

## **Corporate Issues and Reform Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

Date: 16 March 2021

Subject: Early Years Digitisation and support for Digital Transformation

Report of: Cllr Sean Fielding, Portfolio Lead Leader for Digital City Region; Sara Todd Portfolio Lead Chief Executive for Digital City Region

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### **PURPOSE OF REPORT:**

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the digitisation of Early Years across Greater Manchester and wider support for Digital Transformation.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Corporate Issues and Reform Overview & Scrutiny Committee is requested to:

- Review progress against Early Years digitisation ambitions for Greater Manchester.
- Review with impact of wider digital transformation and support provided via this programme.

**CONTACT OFFICERS:** Phil Swan, GM Digital Chief Information Officer; Kieran Smith, GM Digital Programme Manager, GMCA

### **Equalities Implications:**

Regular portfolio level reviews and corresponding Equality Impact Assessments of the GM Digital Portfolio are undertaken. These reviews highlight where there may be a detrimental impact on individuals with protected characteristic, where there may be additional need to target activity to advance equality of opportunity and what activity should be undertaken to foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who don't. The outputs of the review and Equality Impact Assessment are shared with the GM Digital Portfolio Delivery Executive members and the GM Digital Steering Group.

BOLTON  
BURY

MANCHESTER  
OLDHAM

ROCHDALE  
SALFORD

STOCKPORT  
TAMESIDE

TRAFFORD  
WIGAN

## **Climate Change Impact Assessment and Mitigation Measures –**

This work has positive climate change implications in two respects. The shift from paper to digital ways of working not only reduces printing but has the potential to reduce travel as staff do not need to return to offices so frequently. Parents / guardians can see assessment results digitally further reducing the need for materials posting.

The technology solutions re-use parent / guardian mobile devices and the software is cloud hosted, making use of large-scale efficient technology hosting capabilities. The potential to offset these using carbon credits is being investigated.

## **Risk Management:**

Risks to delivery are closely managed via the GM School Readiness Board, which reports to the GM Reform Board, and the GM Digital Platform Leadership Group which reports to the GMCA Digital Portfolio Executive and Steering Group which monitor and respond to escalated risks.

## **Legal Considerations:**

None

## **Financial Consequences – Revenue:**

None

## **Financial Consequences – Capital:**

None

**Number of attachments to the report: 0**

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

Related GMCA paper, June 2019: <https://democracy.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/documents/s3406/19%20Digital%20Early%20Years%20and%20Data%20Sharing%20Capability%20-%20GMCABoardReportPartA%20v3.pdf>

# 1 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In early 2019 and in the context of the Greater Manchester Strategy, the GMCA agreed £6.8M for an investment in a programme to digitise paper elements in Early Years services and establish capabilities that could join up data across the public sector, supporting other funded use cases. This report provides an update on progress, the support provided during the pandemic and forward plans.

## 2 SCHOOL READINESS IN GREATER MANCHESTER

- 2.1 School readiness in Greater Manchester is lower than the national average with almost two in every five children not reaching a good level of development at age five years; this increases to one in every two children in receipt of free school meals and lower for boys on free school meals. Overall, it is estimated that approximately 12,000 Greater Manchester children start school each year without sufficient skills to learn out of a cohort of approx. 40,000. Critically, data on development over the critical 0 - 2.5 year period is difficult to obtain as much of it is on paper. Referrals are also slow, parent access to data is poor and professionals have little visibility of records across sectors.
- 2.1 This has both impacts for the life chances of individuals and is linked with longitudinal underemployment in Greater Manchester. The GM School Readiness programme is directly targeted at this issue and was established in 2017 in line with its status as a priority in the Greater Manchester Strategy.
- 2.2 School Readiness has almost certainly been negatively impacted by the pandemic - health visitors have been pulled into acute settings; providing care for some vulnerable children has been challenging; and the economic impact has placed increased pressures on households. As over 8,500 statutory health visiting checks have been missed since April 2020, the GM Mayor emphasised the need to make ground back on this at the GMCA Reform Board on 15 January 2021.
- 2.3 The Early Years digitisation workstream is a cross-cutting enabler of the wider School Readiness programme, based on the need to shift from highly paper-based working and to provide greater support for child development up to school age with the intent of creating an Early Years Record for all 200,000 children aged 0-5 in Greater Manchester at any one time.
- 2.4 There are several target outcomes of the digitisation work: improving school readiness by providing early years professionals with better tools and data to make better informed and more timely decisions; enabling better commissioning and analysis; accelerating referrals; enabling professionals across settings to have visibility of child development; and giving parents / carers access to child development data.
- 2.5 All areas in Greater Manchester have agreed to adopt this solution as it sits on top of the existing 8 stage Early Years model used across all 10 localities. The localities agreed to digitise the model once, together and consistently, rather than 10 times.

