Corporate Issues and Reform
Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date: 8 March 2022

Subject: Delivery of Early Years Digitisation and support for Digital
                     Transformation across Greater Manchester

Report of: Cllr Bev Craig, Portfolio Lead Leader for Digital City Region; Tom
                     Stannard, 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 in support of reform priorities.

Recommendations:

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

- Review progress against Early Years digitisation ambitions for Greater Manchester.

- Review the 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 characteristics, 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.

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 / carer 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:

- GM "Smart Resident" Data Exchange Platform to enable public service reform – GMCA Report, 28 June 2019
- Early Years Digitisation and support for Digital Transformation - Corporate Issues and Reform Overview & Scrutiny Committee Report, 16 March 2021

1 Introduction

1.1 In 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.

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. It is estimated that approximately 12,000 Greater Manchester children start school each year without sufficient skills to learn out of a cohort of approximately 40,000. The GM School Readiness programme which was established in 2017 is directly focussed on this issue and is working to address a number of challenges.

2.1 From a digital perspective, data on development across the critical 0 - 2.5 year period is often difficult to obtain and analyse as much is on paper. Referrals are often slow, parent access to data is poor, and professionals lack visibility of developmental records across disciplines and sectors. This has impacts for both the life chances of individuals and is linked with longitudinal underemployment in Greater Manchester.

2.2 In addition:

- The nature of early years' service provision across Greater Manchester is complex. It touches multiple public sector services and often does not acknowledge local authority boundaries

- Organisations have variable investment in related digital solutions that are often not integrated and slow to respond to emerging GM requirements.

- There is a significant variation in the level of digital and data enabled and driven practices across localities.

2.3 The pandemic has negatively impacted the GM position. Over 8,500 statutory health visiting checks were missed in 2020 as a consequence of the pandemic and

the GM Mayor emphasised the need to make ground back on this at the GMCA Reform Board on 15 January 2021.

2.4 **Scope of Early Years Digitisation**

2.5 The focus of the Early Years digitisation workstream within the wider School Readiness programme is to enable greater support for child development up to school age by releasing data from paper-based assessments and more efficiently sharing information through integrated digital capabilities and robust information sharing agreements through an Early Years Record for all 200,000 children aged 0-5 in Greater Manchester at any one time.

2.6 At the outset of the programme, all areas in Greater Manchester agreed to adopt a GM solution to digitise and integrate the existing 8 stage Early Years delivery model used across all 10 localities but which continues to be heavily paper based. The localities agreed to digitise the model once, together and consistently, rather than 10 times.

2.7 The pilot project, with Salford Council, demonstrated a productivity uplift of over 30% for health visitors, amongst other benefits, leading to an estimated net GM wide productivity uplift of over £27M over five years that would enable more effective and prioritised family support.

2.8 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 – 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 NHS National Event Management Service (NEMS); b) connect the applications with each areas' local community health systems and provide professionals with a joined-up view of child development and school readiness data.

3 Benefits

3.1   Since the March 2021 report to this Committee, the Early Years digitisation workstream has continued to work with all localities across Greater Manchester to plan for adoption in more areas; to support live use of the system in Bury and Rochdale; to enhance the system further and integrate it with local systems.

3.2   The main benefits for parents and carers which have been captured are that it:

- Makes it easy to access and complete forms online – they will no longer need to worry about losing or forgetting the paper forms

- Gives them online access to their child's development records whenever they need them, increasing their ownership and control of their data.

- Provides videos and other guidance to support their child's language and development

- Enables their health visitor to share documents with them through the app

- Meets people's expectations of being able to use technology in many aspects of their lives

- Increases involvement in child's development and engagement with services

- Improves the experience of the assessment process as information shared between agencies doesn't need to be repeated

3.3   Benefits for health practitioners and commissioners are that it:

- Provides accessible and mobile data currently locked in paper records

- Better tracks child development in a locality to more quickly identify children who require additional support

- Easier tracking of caseload and child records

- Less time spent on manual form filling and preparing paperwork for appointments

- Automatic scoring on assessment forms

- Option to review forms submitted by carers in advance of an appointment

- Ability to print or save assessment form and child data

3.4 Additional benefits for localities and across GM are that it:

- Transforms the way services are used to better meet people's needs

- Provides a consistent model of assessment and data recording across localities

- Better information sharing across agencies and avoids repeating and duplicating information

- Breaks down data barriers between families and health and education services

- Information is held in one place and is easily available to staff and parents/carers

- Enables more effective commissioning

- Creates opportunities for savings in staff time and service costs

- Reduces printing and storing paper forms which saves time and money, increases efficiency and is better for the environment

3.5 This work will also pave the way for other public service areas to digitally transform the service citizens receive, by digitising paper-based forms, joining up different parts of the system and sharing information safely and securely.

