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Learning from the Greater Manchester Scale and Spread Programme: Spreading innovation across a city-region

Final Overview Report

August 2021

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Contents

Introduction

This report provides an overview of the learning taking place within Greater Manchester (GM) as a result of the GM Scale and Spread Programme. The Scale and Spread Programme is a Department for Education funded initiative to spread four innovative services (the innovations) from one or two GM authorities to multiple instances across the ten authorities in GM.

In 2018 Research in Practice were appointed as an independent learning partner to support the Programme throughout its development. The learning partnership role was not to undertake an evaluation, but rather to enable and support the exploration of emerging themes and reflections at various points in the Programme's journey. This learning has been captured through interviews, surveys, focus groups and reflective sessions with groups from across GM and has been fed back to GM as the Programme progressed. This report sits alongside a more formal cost-benefit evaluation and suite of evidence generated as part of the Programme, which together form a collected body of knowledge about scaling and spreading innovation in GM.

As the funding ends, but the work continues, this report seeks to:

> Consolidate and share learning from practitioners, managers and leaders in the system about how to scale and spread innovation.

> Set out the emerging impact and legacy of the Programme on leadership, collaboration and learning across a complex system.

> Highlight the key issues for GM to consider for sustainability and future progress in introducing innovative services and in collaborating for the benefit of all children and young people in the city region.

> Summarise key messages and reflections for the benefit of the wider sector thinking about adopting a scale and spread approach.

The starting point and early vision

GM is a city region in the North West of England, including ten local authorities. Each local authority has its own history, culture and civic centre. The city region also has an elected mayor and city-region wide governance arrangements, in the form of the GM Combined Authority (GMCA). These arrangements provide for a sense of shared vision and strategic direction for GM as a whole, while accountability for the wellbeing of children and young people rests with the ten Directors of Children's Services (DCSs). There is a single police force, Greater Manchester Police (GMP), covering the whole city region, which operates through local divisions mostly, but not entirely, aligned with local authority boundaries. There is strategic direction of health services across GM through powers devolved to the elected mayor, and a complex system of clinical commissioning groups, providers and others planning and delivering health services in the city region.

In 2018, the ten authorities and GMCA were seeking to explore how to balance the tension between collective action and local accountability such that all authorities could benefit from the strengths of the others, while retaining their local identity and priorities. In Children's Services, this included developing a shared commitment to reducing the number of looked after children across the city and the development of a shared strategy to improving outcomes for all children and young people in GM. As part of these efforts, the organisations involved had established a set of principles to inform public service reform across different services and departments in local authorities. These principles are informed by research into effective ways of working with individuals with multiple and complex needs and had been trialled as a way of engaging communities in public service reform in Wigan, one of the ten GM authorities (See Figure 1) (Rankin and Regan, 2004; Naylor and Wellings, 2019).

The Greater Manchester Model – What's different?

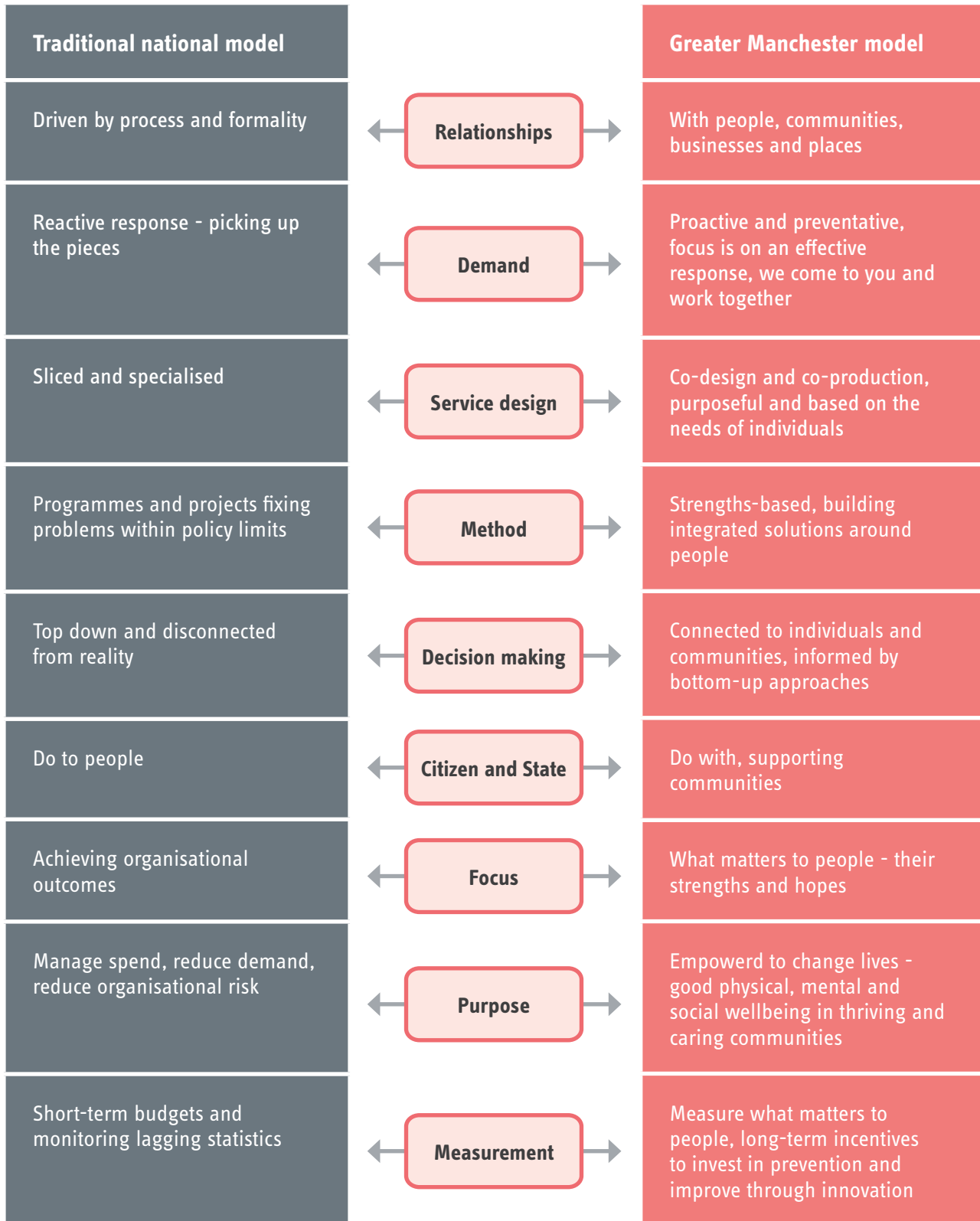| Traditional national model		Greater Manchester model
Driven by process and formality	← **Relationships** →	With people, communities, businesses and places
Reactive response - picking up the pieces	← **Demand** →	Proactive and preventative, focus is on an effective response, we come to you and work together
Sliced and specialised	← **Service design** →	Co-design and co-production, purposeful and based on the needs of individuals
Programmes and projects fixing problems within policy limits	← **Method** →	Strengths-based, building integrated solutions around people
Top down and disconnected from reality	← **Decision making** →	Connected to individuals and communities, informed by bottom-up approaches
Do to people	← **Citizen and State** →	Do with, supporting communities
Achieving organisational outcomes	← **Focus** →	What matters to people - their strengths and hopes
Manage spend, reduce demand, reduce organisational risk	← **Purpose** →	Empowerd to change lives - good physical, mental and social wellbeing in thriving and caring communities
Short-term budgets and monitoring lagging statistics	← **Measurement** →	Measure what matters to people, long-term incentives to invest in prevention and improve through innovation

Figure 1 The GM Public Service Reform Principles

There is significant variation in the structures, service provision and performance of Children's Services across the ten authorities; some had significant experience in developing innovative services and had attracted external funding to do so, while others had not.

Some of these locally-devised innovative services were aligned with the Public Service Reform principles and provided some insight into how the principles could be applied to work with children and families. A further innovative service, developed outside of GM but being trialled in one of the GM authorities, No Wrong Door, was also identified as being aligned with the principles. The four innovations form the core of GM's Scale and Spread Programme:

> **Achieving Change Together (ACT) embedded within a complex safeguarding approach**

> **No Wrong Door (NWD)**

> **Stockport Family and Team Around the School (TAS)**

> **Salford Strengthening Families (SF)**

These innovations have common features that are rooted in an understanding of families as complex systems, in which the relationships between family members and between the family and the outside world influence the family's experiences and the needs of children and young people. Such complex systems are unpredictable and often appear chaotic, but can be influenced by understanding and acting on underlying patterns and structures The approaches used in these innovations to manage this complexity are:

> **Relational,** focusing on working in partnership with the children, young people and families they are supporting, and with their wider relationships and networks

> **Strengths-based**, using tools and approaches that develop strengths,

> **Focusing on what matters** to those they are working with and taking into account their lived experience

> **Trauma-informed,** taking account of the emotional and behavioural impact of trauma on parents, as well as children and young people. This is not one of the PSR themes, but is a common feature of practice across the innovations.

The innovations involve multi-disciplinary teams of professionals working together to provide **holistic help**. Each of the innovations also recognise the need to **empower and support practitioners** to work in these new ways, through training, supervision and management and through providing resources and direction from the wider system that is aligned with those practice approaches and principles. These practice approaches and the systems that support them are identified as key features of effective support for children and families in the wider evidence base, as well as alignment with the Public Service Reform principles (Sebba et al, 2017).

The surface aspiration for the Scale and Spread Programme was to introduce and embed these innovations in several authorities in GM at once. The process of spreading innovation from one place to another is not simple, and it is necessary to adapt service design and delivery processes to fit with local context, structures and culture (Greenhalgh, 2019). Each of the innovations was at a different point of development at the beginning of the Scale and Spread Programme.

> **Evidence base**: Three (ACT, NWD and TAS) had strong or emerging evidence for effectiveness while Salford Strengthening Families needed to develop its evidence on outcomes and impact (Panayiotu et al, 2017; Scott et al, 2017; Lushey et al, 2017).

> **GM context**: Three innovations were already being delivered in the originating authorities at the start of the Programme, while one (NWD) was in the design phase of being established within GM.

> **Experience of exporting**: Only one innovation, NWD, had already been wholly successfully transferred elsewhere from its originating authority (North Yorkshire County Council). Stockport had been appointed a by DfE as a 'Partner in Practice', with funding and responsibility for supporting other authorities to improve performance, drawing on the Stockport Family model to do so.

GM identified that there was further development work for all of the originating authorities to support the export of the innovations, as well as the need to support authorities importing the innovations to accelerate their progress. To achieve this, GM developed an infrastructure to support Scale and Spread, including:

> Grouping local authorities adopting a particular innovation into an **innovation cluster**, and appointing **an innovation lead** from the exporting authority or the Innovation Unit, to lead the cluster through the design and delivery process.

