

**Manchester City Council  
Report for Resolution**

**Report To:** Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
– 16 November 2010  
Executive – 24 November 2010

**Subject:** Safeguarding Vulnerable Children and Young People in  
Manchester – Update report

**Report of:** Director of Children's Services

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**Summary**

To update following on from the previous report in September 2010 on the progress in strengthening the local multi-agency arrangements to safeguard children.

To report on progress in performance against key performance indicators on safeguarding and to note the Annual Performance Report from Ofsted

To update on recent Ministerial announcements in relation to safeguarding and social work.

To alert members to the Ofsted Announced Inspection into Safeguarding and Looked After Children that is taking place between 8 – 19 November

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**Recommendations**

The Executive is asked to endorse the contents of this report.

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**Wards Affected:**

All

<b>Community Strategy Spine</b>	<b>Summary of the contribution to the strategy</b>
Performance of the economy of the region and sub region	Improving safeguarding and parenting will enhance independence amongst Manchester People and support them in making a positive contribution to the economy of the City and sub region
Reaching full potential in education and employment	Improving safeguarding and outcomes for children enhances their life chances to access education to employment

Individual and collective self esteem – mutual respect	Improving safeguarding will enhance children's life chances and enable them to make a positive contribution to The City and their local communities
Neighbourhoods of Choice	The improvements specified will be delivered through and neighbourhood focus, supporting children within their setting and local community.

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

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

**Financial Consequences – Revenue**

None

**Financial Consequences – Capital**

None

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**Background documents (available for public inspection):**

Report to Committee March 2009 – Progress on Safeguarding Issues

The Protection of Children in England: A progress Report by Lord Laming:

<http://publications.everychildmatters.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/HC-330.pdf>

The Protection of Children in England: Action Plan by The Government:

<http://publications.everychildmatters.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=CM+7589>

Working Together to Safeguard Children – March 2010

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters>

## **1. Introduction**

**1.1** This report provides an up-date on progress in improving safeguarding arrangements for vulnerable children and young people. It builds on the previous reports to the CYPOS. Further reports on the effectiveness of local safeguarding arrangements will be made available in accordance with the recommendations from the Report of Lord Laming (March 2009).

## **2. Safeguarding Activity**

**2.1** As has been reported in both national and local media, since November 2008 and the publicity surrounding the 'Baby Peter' case in Haringey, across the country there have been significant increases in referrals to Children's Social Care; children becoming subject to child protection plans and children coming into the 'Looked After' system and being made subject to legal proceedings. This increased demand continues to reflect the extent and complexity of need in the city and continues to place pressure on specialist services, particularly on district social work teams, the services to provide child protection case conferences and looked after children reviews and on family placement and residential services. The services are working very hard to keep pace with the demand to ensure children are effectively safeguarded.

**2.2** Manchester has seen an increase of over 1000 contacts a month to Children's Social Care between 2008/09 to 2009/10. However, the financial investment made into the development of the First Response Team and District social work establishments has enabled this increased demand to be more effectively managed. This was recognised in the Ofsted Annual Unannounced Inspection of frontline services in November 2009 which identified several strengths, including robust scrutiny of contacts, effective screening of referrals and systematic performance monitoring at strategic and operational levels. This was reported to CYPOS in March 2010.

**2.3** However, the inspection also identified the need to improve the quality of initial and core assessments and the systems for recording them. Subsequently completion of initial assessments each month has improved from 529 in April 2010 to 634 in September 2010. Completion of core assessments has fluctuated, improving from 172 in April 2010 to 199 in September 2010. The timeliness of completion of assessments has also improved, at the end of September 2010; initial assessments completed within 7 days are at 79.5% representing a 14.1% increase on the year end result for 2009/10. Core assessments completed within 35 days are at 76.4% representing a 22.5% improvement on the year end result of 2009/10. Social work Team Managers continue to monitor the quality of assessments to ensure compliance with National Assessment Framework standards, e.g. they are child centred, contain a family history and have multi agency contributions.

