

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

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Overview of GM work
Bernie Brown



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Children and Young People's Report

Introduction

The development of the Greater Manchester Children & Young People's Plan (2019 – 2022) (GM CYP plan) represented an important milestone in Greater Manchester's approach to supporting children and young people in the region.

Whilst there were examples of collaboration between Greater Manchester organisations on children and young people issues prior to its development, and a health-focused Greater Manchester-level children and young people's framework already in existence, the GM CYP plan represented the first truly cross-organisation document setting out shared ambitions to improve the lives of children and young people at a city-region level. The plan's overall purpose was framed as follows:

'Our vision is to make Greater Manchester one of the best places in the world to grow up, get on and grow old. This means a place where all children have the best start in life and young people grow up inspired to exceed expectations. Our ambition is that every child in Greater Manchester has the skills, opportunities and aspirations necessary to negotiate early childhood, primary and secondary school, and education and employment.'

This report provides an overview of the significant progress that has been made over the course of the three-year Plan, through reference to key activities in respect of six of the plan's main theme priority areas: school readiness; children in care; care leavers; mental health of children and young people; complex safeguarding; and finally our children's social care innovation programme.

Background

The development of the plan came at an important time for Greater Manchester's work with children and young people. In 2018, central government made an investment of £7.43bn in a Greater Manchester-level transformation programme focused on the spread and scale of innovative practice models across the city-region, children in care sufficiency, and strengthening the support available for care-experienced young people in the city-region.

With increasing recognition nationally and locally of the value to be gained from taking a city-regional approach to areas of work focused on children and young people, a Greater Manchester Children's Board was established.

The Board - made up of lead elected members with responsibility for children and young people in their districts, Directors of Children's Services and representatives from strategic partners including Greater Manchester Police, health and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) - was given the responsibility for overseeing the delivery of the plan and the resources allocated to support the work. The make-up of the Greater Manchester Children's Board sought to mirror the approach to delivering the plan, with a focus on people and place as opposed to organisations or functions, and particular emphasis on shared accountability, leadership and collaboration.



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Approach

The GM CYP plan was organised around seven priority areas that broadly recognised a life-course approach, in line with the Greater Manchester Strategy of the time. It captured a mix of work already underway and planned activity, with programme management and research resources organised around these priorities, and leadership for individual priorities provided by Directors of Children's Services.

To provide consistency across the document, for each priority the plan described the current state, the changes we planned to make, how we would deliver the changes (delivery strategy), the future intended state and the key measures of success. This approach has enabled Greater Manchester to track progress across the various priorities and determine the extent to which our aims have been achieved.

The plan was produced shortly after the publication of the Greater Manchester Public Service Model white paper, which set out a shared vision and operating model for public service delivery.

Whilst this model continues to evolve, the principles and features described in the model - including a focus on early intervention and prevention, delivery at a neighbourhood level and the adoption of strength and asset-based approaches across the workforce - continue to provide an important foundation for Greater Manchester's work with children, young people and families in the city-region.

Context

Of course, the national and local context has changed significantly since the GM CYP plan was drafted 2019. Within less than 12 months of the plan's publication, the Covid-19 pandemic began, which has had a significant impact on our children and young people, particularly in relation to their attendance at school and their mental health, physical health and wellbeing. Not only has this affected the lives of children, young people and families, but it also saw public services shift many of their resources to respond to the crisis, including those supporting the Greater Manchester children's priorities.

For example, with particular respect to the physical health priorities led by the GM Health & Social Care partnership (focused on preventing conditions such as obesity and reducing avoidable admissions for CYP with conditions such as asthma) many resources were directed to respond to Covid-19. Despite these challenges the programme has

successfully established a Complications due to Excess Weight (CEW) clinic for GM children; successfully applied to NHSE to pilot an integrated approach to healthy weight; spread and adopted a "digibete" app to support diabetes management in children; established a children and young peoples' ambulance transfer service; and standardised clinical pathways in children's community nursing teams to support care in the community.

It is therefore testament to the hard work of both the professionals across the city-region and the resilience of our children and young people that Greater Manchester has seen excellent progress across many of the priorities in the plan.

This does not ignore that fact that there are areas where, like other parts of the country, Covid-19 has taken us a step back in relation to what we think is important, most notably (for example) around levels of school readiness and waiting times and demand for health services. In many ways the value of producing this report is that it gives pause for reflection on the impact of our work in improving the lives of children and young people and the added value of taking a Greater Manchester approach whilst still acknowledging the statutory responsibilities of individual organisations. This is particularly important as Greater Manchester considers where we need to focus our efforts over the next few years.



Overview of GM work

- School Readiness and Early Years
- Children in Care and placement sufficiency
- Care Leavers
- Mental health of children and young people
- Complex safeguarding
- 'Spreading and Scaling' of Children's Social Care Innovation
- What next?
- Future priorities

