

**Manchester City Council  
Report for Information**

**Report to:** The Executive - 6 May 2020

**Subject:** COVID-19 - Update on Response Phase

**Report of:** The Chief Executive

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**Summary**

In light of the current national and international public health emergency situation, Manchester and Greater Manchester (GM) declared a major Incident on Friday 20 March 2020. This activated the multi-agency response arrangements in line with the GM generic response plan and the pandemic flu plan. The Prime Minister's unprecedented announcement at 8.30 pm on Monday 23rd March set out the seriousness of the situation and the expectations of all residents, businesses and public services. Over the last days and weeks a number of specific guidance notes have been received which are informing our actions and response.

This note is intended to provide the Executive with a brief summary of the work on COVID-19 in Manchester. Further detail on specific issues will be available as required.

**Recommendations**

The Executive is asked to note the issues outlined in this note.

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**Wards Affected:** All

<b>Environmental Impact Assessment</b> - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

<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	This unprecedented national and international crisis impacts on all areas of our city. The 'Our Manchester' approach has underpinned the planning and delivery of our response, working in partnership and identifying innovative ways to continue to deliver services and to establish new services as quickly as possible to support the
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	

A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	most vulnerable in our city.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	
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. 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.

None

## **1 Purpose**

- 1.1 In light of the current national and international public health emergency situation, Manchester and Greater Manchester (GM) declared a major Incident on Friday 20 March 2020. This activated the multi-agency response arrangements in line with the GM generic response plan and the pandemic flu plan. The Prime Minister's unprecedented announcement at 8.30 pm on Monday 23rd March set out the seriousness of the situation and the expectations of all residents, businesses and public services. Over the last days and weeks a number of specific guidance notes have been received which are informing our actions and response.
- 1.2 Further to the report of the 25 March 2020 this note is intended to provide the Executive with a brief summary of the work on COVID-19 in Manchester. Further detail on specific issues will be available as required.
- 1.3 The Executive is asked to note the issues outlined in this note.

## **2 Summary of the Development of COVID-19**

- 2.1 On 31 December 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) was informed of a cluster of cases of pneumonia of unknown cause detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. On 12 January 2020 it was announced that a novel coronavirus had been identified in samples obtained from cases and that initial analysis of virus genetic sequences suggested that this was the cause of the outbreak. This virus is referred to as SARS-CoV-2, and the associated disease as COVID-19
- 2.2 Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses with some causing less-severe disease, such as the common cold, and others causing more severe disease such as Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) coronaviruses. On 11 February, WHO named the syndrome caused by this novel coronavirus COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019)
- 2.3 In Manchester (as of 27 April 2020) there have been 989 Manchester residents who have tested positive in hospital. In terms of deaths reported by Manchester hospitals the cumulative total on this date was 353, however, this includes both Manchester and non-Manchester residents, as our acute hospitals serve a wide catchment area. At the time of writing there is emerging evidence that deaths are plateauing across Greater Manchester and the North West.
- 2.4 The Public Health Team, working with the Council's Registration and Coroner Service and looking at national data sets, are now building up a picture of deaths that are occurring outside hospitals in care homes and other community settings. In the week ending Friday 24th April 2020 it is estimated that approximately 9% of all deaths registered in Manchester involving COVID-19 occurred outside hospital, with the majority of these in care homes. It is important to note that there is a time lag between time of death and

registration and some of the deaths registered in Manchester are non-Manchester residents. Further work is being undertaken with care homes as part of the Adult Social Care local control room arrangements (see section 7) and outbreak management processes with Public Health England.

- 2.5 Two of the biggest issues for all areas have been around access to community testing and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

### **Community Testing and Contact Tracing**

- 2.6 On 20th March 2020 the City Council, Manchester Health and Care Commissioning (MHCC) and the Manchester Local Care Organisation (MLCO) established the Community COVID-19 Testing Hub with Trafford partners. The Hub has supported the development of the following up to 24th April:

- Testing of hospital in-patients across all Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust (MFT) sites, utilising the capacity at the Public Health England (PHE) laboratory at Manchester Royal Infirmary;
- Assisted swabbing of frontline MFT staff working in critical care and emergency departments and more recently other MFT and NHS workers;
- Access by other staff groups (e.g. primary care and social care) to the assisted swabbing, drive through regional testing facility at Manchester Airport;
- Establishment of the self-swabbing drive through testing facility at the Tennis Centre at the Etihad, which is also open to staff in care homes, children's social care and other identified staff groups in education and council services;
- The assisted swabbing of care home residents by the MLCO swabbing team which will be enhanced by a new partnership approach with PHE;
- The pilot programme to deliver self-swabbing kits via Amazon to care home staff who do not drive or have access to a car

- 2.7 Following the recent announcement by the Secretary of State for Health, the regional testing facility at the Airport will be expanded and the Etihad will also become a regional testing centre from 28th April with assisted swabbing provided by Deloitte, as well as self-swabbing. The services are accessible to a wider group of key workers via the Government self-referral portal. However, the Hub will retain oversight of employer referrals for Manchester and Trafford public sector partners. It is important to note that the local PHE laboratory capacity will not be required for these facilities.

- 2.8 The Hub is also in discussion with the Department of Health and Social Care and the military about "pop-up" mobile testing units that will strengthen the offer in agreed locations.

- 2.9 On 23rd April 2020, the UK Government announced the establishment of a National Contact Tracing Service (NCTS) as part of a wider test, trace and track approach which will be aligned to national and local testing strategies. The development of contact tracing as part of the next phase of work is now underway and the Director of Public Health will work closely with the Strategic

Director of Neighbourhoods to ensure local expertise in public health and environmental health is utilised effectively. There will also be a collaborative approach with Greater Manchester partners to ensure that the national PHE model is co-designed and developed in a way that works for the communities of Greater Manchester.

- 2.10 Finally, whilst community testing and contact tracing have been part of the COVID-19 incident response, they will also be key elements of the exit strategy described later in this report. Health Innovation Manchester are working directly with the government on this development.

### **The Manchester and Trafford PPE Mutual Aid Hub**

- 2.11 Covid-19 has caused a huge surge in demand for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). It is essential that we keep levels of supply up so our key workers, including care staff and GPs, can use the equipment they need to protect themselves and those they care for. For this reason, the Manchester and Trafford mutual aid hub has been set up to distribute PPE to front-line workers as quickly as possible. The hub will operate and evolve until such time as the national systems for PPE are operating effectively.
- 2.12 Working with colleagues in Trafford a project team has established a single system including provision of a central storage point with a shared process of stock holding, allocation and distribution.
- 2.13 As has been well documented nationally there are huge challenges in sourcing PPE. Staff are working tirelessly to procure stock through supply channels, and through donations. We have reached out to our communities for additional quantities of PPE, and they have responded positively as Manchester does. Donations so far have been received from the University of Manchester, schools, voluntary sector partners and local businesses.
- 2.14 The hub can be accessed by any provider of out of hospital care e.g. care and nursing homes, primary care, domiciliary care providers, local authority in-house or commissioned services and voluntary/third sector providers. As well as accessing the Hub it is heartening to see that care homes and other providers are also sharing stock, prioritising those most in need and regular communications are disseminated to our stakeholders across the City to inform them of how to access the hub.
- 2.15 The dedication and hard work of the Hub has resulted in the distribution of 1,014,487 items of PPE in 847 parcels since the Hub became operational on 31 March.

## **3 Governance to Support the Council Response**

- 3.1 Manchester City Council as a statutory Category One Responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 continues to work with multi agency partners through the Greater Manchester Resilience Forum (GMRF) and to be

represented at the Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) and Emergency Committee.

3.2 The specific responsibilities of the Local Authority include:

- i) Warning and informing the public - supporting the delivery of consistent messaging wherever possible
- ii) Support the identification of, communication with and provision of services to vulnerable groups
- iii) Lead on communication with schools and early years providers and work within national guidance to support the management of closures
- iv) Ensure public health advice is provided to relevant orgs and the public
- v) Implement Business Continuity measures to maintain delivery of services
- vi) Work with partners to implement surge management procedures including hospital discharge arrangements where appropriate
- vii) Implement arrangements for management of excess deaths - (specific group led by senior Coroners )
- viii) Lead on recovery

3.3 The specific Health and Social Care aspects of the plan continue to be led by the relevant Directors of Public Health working with key partners in Health and Social Care with an overarching GM group is chaired by the Leader of Manchester City Council.

3.4 Local structures that have been set up in Manchester remain in place with regular reports to the Strategic Management team and Executive members. Arrangements have recently been reviewed to take account of the dynamic nature of the response and to start to focus on the work required to support the recovery phase. A separate report is included on this agenda.

3.5 The Coronavirus Act 2020 received royal assent on the 25th March 2020. The Act has extensive schedules setting out a wide range of powers covering a huge range of matters giving a framework to life under lockdown. Some of the schedules to the Act include emergency financial support measures, staffing numbers for health care, registration of social workers ,enforcement powers for social distancing, the operation of the Courts, registrar and coronial services. The legislation allows for the holding of virtual council meetings and the postponement of elections. Legal services have provided advice and support both on the interpretation of the Act to MCC and to Greater Manchester as well as providing input and advice on the local Government implications of the secondary legislation to Central Government.

