

Manchester City Council Report for Information

Report to: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 7 October 2020

Subject: Special educational needs and disability update and the response to Covid-19

Report of: Director of Education

Summary

Manchester is committed to building a safe, happy, healthy and successful future for all our children, none more so than those with a disability and learning need. The report details the actions taken by Manchester City Council, health services and education settings to support children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This report sets out in detail the impact of the Covid -19 crisis on services delivered to children, young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). In addition, the report outlines how children and their families have influenced the response of Manchester City Council and its partners. Manchester's parents are a key partner and have been instrumental in the development of innovations throughout the Covid -19 pandemic.

The Government made temporary changes to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) legislation, including relaxation of timelines for the Education Health and Care Plan process and the introduction of the 'Reasonable Endeavour' duty in regard to meeting the provision in Education Health and Care Plans. The report details Manchester's Local Area response to these changes.

Recommendations

Committee members are asked to recognise the work of parent/ carer groups, education, health and care staff in responding to the needs of children and young people with SEND and their families during the Covid pandemic. In addition members are asked to consider and comment on the information in the report and the planned next steps.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - 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.

Our Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Ensuring high quality provision for children and young people with special Educational Needs and Disabilities and working in co-production with families to ensure improved lived experience with a focus on preparation for adulthood will enable our young people to fulfil their potential through education and schemes such as supported internships.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	The development of high quality special educational needs and disability provision across education, health and social care will lead to improved education
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Multi agency working has allowed innovation and provision in which the diversity and talent of Manchester's children is celebrated. Children and young people are supported and encouraged to achieve their aspirations and maximise their potential.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	The development of high quality special educational needs and disability provision across education, health and social care makes Manchester a more attractive city to live and work
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	A development of a well-connected system between health, social care and education and between schools and preparation for adulthood will to allow a smoother transition for our young people and ensure all children and young people have opportunity to reach their potential and contribute to Manchester's economic growth.

Contact Officers:

Name: Amanda Corcoran
 Position: Director of Education
 E-mail: a.corcoran@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Isobel Booler
Position: Head of School Quality Assurance and Strategic SEND
E-mail: i.booler@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Julie Hicklin
Position: SEND Lead
E-mail: j.hicklin@manchester.gov.uk

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.

Annual Report on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, December 2019

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 On 23rd March 2020 the government made the decision to 'lockdown' and imposed a series of measures restricting the movement of the population in England. 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, including children and young people with an Education, Health and Care plan, and those of key workers.
- 1.2 There has been widespread national concern raised in regard to the impact of the national 'lockdown' on children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and their families. The resulting changes to health, care and education services has put additional pressures on many families of children with Special Educational Needs. It has been a time of high anxiety and concern as many parents have supported their children and young people to continue their learning at home as well as meeting care needs.
- 1.3 Although all special schools and the majority of Manchester schools remained open for children with Education Health and Care plans, many parents expressed anxiety about children returning to school, particularly at the start of the crisis. Initially the Government's coronavirus guidance was clear that for most children and young people, including those people with special educational needs and/or disabilities, it was safer to stay at home with their families during the early lockdown period. From May there was a change in emphasis and if it was safe to do so, children with Education, Health and Care plans (EHCPs) were actively encouraged to return to schools or settings. By July 17% of children with EHCPs were regularly attending schools and settings in Manchester compared to 12% of the school population as a whole.
- 1.4 From September 2020, Government guidance has been clear that all schools and colleges should be open for all children and young people. Our schools, settings and colleges in Manchester have welcomed back all of their pupils and have been fully committed to ensuring that children return to their school in a well-managed and safe environment - with appropriate support in place where needed so that they don't suffer the long-term effects of not being in school.
- 1.5 Over summer, education, health and care staff have been communicating with families to encourage the return to education in September. This included another letter sent to parents and young people in August, to reassure families, that schools and colleges were ready to welcome children and young people, with Education Health and Care Plans, back safely. The letter gave links to resources for young people and parents, including some created by Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership eg a video of a pupil from North Ridge High, one of our special schools in Manchester talking about her experience of returning to school: [GMHSC Partnership Video on Youtube](#). Parents and schools have reported how happy children are to be back with their teachers and friends and back to their usual routines. One young boy in a

special school was asked how he felt about returning to school in early summer. He said 'March sad, April sad, May happy.' Schools and colleges are also reporting how calm schools are and how well children and young people are adapting to the new arrangements in place.

- 1.6 Since September 78% of children with Education Health and Care Plans have returned to school. Manchester City Council's attendance team and Strategic SEND team are working closely to support more children back to school. The attendance hotline which has been set up to support this and has received positive feedback including from parents of children attending Special Schools. The main thematic reason for non- attendance is parental anxiety about Covid-19. Schools; attendance officers in the Early Help hubs and the attendance team are working to alleviate concerns and support children back to school. The need for children to self isolate in a number of Manchester Special Schools has also impacted on attendance figures.
- 1.7 Throughout the six month period from March to September, colleagues from Health, Education and Social Care have worked closely with parents to ensure, where possible, a business as usual approach was adopted. Where this was not possible innovative approaches have been used and the Local Area has continued to work in co-production with parents to find creative solutions.

