

**Manchester City Council**  
**Report for Information**

**Report to:** Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 24 June 2020

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

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

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**Summary**

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.

Following the announcement of 'lockdown' Manchester's Children and Education Services adopted a 'Business as usual but doing it differently' approach. This has enabled the service to respond to children in need of help, support and protection and work with Manchester's schools. Consequently staff and schools should be commended as the vast majority of Manchester's schools remained open. In addition since the announcement of increasing numbers for specific year groups on 1st June 2020 the number of children attending have safely and significantly increased.

It is worth noting that issues relating to children with SEND and financial viability of Early Years PVI settings and the impact on children's services more generally continue to present significant challenges. This continues to be raised with government departments by the Local Government Association/Chief Executives and Association of Director of Children's Services (ADCS); these discussions are ongoing.

In respect of children's services throughout the 'lockdown' period and since relaxation of those arrangements contact has been maintained with children allocated to a social worker and a noticeable reduction in the requests for a social work service and need for statutory intervention.

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 the support being provided to Manchester's schools and those children considered to be more vulnerable than their counterparts.

**Recommendations**

Scrutiny Committee members are invited to consider the content of this report, recognise the work of schools, children and education services directorate and the council’s partners to promote the learning, welfare and safety of children in Manchester. In addition it is recommended committee members:

1. Explore the decision making and approach adopted by the the Directorate to respond to children in need of help, support and protection
2. Explore the decision making and approach to enable children to safely attend school and access a learning environment.

**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
Through the learning and education system children are informed and understand environmental issues and the negative impact of carbon; promoting safe and healthy lives.

<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	It is important we build a safe, healthy, happy and successful future for all of Manchester’s children so that they can benefit from and contribute to the sustainability of Manchester thriving, economically diverse and successful. Children and Education Services work with all schools and early years settings in Manchester to promote children’s learning and engage with those children and their families who need help, support and protection. The aim is for children to be safe, healthy and make progress in terms of education, training, social development so that they are successful and contribute and benefit from living in Manchester.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city’s economic success	Children and young people matter in Manchester. The work of the Children and Education Directorate is driven by a commitment to provide opportunities and achieve positive outcomes; building a safe, happy, healthy and successful future for all of the city’s children and young people
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Increase the influence Manchester's children and young people have on decisions that impact on them by supporting and enabling their voice to be

	heard; promoting a fair and inclusive place to live and work.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	A safe and effective children and education system is important to promote the awareness and inclusion of children in the engagement of wider societal issues; which together with a successful education offer make Manchester a place parents choose to visit, live and work.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Continually improve outcomes for all children and 'reduce the gap' against the national attainment average

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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.

COVID-19 Update June 2020

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 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;

### 1.3 Education Services

- Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP)
- Maintaining schools and settings open for vulnerable groups and key workers initially and since 1st June 2020 widening access to specific year groups
- Quality assuring school and college arrangements for children/young people not attending school
- Ensuring all schools have appropriate risk assessments and providing the tools and guidance to support this process
- Support for Special Schools
- Support for Early years settings
- Support for vulnerable groups eg. EHCP, young carers, looked after children and ensuring eligible children access Free School Meals
- Headteacher recruitment
- Provision for Children Missing Education and those 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

#### 1.4 Children's Services

- Maintenance of early help and early years services to support our ongoing early intervention strategy
- Maintenance of the front door AGS arrangements to ensure the public and professionals had immediate access to experienced social workers to manage safeguarding and other referrals.
- 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.

1.5 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 member may be requested to undertake tasks not listed above but are critical to the priorities and objectives of the council, the welfare of children, adults and their families.

1.6 In addition to the weekly 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.

1.7 The following is a summary of progress to date:

#### Children's and Education Services

- Staff are now adept at utilising technology to 'deliver business as usual but differently'
- Risk management activities; conferences, learning circles, DACCs, visits, court hearings both remotely and at Court CinN panels, supervisions legal gateway and all other business meetings now adapted to COVID and embedded
- Well established 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. It would appear the approach adopted has ensured service continuity albeit it significantly differently.

