

Date: 29 November 2019

Subject: GM School Readiness Programme Update

Report of: Councillor David Jones, Portfolio Lead for Children and Young People and  
Jon Rouse, Portfolio Lead Chief Executive for Children and Young People

---

#### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to update the GMCA on School Readiness performance for the academic year 2018/19 and ratify the approval in principle to award £250,000 investment from the Reform Investment Fund (RIF) to develop and implement a universal digital platform to provide advice and resources for parents and professionals to support child development.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The GMCA is requested to:

1. Note the school readiness performance update for the academic year 2018/19.
2. Approve the recommendation of the Reform Investment Fund Panel and agree to allocate £250,000 from the Reform Investment Fund, as set out in paragraph 4.1, to obtain a digital platform providing universal and targeted advice and resources to parents in relation to supporting good early year's outcomes.
3. Agree delegated authority for the GMCA Treasurer to obtain through an appropriate commercial arrangement the digital platform outlined in the report.

#### **CONTACT OFFICERS:**

Jane Forrest – Assistant Director, Public Service Reform  
[jane.forrest@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk](mailto:jane.forrest@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)

**Equalities Implications:** NA

**Climate Change Impact Assessment and Mitigation Measures:** NA

**Risk Management:** Paragraph 5

**Legal Considerations:** NA

**Financial Consequences – Revenue:** Paragraph 4.

**Financial Consequences – Capital:** NA

**Number of attachments to the report:** None.

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

An update on School Readiness performance and programme delivery was endorsed by the Corporate Issues and Reform Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in November 2019. The committee requested that Officers continue to work closely with committee members on the school readiness programme to ensure continued oversight and challenge.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

School Readiness Programme – Report to the GMCA (26 July 2019)

<b>TRACKING/PROCESS</b>		
Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution		Yes
<b>EXEMPTION FROM CALL IN</b>		
Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?		No
GM Transport Committee	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	
	19.11.19	

## **1. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

- 1.1. Improving early years outcomes and school readiness levels is a priority in the Greater Manchester Strategy, the GM Children's Health and Wellbeing Framework, Population Health plan and the GM Children's Plan. Plans for a 24 month programme of transformation work to drive improvements in early years services and school readiness across Greater Manchester was approved by GMCA in July 2019.
- 1.2. This is a joint programme between the GM Health and Social Care Partnership and the GMCA and is referred to as the Greater Manchester School Readiness Programme. The investment agreed for programme delivery is £2.1m and delivery is underway.
- 1.3. The aim and objectives of the proposed work programme align with a series of related GM Early Years policies, including the GM Start Well: Early Years Strategy, GM Population Health Plan, GM Children's Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Priority 1 of the Greater Manchester Strategy and the GM Children's Plan.
- 1.4. The latest school readiness performance data released by DfE (academic year 2018/19) identifies that GM is making good progress for the children from more deprived communities but also highlights the need for ongoing investment in strategies and tools that support early intervention and prevention in the early years period.