2.0 Changes in Government Legislation in relation to children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

- 2.1 Since March, the government has been regularly updating its guidance relating to education and Special Educational Needs/Disabilities and all guidance has had to be read in conjunction with schools and settings guidance.
- 2.2 On 1st May 2020 aspects of the law on education, health and care (EHC) needs assessments and plans changed temporarily to give local authorities, health commissioning bodies , education settings and other bodies who contribute to these processes more flexibility in responding to the demands placed on them by coronavirus (COVID-19).
- 2.3 These changes were:
 - a) The SEND (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 amended the regulations that specify timescales relating to Education Health and Care assessments and reviews. This allowed local areas to complete the process as soon as reasonably practicable if unable to meet the time limit due to Coronavirus. This temporary legislation change ended on 25th September and all the usual statutory timescales are now back in force.
 - b) From 1 May to 31 July 2020, section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014 (duty to secure special educational and health care provision in accordance with EHC plan) was modified by a notice from the Secretary of State for Education issued under the Coronavirus Act 2020. During this

period, local authorities and health commissioning bodies were required to use their 'reasonable endeavours' to discharge this duty.

- 2.4 As the changes to legislation were temporary, the statutory guidance, the SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years was not updated during this period. It is important to note that all relaxations of duties were temporary; the reasonable endeavours relaxation ended on the 31st July and the relaxation of timescales for Education Health and Care plan assessments ended on the 25th September 2020. Autumn term guidance has provided information on steps schools and settings need to take to ensure children and young people with SEND can return to full-time provision.
- 2.5 The Department for Education published guidance on home to school transport on 11th August, which included information on how local authorities and transport authorities should manage capacity and demand on public and dedicated transport.

3.0 Participation and co-production with parents/carers

- 3.1 Throughout the Covid 19 crisis, the local authority, schools and health services have sought to involve parents/carers in giving their views about their child's education, health and care provision and in influencing strategy through co-production. Education providers were asked to continue holding EHCP reviews, though the majority of these had to be held virtually or by phone. Some parents and schools reported that online meetings were preferred by many families and allowed better participation, however, some families struggled with digital access.
- 3.2 Throughout the current crisis co-production and strategic work with parents and carers has strengthened and the learning from this period will inform our future partnership. One key learning has been that virtual strategic meetings have enabled more parents to engage and participate ensuring a more representative voice. MPCF have attended virtual SEND Boards, been involved in the anxiety pathway, advised on risk assessments and letters to parents, worked with community health on their new referral pathway and are currently feeding into a review of the SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and personal budgets policy. In addition Manchester Parent Carer Forum successfully applied for grant funding to run a forest school summer activity for children with higher level needs to supplement MCC's summer offer.
- 3.3 In response to concerns of parents/carers and disabled people's organisations about the requirement to wear face coverings on trams, buses and trains, Transport for Greater Manchester provided an exemption card for people who were exempt from this duty. This included disabled people, people who would be severely distressed by having to wear a face covering and people who are travelling with or helping someone who lip reads or uses. Parent/carer groups and schools publicised the card widely to families. Since the guidance on the wearing of face masks has changed to also include shops, and in secondary schools, whilst Manchester remains under further restrictions, the parent carer forum has co-produced a card with Manchester City Council for children, young

people and parents to use in the wider community and other settings including schools.

3.5 MPCF has developed a Coronavirus area on their website and also shares key messages for families through social media.

3.6 During Covid 19 Manchester City Council staff have worked with our Parent Champions to strengthen the offer of peer to peer support through their Facebook page. At their request we have offered Facebook live sessions where a member of the Information, Advice and Support Service answers questions and gives information. Local Offer and specialist resource team staff worked closely with the parent champions on developing the summer short breaks offer for families and we have responded to requests for information in different formats, such as a short video clip explaining 'reasonable endeavours'. Feedback from parent champions is positive and they report feeling involved and supported during this period. Geraldine Hills Parent Champion Representative writes about the work that Manchester Parent Champions have done in partnership with the Council and the Parent Carer Forum:

'The Council approached the Parent Champions and asked us what ideas we had that could influence the Summer Plan given the restrictions brought about because of Covid. We gathered a mass of fantastic suggestions and ideas about how we can use our parks and other community outdoor spaces. We met with the agencies involved and worked up a very exciting programme for the summer.'

Another example of how Manchester Parent Champions have co-produced work has been working collaboratively with Information Advice and Support Services (IAS). At the request of Parent Champions, IAS do a live Q&A on the PC Facebook page. This gives parent/carers and IAS a chance to chat informally and highlight any issues that IAS can give feedback to the council. Following the success of these sessions, we are now in the process of inviting other agencies to come and chat with us on our PC Facebook page.'

Since this Lockdown has come upon us, I have seen some fantastic examples of collaborative working from parent/carers and services and I know this will continue long after the lockdown is lifted.'

'Manchester Parent Champions together with the Council and Manchester Parent Carer Forum have all worked especially hard through Covid 19. We have made sure that we reach out to as many vulnerable SEND families as we can and offer friendship and support and information.'

As a parent of a young person with complex disabilities, I can honestly say I am proud of the way that the SEND community and Council have stayed connected through this difficult time and that the Council continue to support and listen to parent carers in Manchester.'