## **2.0 Schools and settings and/colleges**

2.1 Education services colleagues are continuing to work very closely with all of Manchester's early year providers/settings, 184 state funded schools, Manchester based independent schools, alternative provision providers and post 16 providers to ensure we respond to the changing guidance relating to the Covid 19 crisis. This has included virtual meetings with the Manchester School Improvement Partnership, the Primary Strategy Group, the Special Headteachers group, High School heads, Post 16 group, Early Years Providers and District Headteacher meetings which have all been well attended. In addition, the Service has recently provided briefings for Chairs of Governing Bodies and meets weekly with Trade Unions. Officers have continued to work directly with individual schools and settings, Multi Academy Trusts, Single Academy Trusts and the DfE on recovery planning.

## **2.2 Schools**

Throughout the lockdown period the vast majority of our schools have remained open initially to children identified as vulnerable, children with Education, Health and Care Plans, and children of Key workers with approximately 1000 children attending school each day.

2.3 The majority of schools in Manchester were due to close for the school Easter holidays on 3rd April 2020; in fact 125 schools remained open to ensure there was provision available for our vulnerable children and those of parents in roles considered/defined by the DfE to be critical to covid19. In addition, 44 schools provided an offer of provision over the Easter Bank Holiday weekend. Provision was also made available by some schools over the subsequent May bank holidays too.

2.4 All of our special schools have remained open throughout this period including 7 which offered provision over the Easter break. All children attending a special school have been risk assessed to determine whether they are safer at home or as safe or safer in school and where appropriate this has been completed in partnership with other agencies. The numbers of children attending special schools is continually increasing. All special schools have been provided regularly with PPE from the Council. Home to school transport has continued to run a service during this period which is reduced to social distancing requirements on vehicles and availability of passenger assistants.

2.5 Following the change in Government Guidance to expand the offer in primary schools from the 1st June 2020, for Nursery, Reception, Yr1 and Yr 6, Manchester Schools were asked to individually risk assess their circumstances and develop plans for the expansion of the school offer. Subsequently Manchester Education Services have worked with school

leaders, Trade Unions, Director of Public Health and MCC Health and Safety worked together to develop a rigorous H&S Risk assessment and a local test, track and trace arrangement to support this process.

Subsequently since the 1st June, 36 Manchester Primary schools initially followed this process and developed an enhanced offer for children from the additional identified year groups. However, 133 Manchester schools remained open and continued their education offer to key-worker children and those identified as vulnerable.

- 2.6 Since the 8th June 2020, 178 schools have been open and 87 primary schools have expanded their offer to include the identified year groups. Fifty schools offered additional places to Year 6; ten schools offered additional places to nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6; seven schools offered additional places to reception, year 1 and year 6 and then the remaining schools offered places to a different combination of the identified year groups. A few schools have seen large numbers of additional children, including one school which has regular attendance of 261 pupils who attend in 27 bubbles, another two schools have around 100 pupils attending regularly. However many other schools report that initially there has been a very small take up of places. Headteachers report that the bubble model is working well. The three schools who generally have the largest number of pupils attending are Abbey Hey Primary, Cravenwood Primary and Beaver Road Primary. The three schools are in different areas of the city. In general there has been more take up of school places in the South, however it is not consistent across wards or areas.
- 2.7 From 15th June 2020 more primary schools have expanded their offers; with 131 schools having additional year groups in. 112 Manchester primary schools will be offering places to year 6 pupils. 14 primary schools will be open to all identified year groups, 45 schools are open to only year 6 and 67 will have an offer for year 6 and an additional year group. Schools are continuing to risk assess and are opening according to their own circumstances. On 16th June c7001 children were attending school which equates to c9% of the overall school population.
- 2.8 Following DFE guidance secondary schools were asked to provide Year 10 and year 12 with some face to face meetings to support independent learning but to not have more than 25% of the year group in school. From 15th June 2020, all high schools, with the exception of one, are open to Year 10. The remaining school will be open to face to face meetings with year 10 the following week. Each school has an individualised plan for opening which ensures social distancing but also encourages more children to attend. The majority of schools are offering 1 day a week per child of English, Maths and Science, plus live lessons online for their optional subjects.
- 2.9 All Manchester Special Schools have remained open throughout the Covid 19 crisis and continue to work closely with parents and colleagues from health and social care to individually risk assess for each child. The Manchester parent/carers forum has fed back how generally positive parents

have been with engagement and provision from Manchester Special Schools. There has also been an increase in the numbers of children attending our Special Schools.

