

# Manchester Children's Social Care Workforce Strategy



MANCHESTER  
CITY COUNCIL

Building a stable, skilled  
and confident workforce  
**March 2016**



## 1.0 Purpose of the strategy

As a council, we recognise that the workforce is our most important resource. The purpose of our strategy is to improve the lives of children, young people and families, to keep them safe, and to fulfil their potential. This can only be delivered by a confident, competent and highly skilled children and young people's workforce that understands its responsibilities and works together to deliver relevant, responsive and high-quality services for children, young people and their families.

This strategy focuses on the social care workforce (social work, early help, safeguarding and residential) and sets out how we will create the conditions for our workforce vision over the next three years.

This is a refresh of the Social Work Strategy published in January 2014. A background paper, Social Work Workforce Strategy: Update on Strategic Context and Progress since January 2014, provides the context for this strategy.

### Supporting documents:

- Social Work Strategy 2014 – January 2014
- Social Work Workforce Strategy: Update on Strategic Context and Progress since January 2014
- Manchester City Council Social Work Continuing Professional Development Framework – November 2015
- Children's social care reform – a vision for change, January 2016

## 2.0 Workforce vision

### 2.1 Improvement vision

The refreshed vision for Manchester's improvement journey was agreed in January 2016:

- Children and families will be at the heart of the future success of Manchester.
- Children will live with their families in self-sustaining communities.
- Children will be supported by excellent universal services from pre-birth to adulthood.
- Achieve good outcomes.
- Children achieving at school and becoming good parents themselves will contribute to the labour market, productivity and growth.
- Where children and their families need more support, we will work closely with our partners to intervene in the right way, at the right time and as early as possible, to avoid escalation to statutory services.

As a local authority we will:

- be a learning and high-performing authority seen to innovate, and an example of good practice
- contribute to corporate priorities, including neighbourhoods, community and economic growth.

The vision for our children's social care workforce underpins this broader vision.

### 2.2 Workforce vision

Manchester's social care workers are uniquely placed to transform the lives of vulnerable children and young people, working with others to create the conditions that enable them to fulfil their potential. They will do this by developing positive relationships and robust partnerships, keeping children safe from harm by working with families to enable them to make positive changes, or by finding the best possible care when children cannot live at home, so that all children thrive and achieve.

In order to achieve this, we will ensure that:

- all social care workers have the knowledge and skills to do their jobs well
- they are clear of the expectations of them
- they take responsibility for their own development and growth
- they have the right organisational culture, leadership, tools and working conditions to meet these expectations.

### **2.3 Outcomes – what will be different**

1. A sufficient, stable, skilled and confident workforce that is able to safeguard, promoting the welfare of children and young people, and enabling them to succeed and achieve their aspirations
2. A culture of success in which staff:
  - feel empowered and equipped to practise to high standards
  - have a strong voice to influence developments and decisions
  - are proactive in taking responsibility for their own learning and enabling the learning of others
  - are driven by strong and high aspirations for Manchester children
3. An asset-based approach to interventions with children and families, and to working with colleagues and partners
4. Strong, effective and professional leaders who create the right conditions for effective practice
5. Social care workers are clear about the expectations on them (the ask) and the support available to meet them (the offer)
6. Caseload levels that promote evidence-based practice, decision-making and effective relationships with children, young people and their family
7. Dynamic and responsive recruitment and retention strategies in place to attract and retain the very best social workers to work in Manchester, enabling all internal social care staff to move through the social care career pathway
8. A clear CPD framework, aligned to social care career pathways, that promotes personal responsibility for development and growth while ensuring access to a broad range of learning, development and reflection activity
9. An organisation that supports staff to be child-focused and to spend more time with children and families, maintaining a reasonable work/life balance facilitated by flexible working, efficient business processes, systems and mobile technology, and working
10. Manchester social care workers will have a clear sense of purpose, understanding their specific role within the context of the whole-system multi-agency approach to improving outcomes for children and young people through integrated services

## 3.0 Local and national changes since publication of the Social Work Workforce Strategy

Manchester published its Social Work Workforce Strategy in January 2014. A lot has changed since then locally and nationally:

### **Local changes:**

- Summer 2014 Ofsted inspection and Manchester's improvement journey
- Greater Manchester fundamental review of Children's Services
- Teaching Partnerships/Greater Manchester Academy
- Confident and Achieving Manchester Programme.

