

Manchester City Council Report for Information

Report to: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee - 22 July 2020

Subject: A five-year workforce strategy to sustain and continually improve Children Social Care Services

Report of: Strategic Director of Children and Education Services Directorate

Summary

Following Ofsted's inspection in 2017 which judged Manchester's Children's Services to no longer be inadequate, the service has continued to make progress and improvements in the services provided. This is evidenced through independent peer reviews and through Ofsted's focused visits in 2018 and more recently December 2019. However, it is evidently clear in order for the service to continue to make improvements as we strive for Manchester's Children's Services to be judged as 'good or better' by Ofsted, a key success factor is for there to be a stable, talented and confident workforce. Failure to achieve this can potentially undermine and reverse the progress that has been made to date, thus bringing a reputational and arguably financial risk to the Council.

At its meeting on 10th December 2019 the Council's Senior Management Team (SMT) received a paper that set out the Children and Education Directorate's approach to recruitment and retention of qualified social workers. The report referred to the national context in which the service operates; referring to the national recruitment and retention challenge the social work profession is experiencing. Additionally the report highlighted the refocusing of the regulators inspection framework on the quality of social work practice - thus illustrating the importance of a stable and confident workforce, supported by both a competitive remuneration package and a workplace which facilitates and supports the professional development of its staff.

The report to SMT which has been reflected herein provides an innovative and targeted approach to staff retention by offering a range of financial incentives to specific groupings of roles which have proven difficult to recruit, retain and consequently offer the foundation for the development of the services' future strategic leaders. However, this in of itself will not be sufficient to deliver our ambitions for Manchester's children, it has to be located within a wider context of strategic workforce planning and an approach to continual improvement; one with strengthened accountabilities through a personal performance framework (Senior Manager progression and About You) Underpinning our strategic approach will be that recognition of the importance of early help and intervention with children and their families

It is proposed the initiatives set out in this report will be funded through the effective use of:

- The Social Care Grant as indicated in the current budget plan for 2020/21.
- Application of a vacancy factor of 10%, which is a reduction of 10% against the performance since September 2019 and would be considered 'healthy'; this would compare favourably to a national turnover and vacancy rate. In addition this also allows for student/new social workers to come into the service thus bringing a dynamism and creating opportunities for progression.
- Incorporating the current 'Families First Team' within Manchester's Early Help Service to strengthen and extend the reach of the Troubled Families programme, which will release monies that then can be redirected and avoid any compulsory redundancies.

The expectation would be unless in exceptional circumstances over time the reliance on interim or agency staff significantly reduces, thus removing this as a financial pressure.

Children's services embraces a high challenge and high support approach to continuous improvement. This is why some financial incentives are linked to performance. In addition the importance of a reciprocal relationship between an operating model which maximises outcomes for children and a purposeful recruitment and retention strategy that promotes a stable talented and confident workforce is also recognised. Acknowledging this dynamic context and as challenged by SMT and Executive Members this report sets out the strategic direction of the service and our workforce plan including an approach to recruitment and retention for the next five years.

Recommendations

1. That scrutiny note the grading and pay changes related to this report
2. That having given due regard to the strategic ambitions, challenges in recruitment of qualified children and families social workers in order for Manchester City Council to have a stable, confident and talented social work workforce, Scrutiny is invited to discuss the specific proposals in paragraph 2.1
3. The scrutiny committee is invited to critically discuss and comment upon the key areas identified to support continuous improvement from section 4 onwards.

Wards Affected: All

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

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of the contribution to the strategy
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 success. Children's Services work with those children who need help, support and protection so they can make progress in terms of education, training, social development and subsequently 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
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

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

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

The estimated cost of these proposals is £2.336m in 2020/21, reducing in 2021/22 onwards. The costing provided in the report above indicates a £282k shortfall in 2020/21. This will be managed within the existing budget, given not all of the

proposed 55fte additional grade 8's will be in post from April 2020 onwards. For 2021/22 onwards the funding proposals will need to be reconsidered in light of further information on the continuation of Government funding for Troubled Families and the Social Care Grant. If this funding does not continue the proposals in this report will continue to be a priority for the service and the ongoing affordability will need to be considered in the context of the Council's overall financial position.

