

**Manchester City Council  
Report for Information**

**Report to:** Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 9 October 2019

**Subject:** Skills for Life

**Report of:** Director of Education

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**Summary**

Skills for Life is a universal approach that promotes the use of a common language to describe five key skills and a commitment to increase opportunities for children and young people to practice, reflect and record these skills. This report outlines the process, findings and the next steps for the Skills for Life project (formally Curriculum for Life) which was piloted in 2018/19 with a number of schools and settings.

**Recommendations**

Members are requested to note how the approach has developed through the pilots and comment on the plans to progress this work in 2019/2020.

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**Wards Affected:** All

**Alignment to the Our Manchester Strategy Outcomes (if applicable)**

<b>Manchester Strategy outcomes</b>	<b>Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS</b>
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Skills for Life is a new and exciting approach that acknowledges that the economy needs a skilled workforce to be successful. Skills for Life promotes the development of five skills to ensure that our children and young people are ready and able to contribute towards our distinctive and growing economy.
A highly skilled city: world class and home-grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Skills for Life will create practical opportunities for children and young people to identify, experience and reflect on their skills development as well as working alongside businesses and employers to ensure our children and young people have pathways into employment and are able and willing to support cities economic success.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Skills for Life will be embedded into a broad range of projects and initiatives to ensure maximum and varied promotion across different communities in Manchester to ensure local communities have the

	opportunity that they need to develop and succeed.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Skills for Life will work in partnerships with key agencies so that children and young people understand how their skills can support them to have a positive impact on the climate change agenda.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	

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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.

- Curriculum for Life report to Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee: 18th June 2018.
- Outcomes from the Economy Scrutiny Workshop with Young People report to Economy Scrutiny Committee: 03rd January 2018.
- Preparing for Future Life Opportunities - The Challenges Faced by Young People of Manchester Scrutiny Seminar report to Economy Scrutiny Committee Workshop: 01st November 2017.
- Curriculum for Life report to Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee: 10th October 2017.

## **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 This report provides an update on the progress made since July 2018 with regards to the development of Skills for Life, formally known as Curriculum for Life. This paper will highlight the key findings of the pilot project and the next steps to further develop and embed Skills for Life across Manchester.

## **2.0 Background**

2.1 In 2016, 24,406 young people aged 11-18 (Manchester residents) voted in the national Make Your Mark ballot with Curriculum for Life (now rebranded as Skills for Life) winning the vote. Young people clearly communicating that the education that they receive does not prepare them for life. To respond to this Manchester City Council carried out focus groups with over 240 young people and 100 professionals to explore and identify the best approaches to be piloted and to move the agenda forward.

2.2 The pilot for Skills for Life was based upon the five skills of Communication, Problem Solving, Self-belief, Self-management and Teamwork. These skills aligned to a series of thematic set of challenges, which were developed to broaden perspectives on the multiple opportunities for skills to be woven through sessions with children and young people. The Skills for Life pilot lasted six months and was tested out in 28 education and youth settings and engaged over 1600 primary, secondary and SEN young people in Manchester.

2.3 See appendix 1 for examples of the activities that took place in pilot settings.

## **3.0 Evaluation Process**

3.1 Evaluation sessions and surveys took place with teachers, youth workers and foster carers who had taken part in the pilot project. Alongside this the voice of young people has been present throughout, including in the initial consultations, the pilot project and also in the evaluation process. As part of the evaluation process all sites including children and young people were asked specifically to comment and feedback on the five skills, the thematic challenges and recording tools and resources received. A summary of those findings are included within this paper.

## **4.0 Findings**

4.1 The five skills as a foundation to the approach were viewed very positively with multiple settings commenting on how they were 'a great foundation' and are the 'building blocks to life' which can help children and young people prepare for social and economic independence. Pilot sites liked it that the skills were evidence based, overarching and that were applicable to different situations and contexts.

4.2 As part of the evaluation process there has been a strong response from pilot sites that the skills should be embedded into new and existing projects and that this 'should not be another thing'. Several providers recognised that the five skills could play an integral part in bridging the gap at key transition points, particularly between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. Schools highlighted that this transition point can be

challenging in terms of information exchange particularly those schools who receive students from a number of feeder schools and a universal approach underpinned by the skills could aid this process.

4.3 As part of the pilot project networks with employers were identified and evaluation sessions clearly highlighted that further work must take place to ensure that Skills for Life is an opportunity which increases young people's' chances to access employment and this could be promoted through school/workplace visits, work experience and also as part of recruitment and selection.

4.4 Settings were clear that Skills for Life should remain 'simple, flexible and be universally recognised across Manchester' and this must include working with wide and diverse projects, providers and businesses.