Geraldine Hills parent carer; parent champion representative

4.0 Young people's experience, views and engagement

4.1 Young People's experiences of lockdown were gathered by our Changemakers who are our SEND Young Ambassadors. The following themes emerged from the consultation:

- **Young people had a mixed experience of lockdown:** All had experienced boredom, low mood, feelings of loss, loneliness, confusion and frustration. However, half of the young people asked had been able to engage in their youth providers'/school/colleges' online provision and this had hugely alleviated those feelings. The other half of young people had retreated into themselves and not accessed any support at this time apart from their families and friends. Despite parents/carers trying to engage them in activities online, the young people felt that there was no provision 'for them' and therefore did not want to take part.
- **Good experiences of online provision:** Of the young people who had engaged with online provision, all had enjoyed the sessions they had attended (this has included sports, arts, faith and friendship activities) and said that they would be happy if both face-to-face and online provision were available in the future. Some said that more varied platforms should be used by youth providers such as Kahoot, Discord, Gaming Apps and TikTok. They said that mostly they could get onto platforms such as Zoom without much support and that their providers had helped them if they were stuck.
- **Digital technology:** Young people had a varied experience of access to digital technology; some had devices provided from school/college, some did not. Some young people already had devices they could use. Of those that lived with parents/carers, most had a stable internet connection. However, those who live independently had a much less stable access, running out of data and not having the devices needed or up to date devices that were needed to get involved online.
- **Transition:** All young people stated that they were worried about 'going back to normal' and the challenges that they would face, especially those who were the most isolated and didn't engage with online provision. They were anxious about the ever-changing social distancing guidelines, using public transport, the virus itself, meeting people, and social skills lost through lack of interaction. Transitional work and processing the difficulties of the pandemic was said to be of high importance to the young people.

4.2 This feedback from young people has already influenced actions taken and will continue to influence the Local Area's Action plan going forward. In response to the concerns of young people about transition back to school or college, the education team in collaboration with multi-agency partners, created and shared resources to support children, young people and parents in planning for the return in September. Young people have also clearly indicated the impact of Covid-19 on their Mental Health and well-being; this continues to be an area of focus for the local Area.

4.3 There has also been a large amount of work distributing 2200 laptops and 750 BT wifi vouchers to the school system and this has included our special schools and Pru.

4.4 Following the feedback telling us that not all young people wanted or were able to take part in online and outdoor activities and some had disengaged two creative projects with Venture Arts were provided to support these families at home. The first was joining artist Dominic Bennett in creating ceramic weasels, inspired by characters in *The Wind In The Willows*. Families were sent a box containing all the clay, tools and step by step guidance they needed to create some weasels to join his army – plus one for them to keep. The creations were collected, put in the kiln and sent back to young people for painting. The second project was with artist and storyteller Louise Hewitt, making ceramic garden monsters. Over 80 families have taken part in the ceramics project with very positive feedback:

“My 17 year old daughter suffers with anxiety and depression. She is under camhs and attended the Leo Kelly hospital school until she started college last year. She still hardly leaves the house and her way of dealing with her feelings is sleeping. She loves art though so getting her involved in this has been brilliant. She spent 5 hours making things with clay yesterday when she probably would have been napping. She can’t wait to get her hands on the next box “

“I can’t believe it, my kids are working together. I was able to get on with other stuff while watching them enjoy this. Please pass on my thanks to the council & venture Arts”

4.5 The Changemakers also reported feelings of loneliness and anxiety amongst some young people. As part of the alternative summer offer we worked with Groundwork to offer a 4 week programme with an emotional wellbeing theme in Crumpsall Park, North Manchester for young people aged 10-14, especially those with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. Activities took place every Tuesday and Thursday in August from 12-3pm and included den building, tree identification, outdoor open space sports, and creating a mini-garden to take home. Young people could book on as many sessions as they liked. Takeup was good and initial feedback positive. However we are awaiting a full evaluation from the providers.

5.0 Local Offer and Information Advisory Service

5.1 Covid-19 related information has been circulated to both schools and families through the Local Offer and a weekly electronic newsletter. The Manchester Information, Advice and Support Service helpline has continued to be available with extended hours and One Education has provided a helpline to support parents/carers with concerns about their child’s education and offer strategies to manage anxieties and behaviour. However, call volumes to these lines have been lower than expected. The local authority wrote to children, young people with SEND and their parents/carers in May to explain how they can access support and again in August to encourage the return to education. A set of

Frequently Asked Questions was provided with the letter explaining the measures schools and colleges are putting in place to keep children, young people and staff safe.

- 5.2 The Local Offer team, parent champions, IAS, short breaks and educational psychology staff are running regular virtual drop-ins for parents and carers. These are going well and feedback has been positive. Some parents/carers have said they are getting information overload, so the Local Offer team produced a leaflet that can go on the fridge with essential information and telephone numbers. The Local Offer and IAS teams are also engaging with the Parent Champion Facebook parent page which has approximately 400 parents engaged with it. Following discussions with both parent champions and the parent/carer network, Frequently Asked Questions documents have been put on the Local Offer website.

6.0 Multi-agency working and joint commissioning

- 6.1 A multi-agency approach is required to support the needs and improve the outcomes of children and young people with SEND. During the Covid crisis, children and young people with SEND, and particularly those with higher level needs, have been the focus of strong partnership working between services and families. Manchester's embedded multi-agency working, effective strategic leadership and strong partnership approach with Manchester Local Care Organisation (LCO) and Manchester Clinical Commissioning Group, parents/carers, settings, schools and colleges have held Manchester in good stead to respond proactively across the Local Area to the Coronavirus pandemic.
- 6.2 The Covid 19 crisis provided opportunities for innovative approaches to multi-agency working. Panels and Boards have continued to be multi-agency and have met virtually throughout the lockdown period, including the SEND Board which includes parental representatives; Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP) panel; Multi-agency High Needs panel and multi-agency senior moderation of Education Health and Care Plans.
- 6.3 During this period the Local Area has continued to focus on the improvement of child and family experience and has used the current crisis as an impetus for change. Innovations include:
- 6.3.1 **The Introduction of a temporary Health and Therapies Pathway**
An Emergency Covid Interim Community Health Pathway has been introduced during this time and comprises Speech and Language Therapy, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Special School Nursing and CAMHS. It has first been trialled with special schools and the pathway has provided a coordinated approach for schools and families to access Community Health services with one member of the team providing a coordinated response to the school and family. Manchester Parent Carer Forum has been involved in the pathway development. Plans are now being reviewed to widen the scope of who can refer to this pathway and the learning is being used to inform future practice.