### **National changes:**

- Notification that social workers will be subject to three-yearly assessment and accreditation
- Social care reform announcements of January 2016
- Clarification of the children's social work role
- Publication of knowledge and skills statements
- Munro review resulting in shift in focus from 'doing things right' to 'doing the right thing'
- Publication of the Professional Capabilities Framework.

More information about these changes can be found in the Social Work Workforce Strategy Update, March 2016. The scope of this workforce strategy has been expanded to incorporate all social care staff (social work, early help, safeguarding, residential) in line with social care reform plans nationally and regionally.

## 4.0 Workforce profile and comparative position

The annual ADCS social work benchmarking report collects data from across the north west to facilitate benchmarking. The data set out within the strategy is taken from the annual report so that comparisons can be drawn with other neighbouring local authorities (data submitted correct at 30 September 2015).

Manchester employs 273 full-time equivalent social workers. This is a 9% increase since the same point of time in 2014 and represents the investment in additional social work capacity to reduce caseloads. The vacancy rate has reduced to 3.5% from 11.4% in 2014. At the end of September 2015 there were no agency workers filling vacancies, although they have been used to cover maternity leave, long-term absence and to provide additional capacity. This compares to a rate of 15.9% of substantive posts being vacant and filled by agency staff in September 2014.

These improvements reflect the focused recruitment activity undertaken to fill vacancies and reduce reliance on agency workers. The annual turnover rate for social workers reduced in the year from 22.7% to 13% as a result of the introduction of the retention payment scheme. Manchester's performance across the three areas of vacancies, turnover and agency is higher than both the north west and Greater Manchester average positions. Absence rates have reduced from 5.2% to 4.8% but remain unacceptably high, with 3,316 days lost

throughout the year. This compares with absence rates of 4.7% across the north west authorities and 3.9% across Greater Manchester.

Manchester has a higher proportion of younger social workers than the average across both the north west and Greater Manchester, and significantly fewer social workers aged 50 and above. Length of service is generally lower in Manchester, with the biggest proportion (39%) having less than two years' service and 23% having two to four years of service. Overall therefore, 62% of Manchester social workers have less than four years of service. This compares to 47% across the north west and 48% across Greater Manchester. Recruitment strategies have already become more targeted to attract more experienced workers, and it will be important for Manchester to continue to build on this to redress the experience imbalance and get closer to the north west and Greater Manchester averages.

Manchester has the lowest proportion of part-time social workers across the north west (99.5% of social workers work full-time compared to an average of 94.4% and the lowest rate in Trafford of 90.3%). Part-time working is most prevalent in the over-60s and those aged 30 to 39 years old. In terms of encouraging staff back to work after maternity leave and attracting more experienced social workers, it may be pertinent for Manchester to facilitate an increased level of part-time working.

It is of note that the majority of local authorities with turnover rates that are better than those observed regionally also have higher proportions of part-time staff.

Manchester City Council employs 238 FTE Early Help staff. Turnover in Early Help is low at 1.8%, but absence levels are high, with an average of 1.6 days lost per month. However, it is known that there are a number of staff within the service who have long-term conditions requiring intensive and prolonged treatment. Currently, this rate of absence for the service is unusually high. 82% of staff within Early Help are female and 90% work full-time. 33% are aged between 20 and 39 years and 31% between 50 and 69 years. Within Residential Services, Manchester employs 74 FTE staff; turnover is 5.5% and the current rate of absence is 0.97 days lost per annum per FTE, which is an improvement. 62% of the residential workforce are female and 38% male, with 17.4% of staff working part-time. Residential Services has a different age profile, with 74% of staff being between 40 and 59 years old.