## **2.10 Risk assessments**

As stated above, schools have been required to return a Health & Safety Risk Assessment which Manchester Health and Safety team are reviewing to gain assurance of the measures in place. To date 153 risk assessments have been received and the vast majority are detailed. Risk assessments have been received from all maintained and Voluntary Community/Voluntary Aided schools which are increasing their offer. Any schools where concerns have arisen have been contacted and the revised risk assessment is again being reviewed with Manchester City Council's Health and Safety team.

- 2.11 Examples of some of the adjustments made by schools include providing new signage throughout the schools, 1 way systems, pupils in different 'bubbles' using their own entrances and play spaces, staggered start and finish times, removal of some types of play equipment eg sand and water play and soft toys, pupils being allocated their own sets of pens/pencils etc

## **2.12 Safeguarding**

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 continued 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.

- 2.13 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 the council 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.

## **3.0 Early Years Settings & Childminders**

- 3.1 In respect of Early Year settings, initially in addition to 40 childminders we were able to support 30 settings remaining open; offering essential childcare to around 360 key workers and vulnerable children.

3.2 In addition, Manchester Children's Sure Start Centre/Early Year services continued to provide essential services such as

- 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.

3.3 Since 1st June 2020 the number of settings opened has increased from 28 to 68 open for children. The average daily attendance before this week was 450 increasing to 1315 on 8th June 2020.

During this period, there has been regular contact with Early Years providers and a small grant was set up to support providers who were not eligible for some of the government support available to small businesses.

#### **4.0 Post 16**

4.1 The majority of post 16 providers will be extending their offer for their year 12 students from Monday 15th June 2020 with the remaining two schools preparing to open the following week. The offer varies depending on the number of staff available for work, management of space and needs of the students. Those delivering 'A' levels and level three technical qualifications where possible will be delivering a mixture of teaching lessons and individual progress, wellbeing checks and personal statements in preparation for applying to University or other pathways. Several of the colleges and sixth forms will be opening their study centres / ICT suites for students for independent study with a priority focus on those students who have difficulties in accessing the remote learning offer from home. Manchester College is prioritising students studying vocational qualifications that need to complete practical assignments.

4.2 All providers are adopting a flexible approach and depending on the uptake, management of provision and change in guidance will be looking to do more over the next few weeks if possible. They all continue to monitor and engage their vulnerable learners and there has been a steady increase in numbers attending where a face to face offer has been maintained. Across the sector every attempt has been made to maintain contact with the current year 11 offer students. They have now adapted their taster / welcome days to be delivered virtually and have a wide variety of resources and activities online to help students prepare for September.

4.3 Many of the larger Colleges where the majority of students are reliant on public transport have concerns about them being able to travel safely to and from home. They have therefore altered their start and finish times to provide as much flexibility and to avoid the 'rush hour'.

- 4.4 Over 60% of year 11s now have a confirmed offer of a destination for September 2020. Young people without an offer and now being referred to Career Connect to work with them on securing an offer.

## **5.0 Emotional Resilience**

- 5.1 For the past few weeks colleagues from education have liaised with partners from across the mental health sector to explore a range of strategies to support settings, schools and colleges as we plan beyond the recovery phase and the return of children and young people to their education.
- 5.2 Education Services has shared an emotional resilience directory with all of our settings, schools and colleges to support them in building the emotional resilience of each of their communities. This has been the result of collaboration with a range of colleagues, including: Education, Education Psychology, Manchester Health and Care commissioning group, CAMHS, 42nd St and Manchester Healthy Schools to collate these materials. This is a starting point. We intend to work together to produce a framework that explains the universal, targeted and bespoke offer available to settings, schools and colleges. This will be ready to share with schools for September 2020. Most importantly, we recognise that, at present, there is a need to support school staff and partners who are welcoming children to school whilst managing their own concerns.

## **6.0 Digital Devices/Laptops**

- 6.1 As part of a Government initiative Manchester City Council was allocated 2419 devices and 310 4G wireless devices for care leavers and children with social workers. All children who are subject to a child protection plan will receive a device. Remaining laptops will be allocated to 'children in need' using a needs analysis from social care.
- 6.2 In addition, each term the Virtual School releases pupil premium to schools to fund provision and resources to support 'Our Children' in their learning. This includes the purchasing of IT devices such as laptops.
- 6.3 Manchester was also allocated 150 laptops for disadvantaged year 10s through Greater Manchester Combined Authority which have already been distributed to schools. This is in addition to 274 laptops for Year 10s through the Government scheme; which unfortunately to date have not yet been received.