> Identifying the DCS of each exporting authority as a **strategic DCS** for the overarching theme being addressed by the innovation (e.g. complex safeguarding of adolescents or recurrent care services), as well as a DCS to lead on overseeing the Scale and Spread Programme.

> **A GMCA programme lead** and a team of project officers to provide support to both exporting and importing authorities and to make links to the governance arrangements for wider services for children and young people.

> Drawing on the **GMCA research function** to explore cost benefit analysis of the four innovations and provide an evaluation of those benefits after two years.

> Two **external learning partners**, the Innovation Unit and Research in Practice, to bring expert knowledge and advice into the Programme as a whole.

Governance was provided by the existing DCS group, including all ten Directors of Children's Services, and by the Children and Young People (CYP) Board, made up of leaders and chief executives of the ten authorities, Directors of Children's Services and representatives of the mayor's office. Arrangement for senior oversight of local implementation and delivery varied considerably across the ten authorities, with the Director of Children's Services (DCS), or Assistant Directors (AD) having more or less direct involvement over the period, and project leads ranging in seniority from team manager to head of service. Strategic leadership of the police contribution to the various innovations was provided by the strategic lead for vulnerable children at GM Police (GMP).

The design of the Scale and Spread infrastructure and process was inspired by thinking around how to bring about change in complex adaptive systems, for example the Cynefin model for managing complexity (Snowden, 2011) and dynamic network theory (Westaby, 2012)) and by the work of Professor Munro in exploring these concepts in the context of Children's Services (Munro, 2011). The system undertaking the GM Scale and Spread Programme might be envisaged as a series of nodes in a multi-nodal and richly connected system – each innovation team, each cluster, each local authority and individuals in the system form nodes that are connected in numerous ways to other nodes. Each node brings with it its own history, geography and culture, as well as connections within and outside the system itself and each node influences and is influenced by dynamics in the wider system (Dugrabo et al., 2011).

These theories of complex systems have informed the learning capture that informed this report. Throughout the report we provide visual representations of some of the core relationships and communication flows across GM. Such diagrams cannot capture the full complexity of the system, but are designed to remind the reader that this was not a linear or top-down process, but one based on collaboration and distributed leadership.

The complex systems in GM

An elected mayor and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority develop and support a city-region wide strategy.

City-region level governance is provided through collaboration between local Leaders, Chief Executives and Directors of Children's Services.

Ten different organisations, with their own:

> Local leadership and partnership arrangments.

> History, culture and sense of place.

> Range of in-house and commissioned services.

> Strengths and weaknesses in practice and performance.
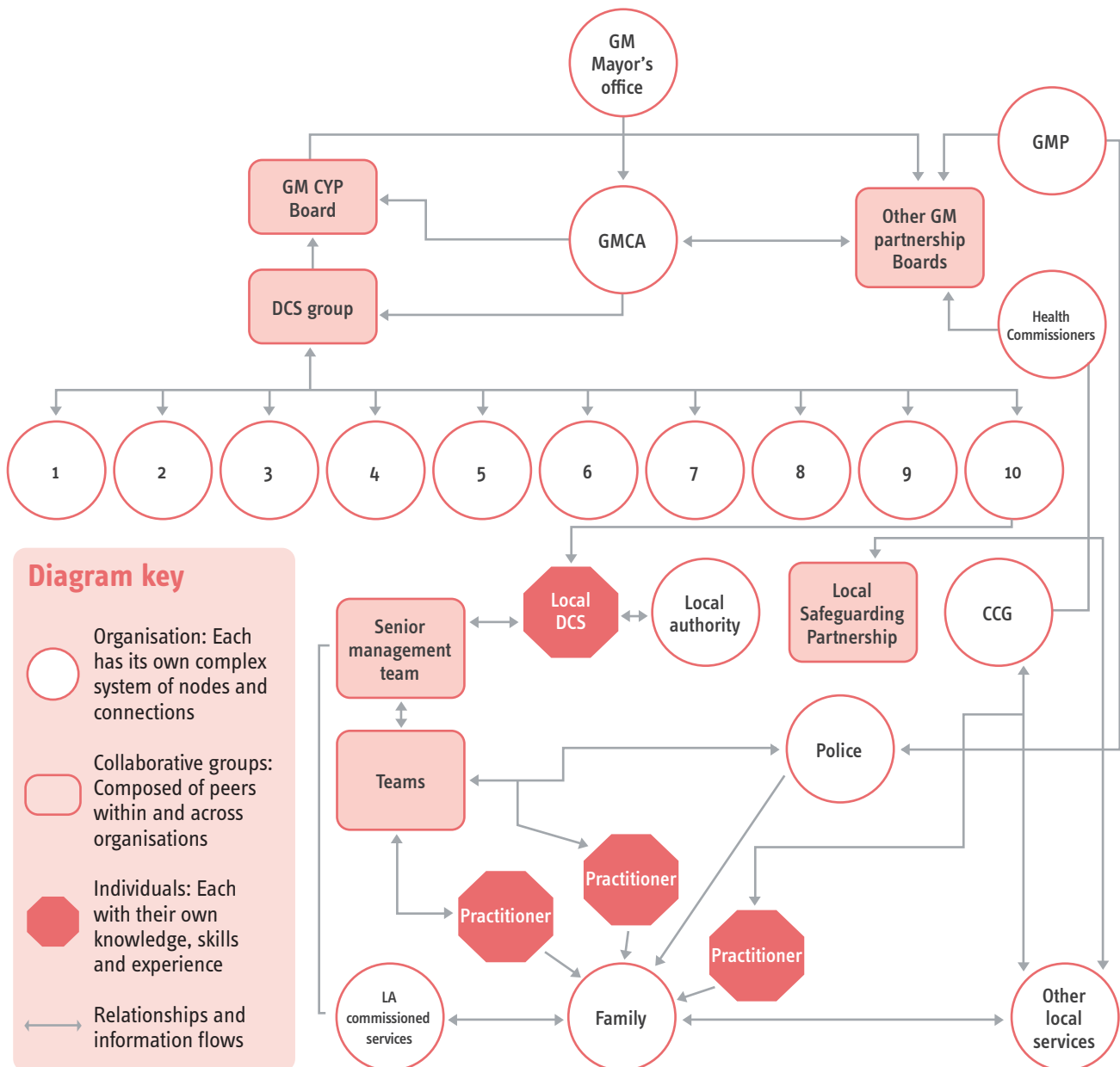
In particular, the Programme lead with responsibility for developing the approach to scale and spread had a significant interest in using the Scale and Spread Programme to explore:

> The role of relationships and connections between different parts of the system in influencing change.
> The role of history and sense of place in influencing local trajectories and how that interacts with the wider context of GM.
> The need to acknowledge and respond to changing circumstances, caused by external shocks or internal changes in direction.
> The capacity of the system and those within it to learn from experience and adapt to changed circumstances.

In recognition that change in complex systems is unpredictable and non-linear, there was no blueprint for how these arrangements would work in practice and it was expected that each innovation would take its own approach to exporting the innovation, adapting to the needs of the cluster, to changing circumstances and to emerging learning from their experiences. The focus of the initial design was on making connections, between local authorities in the innovation clusters, between local authorities at a strategic level and between each of the innovations and the central GMCA team that would support them, and in providing the infrastructure to support learning through the process.

Scaling and spreading the four innovations was not the only aspiration for the Programme. The Programme was seen as an opportunity to broaden and deepen collaboration in Children's Services across GM and to develop the capacity and capability to lead such collaborative efforts. Through doing this work, it was hoped that the Programme would develop a legacy of learning about leading, adapting and collaborating in complex systems. This report sets out progress towards both scaling and spreading of the innovations and that wider legacy.

From 'Scale and Spread' to 'Adopt and Adapt'

By the end of the summer of 2020, there were 25 projects operational, and a small number still in the design phase, compared to the four projects in 2018 when the Programme started. There is at least one project in delivery or at the very end of the design phase in every authority in GM. This is a significant achievement.

The spread of the innovations has not been uniform, some are more widely spread than others. No innovation is fully implemented in all ten authorities and no authority is running all four at once. There are plans in place for further spreading to some of those authorities that have not yet imported a specific innovation and for bringing new innovations into the system of scaling and spreading.

As part of the journey, the GM network has developed extensive experience and expertise in both exporting innovations and in importing them into a range of different contexts. This section sets out the learning that has resulted from the experience to date.

Exporting

The four innovation leads took different paths to moving from one or two examples of the innovation in practice to multiple instances across GM. There was no consistent job description or infrastructure around the new leadership roles – the innovation leads and strategic DCS role – and so each innovation lead and strategic DCS pairing developed differently.

> Two innovation leads shared the role between a practice lead and a project lead and were embedded within the local authority of the strategic DCS and retained some or all of their wider responsibilities alongside the role.

> One was seconded from the authority to work full time as an innovation lead, reporting to the strategic DCS but based in the offices of GMCA and supported by a team of practice and data leads.

> One was an external consultant from the Innovation Unit (IU), supported by other members of the IU, and there was no active strategic DCS lead.

Their paths were guided by the experience and support of the Innovation Unit, though some received more direct support than others, and this provided some alignment between the different approaches taken. The Innovation Unit contributed significant thinking and tools to the process of exporting the innovations, as well as significant levels of support in terms of coaching, advice and other activity. The IU's process gave confidence, even when progress had stalled.

We returned to the model, to the process and had a bit of faith that with the right moves, with the right relationships in place, that we would be able to make progress (Innovation Unit).

Codification of practice, theory and evidence

Codification is the articulation of the core features of the innovation to allow other authorities to implement them in their own context. The process of codification includes describing the services and support provided, pathways in and out or through the service, the core roles in the team and the theory of change linking practice to outcomes. This also involves identifying staffing and resources required from the wider organisation.

Developing an over-arching theory of change for each innovation was an important part of setting out the core features of each project and explaining why those features were considered essential. Developing a theory of change within a complex system is difficult and the output can be somewhat messy, but it is a helpful process to think about how the innovation connects with and forms part of a wider strategy. Beneath the handbook and theory of change sit principles and values for working with children and families that might be conceived as 'philosophies of practice', including the relational and strengths-based ways of working embedded within a wider value base.

A formal evaluation is a key component of persuading others that the theory of change is sound. Where the evidence base was not yet developed, Salford Strengthening Families committed resources to independent evaluation and this was seen as a key tipping point in attracting others to adopt the approach to recurrent care.

In GM, exporting authorities spent considerable time reflecting upon their innovations, through talking to practitioners, observing practice, hearing feedback from children and families and analysing existing evidence and outputs. The resulting handbooks place different levels of emphasis on the evidence base, the core features, the principles and values and the system conditions required for implementation, reflecting the different ways that exporting authorities conceptualised their innovation and how it works (see the individual handbooks). This process of making tacit knowledge explicit and talking about values increased exporting authorities' own understanding of the theory and practice underpinning their work and increased their confidence in sharing their work with others.