Financial Consequences – Capital

None.

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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. Introduction

1.1 Following Ofsted's Inspection of Manchester's Children's Services in 2017, the service continues to improve, as evidenced within the following governance/reporting arrangements:

- Performance/assurance reporting
- "Focussed visits" by OFSTED
- Commissioned independent peer challenge
- Established programme of self-assessments
- Scrutiny and governance arrangements

1.2 Ofsted's focused visit published on 21 January 2020 recognised a number of improvements in the service but recognised that to be good a number of practice areas required to improve.

1.3 Children's and Education Services Leadership Team has given due regard to the progress, analysed data and collectively developed a series of measures, with the support of SMT, that had planned to be delivered by March 2020 that seek to build on the strengths to;

- Recognise the commitment and loyalty of our staff
- Arrest the increase in social work turnover
- Increase the social work experience in the service through the creation of the role of Advanced practitioner - with post qualifications
- Remove the reliance on agency staff
- Clarify key strategic behaviours that underpin our approach to continuous improvement

2. Summary of proposals

2.1 In addition to being one of the first Local Authorities to deliver a Social Work Apprenticeship Scheme (now in year 2 with positive progress being reported for all apprentices) and now in the final stages of planning and selection for our second cohort, at its meeting of the 10th of December 2019 SMT endorsed the following proposals. The aim of these proposals are/were to mitigate against a twofold risk associated with an unsuccessful recruitment and retention strategy ie undermining the progress made to date in improving children's services and a continued reliance on high cost agency staff, who by the nature of their employment are less likely to buy into the organisation's vision and objectives. A summary of the financial incentives is listed below and are supplemented by a "refer a friend" scheme.

Social Worker Level 1	£2,000 retention payment after 2 years' service; paid either in a lump sum or alternatively in 3 instalments of £666 on their 2 year anniversary, 6 months later and a further 6 months after that. We
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	propose to engage staff on the preferred option.
Senior Social Worker	£5,000 market rate supplement,
Team Manager	Continuation of £5,487 market rate supplement - supported with a consistent and clear set out objectives identified in About You.

* Market rate supplements are subject to National Insurance and pension contributions.

- 2.2 The impact of these proposals will be reviewed 18 months after implementation and in accordance with the market rate policy to measure the success of the approach; this review will also consider the following measurers: social work experience, retention, agency reliance and the quality of social work practice.
- 2.3 A current and ongoing recruitment campaign that has been in place since November/December 2019 has highlighted significant difficulties in recruiting to the post of Service Manager and Head of Service/Locality, with few Service Manager applications and no suitable applications being received for the Head of Locality. A subsequent benchmarking exercise has identified that Manchester does not offer a competitive salary - on average local authorities across Greater Manchester and the North West Region offer £5,000 more in basic salary.
- 2.4 In respect of the Service Manager post many are newly appointed/first time in role. A benchmarking exercise has indicated the salary is comparable. However, this does not recognise the challenges, intensity and demands of a large and diverse city when compared with other parts of the region. Consequently taking account of advertising and other recruitment costs etc. it is considered a market rate of £2k will be a sound investment to place Manchester City Council in a competitive position if we are to successfully retain talent and develop our service managers into our future leaders; which it is proposed is linked to their About You process and successful delivery of key objectives and is moderated by the Deputy Director Children's Services.
- 2.5 Our recruitment and retention campaign commenced on the 1st March 2020. Due to action taken as a result of Covid-19, the Communications team advised that this would not be the most effective time to launch the campaign. As of 1st April, the campaign has had a soft launch, including posts on Social Media, work with partner agencies, the creation of video content and blog posts.
- 2.6 The campaign slightly delayed by the impact of COVID 19 was fully launched in early June with advertisements in the national professional press. The recruitment campaign has targeted experienced Social Workers through channels identified by the communications team. This includes a package with

Community Care, The Guardian and sponsored Tweets. There is also the Refer a Friend scheme to encourage applications.