## **7.0 Transition Read (Bee a Reader: Bee Ready)**

- 7.1 To support schools with KS2 to KS3 transition through COVID-19, Year 6 pupils in Manchester primaries have been 'gifted' the same reading book and provided with enrichment activities to complete around the themes and topics of the book. It has been a joint project with Read Manchester and we are delighted that 'City in the Community' have kindly donated all 7000 copies of '**The Kid Who Came From Space**' by **Ross Welford**. The books

are going to be delivered to all Manchester primary schools directly from the publisher the week beginning 21st June 2020. `

- 7.2 Enrichment activities can be used in schools or can be completed at home. Many of the activities lend themselves to competitions which can be used by secondary schools to support transition. Primaries will be provided with several planned lessons to use with Y6 pupils to introduce the book and support reading the beginning of the book. Secondaries will also be provided with several planned lessons to use with Y7 to develop inference skills.
- 7.3 All pupils in current year 11 will receive a letter from the Council to ensure that they have a post 16 destination offer and who to contact if they do not yet have a confirmed offer. The letter also provides information on where young people can access any help or support at this time.

## **8.0 Children with special educational needs (SEND)**

- 8.1 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 was sent 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.
- 8.2 During this period, the Government made some modifications to legislation in the Children and Families Act relating to special educational needs which meant that Local Authorities had to communicate to parents/carers the reasonable endeavors that could be made to meet the provision in Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). Manchester currently maintains 4900 EHCPs and through our schools and settings working alongside parents/carers and other agencies is working through each of these plans. The modifications also relaxed the 20 week timescales to complete an assessment and produce an Education, Health and Care Plan. However, as far as possible the statutory assessment team continues to undertake Education, Health and Care plans within the 20 week timescale.

## **9.0 Free School Meals**

- 9.1 Prior to the national government scheme in partnership with our schools, Manchester established a COVID Free School Meal Scheme which paid £10 per week for each child and has operated from 23rd March to 17th April 2020, when the national scheme was adopted by Manchester's schools. The Government has recently confirmed that this voucher scheme will now continue through the summer holidays; we are awaiting the details/conditions of the grant and whether it will be sufficient to free school meals over the 6 week summer holidays.

## **10.0 Children Missing Education**

10.1 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 is currently being delivered through One Education. pending the allocation of a school with effect from 20th April 2020.

## **11.0 Children's Services**

11.1 Children's Services provides a statutory service to c5370 children. 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

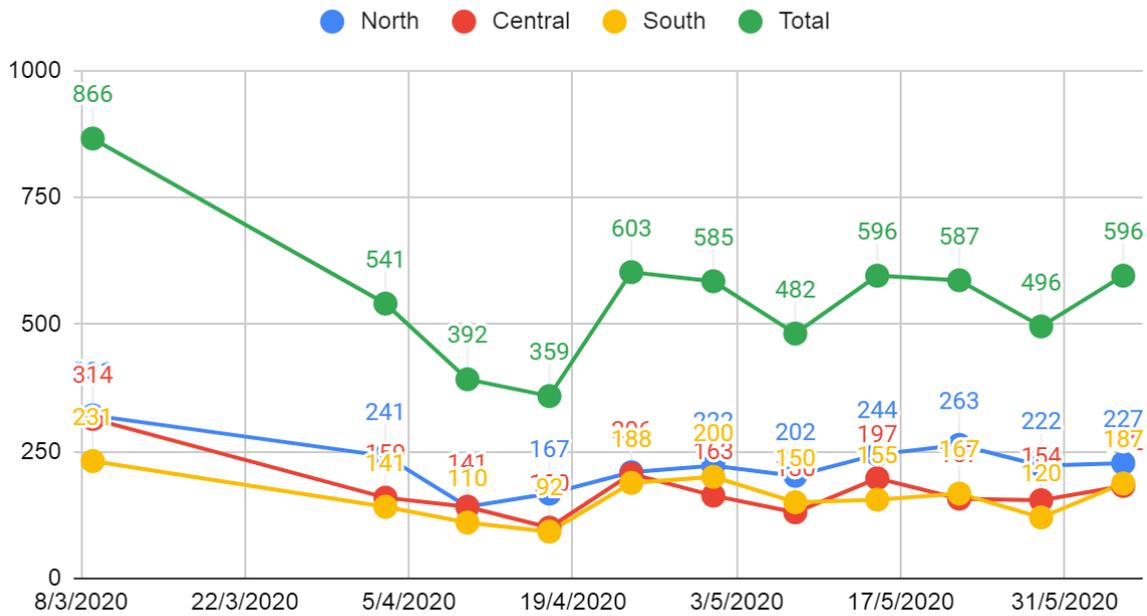
There continues to be positive levels of staff attendance and multi-agency work across the service and includes:

- 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
- Looked after reviews

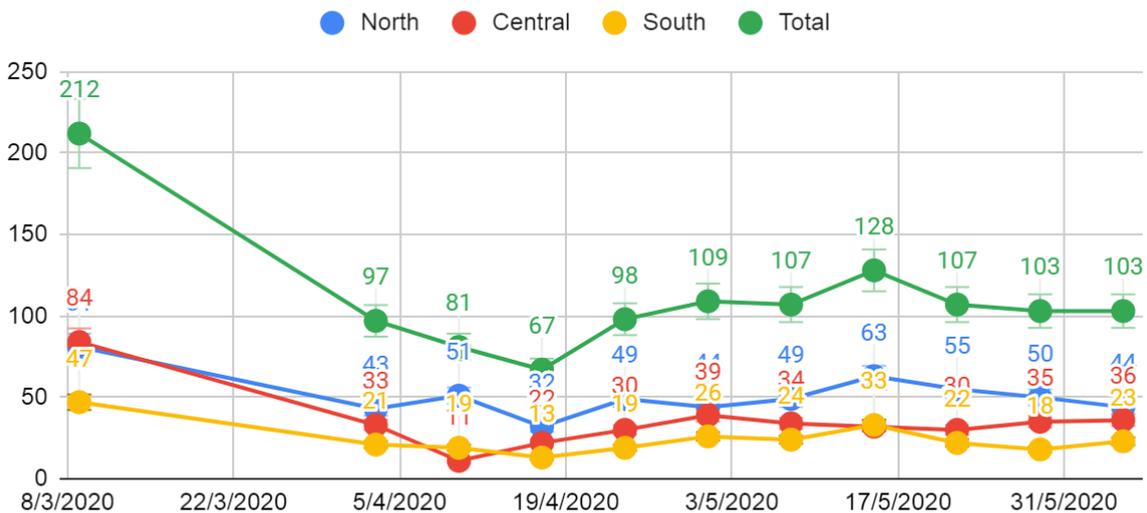
11.2 The Early Help Hubs are reporting an increase in families experiencing financial/hardship and support relating to children's behaviour/parenting. Unlike other regions which have indicated a significant retraction of partnership work from Health Visiting/Safeguarding and Police, whilst c70 Health Visitors were 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 and consistent.