The codification process resulted in artefacts and outputs with visual appeal and bold, simple communication of key points. Much of the codification process was supported or informed by the work of the Innovation Unit, their experience in No Wrong Door in North Yorkshire and their expertise in design.

Outputs and artefacts produced include:

1) Handbooks for each of the innovations.
2) A video for Stockport Family Team Around the School.
3) A guide to developing deep dives, for the No Wrong Door innovation.
4) Presentations and materials for facilitated learning workshops in each of the innovations.

Working with importing authorities on design

Innovation leads and their teams worked with individual local authorities to design and implement the innovation in their context. Innovation leads worked with each authority and with the group, providing advice based on their own experience and that of others, and supporting senior leaders and project leads to build the connections and networks needed to support implementation. Where the handbook and theory of change were in place at the time of introducing the innovation to each authority, this was felt to accelerate the process of moving into the process of design.

> I think that made it quite difficult in some ways because people wanted the Handbook, but [at that point] I didn't have anything to give them. [Initially] I didn't have an infrastructure like the Innovation Unit behind it to create all of those materials, tools and kind of products. And perhaps if we had some of that, at the start, it would have made some of it a little bit easier (Innovation Lead).

This transfer is not a technical process of replication, but a transmission of knowledge and experience and values into a new context. This is done through the building of relationships between peers and a process of "walking with them on their journey" (Innovation Lead). Sharing these principles and encouraging their adoption is labour-intensive and ongoing, requiring face to face conversations. This is a facilitative, rather than a didactic process. Innovation leads do not have management authority, but need to persuade and motivate each authority to take the incremental steps towards implementation. Innovation leads provided a "sense of grip" (DCS) on what could seem like a daunting process, guiding authorities to reflect on particular themes at each stage, building on their learning from other authorities. There is a careful balance between providing a sense of direction and being directive, facilitated by humility and a willingness to learn.

Coaching

Innovation leads and their teams provided significant amounts of coaching and advice to project leads as they navigated the process of design, implementation and subsequent delivery. This involved providing practitioners, project leads and others with individual reflective spaces to talk through the process and helping them navigate the challenges they were facing. This coaching also included an element of challenge, to maintain momentum and to drive improvements in practice. Innovation leads and their teams sometimes found it difficult to balance these roles of both supporter and challenger:

> I sometimes feel like I need two hats, so people know if I am there to support or challenge (Innovation lead).

This coaching process can be seen as akin to reflective supervision for social workers, helping people to see a path through the complex environment, problem-solving and containing the emotions associated with a period of change. Coaching was seen as an important factor in maintaining motivation and pace, and in supporting the professional development of local leads. The expertise of the Innovation Unit in providing this form of support was highly valued.

> I have got a lot from working with the innovation coaches and colleagues in GM... Unique combination of coaching, support and challenge. Friendly and skillful... it's been really rewarding to do (Project Lead).

Collective reflective spaces

Innovation leads brought people together within the teams delivering the innovation, within the local authority and local partnership, across the authorities in the cluster and with strategic leaders across GM. These spaces and the activity within them are discussed further below (see **Reflective spaces** below for more on the nature of these spaces)

Support and infrastructure for exporting

There are significant activities and resources needed to support the exporting of an innovation into multiple authorities, requiring different skills and expertise. Some exporting authorities shared the innovation lead role between individuals with different skill sets to increase capacity and focus people's energy where they had most impact. The exporting authorities drew on other sources of support to secure all the skills needed to successful export the innovation.

As well as the extensive activity to codify and disseminate the innovation itself, there is a significant requirement for:

> Training and workforce development.
> Collating evidence of impact and activity (see below).
> Project and programme management.
> Financial management and reporting.
> Event co-ordination and planning.

Some of this supporting infrastructure was provided by the exporting local authorities, and in the case of No Wrong Door by the external innovation lead from the Innovation Unit, but there was a need to increase access to capacity and skills to support the innovation leads in their role as well as to support the connections between the innovations and the wider governance structures and decision-making in GM.

Functions performed by the GMCA Programme team included:

> Establishing the initial agreements between GMCA and the individual local authorities.
> Facilitating networks, including a significant amount of administrative work in arranging and recording meetings.
> Mediating difficult conversations between DCSs and offering challenge where needed to keep implementation moving .
> Collecting evidence of progress and impact, including monitoring progress on implementation, identification of barriers and identifying and writing case studies.
> Managing the interfaces between layers of governance, including financial negotiation and reporting, reporting to the DCS Group and GM Children and Young People Board and to the Department for Education.

The support provided by GMCA has "*evolved as we understood what was needed*" (GMCA). The project support team have needed to be flexible about the support provided to each innovation, depending on the needs of each project and the resources available elsewhere.

Sometimes that is rolling up your sleeves and getting your hands dirty and going out there and collecting case studies or supporting local areas with a particular challenge, and sometimes it is about facilitating, connecting, supporting that space for people to come together (GMCA).

The GMCA Programme team can be seen as a central repository of learning from the Scale and Spread Programme. By working closely with the Innovation Unit, and seeing their contribution at various levels, the Programme team have developed new skills and an understanding of the methodology around scale and spread. They have built relationships and a rich understanding about each innovation and each local authority involved in them, and have a huge amount of insight into the practical enablers and barriers of making this kind of large scale project work in the GM context. That will be critical to sustaining this kind of collaborative innovation in GM in the future.

As well as the expertise in managing the governance and oversight of complex programmes provided by GMCA, there was a need for support from organisations with expertise specific to Children's Services and in particular in using evidence and experience to support innovation in that context. Two organisations, the Innovation Unit (IU) and Research in Practice, were contracted as learning partners from the outset and other input came from specialist support and access to wider networks from outside of GM. The input of external support was highly valued for bringing skills and experience in scaling and spreading and expertise in research and theory underpinning the innovations. This accelerated progress across GM by providing a common language and evidence base across the innovations, supporting the development of coherent approaches across the city region and by maintaining momentum of implementation, increasing capacity to support authorities on their journeys.

External support accessed included:

> Innovation lead capacity and coaching and support for local innovation leads.
> Training and professional development opportunities for both project leads and practitioners.
> Identifying and sharing key messages from research and theory.
> Bespoke learning and development programmes designed to meet the needs of the newly forming project teams.
> External evaluation and reviews of progress (e.g. the Strengthening Families evaluation led by University of Essex).
> Links to existing networks of authorities doing similar work (e.g. What Works Centre network for social workers in schools and the Public Health England (PHE) Community of Practice on recurrent care).
> Specialist expertise and advice to develop technical aspects of the work (e.g. the WISE project leading on a revised approach to risk assessments for child exploitation).

Importing

Choosing an innovation

The codification and strengthening of the evidence described above were seen as essential steps in supporting wider adoption as this provided a call to action making the case for change, while providing helpful guidance about how to deliver services that addressed that need for change. The artefacts allowed other authorities to see quickly and easily what was involved in implementing the innovation, the potential benefits and the theoretical foundation.

The choice and implementation of innovation was rooted in local priorities. Each local authority was building on their own local structures, systems and culture. There was no expectation that all four innovations would be implemented in all ten authorities, instead local authorities chose the innovation(s) that best suited their current direction, either building on existing strengths, such as a strong outreach service for young people on the edge of care, or to fill gaps and address known weaknesses, such as a weak early help strategy. Local authorities were supported in this prioritisation process by the Innovation Unit and were encouraged to consider both their own priorities and the organisational readiness to import each of the innovations. This process was found to be helpful in refining local thinking about which innovation best suited their needs.

One of the better sessions we've had, was looking at the options very early on.... made us probably think harder than what we had thought in terms of what was right for [LA] (Assistant Director).

The initial low uptake of Strengthening Families can partly be explained by this prioritisation process: the gap in provision for these families and the impact on numbers of children in care was not necessarily identified by local leaders due to difficulties in using local data to understand the problem (Boddy et al, 2020). By supporting access to external data on recurrent care, producing powerful personal stories of impact and by producing a robust evaluation of the service, Salford increased the traction for this innovation with other authorities and the spread gained pace as a result.

One of the lightbulb moments for me, was the workshop just before lockdown and parents were sharing their story. You are just speechless, aren't you, about the impact and the significant changes and how those parents shared their experience honestly (Project lead).

Designing local implementation

In the early days "*authorities have a million questions*" (GMCA) about how the exporting authorities did what they did, and are keen to understand as much as possible in order to inform their own thinking. Initially, the full picture of the innovation and all it entails is overwhelming, and authorities found it helpful to break down the process into a series of steps.

> *I spent a lot of time with the team planning the design and securing governance sign off and commitment for the pre-requisites and grant allocation (Project Lead).*

Most areas found the process rewarding in providing them with a solid foundation for implementation. In particular, authorities found the following helpful in ensuring that the local implementation included the core features and principles driving the innovation:

> **Provocations**: Provocative questions are designed to help local areas to reflect on the decisions that they are making and how they align with core values and principles. Examples of provocations include "Would this be good enough for my child?" and "What kind of adult do we want the child to be?"

> **Developing local theories of change**: Building on the original theory of change, local areas developed their own understanding about how practice and structures were related to outcomes. The local process was used as a tool for co-production, engaging partners in planning and a shared vision for the future. This process helped to make connections with other parts of the system, and to highlight the need for a wider strategic approach.

> **Stakeholder engagement**: Working with partners, senior leaders and other parts of the system helped to secure buy-in to the shared vision and commitment of resources. Innovation leads were able to marshal evidence of effectiveness, experience of feasibility elsewhere in GM and the voice of children and families to make the case for investment at a local level.

> **The voice of children and families**: Consulting with families affected by the innovation can be difficult when they are part of a *"hidden cohort"*, such as the families experiencing recurrent care. The expertise of the innovation lead in talking with these families produced powerful stories that made the case for change locally.

The artefacts, supportive structures and one-to-one support are not sufficient to drive adoption of innovation. The readiness of a local authority to adopt depends on necessary local conditions for innovation identified by GM leaders to include:

> A practice and management culture that supports experimentation and with values aligned to those underpinning the innovation.

> Strong local partnership arrangements that can provide both strategic and operational oversight of multi-agency teams and budgets.

> Leaders willing and able to commit resources, time and management capacity to the innovations, in addition to 'business as usual'.

> Staff at all levels with the skills, capacity and values to work both autonomously and collaboratively, to try out new approaches and build an alliance around a shared vision

> Stability of leadership and a stable local context to maintain commitment to the Programme and retain the organisational memory of lessons learned.