6.3.2 About Me

Community Health have led a group which has co-produced a document which will allow families to share crucial information about the child/young person's needs and preferences when accessing health and other services. This was particularly important when young people were having to meet new staff and access services online.

6.3.3 Anxiety Based School Avoidance

Education services, One Education Educational Psychologists, CAMHS, Healthy Schools, parents and schools have co-produced a guidance document to help families, schools and settings with children and young people who struggle who come to school due to anxiety difficulties – anxiety based school avoidance. Permission was gained to use a West Sussex document as a model. The guidance document includes tools for parents/carers and schools to talk to children and young people regarding their anxieties and to provide strategies to encourage school attendance. The guidance, tools and new guidance from the attendance team were launched through a webinar in early September attended by over 130 people – from a wide range of local authority teams, health, schools, colleges and parent/carer groups. Delegates have been asked to trial the document and to feed in their own practice and research and the documents will be updated in spring. [Hyperlink to the Local Offer page - Anxiety Based School Avoidance](#)

6.3.4 Aerosol Generating Procedures (AGPs)

There has been extensive multi-agency work around how to ensure the safe return to education of children and young people who require aerosol generating procedures, including changing tracheostomies and suctioning. Staff from community health, health and safety, population health, infection control, education services, are advising schools on their approach and as each pupil has such individual circumstances, they each need individual plans to ensure they receive their education safely. The focus has been on ensuring children have access to safe learning in school, where possible, and has led to schools adapting rooms to support this.

7.0 Quality and impact of Education, Health and Care assessments and plans

7.1 Education Health and Care Plan compliance

7.1.1 Following robust self-evaluation, and taking account of parental experience of Education, Health and Care plan processes, timeliness and quality, the improvement of the Education Health Care Plan, statutory assessment and review process had been a priority for the local area prior to the Covid-19 crisis. Following a restructure in the Education Health and Care plan team to move to a district model, external recruitment took place in July to increase capacity and 15 new members of staff have joined the team in September; new team members are currently being trained with the emphasis on improving the parental and family experience of the process and ensuring high quality EHCPs impact on improved provision and outcomes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

- 7.1.2 The Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) team have been working from home in line with Government guidance, adopted a 'business as usual approach', successfully updated data systems and have started to embed the new statutory assessment process, including a virtual multi agency SEND panel. Although there has been a relaxation of the 20 week window, the EHCP team has continued to complete statutory assessments and work towards 20 week compliance, finalise Education, Health and Care plans and complete annual reviews, in line with statutory duties. In the few cases where Education Psychology assessments have not been possible, parents have been consulted and older assessments used with an early review date planned. Since April (and therefore during the lockdown period) the 20 week EHCP week compliance has been 63% which compares favourably to the national compliance rate of 60 % for 2019.
- 7.1.3 Children with EHCPs transitioning to Reception and Year 7 places were offered school places by the statutory date, with parents and schools being informed of the allocations by the EHCP team. However, the updating of some plans took place after this date, due to a resourcing issue within the team; this did not impact the timeliness of the allocations being made. The team have worked with post 16 providers and the Connect Service to ensure that all students with EHCPs who were expected to start post 16 provision in September 2020 have enrolled and are following up those who have not yet started.
- 7.1.4 The EHCP Quality Assurance framework is becoming embedded in the revised process. Senior moderation of the EHCPs noticed that draft plans in the early stages of the Covid -19 crisis lockdown were becoming single agency plans. This has been addressed and recently moderated plans have demonstrated an improvement in quality, parental and child and young person engagement and have been much more reflective of a multi agency approach.

7.2 Risk Assessments for children with Education Health and Care Plans

- 7.2.1 Early Government guidance required Local Authorities to make a risk assessment after consulting with parents/carers/schools or settings and young people to determine if the child is safer at home or safer at school. Following consultation with Manchester Headteachers it was agreed that all schools would Risk Assess all of their pupils with EHCPs following a standardised process involving social care and health where appropriate and, where agreed, provide an offer of provision for pupils.
- 7.2.2 The risk assessment, letter templates and guidance were **co-produced with Manchester Parent Carer Forum (MPCF)** in a very short space of time. The risk assessment template was sent out to all schools, colleges and early years settings, with a coding system - green, amber and red. The Risk Assessment Template has allowed schools to show their decision making process and the involvement in this of education, health, care, parents/carers, children and young people. Provision and level of risk is clear. At all points through the process parents, carers, children and young people have been fully consulted and informed. Schools and settings were asked to regularly review and update the Risk Assessment, as circumstances changed for families and children and

in the light of recent government guidance that all pupils are required to return to education in September.