The age and gender profile of the workforce suggests that there are likely to be high rates of maternity leave across the social work and Early Help workforce. The ability to have a flexible pool of permanent staff who can be flexibly deployed to cover maternity leave will help to ensure practice standards are maintained during periods of maternity leave. It will also minimise changes in social workers and key workers for children and young people.

NB. Regional benchmarking information is not currently available for the wider non-social work social care roles.

## 5.0 Priorities to achieve outcomes

The priorities to achieve the outcomes over the next three years are:

- Ensuring that Manchester has a continuous supply of talented social work staff who are appropriately experienced, nurtured and developed to be equipped to meet the needs of Manchester's children, and are adaptable to move into vacancies as they arise
- Succession planning to support movement across the social care career pathway and programmes to support staff through change as new delivery models are implemented
- Management of Change programme to develop a culture of success
- Continuing to develop an asset-based approach through implementing Signs of Safety and introducing strengths-based conversation training
- Leadership and management development at all levels
- Embedding practice standards and ensuring access to regular high-quality professional supervision, management support and opportunities for reflective practice and learning
- Ensuring staff have access to a good-quality induction and that there is robust delivery of the AYSE programme
- Further reducing caseloads of social workers and bringing caseloads of Early Help staff in line with regional benchmarking
- Implementing the Continuing Professional Development framework
- Reviewing and updating processes aligned to Signs of Safety model
- Enabling flexible and mobile working
- Social work remodel design and implementation
- Implementing new delivery models for Early Help and residential services.

## **6.0 Actions to deliver workforce priorities**

The plan below sets out the activity and timescales for delivering the workforce priorities over the next 12 months, together with how we will measure progress. The action plan will be reviewed and refreshed annually.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

Manchester will not deliver its improvement aspirations for Manchester's children and families without an engaged, skilled and motivated workforce. While there has been significant progress in taking forward the Social Work Workforce Strategy there remains some distance to travel to deliver on the priorities in full. This strategy, which is broader in scope, sets out where we will focus our attention for the next three years and how we will know when we are getting things right.

Our most important indicator of whether we are getting it right is what our workforce tells us. We are committed to regular, effective and strong workforce engagement, and to using the outputs from this engagement activity to inform our activity, to sense-check the impact of activity, and to course-correct where we are not getting things right.

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
Ensuring that the Manchester supply of good-quality, appropriately experienced social workers meets demand and can quickly move into vacancies as they arise	Minimum of biannual 'Becoming the Best' recruitment campaigns	February 2016 and minimum six-monthly
	Reserve list maintained and monitored with proactive steps to replenish as needed	Monthly monitoring
	Overrecruitment to enable timely and flexible deployment to cover long-term absence and maternity leave, reducing reliance on agency staff	By June 2016
	Review social work pay	By June 2016
Succession planning to support movement across the social care career pathway and programmes to support staff through change as new delivery models are implemented	Ongoing proactive work to attract people with the right behaviours and attitudes to move into Early Help roles and receive appropriate training in evidence-based interventions	Ongoing as demand arises
	Skills audits to determine ongoing learning and development requirements	By July 2016
	Develop and commission core training offer for staff commensurate with their roles, duties and responsibilities	July 2016 – March 2017
Management of Change programme to develop a culture of success	Change management programme designed	End April 2016
	Senior leadership team participate in change management programme	May 2016 – November 2017
	Senior leadership team coach leaders and managers through change management programme	July 2016 – January 2018
	Access to coaches or mentors facilitated	From May 2016