Not all GM authorities had these conditions in place at the start, but developed them to a greater or lesser extent over the period of the Programme. Some of these conditions could be disrupted by external events, including inspection, a change in leadership and overridingly in 2020, the pressures brought by the Covid-19 pandemic. These conditions were not specific to the four innovations that formed the Scale and Spread Programme, and where the conditions were in place, or developing, they fostered an appetite for innovation more broadly.

The process of co-design with partner agencies locally, the process of embedding the innovation into wider strategy and embedding the relevant values and ways of working all take time.

If it takes time to get the model right then that's fine. Build your foundations, trust and relationships. You'll move on at speed once you've got that (Project Lead).

Taking this time to build relationships and enable co-design produced a tension with the pace of change expected by some of the innovation leads, the limited time external partners were contracted and the time-limited nature of the funding demanded work at pace. This resulted in some innovations in some authorities being put in place very quickly, and then being shaped and adapted in practice to fit the local context and available resources. In these authorities there was a huge sense of momentum, but also a sense of being vulnerable to a change in direction with every new initiative and adaptation, and a sense that other parts of the authority and partnership did not have a good understanding of the work. For others, the design process was slower, and more collaborative as partner agencies were brought into the planning process and the innovation was embedded within wider strategic change. At the time of reporting, many of these innovations are not yet in the delivery phase as the result of a substantial amount of discussion about core principles and alignment with wider service structures. But the hope is that laying this groundwork will make these projects more robust to changes in funding. The relationships built to date certainly helped those authorities to adapt to Covid-19, in particular in those authorities developing Team Around the School.

Importing innovation

Adapting for local context

> Selection based on local priorities.
> Developing local partnerships.
> Building on local strengths and resources.
> Consulting with children and families.
> Recruiting and developing practitioners.
> Developing local leaders and culture.

Originating teams

Consultative groups of young people and families

Innovation teams

Strategic DCS

Partner agencies and governance

Exporting innovation

Originating teams

Innovation teams

Strategic DCS

Articulating the model

> Codification
> Theory of change
> Evidence base
> Principles and values
> Organisational requirements

Communicating the model

> Communicating values
> Coaching
> Learning with peers
> Walking alongside
> Practical advice
> Professional development

Making links between the innovations

NWD · ACT — Broadening the offer while keeping consistent relationships.

ACT · TAS — Supporting young people at risk of exploitation in education settings.

TAS · SSF — Supporting child development in the early years by supporting parents.

ACT · SSF — Recognising adolescent trauma and impact on future relationships and parenting.

Responding to emerging need

> Special educational needs
> Mental health
> Housing
> Adult social care

Responding to Covid

> Drawing on knowledge of research evidence and theory.
> Practitioners empowered to respond flexibly and according to need.
> Building on existing partnerships and relationships.

Developing approaches to prevention and to working at scale

> Building wider strategy around the principles of the innovation.
> Extending practice approaches and principles to earlier help to prevent escalation.
> Embedding specialist roles in other teams working with different types of need.
> Disseminating training and tools to the wider workforce.

Ripple effects on wider practice and systems

> Practitioner advocacy for individual children and young people.
> Practitioners championing ways of working with colleagues.
> Championing of values in the wider organisation.
> Wider use of reflective spaces and communities of learning.

Adaptation

Codification does not inevitably lead to 'compliance' to a pre-existing model. Even with the most rigorously defined innovation, No Wrong Door, authorities have amended and adapted to fit with resource constraints and local contexts. We would assert that this adaptation is neither aberration nor failure. Rather, it is the result of responding to local contexts, systems and cultures and developing alignment between that context and the design of the service.

To reflect this emergent understanding as the Programme developed, the language changed. The idea of *"scale and spread"* was replaced by *"adopt and adapt"*, underlining the flexibility within the Programme for local authorities to make the model their own. This included local areas giving their version of an innovation its own name to reflect its distinctive local identity (for example Rochdale's recurrent care service is called Nest). To avoid confusion, we continue to refer to the Scale and Spread Programme in this report.

Developing fit with local systems

While local authorities are mostly keeping to core features and principles for each innovation, they are adapting the role descriptions, composition of teams and design of services based on:

> The resources available to fund ongoing delivery, including both local and external funding streams.
> A desire to build on existing strengths in the local system.
> Aligning the innovation to wider strategic objectives of local partnerships.

Examples of these adaptations include:

> Delivering aspects of the core offer first, when this builds on existing service provision, while other elements are still being developed (NWD).
> Embedding a range of wider functions into the teams working alongside specialist workers (ACT / TAS).
> Working through existing team structures, rather than creating a dedicated team (TAS / SF).
> Moving qualified social workers into early help roles and vice versa based on local approaches to practice (ACT / SF/ NWD).

Responding to Covid-19

As well as adapting to existing local contexts, local authorities have had to adapt in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. All of the innovations in delivery across GM have so far stood up to the pressures brought by Covid-19 and remain in operation at the time of writing. Despite the crisis, the teams have continued to operate and to adapt to the new environment of working virtually and at a distance. A number of factors helped the innovation teams to provide imaginative responses to the emerging needs of families in the pandemic.

> **A strong value base**: The focus on maintaining relationships, keeping families together and on providing early help guided thinking about how to respond from the start.

> **Understanding evidence and theory**: Thinking about trauma and grief, the importance of context and the need for a holistic response to family's needs informed understanding of how the crisis would affect different young people and families.

> **Existing relationships**: The trusted relationships practitioners had built with young people and families meant that these practitioners were able to make contact quickly, build on their existing knowledge of the family's circumstances and offer trusted advice on how to cope.

> **Empowered professionals**: Being used to acting flexibly and creatively to respond to changing circumstances allowed practitioners to experiment with different approaches quickly and to iterate to improve quickly.

> **Access to expert advice and reflective spaces**: Being able to call on expert advice about how the crisis might affect families' mental health and access to support, and the space to think things through with colleagues supported the translation of these values, knowledge and experimentation into a revised offer for children, young people and families.

It was about us as practitioners being creative and trying to still reach young people and support them, and try and help them understand what this [Covid-19] is (Practitioner).

However, where projects were still in the design phase in March 2020, the need to reassess financial resources and the make-up of teams has caused at least one authority to revisit the design process.

Making connections between the innovations

Through the connections between innovations, both locally and at a GM level, leaders have identified opportunities to combine and integrate two innovations to provide a more coherent and holistic form of support. This includes:

> **Aligning the support offered to young people** who are both on the edge of care and experiencing or at risk of exploitation to draw on resources from both the complex safeguarding and No Wrong Door Teams.

> **Developing a Team around the Pupil Referral Unit** and working with complex safeguarding teams on prevention and early intervention for those at risk of exploitation.

> **Developing a Team Around the early years**, aligned with the intensive support for child development in the Strengthening Families approach.

> Recognising that exploitation is a common experience for the parents experiencing recurrent care proceedings and sharing expertise in managing the resulting trauma.

Extending the scope and scale of innovations

So far, this report has mostly been about the transfer of the core innovation from one place to another. Increasingly, local authorities are looking to move to scaling their approach within their authority to reach larger groups of children, young people and families.

There are a number of examples of the criteria for the innovation being extended to reach families earlier and to continue to support them later to embed progress.

> Extending Strengthening Families approaches to families at risk of having their first child removed and families working towards reunification with their children from care.

> Exploring how young people can be supported into adulthood through transitional safeguarding approaches.

> Extending Team Around the School to families in early years and further education settings.

Scaling poses resourcing challenges, given the specialist and intensive support provided in three of the innovations (NWD, ACT, SF) and the associated costs of protected caseloads, specialist placements and professional expertise. Instead, local authorities are looking at how to scale the principles and practices of the innovations, focusing most resource on the most complex cases while offering some services to those below the threshold for the innovation itself. A number of different models are emerging for doing this:

> **A 'pyramid' approach**: using the core innovation team to address the most complex cases while providing expert advice and support to colleagues working with lower levels of risk and need.

> **A 'diffusion' approach**: training a wider group of professionals in the principles and a tool developed within the innovation team to inform their wider practice with children and families.

> **A 'replication' approach**: increasing the number of specialist workers and embedding them in other teams to apply the model in a different context.

> **A sharing approach**: for recurrent care, there is appetite for thinking about how local authorities could share a team of workers to deliver Strengthening Families across local authority boundaries, but no such examples exist yet.

Managing this variation requires leaders to *"let go"* (IU) of some of the original ideas and to apply their expertise in different contexts:

That's been a challenge, but it's 'adopt and adapt' isn't it. I can only guide on what I know... I can go away and think about what theirs might look like, but I haven't got that that knowledge and know-how straightaway (Innovation lead).

Innovation leads were attempting to maintain sufficient consistency of approach in core activities and practices as the basis for ongoing shared learning. This process includes undertaking 'fidelity checks' to look for the core features of the model, a process developed for No Wrong Door and now extended to ACT and complex safeguarding. Originally designed as tool for compliance, innovation leads developed these processes to be less directive and more facilitative over time. The leadership skills and behaviours needed to work in a collaborative system are discussed below.

Where next?

Local authorities have moved at pace to implement the innovations and to develop the system conditions in which to do so. As they have done so, GM as a whole has continued to look outwards to get more ideas about future directions and additions and developments of the various innovations. Local authorities are at different points of maturity in designing and delivering the innovations and every local authority is on a journey of adapting and refining their approach. In some authorities the innovations have a "temporary feel" due to the fixed term funding and short-term contracts for the project teams. The variation and adaptations pose significant challenges for undertaking a single cost-benefit analysis of each innovation across GM, as does the different pace of implementation in different authorities.

A number of authorities have received funding to implement innovations in the next few years (both the original four and others) and are beginning a new process of design and developing fit. The distribution of this new funding is not uniform, and is granted to individual authorities rather than GM as a whole. Alongside this, the exporting authorities continue to develop their original innovation to extend the principles and practice more widely.

This presents some key considerations for next steps for GM

> A clear decision on the future of these innovations and a commitment to continue collaborative activity will give a greater sense of permanence and a sense of security for key staff.

> If this is to continue to be a collective journey, there is a need to consider how local authorities will be supported to continue to develop and adapt their innovations locally, within a shared strategic direction for GM as a whole. This section has highlighted the crucial role of the innovation leads and their teams in managing this tension, and in driving the pace of change.

> Given the diversity of adaptations, and the introduction of new innovations, GM should consider how the activity and learning that results from this experimentation can be consolidated and shared across the city region for the benefit of all authorities.

Learning and working together

An overwhelming message from across the system, from practitioners, managers, leaders and others, is the steep learning curve for everyone involved in the Programme:

> > How to practice with children and families in new ways and how to supervise and manage practitioners to do so.
> > How to articulate and codify a service approach and build the evidence underpinning it.
> > How to design and embed a new service according to a handbook.
> > How to export effectively to other authorities.
> > How to lead in a collaborative system.

There were significant commonalities in the collaborative behaviours and learning activities developed at all levels of GM: in practice, in leading projects, in leading innovation clusters and providing strategic leadership. This section draws out the key themes.