## 12.0 Demand on children's services

### Referrals to CS pre COVID, April, May and June 2020



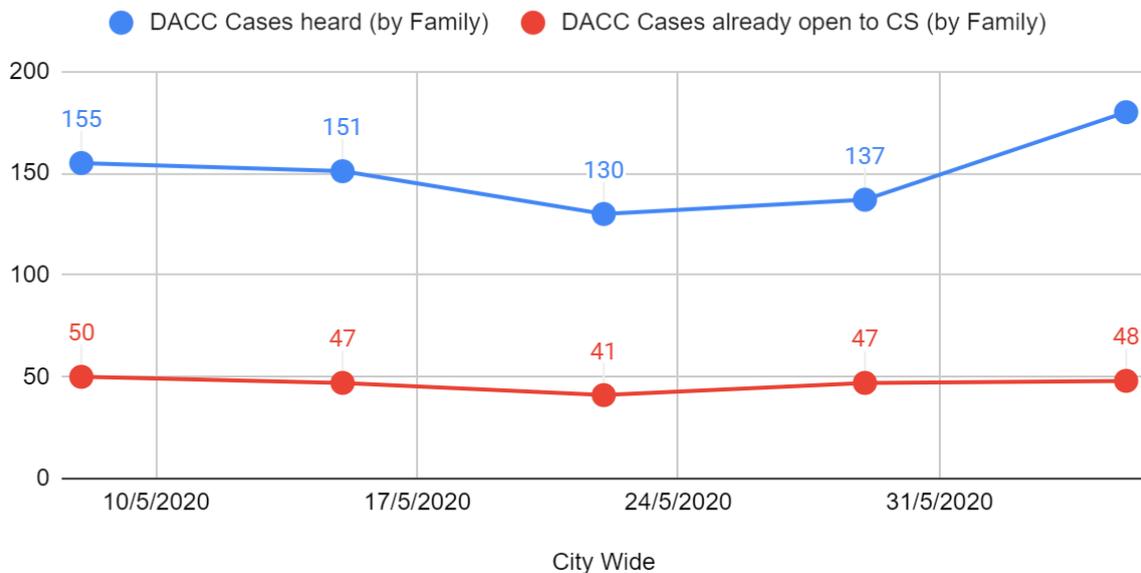
### Assessments started by Locality Pre COVID and April, May and June 2020



Referrals to CS

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. The table below shows the pattern and frequency of Domestic abuse Child care concerns across the City (to note there are no reported issues with IOPS (GMP case recording system) in Manchester, with coding of incidents and care plans comparing positively across Greater Manchester).

## Citywide: DACC Cases heard (by Family) and DACC Cases already open to CS (by Family)



12.1 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. This has been complimented manager's auditing and dip sampling activities indicate strong compliance with:

- 94-100% of visits to children subject to Child Protection Plan visited and recorded in statutory timescales
- 90% of assessments completed within 45 days

12.2 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. The figure at the end of May for timeliness of case conferences is 93%.

### 13.0 Looked After Children

13.1 There are currently 1431 children looked after by Manchester City Council. For those with contact arrangements in place these have been reviewed and on the whole are being facilitated by a combination of activities but principally video technology.

13.2 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.

13.3 The monitoring of children's welfare is enhanced by the work the virtual school for 'looked after' children 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)

#### **14.0 Due to current lockdown measures it is anticipated that there is suppressed demand for services.**

14.1 The Directorate is anticipating new demand through increased vulnerability in the community due to the repercussions of Covid-19. For example increases in family poverty, domestic violence, substance misuse, behavioural issues, mental health issues and family breakdown.

#### **15.0 Leaving Care Services**

15.1 In respect of our care leavers, there has been an increase in staff staying in touch with them at 89% and 92% of 18-21 year olds. This includes offering additional support and advice to overcome the impact of isolation.

15.2 In addition 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.

#### **16.0 Interface with the Family Court**

16.1 There has been ongoing national considerations regarding the fairness and efficacy of remote hearings. The key stakeholders including local authorities, judiciary, courts service, Ministries of Justice and Education, voluntary organisations for both children and parents/carers and both private and local authority legal advocates have debated how to best respond to the impact of the pandemic. A rapid review was commissioned by the President of the Family Division in the early stages of the pandemic and this demonstrated that local arrangements were being made and that urgent remote hearings must continue in the best interests of the child.

- 16.2 Our initial strategies included deferring non-urgent hearings and hearing only urgent cases remotely. Whilst there were some coordination difficulties from our local court, a consistent process has now been adopted. This has resulted in the majority of Court Hearings taking place remotely. During March to 15th June 2020, 42 cases (78 children) have had their proceedings concluded. The month of April experienced the highest level of case conclusions in the last 12 months, indicating strongly that the child's journey has not been impacted negatively due to the pandemic. However, there have been cases that have been deemed inappropriate for remote hearings and this have been risk assessed accordingly. 10 cases fall under this category since March. Although minimal, there has also been some delay in case work relating to sickness/self isolation of social workers and other key stakeholders in the family court system, such as psychologists and commissioned areas of work such as drug and alcohol testing.
- 16.3 In relation to discharges of care orders, in April and May 48 and 32 indicating a slight slow down in performance due to these children being treated as non urgent cases. A further 8 children are awaiting court hearing timetables and a further 28 children in preparation for discharge. This is viewed as a delay in our usual timescales and is being rectified with our legal team to ensure court hearings are sought at the earliest opportunity as we collectively navigate the non urgent hearings being in the child's timescales.

