

---

## **Appendix 1 - Annual Fostering Service Report 2017/18**

### **1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report is an annual report intended to brief Scrutiny Committee Members on the business and activity within the Council's Fostering Service in 2017/18.
- 1.2 As well as providing data about activity in the service, and the role and business of the Fostering Panel, this report details service developments and improvements that have occurred in the year.

### **2.0 Introduction**

- 2.1 Manchester City Council Fostering Service operates within the regulatory framework of the Children Act 1989, Fostering Service Regulations 2011, the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. Fostering services are inspected by Ofsted.
- 2.2 The inspection of local authority fostering services is incorporated into the Single Inspection Framework which takes into account the role of the fostering service in meeting the local authority's looked after children's needs.

### **3.0 Ofsted: Manchester Single framework inspection 2017**

- 3.1 **Comments from the report inspection report relating to the fostering service:**
- 3.2 The fostering panel is suitably probing and challenging. It contributes effectively to overall service improvement and provides useful feedback, clear guidance and advice to staff.
- 3.3 Focused recruitment activity and good support to existing foster carers have led to an increase in the number and diversity of available foster placements.
- 3.4 The vast majority of Manchester's foster carers feel valued as part of the team around the child. Senior corporate parents engage carers well in wider service planning. Carers are represented on the corporate parenting group and welcome the opportunity to share their views and ask questions at quarterly meetings with children's services managers. The local authority celebrates foster carers' central contribution to the lives of Manchester's children looked after at an annual awards ceremony.

3.5 The creative development of specialist foster care provision, known as WRAPP (wrap-around service providing permanence) and targeted at children who need extra support, demonstrates Manchester's long-standing commitment to evidence-based models of care. WRAPP provides intensive support for children in foster care aged up to the age of 14 and has further expanded placement choice for children looked after.

3.6 Carers across all types of foster care are positive about their training opportunities, and they particularly value the training on the therapeutic model of care underpinning WRAPP. By helping a wider range of carers to develop their insight into the needs and behaviour of the children whom they look after, the training has broadened WRAPP's impact beyond its target group of children.

3.7 Supervising social workers provide good support and challenge to foster carers. Foster carers' annual reviews, chaired by IROs, are robust. Supervisory visits are timely, effective and well recorded, although changes in staff mean that some carers have not yet experienced sufficient continuity of support.

3.8 The fostering panel is suitably probing and challenging. It contributes effectively to overall service improvement and provides useful feedback, clear guidance and advice to staff.

3.9 The Fostering Service in Manchester is made up of six teams providing regulated fostering services as well as a further two teams offering non fostering, non-regulated services, as follows:

Fostering Supervision Team 1  
Fostering Supervision Team 2  
Fostering Supervision Team 3

The Recruitment and Assessment Team,

The Therapeutic Fostering Scheme (WRAPP)

The Connected Persons Assessment Team  
Short Break/Multi Link

Foster Carer EDS Emergency Duty Service

The Special Guardianship Assessment Team  
The Staying Put Fostering  
Supported Lodgings Provider Team

Plans are in place for the support and supervision of Private fostering carers to transfer from localities to come under the fostering structure

- 3.10 As per the Regulations, the Service has a fostering panel chaired by a skilled and experienced independent social work professional. The panel considers and makes 'recommendations' about the suitability of foster carer applicants and on the long term/permanent matching of children with long term/permanence foster carers.
- 3.11 The Head of Service for Court and Locality is currently performing responsibility of Agency Decision making for Fostering. The Agency Decision Maker considers and makes decisions informed by but not constrained by the fostering panel recommendations. The Agency Decision Maker also has responsibility to agree the continued suitability to foster following a foster carer's annual fostering review. The Fostering Service Manager performs the role of Agency Decision Maker for the Fostering Service carer reviews.
- 3.12 There are two distinct types of approved foster carer that the Service works with and that are referred to throughout this report. They are 'recruited' foster carers and 'connected persons' foster carers. Recruited foster carers are those individuals or couples who are actively recruited from the public to care for children who are unknown to them. These carers are approved not for a named child, but for any child that falls within the number and age category for which they are approved. For example a recruited foster carer might be approved to foster two children aged 0 to 12. A connected persons foster carer is a person who is approved to care for a child that they already know and have a relationship with (a connection). Most connected persons foster carers are relatives of the child, and very often they are grandparents.

#### **4.0 Manchester's Looked After Children Population**

- 4.1 Manchester's looked after children population totalled 1,170 children at the end of 2016/17 and had increased to 1,250 by the end of 2017/18. From looking at the rate of children per 10,000 in the general population and comparing with statistical neighbours, other core cities, and the national average (based on the comparison groups 2016/17 year end figures), we can see that we have a higher rate of looked after children.
- 4.2 For example, at the end of 2016/17 the average statistical neighbour rate of looked after children was 94 children per 10,000 of the child population, the core city rate was at 82 per 10,000, and the national average was 62 per 10,000. Manchester's rate was 97 per 10,000 at the end of 2016/17 and had increased to 104 per 10,000 at the end of March 2018. We are aiming to reduce the population by improving our edge of care services and increasing the number of children for whom we secure timely permanence outside of care through special guardianship and adoption.

## 5.0 Looked After Children by Placement Type

5.1 With such a large number of looked after children to accommodate, it will always be necessary to use a mixed economy of care, utilising foster placements and residential resources in the independent sector to complement our own in-house local authority foster carer and residential resources.

5.2 At the end of 2016/17 75.6% of our looked after children were placed in foster care, inclusive of in-house and independent provision. At the end of 2017/18 this had slightly decreased increased to 74.2%. The most recent data indicates that nationally at the end of March 2018 73.5% of looked after children were placed in foster care.

5.3 The following table shows the number of children placed with in-house foster carers and independent fostering agency carers and the changes from 2014/15 to 2017/18.

5.4

<b>Looked After Children by Placement Type</b>				
	<b>14/15</b>	<b>15/16</b>	<b>16/17</b>	<b>17/18</b>
<b>1.Total LAC</b>	1291	1237	1170	<b>1250</b>
<b>2.IFA placements</b>	614	534	489	<b>439</b>
<b>3.In-house recruited carer placements</b>	205	191	229	<b>293</b>
<b>4.In-house connected persons placements</b>	162	185	167	<b>195</b>
<b>5.Total in-house carer placements(3+4)</b>	367	376	396	<b>488</b>

## 6.0 Children Placed in the MCC Fostering Service

6.1 As detailed in the above table, at the end of March 2018 there were a total of 488 children placed with Manchester's in-house foster carers. Of these, 293 children were placed with mainstream 'recruited' foster carers, and 195 children were placed with 'connected persons' foster carers.

6.2 At the end of March 2017 we had a total of 396 children placed with in-house foster carers, made up of 229 placed with recruited foster carers and 167 placed with

connected persons foster carers.