4.5 Some of the quantitative data included:

- 89% of professionals linked Skills for Life in with existing projects taking place with 52% of schools promoted Skills for Life as part of PSHE demonstrating the universality and multiple application of the five skills for life.
- 89% of professionals stated that the challenges helped to increase awareness of the breadth of opportunities for children and young people to develop skills.
- 75% of professionals stated that the challenges worked to promote skills development. This was evidenced through baseline tools, pupil demonstrations and in the language that the children and young people used.
- 95% of children and young people surveyed liked working on the challenges.
- 90% of young people surveyed felt that they learnt something by taking part.

4.6 As part of the pilot, settings received paper-based recording tools designed to encourage children and young people to reflect and record their progress. The findings in relation to use of the recording tools was very low. The reasons for this were clearly communicated from the original planning sessions right through to the evaluation session. Feedback and concerns were in relation to the fact that the recording tools were paper based which meant that it would be difficult to track and encourage young people to keep and complete. From the onset it was also communicated that if Skills for Life to be considered meaningful then they should be recorded properly online.

- 88% agreed that there is a need for a city-wide recording tool for children and young people to record and reflect on their skills development. The majority of settings that agreed that any recording must be online, contemporary and engaging for children and young people.

4.7 A number of settings that dropped out of the pilot project early on were asked to consider what a recording tool should look like, there was an overwhelming consensus about the importance of online tracking and recording for children and young people.

4.8 Some of their feedback is clustered here:

- 'Young people need an online portal/tracking tool to record their evidence, this would need to include cross curricula mapping to find out where this could fit.'
- 'For this to be effective it would need an online recording tool/passport for younger children that could be transferred over at transition. The website/portal should allow young people to upload their work, record and reflect on their development.'
- 'This would be useful as there is a lack of recording opportunity in school'

4.9 All of the findings including the quantitative and qualitative data provided as part of this consultation and evaluation process have led the recommendations and action for the year ahead.

## **5.0 Skills for Life Branding**

5.1 As part of the evaluation, settings were asked to comment on the name, branding and icons distributed as part of the pilot project. The key findings received were regarding the original name, Curriculum for Life, which pilot sites and young people commented sounded too formal, too school focused and quite boring. As a result of this, children and young people were asked what the new name should be and 'Skills for Life' was selected as it was the simplest and the most applicable to the project.

5.2 The Communications team have done further work on the branding for Skills for Life and each skill now has a link colour as well as there now being a logo for Skills for Life.

5.3 See Appendix 2: Skills for Life Logo and Icons

## **6.0 Skills for Life Launch**

6.1 The Skills for Life launch took place at the Etihad stadium to provide feedback on the pilot projects and to promote the new logo and icons. The event was attended by Cllr Rahman and Cllr Bridges and attended by over 150 professionals and 30 stall holders. All stall holders were asked to display how their work contributes towards the development of the five skills and to consider how they could weave the skills into their projects in the future. Some providers have already embedded Skills for Life into projects and these include: Ghyll Head outdoor education have already redesigned their activity booklet based on the five skills, One Million Mentors have aligned the skills to their twelve week mentoring programme and Healthy Schools are focusing on the promotion of the five skills as part of their Voice Box pupil participation network.

## **7.0 Recommendations and Priority Actions 2019/2020**

7.1 These recommendations and priority actions are based upon the findings of the pilot project and of the evaluation sessions that took place with young people and professionals. It is essential that the Skills for Life continues to be underpinned by Our Manchester values and involves children and young people in this developmental process.

7.2 The priority actions for development of Skills for Life are:

- The development of a universal toolkit which will include promotional materials, activities and resources which will support schools, youth and MCC providers and other projects to embed and promote Skills for Life into their setting.
- Join existing networks of businesses, employers, SEND providers and youth providers to share information, explore ideas on the most effective ways to promote and publicise the Skills for Life so that it is widely recognised and embedded across Manchester.
- Work in partnership with Senior Schools Quality Assurance Officers and schools to develop and pilot a primary to secondary transitions package underpinned by the five skills.
- Identify relevant digital platforms and pilot an online tool which would allow young people to record and reflect on their skills development as part of Skills for Life.

## **8.0 Conclusion/Summary**

8.1 Skills for Life is a universal approach that promotes the use of a common language to describe five key skills and a commitment to increase opportunities for children and young people to practice, reflect and record these skills. The development of the Skills for Life toolkit will support practitioners to review their practice and to identify opportunities for children and young people to develop their skills as part of new or existing projects. Through campaigns and promotional materials, Skills for Life will raise the profile of the skills agenda so that children and young people understand the importance and relevance, especially in the emerging and challenging landscapes of today. Alongside this, the findings of the pilot project clearly demonstrated a need for a contemporary and engaging online portal, which encourages reflection and recording of skills. It is proposed that going forward an online portal is piloted to explore how this could work.

8.2 In Manchester, Skills for Life is not only needed for young people and employers but also, for the cultural capital of our city. It is important that the development of this work is seen as a way of supporting our children and young people to have the skills to be able to grow up happy, healthy, safe and successful.