7.3 Reasonable Endeavours

- 7.3.1 The Department for Education introduced temporary legislation that allowed local authorities and health services to use their 'reasonable endeavours' to deliver the provision in children and young people's EHCPs. Education services wrote to parents, carers and young people to inform them of this temporary change and the sources of support available to children and young people with SEND and their families. This included the Information, Advice and Support service helpline, which parents/carers could contact if they had concerns about their child's provision. Education services provided schools with a model letter to support them with informing parents, carers, children and young people of the school's reasonable endeavours to meet the requirements of their education, health and care plans. Each letter was personalised, outlining the reasonable endeavours for education, health and care following discussion with parents/carers. Education Services quality assured the risk assessments / reasonable endeavours letters and offered support and challenge to schools. There are some examples of very detailed and personalised letters which were shared as good practice.
- 7.3.2 All special schools, mainstream schools and all colleges completed and returned their risk assessments. Greater Manchester authorities took a coordinated approach to communicating with independent and out of district schools. As of August, we had received 4000 risk assessments and reasonable endeavours letters. Special school risk assessments evidence multi-agency working; there is also evidence of multi-agency planning in mainstream schools and colleges. Social workers and Early Help staff have continued to work with families throughout lockdown and worked with schools to plan the return to education for many of our most vulnerable children.
- 7.3.3 Examples of the reasonable endeavours letters showed a range of provision offered including part-time school with blended online learning. Those families that didn't have access to online learning were provided home learning packs to complete and regular telephone calls from school staff. Some letters also included the number of home visits the child/young person would receive. Information, Advice and Support posted a video for parents and carers on the Local Offer on the subject of reasonable endeavours and risk assessments.
- 7.3.4 To support Manchester Special Schools being able to make reasonable endeavours, the Mutual Aid Hub provided them with a regular supply of PPE. Several families who employ home carers through direct payments have also been supplied with PPE.
- 7.3.5 The temporary change to legislation in regard to 'Reasonable Endeavours' ended on the 31st July 2020. The statutory duty to meet provision as detailed in the Education Health and Care Plan has now come back in force.

8.0 Elective Home Education

8.1 Since schools have returned in September there has been an increase in parents of children with Education Health and Care plans seeking to electively home Educate with 7 applications received so far. Staff from schools and education officers are actively engaging with parents to understand the reasons and to ensure any necessary support is in place. Manchester City Council's Elective Home Education policy is being followed to ensure safeguards are in place.

9.0 Inclusion

9.1 Manchester launched its Inclusion Strategy in November 2019. During the partial closure of schools following the Covid-19 crisis, all schools, including out of area schools were asked to pause their exclusions and to provide day 6 provision as this was felt in the best interest of the young people and families during this time. At this time there were 17 exclusions, all of which were requested to be paused and education provision and welfare checks undertaken by the excluding schools.

9.2 All schools have been given guidance about updating their 'Behaviour Policy' during this time and ensuring the needs of all children including those identified as vulnerable or with SEND are met. The Attendance Team have updated their guidance on exclusions and shared this with schools.

9.3 Feedback from headteachers has been that the arrangements in place to reduce the spread of infection such as reduced movement around school, separate class break times and specific slots for dining have resulted in schools feeling very calm. This has also been echoed by some parents/carers of children with special educational needs who have said that these arrangements are really working well for their children. This has also been reflected in a further reduction in exclusions; since September there have only been 2 permanent exclusions of Manchester children, neither exclusion is from a Manchester school.

9.4 Multi agency working on supporting emotional resilience and mental wellbeing

9.4.1 Multi agency working on supporting emotional resilience and mental wellbeing was a key strand of the Inclusion Strategy, in addition to the increased focus on trauma informed approaches. Like many things, the Covid-19 crisis has accelerated the work in this regard and has led to a truly multi-agency phased approach to emotional resilience which is being phased across all schools. The first outcome of this was the production of an 'Emotional Resilience Resource Collection' to support wider openings of schools and preparation for more students returning to settings, schools and college in June 2020. [Manchester City Council - Inclusion Strategy Document](#)

9.4.2 Manchester Health and Care Commissioning approved new funding in March 2020 to establish a Manchester THRIVE Hub as a single point of entry, a front door, to Manchester's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health offer, which will

be managed by Manchester Foundation Trust Child and Adolescent Mental Health service (CAMHS) and work alongside multi-agency partners, including Education, Early Help, Healthy Schools and voluntary sector. Over the next five years the NHS will fund new Mental Health Support Teams (MHST) working in schools and colleges, building on the support already available. Manchester Clinical Commissioning Group was chosen in April 2020 as one of the first localities to develop and mobilise the MHST over the coming months. This has been ongoing with virtual meetings despite Covid -19.

- 9.4.3 The NHS Healthy Schools team has paused their usual accreditation programme to concentrate on supporting schools responding to the current coronavirus pandemic. This offer includes 1-2-1 consultation (via phone and/or email), whole-school online training and virtual networking, plus resource and policy development i.e. Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy or Relationships and Sex Education curriculum. Healthy Schools has been commissioned through the dfe 'Wellbeing for Education' project to deliver training to schools and colleges from November 2020 that will build resilience of schools to support their children and young people and complement the existing developments within the Manchester local offer for mental health and wellbeing.
- 9.4.4 Manchester Thrive in Education will bring together existing services and support into a new, multi-agency offer for children and young people to enable them to access mental health support in an educational context. **The Manchester Directory** (offering a wealth of resources on emotional health and wellbeing and signposting to services and organisations) and the **M-Thrive in Education Offer** are aligned resources to assist school and college leaders to meet the needs of children and young people in Manchester. These will be explored in a webinar for all headteachers and school or college leaders on 21st October 2020.
- 9.4.5 The impact of the close communication with schools, and parents, including parents with children with SEND, and the consistent response from all partners resulted in an ever increasing number of children attending school during the summer term and to the high attendance figures as schools returned in September.

