growing up, do well at all levels of learning, have the skills for life, and are active citizens who feel they have voice and influence.

How we drive change is by using relationship-based practice, cluster and locality working so we are rooted in **our children’s communities** and by ensuring the voice and influence of children and young people. The child is at the centre of everything we do, and we have a relentless focus on improved outcomes for them.

The work plan that delivers the strategy is divided into the four thematic outcomes, **Happy, Healthy, Safe, Successful**. Manchester’s cared for children and care leavers have set their priorities with us, beyond our statutory responsibilities, under each of those outcomes. These reflect what they have told us matter most to them and will have most impact. They work with us to be successful in delivering against these priorities and they hold us to account at the quarterly Corporate Family Cooperative meetings. These meetings produce impact reports that we coproduce with our care consultants and form the basis of our accountability back to our children for what we have achieved.

The governance structure is represented by the diagram below:



Within the strategy, our children and care leavers have set out **12 expectations** they have of us and will hold us to account for:

1. Respect and promote my rights.
2. Do nothing about me without me, and explain why so I understand.
3. Know the people that are important to me and make sure they stay in my life and those relationships get better.
4. Make sure I live in a safe place and I have choice when I'm older.
5. Know my culture and identity, what it means and celebrate and promote it with me.
6. Make sure I have the skills and support to be part of my community.
7. Be there if I need you.
8. Keep me healthy and teach me what the healthy choices are.
9. Believe in me, skill me up to cope with challenges and make sure I know where help is.
10. Know what I am good at, celebrate what I achieve, help me learn when things could go even better and how I can do that.
11. Make sure I have the technology I need and teach me to use it safely.
12. Give me chances to try new things and do the things I like doing.

All those in Manchester connected with a cared for child or care leaver have a responsibility to make sure that everything they do meets these twelve expectations and to evidence this and know what positive difference they have made.

The full strategy and summary on a page can be found at appendix 1 and 2. Appendix 3 provides the action plan for each outcome shaped by the consultation. Appendix 4 provides an example of a coproduced impact report from MCFC.

Recommendations

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

1. Consider the strategy, governance and delivery of Manchester's corporate parenting responsibilities.
2. Consider and comment on the work plans.
3. Engage with the corporate family cooperative in meeting those responsibilities to Manchester's cared for children and care leavers.

The Executive is recommended to:

1. Endorse the approach proposed for Manchester to meeting its Corporate Parenting duties and responsibilities.
 2. Seek an annual Corporate Parenting Report setting out the progress and impact made against the priorities identified within Manchester's Corporate Parenting Strategy and plan.
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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>N/A</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's strategic planning and delivery for our cared for children and care leavers has engaged young people from a diverse range of communities and identity. Services continue to strive to improve the cultural competence in how we deliver to our children, young people and communities. Consequently, whilst progress is evident it will remain a priority area for continued focus.</p> <p>We recognise that in Manchester being a care experienced young person is a protected characteristic.</p>

Manchester Strategy outcomes	
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Effective support for our children and care leavers is critical so they do not experience poorer life chances because of the circumstances of their birth or their family, where they came from, what they believe, or whether they have a disability. This support in their community enables them to connect, provide support, contribute and be part of Manchester as a thriving and sustainable City.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Ensuring our children and young people are given the opportunity to access immediate and ongoing support as their needs change and develop, so their potential is achieved and their ambitions realised contributes significantly to achieving this outcome.
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. Close connection within their communities enables them to thrive
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	It is important as a city we are responsive to ensuring our children and care leavers have high-quality opportunities and benefit so they can be successful and be an active member and contributor to Manchester City and local communities.