- 6.3 Overall, we were caring for 92 additional children with in-house foster carers at the end of 2017/18 compared to the end of 2016/17. We had 64 more children placed with our recruited foster carers and 28 more children placed with connected persons foster carers.
- 6.4 The 64 additional children placed with recruited carers is the result of recruiting new foster carers in 2017/18 who are more suitable and a better match with children who need placement, compared with foster carers who have left the service in the year.
- 6.5 Year end for 2017/18 there was an increase in placements with connected persons as the LAC population in Manchester was increasing. The 2017/18 figure of 195 shows an increase on previous year of 167.

## **7.0 Children Placed in Independent Fostering Agency Placements**

- 7.1 As detailed in the table above we recorded a decrease in the number of children placed with independent fostering agency carers from 489 at the end of 2016/17 to 439 at the end of 2017/18. This was as a result of us making more placements with in-house recruited foster carers and an increase in the number of independent fostering agency carers becoming special guardians for the children they fostered.
- 7.2 We will continue to strive to maximise the number of children we place with in-house carers and reduce our reliance on the independent sector. Independent sector placements are on average considerably more expensive than in-house placements. In addition, in-house placements are more likely to be local and as a service we have a better knowledge of our carers' skills, experience and capabilities. As detailed in the above table, in 2014/15 the balance was 614 independent fostering placements compared to 367 in-house. This has become 439 independent placements to 488 in-house at the end of 2016/17, changing the balance from a 63% to 37% split in favour of the independent sector to a 53% to 47% split in favour of the in house sector.

## **8.0 New Fostering Placements Made in 2017/18**

- 8.1 In 2017/18 there were a total of 337 new placements made with in-house recruited foster carers. This is higher than the 317 new placements made with in-house recruited carers during 2016/17 and indicates the increased contribution that the in-house service is making in meeting children's placements needs.
- 8.2 In comparison the local authority made 236 new placements with independent

agency foster carers in 2017/18.

8.3 In house fostering service is currently operating to full capacity as the demand for the service increases.

8.4 It should be noted that not all of these would have been new admissions to care as some will be moves from one placement to another, for example, a move from an emergency carer to a non-emergency carer, a move from a short term carer to a long term/permanence carer or less positively and less frequently because of a placement breakdown. The number of new admissions to care in 2017/18 was 568 in total.

## **9.0 Numbers of Approved Foster Carers**

9.1 At the end of 2017/18 the Service had 207 in-house recruited foster carers. This compares with 206 at the end of 2016/17. The Service recruited 27 new foster carers in 2017/18 but also lost through deregistration a total of 26 existing foster carers, making a net gain of 1 carer household.

9.2 As discussed above in 4.3.4, the new carers recruited are more suitable and better matched with the needs of our looked after children than those we lost and as a result the foster carer pool was able to care for 64 more children at the end of 2017/18 compared to 2016/17.

9.3 At the end of 2017/18 we had a total of 130 connected persons foster carers caring for a total of 195 children. This compares with 118 approved connected persons foster carers caring for 167 children at the end of 2016/17.

## **10.0 Fostering Panel Functions**

10.1 Manchester City Council Fostering Panel has the following primary functions:

10.2 To consider each application for approval and to recommend whether or not a person is suitable to be a foster parent (including “connected persons” under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement & Care Review Regulations 2010).

10.3 Where it recommends approval of an application, to recommend any terms on which the approval is to be given.

10.4 To recommend whether or not a person remains suitable to be a foster parent, and whether or not the terms of their approval (if any) remain appropriate:  
(i) on the first review and

(ii) on the occasion of any other review, if requested to do so by the fostering service (e.g. following allegations or complaints against foster carers).

10.5 To consider and recommend approval of matches of children who have a plan for permanent fostering with suitable foster carers.

## **11.0 Fostering Panel Organisation**

11.1 Manchester City Council Fostering Panel meets on a weekly basis with each meeting lasting half a day. Panel can sit for additional meetings if required to meet the needs of the service.

11.2 The panel maintains a central list of panel members with a wide understanding of fostering, children's multi-agency services, local services and the needs of the children looked after by the Council.

11.3 The panel has a key quality assurance role in relation to the work of the service.

11.4 The panel now has a permanent Panel Advisor in post from January 2018 who works with and supports the panel in its work. The Panel Advisor is the link between practitioners and the panel, offering support in preparation and delivering constructive feedback. With the appointment of a permanent Panel Advisor, there is a renewed focus on ensuring consistency in panel processes.

## **12.0 Panel Membership**

12.1 The panel has a committed and loyal membership who are flexible with regard to attendance.

12.2 The Panel Chair and two Deputy Chairs work together to ensure that all panels are serviced. The panel meetings are planned with 6 members in attendance where possible.

12.3 The panel members have a wide range of professional experience, including social work, ex police officer, nursing, foster carer, adopter, youth justice, CAMHS and an Elected Member. The panel has reduced the over-representation of white women within its membership and the panel. Two panel male panel members have been recruited one of whom is black British.

12.4 Recruitment is underway to increase the central list to ensure that panel remains quorate. An individual with care experience is currently going through the recruitment processes as is a male foster carer. There are plans to undertake further focussed recruitment with the intention of recruiting a connected carer to the panel.

- 12.5 All panel member appraisals have been updated during the reporting year. Newer panel members have offered positive feedback on the functioning of panel and they have settled into their role well. Recent panel member appraisals indicate that panel members are confident in their role and not afraid to challenge and debate issues within panel. Panel Members have confidence in the Panel Chair to chair the meetings effectively.
- 12.6 The Panel Chair was also subject to an appraisal in the reporting year undertaken by the Fostering Agency Decision Maker.
- 12.7 The panel has a medical advisor to offer professional health advice. The Panel also has access to legal advice when required.

### **13.0 Panel activity and Development**

- 13.1 A Panel training day is planned for the autumn alongside induction training for new panel members. The training will focus on the functions of the fostering panel with a focus on regulations and standards and GDPR. Learning is disseminated by the Panel Adviser and Panel Chair during the 'Any Other Business' section at panel on an ongoing basis.
- 13.2 During this reporting year, Panel Members will be provided with an up to date reading list and key documents to support them in their role. Whilst many established Panel Members will be familiar with many of the documents, providing this to the whole of the panel will ensure that there is consistency in the information shared to all Panel Members.
- 13.3 Panel Members have always offered constructive feedback particularly in relation to permanent matching processes. This feedback has informed the review of the permanent matching documents and processes. The new process is in the early stages of implementation and panel will have a key role in providing feedback on this.
- 13.4 Panel continues to operate as a 'paper panel'. It is a key priority to move towards a paperless panel in 2018/2019. Panel Members will be offered training and support to aid this transition. Moving towards a paperless system will have significant cost savings, increased data security and environmental benefits.