- 2.7 The content created for the campaign includes images and videos of real Manchester Social Workers talking about the benefits of working for Manchester City Council. The benefits that matter most to our Social Workers were identified using a focus group and the initial campaign idea was presented to them for feedback. Whilst still in its early days, with significantly more interest in the posts than finalised applications the campaign has been well received and is making an impact as demonstrated below;

	Internal Appointments		External Appointments		Remaining Vacancies	
	AP (G8)	TM	AP (G8)	TM	AP (G8)	TM
North	5	1	1	0	6	0
Central	8	0	0	2	10	4
South	3	1	1	0	10	1
Permanence	8	1	2	0	0	0
Total	24	3	4	2	26	5

3. Context and strategic direction

- 3.1 The proposed strategy is intended to be flexible/adaptive in order to respond to changing fiscal and social policy over the next five years. As a result our strategic approach to service delivery will continue to be informed by a dynamic Directorate Business Plan which will be focussed on delivering safe, effective and efficient services. In addition, the approach to service planning, delivery and service improvement and the basis for our strategic endeavours will continue to be informed by the 'Our Manchester' Behaviours, principles, relationship focussed practice, the signs of safety, passionate about our ways of working and performance; tracked and monitored via measurable goals and objectives articulated in our service practice model (Our Practice in Manchester) and Directorate Plan.
- 3.2 Improving the quality of social work practice is a key short, medium and long term priority for the service. To date, that has been significant progress with regards to the 'infrastructure' to support and underpin this and includes the following:
- Revised Quality Assurance & Performance Framework

- Development of 'Top 10 Behaviours and Rules' for quality of practice
- 6 Golden threads
- Refreshed audit approach
- Improved professional supervision policy
- Revised practice standards
- Refined and well understood practice model
- Clear and well understood strategic objectives
- Clear, measurable Directorate Plan
- Locality programme
- Working relationship with MLCO
- Service redesign - Complex safeguarding hub, the Front Door, leaving care, early years /early help, social work delivery model families first, family contact, youth justice service, families first and fostering. All of these reviews are designed to ensure resources are used to maximum effect supporting our strategic intentions
- Independent confirmation of a strong self-assessment (Peer reviews and OFSTED)

3.3 Continuous improvement through self-assessment is now an embedded approach and will continue throughout the next 5 years.

3.4 The remainder of this paper sets out in further detail the underpinning approach to continual service improvement and the recruitment and retention of qualified children and family social workers for the next 5 years.

3.5 Of course all of this is set within the operating challenge of COVID 19 where the health impacts and economic impacts are not yet fully understood. In the early stages of recovery what is clear is that the impact of the pandemic is likely to increase inequalities in the City and drive up demand for children's social care services. Simultaneously the pandemic has had a short term influence on our approach to service delivery with improved use of technology and a more agile workforce both of these aspects are subject to ongoing corporate and service wide reviews and both will significantly shape our approach to service delivery as we adapt to living with COVID 19.

4. Performance Management

4.1 Over the next 5 years we will continue to use our developed performance and assurance arrangements in order to sustain focus on our evidenced based improvement activity. The analysis of our data has increasingly become more straightforward through the investment in Liquid Logic. This combined with an interpretation of the potential social policy changes and the regulator's priorities will ensure we will be a fit for purpose and adaptive organisation; ensuring we deploy sufficient resources, management and leadership capacity in the right places so that we deliver our strategic ambitions; put simply we will be guided by evidence in our decision making.

5. Service Redesign

- 5.1 In the last year our approach to 'Delivering Children's Services in a Locality' has been overseen by a programme management approach that has and is incrementally transforming and redesigning services. This approach has promoted rigour, challenge and has engaged staff in many of our redesigns. We believe this is a helpful way to plan change and whilst we recognise it is essential to consolidate our approach to many of the service development since 2016 we also recognise the service has to have the capacity and an appropriate methodology to oversee redesign and evolve that will ensure we are responsive. It is intended with the support of the Reform and Innovation Team to continue with a programme approach to service development over the next 5 years and we are in a final stage of revising new aspects of service evolution to be included within this approach to change management

6. Governance

- 6.1 It is envisaged that governance of the service throughout the next 5 years will continue to be achieved through the Directorate leadership team, performance /assurance arrangements and reporting via executive member portfolio, accountability meetings (Manchester safeguarding Partnership and the with the Leader and Chief Executive of the Council) and scrutiny committee. It is envisaged that the collaboration with the MLCO is likely to develop within the next 12 months and continue further over the next 5 years. Whilst it is difficult to predict the exact nature of this, the Our Manchester behaviours will drive this collaboration. Improving our strategic thinking with the LCO as commissioner and providers of services to children will be focussed on improving the whole system of children services and is welcomed. Similarly, the services engagement with placed based activity and our influence with other Council services, principally through bringing services together will remain a key focus over the next 5 years.