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

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

N/A

Financial Consequences – Capital

N/A

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

N/A

1.0 Introduction

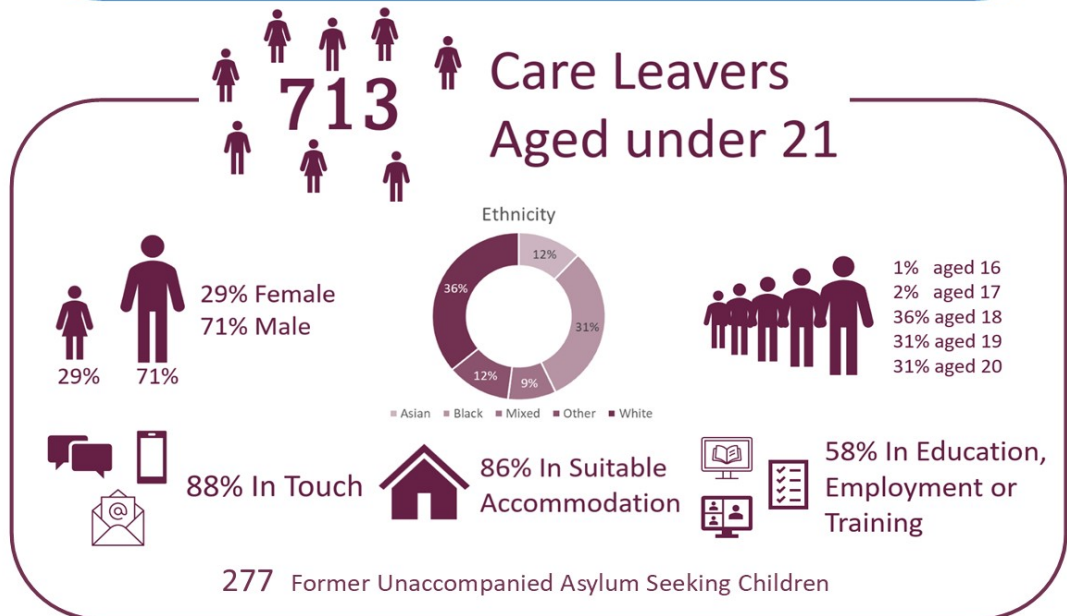
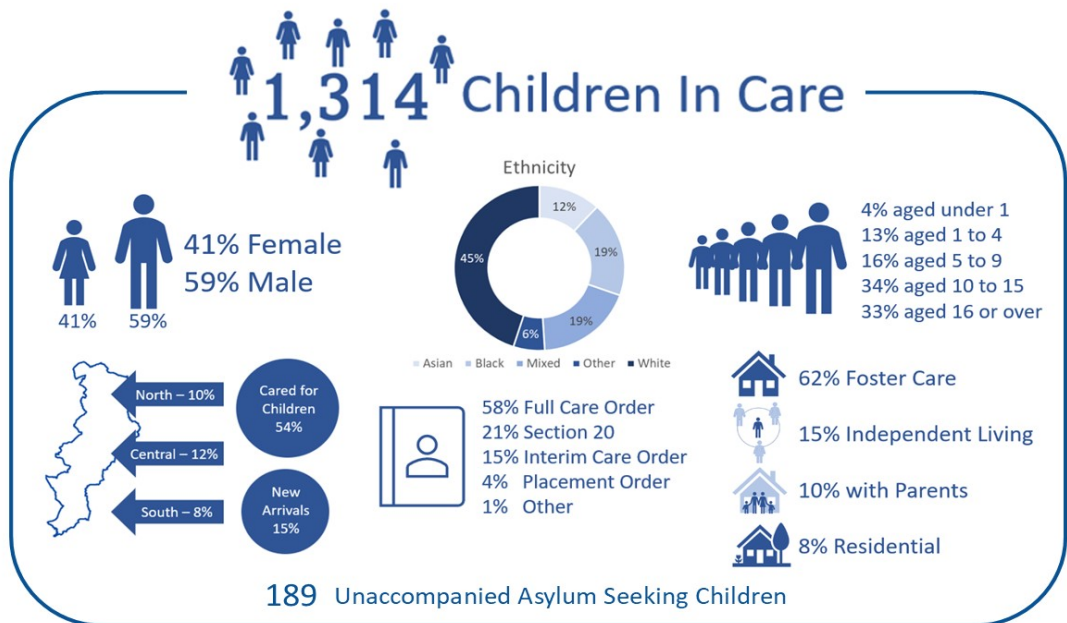
- 1.1 When a child comes into care Manchester Children's Services, its partners, the Council and Elected Members become their Corporate Parent. Corporate parenting is therefore our collective responsibility to make sure that our children and care leavers are provided with every opportunity to lead fulfilling lives, in the same way that any good parent would do for their child. Manchester's Corporate Family Cooperative (MCFC) brings together all these people to provide a forum for accountability and change.
- 1.2 This Corporate Family Strategy sets out our ambition for children and young people over the next 3 years, the values and principles that underpin the way we deliver our shared responsibilities and how we will be held to account for the impact of what we do. This has been informed by what our children and care leavers have told us and driven in coproduction by our Care Consultants. No single agency can be solely responsible for the delivery of this strategy.
- 1.3 The delivery of the strategy is set out in the actions plans for each of the four outcomes, Safe, Happy, Healthy, Successful (Appendix 3).