10.0 The Continuum of Provision in Manchester

- 10.1 The commitment to maintaining a continuum of provision within Manchester including special schools, resource provision, mainstream schools, Children's Disability team/Children's Social Care, Early Help and health professionals has continued throughout Covid 19.
- 10.2 Throughout the Covid 19 crisis the Access and Sufficiency service has been operating as business as usual and that includes completion of the additional places which were due to increase special school capacity in September 2020. Building work has continued and special school places have increased by 80 for September 2020. **Prospect House Specialist Support Primary School** - a new 100 place special school has opened in temporary accommodation at Grange School and has offered an initial capacity of 25 pupils for this academic

year 2020/21. Only one scheme has been delayed: the purpose built sixth form for North Ridge High School will be completed in December 2020.

- 10.3 Education services colleagues have worked very closely with all of Manchester's early years providers/settings, 185 state funded schools, Manchester based independent schools, alternative provision providers and post 16 providers to ensure all schools have responded to the changing guidance relating to the Covid 19 crisis. Throughout the lockdown period the vast majority of our schools remained open to children identified as vulnerable, children with Education, Health and Care Plans, and children of key workers. All 13 Special Schools in Manchester remained open throughout, and feedback from our parents has been very positive in regard to provision from Special Schools; there has been a more mixed response from parents of children with SEND in mainstream settings.
- 10.4 A very small number of children and young people may not be able to return to classroom learning at this stage on medical advice. The Greater Manchester SEND Board, chaired by the Director of Education, is exploring the use of technology to keep these students connected to their schools and colleges whilst unwell in hospital or at home.
- 10.5 **Home to School Transport** continued to operate throughout the crisis, coordinating approx 74 routes each week; this included working with the 7 special schools in Manchester, and other out of authority schools, which were open over the Easter break to arrange transport for those pupils who were attending school.
 - 10.5.1 The Home to School Transport team and schools have been having conversations with parents /carers of children with SEND about how they can get their children to school/college safely. This includes paying personal mileage to parents who are able to drive their children and staggering start times. The Home to School Transport team was operating at full capacity in September to support the return of children to schools with all routes open.
- 10.6 **Social Care:** The Disabled Children's team and locality teams have continued to work throughout Covid-19 supporting children and families and in a number of cases challenging schools where they believed a school place should have been provided for a child. There has been mixed responses across Child Protection and Child In Need as parents still retain parental responsibility and so can choose not to send their child to school which may be contrary to the social care advice given. Where children have gone into school, social workers are reporting good stories from parents, and that children going to school has been very positive and has worked well. Overall schools kept in contact with their vulnerable pupils well. Schools reported their approach to safeguarding children out of school in detail to the schools' Quality Assurance team.
- 10.7 **Community Health:** at the start of the pandemic many community health staff were seconded to other duties so were not able to offer all of their usual services in schools and clinics, though some essential therapies and treatments were delivered through home visits. NHS England's guidance on 3rd June

directed the restoration of Children's Community Health Services (CCHS) across the country. Children's health services in Manchester planned a phased approach to restoring services and are managing referrals and consultations via a range of different communication modes, including phone calls and online consultations, as well as the more traditional face to face clinic based consultations. Staff also provided social stories to explain to children what will be different about their visit to clinics [Manchester Parent Carer Forum website- Community Health Services](#)

10.7.1 The Community Health lead manager and her team have spoken regularly to education services staff and special school heads regularly about when and how to resume services in schools and the assistant director for CCHS has written to mainstream schools to outline the health provision for the autumn term from school nursing, Healthy Schools, therapists. Chat Health for secondary pupils is continuing and a new website Heath4Teens has just been launched. This helps young people take ownership about their physical health and mental wellbeing and how to access support from school nurses and other services.

10.8 Early Years: During Lockdown there was no difficulty meeting sufficiency. Families were redirected to open settings where their current setting is closed.

10.8.1 During the Covid 19 crisis there has been multi agency co-production of the Early Years Ordinarily Available Provision Document aimed at the Early Years Sector which sets out all of the things an early years setting should be able to provide for a child with SEND. This piece of work has been facilitated as an Action Learning Set by the Council for Disabled Children. This is a document aimed at all early years settings, including school nurseries; it is based on the Code of Practice and the Equality Act and aims to support staff in settings/nurseries in their graduated response to meeting the needs of children with SEND. It also helps parents understand what type of support/resources they can expect from the setting/nursery for their child. The aim is to increase access to early years provision for all children with additional needs. [Early Years Ordinarily Available Provision Document on the Local Offer](#)

10.9 Preparing for Adulthood

10.9.1 In late March the authority had discussions with college/adult education/training providers about provision for their students during the Coronavirus outbreak, including for students with EHCPs or other support needs. All mainstream colleges very quickly moved to an online learning offer and provided the LA with their risk assessments and later, with information on the reasonable endeavours they were making to support students with EHCPs. The mainstream colleges and Manchester Adult Education Service (MAES) have developed online learning offers, supplemented by pastoral phone calls and visits, which have ensured that the majority of their students were able to engage with learning and access support.