4 Early years digitisation progress

4.1 **System adoption**

4.2 Almost 20,000 child assessments have now been completed in Rochdale and Bury using the EYIS application since late 2020. Approx. 30 minutes have been saved per average assessment equating to approximately 10,000 hours. It is estimated that up to £52,000 has been saved on the posting out of paper assessments alone.

4.3 The EYIS application is operating effectively in line with the Memorandum of Understanding between GMCA and localities which includes the data protection requirements and governance and support arrangements.

4.4 One to one work has continued with other localities throughout 2021/2, however the ongoing of the pandemic has meant that this has not been as high a priority for NHS professionals. A further round of engagement sessions with 7 of the 8 remaining localities has recently been completed.

4.5 Findings have been extremely positive, with localities still aligned to the vision for digitising early years services. There are, however, still challenges to overcome in adopting GM solutions such as the availability of budget longer-term and the need to integrate solutions to create a seamless experience for users.

4.6 There are follow-up sessions scheduled with several localities keen to move with one or more digital components. It is clear that completion of the system enhancements outlined below increase the benefits of the systems capabilities and its appeal.

4.7 **System enhancements**

4.8 Significant enhancements to the Early Years Integrated Solution have been made since March 2021.

4.9 The **Early Education Application** is nearing completion. This extends the solution so that professionals in Nursery Settings can complete WellComm assessments used across most of Greater Manchester. The App includes video guidance to support children's learning and development and the ability for health practitioners to share documents with parent/carers. The data protection work that would enable Early Education professionals to access Health Visitor assessment records safely has made significant progress and is with legal leads for sign off in two localities.

4.10 **Integration with localities Electronic Patient Records** (EPR) systems has been requested by NHS colleagues in several localities ahead of going live. This will allow end users to view the appointments and relevant updates from the EPR to the EY digital solution. The functionality will provide a one stop shop for the parents / end users to keep a close track of their children's early years development.

4.11 **Integration with the NHS's Spine Mini Services (SMSP) and National Event Management Service** (NEMS) have been successfully completed is undergoing final testing. This will enable information such as births, deaths and address changes to be pulled directly into the Early Years Integration Solution, key information to be available to professionals, data quality improved, and automate the process of registering families.

5 Wider support for digital transformation

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

5.2 As shared with the Committee in March 2021, during the first year of the pandemic the team and its technologies were called on to support Covid-19 related support activities in a variety of ways including Situation Reporting, Community Volunteer Hub app development and Complex Case Management support.

5.3 During 2021/22 the team has:

- Led the deployment of the GM-Think homelessness system in support of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy and which is now live across all ten localities and being followed up with a further phase of design and planning work with Manchester City Council to understand how data could be captured, shared, and used more effectively across central Manchester to better support people who are at risk or currently experiencing rough sleeping. This is due to complete by the end of March 2022.

- Supported the GMCA Research team to secure £950K of Government funding for a Data Accelerator project to work with localities to improve insights into family support, to provide better analysis and help areas move towards a more proactive / earlier responses. Design work is underway with Bolton, Bury, Rochdale and Trafford councils as early adopters.

- Supported work on the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme ("PSDS") which gives GM a major opportunity to decarbonise public sector non domestic buildings by enabling technologies like metering or electrical infrastructure. The GMCA Digital team is responsible for building a digital infrastructure & reporting capability to store, normalise and cascade data to monitor the carbonisation impact over the next three years.

5.4 Underpinning this work is a small team that employs a strong set of design principles which are closely aligned with the Government Digital Services design principles, the first of which is "start with user needs"[1], and which follows a structured gateway

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[1] Government Design Principles - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

process. Similarly, the technology set underpinning these projects is based on re-usable components in a clearly interlined architecture.

5.5 This scalable approach to digital, data and technology across the city region in support of the Greater Manchester Strategy contributed to the Greater Manchester Early Years project winning "Digital Leaders Digital Innovation of the Year 2021".

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, Assistant Director for 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 Transformations Leadership Group which was chaired until January 2022 by Andrew Williamson, Assistant Director for Transformation, Bolton Council, and is rotating to Paul James, Chief Digital Officer at Trafford Council. This reports into the GMCA Digital Portfolio Executive and Steering Group which are chaired by the GM Digital Portfolio Leaders.

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.