Priority	Actions	Timescale
Continue to develop an asset-based approach through implementing Signs of Safety (SoS) and introducing strengths-based conversation (SBC) training	Partner and staff SoS briefings	From February 2016
	Introductory/basic SoS training for all staff	May – August 2016
	Advanced training for SoS Practice Leaders/Champions	Two years from 16 May
	Implement programme of learning lunches/forums	Monthly
	Deliver additional 2,000 SBC training sessions to partners	March 2016
	Align supervision to SoS model	March 2017
	Continuation of learning forums for Early Help staff and key workers	Ongoing
Leadership and management development at all levels	Leadership and management development programmes scoped and commissioned	May 2016
	Coaching and mentoring opportunities made available	June 2016
	Clear accountabilities framework in place	June 2016
	Development programme introduced to support fast-track to leadership	March 2017
	Participation in design and implementation of Greater Manchester Academy Leadership and Management Development programme	Ongoing
Embed practice standards and ensure access to regular high-quality professional supervision, management support and opportunities for reflective practice and learning	Practice standards introduced for all staff	March 2016
	Practice standards reinforced through appraisals, supervisions, reflective practice and development sessions	Ongoing from March 2016
	Revised supervision policy introduced to all staff	Mid-April 2016
	Supervision policy embedded through effective management and monitoring	Ongoing from March 2016
	Monthly reflective learning forums introduced	June 2016
	Supervision policy reviewed and refreshed to align with SoS	May 2016

Priority	Actions	Timescale
Ensuring staff have access to a good-quality induction and that there is robust delivery of the AYSE programme	Induction programme reviewed, refreshed and implemented so that all managers can consistently deliver	April 2015
	Compliance with delivering induction monitored through monthly workforce reports	From April 2015
	Biannual refresh of induction check meaning programme to accommodate new ways of working, policies and procedures	Aligned to recruitment campaigns
	All AYSEs access commissioned programme of support	Aligned to recruitment campaigns
	Staff with less than two years' experience who have not previously accessed a robust AYSE programme enabled to flexibly access the AYSE programme in line with identified developmental needs	April 2016 to March 2017 and ongoing
Further reduce caseloads of social workers and bring caseloads of Early Help workers in line with regional benchmarking	Additional capacity secured and in post LAC discharge team effective in reducing LAC numbers	June – September 2016
	LAC strategy proactively implemented to reduce LAC numbers	In line with LAC reduction schedule
	Ongoing implementation of EH strategy to reduce demand	Ongoing
	Social workers flexibly deployed to meet demand as it changes throughout improvement journey	March 2017 and ongoing
	Caseloads proactively monitored and activity progressed to address outliers	Ongoing
	Implement new EH delivery model to bring caseloads in line with regional benchmarking	September 2016

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
Implementation of Continuing Professional Development framework	CPD self-assessment tool introduced to inform annual appraisal process	17 March
	Proactive analysis of trends and issues arising from appraisals to inform annual training and development plan	May/June annually
	Training plan refreshed and commissioned annually and visibility improved	By June annually
	SWC work programme reviewed and refreshed annually	By June annually
	RiP is made available to social workers	16 May
	Opportunities for reflective practice made available through supervision learning forums and team sessions	From 16 May
	Managers skilled up to coach and mentor staff	16 December
	Opportunities to gain experience in different social work roles are available and actively promoted to underpin CPD	From 17 January
	Evaluation programme designed and implemented	16 September
Flexible and mobile working enabled; improvements to systems	Quick wins and urgent changes to Micare implemented	April, May and July 2016
	Best practice workshops held to inform further changes	March – May 2016
	Pre-upgrade business process changes	July and August 2016
	Mosaic upgrade	March 2017
	Introduction of laptops, including sessions with managers to promote new ways of working	February – April 2016
	Flexible working arrangements scoped and implemented	June 2016
Social work remodel design and implementation	New model of integrated children's social care designed	November 2016
	Consultation on new model	December 2016 – January 2017
	Implementation of new model	March 2017