Authorities and individuals started this learning journey at different points. Some had experience of working in these ways and had significant expertise to share. Others needed time and space to explore the core concepts underpinning the innovations and of the process of innovating before they could build on these foundations to put them into practice.

Learning activities

Managing the different learning needs of each authority at different stages, while creating a sense of collective learning was challenging. This tension was managed through providing a variety of learning activities, for individuals, for teams, for organisations and for the clusters as a whole. These events variously focused on communicating existing knowledge from research and from other authorities, reflecting on and developing skills, and applying learning in practice. These activities included:

> **Training**, workshops and events centred on understanding and reflecting on research evidence and its connection with practice.

> **Expert advice** focused on the specific challenges that individuals, teams and organisations were trying to solve, with individual children and families, in design, or in engaging other authorities.

> **Coaching** focused on the development of professional competencies and skills.

> **Action learning and inquiry** through deep dives and peer review processes that bring together people with different perspectives to explore practice and systems in detail.

> **Collective, reflective spaces** in which groups could talk and learn from each other.

The core training provided by the learning partners gave the networks a common language to talk about their work, while reflective and collaborative activity helped to develop this into common approaches to addressing challenges. Individuals coming into GM during the Programme had to *"get up to speed and learn the lingo"*, as well as *"get out and about and see what others are up to"* (AD), outside of these structured processes. Flexibility of approach from learning partners and contributions from the strategic DCS, innovation lead and local leaders to accommodate new arrivals was critical.

As well as formal learning opportunities, practitioners, managers and leaders spoke about learning from each other through their day-to-day interactions. Practitioners particularly valued opportunities to learn from professionals in other disciplines within their teams. The expert advice of the clinical psychologist in supporting case formulation and the professional knowledge of Speech and Language Therapists and Special Educational Needs specialists were felt to have particularly contributed to increased understanding of children and families and how to support them.

The model is assisting all agencies to understand the context of each other's roles and the wider family context for children (Practitioner).

Building relationships

Scaling and spreading involves new and multiple relationships between organisations and between people in those organisations. Establishing and sustaining these relationships is the core task for everyone involved, and particularly for those in leadership roles (see Leading in a collaborative system).

These connections and relationships include:

> Local leaders contributing to collective leadership activity across the system.

> Local authorities taking the lead on scaling and spreading innovations to other authorities.

> Innovation leads, working with multiple authorities in a new set of relationships where there is a need to achieve progress quickly, with limited resources and capacity.

> Project leads within authorities, building new relationships with partner agencies, brokering new internal relationships in authorities and managing restructuring, team building and culture change.

> Multiple disciplinary relationship-building in new teams, bringing in new skills and expertise and developing new ways of working together.

The process of establishing and sustaining these relationships was significantly enabled by the rich network of existing relationships between individuals in GM, at all levels, as a result of previous collaborative working and of the movement of people around authorities in the city region. Individuals with a long history in GM could call on a wide range of people to support their project and to share their vision, and this gave them significant influence. Conversely, new arrivals into GM had to build connections locally and at GM level if they wanted to increase their influence on the direction of travel.

A key task of the system supporting collaborative activity was to shift these one-to-one relationships to one-to-many and many-to-many relationships, by bringing together people with common interests and similar roles to plan and learn together. Trust develops through repeated interactions that demonstrate commitment to shared vision and values. Importantly, trust cannot be mandated above or enforced on a group or system, it has to grow over time through the demonstration of mutual respect, honesty, empathy and forgiveness (Thaddieus et al, 2016).

This trust developed slowly in GM through the collaborative activities associated with the Scale and Spread programme that brought them into contact with each other and provided common experiences on which to develop mutual understanding. Collaborative activity could be operational, focused on getting the work done, or developmental, thinking together and exploring possibilities in a more reflective way.

The capacity of authorities and teams to participate in these collaborative activities was influenced by the capacity of individuals to make time and space for additional activity on top of 'business as usual'. Prior to the digital shift engendered by the pandemic, face-to-face meetings in GM incurred significant travel time, particularly when meetings were moved around the city region to ensure equitable access. The shift to digital meetings significantly improved attendance and participation in these meetings, though again the technological capability to participate was mixed. It is significant that collaborative activity continued through the various lockdowns and restrictions put in place in GM throughout 2020.

In order to progress operational activity, groups needed structure and direction to the conversation provided by the innovation lead or other facilitator, building on previous progress and resulting in a clear summary of discussion and decisions made that could be shared with connected networks and for those unable to attend. This kind of support was crucial for maintaining momentum and for allowing authorities to move at different paces, while still feeling like part of the group. These groups included collective decision-making bodies, like the DCS group, innovation steering group and local partnership boards. This type of activity, formal meetings with agendas and minutes and strict time-keeping are standard practice for many local authorities.

Making Connections

The infrastructure around the Scale and Spread Programme aimed to increase connectivity across GM, between individuals, teams and organisations.

Leadership roles

> Recognising the DCS from the exporting authority as the strategic lead for the innovation.

> Appointing one or more innovation leads, to develop the innovation for "export" and support authorities with adoption.

> Forming a Programme Team within GMCA to support both exporting and importing authroties.

> Appointing Learning Partners to support collective learning and feedback loops.

Collaborative activity

> Local leaders contributing to collective leadership activity across the system.

> Bringing local authorities adopting a particular innovation together into a cluster to work together.

> Project leads forming steering groups and stakeholder groups with partner agenicies, and within authorities.

Building Trust

The Scale and Spread Programme increased the quantity and quality of connections between authorities and individuals through:

> Developing a shared vision based around shared principles and a shared evidence base.

> Developing relationships with and between members of the group, understanding their strengths and where they need support.

> Collective problem-solving and sharing of resources to address common challenges.

> Safe, reflective spaces for sharing experiences and learning together.

> The exchange of peer support between members of the group.

> Continuing to expand the shared evidence base, through shared data collection and case studies.
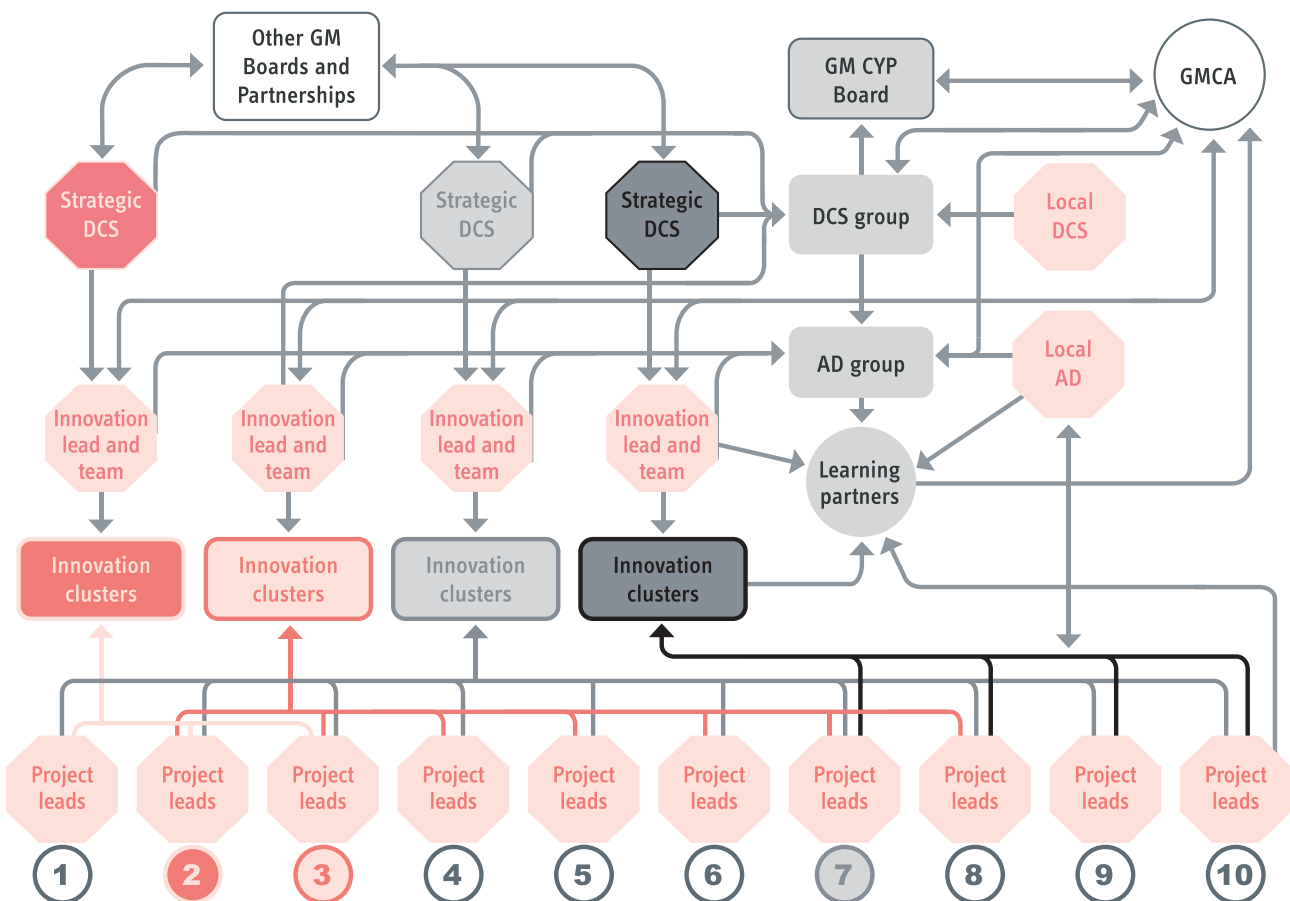
Reflective spaces

Opportunities to learn and reflect together take a different form. These spaces are less structured and the topics for discussion less well-defined in advance; the role of the facilitator is to guide emerging discussion brought from the participants. These spaces might be developmental workshops to help local areas think through their design process, or groups of practitioners talking about individual cases within their teams, learning sessions in which participants consider new research and reflective sessions in which participants are invited to consider themes and issues emerging from their own experience.

Learning a new skill and way of being requires the time and space to reflect. These spaces provide time to think and analyse away from the urgency and intensity of the helping relationship, and to unpick the emotions elicited by working with families living with the effects of trauma. The emotional effects of the work were felt at all levels of the organisations and system. Reflective spaces are a critical part of the development of new ways of working, both in practice with children and families and in designing and implementing innovation.

The explicit purpose of reflective spaces within the Scale and Spread programme included:

> Learning and embedding new knowledge or a new skill into practice.
> Making explicit tacit knowledge held by the group.
> Understanding multiple perspectives to identify next steps.
> Collective problem-solving and action learning.
> Containing and reflecting on the emotional responses evoked by new ways of working and working in ambiguity.