### **14.0 Panel Business in 2017/18**

- 14.1 The following table details the number of each type of case considered by the Fostering Panel in 2017/18 with the data for 2016/17 in brackets:

14.2

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Statistics</b>
Recruited carer approvals	32 (30)
Connected carer approvals	35 (20)
Temporary connected persons viability assessments considered (these ceased coming to panel on the 20 <sup>th</sup> February 2018)	68 (12)
Foster carer reviews	56 (25)
Long Term Matching (In House)	4 (10)
Long Term Matching (IFA)	19 (70)
Complaints	3 (1)
Deregistered at panel	0 (1)
Resignations	27 (31)
<b>Total</b>	<b>244 (200)</b>

14.3 Of the 32 recruited carer approvals, 16 households transferred from Independent Fostering Agencies or other Local Authorities, 5 households had previously fostered and 6 had professional experience of working with children. The remaining 5 households had not had any previous experience.

14.4 All recruited foster carer assessments presented to panel were recommended for approval by the panel and approved by the Agency Decision Maker.

14.5 The increase in the number of foster carer reviews correlates to the number of recruited carers approved in 2017/18. All first reviews return to panel as required by regulations. Previously, the Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) presented first reviews to panel along with the allocated Supervising Social Worker (SSW). Practice changed in November 2017 when it was agreed that Fostering IRO's would not continue to routinely attend panel. Fostering IRO's will now only attend panel where there are issues, concerns or disputes. This change does not appear to have had any significant impact on the considerations of first reviews at panel. Along with reducing the time commitments for Fostering IRO's attending panel, it has allowed for greater flexibility and efficiency when booking reviews onto panel as there is only the SSW's availability to factor in.

14.6 There has been a decrease in the number of matches presented to panel. There are a number of potential reasons for this. The previous year's figure could reflect a 'spike' in matches following the renewed focus on permanence. An internal bespoke process has been proposed with the aim of addressing any historical

cases where there is continued delay in matching children. Therefore a number of cases may be matched through this process, bypassing panel. The paperwork and processes for matching of children through the panel process has proved to be a barrier. Staff have fed back what the barriers are to completing the paperwork and there has been some confusion about roles and responsibilities. This is being addressed through the changes to the permanent matching process which aim to address these issues.

14.7

<b>Matches</b>	<b>Deferred</b>
In house (4)	2
IFA (19)	5 (2 of which were deferred twice)

14.8 Of the 7 cases deferred, 5 were deferred, at least in part, due to questions about the foster carers capacity to offer long term care either due to the long term report not being completed or the issues not being sufficiently addressed within this document.

14.9 Matches deferred. 1 case was deferred due to the poor quality of the CPR. This is a significant improvement on the previous year. In all cases, when sufficient information was provided at a later panel meeting the match was recommended and approved.

14.10 It is anticipated that once embedded, the new process for permanent matching will drive up standards and ensure that the necessary information is presented panel without the need for deferment.

14.11 The role of fostering panel when resignations are submitted is to note this. There is no decision making function in this regard. As the service moves towards undertaking exit interviews with all carers, themes and issues arising out of these will be reported back to Panel Members.

## **15.0 Fostering Panel Quality Assurance**

15.1 The Vice Chair of the Fostering Panel completes a feedback form as panel meetings progress for every case where the panel makes a recommendation. The forms have recently been redesigned and the feedback is that the current form is easier to use and captures the relevant feedback. Previously feedback was emailed directly to the social worker and team manager. It is now uploaded to MiCare and added to the child and/or foster carers record.

15.2 A key priority for 2018/2019 is to develop a more systematic way of collating and

analysing this feedback.

- 15.3 The Panel Chair reports a collaborative working relationship with the service, and reports that the standard of assessments remains generally good. No assessment has been placed before the panel that has been considered inadequate. The Panel Chair would wish that particular credit is given to the panel administrators who at all times ensure that the agenda runs smoothly and that panel members receive reports five working days before the panel.
- 15.4 The Panel Chair has raised some concern about the process for investigating complaints and allegations, in particular the timeliness for foster carers.

## **16.0 Feedback on the functioning of the Fostering Panel**

- 16.1 Feedback is sought from representatives who attend Panel on the Panel's functioning. 52 forms were returned in the year 2017/2018. 51 responses were unanimously positive highlighting that carers felt well supported and welcomed by panel, panel focussed on the needs of the child, panel evidenced good knowledge of the case being discussed and understood the complexities.
- 16.2 Further comments included the 'engaging' approach from the panel chair and the thoroughness of panel was balanced with a relaxed approach.
- 16.3 Three areas were identified for improvement which were improve timeliness, consider the recruitment of a person who has been looked after and consider inviting carers into panel first.
- 16.4 A panel member has been recruited in line with the above feedback. Whilst panel endeavour to follow the agenda, there are often barriers to time keeping. Panel is extremely flexible and dynamic and will adjust the running order on panel days in line with the needs of the service. The discussions with the social worker need to take place before carers are invited into panel as these inform the areas that are then explored with the carers so the process could not be changed in this respect.
- 16.5 No feedback has been received from applicants and carers attending panel and this is a key area for development in 2018/2019.

## **17.0 Recruitment Activity and Outcomes**

- 17.1 The Service worked in a targeted approach to attract, recruit and approve new 'recruited' foster carers in 2017/2018. The team worked closely with the Council's Communications and Media Team and changed our key messages to the public.

- 17.2 In 2014 we commissioned some external research which told us that Manchester's foster carers put themselves forward due to loving children and a desire to help children in their community. The research told us that Manchester's foster carers view fostering as a selfless act and about the positive impact it can have on children's lives.
- 17.3 Using this insight our recruitment campaign featured images of children with the copyline: "Be the difference, foster for Manchester". We targeted people who had not fostered before and who lived in a 25 mile radius of Manchester.
- 17.4 This approach brought in a lot of enquiries from people who wanted to "make a difference" to a child's life, but a high proportion of these did not have the right skills to foster then.
- 17.5 As a result of this, in April 2017 our recruitment strategy changed to reflect this. We worked with our marketing team to ask the question, who would make a great foster carer? And, who is our ideal candidate? Using this criteria we looked to target people whose profession meant they already had experience of working with children and so would have the necessary skills to make great foster carers.
- 17.6 Our key messages changed to:  
"If you've fostered, we need your help" and  
"If you've worked with children – we need your help".
- 17.7 This new campaign led to more enquiries from people who already had experience of fostering and education professionals.
- 17.8 The Recruitment and Retention strategy has been revised and refreshed for 2017/18 and implementation has commenced. The new strategy will result in improved performance over the course of the year.
- 17.9 **Outdoor Media**  
Our two strong images and messages were placed across the city on billboards and outdoor media sites. Alongside specific campaigns across the year (i.e. Fostering Fortnight each May) we have run our creative media images on outdoor sites across the city when available. This not only keeps the fostering message in people's minds but allows us to run our campaign messages in the months when enquiries to recruitment teams have historically been quieter (i.e. July/August).
- 17.10 **Digital Channels**  
When running marketing campaigns throughout the year we have also used digital channels and have targeted people by location, age, behaviour online and by profession.