## **4 Workforce**

4.1 Following the Prime Minister's announcement on Monday 23 March, all staff except those in essential services have now been asked to work from home and not come into their workplaces until further notice. Guidance has been issued to staff about how to work effectively remotely and ICT support is being provided as a priority to ensure employees can work from home. Changing to

an organisation that predominantly works remotely has been a huge challenge for all parts of the Council but is working well.

- 4.2 Services continue to take account of guidance received from the government. This assessment has identified those services which would result in severe failure or interruption if unable to be undertaken. This could include breach of statutory duties, laws and regulations, risk to safety, welfare and life; wellbeing of the population; and key support services that are essential to the delivery of front line critical services to residents, businesses and the community. An ongoing assessment is used to inform which services need to retain a minimal on-site presence in the delivery or support of critical services.
- 4.3 All services have prepared Business Continuity Plans and have completed Risk / Issue Impact Assessments. These include clear expectations about which services can be maintained, which need to change, and which services cannot be delivered at this time. This process also allows services that are operating to request additional support; whether staffing, PPE, ICT or guidance on decision making that are then referred to HR, ICT and other support services for assessment, prioritisation and action.
- 4.4 The total number of COVID-19 related absences has continued to reduce with the current total standing at 299 compared to 331 last week and 529 when the first dashboard was produced against a total Council workforce of around 7,300. Symptomatic staff in essential roles across Children's and Adults have been referred for testing for the past 2 weeks via an internal booking system which will continue until we are assured staff can book on via the government website. Neighbourhoods continue to have an above average number who are Covid-19, (10% compared to the average of 4.1%). Absence is higher within Catering, Grounds Maintenance and FM which have a higher than average age profile and in addition many of the employees have underlying health conditions and fall into shielded or vulnerable categories.
- 4.5 A number of staff who are unable to do their usual role have volunteered for redeployment on a temporary basis. In the main this is supporting the helpline for vulnerable residents or related food/medicine deliveries etc.
- 4.6 Regular communications have been going out to staff and managers and this will continue on a daily basis. These communications share the latest government and PHE advice as well advice specific to Manchester. This has included messages to all staff each day, supplemented by messages to managers or the senior leaders' group as appropriate.
- 4.7 Further information on services and alternatives where appropriate is available here: <https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/info/500361/coronavirus>.

## **5 Support for Residents**

- 5.1 The face to face Customer Service Centre is now closed. For the first few days a core group of customer service staff supported the transition by providing a triage service.

- 5.2 The Contact Centre is made up of several key functions - Children and Families, Civil Contingencies Line, Out of hours services 24/7 when others are closed, Neighbourhoods, Revenues and Benefits, School Admissions, Elections.
- 5.3 Due to the lack of call centre home working technology, the Neighbourhoods, Revenues and Benefits, School Admissions and Elections services moved to email and online only. The ability to make a payment by phone has been maintained throughout.
- 5.4 As part of the new Governance arrangements, a work stream has been established, which brings together the strands of work that have developed to meet the needs of Manchester residents who are at risk and further disadvantaged by Covid-19. Its purpose is to ensure that the offer is appropriate, joined up and sustainable, using Government and MCC data and intelligence to inform the interventions.
- 5.5 There are 12,425 Manchester residents on the NHS shielded list but significantly more residents with wider risk issues, which may be exacerbated by the current crisis e.g. poverty, disability, social isolation or domestic violence.
- 5.6 For the third week of its operation (w/c 13th April 2020), the Community Response Helpline received 1,795 calls, bringing the cumulative total over a 3 week period to 6,371 calls:
- More than half of the calls into the hub were for reasons other than Covid-19 e.g. council tax, caller from another authority, waste collection. The freephone number provides an easy and fairly accessible entry point for residents for issues in relation to wider welfare support. These calls are all signposted appropriately and no follow up action is needed by the Community Response Team
  - In terms of vulnerability, the largest group who were isolating (85%), medically vulnerable (56%), with 36% of callers indicating that they are in the shielded group;
  - Where follow-up action is required the Community Response team complete a form but the number of forms being completed is reducing each week, which could be a result of repeat callers;
  - A number of callers ring back the hub to thank them for the support they have received and we will build in a way to capture this;
  - Majority of calls (over 90%) continue to be in relation to food support;
- 5.7 Multi-agency teams in each of the city's 13 neighbourhoods are working together to wrap support around those people who need it most. This is being coordinated by the MCC Neighbourhood teams and includes the MLCO Integrated Neighbourhood Teams and Registered Housing Providers. This work is based on soft intelligence about people who need support as well as quantitative data.

- 5.8 For those people on the 'shielded' list who are known to social care, social work teams are making contact through 'safe and well' checks, in addition to GPs contacting patients on their list. This will signpost residents to the Community Response Hub if they need further support.
- 5.9 The request for food response comes through the Community Hub and other trusted partners and referral agencies. Individuals and organisations can also get in touch directly via [food.response@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:food.response@manchester.gov.uk).
- 5.10 Since Mon 30 March, the food response team has received requests to support over 6,500 residents with food provision. Of these, 4386 require ongoing support and currently receive food support delivered twice a week. Of the total requests, 17.51% are requesting pre-prepared meals and the rest groceries.
- 5.11 The MCC team is working with a partnership of 31 food providers, which is continuing to expand, to ensure that we work with and build on the local provision that was in place prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. The model has moved from collection at food banks and community organisations to very largely doorstep delivery. As demand has grown exponentially and to cover emergency food provision, the New Smithfield depot became operational from Easter weekend. The city wide offer means that we are able to support people from all wards across the City. On our busiest day the partnership delivered food to 2443 residents in the city.
- 5.12 Generous cash donations from businesses through the Lord Mayor's Charity We Love Mcr and the City Council's Local Welfare Scheme have funded the food provision alongside donations of food, volunteers and vans. Issues going forward include the need for additional refrigeration facilities and funding & food provision to sustain the offer. Defra continues to work with supermarkets and local authorities to get allocated priority delivery slots (400,000 nationally) for residents who need food delivered and can afford to pay for it. Local Authorities will be expected to triage the support and we are working with the LGA to ensure that this becomes part of our local offer and that there is flexibility for us to respond.
- 5.13 MCC is working closely with MHCC, Macc and Young Manchester to provide a coordinated and practical support offer to the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector. A matching service is operating for those who wish to volunteer and organisations requesting support. By 20 April, nearly 2,500 residents had signed up to volunteer.
- 5.14 Volunteers can register their details at:  
<https://www.manchestercommunitycentral.org/covid-19-community-volunteering-0>

Voluntary sector groups can request additional support here:

<https://www.manchestercommunitycentral.org/coronavirus-advice-and-resources/covid-19-support-voluntary-sector-organisations>

## **6 Welfare and Benefits Support**

- 6.1 To indicate the increased level of demand for support, Manchester Citizens Advice recorded welfare benefits enquiries during the week of 30 March that were double the level in early February, and enquiries relating to unemployment had nearly trebled. Nationally, Citizens Advice reported the busiest week in their history at the end of March.
- 6.2 Official DWP statistics relating to new Universal Credit claimants are not due to be released until May. Housing Benefit / Council Tax Support claims received via Universal Credit new claim records can be used to provide an estimate of increases in volume, but note this is only a subset of all new claimants. Claims were three times the norm in the weeks ending 5 and 12 April, which reflects the significant increase reported nationally for Universal Credit claims.
- 6.3 Ahead of the Government scheme issuing vouchers via schools to families who would usually be eligible for Free School Meals, MCC made local arrangements to support Manchester families. 5,028 applications were received by 12 April, of these 4,594 have been processed and 3,026 approved to the value of £163,370. This equates to £10 per week for each child or young person in the household to contribute towards lunchtime meal costs.
- ### **6.4 Hardship Fund**
- 6.5 As part of its response to COVID-19, the government announced in the Budget on 11 March 2020 that it would provide local authorities in England with £500 million of new grant funding to support economically vulnerable people and households in their local area. Manchester's award is £7,458,231.
- 6.6 This is based on a snapshot of the CTS caseload and the money awarded is expected to provide Council Tax Support and additional support for other urgent support to residents. There is no cost to the Council in granting these awards as long as costs remain within the amount of money allocated by the government.
- 6.7 Based on a recent snapshot of the current Council Tax Support, the approach suggested which is to award each CTS claimant a credit to their Council Tax account of £150, would cost £5.12 million.
- 6.8 However, there is an expectation that due to the economic position and the large number of pending UC claims that this could result in a significant number of additional CTS claims. It is therefore prudent to assume a further 20%, £1.024m top of the £5.12m to deliver the scheme. This takes the costs to £6.144M, leaving £1.314M to support other welfare priorities.
- 6.9 These proposals are based on the position as understood at the present time and may change in some areas to respond to new and emerging requirements.