In participating in reflective spaces, groups became more coherent, as they worked and learned together. In the course of the activities above, groups were observed to be:

> Building mutual understanding and respect.
> Sharing knowledge and resources among the group.
> Exploring and enacting the core principles underlying the innovations and the Scale and Spread Programme.
> Developing a shared language and mental model of the problem they are trying to solve.

Running such sessions takes a different kind of leadership behaviour, the ability to let go of control of the agenda, willingness to hear and respond to different experiences, and ensuring that everyone's voice is heard.

It has been really nice to speak to each other away from the usual contexts that we're in, which are more formal meetings (Strategic Lead).

Designating learning events as a safe, non-judgmental space worked well to enable authorities to share openly. Groups in GM found it helpful to have both internal trusted advisors and external organisations trusted by all participants to make connections, lead initial conversations and smooth out potential tensions. This is a delicate task, and one which holds great influence over the communication flows and behaviours within the system, balancing a climate of appreciation and positivity within the group with the willingness to have challenging conversations.

There is a wealth of practice wisdom and learning emerging from the process of scaling and spreading and of putting the innovations into practice. Learning opportunities and collective reflective spaces built new connections within and across teams for both practitioners and local project leads. This has laid the foundations for a more collaborative approach to learning.

Communities of learning, in which people in similar roles or with a common passion, come together to discuss and develop their practice have emerged in each of the innovations. These communities are in their early stages, and they are mostly being facilitated by innovation leads and their teams. This facilitation is important as communities gain momentum and confidence, but should be less needed once these groups reach maturity. However, the administrative and logistical challenges of maintaining communities of learning remains for as long as the group continues to meet (Webber, 2016).

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> Explore and **enact the core principles** underlying the innovations and the Scale and Spread Programme.
> Develop a **shared language and mental model** of the problem they are trying to solve.

Designing reflective spaces

> Reflective space require **time and resources** to coordinate and manage.
> Facilitating reflective spaces requires leaders to 'let go' of the agenda and give control to the group – this is a **different set of behaviours** to those used to drive progress.
> Facilitators need to have the **trust of the group**, with clear guidance about what will be shared outside the group, with whom and for what purpose.
> Ability to access reflective spaces relies on **local capacity and permission from those in leadership roles** to commit to time away from 'business as usual'.

Reflective spaces diagram: Learning from Greater Manchester

Innovation lead and team

Expert practitioners

Innovation Unit

Research in Practice

External orgs

GMCA

Relevant knowledge

Practical experience

Facilitation skills

Connections to wider sector

Coordination skills and capacity

One-to-one

Coaching sessions

Supervision

Teams

Team-based training

Group supervision

Case formulation

Local systems

Deep dives

Peer review

Communities of learning

Clusters

Design workshops

Reflective learning sessions

Shared data analysis

Concrete actions

Professional and personal development

Increased trust and understanding

Co-created knowledge

Feedback of learning to senior leaders

Impact: Empowered professional

Impact: Collaboration

Impact: Adaptation

Continuous, collaborative learning

The individuals and teams working in the innovations have generated new knowledge through their own experiences of designing and developing each innovation. Through the innovation clusters, local areas shared these experiences with each other, gaining a common understanding of the problem they were trying to solve and new ideas to try. In some innovations, tools and activities were developed to provide a common framework for learning about emerging practice themes, quality and impact. These tools and activities helped to support learning by highlighting similarities and differences in approach and promoting curious conversations. These tools included:

> Shared datasets collected across authorities to give an overarching picture of activity in complex safeguarding teams.
> Fidelity checks designed to explore whether core features of an innovation were consistent across local implementations.
> Case and system audit tools to support the deep dive and peer review processes.

This iterative learning is complemented by evidence-building through both qualitative and quantitative methods. From the start, GM was committed to establishing the infrastructure to measure impact through quantitative data analysis. The cost-benefit analysis is seen as a crucial part of sustaining the services introduced through the Scale and Spread Programme to justify ongoing investment from local authorities and their partners and to attract external funding to continue the project.

Understanding the overall impact on outcomes across GM, and the differential impact in each authority is a significantly challenging task, for a number of reasons:

> Identifying and gaining consensus on measurable outcomes and linking these to costs avoided is a tricky problem, requiring a deep understanding of a service and its underpinning philosophy, as well as the potential effects on costs in the wider system.
> Modelling the range of adaptations and the difference in pace of implementation that have been highlighted in this report adds complexity to the analysis. As services evolve new processes and pathways it is difficult to maintain an overview of the definitions and data being used in each authority.
> Each authority has its own recording practices and processes for collating and analysing data. Securing co-operation from individual teams and local authorities to collect and submit required data has been time-intensive.

GM also recognised that this quantitative evaluation of impact only tells part of the story. To supplement the cost-benefit analysis with richer insights about children and young people's experiences, practice and systems, the innovation leads and their teams and the GMCA Programme team have collected developed and designed case studies of individual children, young people and families, the support they have received and the outcomes achieved. This report forms a third strand of understanding impact (see **Early impact and green shoots**).

Sharing the rationale and outputs of accrued knowledge and learning throughout the complex systems in GM has been challenging. Data and evidence collection are often associated with being held to account or being judged, rather than as a source of valuable intelligence for those running, designing and delivering services. There is some trepidation among project leads and local leaders about the use of data to compare performance between areas with very different levels of resources and capacity and working in very different contexts, though there is also an appetite for the results of comparing different approaches (ACT and no ACT in complex safeguarding for example). There has been a shift in attitude to the use of data and comparison where project leads see the value in the data collected and have opportunities to discuss findings and translate them back in to practice.

It enables us to really start to unpick the differences across some of the areas and enables them to see those key themes and take some ownership, to see that they need to take that forward. It's not just us in GM gathering data for no reason. There's a purpose for it (Innovation lead).

This has led to more motivation to reform recording systems and improve data collection to enable local areas to take part in these conversations. Where there has not been this shift, there is a negative view of the resources needed to "feed the beast".

Where next?

The collaborative activity associated with this Programme is significant and much has been achieved through the energy of individuals across the system and a growing commitment to working and learning together. The degree of networking, relationship building and collaboration is proving fertile territory for getting things done together and learning from each other. This way of working is being adopted more widely in the city region, for example in improving fostering and placement sufficiency.

A range of resources have been produced to enable learning about the practice innovations, and the processes, conditions, cultures and values underpinning the Programme. This includes the handbooks and other artefacts produced by exporting authorities, resources produced by innovation leads and their teams to support practice and implementation, the outputs from GMCA and this report by Research in Practice. These are valuable assets, for people coming into GM, or into the innovation teams, for authorities wanting to adopt one of the existing innovations for the first time and for the transferable learning to the wider sector.

Learning is ongoing, and continued learning capture and providing feedback loops into decision-making will be critical in realising sustainable value from this ambitious, collaborative programme. Communities of learning offer a means for continuing the collaborative learning culture and there is scope for making more connections, for example between people working with parents in complex safeguarding, Team Around the School and Strengthening Families, or people working to improve child development in the early years. There is a significant administrative task in arranging and managing the process of meetings and joint activity and in driving shared decisions into action. Where no administrative support was in place, this burden fell on innovation leads and practice leads, taking time away from their other roles.

> The resources produced by the Programme do not currently have a formal 'home'. They are distributed as needed by innovation leads and project staff, but are not freely available. There is a need to consider how these resources can be curated and made available more widely.

> The cost benefit analysis will help leaders explore the differential impact of different approaches, but it will not give clear and unambiguous answers about next steps. There is a crucial role for leaders to facilitate collaborative conversations about the future in a context of uncertainty about the overall budgetary impacts of the work.

> Providing ongoing capacity to capture learning from across the system will allow GM to continue to benefit from the rich experiences across the city region for the benefit of all ten authorities and their partners.

> Communities of learning will need ongoing support with facilitation and administration. To participate, individuals will need to feel encouraged by their manager and leaders to participate and to make time for ongoing learning and reflection, and the time will need to be protected from operational matters.

Leading collaboratively

Leadership of the Programme was distributed across the system, with some leadership tasks being undertaken at a GM level, working alongside those in local leadership roles. In such a complex system, no one individual can have detailed oversight of the 23 projects across ten authorities, and no one has their hands on all the levers needed to bring about change at pace. Leadership tasks and roles were therefore delegated to be closer to those doing the work to enable shorter feedback loops and design by doing. Within each local authority, projects leads were given significant autonomy to develop the teams delivering the innovation, acting as another layer of local leadership.

These leadership roles developed over time as the individuals and the system came to understand more about what leadership behaviours and qualities are needed to work collaboratively across autonomous organisations. As well as the traditional roles of leaders within organisations of providing vision, providing resources and influencing culture, leaders in a collaborative system also need to build and sustain relationships and act as a conduit between different parts of the system. This brings coherence to the multi-organisational shared endeavour.

Connection and communication

A core function of leaders in a collaborative system is to make connections, both across authorities and within the decision-making structures of their own authority. (Hoppe and Reinault, 2010).

The innovation lead and strategic DCS are central nodes connecting the cluster, reporting upwards to decision-making groups and making connections to wider strategy and activities outside of GM. Individuals in these roles work with the complexity of competing interests and opinions emerging from working across up to ten authorities, with GMCA and the learning partners and with external parties providing funding or additional support. This requires agility, resilience and a passion for the work. A key feature of these roles is managing the tension of leading a group in collective and collaborative activity without direct management authority, instead working through groups at a GM level to gain consensus, and relying on senior leaders to communicate back to their authorities.

Local leaders have a key role in communicating collective decisions by the group to those with responsibility for implementing those decisions locally. These communication channels, from DCS and AD to project lead and practitioners, were not always timely and effective, which could lead to delay and some friction in the relationships with the cluster and completion of activities. GM leaders reflected on these challenges and passed greater responsibility for operational matters from the DCS group to the Assistant Director Group, highlighting the crucial link between strategic and operational management and delivery of the innovation.

There was a critical role for the strategic DCS in re-energising both horizontal and vertical connections where they had lapsed. The DCS group and innovation leads quickly identified the need to engage new DCSs, Assistant Directors and project leads in the Programme to sustain an authority's participation.

Representatives of partner agencies were rarely part of these groups and networks at a GM level, and where they were, the communication channels between leaders at a GM level and local teams were not always effective. This meant the work of engaging partner agencies to support the innovations took place at a local level. This had its benefits in strengthening these local partnership relationships and ownership, but meant that there was no coherent approach to workforce development across GM for professionals in the police or health services.

Leadership behaviours, skills and capacity

Leading collaboration between autonomous organisations requires those in leadership roles to act through influence and persuasion to motivate individuals and the group collectively, to follow their lead. This type of activity isn't new to senior leaders in local authorities; it is the basis of much of the partnership working undertaken locally. It is new to many individuals in other leadership roles and they developed the required skills and knowledge over time.