7. Assurance activity

- 7.1 Throughout the next 5 years the service will continue to promote methods of continuous improvement embracing self-assessment, peer challenge, quality assurance activity, workforce development and ensuring management oversight in the pursuit of the delivery of a confident talented skilled workforce. It is envisaged, supported by the statutory organisations of the Manchester Safeguarding Partnership, that this improvement is also likely to see an increased focus on joint agency improvement activity and a greater focus on place and the contribution of locality leaders including improved engagement of other organisations.
- 7.2 Central to this work will be our long term commitment to our 6 Golden threads which will remain key practice objectives throughout the next 5 years. Having spent a significant period reflecting on how our practice model interacts with other key determinants of the wider practice environment; Our Manchester Behaviours, relational practice and our passions we will look to develop a deeper sense of how this impacts on professional practice

8. Locality working

- 8.1 As referred to above the service will further develop our approach to locality working driven by a placed based approach located in our three geographical areas of North South and Central interacting with our 13 neighbourhoods and 32 wards. The locality system approach goes beyond the day -to- day working of individual practitioners. It creates a unifying methodology, language and understanding that supports outcome based working across the children's service system. It empowers professionals to develop a wider sense of the culture of Our Manchester, we will continue to support placed working and improve the focus, effectiveness and outcomes of children throughout the next 5 years.

9. Proportionality

- 9.1 It is a strategic objective to continually strengthen our approach to early intervention; preventing the unnecessary escalation of children's needs so that they require statutory intervention. This is an essential element of our strategic behaviours over the next five years as it will take a system wide culture change. Subsequently throughout the next 5 years we will influence universal services in design and targeting of resources; actively promoting and embracing technology to develop new ways of working and predictive factors to best target and meet vulnerability. This will of course be a significant driver for a changing relationship with the MLCO, health visiting and public health. We are keen to ensure our early help service builds on its evident success and effectively target its service to maximise the ongoing troubled families' investment. Our move to locality Advice Guidance and Support drawing on key partners has already made progress in changing behaviours. This will remain a key aspect of our approach to accessing children's social care services.

10. Partnerships

- 10.1 The service has and will continue to invest in partnership working in places and has strengthened local leadership capacity focusing on improving the quality of planning and the effectiveness of partnership working partnership practice ensuring proportionately of service, and workforce development. The aim is to create the conditions that enable practitioners working together in a locality having conversations to agree effective, right and timely interventions resulting in positive change for our children to have safe, happy healthy and successful lives
- 10.2 All of this activity will be reflected in the Children and Education Services Directorate Plan 2020-24, which is currently in its final stages of design to ensure it is contemporary and reflective of recently refreshed corporate and wider strategic partnership priorities, including our approach to living with COVID 19

11. Locality Management Arrangements

- 11.1 Our locality programme project management approach has been the means by which we have and will continue to develop the service in response to our self-assessment, new and emerging practice challenges, service redesign and ensuring our service delivery arrangements are designed to deliver our ambitions of delivering a safe effective and efficient service. The Head of Locality posts (x 3) were established in 2018 in response to both the Children's Services self-assessment and Ofsted's findings (2017) in relation to the requirement to develop and strengthen management arrangements on a local level and in order to be able to improve and drive the consistency and quality of social work practice.
- 11.2 Since the establishment of the posts, the expectations and demands placed on the Heads of Localities have shifted in-line with the strategic direction of the Directorate. The roles were operational leaders focused on compliance and performance. However, as the Directorate drives towards a position of integration with partners and locality ways of working, the roles are now expected to be strategic leaders across the system with the responsibility for leading multifaceted and complex children's services.
- 11.3 A review of the deployment of social workers with the locality teams has been completed to respond to existing changes in the numbers of children who require an assessment service. This has led to increasing the numbers of qualified social workers in the teams that have long term planning for children as their primary responsibility. This coupled with improved recruitment and retention should address the areas of our self assessment that we require to improve on
- 11.4 The service significantly engaged in improving the quality of social work practice that will support children reaching their full potential; this is reflected in ensuring we recruit and retain the correct experience in the service and we ensure our professional development offer is exceptional.