## **17.0 Future Planning**

- 17.1 Since March to 15th June 2020, we have issued 57 care applications (87 children), strongly indicating a 'business as usual approach' to our planning for permanence for our children. The data for first hearings on non urgent cases is showing a slight delay by 5-7 days. Comparative data from the previous 3 months and the 3 months before that are 58 and 45 respectively.
- 17.2 The President of Family Division has addressed "The Road Ahead" on 9 June 2020 and has made it clear that the 26 week time frame remains and Courts/local authorities need to plan for the medium term on the basis that remote working will be the default position and physically attend hearings as an exception if required to do so, taking the usual safeguards to stay safe. There is also ongoing negotiation to commit to an infrastructure to conduct hybrid hearings if required.

## **18.0 Mental Health**

- 18.1 It is widely recognised that COVID 19 has the potential for a significant impact on the mental health and well being of young people. Throughout the period of lockdown Manchester CAMHS have retained a duty service. Referrals are triaged and where required assessments and/or interventions are either completed by telephone calls, video links and where required visits to family.

18.2 In addition to providing face to face support, the CAMHS services have invested in online resources; Kooth is a fee confidential online counselling service for young people ; usage of this has increased throughout the pandemic additional funding was approved in line with the wider thrive business case to enhance this approach .Clinicians are now able to prescribe an app , in limited numbers, due to licensing issues to children who have self harmed. In terms of post COVID a significant development in Manchester is the recent approval (April 2020) for new funding from National Health Service England to develop new Mental Health Support Teams for schools in the city. This will increase direct mental health support for schools with new Education Mental Health Practitioners and dedicated CAMHS clinicians. The mobilisation plans are currently being developed with CAMHS and VCSE providers and the intention for Manchester is to align to the new 'thrive' hubs to provide a coherent offer for CYP, families and schools.

## 19.0 Financial Implications of Covid-19

19.1 To date £33.756m of emergency grant funding has been received from the Government for Council related costs and income losses arising from COVID-19, of this £389k was applied to costs in 2019/20 leaving £33.367m for 2020/21.

From April 2020, every Local Authority has been required to submit monthly returns to MHCLG setting out the forecast financial implications of COVID-19. The second return for the Council was submitted on 15 May, and for 2020/21 includes an estimated £40.7m of additional costs of which £7.8m is expected to be funded by the CCG or GMCA and £2m relates to the HRA, leaving £30.5m against the Council's mainstream budget.

19.2 Taking into account the grant and the adjustment between financial years, together with expected continuing pressures which will arise it is currently forecast that there will be a budget gap of c£33m in 2020/21, rising to £157m in 2021/22.

19.3 The additional costs/income shortfalls reported for 2020/21 against the grant to the Council of £33.756m are as shown in the table below. Whilst the total reported pressures are £180.3m this includes costs which are being funded by other sources including the ring-fenced HRA, CCG funded support for discharge/admission prevention via specific COVID-19 grant to CCGs and funding from the GMCA for some homelessness costs. In addition £3.484m of the income loss against business rates and council tax relates to precepts due to GMCA. The net effect on the Council's general fund is £166.931m.

represents a **shortfall of £133.2m** for the Council against the General Fund (£135.2m including the HRA) after the MHCLG grant of £33.7m has been applied.

	<b>MCC General Fund Only</b>	<b>HRA</b>	<b>Other (CCG/ GMCA)</b>	<b>MHCLG Return*</b>
	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>
2019/20 cost pressures	0.389			0.389
2020/21 forecast cost pressures*	30.499	1.965	7.847	40.311
<b>Total forecast cost pressures</b>	<b>30.888</b>	<b>1.965</b>	<b>7.847</b>	<b>40.700</b>
Forecast Income Shortfalls	136.043	0.040	3.484	139.567
<b>Total</b>	<b>166.931</b>	<b>2.005</b>	<b>11.331</b>	<b>180.267</b>