**2.4** The number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan has increased from 591 at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010 to 687 at the 30<sup>th</sup> Sept 2010. Despite this very significant increase, performance on child protection reviews taking place in required timescales remains at 100% but the timeliness of initial child protection case conferences being held within 15 days of the strategy discussion remains challenging, and action is being taken to improve performance in this area.

**2.5** The numbers of Care Proceedings being instigated increased by 63% between 2008/9 and 2009/10. Numbers of looked after children, whilst relatively high remain stable reflecting more effective planning, particularly in relation to cases of neglect.

**2.6** Within the context of increasing need and demand all children who are subject to a child protection plan or who are looked after have an allocated social worker. A number of cases where a child has been assessed as in need of support have not been allocated a social worker; this number has decreased from 38 in April to nil in Sept 2010. The service will continue to strive to ensure all children in need have a suitably qualified worker and progress is regularly monitored and reported.

### **3. Early Intervention and Prevention - Common Assessment Framework (CAF)**

**3.1** Paragraph 2 (above) exemplifies that the need through CAF for early intervention and prevention is great. Overall there has been an increase in the number of children and young people supported by a CAF, from 653 in 08/09 to 745 in 09/10. Whilst this represents a shortfall of 315 against the target set for 09/10 the variety of agencies completing a CAF continues to increase. Schools remain the key agency for completion of a common assessment with 285 completed by schools in 09/10 followed by Health with 123 completed. There has been a particular increase in the numbers triggered by poor school attendance, reflecting the city wide focus on improving school attendance. Implementation and increasing the numbers of CAF remains a key priority for the District Wide Leadership Teams (DWLT'S) who have responded to the finding from the Unannounced Inspection which reported that too few children in Manchester are supported by CAF. They are monitoring progress and ensuring barriers to completion of a CAF are removed. Good progress has been made and challenging targets will continue to be set for each District.

**3.2** Multi agency training has been supporting the culture change which underpins integrated working providing a consistent message about the role and responsibility of the Lead Professional and CAF process. The programme has been revised and improved in line with practitioner feedback. Attendance and demand has been high, and feedback on the quality of the training has been consistently positive.

**3.3** A formal Impact Evaluation was undertaken and concluded that CAF is improving individual outcomes for children, young people, parents and carers in Manchester and that the process works well. This is supported by the views of most young people, parents, carers and practitioners who participated in the evaluation. The central CAF project closed on March 31<sup>st</sup> 2010 as planned to support the mainstreaming of CAF with the future accountability and governance transferring to District Wider Leadership Teams through to the Children's Trust Executive.

**3.4** One area to highlight where there has been an increase in arrangements is those children subject to private fostering arrangements. These children can be particularly vulnerable and concerted efforts have been undertaken to increase the awareness and notification to the Local Authority. In June 2010 there were 44 children subject to private fostering arrangements, this represents an increase of 10 compared to June 2009 and is the highest number reported in the City.

### **4. Manchester Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB)**

**4.1** Quarterly reports in relation to the key performance indicators are presented to MSCB. The information from these, together with the information from Serious Case Reviews has led to MSCB commissioning a piece of research to consider the needs of victims of Domestic Abuse, and services available to meet those needs. This will then inform future commissioning of services to this vulnerable group. In addition MSCB partner agencies are contributing to the Drug and Alcohol Service redesign, with the focus being on Early Intervention and Prevention, and focussing on safeguarding children within the context of the family and community in which they live.

**4.2** Nationally, there have been several high profile Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) reported, all have identified themes of poor risk assessments, practice not always being child centred and the impact of drugs and alcohol on parenting. These themes are consistent with the learning from recent SCR's in Manchester. In applying the learning, all findings of SCR's are fed into workforce development plans and training courses.

**4.3** The MSCB commissioned an Independent Consultant to undertake a thematic analysis of recent SCR's held in Manchester which has been shared with multi agency partners. Briefings to front line managers and social workers are also undertaken and feed into Team and District business plans. Of the three Manchester SCR's published over the last three years, Ofsted found that the quality of two were good, and one outstanding. This was the first SCR nationally to be classified as outstanding.