12. Recruitment and Retention - A 5 Year Approach to Recruiting and Retaining Qualified Children and Family Social Workers

- 12.1 Manchester's Children's service operates within a national and local context in which retention of social workers is an ongoing challenge; the most recent evidence suggests this situation is not likely to improve soon. In September 2019, 26 local authorities across England reported children's social work posts were occupied by 30% interim/agency staff.
- 12.2 Our long term Business intelligence demonstrates over a 10 year period, 201.7 Social Workers left Manchester City Council, of which:
- 42.4 left within 12 months of employment
 - 55.1 left within 2 years of employment
 - Almost 50% of the leavers left within their first 2 years of employment
 - 80% of the total leavers were Social Worker G7

- 12.3 Manchester is a large and diverse city with a high level of deprivation. This presents unique opportunities and challenges for social workers; which take time to adjust for any new starter within Children's Services. Added to this, recent business intelligence informs us we have continued challenges regarding the recruitment and retention of social workers with 2 years+ experience. A benchmarking analysis informs us that at basic grade Social Work entry we pay a competitive minimum salary, however the maximum salary is not as competitive as GM authorities who offer an 'experienced' pay band which isn't available in Manchester; when this band is factored into the total reward package, Manchester offers the lowest salary in GM. In respect of Senior Children and Families Social Worker roles, MCC offers the lowest minimum and maximum salary. Neither of these factors contribute to the necessary objective of building a competent confidence workforce.
- 12.4 Despite this there has been a significant reduction in the use of interim/agency staff which has in turn increased the stability of the workforce (a key factor to ensuring a children's services area continue to improve year on year) and social worker turnover recorded to be as low as 5% in the area teams during the summer of 2019. Furthermore the financial spend on agency staff has reduced by £1.7m since 2017. However, in recent months the turnover and vacancy rates for children and family social workers has increased; following previous patterns and arguably hindering practice improvements.
- 12.5 Analysis of exit interviews, 'leavers' and a Terms and Conditions benchmarking exercise indicates a common reason that contributes to the pattern of social workers leaving the employment of the council after 2 years is the complexity of the social work task and a significant difference in the salary paid by Manchester City Council and neighbouring authorities for 'experienced' social workers.
- 12.6 Despite the increasingly competitive nature and challenges associated with the recruitment and retention of Children and Families Social Workers, Manchester's Children's Services has seen a reduction in the turnover of social workers from c25% in 2014 to 15% in 2019 and agency staff from 121 in 2015/16 to 26 as of October 2019. This is principally attributed to the service reforms that have been successfully delivered to date, reduced caseloads and our enhanced reputation and reflects the interrelationship between retention, leadership/management and practice environment / model.
- 12.7 In addition to offering existing staff opportunities to become a Qualified Social Worker via Manchester's Social Work Apprenticeship and being a key partner to the Greater Manchester Social Work Academy, Manchester City Council's current offer to staff/social workers includes:
- Development and implementation of a career pathway
 - Supervision arrangements and staff development programme/ opportunities
 - Development of practice standards
 - Bespoke support for ASYEs (Newly Qualified Social Workers)

- Promoting flexible and new ways of working
- Regular staff engagement/ training events.
- Sustainable financial arrangement for the Greater Manchester Social Work Academy; thus ensuring a 'flow' of locally trained qualified social workers and an apprenticeship scheme.
- Exploring the opportunity to recruit final year students as social work apprentices
- Increased visibility, influence and focus on the role of the Principal social worker supported by a small workforce development team.