Provision of lunch time meals for children	£200,000
Emergency fund to support Council Tax payers in the city who may not be in receipt of Council Tax Support	£500,000
Emergency food provision (as required tbd)	£200,000
Support for carers	£200,000
Additional support to the Welfare Provision to support households that might be facing a crisis or emergency	£200,000

## 6.10 Free School meals

- 6.11 The Council always wants to ensure that all our children and young people have access to a lunchtime meal. As a result we had a scheme set up for both term time and later for the school holiday period in advance of the government's scheme being announced and going live. During the term time period whereby schools were closed they maintained the responsibility to ensure that children who were entitled to means tested free school meals were able to get food or a voucher/cash.
- 6.12 This support was provided by the Council's Revenues and Benefits Service using the Welfare Provision Scheme. This scheme was in operation from 23rd March to 17th April 2020. We have since established that for free means tested free school meals cases, the Council will be able to claim this money from schools who have been provided with this money for the four week period including the holidays. The Council will pick up the costs where support is provided and the child does not qualify for the government scheme.
- 6.13 In addition to children who qualify for free school meals, the Council's scheme is also available to people who may not qualify but who may have an immediate need for support.
- 6.14 The following is a snapshot of grants at the end of the Easter holidays. In addition to cash for lunchtime meals, fuel grants were also provided in a few cases.
- 5,928 FSM applications received
  - 5,866 applications processed
  - 3,538 approved to a value of £191,350
- 6.15 NB an additional 600 FSM cases received prior to the formal scheme launching have been processed but because they were submitted in advance of the formal scheme going live the number and value of these cases paid at this point is not captured in the figures the system reports and will be produced manually later in the month.
- 6.16 From 20th April 2020, schools will be providing support to families that qualify for free school meals using the new government voucher scheme.

6.17 The Council will maintain support for other families who may need support at this time and has implemented a temporary scheme. The Manchester Temporary COVID Free School Meal Scheme will pay £10 per week for each child for an initial four week period for families experiencing severe hardship. This may be extended in some cases. Funds for this are limited and paid from a Covid Hardship Grant paid to the Council. This could include the following circumstances and each case will be considered on its own merits.

- An immediate drop in income not covered by the means tested benefits regime
- A decrease in self-employed income
- Waiting for a Universal Credit claim to be paid
- Domestic violence or family displacement
- Other immediate need or hardship arising from COVID 19.

6.18 The Council is also working with schools to ensure that those families that have not claimed up to now make their claim and receive the grant payments.

#### **6.19 Emergency Food Provision**

6.20 Of the £200,000 set aside for food poverty, £40,000 was provided to the hub prior to the Easter break to ensure that there was adequate provision to meet presenting need. £160,000 of the £200k remains.

#### **6.21 Council Tax Hardship additional Support**

6.22 Additional support has been set aside to support households with Council Tax. These payments will be made to households experiencing hardship and having problems meeting their Council tax liability and may not qualify for Council Tax Support or Council Tax Support is not yet in payment.

6.23 Applications will be considered by officers considering the individual circumstances of the case when no other support is available.

#### **6.24 Welfare Provision Scheme**

6.25 The Council's Welfare Provision Scheme would normally only help those families in receipt of a qualifying means tested benefit facing crisis or an emergency or if they are being supported to move home due to complex circumstances e.g. homelessness or leaving hospital.

6.26 The scheme has been amended so that applications can be considered in exceptional circumstances to meet immediate need from extremely vulnerable households who may not be in receipt of means tested benefits. Examples could include an emergency cash grant or a fuel grant. Each case will be considered on the individual merits of the case, cognisant of the budget.

#### **6.27 Support for Carers**

6.28 The Welfare Provision Scheme has also been temporarily amended to include support for carers recognising the exceptional demands based on households during the lockdown period. This is being provided with support from Adult Social Care and those organisations supporting carers in the city.

6.29 Support is available to carers, including those households where a child or young person is the carer, to ensure the ongoing health and well being of both the carer and the person who needs care. This could be travel or transport costs, including taxis, furniture or white goods needed as a result of the disability or caring needs or emergency funds for food, food delivery and fuel.

### **6.30 Council Tax Support- changes to align to government changes**

6.31 As one of many government responses to Covid-19, HMRC are increasing the basic element of Working Tax Credit by £20 per week. In order to ensure that claimants receive the full amount of this increase, an equivalent increase to the Housing Benefit additional earnings disregard has been applied (the disregard increasing from £17.10 to £37.10 per week). The HMRC change does not apply to the Council's local Council Tax Support Scheme. The change also applies to persons who are not entitled to WTC but who comply with certain conditions with respect to minimum hours of work as set out in the regulations relating to HB. The change comes into force on 6 April 2020 and ceases to apply at the end of 4 April 2021.

6.32 It is appropriate to mirror this change within the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme so that residents benefit from the whole of this additional award of tax credits. If we do not amend the CTS Scheme the way we calculate entitlement, it will mean that the additional income is taken into account as earnings when calculating entitlement, meaning that residents would lose 20 pence in each extra pound awarded.

6.33 We can do this adjustment using the discretionary powers under s13A (1) (c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. This means that we are aligning our scheme to other means tested benefits so that residents do not lose out.

### **6.34 Benefits - Increase in claims to the Council**

6.35 The Council has also had a significant increase in benefits claims that are managed by the Council. The data below shows the increase and a comparison to show the scale of the increase.

Housing Benefit / Council Tax Support:

New claims received

W/E 1/3/20 = 524

W/E/ 19/4/20 = 1,250

Of the above:

Benefits Service online claims:

W/E 1/3/20 = 249

W/E 19/4/20 = 283

Universal Credit New Claim Records (indicating a possible new claim for CTS) -  
W/E 1/3/20 = 255  
W/E/ 19/4/20 = 877  
The increase reflects the significant national increase in Universal Credit claims

Changes reported (all claim types) -  
W/E 1/3/20 = 2,902  
W/E/ 19/4/20 =2,894

- 6.36 Changes have increased from 1,786 last week. This is primarily due to the increase in Universal Credit changes reported. The increase reflects a combination of usual year-end uprating adjustments plus Covid-19 driven changes such as people being furloughed or reporting changes in circumstances that are moving them from legacy benefits onto UC.

## **7 Support for Businesses**

- 7.1 There have also been separate announcements of direct support to businesses. These include expansion of the Retail Discount and the availability of grants.
- 7.2 The relief for retail, hospitality and leisure services will apply to occupied properties in the year 2020/21 at 100%. There will be no rateable value limit on the relief. Premises occupied by providers on Ofsted's Early Years Register and wholly or mainly used for the provision of the Early Years Foundation Stage will also be eligible for a business rates holiday from 1 April for a year.
- 7.3 In addition grants will be made through the Small Business Grant Fund (SBGF) and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund (RHLGF), which were announced by the Chancellor in the Budget on 11 March 2020.
- 7.4 Under the Small Business Grant Fund (SBGF) all businesses in receipt of Small Business Rates Relief (SBRR) and Rural Rates Relief (RRR) in the business rates system will be eligible for a payment of £10,000.
- 7.5 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant (RHLG) businesses in receipt of the Expanded Retail Discount (which covers retail, hospitality and leisure) with a rateable value of less than £51,000 will be eligible for the following cash grants per property, based on:
- Eligible businesses in these sectors with a property that has a rateable value of up to £15,000 will receive a grant of £10,000
  - Eligible businesses in these sectors with a property that has a rateable value of £15,000 and above, but less than £51,000 will receive a grant of £25,000
- 7.6 The Council will be fully funded for these costs, along with additional New Burdens funding for the costs of administering the scheme (although the detail of this is yet to be announced).
- 7.7 The following table provides the status of the grants as 26 April 2020.

	Potentially entitled based broad eligibility criteria -restated *	Number paid and amount claimed	Balance based on the number of potential applications
Small Business Grant £10k	6,761 £67.6m	3,100 £31.0m	3,661 £36.6m
Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Grant £10k	971 £9.7m	241 £2.4m	730 £7.3
Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Grant £25k	1,253 £31.3	475 £11.9m	778 £19.4m
Extended Retail Relief (paid to Business Rates account)	3,746 £137.4m	3,746 £137.4m	Expected in full, subject to final checks
Nursery Relief (paid to Business Rates account)	91 £1.1m	91 £1.1m	Expected in full, subject to final checks

*\*excludes a number of properties (76) now agreed with BEIS as ineligible and also properties (500) expected to not apply for grant due to state aid limitations.*

7.8 The processing of applications has been challenging in some part due to the high volume of claims coming in within a short period of time, training staff from other areas whilst homeworking, lack of home working call centre technology and the time spent data cleansing and transience within the city.

7.9 Other challenges with the scheme include:

- Some businesses claiming when they are not entitled, and others who are entitled not claiming as the media suggested that this would be automatic with no eligibility criteria.
- The award of the SBRR grant is based on businesses being in occupation and liable for business rates, this rules out serviced offices, businesses that pay rent and rates inclusive and those within enterprise zones.
- The award is based on a snapshot of the rating list so assessments that are pending or not yet submitted with the VOA cannot be considered
- The business rates data held for the occupants of properties that receive SBRR is inaccurate with no financial details held.
- Because for several years, businesses below a £12,000 rateable value have not had to pay any rates, the occupation details have not been maintained in many cases and therefore the Council holds limited data.
- The Council has received a number of calls requesting changes to the list so the correct occupant can receive the grant. Where this is within the council's gift to do so we are updating the accounts, subject to appropriate evidence being provided to prove occupation.
- There has already been fraud regarding claiming business rates relief.