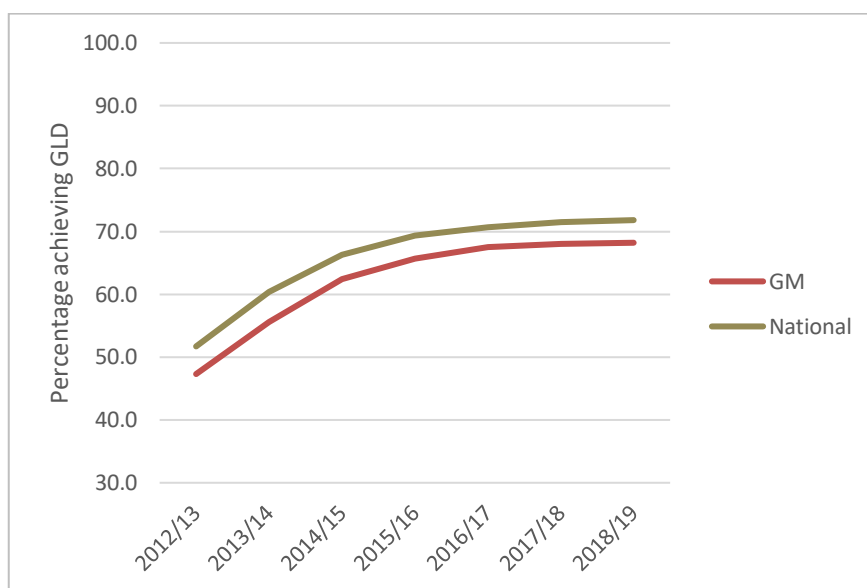
## **2. SCHOOL READINESS PERFORMANCE**

- 2.1. The government's current measure of school readiness for children aged 5 is the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) profile, which is completed for all children at the end of the reception year. Children are defined as having reached a Good Level of Development (GLD) if they achieve at least the expected level in the following three early learning areas:
  - Personal, social and emotional
  - Physical development
  - Communication and language
- 2.2. In 2012 GM developed a model for integrated Early Years services. The GM Early Years Delivery Model (EYDM) is built upon the principles of proportionate universalism. It recognises the 1001 critical days starting at conception and harnesses the universal reach of maternity services and Health Visiting for the crucial early identification of vulnerability in both parents and infants. When the EYDM is implemented across GM to a consistently high standard, families will be in receipt of a proportionate, multi-agency tailored response relevant to their level of needs and children will benefit.
- 2.3. Since the development of the EYDM, there has been significant increase in GLD performance across GM, as demonstrated in chart 1. However, Greater Manchester remains an outlier in school readiness outcomes compared to the national average, with the latest data showing that 68.2% of all eligible children achieve a good level of development (GLD) at the end of the EYFS in academic year 2018/19, compared with the

England national average of 71.8%. This is an improvement of 0.2% in GM and 0.3% in England compared with the previous year's data.

2.4. Although the gap between GM and national performance has narrowed slightly in recent years, the trend towards a plateau in performance is a feature of the national trend data as well as the GM data. There is an ambitious objective for GM to reach the national level for GLD within 2 years.

**Chart 1: Greater Manchester EYFS Results 2013 - 2019**



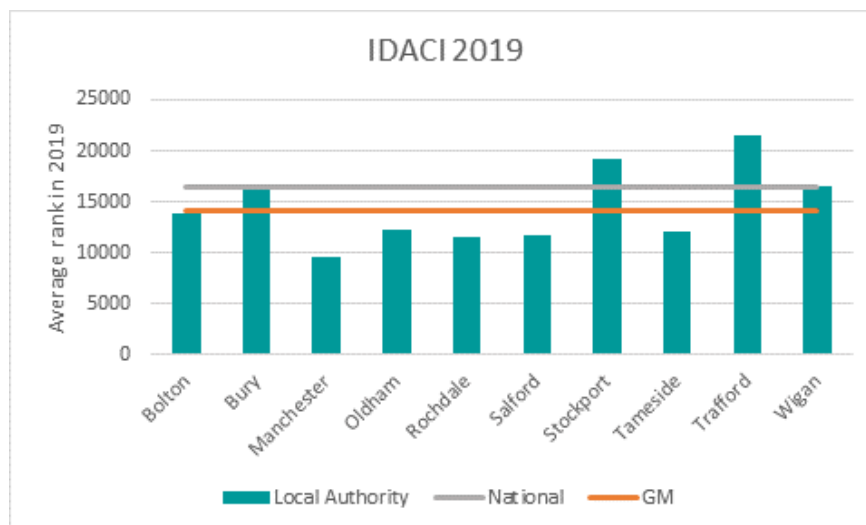
**Chart 2: Greater Manchester EYFS Results Academic Year 2018/19**



2.5. Chart 2 shows EYFS results by local authority area within GM for the latest academic year (2018/19). It should be noted that results in Tameside and Oldham have improved by 1% and 4% respectively. Over the last 3 years the proportion of 5 years olds reaching GLD in Oldham has increased by over 7 percentage points. This makes Oldham the most improved local authority in the North West and one of the most improved in the country. Oldham has benefited from additional investment as a DfE funded Opportunity Area; early years initiatives funded as part of this programme can inform further improvement work across GM.

2.6. Rates of child poverty are important to bear in mind when contextualising GM's GLD results; the proportion of children living in income-deprived households is higher in GM than the national average. Chart 3 shows the income deprivation affecting children index (IDACI) for local authorities within GM; the most deprived areas have lower IDACI scores. Only three localities within GM have IDACI scores above or in line with the national average.

**Chart 3: Income Deprivation Levels Affecting Children in Greater Manchester 2019**



- 2.7. Despite this, we are seeing positive improvements in outcomes for disadvantaged children and GLD outcomes for pupils eligible for free school meals have improved by 4 percentage points since 2015. Provisional data, yet to be validated by DfE, shows that we have now closed the gap between the GM and England GLD average for pupils eligible for free school meals. This is significant as we know that the development gaps between disadvantaged children and their peers has a profound impact later in life and on long-term social mobility.
- 2.8. Within GM, a key aim of the EYDM was to improve life chances for children growing up deprivation. Original modelling undertaken for the EYDM business case estimated that 25% of children would require additional, targeted support due to growing up in deprivation or additional needs within the family. The latest performance data highlights that we are improving outcomes for this group and the work to date is demonstrating impact.
- 2.9. The GM Strategy also includes a target for all early years' settings to be Ofsted rated 'good' or 'outstanding'. The quality of GM early years settings has continued to improve, with only 5.8% not achieving a 'good' or 'outstanding' rating in the March 2019 data.
- 2.10. The school readiness programme includes further work to help identify strategies that are effecting positive change within GM. This includes the development of a new data dashboard showing ward level GLD data mapped against levels of deprivation to help identify areas of good practice and support shared learning. This will allow local authorities to clearly identify 'peer' wards who face similar contexts, but who are seeing different results.
- 2.11. Additional work is also underway to identify wider measures that contribute to a more holistic picture of school readiness levels. A Data and Evaluation Community of Practice, comprising a range of professionals from across the early years system is

developing a new framework of measures that will promote a broader understanding of a child's readiness to learn and support system accountability through assessing progress at a locality and GM level. A draft framework of measures will be in place for further consultation from January 2020.