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 defined for the first time in law the responsibility of corporate parents to ensure, as far as possible, secure, nurturing and positive experiences for cared for children and young people, and care leavers.
- 2.2 This includes helping to dispel myths, and challenge any stigma and discrimination faced by children and young people in care and care leavers as well as ensuring they have access and support to achieve the ambitions we would want for our children.
- 2.3 The Children Act 2004, sets out for local authorities their duty to promote cooperation between 'relevant partners', including the police, the NHS and education providers, in being corporate parents while those partners have a duty to cooperate with the local authority in turn.
- 2.4 The traditional approach to corporate parenting has been to establish an adult led forum for discussing how these shared responsibilities are met.
- 2.5 The last 2 years have been an opportunity to refocus how we do this in Manchester in a way that is driven from a children's rights and coproduction ethos. As a result, Manchester benefits from the establishment of the role of Care Consultant. These are children who are in care or care leavers whom we employ to provide expert advice, collaborate with us on ensuring we are seeking the views and experience of our cared for children and care leavers; setting priorities, improving outcomes and hold us to account for the impact of what we have done. The strategy, work plans and operation of Manchester's Cooperate Family Cooperative are predicated on this approach to coproduction and cooperation.

3.0 Main issues

3.1 The profile for our Manchester children is set out below* as at 01.01.2024:



3.2 The key considerations from the strategy are:

- The twelve expectations of us as corporate parents that our children and care leavers have set out.
 - The priorities within each of the four outcomes that they ask us to work with them on to be even better set out in the work plans.
 - The governance structure for achieving this.
 - The accountability and impact model for the corporate parenting family cooperative that will oversee our success.
- 3.3 The strategy has been coproduced with the Care Consultants, which led to the adoption of the twelve expectations all children in care and care leavers have from anyone involved with them. It is critical that this is adopted and reflected in all we do.
- 3.4 During the Christmas break there was a direct consultation open to all cared for children and care leavers. The analysis of this consultation led to the care consultants setting ambitious targets for MCFC to achieve. These are set out in the workplans in appendix 3. The Cooperative meets quarterly, focused thematically on one of the four outcomes we want to achieve for Our Children; Safe, Happy, Healthy and Successful.
- 3.5 The success and impact of the work plans are scrutinised at the quarterly MCFC meeting which are themed against one of the four outcomes. The Care Consultants plan and lead the sessions and hold us to account for our impact. They mostly use a workshop style, challenging Members and Professionals across the Partnership to unpick the way services support (or otherwise), best outcomes for cared for children on this theme. Each of these outcomes has a lead responsible for delivery of the priorities set by Manchester's children in care and care leavers. The working group for each outcome is made up from Our Children and Care leavers in coproduction with elected Members, officers, partners and relevant others to achieve the priorities in the workplan. There are no observers everyone is expected to operate cooperatively to debate, agree and action the challenges set by Our Children to improve their experience based on what is important to them.
- 3.6 The output from the quarterly Corporate Family Cooperative meetings is the production of an impact report. This reflects what we said we would do, what we have achieved and what we agree to do next. We also produce a one page summary, written in coproduction with the Care Consultants (appendix 4).
- 3.7 The governance structure set out in the strategy reflects the relationship between MCFC and the multi-agency Corporate Family Strategic Partnership group. The leads for each outcome attend the strategic Partnership group and are responsible for ensuring the priorities are understood, actions to achieve the outcomes progressed, and any obstacles to success identified and overcome or escalated.