13. Retention

13.1 The service has drawn on additional evidence to gain a deeper understanding to support a longer term approach to recruitment and retention. This analysis and exit interviews indicate responses are split across the following three broad areas:

1. Social Workers moving to another authority for more money
2. Social workers changing career and Social Workers moving back to their hometown
3. Most significantly, our Bheard feedback an analysis of the 'fair deal' factor (the section that measures how valued employees feel, particularly about their pay and benefits) and free text comments has been undertaken in respect of Children's Localities and Permanence. These service areas respectively scored 9% and 7% lower than the Council overall in terms of 'fair deal. With the Council scoring below the 'Ones-to-Watch' benchmark in this factor, scores for Children's Localities (11%) and Permanence (8%) were even further away from the 'One Star' benchmark aims of the Council. The 2019/20 Bheard results have further reinforced this feedback and reflects a worsening picture.

13.2 In response to feedback from staff and the 2018/19 Bheard survey a working group of staff and managers were established to explore approaches to improving wellbeing, recognising and valuing staff and effectively improvements which are within the 'gift' of the Directorate. The conclusion of which was an agreement to apply the following approaches:

- **Career Pathway Review:** ensuring progression evidence of Our Manchester behaviours, principles, values, identified evidenced based and practice model - improving the lives and outcomes of Manchester's children.
- **Social Worker 'TOIL' project:** innovatively designed to enable a team to have friday off via a rota/cover arrangement.
- **Retention engagement events:** events hosted by the Deputy Director, Children's Services which provides a platform for social workers to share the good news, opportunities and challenges.

- **Monthly Social Worker message:** a dedicated monthly message which will include social worker case studies, key messages and national, local, regional news.
- **Exit interviews:** robust process and proper oversight of exit interviews and reporting completion rate back into the Directorate.
- **The role of the Principal social worker:** we have enhanced this role to ensure a connection between strategy and practice
- **Health & Wellbeing portfolio:** supporting our social work workforce with managing the complexities and emotional demands that are encountered. This includes specialist resilience and wellbeing training delivered by Robertson Cooper, Mindful Mondays and Wellbeing Week.

13.3 The delivery of a successful long term approach to recruitment and retention within Children’s Services gives due regard to the underlying challenges and therefore encompass financial incentives to entice individuals to work and stay in Manchester as such it requires longevity and connection with our self-assessed business needs and wider long term strategic priorities. A measure of success would be a 10% turnover rate; which would be better than a national average and the reduction in the use of agency staff.

14. Financial Implications

14.1 The table below illustrates the financial commitment which will be required to deliver the necessary and innovative incentives that will drive recruitment, retention and ensure the correct level of staff to lead and drive the areas we require further the improvement

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
	£000's				
Market Supplements	342	342	342	342	342
Revised structure	726	726	726	726	726
Retention and Loyalty	747	578	523	473	473
Non-Workforce budgets	520	520	520	520	520
Total Expenditure	2,335	2,166	2,111	2,061	2,061
Social Work Turnover - 7.5%	866	866	866	866	866
Social Care Grant	500	500	500	500	500
Families First Saving	687	687	687	687	687
Total Funding	2,053	2,053	2,053	2,053	2,053
Shortfall/-Surplus	282	113	58	8	8

14.2 The revised Locality and Permanence structures have been costed out on the basis of 45 teams of 6 staff, with two grade 6’s, two grade 7’s and two grade 8’s per team. The estimated cost of these proposals is **£2.335m** in 2020/21, reducing in 2021/22 onwards. This will be funded by:

- Staff turnover reduced to more manageable levels as a result of a revised offer to social workers. An additional 7.5% staff turnover assumption over and above the standard 2.5% vacancy factor and no planned use of agency leads to £0.866m being available from the current budget.
- The Children's budget for 2020/21 proposals includes £500k for recognition of loyalty and commitment from the 2020/21 Social Care grant. There is a need for this funding to continue to support these proposals.
- Extending the reach of Early Help to incorporate funding of Families First by the Troubled Families grant will lead to 19fte moving into the Early Help service and £0.687m of cash limit budget being redirected to support these proposals. It should be noted that in 2018/19 and 2019/20 the Early Help budget has been supplemented by c£2m of Troubled Families funding. The continuation of funding has recently been confirmed for 2020/21 at an indicative sum of £3.174m.