**4.4** Manchester's two most recent SCR's are currently with Ofsted for evaluation. The first followed the tragic death of a young child. The SCR identified weaknesses and gaps in assessments and service provision to this family across a number of agencies. The second relates to a teenager who committed suicide. Similar issues arose in terms of the level of service offered to this young person, significantly in relation to the suitability of the accommodation he was living in. The learning, and single and multi agency action plans, have been widely disseminated, and progress in relation to the action plans is being monitored by MSCB. The learning from all SCR's has contributed to work in relation to key themes such as housing provision for homeless young people, alcohol abuse and domestic violence

## **5. Ministerial Announcements**

**5.1** In early June the Department for Education released a Written Ministerial Statement setting out its intentions to commission Professor Eileen Munro to conduct an independent review to improve child protection. There are a number of key focus areas for the review including early intervention, trusting professionals, removing bureaucracy and greater transparency and accountability. In the statement the Department confirmed its commitment to implementing the 15 recommendations of the social work task force. Professor Munro's first report was released in September 2010, with her final report due in March 2011. It is expected that this review will make specific recommendations as to the future of the Integrated Children's System and strengthening the Serious Case Reviews process, in line with the decision that SCR's commissioned from June 2010 will be published in full.

**5.2** The Secretary of State has also signalled his intention to:

- Remove the duty on schools to co-operate through Children's Trusts via the forthcoming Education Bill
- Remove the requirements on local authorities to set up Children's Trust Boards and the requirements of these Boards to prepare and publish a joint Children and Young People's Plan, at the first available legislative opportunity.
- Revoke the regulations underpinning the Children and Young People's Plan and withdraw the statutory guidance on Children's Trusts, in the autumn.

**5.3** The Education Select Committee has launched an inquiry into the role and performance of Ofsted. The inquiry will look at whether inspection of all organisations, settings and services to support children's learning and welfare is best conducted by a single inspectorate.

## **6. Inspection and Improvement**

**6.1** Within the current inspection regime Children's Services in Manchester have been provisionally found by Ofsted to be performing adequately, which is in line with our self evaluation, with a very large majority of outcomes in line with England or similar area averages. The report in October says that the majority of inspected services, settings and institutions are good or better. The further education and sixth form colleges are outstanding, as is one of the two academies inspected. The large majority of primary and special schools are good or better. There are no inadequate secondary schools but over half are satisfactory only. Provision for very young children is mixed with equal numbers of outstanding and inadequate providers. Two thirds of fostering and adoption provision is satisfactory.

**6.2** Ofsted notified The Director on 25<sup>th</sup> October that the three yearly Announced Ofsted Inspection into Safeguarding and Children Looked After would take place in November with the fieldwork occurring between 8<sup>th</sup>- 19<sup>th</sup>. The fieldwork is underway currently. Ofsted lead this inspection in partnership with the Care Quality Commission who are responsible for ensuring the quality of Health service delivery. A self assessment against the Ofsted grade descriptors has concluded a likely score of adequate against both the judgements on safeguarding and children looked after. Whilst improvements have been made there continues to remain risks in relation to high numbers of looked after children with over 40% placed outside of Manchester, the levels of need, demand and complexity of cases, and the consistency and reliability of social work practice. Investment in District social work posts has reduced the number of social work vacancies. A recent recruitment campaign was favourably received with over 46 applications for seven vacant posts. Work to address caseloads has begun and a caseload monitoring tool is being piloted in three of the Districts. Newly qualified social workers (NQSWS) continue to be supported through a bespoke workforce planning and development programme. Caseloads for NQSWs are high which remains a challenge, these cases are often complex and this inevitably reflects the level of need of the families who require statutory social work support and intervention.

**6.4** Improving the quality of initial and core assessments by social workers has been a key area for development. Mandatory training for staff on the National Assessment

Framework was commissioned which incorporated key findings from Serious Case Reviews. A risk assessment tool has been approved and risk workshops have been arranged to improve risk analysis and risk management.

**6.5** The Health Checklist identified by the Social Work Task Force is currently being tested in the Districts focussing upon caseloads, supervision and support requirements. This will test out compliance with agreed standards and progress to ensure that appropriate action is taken to manage them effectively. The final report will be available by the end of November.