### **3. Further Work – Online parenting resources**

- 3.1. While section 2 outlines the improved performance of children living in our most disadvantaged communities, we know that we need to do more to ensure that all children have the same life chances. To support this we are continuing to focus investment in strategies and tools that seek to enable whole system change across the early years and support delivery of the GM Early Years Delivery Model.
- 3.2. Stakeholders have consistently identified the need for a GM wide digital platform that provides information, advice and guidance at a universal and level to support delivery of the EYDM and associated pathways. To address this, GMCA has recognised the benefits of investing in an enabling tool that will help realise our early intervention and prevention ambitions in relation to the early years and school readiness agenda.
- 3.3. Work has been undertaken to prepare an outline business case for investment in a digital platform providing expert-led evidence based, parental advice on a range of health and wellbeing topics. The specification scope will also seek to ensure functionality to allow digital content to be electronically delivered to parents and carers where a professional identifies a need. Costings have been based on initial market engagement at a GM and locality level.
- 3.4. The business case was approved by the Reform Investment Fund panel at the September meeting given that it supports a number of the RIF's current operating principles that were previously agreed by GMCA, namely:
  - Making a tangible difference to Greater Manchester outcomes through investing more in prevention
  - Maximising the leverage of other funding (in this case alongside Angel Investors)
  - Promoting reforms that lead to sustainable future models (see above)
  - Supporting priorities within the Greater Manchester Strategy (School Readiness)
- 3.5. Ratification is now sought from the GMCA Board. Section 4 outlines the full financial considerations and identifies areas of activity to be supported through the GMCA investment.

### **4. Financial Considerations**

- 4.1. The Reform investment Fund panel have approved in principle £250,000 investment from the RIF to procure a suitable digital platform. Funding will be allocated to the activity outlined in the table below.

<b>Phase One Activity</b>	<b>Indicative Costs</b>
Development of GM platform	£125,000
Platform set up in each of the 10 local authorities	£70,000
Initial licence rollout in 2 pilot sites	£35,000
Development of additional content as required	£20,000

4.2. Work will be overseen by a steering group led by the GMCA. The group will work with the provider to ensure alignment with the GM school readiness strategy and consistency in messaging across content and wider support programmes for parents.

4.3. Subject to the identification of savings across the early years system, ongoing investment in a platform has been agreed in principle by the GM Directors of Public Health at the GM Directors of Health Board meeting in June 2019. This will be conditional on the identification of time and efficiency savings to the system during the initial rollout in pilot sites.

## **5. Risk Management**

5.1. GMCA will work with the selected provider to ensure comprehensive processes are in place to identify and mitigate risks. Currently risks and mitigating actions are outlined below.

- Insufficient evidence of impact and evaluation: ensure a clear evaluation plan is in place, and agreed with DPHs, to ensure that actual and potential benefits are identified and measured as part of the pilot phase.
- Sustainability beyond initial rollout: engagement has taken place with Directors of Public Health with agreement in principle for funding to be sustained subject to evidence of impact.
- The system does not meet the needs of all localities: a GM steering group has been established to provide oversight, support procurement and provide oversight to ensure that platform content aligns to GM key messages and the Early Years Delivery Model. Engagement with localities will be facilitated through the EY reference group and EY leads, to ensure that the system functionality supports existing ways of working.

## **6. Performance and Evaluation**

6.1. Regular updates on procurement and delivery will be provided to the School Readiness Board, chaired by Jon Rouse. The Board will provide assurance that investment is being directed towards agreed priorities and work is informed by wider school readiness initiatives. Progress reports will also be shared with the Reform Investment Fund Panel members so that they are able to track the impact of the investment.



6.2. As outlined in section 5, a clear evaluation plan will be developed with support from a Health Economist to understand the impact of the platform and workforce delivery system on workforce efficiency and potential wider early years outcomes during the pilot phase.

## **7. Conclusion**

- 7.1. The latest school readiness performance data demonstrates a small increase in school readiness levels across GM, with an improvement trajectory broadly in line with the England average. For pupils eligible for free school meals, provisional data shows that GM has made significant improvements and closed the gap between the GM and England average.
- 7.2. Ongoing investment in universal and targeted services is required to sustain this improvement. GMCA has identified that investment in a digital platform and delivery system will add value to the wider work to improve school readiness across GM, through provision of a GM wide advice, information and signposting offer at a universal level.
- 7.3. GMCA is asked to ratify the agreement in principle to provide £250,000 investment from the RIF to fund development of an online digital parenting resource and initial work to support rollout across GM.