10.9.2 Students on technical/vocational courses, including supported interns have experienced the most disruption to their learning. Several post 16 providers

requested extended time for some of their students - particularly for interns and Manchester Adult Education Service students who have not yet met their EHCP outcomes, due to closure of their work placement and/or community / independence skills activities and a number of students are being funded for an additional term or longer. The Manchester College, our largest provider of internships, has reported that of the 51 students on internships, 10 have already secured paid employment, 11 will secure this imminently, 10 are likely to be able to move into paid work, with some additional support provided between July and September. A further 15 have secured other outcomes - including further education, supported employment or voluntary work.

2019/20 Supported Internship Case Study (name has been changed)

Sarah started on The Manchester College and Manchester NHS Foundation Trust Supported Internship in September 2019, she had already completed Routes and the Preparation for Supported Internship Programme. Sarah's first placement was in a catering role which she enjoyed but helped to confirm that she would like to work in a caring role ideally working with children. In January 2020 Sarah started a placement at a Saint Mary's Hospital Ward in a Housekeeper role.

Sarah was initially supported by a job coach and after a period of time, demonstrated with the structure of the role, the support of the staff team and her commitment that she was able to work more independently. Sarah has always wanted to work with children and specifically babies so this placement was a perfect fit. Shelly always arrived early and never wanted to leave and even wanted to attend in the holidays. The staff team saw her dedication and commitment and soon embraced her as part of the team. The team supported Sarah to work at her own pace and also stretched and challenged her which enabled her to flourish. Sarah maintained privacy, confidentiality and was sensitive to individual needs throughout her placement.

In March Sarah was nominated by the staff team for Employee of The Month and her picture appeared on the wall of fame. It has been amazing and inspiring to see the growth in confidence and self-esteem and is testament to the support and belief offered from such a supportive team. The balance of education and practical application has enabled Sarah to develop in all areas to the point where she is more than capable of taking on the responsibility of full-time work and training for her new role. At her Internship review it was clear that Sarah was a pivotal part of the team with the manager thanking her quoting "I am overwhelmed at the peace and kindness that Sarah has brought to the ward"

Sarah loved the placement, was keen to gain a full-time position and was successful in achieving a Trainee Maternity Support Worker role in May 2020. Despite the current challenges of securing employment, Sarah has been able to get started by completing her online induction and training whilst working from home.

10.9.3 Following a successful programme of activities in 8 Manchester special schools in 2019, the authority, The Manchester College and Pure Innovations have

worked with Digital Advantage, a Community Interest Company, to develop a digital supported internship. Partners held a virtual open evening in May, which was followed by virtual interviews and 12 young people being offered places on the internship. 3 further places are available for late applicants or can be infilled during the academic year. Employers who have offered placements and other support include: GCHQ, Autotrader, the Co-op and the Council.

10.9.4 Education Services have worked with Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) leads and the Work and Skills team to ensure young people with SEND are included in Manchester's multi-agency not in education, employment and training (NEET) prevention work. The teams led a well-attended joint network for secondary special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs), college SEND leads and careers leads and the ideas generated have fed into the NEET recovery plan. Transition to post 16 provision has been a topic at other Preparing for Adulthood networks - sharing best practice on how schools, colleges and other providers are supporting young people to move between education placements and into work and adult life. Colleges have created excellent resources for school leavers, and the Connect service are prioritising work with young people with SEND or other support needs identified in the risk of NEET indicator - who had not confirmed their post 16 destination or had not enrolled at the start of term.

11.0 Transition Planning Team

11.1 The transition planning team has built stronger communications and collaborations with key partners with weekly information sharing sessions, and through engaging with citizens' families, carers and partners. Staff from the team put in place Safe and Well checks to ensure those deemed vulnerable had access to the right information and contact numbers to get help and support quickly and easily. The collation of risk registers ensured citizens received the support they required. Collaboration with families and other partners and sharing of information for those deemed high risk ensured tailored support to reduce the risk of carer breakdown. Joint working with children's services for any young people pre 18 and adult services for post 18 citizens identified as at risk of going into crisis during the lockdown period proved very effective. This collaborative approach produced better outcomes and support for those who needed it most at times of crisis. Citizens and families have shown resilience over this period, supporting each other and some have reduced their reliance on paid care and support.

12.0 Short Breaks and Personal Budgets

12.1 The specialist resource team, social workers and commissioners have worked with parents/carers, short breaks providers and schools to deliver short breaks differently during the Covid period. Some providers were not able not deliver short breaks due to staff shortages or because families were being advised to minimise contact with external agencies. The specialist resource team has set up a virtual multi-agency short breaks panel to continue to work together to find creative solutions. These included: flexible use of direct payments and drawing on community resources such as the use of special schools' outdoor space, as

many parents were concerned that their children could not safely access community facilities.

12.2 There was particular concern from families that they would need access to a break over the school holidays. The Local Offer and Short Breaks team worked with the Manchester Parent Carer Forum (MPCF), Parent Champions and Young Manchester to co-produce an alternative summer offer. This included creative use of outdoor space in both schools and parks delivered in partnership with voluntary sector providers. For example, families were able to book time to use special school playing fields, parks offered dedicated sessions for families with children with SEND to go on boating lakes or use cycle tracks. This work has provided an opportunity to test new ways of delivering short breaks informed by parents and carers and will have a lasting impact on our short breaks offer. Short breaks are currently being reviewed and both the Manchester Parent Carer Forum and the parent champions will be working closely with the team.