## **8 Adult Social Care, work with Health Partners**

- 8.1 At the beginning of the crisis the Government announced additional funding of c£5 billion nationally of which £2.9 billion was allocated to Local Authorities and Health. This was expected to support, mainly, care for the vulnerable and included:
- £1.6 billion to local authorities to help them respond to Covid-19 pressures across all services they deliver, including increased support for adult social care and homelessness. The City Council's allocation is £18.6 million.
  - £1.3 billion to improve NHS discharge processes to potentially free up 15,000 beds in hospitals.
- 8.2 On 19th April the Government announced a further £1.6 billion to support local authorities in responding to Covid-19 pressures, recognising the wider pressures on Local Government. Additional funding has also been made available to Health and this now stands at £6.6 billion as per the Government announcement on 14th April.
- 8.3 A series of temporary arrangements have also been announced nationally to increase flexibility, including enabling recently retired professionals and students to register as social workers, changes to the Care Act to enable Councils in specific circumstances to prioritise care for the most vulnerable, and suspending Care Quality Commission routine inspections.
- 8.4 The ASC response is predicated on three key objectives:
- Continuity of care for citizens
  - Minimising risk of harm/fatality
  - Protecting credibility of health and social care and partners
- 8.5 A Control Room has been established to expedite people discharging from hospitals and proactively contact and work with providers to ensure continuity of care. Over 350 individuals have been discharged through the control room during the covid-19 emergency period. All care providers (including residential and nursing, homecare, extra care and supported accommodation) are being contacted daily to establish self-reported RAG status, staffing levels, PPE etc. ASC DMT receive a daily report on this and are taking action where required to provide targeted support to providers. This has included significant work to ensure sufficient PPE supply (which also includes access to PPE for our in house services). There has been some positive change in the self-reported delivery capacity of care providers. This has improved from nearly a third of providers in early April reporting Amber, down to 5% by the second week of April, largely due to deliveries of centrally sourced PPE.
- 8.6 Work has accelerated to establish a covid-19 positive nursing home with MLCO. This home is now operational and accepting patients/citizens on discharge from hospital.
- 8.7 To support continuity of care and maintain staffing capacity, 24 additional support workers have been appointed to act as a flexible resource available to respond to any staffing requirements within in-house provider services in particular. Training is taking place as well as local induction arrangements.

- 8.8 In-house provider services have closed three day centres and one short breaks service, releasing capacity as well as ensuring physical distancing. Individuals normally in receipt of these services have routine safe and well calls.
- 8.9 The assessment and safeguarding ASC function is still fully operational, including support to those with personal budgets. The majority of interaction with citizens is being completed virtually where possible. Work is underway on a consistent approach to safe and well checks and risk rating citizens which includes contacting those c.2,000 individuals on the shielded list known to adult social care. Contingency plans have been identified to maintain delivery of the assessment process in the event that staff shortages become an issue. These contingency plans include the establishment of a social worker bank, an invitation to retired social workers to return to Manchester City Council and the creation of a new unqualified temporary role to support social workers which will also involve redeployment of MCC staff.
- 8.10 In the event that these contingencies were exhausted, work is also far progressed on the establishment of a framework for the enactment of the Care Act easements at stage 3 and 4 (through the emergency legislation). Even if enacted the framework maintains delivery of the assessment and safeguarding function which would include work to reprioritise care where necessary, in line with the national ASC ethical framework. Advice has been sought from Counsel on the approach being taken
- 8.11 Council officers are working with Health partners to ensure governance arrangements are joined up effectively. ASC are part of the MLCO command structure including participating in silver and bronze command calls daily.

## **9 Homelessness and Rough Sleepers**

- 9.1 The Council has accommodated over 250 people who were sleeping rough or at immediate risk of doing so. This has been done through the identification of a number of hotels or other units which can support self-contained accommodation, either directly by MCC or in partnership with GMCA. GMCA have established a direct contracting relationship with a number of hotels across Greater Manchester, although we have sourced a range of units independently. Allocations are managed in partnership and we are working with voluntary sector partners to maintain a qualified and consistent level of support staffing and a food offer to enable self-isolation and social distancing. It is not expected that any additional provision will be required. We are maintaining delivery of the Council's statutory duties towards homeless households in the city. A Covid-19 Exit Plan is being drawn up with partners which will cover all aspects of homelessness.

## **10 Children's Services, Schools and Education**

- 10.1 Education and children's services are operating business as usual services, delivering these differently.

- 10.2 School places have been provided for the children of key workers and those defined as vulnerable, and learning materials for all children including laptops and physical materials. During the school Easter holidays, 125 schools remained open for these children. As of 15 April, there were 833 Manchester children attending schools, of whom 615 were children of key workers and 212 were classed as vulnerable. These numbers have been gradually reducing since late March. Fewer children are attending secondary schools than primary schools.
- 10.3 There are currently 30 Early Years settings and 40 childminders providing 375 places for children of key workers and vulnerable children. There are continued issues relating to children with special educational needs and relating to the financial viability of early years settings which are being raised with the Government via the Local Government Association / ADCS (Association of Directors of Children's Services).
- 10.4 Children's social care is providing a business as usual service for Manchester's 1431 looked after children, but delivered differently including through video technology.
- 10.5 Reflective of the national picture, since 23 March, there has been a significant reduction in the number of contacts being made with Children's services. This is coupled with increased reports of domestic abuse notifications being triaged in partnership with Greater Manchester Police.
- 10.6 Early Help Hubs are receiving high levels of demand in terms of general family support, financial support, and issues relating to child behaviour and parenting during the challenges of the lockdown period. Partnership arrangements with schools, health organisations and the police remain positive at this time.
- 10.7 The report of the Strategic Director for Children Schools and Education, appended gives more detail on the work being undertaken to support vulnerable children in particular.

## **11 Services in the Neighbourhoods Directorate**

Since March the Directorate has been engaged in a wide range of activities including: demobilising services; halting capital projects; managing non-compliance and nuisance; fundraising activities; distributing grants to businesses and voluntary sector organisations; assisting with financial hardship; providing advice and guidance; holiday hunger initiatives; keeping residents active and engaged with access to online resources; and, assisting health colleagues with work in the community.

### **11.1 Compliance and Community Safety**

Across the service the teams have strived to ensure the continuation of business as usual services through implementing online and telephone offers as appropriate. Where staff have only been able to work from home due to

shielding they have assisted other teams with back office work (for example: supporting Food Standards Agency Covid-19 premises checks and preparatory work for PSPOs). Additional resources have also been provided to support the COVID response, such as a Trading Standards vehicle to provide food deliveries.

In the community safety team there has been a particular focus on supporting Domestic Violence and Abuse services to ensure victims and potential victims are properly supported

The ASBAT teams have seen a spike in cases in the past 4 weeks with 177 cases during this period which is higher than normal and mainly linked to complaints about physical/social distancing. Staff are deployed each day to support the work with rough sleepers and are out each day with GMP, MCC Outreach Teams and VCS to engage with people who are sleeping rough to support them to access accommodation to keep them safe.

## **11.2 Neighbourhood Teams**

The Neighbourhood teams have played a critical role in supporting those that are vulnerable and at risk, working with partners and taking a lead role in making contact with individuals who have asked for support, either signposting or providing them with the required support they need e.g. food, someone to talk to. Many cases have not been straightforward and the teams have used their networks, community connections, own community language skills and knowledge of the local area to help provide the necessary support to individuals.

During this time they have maintained regular contact with resident and community groups, adapting ways of working to ensure that they can maintain contact and provide support, a listening ear and helping to connect organisations with things that they need e.g. funding and linking in with the We love Manchester Charity. Neighbourhood Investment Fund monies (c£16k) have also been provided to support local groups that need help at this time.

The current situation has supported an acceleration of our place based reform ambitions to ensure the wider wrap around support for residents is in place. The Bringing Services Together for People in Places Team around the Neighbourhood is now fully established and operational in each of the 13 neighbourhoods and is coordinating the work with vulnerable residents on the ground.

## **11.3 Parks, Leisure, Youth and Events**

Our parks have remained open to support residents in taking their daily exercise and whilst there have been examples of non-compliance with social distancing in the main this has not been an issue.

The Youth team has been working with Children Services, addressing some of the complex issues which arise in communities from schools being closed

whilst the Commercial team have co-ordinated the offers of business assistance, dealing with 61 different companies and aligning these offers to how they can best support both the Council and other agencies across Manchester.

The Events team has been supporting the logistics of the food distribution to our most vulnerable residents as well as supporting health colleagues with the setup of the Nightingale Hospital, ensuring that the area surrounding Manchester Central operates smoothly and working with Manchester Health and Care Commissioning (MHCC) with the opening of the Rest and Relaxation facility at the National Squash Centre, which is supporting health staff during this difficult time. In addition, leisure facilities such as the Regional Tennis Centre have been mobilised to establish the first Drive-Through Test Centre in Manchester. The team have assisted with freeing up venues for training and the induction of NHS and GMP staff at the Etihad Campus and they have worked closely with partners such as Manchester City Football Club (MCFC) to ensure that suppliers and partners are engaged and contributing, often in kind and at their own cost.