17.11 **Manchester Schools**

The Service continued to have contact with schools linking in with their family workers and attended meetings with school staff in 13 schools, specifically:

1. Ashgate
2. Lancasterian
3. The Birches
4. St James
5. Beaver Road
6. Southern Cross
7. Melland
8. Meade Hill
9. St Mary's, Moss Side
10. Button Lane
11. Sandilands
12. Baguley Hall
13. St Peters

17.12 **Faith Communities**

The Service continued links with Faith 4 Network and visited 45 faith establishments who agreed to promote our marketing materials and raise the need for more foster carers in Manchester with their faith groups. We also met with the Bishop of Manchester, David Walker and Rabbi Elf representing the Manchester Jewish Faith Community.

17.13 **Ward Meetings**

The recruitment and assessment team attended 16 ward meetings (Ardwick, Baguley, Brooklands, Chorlton Park, Fallowfield, Hulme, Levenshulme, Miles Platting, Newton Heath, Moss Side, Moston, Old Moat, City Centre, Whalley Range, Withington, Rusholme) and discussed how community leaders could promote our message, leading to adverts in community newsletters.

17.14 **Fostering Recruitment Information Events**

We hosted 27 information events throughout the year at venues across the city, mainly in the evenings so as to make them accessible to a wider audience.

17.15 **Community Work**

The team was busy with outreach work in schools, libraries, sports halls, hospitals, local businesses, Manchester Airport, veterinary surgeries, GP's and faith organisations.

17.16 **Recruitment Outcomes**

The following table shows recruitment outcomes in 2017/18 (Frank to insert from monthly data set)?

	Apr l	Ma y	Jun e	July	Aug	Sep t	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Enquiries	62	79	68	36	52	99	73	65	35	82	53	76
Detailed phone calls	40	38	46	25	39	58	47	37	22	53	25	40
Home visits	8	5	14	5	14	14	11	12	8	16	7	11

- 17.17 In 2016/17 there were 555 enquiries, compared to 780 in 2017/2018. The majority of the callers fall off in numbers between the stage of detailed phone enquiry and initial visits to people's homes. The recruitment team responds very promptly to interest and provide a warm welcoming and professional service to enquirers.
- 17.18 Thirty two foster carer households were approved in 2017/18. Whilst this is not as high as we would have liked as our target was 40, we were pleased with the quality of the resources coming though.
- 17.19 Of the 32 households that were approved in 2017/18, 16 households were transferring from Independent Fostering Agencies or other Local Authorities, five households had previously fostered and six had, or were working with children. Five of the households had not had any previous experience.
- 17.20 Whilst the Service did not meet its target, and the end of March there were a further 26 assessments looking positive in the assessment pipeline.

## **18.0 Family Finding: Permanent Fostering**

- 18.1 This is a newly strengthened role based in the Recruitment team. The role provides a timely and consistent family finding service to identify the most appropriate child centred placement for our looked after children whose care plan is for permanent fostering.

## **19.0 Activity day**

- 19.1 Working in partnership with Coram, Manchester Fostering hosted their first Fostering Activity Day on the 13th May.
- 19.2 After the event there were 24 expressions of interest for children, which led on to 3 potential matches for children requiring forever families.

19.3 After several months of preparation with staff and carers we had all 16 foster carer households attend who had confirmed and 14 children were featured.

## 20.0 Foster Carer De-registrations

20.1 In 2017/18 we de registered 27 existing foster carers which 12% of our total recruited carer population. This is comparable with 28 de registrations last year equating to 12.4%. It is higher than we would like and marginally above the national average of 12% as cited by National Fostering Agency.

20.2 There was five main categories for de registration;

- Not wishing to continue fostering
- Moving to another area/country
- Transferred to Supported Lodgings
- Ill health/Retirement
- Allegation/Complaint

20.3 There was no one overriding theme or trend for carer de registrations and no indicator that dissatisfaction with Manchester as main reason for resignation.

20.4 We are currently developing a Carer Retention strategy to ensure focus activity of retaining foster carers.

20.5 A foster carer Mentoring scheme is being developed to support newly approved foster carers and national guidance indicates that this is likely to increase carer satisfaction.

## 21.0 Coram I DFE sponsored project - Support Fostering Services

Since May 2017, Coram I have been working in partnership with Manchester fostering providing consultancy and support to develop practice standards, systems and processes.

21.1 **Piloting performance surgeries in the Fostering Services to ensure that SSWs are also driving permanency plans:** With support from Coram, fostering are undertaking performance surgeries with the Recruitment and Assessment Team and with the three Fostering Support teams. During the surgeries the Chair asks questions about the children placed with the foster carers, including progress of their permanency plans. This is supporting and enabling a shift in SSWs' perception and views of the foster carers as their 'main client' and re-focus on the child as the 'primary client'.

- 21.2 **Improved awareness of how data informs service delivery:** through the performance surgeries and the joint tracking meetings Coram supported the fostering service to secure a culture in the fostering service that ensures the importance of data.
- 21.3 **Developing Practice Standards:** The performance surgeries have highlighted some inconsistencies in utilising consistent practice standards, procedures and regulations. Coram have supported managers to embed the performance management approach through individual SW's supervision. Moving forward the plan is for the team managers to Chair the performance surgeries for their respective teams on a monthly basis with the Service Manager Chairing one team per month on a rota basis. This will ensure continuity and building upon the improvements achieved by Manchester to date since the implementation of the tracking/performance surgeries.
- 21.4 **SSW's supporting the CLA reviews:** Work is in progress with the IRO Service as to how Supervising Social Workers (SSWs) can contribute to the LAC Reviews by formulating and agreeing a template for SSW's to complete when they are unable to attend the review.
- 21.5 **Recruitment:** Coram has assisted in redesigning the Fostering Recruitment and Assessment process, and related materials (merging the Initial Home Visit and the application form and simplifying them). This has been signed off by Manchester and is been piloted since 12/03/2018. Coram wanted to support how changes to the revised R&A process can be reflected on the Council's management information system. However, there are challenges with this as Manchester are moving to a new management information system and all changes have been put on hold.
- 21.6 **Ambassador Scheme to support recruitment and retention:** Coram are supporting the R&A team to develop a formal Ambassador scheme, to ensure that the Council can draw on a pool of foster carers who could 'promote' fostering for Manchester.
- 21.7 **Activity Days for Fostering:** An Activity Day for Fostering was held in Manchester on the 13/05/2018. Initial feedback is very positive, with 10 children and 16 carers attending and 24 expressions of interest received so far. It will take a few months to see how many of these expressions of interest will convert into permanent matches.
- 21.8 **Redesign the family finding process:** Coram have redesigned the family finding process for permanent fostering. This was finalised in January 2018 and shared with key stakeholders (i.e. IRO Service, Court and Localities, Fostering Services).