12.3 Following a successful pilot with our Parent Carer Forum, Parent Champions and in collaboration with a voluntary sector partner - 4CT, Manchester City Council distributed Summer Sensory and Wellbeing Bags for children and young people (4-16) with an Education Health and Care Plan. The content and design was informed with our Parent Forum and delivery of the bags has brought about much joy:

"We love every single toy in the bag, they have been great and very useful, we have played for ages. It is as though they have a magical knowledge of my child's needs. I am really pleased."

[More reactions to this successful collaboration are captured on MPCF's website.](#)

13.0 Workforce Development

13.1 This summer term, the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator (SENCO) and Preparing for Adulthood (PFA) networks were replaced by virtual networks due to Covid 19. Two Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator (SENCO) networks were held for Primary SENCOs focussing on the new Early Years Ordinarily Available Provision document, as well as sharing best practice and answering questions about school support for children with SEND during Covid (attendance 110). SENCOs found the chance to meet colleagues and hear about new resources very useful, and also beneficial to hear from other schools and Outreach Leads about how they are dealing with issues such as social distancing, risk assessments, systems for welcoming visitors such as Speech and Language Therapists (SALTs) and Educational Psychologists (EPs).

13.2 Rodney House and Early Years Quality Assurance staff held an Early Years SENCO network, to ensure all settings and nurseries were given the same messages about, and chance to feed into, the Ordinarily Available Provision document .

- 13.3 Three Preparing for Adulthood networks were held - the first focussing on recent DfE and local guidance and chance to discuss issues such as school and college leaver transition, and online learning for students with SEND. Another focused on Person Centred Reviews - sharing practice and resources on carrying out virtual reviews, and a final session led by the Transition Lead in adult social care on transition pathways. The Preparing For Adulthood networks are attended by staff from secondary mainstream and special schools, colleges, training providers, supported employment providers, EPs, health staff, Connect and other careers staff. 134 staff attended the three networks.
- 13.4 Over 200 staff attended one or more SENCO or PfA networks. This compares favourably with usual face to face network attendance - average attendance each term has been 130 primary and secondary SENCos and 35 for PfA networks. We supplemented the networks with SENCO newsletters and links to new resources on the Schools Hub and Local Offer websites. A further network for SEND and careers leads in schools, colleges and training, was jointly hosted by education and Work and Skills/careers teams.
- 13.5 Manchester's special school outreach leads have provided advice and resources to mainstream colleagues throughout - with a particular focus on how to safely bring pupils with SEND back into schools, how to teach social distancing and hand hygiene, sharing resources for home learning and supporting schools with individual pupil risk assessments. The new outreach lead at Bridgelea School has developed a comprehensive Social Emotional and Mental Health training offer for primary schools. This includes a programme of training and mentoring for Newly Qualified Teachers around strategies to manage behaviour and understanding the drivers of behaviour.

14.0 Regional networking

- 14.1 Local authority, school and health staff and parent/carer forum members have had the opportunity to network with colleagues across Greater Manchester and the North West. This has included meetings with Department for Education and NHS advisers, North West SEND strategy group, Greater Manchester SEND Board and a regular conference call for GM special schools, SEND leads, representative from NW parent carer network, with the GM mental health and disability lead and DfE adviser. These meetings have allowed sharing of practice and resources, and are helping us provide more consistent messages to families and partner agencies across the region.

15.0 Conclusion

- 15.1 Manchester City Council and Local Area is committed to supporting all our children including those with a disability and learning needs through the current Covid 19 crisis. This report has focused on the impact of schools closures and changes to Health and care provision on children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities and their families and the strong multi agency response.

15.2 Manchester's parents are a key partner and the Covid 19 crisis has led to closer working relationships and great innovation demonstrated through the summer offer and the success of the sensory bags.

15.3 However, Manchester as a Local Area still has more work to do to achieve our ambition of improved outcomes for children and young people with SEND and improved young people's and parental experience

16.0 Next Steps

- To continue to work as a partnership to improve the quality of Education Health and Care plans and outcomes through embedding the EHCP Quality Assurance Framework
- Improve the short break offer, by identifying gaps and including the learning from the summer offer through the Covid-19 pandemic, which had increased uptake.
- Continue to improve Inclusion through the implementation of the Manchester Inclusion Strategy and ensuring access to education for all during the Covid-19 crisis.
- Continue to ensure the voice of the child and parents and carers are central to everything we do
- Further embed co-production through work with Manchester Parent Carer Forum, the Working Together for Manchester group and work with our parent champions to respond to the Covid 19 crisis
- Further develop the multi agency approach to workforce development across Education, Health and Social Care.
- Continue to improve Educational outcomes of children and young people with SEND at every key stage
- Work with schools and settings to quality assure remote learning offers which are accessible for all, including children and young people with SEND
- Improve Attendance of children and young people with SEND, through targeted work with identified schools, working directly with parents to alleviate anxiety through an attendance hotline and through the attendance Early Help Hubs.
- Continue to Improve Transition to adult health and care services through the work of the Transition Board and by improving the clarity of information provided to young people and parents on services and support for 14-25 year olds and beyond.
- Further increase the proportion of 16-25 year olds with identified SEND in education, employment and training through the implementation of the NEET reduction plan.
- Ensure sufficiency for Manchester's growing child population, reduce pressure on special school places and reduce waiting times for specialised health services through the implementation of the special school places plan and the further development of the co-designed social communication pathway.
- Ensure parents are supported in navigating and understanding the systems and pathways to accessing services.
- Work with partners to develop a cohesive Mental Health offer for Manchester's Children.