4.0 Next Steps

4.1 We are ambitious to ensure our responsibilities to the children in our care and care leavers continue to progress. Strategic advances over the next three years will focus on the following:

- Coproducing a website where information is available for children and young people about MCFC, promoting involvement, influence and transparency.
- Member training, on Corporate Parenting coproduced and co-delivered will take place, including refresher training.
- The link between the work of MCFC and front line practitioners and managers will be strengthened to ensure greater reach and impact.
- A recruitment campaign for new care consultants will take place on an annual basis, and an induction programme will build their knowledge and confidence of the Council.
- We will consider if there is an appetite amongst out cared for children and care leavers to develop a 'young inspectors' role to enhance how we monitor and evaluate our services.

5.0 Impact

5.1 There has been the impact on the individuals who are Care Consultants in terms of their confidence, skills and experience and the opportunity to be at least equal partners in a shared enterprise to do even better for Manchester's Cared for Children and Care Leavers.

5.2 The impact on the effectiveness in Manchester of meeting our corporate parent responsibilities has been similarly significant. In the last year Manchester's Corporate Family Cooperative has:

- Increased the leaving care grant by 50%
- Better access and take up of free gym Membership
- Created the opportunity to experience a residential outdoor activity holiday
- Coproducing and delivering Member training on corporate parenting responsibilities
- New free clothes from local retail businesses for Care Leavers including for interviews
- Co-producing and delivering children with a disability training for practitioners on how to be even better
- Secured being a Care Leaver as a protected characteristic.
- Identified the Corporate Family Cooperative as the 'family firm', including ring fencing six apprenticeships for care experienced children.
- Linked 100 children to clubs and activities they have been interested in trying.
- Coproducing a 'handbook' for foster cares on how to recognise, and respond with children in their care who may have mental health problems and self harm.

- Led a session at our social work team managers conference challenging them to understand how they can do even better in delivering services across Manchester.

5.3 The impact on the elected Members, officers, partners has also been relevant. There is a stronger understanding of what is important to children who experience our care to make it better. The corporate parenting role is active and present and embedded in upholding the rights of Our Children and the benefits of being equal partners in directing change.

5.4 Most importantly it is best summed up in the words of a Care Consultant, Aliyah:

“The best things for me is being able to make a change for the future of children and young people in care. The biggest thing is that plans moving forward are part of what young people themselves feel like need putting in place, it shows real meaning behind Manchester as a collective being child centred and child friendly. Don’t know if it could get better than that!! x ”

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 It is recommended that Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee:

- Consider the strategy, governance and delivery of Manchester’s corporate parenting responsibilities.
- Consider and comment on the work plans.
- Engage with the corporate family cooperative in meeting those responsibilities to Manchester’s cared for children and care leavers.

6.2 It is recommended to the Executive:

- Endorse the approach proposed for Manchester to meeting its Corporate Parenting duties and responsibilities.
- Seek an annual Corporate Parenting Report setting out the progress and impact made against the priorities identified within Manchester’s Corporate Parenting Strategy and plan.

7.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Manchester Corporate Family Strategy

Appendix 2 - Manchester Corporate Family Strategy – on a page

Appendix 3 – Manchester Corporate Family Outcomes Work Plan

Appendix 4 – Impact report on a page