- 21.9 **Redefining the role of the family finder for permanent fostering:** The role of the family finder has been redefined, alongside the Family Finding process, and made much more visible and working in a joined-up way with other parts of the Services. There is early evidence of more professional profiles being completed and a greater focus on exploring the use of DVD's when family finding.
- 21.10 **Children's profiles workshops:** A profile workshop was held in Manchester on the 28/11/2017. It was very well attended by Supervising Social Workers, Social Workers and Team Managers.
- 21.11 **Strengthen foster carers peer support/developing a mentoring scheme:** Coram are working with a team manager and 2 advanced practitioners in support and supervision teams to drive the development of the Mentoring Scheme.
- 21.12 **Seeking feedback from foster carers who are deregistered or resigned:** Coram have assisted the R&A team to develop an 'exit' interview template. The plan is for the R&A team to lead on obtaining feedback from those carers who were de-registered or resigned from April 2018.
- 21.13 **Seeking feedback from newly approved carers:** Coram are working with the R&A team to develop an interview questionnaire to seek the views of newly approved carers about their journey so far (including the quality of support received with their first placement).
- 21.14 **Seeking the views of foster carers on an ongoing basis:** We are working with the IRO Service to see how the feedback that foster carers give at Foster Carer Reviews could be fed back and used to improve the quality of the service their receive. We have asked the IRO Service to undertake a quarterly report summarising their findings, key strengths and areas of development, based on their role undertaking the Foster Carers Reviews.
- 21.15 **Improve the preparation for and chairing of matching meetings by the Localities, Permanence, Fostering and IRO Services:** Coram have supported the service in providing clarity which children should be presented to the Fostering Panel for permanent fostering matches (this is now all children up to the age of 16). Coram have also worked with the Fostering Panel Adviser and the Family Finder to streamline the documentation for the Fostering Panel in regards to the updated assessment of the foster carer and the match. The Family Finder now chairs the Matching that also focuses on the support needs of the child/dren and carer/s.

## 22.0 QA Fostering Audits

- 22.1 The fostering service conducts monthly quality assurance audits of foster carers files. The audits files are allocated by QA Coordinator.

The audits are carried out by Team managers alongside the Supervising Social Worker and evidence quantitative and qualitative practice. The audits are moderated by Service manager. Monthly action trackers are maintained.

## **23.0 Foster Carer Support and Supervision**

- 23.1 There are three Fostering Supervision Teams in the Service. These teams support, supervise and manage all of our approved foster carers, both recruited carers and connected persons carers, except approximately 10 who are part of the WRAPP therapeutic service.
- 23.2 All of our foster carers have a named allocated supervising social worker. The social worker is required to maintain a minimum of six weekly supervision visits to each foster carer unless the child's care plan a lesser frequency such as with long term matched/permanence placements. Compliance with this requirement is at 85% monthly average which is significant improvement from last years 73%.
- 23.3 There is a significant increase in the ratio of LAC seen during SSW supervision visits to foster carers. The required standard has been introduced into the fostering service for LAC to be seen at every second visit.
- 23.4 Foster carers receive a minimum of one unannounced visits per year by supervising social workers. It is expected that these visits are planned at a time when foster carer and LAC in placement most likely to be at home. The service has achieved an average of 83% unannounced visits completed on time within twelve month period. The service is increased the requirements of unannounced visits to twice yearly.
- 23.5 All carers have access to a range of training and development opportunities throughout the year and are encouraged and supported to attend monthly support groups.
- 23.6 Following a tendering process a new provider has been commissioned to deliver the foster carer post approval training programme. There is a transition period before the new provider is fully operational in January 2019.
- 23.7 There are 3 geographically organised support groups, south, north and central, all which meet monthly.
- 23.8 There is an ongoing focus on rolling out Secure Base training to our foster carer pool over the reporting year.  
This is an attachment based training programme created and supported by Beek and Schofield at the University of East Anglia. Feedback about the training from

foster carers so far has been very positive about the impact the training has had on their ability to meet children's complex needs.

## **24.0 Foster Carer Reviews**

- 24.1 It is a legislative requirement that all foster carers have their approval as carers reviewed within first six months of approval and twelve months thereafter. Foster carers also have a review of approval following a serious complaint relating to practice or after an allegation.
- 24.2 Following an allegation an initial investigation foster carers receive independent support from Foster Talk and a report should be completed by the fostering service and presented to panel within twelve weeks. It is recognised that more complex investigations may take longer, in which case the foster carer will be advised in writing about the required timescale for completion.
- 24.3 In Manchester foster carer review meetings are chaired by two dedicated independent reviewing officers from the Safeguarding and Improvement unit. The carer review system and process has been subject to a policy review within last twelve months with improved timelines for completion of reviews. In the last twelve months the majority of foster carers had their reviews in line with regulatory requirements.
- 24.4 Within the reporting period 318 fostering carer reviews were held. Performance in this area was 90.57% of required reviews (288) held within the 12 month cycle and there is a drive to ensure performance in this area improves over the next 12 months. 30 further reviews were held within the reporting period however these were out of timescale. Going forward Fostering IRO's will now complete a monthly report detailing any reviews that have fallen out of timescale, alongside any emerging themes and these will be escalated to the Service Lead. Currently IRO's also highlight those reviews that need scheduling where issues have arisen to the team manager and communication between the service and IRO's is good.
- 24.5 The reported information in the 2016/17 annual report stated that 100% of reviews were held within timescale however this was incorrect and is not supported by any data. However within the reporting year the Fostering Service in conjunction with the Safeguarding and Improvement Unit have updated the carer review policy and introduced improved standards and timelines which has greatly improved the service. Fostering IRO's and service leads from SIU and the fostering service now meet quarterly to review the service and consider outcomes and trends in order to continue to improve practice.
- 24.6 At the end of 2017/18 there remained 7 approved carers with reviews outstanding; reasons for this range from long term health needs to an ongoing investigation. These reviews continue to be tracked by the IRO's and continued dialogue with the Supervising Social Workers held to ensure up to date information is shared.

- 24.7 There is a notable improvement in the standard of foster carer reviews with improved focus on feedback and consultation from other professionals and third party agencies. The voice of the child at their carers reviews has significantly improved through the use of the MOMO Mind of my own App.
- 24.8 140 escalations were received by the Fostering Service from the Safeguarding and Improvement Unit within the 12 month reporting period. An overwhelming majority (76%) of these escalations relate to no Social Worker report or attendance at LAC reviews or foster carer reviews. Within the reporting period the number of these escalations has decreased month to month suggesting that performance in this area has improved. The Fostering Service is committed to continuing to improve practice in this area. Reporting in this area has been strengthened for 2018/19 and will be incorporated into monthly reports.
- 24.9 Other themes picked up on from escalations received are TACP assessments being completed out of timescale (4% of escalations received); delay in SGO assessments (2%) and a delay in long term family finding (2%). The small number of escalations received in these areas is positive however work is ongoing to ensure performance in each of these areas remains high and meets the needs of our children.
- 24.10 Feedback from the IRO's regarding performance in the last 12 months has highlighted that the review process is now completed within a much more timely manner from start to finish, including the sending out of invites, completion of professional reports for reviews, and ADM sign off. Fostering IRO's report a noticeable increase in the number of Supervising Social Worker reports being quality assured and sign-off by team managers prior to the review however an area of identified improvement was the need to ensure all carers receive a copy of their review report in advance of the review to enable the carer to fully prepare and ensure transparency across the service.
- 24.11 SIU will also complete bi-monthly audit reports which will assist in pulling out key themes to feed into the 2018/19 report.