#### **11.4 Libraries, Galleries and Culture**

Whilst the buildings are currently closed library staff are making contact with local customers and the groups that used the library, many of these residents live alone and have no digital access so library staff are signposting them to MCC hub for advice and food. Library staff continue to offer an enquiry service via email. Customers can still access many library services online and working with our suppliers joining restrictions to non-library members in Manchester have been removed so all residents can get temporary membership to access e-books, e-audio-books, e-newspapers and e-magazines.

The Business and IP Team are developing their on-line presence to support businesses; the first webinar was extremely successful. Work is also progressing to support the PPE supply chain by using the 3D printers to print component parts for visors/masks which are badly needed to support the crisis.

The [ManLibraries blog](#) is being used to promote libraries online services, and has now started themed communications with residents including a weekly [Children and Families newsletter](#) and a fortnightly newsletter for adult customers. We are developing a #LibrariesFromHome programme of virtual activities and events, mostly delivered from the [Manchester Libraries Facebook page](#), using videos uploaded to [Manchester Libraries Youtube Channel](#). There are regular events each day such as Lego club, virtual storytime, craft activities, memory boxes of local areas, plus one off events such as reading groups and author events.

Working with Work and Skills and GMCA to support vulnerable residents who are digitally excluded, two initiatives have been implemented: Free tablets with free data have been provided to a number of vulnerable residents across the city as part of the national initiative. Secondly working with VCS organisations,

Citizens Advice Manchester and MAES to offer telephone support to vulnerable residents with their use of technology. Residents contacting the Council's response hub or being referred from organisations will receive phone calls to help them use the Internet from home effectively, to connect them with friends and family, access information and do things such as shopping online or booking an appointment with their GP. Access to [on-line resources](#) to improve digital skills are being promoted to all residents.

Our cities galleries have been closed to the public since late March, however staff are working behind the scenes to take its collections, community programmes, well-being activities and education work online. Staff and volunteers are adapting regular events including Art Bites, Philosophy Cafe and parts of the gallery's well-being programme so that audiences can continue to explore and connect with its collection in their own homes. The gallery will be using Zoom Pro and Facebook live to bring these and other new activities to both regular and new audiences. There will also be features on individual works of art from the collections, with commentary and discussion to bring them to life. Free video content and films for virtual gallery-goers to enjoy will also be developed,

In addition the council has offered its support to the city's Cultural Sector. The Executive member has written to organisations to reassure them the council is closely monitoring the impact of the outbreak across all sectors of the city. Planning is also underway to support virtual and live-stream content to residents, underpinned by widening access approach #AllSortsToDoAtHome.

## **11.5 Commercial and Delivery**

A number of functions are continuing to operate business as usual working from home, including: contract management, various project work ranging from the Civic Quarter Heat Network to the procurement of a new car park operator. Focus remains to ensure that we continue to maximise the potential future income streams and commercial opportunities which will support the overall council recovery.

The Markets team continue to ensure that New Smithfield Market remains open for business to support the food supply chain as well as providing storage and distribution facilities for those supplying food parcels to the vulnerable, PPE equipment and the temporary Nightingale Hospital.

The Bereavement team have, understandably, been undertaking business as usual with extended working hours to facilitate the increased number of burials and cremations. They have been working with colleagues in ICT and Communications to develop ways of recording services so that we may be able to offer alternatives in future for those who are unable to physically attend. Pest Control has developed a self-service offer to ensure that residents can deal with infestations without the need for a visit from an operative. School catering have continued operations in 42 schools across Manchester, serving on average 641 meals per day for the children of key workers.

The waste and recycling team have been working closely with Biffa to ensure that the majority of services continue to be delivered across the City. We have managed to maintain the majority of bin collection services and are currently looking at ways of reinstating green waste and bulky rubbish collections as soon as possible. The Delivery services have similarly had to revise some ways of working. Grounds maintenance are continuing to ensure that the Parks remain clean and free of litter to enable people to use them for exercise.

Fleet continues to ensure supplies of fuel and vehicles to facilitate those working on the front line. The staff who usually undertake the taxi compliance tests have volunteered to work from New Smithfield Market delivering food parcels to vulnerable residents. The Highways Maintenance staff have taken advantage of the reduced footfall within the City Centre to undertake the critical projects rectifying defects within the public realm and keeping the highway safe.

### **11.6 Highways Service**

In anticipation of the lockdown the Highways service set up plans to focus strongly on staying as close to business as usual as possible with staff working outside inspecting the roads, responding to customers and Members, and supporting utility companies making repairs. The service has continued to manage the major highway projects including those at Hyde Road, Great Ancoats Street, Medlock Street Roundabout, A6 Stockport Road, Chorlton and the schools crossing improvement programme and the huge resurfacing programme is accelerating to take advantage of the low traffic flows (around a 68% reduction).

## **12 Corporate Services**

Overall the priorities continue to be to support the Incident Management arrangements and responding to phased easing of lockdown. The Strategic Director for Neighbourhood Services is now chairing the refocused IMT. Services across the core have been directly involved in supporting a significant volume of essential Covid related and business as usual work.

The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer is now chairing the Planning Ahead group which is focussed on the recovery activities required to support the City and the Council, supported by Policy, Performance and Reform. This will all support the national, Core Cities and GM groups as well as the planned reset of the Our Manchester Strategy. A separate paper has already been shared which sets out the governance and scope for this work and an Executive Paper is also being prepared which will add more detail to the scope of the work required.

As well as responding to COVID 19 two major programmes have continued. These are:

- Delivery of the Zero Carbon Action Plan - a summary is provided below.
- The Our Transformation Work - this will now be refocussed as the internal transformation workstream required as part of the Planning Ahead work.

The Zero Carbon co-ordinating group chaired by the DCX/CT is continuing to meet. Below is a summary of the work that is being progressed.

- Reporting
- Buildings and energy - preparation for the development of the Local Plan; use of ERDF etc.
- Transport and travel - Clean Air Plan, Waste and Recycling EV fleet, funding application for 23 electric assist cargo bikes etc; work with TfGM to roll out EV charging points
- Reducing consumption based emissions and influencing suppliers - understanding capacity of Procurement to support this work over the next 3 months and where expertise can be drawn in
- Climate adaptation, storage and sequestration -Completion of West Gorton Park, preparation on tree planting for October.
- Influencing and being a catalyst for change - work to develop CCA and associated work

## **12.1 Our Transformation**

Reform and Innovation will be engaging teams and staff about what we can learn from the C19 period, new ways of working that we want to sustain, and which elements are not working so well. As a result the programme is being redefined and will support the Council's Recovery Plan. The work will include (not in priority order):

- improved management of data - ensuring there are clear policies for handling, storing and archiving data (including documents and emails) with the appropriate security in place is even more important for an organisation that is predominantly working remotely
- continuing to modernise working practices through OWOW. This will include supporting continued remote working and during the phased exit from the lock down arrangements. A new feature of the work will be effective social distancing. The work will include the roll out of O365, video conferencing technology (Microsoft Teams), new and easier to use intranet, roll out of telephony contract with more soft phones and less hard handset, equipping meeting rooms for video conferencing and social distancing. How office space is used will be very different during phased exit period and potentially for much longer.
- more agile and effective decision making and bringing the learning into accountability framework
- Due to the age and fragility of the Council's current CRM and telephony infrastructure the Council has been unable to retain its Contact Centre telephone service with phone lines for out of hours support and the Resilience Hub only. The work to improve how residents can engage and interact with the Council remains a priority.

12.2 Across the Corporate Core activity has been very focussed on COVID related activity. In addition to the work outlined above it should be noted that:

- 75% of the HROD work is focussed on COVID activity, including the operation of the Resourcing Hub. This will have an impact on other areas of work including casework.
- Work on internal audit plan activity has ceased with work redeployed to support work on health and safety and the acquisition of PPE and to process business rates grants
- The ICT service have prioritised supporting the significant shift to home and remote working along with the front line support required and the delivery of the major projects which deliver resilience and security, to update infrastructure where required such as the data centre, telephony and wide area network.

### **13 Financial implications**

13.1 The Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer and the Deputy City Treasurer are leading the financial workstream for the Council which will include the following:

- Identifying the financial implications arising from the crisis, this will include additional direct costs as well as lost income from council tax, business rates, fees and charges (eg car parking) and commercial arrangements. It will take into account the potential economic and social impact.
- Update the Council's budget position for 2020/21 and future years
- Refresh and reset of the Council's Capital Programme
- Review the Housing Revenue Account and the 30 year business plan
- Consider the impact on treasury management - including the cash flow position.
- Lobby the Government to ensure that Manchester can access the appropriate amount of available Government funding during the current crisis as well recognising the future impact on Council resources. Longer term impact includes, most notably, continued spending on social care and homelessness, as well as falling revenues from business rates, council tax and commercial income.

13.2 The work to identify the financial implications of the current COVID-19 crisis is ongoing and evolving particularly as announcements are made regarding lockdown and continuing social distancing. There have already been some additional costs and reductions in income during March 2020 that will affect the 2019/20 outturn position, however, the implications in 2020/21 and future years are likely to be significant. Government is working with Local Authorities to understand the financial impact and the Council will continue to lobby for the appropriate level of support for the City, the region and the sector, working alongside colleagues in GM and Core Cities.