- 2.6 The pilot of this initiative with Salford Council demonstrated a productivity uplift of over 30% in health visitors, amongst other benefits, and further work estimated a net GM wide productivity uplift of over £27M over five years, enabling more effective and prioritised family support.
- 2.7 Consequently, the scope of Early Years Digitisation work, as agreed with the School Readiness Board, is:
- *An Early Years Application*: To work with professionals and parents to create a mobile application and then support adoption across all 10 boroughs, all the paper-based assessment forms used by parents / carers and health visitors for children aged 0 – 2.5 years (Ages and Stages Questionnaires and WellComm Assessments) as part of the GM Early Years Delivery Model and Healthy Child Programme.
  - *An Early Education Application*: To work with early years' professionals to create a mobile application for speech and communication pathways and to digitise assessments in early education settings (including childminders) and then support adoption across all 10 boroughs.
  - *An Early Years Integrated Digital Solution: An Early Years record for Greater Manchester*. To: a) Enable the Early Years Application to be connected with the NHS Patient Demographic Service (PDS) and; b) connect the applications with each area's local community health systems and provide professionals a joined-up view of child development and school readiness data.

### **3 EARLY YEARS DIGITISATION PROGRESS**

- 3.1 Following the completion of procurements in August 2019 and after intense co-design work with a wide range of front-line GM users, the Early Years App was due to go live in March 2021 in Bury and Rochdale. An "agile" approach to this work was used, based on working with frontline staff to capture and support typical user journeys and multiple short development sprints to ensure that delivery aligned with user expectations for usability and functionality. Figure 1 illustrates the scale of this activity.
- 3.2 To achieve this, Greater Manchester also worked with the Dept of Health & Social Care to negotiate the UK's only digital (as opposed to paper) licenses for Ages & Stages Questionnaires used as standard across the country.

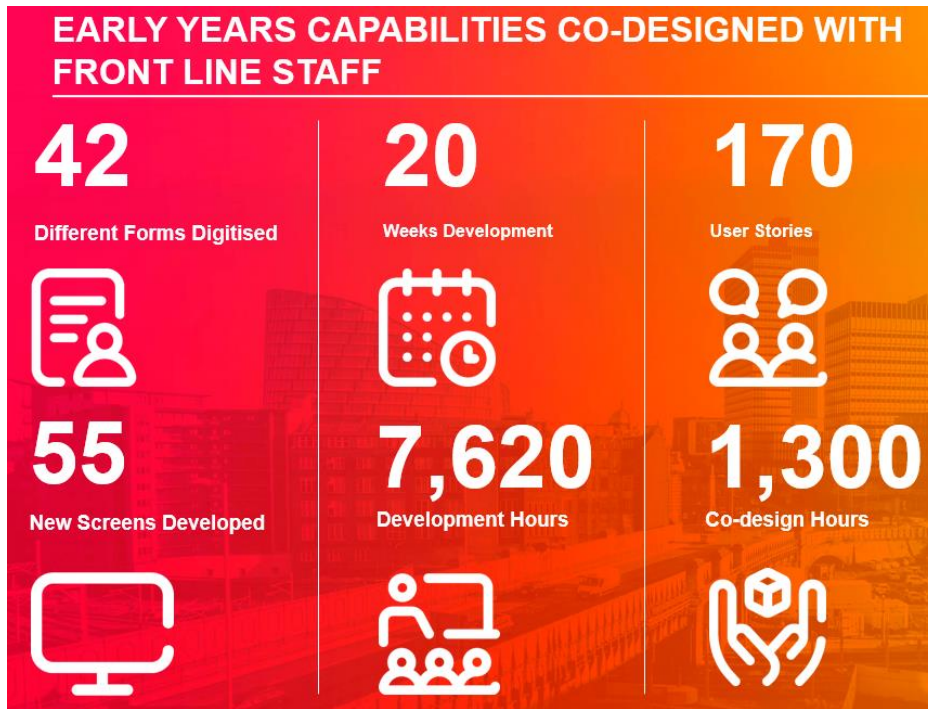


Figure 1. Early Years applications development

- 3.3 As with so many areas, COVID-19 impacted plans and both the GM School Readiness Board and individual localities opted to postpone go-live as early years professionals were drawn into COVID-19 response.
- 3.4 Early Years go-live was rescheduled for September 2020 with professionals in Bury and Rochdale, not least because it was perceived that online completion of child development forms by parents / carers was helpful in a social distancing context. The service was launched then and has been used with the first 2,000 families successfully. Families are also encouraged to download the App from either the Apple or Google application stores and through this they can both complete responses and see evaluations.
- 3.5 The focus now is on scale and impact. All localities areas are engaged in projects to go live with this and additional capabilities in 2021-22 as shown in Table 1. A benefits realisation study is also underway with Bury and Rochdale.
- 3.6 The Early Education version of the App for education settings and childminders is due to go live in Bolton, Rochdale and Salford in March 2021. Everyone involved is however working around the evolving pressures caused by Covid-19.