## **25.0 The WRAPP Programme**

- 25.1 The WRAPP (Wrap Around service Promoting Permanence) Programme was developed by Manchester's Family Placement Service in Partnership with CAMHS, and launched in February 2017. WRAPP is a Specialist Fostering service offering placement to children age 3-11 years of age in Manchester who present with highly complex and challenging developmental and behavioural presentations as a consequence of early maltreatment.

- 25.2 The WRAPP Programme is an attachment-focussed family based intervention that emphasises the child-carer dyad in supporting and stabilising placements, thereby promoting permanence. The Programme provides intensive training and support to carers as well as an enhanced professional fee in an effort to ensure permanence for at-risk looked after children.
- 25.3 The WRAPP Programme currently has 11 carers and 9 children in placement. A new carer has recently completed the WRAPP assessment process and will be ready for a placement by the end of August, 2018.
- 25.4 One of our carers is a short break carer, providing respite and mentoring service to the other carers, as part of the model.
- 25.5 Of the 9 children currently in placement, 5 are now or will soon be permanently placed with their carers, continuing to receive a tiered specialist service from WRAPP.
- 25.6 Referrals are accepted by the Clinical Psychologist who determines eligibility and appropriateness for participation in the programme.
- 25.7 Carers are recruited by the Recruitment and Assessment Team and receive an additional assessment from the WRAPP Team prior to becoming WRAPP carers.
- 25.8 Carers receive intensive training that included a 6 week or 16 week Secure Base Course, co-facilitated by WRAPP Team Members, A four day P.A.C.E. (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, and Empathy) Training, conducted by the Psychologist and the Advanced Practitioner, fortnightly training sessions as a part of the WRAPP Support Group, also co-facilitated by the Psychologist and the Advanced Practitioner, and regular consultations, including on call support, as determined necessary.
- 26.0 Cost-effective**
- 26.1 WRAPP is less expensive than equivalent IFA placements and residential care.
- 26.2 WRAPP currently provides almost double the placement capacity of TOPS for a significantly reduced operating budget
- 26.3 The current WRAPP placement capacity is 10 compared to 5 with TOPS model
- 26.4 WRAPP operates with 30 fewer hours of clinical and supervisory workforce provision, and 30 fewer support workforce per week.
- 26.5 From 5 initial placements, WRAPP has grown to providing 9 placements currently (80% increase in 11 months).

## **27.0 Clinically effective**

- 27.1 Of the 12 children WRAPP has supported since February 2017:
- 1 have maintained stability whilst within the WRAPP program (92%)
  - 2 have moved on from the program successfully (17%)
  - 6 have been approved or are being assessed to remain with their carers long-term (50%)
  - All 12 have successfully stepped up to or are maintaining attendance at mainstream education placements full-time.
- 27.2 In the recent Ofsted inspection feedback, WRAPP was specifically commended for providing a specialist therapeutic service for children in need of additional intensive support, and as evidence of the MCC commitment to providing creative and evidence-based models of care.
- 27.3 The support package and level of input from WRAPP is attractive to quality carers within the wider service, and externally. The team has retained 10 placements of the 11 which have been involved with WRAPP since it transitioned from TOPS or been subsequently recruited to the service.
- 27.4 The positive experience of current WRAPP carers communicated to Ofsted recently demonstrates the high rate of satisfaction with the model as supportive and effective.
- 27.5 In response to the local need, WRAPP has expanded in age range from 3-6, to 3-11.
- 27.6 WRAPP has provided services for children already placed with MCC foster carers, bringing the carers and the children into the WRAPP programme.
- 27.7 WRAPP placements have been offered to children from a range of socio-demographic backgrounds, reflecting the diversity in the Manchester fostering population.
- 27.8 The pool of WRAPP foster carers also reflects this diversity, and the service has successfully provided 5 cross-cultural placements.
- 27.9 WRAPP is successfully supporting placements for children with a range of additional diagnosed difficulties, including ADHD, ASD, chromosomal abnormalities and global developmental delay
- 27.10 WRAPP team professionals provide support to the wider service through:
- Formal and informal psychology and education-orientated consultations, including a weekly psychology clinic to family placement, permanence, supported lodgings, court and locality and connected care teams.

- Skills coaching guidance for support workers and life story work advice and support.
- Training (on attachment and Secure Base, behavioural management, and therapeutic life story work).

27.11 WRAPP has recently been provided with additional Supervising Social Worker capacity, allowing the service to grow as additional carers are recruited.

27.12 In the future, an increase in psychology and education provision will also be necessary, and may allow additional opportunities for offering some of this resource to the wider service.

## **28.0 CPAT Connected Person Assessment Team**

### 28.1 Definition:

A connected person can be a relative, friend or any other person with a prior connection with a child or young person who is looked after by the local authority. This includes grandparents, aunts and uncles, adult siblings, other adult family members friends, or someone who has known the child in a professional capacity such as a teacher or youth worker.

28.2 When a connected person has been identified as being in a position to care for the child who is in the care of manchester, they must/may be approved as foster carers for that child. The assessment and approval process for connected persons is the same as for any other non related foster carer, other than the timescales for the assessment when the child is already placed.

28.3 This team was first established in manchester in 2014 with a Team manager and 9.5 Social Workers. Year on year the demand for this service has increased. In 2016/17 there was 211 referrals to the CPAT. To date the team has received 251 and on target to be 500 by the end of the financial year showing a 100% increase.

28.4 This increase is linked to rise in LAC population in Manchester.

## **29.0 Short Break and Multi Link Service**

29.1 Short break placements provides children in need with overnight and day-care provisions, these are generic placements for children with physical and learning needs that are less complex and can be managed within a short break placement with one carer.

29.2 Multi-link foster carers provides 210 days short break placements per an annum (18 days in a month) for children with multiple health, physical and learning needs

including children with advanced end of life care plans. The multi-link provision consist of five multi-link carer's two of those post are currently vacant and due to be filled.