13.2 The main Government announcements regarding confirmed additional support through to the Council are:

Description of Funding	£000's
COVID-19 Emergency Funding - this is a non-ring fenced grant to help local authorities respond to pressures across all services but particularly recognises the impact on vulnerable people.	18,589
Hardship Relief - for welfare support, largely focussed around the Council Tax Support Scheme for working aged adults.	7,458
Rough Sleeping (1st Tranche)	68
Small Business Grant Fund (based on eligible businesses at the time)	121,000

- 13.4 A further announcement of £1.6bn nationally to support councils through the crisis was made on 19th April. As yet the allocations of this funding to individual Local Authorities has not been published.
- 13.5 As well as ensuring that quick decisions can be made to facilitate the response, additional measures have been put in place to control discretionary spend. This will be in a way that is proportionate and includes:
- work to review the procurement pipeline with a view to stopping any possible future contractual commitments that are not directly linked to essential services or the Covid-19 response.
  - Focussing ICT capacity and resource on the essential pipeline and to support changes required in response to Covid-19
  - Ensuring where services are being scaled back all relevant spend is curtailed where possible - noting the need to retain staff and the approach outlined in the procurement section of this report
  - Where the Budget for 2020/21 includes additional investment this is rephased to reduce the level of spend and take into the account the practical implications of having the capacity to deliver the investment in the current situation.
  - All capital schemes that are not contractually committed are deferred unless there is a good reason to go ahead.
- 13.6 The financial impact of the Covid-19 measures, likely compensation from Government and likely required use of reserves will all be collated to ensure a proposal for an updated budget position for 2020/21 in June 2020 ready to report in July.
- 13.7 Fortnightly reporting on all the financial implications is being implemented and will be shared with the Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources.
- 13.8 The statutory deadlines for the completion of the Council's draft accounts and audited final accounts have been moved from 31 May and 31 July to 30 June and 30 September respectively.

13.9 The approach to procurement will be to ensure flexibility, quick decision making and following the recommended government approach which includes:

- Urgently review the contract portfolio and inform suppliers at risk that they will be paid as normal, and ensure prompt payment
- Where necessary, allow payments in advance for up to 25% of the contract value. This should be on an open book basis and if the contract value is being paid in full, staff must be retained. Note this applies to construction if applicable.
- Pay at risk for three months even if the supplier cannot fully meet the requirements of the contract

13.10 A record will be maintained of procurement decisions made to ensure an appropriate audit trail exists.

## **14 Capital Programme**

14.1 The capital programme will be subject to review. It is proposed that schemes that are not contractually committed are put on hold unless there is a good reason to go ahead. Some schemes are continuing which include:

- the Town Hall project - although the move to Notice to Proceed has been delayed, some more limited works are continuing under advanced works orders.
- works continuing on site for The Factory, albeit with reduced productivity.
- schemes that are already underway, such as the refurbishment of Alexandra House.
- work to secure SEN school places is also progressing with schemes on site at Northridge / Roundwood / Camberwell / North Hulme.
- Hyde Rd secondary design is being progressed for a September 2021 temporary and September 2022 new build school.
- Minor works across the Council's and HRA capital programme are continuing as required.

14.2 It is ensured that any on site works are in line with PHE requirements.

14.3 An update on the Capital Programme and the priorities for delivery will be reported in July. As with the revenue budget the financial consequences associated with COVID19 will be evaluated in light of the latest information available. Capital investment funded through the HRA will also be reviewed reflecting the impact on the 30-year business plan.

## **15 Economic and business impacts**

15.1 The global economy has experienced a large downturn since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Government has announced significant support since the 11 March budget to mitigate some of the impact, including:

- £330 billion of Government backed loans and guarantees

- Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme - Government to cover the cost of up to 80% of the salary of workers, or up to £2,500 per month for an initial three months, who are furloughed, rather than made redundant.
- Business rates relief - range of measures, including: 12 month holiday for all retail, hospitality and leisure (museums, theatres, gyms, hotels etc) businesses; 100% relief for nurseries; additional relief for businesses in receipt of small business rates relief as of 11 March.
- Grant funding of up to £25,000 for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses with property with a rateable value between £15,000 and £51,000
- Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme - scheme aimed at encouraging banks to provide loan facilities of up to £5m for smaller businesses experiencing increased costs or disruptions to cash flow. The Government will provide lenders with a guarantee of 80% on each loan, and cover the first six months of interest payments.
- Deferring £30bn of value added tax payments by companies until end of June
- Deferring income tax self-assessment payments due on 31 July 2020 to 31 January 2021 (aimed at self-employed)
- Statutory sick pay relief package for SMEs, allowing SMEs to reclaim expenditure
- £7bn to strengthen the UK's welfare safety net, which is aimed at the self-employed. Additional measures are expected to help the self-employed.
- On 19 March 2020, the Bank of England announced that it was further reducing the interest rate, taking it from 0.25% to 0.1%, the lowest level in history.

15.2 The actions taken by the Government to underpin both the supply and the demand sides of the economy are to be welcomed. However, support for those who are self-employed has yet to be given and the Government should be encouraged to find solutions to support this sizable part of our workforce. Notwithstanding the support announced by the Government, the near term impacts of what has already happened in our local economy as a result of Covid-19 cannot be measured at the moment. The Skills team and Business Rates team, with GM support provided by the Growth Hub continue to work to ensure that available support can be reached. The Head of Work & Skills is also part of the GM Economic Resilience Group.

15.3 Council officers are working with Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) on the transport implications. A key priority is ensuring that key workers including medical professionals are still able to get to work when they rely on public transport. There will be a need to consider re - purposing services that are no longer needed during the current phase and for these to be considered for re-deployment to support priority requirements for NHS staff and other key workers. As an example, and in discussion with TfGM and leading members, the decision has been taken to temporarily suspend the city centre Free Bus. Discussions will take place as to how these vehicles may be re - purposed. In addition, public transport providers are enhancing cleaning regimes to seek to try to minimise the threat of cross infection for those people who continue to need to rely on public transport.

- 15.4 The Council's website signposts businesses to support and guidance, here: <https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/info/500361/coronavirus/7928/coronavirus/2>. Support for businesses is being coordinated through the City Council's Work and Skills team and Business Rates team, with GM support provided by the Growth Hub.
- 15.5 Both the Leader and the Chief Executive are part of the Government Recovery group and working with Greater Manchester to plan for the GM recovery which will have a clear focus on economic and business impacts.

## **16 Post Lockdown Planning**

- 16.1 Whilst there is no published government guidance on what a relaxation of lockdown will look like, based on the latest government announcements and health advice the following assumptions are being made (planning will be flexed as more detail becomes available):

### **16.1.1 Health Indicators required before lockdown is relaxed:**

1. Making sure the NHS can cope
2. A 'sustained and consistent' fall in the daily death rate
3. Rate of infection decreasing to 'manageable levels'
4. Ensuring supply of tests and PPE can meet future demand
5. Being confident any adjustments would not risk a second peak

### **16.1.2 Conditions for a relaxed lockdown are likely to remain quite restricted:**

- More shops/establishments potentially will be allowed to open
- Likely to be age restrictions around relaxation
- Restrictions for those in the vulnerable and shield category will remain unchanged
- Likely to be reduced capacity in schools if they reopen before the end of the summer term (which will impact the ability of a large number of staff to sustain onsite work)
- Current social/physical distancing measures are likely to remain in place.
- Advice is likely to remain if you can do , you should continue to work from home

## **16.2 Preparing for the next phase**

- 16.2.1 The Council was able to very quickly move from a mainly office/location based organisation to an organisation working off site, and over the last 4-6 weeks has very successfully been able to continue to deliver essential services and support the response to the pandemic. This has not been without its challenges but it has enabled new and innovative ways of working to be tested and developed. In planning to come out of lockdown (on a staged basis) it is important we do not lose the new ways of working developed over the last 4-6 weeks and we should where possible plan alongside the relevant Our Transformation projects.

16.2.2 Where appropriate e.g. in our Libraries and Leisure services learning from areas where we have strong relationships through sector partnerships both in Europe and beyond where they are further ahead in lifting restrictions will assist in this planning phase.

16.2.3 As planning (and advice) develops, it is the intention to develop plans for the next 3, 6 and 12 months where we are envisaging restrictions at different levels to remain. There are a number of dependencies that will influence the decisions and actions we are able to take, some of which will be a result of government decisions and guidance. Although we cannot control these, work is underway to enable us to respond in a timely way.

16.2.4 To support the planning for easing of lockdown restrictions the Council is working with other city stakeholders to consider the needs of pedestrians and businesses. Prioritisation will be given to mass transit and walking. Key routes from travel hubs, such as railway stations and tram stops, to major employment locations will benefit from plans to temporarily widen the footway into the carriageway by closing road lanes with simple traffic management. In addition traffic signals at crossings will continue to have maximum pedestrian crossing timings to stop bunching at junctions. Discussions are underway with TfGM about their plans for social distancing at busy bus and trams stops. Some temporary road closures to support the economy and encourage walking are being considered in the city centre and where possible planned cycling and walking schemes will be accelerated subject to Mayors Challenge Fund governance arrangements.