Locality	1. The Early Years Application alone	2. The Early Education Application alone	3. Both Apps live and integrated	
			Integration into national maternity datasets	Planned Integration into local systems**
Bury	Sep-20		Phase 1, end of Mar 2021	Jan-22

<b>Bolton</b>		end Mar 2021		May-21
<b>Manchester</b>				Nov-21
<b>Oldham</b>	Est. early 21-22*			May-21
<b>Rochdale</b>	Sep-20	end Mar 2021	Phase 1, end of Mar 2021	Jan-22
<b>Salford</b>		end Mar 2021		May-21
<b>Stockport</b>				Aug-21
<b>Tameside</b>				Aug-21
<b>Trafford</b>				Nov-21
<b>Wigan</b>				Nov-21

\* Dates being confirmed as a result of ongoing COVID pressures.

\*\* Discovery projects underway to capture requirements. Dates provides are indicative and for planning purposes only. All implementation plans will be formally approved through appropriate governance.

*Table 1. Planned Early Years go-live dates.*

3.7 Additional user requests are being captured and managed through a change management process and include bringing in automated updates on new births from NHS systems and additional content for parents like the BBC's "Tiny Happy People".

## **4 WIDER ACTIVITY SUPPORTED THROUGH THE GM DIGITAL PLATFORM PROGRAMME**

4.1 Whilst Early Years digitisation is the agreed focus of the GMCA's investment, the initiative also intended to create a re-usable set of technical capabilities that would support not only this area but other priorities.

4.2 This ambition was shared by the Greater Manchester Health & Social Care Partnership (HSCP) and so both GMCA and HSCP co-invested in several of the underpinning technologies. During the pandemic these have been called on to support Covid-19 related support activities including:

- Providing the data gathering system that underpins the Covid-19 Situation Reporting analytics that gathers data from over 2,700 organisations in Greater Manchester on a daily or bi-weekly basis.
- Providing a Covid-19 Community Hub volunteer management system with Bury Council that was taken up by Rochdale Council also. This used some additional Microsoft software.
- Setting up a Greater Manchester wide C19 Complex Case Management system for Tier 1B cases. The information governance work on this underpinned the subsequent Track & Trace Hub activity. This also used some additional Microsoft software.
- Providing support for the deployment of the GM-Think homelessness system with localities.

- 4.3 Health Innovation Manchester have also successfully re-used parts of the technology to provide a Smoking Cessation App as part of the Greater Manchester Smokefree Pregnancy Programme<sup>1</sup>. This draws on elements in the Early Years App's development in particular.
- 4.4 The security of the underlying technologies and architecture has been thoroughly explored and a large amount of information governance work has been undertaken to comply with data protection legislation, taking into account the legal powers of different organisation and resident access.

## 5 LOOKING AHEAD

- 5.1 The primary focus for this work is the successful digitisation of Early Years and the improvement of School Readiness in Greater Manchester with the plans for this described above. Effort also continues to ensure that additional value is gained from the underpinning technical assets. Currently work is underway in the following areas:
- Digitally enabling Victim's Services: A GM solution design and business case has been prepared through the sponsorship of the GM Police & Crime Commissioner.
  - Strengthening analytics of Vulnerable Families. Working with the GM Reform programme, a study has been completed into managing existing data flows more effectively and improving understanding of families at risk.
  - Supporting a bid for a Health Aging pilot to Innovate UK from GMCA, Manchester Local Care Organisation, industry partners and Health Innovation Manchester.
  - Engaging with individual localities on ways to improve data flows and integration.
- 5.2 In addition, there is national interest in Greater Manchester's Early Years solutions which are being discussed with Dept of Health & Social Care.

## 6 GOVERNANCE AND OVERSIGHT

- 6.1 The GM School Readiness Board, chaired by Christine McLoughlin (DCS, Stockport Council), oversees the Early Years Digitisation work via the Early Years Digitisation Sub-Group (chaired by Rebecca Bibby, Early Help and School Readiness, Salford City Council) and includes early years professionals from all localities.
- 6.2 In addition, the cross-cutting programme and technology aspects are governed through the GM Digital Platform Leadership Group which is jointly chaired by GMCA and Salford Royal Foundation Trust, as the lead delivery organisations for underpinning work. This jointly reports into the GMCA Digital Portfolio and HSCP as per HSCP's memorandum of understanding with Salford Royal Foundation Trust. These arrangements are currently being refined to take into account changes to the HSCP Digital programme.

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<sup>1</sup> [Greater Manchester Smokefree Pregnancy Platform - Health Innovation Manchester](#)

## **7 CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS**

- 7.1 Digital transformation at scale and across multiple organisations is challenging, however the Early Years work is demonstrating that it is achievable and impactful. This initiative has also shown that an approach based on re-usable underlying technologies is effective and the wider potential for this has begun to be explored. As Greater Manchester emerges from COVID-19 and pressures on public services continue, there will continue to be significant focus on the opportunities this work creates.