- 29.3 In the financial year April 2017 no short break carers were approved, in financial year 2018 two short break foster carers were approved, with number of potential short applicants undergoing assessments or due to be presented to the fostering panel.
- 29.4 In financial year 2017/2018 nineteen children received overnight provision from the three multi-link carer's alone. A further eight children received short break daycare and overnight from the 7 short break carers. On average multi-link provided 630 days of 24 hour care and short break carers provided 108 days of 24 hour overnight and day-care. A total of 738 days of care was provided to children within multi-link and short break provision. (Three of the short break carer work part-time due to other work commitment)
- 29.5 A multi-link specialist 24 hour one overnight placement per a child cost of £62.57 + £78.57 retainer =£141.14 per day, compared to the residential 24 hour overnight placement providing similar care cost £570.00. A saving of £428.86 per overnight is made within multi-link placement. In a residential a child requiring 2-1 cost £935.50 compared to 2-1 provision within a multi-link would cost £203.71 saving of £731.70 per day.
- 29.6 Short break placement per child for 24 hour overnight period cost £62.57 compared to residential cost of similar provision costing £349.14 per day. Short break Day Care provision cost £35 for under 5 hours support and £70 over 5 hours compared to a fix rate for 24 hour care within a residential costing in the region of £349.14.
- 29.7 On average an in house multilink and short break carer's provided 738 day of 24 hour care costing £95,676.66 to £97,177.34 compared to cost for 738 days at residential for same level of care would cost between £257,562.00 to £690,399.00
- 29.8 Since January 2018 the recruitment of short break provision have been focused on special schools supported by multi-link/short break SSW and short break foster carers, particularly targeting experienced staff from the education establishments. Advertising and publication of short break provisions has been revised and distributed in the local shops, community centre/s, and schools. Online provisions has also been revised, updated and made simpler and queries are responded to within 24 hours or sooner. Fostering team manager has also approached other Local authorities to explore their strategies of recruitment, of short break carers and exploring methods used to providing a cost effective multi-link and short break provisions.

### **30.0 EDS: Emergency Duty Service**

- 30.1 Manchester currently has three emergency Foster carers offering five placements 0-18. The placements are made direct by the Emergency Duty Service. Between March 2017 to date the EDS Foster carers have provided placements to seventy

children and young people.

- 30.2 There is an extremely high demand for EDS carers and the plan to is recruit more carers to meet the demands of the out of hours service.Under a new contract,
- 30.3 Very positive feedback has been received from the Emergency Duty Team regarding the high quality of the service provided by the EDS Foster carers.

### **31.0 SGO: Special Guardianship Assessment Team**

- 31.1 The Special Guardianship Teams sits within the family placement service in Manchester Children's services. It comprises of one team manager and three assessing social workers.
- 31.2 The purpose of the Special Guardianship team is to complete full special guardianship assessment for children who have been identified as suitable to remain in their current placement long term. The special guardianship team works alongside the permanence service to identify those children who are in stable, secure placements in that their carers have a long term commitment to meeting their needs.
- 31.3 A special guardianship order is a legal order introduced with the intention of creating a permanent home for a child or young person who does not live with his or her parents. If adoption or long term fostering is not suitable or is not in the child's best interests, then a special guardianship order will be considered. Applications may be made by an individual or jointly by two or more people, the special guardianship order discharges the current care order in place and transfers the parental responsibility from the Local Authority to the special guardian which means that the person who holds the special guardianship order can make day to day decisions relating to a child's care and upbringing. Upon the successful discharge of the child's care order and granting of a special guardianship order the child will no longer be a looked after child and be closed to the Local Authority. This allows for increased capacity within permanence teams, the Independent reviewing teams and the management teams thus increasing service capacity and minimising the impact on important professional and financial resources. The current carers will be able to claim relevant benefits for the child or children in placement which will means a reduced cost to the local authority. If the child is in an IFA placement the local authority will no longer pay high cost IFA fees.
- 31.4 The special guardianship team are another element in providing the best outcomes for Manchester children, ensuring they have stability security, the sense of belonging to their carers without losing their identity or bond with their birth family. A special Guardianship Order helps children and young people find permanency with their carer, and helps them feels secure and safe however the child young person still maintains links with their birth family, this is especially important to older children who want to maintain a relationship with their parents.

31.5 From October 2017 until the present day the team have successfully discharged 9 care orders securing permanent homes for those children without the continued need for involvement from the Local Authority.

In addition there are a further 26 assessment which have been successfully completed and are awaiting court hearing dates.

## **32.0 Supported Lodgings Service**

32.1 The Supported Lodgings Team sits within the Family Placement Service in Manchester Children's Services. The service comprises of one team manager and 5 supervising social workers. The Team manages all of their own recruitment, the assessment of potential providers, the supervision and review of placements as well as the facilitation of all training that is delivered fortnightly to providers throughout the year.

32.2 The Supported Lodgings Scheme aims to provide safe and supportive lodgings for any young people aged 16 years and over who are or who have been in local authority care. The aim of Supported Lodgings is to help young people prepare for independent living. The supported Lodgings services works very closely with Manchester Leaving care services as well as with the permanence service to ensure that all Manchester care leavers that are referred to the service are supported through their transition and are able to develop the skills that they need to become successful adults.

32.3 Currently that Supported Lodgings service has 68 providers across the city with a mixture of approvals ranging from one to three available placements each. The service currently supports 72 young people within those placements.

32.4 The supported Lodgings Service continues to grow and in 2017 – 2018 the supported lodgings service has recruited 16 additional providers. The service continues to be in high demand with continual interest from potential providers through recruitment drives and successful recommendations from current providers.

32.5 Manchester's supported lodgings service is over five times bigger than its neighbouring authorities who have contacted the team directly to request peer support to develop their own services due to Manchester's excellent reputation in this area. In addition supported lodgings providers who are approved by neighbouring Authorities have contacted our service in Manchester directly to request an assessment in a bid to transfer their approval to us based on reputation and recommendations.

32.6 Over half of the young people (55%) that the supported lodgings service provide support to are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children and young people

(UASC).

32.7 The service prides itself in ensuring that young people that are new to the UK or may have language and other barriers are safely supported to integrate into their communities and have access to education and other support that they may need to keep them safe and support their transition.

### **33.0 Staying Put**

33.1 Staying put is when a young person continues to live with their foster carers after they reach the age of 18 years.

33.2 Specifically, it is defined by the Children Act 1989 as an arrangement whereby a young person, who when they became 18 was in law an 'eligible child' placed with a foster carer, continues to live with that person.

33.3 Whenever a young person continues to live with their former foster carer in these circumstances, it is referred to as a staying put arrangement. Staying put arrangements continue until the young person becomes 21, or stops living in the household before then.

33.4 A former relevant child who is pursuing further education or training may be entitled to support until the age of 25 years old.

33.5 The young person must be 18 years old and have previously lived with the foster carers with whom they want to remain. The young person must be an eligible young person in that they have been looked after for at least 13 weeks since their 14<sup>th</sup> birthday.

33.6 The staying put service currently supports 95 young people to remain within their foster placements post 18 years. Out of the 95 providers 22 of these are also MCC Foster Carers who continue to offer placements for younger children.

33.7 Within the Fostering Service we also operate a Staying Put and a Supported lodgings Service. The Staying Put Service promotes and supports existing foster carers to continue to offer accommodation and support to the young people they are fostering once they have turned 18. We have a total of 82 young people who are in staying put placements currently.