## **17 Conclusions**

17.1 Executive will be kept up to date with developments as this agenda is expected to continue changing rapidly.

## Appendix

**Subject:** Children and Education Services response to Covid19

**Report of:** Strategic Director for Children and Education Services

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### Introduction

In light of the increasing incidence of people in the United Kingdom becoming infected with and dying from Covid19 on 23rd March 2020 the government made the decision to 'lockdown' and imposed a series of measures restricting the movement of the UK population. Most significantly these included following Public Health England advice to follow strict social distancing, use of Personal Protective Equipment, only essential services to continue to operate which included Schools and Early Years settings remaining open for vulnerable children and those of key workers. These measures have been supported by regular (daily) guidance being issued by the DfE in respect of and in response to specific issues. It is worth noting that issues relating to children with SEND and financial viability of Early Years PVI settings continue to present significant challenges and which are being raised with government departments by the Local Government Association/Chief Executives and Association of Director of Children's Services (ADCS); these discussions are ongoing and progressive.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the impact, progress and response of schools, children and education services to the presenting challenges of Covid19; with a specific focus on vulnerable children and support for key-workers.

### Summary

Following the Government's announcement on 23rd March 2020 in order to ensure operational delivery of core functions/duties and responsibilities associated with the Children and Education Services Directorate a directorate wide coordination plan was established to implement the Children and Education Services Business Continuity Plan for all services/teams that fall under the leadership accountabilities and responsibilities of the Directorate. In essence the approach taken has been 'Business as usual but doing it differently'; requiring **all staff to be flexible, adaptable and most of all adopting a 'can do' approach** and potentially doing tasks/functions that are not wholly covered within their respective job role/contract. This has been supported by HROD guidance and processes.

As a provider of direct/public facing service, the aim has been to organise teams/staff and leadership and management arrangements into a structure from where staff will work/deliver services; ensuring there is visibility, easy access to partners, colleagues, children and their families and risk of cross infection from covid19 is minimised. To support the approach a rota was developed to provide the location where staff would work from on a fortnightly basis. Thus reducing the risk of contamination across teams and whilst ensuring a presence for face to face work while others are working from home.

The Directorate identified its core duties/responsibilities, which reiterated an expectation of Managers to maintain oversight and provide direction as to the activities being undertaken by staff irrespective of working location. In summary the identified core duties and responsibilities are outlined below and are treated as 'first order' (to be undertaken above all other activities) duties;

### Education Services

- Education Health and Care Plans
- Maintaining schools and settings open for vulnerable groups and key workers
- Quality assuring school and college arrangements for children/young people not attending school
- Support for Special Schools
- Support for Early years settings
- Support for vulnerable groups covered by statutory duties eg. EHCP, young carers, looked after children and ensuring children accessed FSM where eligible
- Headteacher recruitment
- CME and those children not on a school roll
- School admissions including national offer day
- Ensuring year 11s have a destination for September
- School Capital programme and Academy presumption process

### Children's Services

- Maintenance of early help and early years services
- Maintenance of the front door AGS arrangements
- Assessment and Care management across the three geographical districts and permanence
- Maintenance of city wide services including youth justice services, leaving care services, contact , complex safeguarding and residential .

These activities are not intended to be exhaustive but to offer managers/leaders a framework/guide; judgements are needed to be made by the respective manager(s)/leaders cognisant of need, statutory duties and responsibilities. As a staff may be requested to undertake tasks not listed above but are critical to the priorities and objectives of MCC, the welfare of children, adults and their families.

In addition to the weekly CEO and corporate staff briefings, there have been daily briefings to schools/settings and Directorate staff. These briefings provide essential service specific information and an opportunity to 'stay connected' and share good practice'; without exception the feedback received to date is this bespoke communication is appreciated and valued.

The following is a summary of progress to date:

### Children's and Education Services

- Staff are becoming adept at utilising technology to 'deliver business as usual but differently'

- Risk management activities; conferences, learning circles, DACCs, visits, court hearings( with some difficulties) CinN panels, supervisions legal gateway and all other business meetings now adapted to COVID and embedded
- Good mechanisms of regular contact between staff and managers have developed with 'daily check-ins'.
- Ongoing requests for financial / food assistance especially nappies and baby milk across all services
- Planned training courses have been adapted and delivered via video conferencing and/or online
- PPE has been delivered there has been no immediate concerns raised regarding the availability of PPE inc schools.
- Positive feedback from schools and settings regarding the quality and frequency of communication.

Overall morale across the Directorate remains high and staff actively engaged; this is despite Covid19 affecting some staff. However, it would appear the approach adopted has ensured service continuity has been maintained, albeit it differently.

### Schools and 6th Form/colleges

In Manchester there are 184 schools, 133 Early Year settings and Manchester based independent schools/providers; all of which our SSQA have maintained regular contact with during this period.

Prior to the Easter break in addition to 30 Early Years settings, 150 schools remained open with over 1000 children attending each day including on average 310 vulnerable children.

The Local Authority has continued to maintain regular contact with the main Post 16 Providers including The Manchester College, Loreto, Xaverian and Connell Sixth Form Colleges and our High School Sixth Forms. All of the above providers have implemented the Covid-19 guidance, and have remained in contact with their vulnerable students.

The majority of schools in Manchester were due to close for the school Easter holidays on 3rd April 2020; 125 schools have remained open to ensure there is provision available for our vulnerable children and those of parents in roles considered/defined by the DfE to be critical to covid19. This has ensured over the Easter period in every work (with the exception of Fallowfield and Deansgate) In addition, 44 schools provided an offer of provision over the Easter Bank Holiday weekend.

In respect of the schools that have closed, they had consulted their parents and as there is very little or no demand, they decided to close; with a few due to insufficient staffing levels but have continued to stay in contact with their vulnerable students. All 13 special schools remained open prior to the Easter holidays with 7 offering provision over the Easter break. Despite the Travel Coordination Unit continuing to operate (reduced service) the overall uptake of places for children with EHCPs has been relatively low with on average 130 children attending schools each day prior to Easter and 80 attending over Easter.

We have been able to provide PPE for travel assistants and special schools.

In respect of Early Year settings in addition to 40 childminders we have been able to support 30 settings remain open are open; offering essential childcare to around 360 key workers and vulnerable children.

In addition, Manchester Children's Sure Start Centre/Early Year services continue to provide essential services such a

- Antenatal sessions
- Food clubs
- Family support

It was recorded as at 14th April 2020, there were 400 parents accessing antenatal services and 146 families food clubs and family support.

#### Attendance in education/learning settings

The following table which is informed by the DfE daily school attendance portal illustrates the attendance trends for Manchester's children; specifically those determined to be vulnerable and/or children of critical workers.

Date	No. of Pupils attending establishments	Children of critical workers	Children of critical workers with social worker	Children of critical workers on an EHCP	Vulnerable children	Vulnerable children with a social worker	Vulnerable children on an EHCP
30/03/20	1030	759	21	38	296	158	101
31/03/20	1063	766	24	36	296	157	98
01/04/20	1158	836	18	38	324	184	100
02/04/20	1126	799	19	38	340	191	113
03/04/20	1007	686	18	37	298	166	103
06/04/20	788	588	11	35	201	123	37
07/04/20	816	592	19	31	233	145	65
08/04/20	817	574	13	26	229	148	5
09/04/20	759	547	10	26	217	143	54
13/04/20	72	40	1	4	32	16	5
14/04/20	734	511	9	26	261	127	58
15/04/20	833	615	12	30	212	131	47

As previously indicated there are currently 30 Early Year settings and 40 childminders providing 375 places for vulnerable children (20) and those of designated key workers 350).

An analysis of the data, there continues to be varying numbers of children accessing provision with much smaller numbers in secondary schools than primary schools. The majority of primary schools in the city continue to have 20 or less children accessing provision from both key worker staff and vulnerable groups. There continues to be higher numbers at Wythenshawe Primary schools, and schools in the South.

In respect of those vulnerable children social workers are contacting schools and the early years team to promote attendance and/or broker a place with Early Years providers. This is currently known to be taking place in respect of 288 children.

### Safeguarding in Schools & Other Educational Settings

All of our schools and colleges, including independent schools and alternative provision, have engaged with the Education Safeguarding Team in a review of their safeguarding processes during Covid-19. The early findings from this review indicate Manchester's schools, colleges and settings continue to monitor, support and advise students; which alongside that of children's services offers assurance as to the support for our vulnerable children and families are being prioritised and monitored. In addition, a safeguarding newsletter has been shared with all of our youth organisations, in conjunction with 'Young Manchester' and the Youth Strategy team.

In respect of those children who are not attending school, across the city, schools are ensuring daily contact/welfare checks on their most vulnerable, with visits to families, as appropriate. A large number of schools are visiting homes with food parcels and home learning packs for those without access to online learning, enabling schools to do welfare checks at the same time. Interestingly, across all schools, there has been a need to consider online learning and communication between school and home. This has been supported by MCC with advice for teachers, parents and children on staying safe online. This has been reiterated on the @mcr\_education twitter feed which is followed by most of our schools.

### Children with special educational needs (SEND)

COVID- 19 Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) Information has been circulated to both schools and parents through the Local Offer and a weekly electronic newsletter. Through our Educational psychology contract a helpline for parents/carers has been established and Manchester Information and Advice helpline has continued to be available. However, call volumes to these lines are lower than expected. A letter is being produced to send directly to parents/carers of children with an EHCP to remind them that they have the offer of a school place if they require it and will also provide information on these helplines.