The aim of collaborative leadership activity is to build and sustain trust between members of the group. Some collaborative leadership activities appear to have supported the increase in trust within the various networks within GM.

> Developing a shared vision based around shared principles and a shared evidence base.

> Developing relationships with and between individual members of the group, understanding their strengths and where they need support.

> Facilitating and shaping the meetings of the group to increase a sense of collective ownership, managing different views and guiding the group towards consensus.

> Demonstrating their belief in the shared vision by committing significant time and resources for the benefit of the group as a whole.

> Championing and celebrating the work of the group across GM and beyond.

> Having challenging conversations on an individual basis where members' contributions to the group are barriers to collective progress.

To work in this way requires more than a set of activities and processes to actively nurture relationships. It requires a change in mindset away from thinking about authorities in isolation to thinking about how to work together for mutual benefit.

We are moving from "how do I" to "how do we" (DCS).

This critical shift requires:

> A respectful acknowledgement of difference.
> A commitment to actively nurturing relationships, taking the time and space to build trust
> An inclusive attitude that sees every local authority and leader as having a contribution to make to the collective effort.
> A willingness to be flexible and for each authority to move at its own pace.

In doing so, leaders are mirroring much of the language of relational and strengths-based practice used by practitioners working in each of the innovations.

Strengths-based practice	*We now know that everyone is good at something, and that is where we start the conversation – show me the good. (DCS)*
Understanding lived experience and context	*Having the experience of having done the work helps, because you have a bit more of an understanding of what people have been through, and I think really that brings a lot to it. (Innovation lead)*
Working in partnership	*They really walked alongside us, every step of the way. (DCS)*
Willingness to experiment and be flexible to meet individual needs	*Don't be afraid to try something different, new ways of working and refocusing. (AD)*
Measuring what matters	*I don't think our goal is to please Ofsted, it is about doing the right thing, and this is the right thing. (DCS)*

Distributed leadership

The key leadership roles in the scale and spread programme were:

> **The strategic DCS**, leading the export of the innovation and links to wider strategy.

> **The innovation lead**, bringing together the local authorities adopting the innovation and providing pace and momentum.

> **The local DCS and AD**, providing local strategic and operational leadership and making links to the local system.

> **The local project leads**, leading on design and implementation, leading the formation and management of multi-agency teams.

> **The GMCA programme lead**, providing the overarching vision, oversight and connections across the innovations and into governance processes.

Leading in a collaborative system

Leading in a complex system of autonomous organisations requires leaders to provide a sense of direction, without being directive.

They do this through:

> **intentionally nurturing relationships** with each other and those they work alongside.

> **adding pace and momentum** to collaborative activity and facilitating collective reflectice spaces.

> **making connections** with the wider system and publically celebrating the work of GM.

> **providing high support and high challenge** to individual members of the group.

> **publically celebrating the work of the group** and individual authorities outside of GM.

This requires agility, passion, resilience and a willingness to listen, learn and experiment.

Supporting leaders

> **Senior, strategic support** to provide vision, resources and challenge.

> **Professional development** through coaching and reflective activities to develop new behaviours.

> **Supporting infrastructure** to coordinate collaborative activity.

Leadership flowchart: Learning from Greater Manchester
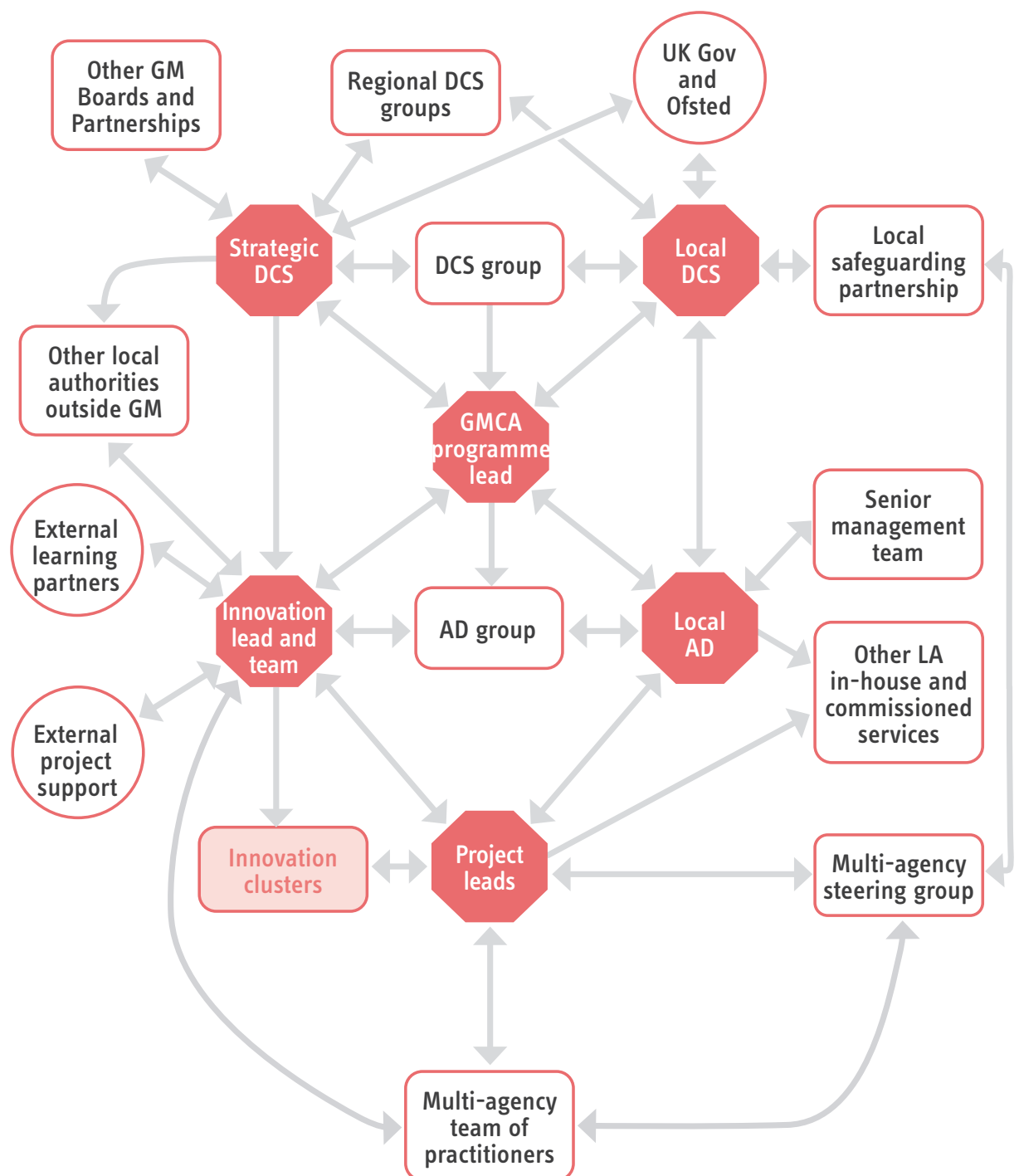
Supporting leaders

Leaders were required to work in significant ambiguity and uncertainty. Whether in local authorities or as innovation leads, some individuals found this particularly challenging, while others appeared to thrive on the potential to have a significant impact through their own efforts and imagination.

Whether they were thriving or struggling in this environment, individuals highlighted the importance of strategic leadership support to help them make progress.

> *You need strategic support. Our DCS and ADs are absolutely signed up to our early help response and how it is a partnership response (Project Lead).*

Those leading collaborative activity needed strategic support to:

> > Promote the vision and principles underlying the project to other senior leaders and at a strategic level.
> > Provide the time and resources to support the collaborative activities set out above.
> > Offer advice and support in negotiating relationships and balancing authority and autonomy.
> > Introduce an element of challenge where progress was not being made.

Some individuals had to work a lot harder than others at gaining the right senior support, especially in the early phase, as senior leaders came to grips with the process of exporting and importing innovation and the support and input required. Equally, senior leaders were balancing the needs of the innovation with wider demands of 'business as usual' and the need to respond to external events, such as an inspection, or the overriding impact of the pandemic. Where strategic attention is diverted away from innovation locally, this can leave project leads feeling isolated and unable to make progress. Where strategic leadership changed, and strategic interest in innovation increased, operational leads reported a palpable change in the progress they were able to make. Innovation leads provided a critical form of continuity and connection for project leads where strategic support lapsed, but cannot replace the mobilising effect of local strategic leadership.

Leaders in networked systems spend a lot of time in meetings and conversations in order to nurture relationships and maintain momentum behind shared activity. This is in addition to the significant technical activity involved in exporting innovation. Very few people in leadership roles within the Scale and Spread Programme were dedicated to the role full-time. They had other responsibilities within their local authority and their time and energy to commit to the Programme was limited and varied over time as other priorities came to the fore.

Having the time and capacity to support collaboration across local authorities, while continuing to develop the innovation and its connections to the wider system is critical to ongoing success. People in a range of leadership roles talked about the limits that their capacity put on how far they could contribute to the collective effort.

> *[You] can't dilute everyone's role. You need people dedicated to this (Project Lead).*

This dedicated time includes the time needed to reflect, individually and collectively on leadership practice and working in partnership with other authorities. The balancing of passion and drive to make things better with flexibility and understanding that people and teams work at their own pace is as challenging for leaders as it is for practitioners. Resilience is not an individual concept, rather it is a social one. The ability to lead and work in this space is enhanced by the network of relationships and support around those in leadership roles. Coaching and peer support have been highlighted in previous sections, but it is important to note that this extends to all those in leadership positions in a collaborative system. Coaching was helpful for those new to the role, or in the early stages of the Scale and Spread Programme when there was significant uncertainty, and peer support came to the fore after leaders had become more established in their role and were more confident in sharing what they had learned with colleagues in similar positions.

Where next?

People in leadership roles have developed significant skill and leadership behaviours to work in this way through their experiences to date.

> The funding for the innovation leads and their teams and the central Programme Team is temporary. Securing this experience within GM, and growing the next generation of leaders with the right skills, values and connections needs to be a key consideration for the future.

> The foundations for ongoing collaboration have been laid through trust-building activities and regular interaction. Resourcing this activity in the future will allow collaborative behaviours and activity to continue to mature. This might include investing in the digital infrastructure to include ongoing participation at a distance.

Early impact and green shoots

GMCA's cost benefit analysis (CBA) of the innovations is designed to provide insights into the impact of the Programme on children and families and on the associated costs incurred by local authorities in supporting them. This work takes time and the results are likely to be shared in 2021. This section provides another perspective on impact; the impact on practice, organisations and systems as perceived by those working within GM as the Programme unfolded.