**6.6** The next Annual Unannounced Inspection is due sometime before the end of August 2011.

## **7. Staffing - Recruitment and Retention**

**7.1** All districts retain consistent baseline staffing levels which enables each service to develop more effective, efficient approaches to service delivery based on need. There is currently no district social work vacancies city wide from an establishment of 141. There are no Advanced Practitioner vacancies and the 1.5 Team Manager vacancies are covered by agency staff.

**7.2** Social work retention continues to be a priority. A retention group has been established to ensure continuing participation in the NQSW Programme. There will be a stand at the Soc Now Careers Convention in November to support our continued success in attracting social workers to apply for posts within Children's Services, particularly experienced social workers.

**7.3** All social workers, Team Managers and Advanced Practitioners have been issued with a Continuing Professional Development Folder which highlights the importance of induction, the need for continuous development linked to the core competencies required for the role and to business goals. This links to key areas for development highlighted in the recent Ofsted Social Work survey, findings from Serious Case Reviews and individual areas for development identified in ongoing supervision and appraisal.

**7.4** A newly developed Social Work Practice Handbook has been issued to all social work staff and managers which gives clear practice guidance on social work processes which have to be followed in the arena of safeguarding/child protection from initial assessments through to permanence. A joint Social Work Development Group is in place with Adult Social Care. This Group will link into the work of the Social Work Taskforce and look at how social work developments will link into and inform corporate priorities. There is also joint work with Adults across safeguarding training - child protection/ vulnerable adults linked into the Think Family approach. This has led to the development of joint training courses particularly around domestic abuse and mental health.

**7.5** Licences for Community Care Inform, an electronic online tool which gives Social Workers access to research and evidence based practice in all areas of Social Work including safeguarding, have been purchased which enables practitioners access to the most up to research and policy guidance.

**7.6** In June 2010 an event was held for Team Managers and Advanced Practitioners which focused on raising standards in front line practice and was very positively received. Previous events have focused on Learning from Serious Case Reviews and Inspection requirements, with the most recent event in September 2010 focussing on the impact of alcohol abuse on parenting.

**7.7** Management support for Deputy District managers is available in the form of a Post Graduate course tailored to Children's Services. An Institute of Leadership & Management Level 5 has been commissioned with 2 of the cohorts exclusively for social work Team Managers. These, together with a management induction course, and a range of courses on management practices - e.g. appraisal, grievance and discipline, are designed to link with the new Leadership and Management Strategy and Manager's contract and to raise standards of social work management practice.

**7.8** Recent feedback from the Investors in People Internal Review of Children, Young People and Families identified a number of areas of improvement against standards but highlighted inconsistency of practice in relation to induction, appraisal, and supervision. An action plan has been developed which will feed into the workforce development plan.

## **8. Integrated Children's System (ICS)**

**8.1** Whilst ICS will be reviewed as part of the Munroe Review of Child Protection mentioned previously, the system in Manchester was successfully up graded, and simplified forms along with the Child in Need Coordinator's workflow processes were implemented on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2010.

**8.2** Over 200 staff were trained on the new upgrade and feedback from social workers and managers about the changes has been very positive. As use of the documents become embedded social workers will be freed up to spend more time with children and families. The next priority is the introduction of simplified Child Protection forms and workflow to further enhance the service provided to children by Independent Reviewing Officers and Social Workers.

## **9. Conclusion**

**9.1** As can be seen, similar to local authority areas across the country, Manchester has seen significant increase in demand on specialist statutory social work services. However, improvements in performance in some key areas can be highlighted such as timeliness and quality of assessments and the recruitment of staff. The increase in demand and the high number of children subject to child protection plans or who are looked after alongside the relative inexperience of the social work force continue to present a challenge in providing consistency and reliability across the city. This is closely monitored by senior management and reporting on performance is undertaken on a monthly basis to ensure multi agency safeguarding arrangements are secured.

**9.2** The outcome of the Announced Inspection will be reported to CYPOS alongside the recommendations for action and the action plan to continue to ensure we improve services to keep children and young people safe.