#### 19.4 Additional Children's and Education Costs and Income loss incurred in response to Covid-19

- 19.5
- The additional costs and income loss for the Directorate are outlined below:
  - Increased looked after children and care leaver costs both with additional care entrants, delays in the discharge from care and increase in unit costs. Increased use of S17 monies to support hardship Based on evidence to date, £3.999m.
  - Non delivery/slippage in planned savings; including agreed transformation projects.Evidence of increased staff costs with extended use of agency staff in Social Work to cover absence, 12 months impact. £436k
  - Delayed release of young people from remand due to postponement of court hearings, 6 months impact. Additional premises related costs due to delays in construction of new premises. £0.681m
  - Additional short breaks resources direct payments due to lack of availability and disruption to short breaks provision, 12 months. £20k
  - Small grant scheme for Early Years centres, the Council is offering a small grant scheme to ensure that PVI settings are able to reopen if not benefiting from NNDR relief 3 months. Support is being provided to childminders and Early Year Provision for Key Workers where they are accessing day care and paying nursery/childcare retention payments plus Early Year resources. £323k
  - Special schools and mainstream schools PPE. Health and Safety support and training for all schools, one-off payments. £100k
  - Home to School Transport additional costs due to provision for vulnerable children and additional transport costs resulting from to social distancing requirements. £1.465m

- Loss of income relates to suspension of school attendance penalties, reduction of children’s centres rental income and Teaching Partnership income. £0.508m

**19.6 Initial Savings/Efficiencies Identified**

19.7 As part of the work to reduce costs in this financial year whilst work is carried out to address the options for the longer term financial impact on the council a series of savings proposals are going to the July Executive. These include sensible and practical measures such as freezing vacancies and uncommitted budgets. These have been developed following a line by line budget review with Heads of Service.

19.8 In total the additional net savings and further income identified for 2020/21 is £21.1m of which £8.9m are Directorate related savings, with the remainder including income from interest on commercial loans, additional grant funding and savings negotiated corporately, e.g. utilities, which will be offset against the associated cost reductions within services. The ones relevant to this committee are set out in the table below. The position, alongside the use of reserves, will be reviewed as the financial impact becomes clearer.

Description of Efficiency/Increased Income	2020/21 £000	2021/22 £000	FTE
Delayed Recruitment	160		6
Delay Restructures	700		TBD
Efficiencies	1,246		-
Minus Cost Pressures	(784)		-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,322</b>		<b>6</b>

19.9 The staff savings identified in the table above are based on the estimated time required to externally recruit to posts in the current situation. It is assumed that most posts will not be filled externally Before August 2020. The impact on services is being managed with prioritisation of essential requirements.

19.10 The measures required to address the longer term financial position, some of which may need to be introduced in this financial year, are being developed for Executive Members to consider in the Autumn. This work will include the scrutiny process and involvement of elected members as well as other key stakeholders.

19.11 It has been reported that the government will deliver a ‘mini budget’ in July which is likely to include measures to boost the economy and may include further support for local government. The Council will

continue to work with Core Cities and GM Authorities to make representations to the Government to seek solutions to address the funding shortfall.

## **20.0 Summary**

- 20.1 Manchester's Education and Children's Services have worked conscientiously and diligently during the covid period to operate a principle of *business as usual but doing it differently*. This has ensured there has continued to be a timely response to those children in need, support and protection; maintaining regular contact.
- 20.2 In addition working in partnership with Manchester's family of schools we have been able to safely provide places for the children of key workers and those defined as vulnerable; increasing the number of children attending from key year groups. This is in addition to developing alternative learning materials and approaches for all children; especially as the start of the new academic year is not far away. Consequently, we are exploring an 'offer' for the summer period and the learning experience for Manchester's children from September.
- 20.3 Ensuring all young people have a post 16 destination in September 2020 has been prioritised; it is expected this will be completed in the next few weeks with a particular focus on those young people identified by schools already as being at risk of NEET to ensure they have a named destination.
- 20.4 The national voucher scheme providing support to children eligible for free school meals came 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. 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. As a result of COVID19, Manchester's allocation of the recently announced Welfare Assistance fund is not known.
- 20.5 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.

- 20.6 The associated costs of Covid-19 to Children's services are significant. The Council is still working through how it will manage the additional costs and loss of income.
- 20.7 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; with a bespoke test, track and trace arrangement in place for Manchester's schools. In addition all children's services and teaching staff 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.