The statutory assessment team continues to undertake Education, Health and Care plans and complete annual reviews, in line with statutory duties; there is representation being made nationally to relax the guidance; the ADCS is anticipating a positive response. During March 84 EHCPs were completed and issued as the team are continuing to consult with schools and settings; making 'reasonable endeavours' to identify provision in plans giving particular attention to transition

points. However, there has been a large increase in the number of applications (88 in March and 96 in April compared to an average of 65) placing the team under increased pressure. It is believed this is due to SENCOs having additional time due to partial school closures.

### Free School Meals

Prior to the national government scheme in partnership with our schools, Manchester established a COVID Free School Meal Scheme which pays £10 per week for each child and has operated from 23rd March to 17th April 2020, when the national scheme will be adopted by Manchester's schools. Eligibility has been based on the following circumstances:

- An immediate drop in income not covered by the means tested benefits regime
- A decrease in self-employed income
- Waiting for a Universal Credit claim to be paid
- Domestic violence or family displacement
- Other immediate need or hardship arising from COVID 19.

To date from a cohort of 17,000 children, there have been 5313 applicants of which 5229 have been processed and 3362 eligible for payment.

Recent government guidance has been issued and extended the offer to those families who have no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

It is anticipated that there are approximately 12,000 eligible children (between 4-6,000 families) who are eligible and have not claimed. Consequently applications can be made up until 30th May 2020 and arrangements are in place for schools and children's services to make contact with them after the Easter holidays.

### Children Missing Education

There are a number of children currently not on a school roll known to the Local Authority. The majority of these children are in the process of applying for a school place (125 primary and 67 secondary) or have been offered a school place which they had not taken up before the schools closed down. These are being monitored through the Education casework team who have been doing welfare checks and have identified a number of children for whom a package of Education will be developed through One Education pending the allocation of a school with effect from 20th April 2020.

### Children in need of help, support and protection via Manchester's Children's Services

Children's Services provides a statutory service to c5370 children and as previously indicated within Children's Services there operates a 'rota' system to ensure presence and responsiveness across the following areas;

- Residential Children's Homes (4)
- Fostering Services
- Early Help Hub (3)
- Youth Justice Service

- Complex safeguarding
- Children's Social Care/work
- Leaving Care Service

There continues to be positive levels of staff attendance and multi-agency work across the service and includes:

- Daily 'triage' in Early Help Hubs and Advice and Guidance Service (domestic abuse)
- Planning meetings (Child in Need and Child Protection Core Groups)
- Child Protection Strategy Meetings and Conferences

The Early Help Hub are reporting busyness which is focused on more general family support, financial/hardship and increases in children's behaviour/parenting. Unlike other regions which have indicated a significant retraction of partnership work from Health Visiting/Safeguarding and Police, whilst c70 Health Visitors have been redirected to front line nursing duties and changes in working practice the contributions from schools, health colleagues and Greater Manchester Police in Manchester continues to be positive.

#### Contact, duty and assessment

It can be seen from the following tables across the city there has been a significant reduction in the number of contacts being made with Children's Services. There is no specific pattern to this reduction. However, there have been increased reports of domestic abuse notifications which are triaged via daily meetings with GMP (to note there are no reported issues with IOPS in Manchester, with coding of incidents and care plans compares positively with Greater Manchester).

Children who are in need of help (assessment/children in need) and protection (741 subject to a child Protection Plan) are visited/seen regularly; with high levels of compliance with statutory timescales. At present the data system is not able to produce a report on 'child in need' visits. Notwithstanding this, manager auditing and dip sampling activities indicate compliance.

Area of activity	Locality	Baseline as at 9/3/20 ( pre-covid19)	Current performance
Contact	North	321	141
	Central	314	141
	South	299	110
Referrals	North	81	51
	Central	84	11
	South	58	19
Assessment timeliness (15/35 days)	North	62%	39% (35 days)
	Central	49 / 67	37 / 70
	South	33 / 65%	6 / 53%
Child Protection visits	North	93%	94%
	Central	89%	98%
	South	95%	100%

In respect of the activity of the Safeguarding and Improvement Unit (Independent Reviewing of Looked After/Child Protection Plans), there has been continued good performance in respect of 'looked after' children reviews at 99-100% being held in time. Whilst assured by the activity of the allocated social work teams, the performance for the timeliness of Child Protection Conferences reduced from 88% to 38% since 23rd March 2020 (start of lockdown). This is attributed to working with staff/trade unions to adapt the system and way conferences are held and is now being closely monitored.

### **Looked After Children**

There are currently 1431 children looked after by Manchester city Council for whom their contact arrangements with family have been reviewed and on the whole is being facilitated by a combination of activities but principally video technology.

The allocated social workers for 'our children' are having regular contact with them using a variety of methods, face to face or virtually and are recorded to be between 95% and 100% within statutory timescales. These are monitored and reported on a weekly basis and those which are reported not to be within timescales tend to be a delay in recording or the children are outside the United Kingdom. This monitoring of children's welfare is enhanced by the work the virtual school which is actively engaging with early years' settings, schools and Post 16 Providers from across the country; monitoring the contact they are having with 'our' children and young people on their roll and an insight into their well-being. The latest report (14th April 2020) indicate:

- 66.7% young children have been contacted by their EY setting ( contact records for 46 out of 69 children)
- 88.9% school age children have been in contact with their school ( contact records for 790 out of 888 children)
- 58% post 16 young people have been contacted (152 young people out of 261)

### **Fostering**

In addition to ensuring there is weekly contact made with all our foster carers, there are 95 (39 have received a shielding letter) recognised as being 'high risk' and vulnerable as per government guidance. Subsequently all have a safety plan which is reviewed weekly with their supervising social worker.

Recruitment of foster carers continue and for whom there are 14 due to be presented to the fostering panel between April and June 2020.

### **Leaving Care Services**

<b>Area of activity</b>	<b>Baseline (date pre-covid)</b>	<b>Current performance</b>
In Touch	83%	89% (92% of 18-21 year olds)
Suitable Accommodation	96%	93%
EET	69%	64%
YP accessing LRF	0.5%	0.5%

In respect of our care leavers, there has been an increase in staff staying in touch with them. This includes offering additional support and advice to overcome the impact of isolation.

The local resilience forum (LRF) with which there is a dedicated school and children's services link has made arrangements for care leavers within the eligibility criteria. As noted there have been 8 contacts with the forum; this was associated with 'hardship/food' and each have had a follow-up visit by the Leaving Care service.

#### Summary

Manchester's Education and Children's Services continue to operate a principle of *business as usual but doing it differently*. Subsequently in partnership with Manchester's family of schools we have been able to provide places for the children of key workers and those defined as vulnerable, as well as learning materials for all children. This has included providing laptops and/or physical learning materials. In addition ensuring all young people have a post 16 destination in September 2020 has been prioritised to be completed in the next few weeks with a particular focus on those young people identified by school already as being at risk of NEET to ensure they have a named destination.

Whilst it is recognised there has been a contradiction in the government advice to 'stay home' with that of children attending school, college or an early year setting are much lower than is desirable. Consequently children's services are challenging and supporting the parents/carers of those children in receipt of services for them to attend; it is anticipated attendance will improve. Notwithstanding this, we are confident vulnerable children as identified by teaching and education services staff and those known to Children's Services are being seen regularly.

The national voucher scheme providing support to children eligible for free school meals comes into effect on 20th April 2020. It is recognised many schools nationally have struggled with this scheme and there are some issues with the range of vouchers being offered which may result in some schools opting for different shops. The Education Services staff will continue to monitor this situation alongside the Council providing an online scheme for families not covered by FSM but who may be experiencing hardship as a result of COVID19.

In order to support vulnerable children and their families designated links have been made with the Local Resilience Forum; ensuring any additional support beyond that of financial/food can be identified and responded to. This includes those children/adults who are identified as part of the 'shielded' group. We are working with MHCC who are currently undertaking an assurance exercise to determine all those children/adults have been contacted. An update on progress expected on 21st April 2020, when discussions will be held as to how Children's Services can add value/support.

Both locally and nationally there continue to be concerns in respect of Early Years settings which appear to be faced with a range of challenges including the furloughing of staff, supply of essential items, staff self-isolating, enhanced health

and safety and loss of income, particularly for settings which rely upon private fee paying families. An analysis and options appraisal is currently being developed outlining some of these issues and potential solutions.

On national primary school offer day 92% of children received their first choice and 98% one of their third choices.

Whilst there has been a noticeable reduction in the number of contacts with Children's Services, there has been an increase in the number of domestic abuse incidents and applications for EHCPs (Education Health and Care Plan). The increase in EHCP will increase pressure on the service and difficulties in receiving Health advice, the statutory deadlines remaining the same.; this is being pursued at a national level to seek a relaxation in the relevant statutory guidance, which is expected in the coming weeks.

Finally, in respect of school, Education and Children's Services staff attributed to the approach to delivery, the number of infections of Covid19 are currently manageable. In addition they are engaging with children creatively as they continue to provide business as usual but are doing it differently; this is shared across the service in a weekly broadcast. Their overall morale is reported to be positive and access to PPE whilst a challenge is being made available to all those that require it. This is testament to the partnership working across Manchester which appears to continue to be strong in respect of children and their families.