14.3 The costing provided in table above indicates a £282k shortfall in 2020/21. This will be managed within the existing budget given not all of the proposed 55fte additional grade 8's will be in the new financial year. For 2021/22 onwards the funding proposals will need to be reconsidered in light of further information on: the level of Local Government funding arising from the fair funding review due to take place in 2020/21 and come into effect from April 2021; continuation of Government funding for Troubled Families and the Social Care Grant. If the funding does not continue the proposals in this report will continue to be a priority for the service and the ongoing affordability will need to be considered in the context of the Council's overall financial position.

14.4 Risks regarding the above will be mitigated and manageable as the national turnover rate is 15%, remodelling of the Family First Service, avoiding a reliance on agency staff, and not all staff will be eligible for progression to be an Advanced Social Work role.,

15. Current and future operating context

15.1 In supporting its commitment to a locality model of social work the service appointed Heads of Locality whose broad remit focussed on improving the performance of the service; compliance and quality improvement, as well as leading and shaping local partnerships to address localised issues. This has added to the strength of local partnerships, intervention with families and outcomes for children, recently recognised by OFSTED; this function will remain a priority within the service.

15.2 In order to support monitoring, challenging and improving quality we also require to build experience and provide an environment where talent can flourish it is essential given the complexities, intensity and the aspirations for the highest quality of social work practice and to support our strategic priorities, noted below, we require to recruit and retain experienced confident and capable social workers and managers to our deliver our next phase of improvement, this includes financial incentives and competitive salaries (funded via the flexible market factor supplement) to enable our recruitment, retention and succession planning strategy to be successful.

15.3 In concert with this approach our workforce development strategy requires us to ensure retention, support and development as key to delivering our short, medium and long term objectives. In the following sections of this report we identify what our strategic behaviours and priorities are over the next five years.

16. Summary

16.1 Manchester Children's and Education Services has made significant progress since 2017, achieving a regional and national profile befitting of this proud and passionate city; never satisfied with mediocrity this paper outlines the approach to build on those foundations and ensure continuous improvement is sustained. However, without a stable, confident and talented workforce the ability to achieve our collective ambition to build a safe, happy, healthy and successful future for all our children are likely to be impaired. This is none more so than that within children's social care.

16.2 As indicated a key contributing factor to sustained improvement within children's services is the stability and experience of its social workers. Research and evidence indicates the modern day social worker is younger and predominantly female, with 16% aged between 20 - 29 years of age (DfE data release February 2019) and 59% less than 5 years' experience. Subsequently whilst there is an inevitability of turnover, it can be lessened by:

- The **organisational culture**; moving away from a risk averse and blame to one that is characterised by learning, high support and challenge.
- **Workloads** that enable practitioners make a difference in the lives of the people they work with
- **Career opportunities** and development
- A **supportive environment** in which supervision is regular, structured and reflective; thus enabling their skills, knowledge and ability is developed
- **Recognition** of the challenging circumstances/situations they experience everyday so that they feel valued and supported in making difficult decisions
- **Equipment and working environment** that is adaptive and mobile with an office space that is supportive and promotes peer support and group supervision. This continues to be a 'work in progress'.

16.3 In addition whilst salary is very rarely cited by social workers as a reason for leaving a job, it is inevitably a factor when experienced workers move between employers (Local Government Association, 2015); this has been a recurring feature in the 2018/19 and 2019/20 Bheard surveys that social workers (like most other employees) want 'fair pay' at a level which accurately reflects their responsibilities and demonstrates the value attached to their work. The benchmarking undertaken and referenced within this report indicates that the salary offered by Manchester City Council is disproportionately less than Greater Manchester and the North West Region for key roles. Roles that are essential to building practitioner confidence, sustaining improvement and

successful succession planning through a stable, confident and talented workforce.

- 16.4 Finally it should be noted, social work is not an homogenous group and the needs and demands change from service to service eg the challenges and needs found in frontline 'child protection' teams will differ greatly to those of an adoption independent chair service/unit. This is why any recruitment and retention strategy like that set out in this paper has to be adaptive and responsive; especially one that aims to meet the needs of children and their families for the next 5 years. Subsequently underpinned by competitive salaries that can be met from within the existing resource allocation albeit some risks as set out in section 16 along with the mitigating actions, this paper sets out a range of adaptive range of initiatives that can be applied over the short, medium and long term to achieve a stable, confident and talented workforce; delivering our ambition both for the service and Manchester's children and young people.