33.8 The same team also operate a Supported Lodgings Scheme. This scheme recruits members of the public to offer lodging accommodation in their home to care leavers.

33.9 At the end of 2016/17 we had 74 young people in staying put foster placements

and 58 young people placed with supported lodging providers.

33.10 These two services ensure quality support for a considerable number of care leavers post age 18 and are an essential resource as identifying alternative supported housing and accommodation is a challenge in the City.

#### **34.0 Foster Talk**

34.1 Foster talk is a non profit organisation providing independent support services to foster carers across from local authorities and independent fostering agencies. They have been contracted to support our foster carers and supported lodgings carers following a tendering process in March 2017.

34.2 The overall level of satisfaction from carers regarding the services of Foster Talk is high. However the quarterly contract monitoring indicates that the level of take up of the full range of services available is relatively low for an authority the size of Manchester. More recently we have worked with Foster Talk raise the profile and promote the services in order to increase levels of engagement.

#### **35.0 Manchester Foster Care Association**

35.1 MFCA is a self governing and independent voluntary organisation that for many years has promoted, supported, advised and helped to develop fostering services in Manchester. More recently the role of MFCA has changed. They no longer provide the fostering independent support service as this is now provided by Foster Talk. Also, following a recent tendering process MFCA will cease to deliver post approval training from January 2019.

35.2 Senior managers in the fostering services meet regularly with representatives from MFCA and there is a consultation process in place to develop a new working relationship.

#### **36.0 Foster carer post approval training**

36.1 Following a tender process a new, single provider will deliver the foster carer post approval training programme. A phased implementation process will start in September and will be fully operational in January 2019.

#### **37.0 Foster Carer HandBook**

37.1 The new Foster Carer Handbook due to be published December 10th 2018 for all Manchester Foster Carers and is a quick reference guide to be used when particular issues or queries arise, and to provide more information about fostering

in Manchester. The subject matter is written in alphabetical order and there is a useful glossary of terms at the end.

37.2 The Handbook contains the necessary information and reference to guidance and procedures to care for Manchester's Looked After Children safely and to the required standard.

### **38.0 What Children Have Told Us**

38.1 The fostering service continues to share and promote the findings from the 2017 Bright Spots Survey of looked after children had a number of positive messages as follows:

38.2 More children and young people (11-18yrs) in Manchester stated they felt safe in the home they lived in both in comparison to children in the general population, and to other local authorities.

38.3 Most (90%) children always felt safe in the home they lived in and over 75% felt settled.

38.4 Children reported that in the main they trusted their social workers and carers and the majority felt that their carers were sensitive to the way they were feeling.

38.5 Most children liked school, especially 4-11 year olds. A larger proportion of children aged 11-18yrs reported that their carers took an interest in their education compared to the general population.

38.6 Children aged 8-11yrs in Manchester were less likely to record that they worried about their feelings or behaviour regularly compared to children in other authorities.

38.7 When asked if they were happy yesterday 70% of children said they were & 89% felt their lives were improving 'A lot' or 'A bit'.

38.8 The thing that children appeared least satisfied about was contact. Many children wanted more contact with parents and siblings.

### **39.0 Supersonic Group**

39.1 The Supersonics group was launched in 2017 in order to capture the voice of children who are looked after by Manchester City Council between the ages of 8 and 11 years of age.

39.2 Young people aged between 8 and 11 will be invited to take part. The children are representative from different genders, ethnicities and from within different living arrangements including recruited/connected carers and residential care.

## 40.0 Purpose and Aims of the group

- 40.1
- To further shape our services for LAC in line with their wishes.
  - To establish what LAC think works and what could be improved.
  - To empower children and young people in talking about their experience.
  - For children to meet together with other children who are looked after.
  - Offer opportunities for looked after children to input into practice and policy changes.
  - Offer a safe place to try out new activities and raise confidence/self esteem and support children wanting to try out new and exciting opportunities.
  - Feed in children's views to the fostering recruitment, training, staff development and recruitment of social workers.
- 40.2 The primary responsibility for leading the group will lie within the Recruitment and Assessment.
- 40.3 Since June 30th 2017 there has been eleven activity events involving thirty four Looked After Children in placement with Manchester Foster Carers. The feedback from these events has been positive and informative and has been shared with the Voice and Influence Steering group.
- 40.4 Comments from young children during a supersonics session February 1st 2018
- 40.5 If you were interviewing a social worker for Manchester what would you ask them?  
I would ask if I was upset what would you do?
- 40.6 I think Social Workers listen sometimes but they don't always give eye contact they look away.
- 40.7 What should a social worker look like?  
They should be cheeky, energetic, happy, supportive and called Emma, Lucy or Harry. They should like animals. I want them to be 20-30 yrs old, wear smart clothes like a suit jacket, frilly shirt and skirt. When we asked why they said. *'It looks like they do not care if they visit looking casual'*
- 40.8 We asked them how many social workers had they worked with. One girl had 3 social workers in one year, the other girl told us 4 in one year. We asked why they felt the worker had left the service *'because they live too far away'*
- 40.9 What's it like meeting a new social worker?  
*'it's dreadful', 'we get fed up of repeating ourselves'*
- 40.10 They want social workers to ask them more questions *'about me, what I do at weekends/ hobbies/ likes'*  
*'Social Workers ask difficult questions but that's ok'*

*'Social Workers sometime ask too many questions'*

- 40.11 About meetings:  
*'I always attend, I want to hear what they are saying'*  
*'I get to see my mum'*  
*'I would prefer the meeting was at my school and not at home'.*
- 40.12 Where do you like to sit at meetings?  
*'I like to sit with my mum'*

## **50.0 Areas for development and service improvement 2018/19**

- 50.1 We will implement the new carer recruitment strategy and recruit minimum of forty new foster carers to increase in house capacity and improved placement choice.
- 50.2 We will improve on carer retention to ensure we lose fewer carers through deregistration than previous year
- 50.3 We will improve communication with children and young people to ensure their voices are heard and used to influence and improve services
- 50.4 We shall continue to improve standard of support to foster carers and improve carer satisfaction with the fostering service
- 50.5 We shall continue increase the numbers of conversion of FCO's with connected persons to SGO's
- 50.6 We shall increase the number of Supported Lodgings providers and provide greater placement opportunities for young people as part of leaving care pathway plans
- 50.7 We shall increase the number of young people Staying Put with their Foster carers post eighteen years of age.
- 50.8 We shall improve communications across of areas of the fostering service and ensure staff have opportunity to contribute to improvements and developments of the service.
- 50.9 Fostering service will work to develop closer links and positive working relationships with colleagues in localities
- 50.10 Ensure that allegations against foster carers are investigated within required twelve weeks timeline wherever possible and that foster carers received independent support and regular updates in writing.
- 50.11 Statement of Purpose for the fostering services has been updated for 2018/19 and will be published on MCC website.