The impacts described below were not uniformly experienced but where more than one authority or practitioner spoke about a positive impact, it is included below, and any identified enablers and barriers are described. The comments reflect a growing consensus that this way of working, both in the innovations and across GM, has had a positive impact on children and families, on practice, on local authority budgets and strategy and on the system as a whole. These impacts are emerging green shoots and will take time and sustained nurture to come to full fruition.

Children and Families

Practitioners, managers and leaders told stories of positive impact on children, young people and families with huge pride at what they had achieved. When asked about the impact of their work, they could often list the outcomes that were being measured by the CBA process and identify where individual families and young people had made progress on these measures, for example where a young person they were working with had fewer missing incidents recorded, or where their school attendance had improved as a result of the support provided.

Given the complexity and entrenched nature of some of the challenges facing young people, practitioners were keen to highlight that what looked like limited positive outcomes could be a huge milestone for an individual young person. The closeness of the relationship allowed practitioners to see this progress emerge, including:

> Improved engagement with education and increased punctuality.

"just one day a week, but for him that is massive" (Practitioner).

> Improvements in behaviours, and decreased involvement in anti-social behaviour and crime.
> Improved routines and boundaries.
> Decreased conflict at home.
> Avoiding exclusion.

Practitioners also identified 'softer' outcomes and positive impact of their practice that would not be captured in quantitative measures. These outcomes were often felt to be more important to the young person or family they were working with, and to provide the foundation for future progress in achieving more measurable improvements.

> Improving confidence, sense of self and agency.
> Children, young people and families' increasing understanding of their strengths and of the professional concerns about the difficulties they were experiencing.
> Positive relationships between family and practitioner were seen as good outcomes in themselves, as well as the foundation for improving more tangible outcomes. Increased willingness to stay in touch with the practitioner during a missing incident, or willingness to disclose exploitation were seen as crucial steps in keeping young people safe.
> Even where the problems the family or young person were facing were intractable, practitioners felt they had a positive impact on those they worked with.

I think sometimes we help simply by being there, walking with them in their pain (Practitioner).

Enablers and barriers

Practitioners and their managers have identified key elements of practice and structure that help to build relationships and to support families in a strengths-based way. At the heart is a set of values and beliefs about people and processes of change that underpin the application of many of these approaches. This "way of being" was felt to be critical to the successful delivery of new ways of working and was enacted through adopting and developing a strengths-based mental model of families and a positive language to talk about young people and families and their circumstances.

In addition, teams have developed tools and approaches to support this way of working that have wider applicability to practitioners across the system.

> Putting time and energy into initial engagement with children, young people and families, recognising the role of trauma and past experiences as a barrier to engagement and the benefit of some "quick wins" in improving engagement and increasing trust.
> Supporting the family to tell their story in their own words, and providing tools that help families to see their own strengths and challenges. Examples of these tools include an adapted Maslov's hierarchy, used to communicate children's basic needs to parents; and the iceberg model, used to help parents and young people talk about the challenges underlying the surface crisis.
> Being flexible about where, when and how to meet with young people and families to make them most comfortable, including the use of digital technology where necessary and appropriate.
> Taking a systemic approach to understanding the child, young person's and family's lived experience and to the networks of relationships around them that can act as sources of risk or support.
> Engaging young people in new activities to widen their experiences and interests, which increases engagement and resilience.

In terms of structures, practitioners identified the following as key enablers to achieving outcomes with children young people and families:

> Additional time to spend with families through protected caseloads.

> Permission to prioritise family needs over meetings and processes.

> Acting outside of the statutory child protection process of "assess, assess, assess" (Practitioner).

> Access to expert advice and sources of practical support for families within the team and through the wider organisation.

Professional challenge is a really good thing, because it even if it doesn't get to the root cause of things, it can give you some really good ideas and collectively come to a decision about the best way to support that young person (Police officer, NWD).

Not all professional relationships within the teams were considered to be helpful. In particular, there are significant tensions between the role of the police and of social workers working with young people experiencing exploitation, with the former prioritising gathering intelligence and the latter seeking to build trust and safety – these goals are not always aligned and there was limited support locally or at a GM level to help manage these tensions.

Limited access to resources to support children, young people and families was repeatedly raised by practitioners as a barrier to making as much progress as possible. Practitioners were concerned about the erosion of services available over the previous decade and identified gaps in universal, targeted and specialist services that affected the cohorts they were working with, including:

> Voluntary and community groups, particularly those with expertise working with Black, Asian and ethnic minority families.

> Universal and targeted services for children and young people including children's centres, youth clubs and activities for young people.

> Targeted and specialist mental health services for adults and young people, including support for grief, bereavement and trauma.

> Specialist placements for young people experiencing exploitation, including secure welfare placements.

Practitioners highlighted previous experience of social care and interactions with the police as a significant barrier to engaging families with the new service. Negative experiences with social workers and the police not only influence the family to see practitioners as *"just another busy body with a box to tick"* (Practitioner), but also influence the history of the family as documented in referrals and case files, and thus the pre-conceptions and assumptions brought by the practitioner to initial meetings. These negative interactions could happen while the practitioner was trying to build a relationship with the young person or family and disrupt the trust-building process.

It just takes one negative comment from another professional, and you feel like you are starting again from the beginning. It's a snakes and ladders board (Practitioner).

Whether the task of building relationships and working in partnership with children, young people and families is a social work or early help function is an open question in GM, with different authorities taking different approaches, based on their own practice culture. This was partly about a need for particular relationship-building skills, rather than formal qualifications, and also about the tension between working in partnership with families as equals while holding the power associated with statutory social work functions of assessment and decision-making. None of the practitioners spoken to as part of the project were working in statutory social work roles, but were working alongside statutory social workers. This separation from decisions about risk and removal was felt to be a core component of building and maintaining trust in some places, while in others it was felt that relational and strengths-based social work practice could overcome this power differential.

Practitioners

Practitioners hugely value the chance to put some of their core professional principles into practice and to reflect on previous practice and understand why it was such a frustrating experience.

This is the kind of work I came into social work to do (Practitioner).

Practitioners and managers have significantly developed their knowledge of research theory and evidence underpinning their work and to reflect on how this should influence their practice.

Understanding how trauma affects people's capacity to change is very important. It lets us look at parents in a different way, understanding where they came from, that they haven't had the tools to make these changes, and we haven't recognised that. Now we can name it (Practitioner).

Through working with multi-disciplinary teams, practitioners now have a much better understanding of their colleagues' work and practice and the thresholds and criteria for accessing a wide range of services. They are able to use the wide network of connections that they have developed to negotiate imaginative and creative forms of support for children and families.

With this new perspective, practitioners have developed the ability and confidence to identify social, economic and systemic barriers facing children young people and families and to act as advocates for them with the wider system of services in GM. They provide challenge to schools, health professionals, social care colleagues and police officers in their decision-making and attitudes to young people and families, sharing with them their knowledge and skills in how to effectively support the people they are working with.

Enablers and barriers

Access to research and to workforce development opportunities that promoted reflection on research evidence and how it could be applied to practice was highly valued for providing an intellectual justification for the "way of being". Training alone was not sufficient to transmit the enthusiasm for the way of working, and practitioners needed repeated confirmation that they *"had permission"* (Innovation lead) to work flexibly and creatively. The practice lead role was critical in providing this ongoing reassurance.

Having time and space to reflect, and experienced peers, managers and other professionals to guide that reflection were seen as critical. Not all practitioners had access to these spaces across all the innovations and all the authorities and partner agencies. There was some indication that police colleagues do not have this type of reflective space, and would highly benefit from it. These reflective spaces were particularly useful in responding to seismic events of 2020 – the pandemic and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matters campaigns following the murder of George Floyd, and locally, the publication of a report into historic child exploitation in the city region. These spaces gave practitioners space to talk about difficult issues and to explore structural inequalities and prejudice affecting those they work with.

Support and attention from senior leaders ensures that when practitioners raise concerns about the wider system, these concerns are acted on and barriers to practice addressed. Such action wasn't always timely, and this caused frustration among practitioners as they saw the effects this delay was having on children and families.

Putting principles into practice

The four innovations share some underlying practice principles, which are aligned with the Greater Manchester ambitions for Public Service Reform and the features of effectice practice identified in the DFE Innovation Programme (Sebba et al., 2017). By developing these innovations in different contexts, Greater Manchest authorities have generated significant learning about how to develop and support practice that is strengths-based, relational and trauma-informed. Practitioners describe a "way of being" that is supported by a range of enablers within their team, organisation and in the innovation clusters. They talk passionately about the impact this way of working has had on the children and families that they work with, and on their own practice, while leaders describe a range of positive effects on their organisations and the wider network. Impact across the ten authorities varied and was perceived to be accelerated by the presence of the enablers below.

Principles for practice with families

| Strengths-based approaches | Systemic and relational practice | Trauma-informed practice |

Delivered through

| Skilled direct work | Intensive and consistent relationship | Multi-disciplinary teams |

Working within

| Local priorities and resouces | Supporting organisational culture | Multi-agency partnership arrangements |

Common practice approaches

> "Quick wins" on practical issues to gain families' trust
> Listening to families tell their story in their own words
> Understanding strengths and interests to provide positive experiences
> Helping families understand the theory behind the professional concern and the support offered

> Shared goal-setting
> Flexibility in where, when and how to communicate with young people and families
> Identifing and working with wider family and community networks to provide support
> Advocacy for families with the wider system

Enablers

Getting started

> Evidence-informed training
> Recruitment for values and skills
> Coaching and mentoring
> Permission to work differently and outside of statutory processes

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> Functioning partnership working at a strategic level
> Established vision for local families
> Shared values, principles and evidence base
> Willingness to experiment

Keep going

> Practice tools
> Time and capacity
> Opportunities to reflect
> Access to expert advice
> Access to resources
> Cooperation of the wider system

> Engaged and consistent leadership
> Active nurturing of partnerships
> Championing new approaches to practice
> Access to additional funding
> Producing robust evidence of impact

Working together
Supported by

> Common leadership on practice issues
> Shared training and development
> Communities of learning and reflective spaces
> Shared tools and approaches
> Leadership support and challenge
> Securing engagement and momentum
> Organisational diagnostics
> Deep dives and peer reviews
> Shared evidence and data

Impact

Children and families

I think sometimes we help simply by being there, walking with them in their pain (Practitioner).

> Incremental progress towards measurable outcomes
> Increased self-esteem
> Increased willingness to ask for help in a crisis
> Building/repairing trust in professionals and public services
> Having a model of a reliable and stable relationship

Practice

This is the kind of work I came into social work to do (Practitioner).

> Increased job satisfaction
> Increased understanding of challenges facing children and families
> Increased knowledge of evidence and theory and confidence in applying them in practice
> Increased understanding of the roles and services in other agencies

Local systems

We are starting to have some good strategic discussions about the future shape of early help (Project Lead).

> Local evidence of cost savings and improved outcomes
> Improved inter-agency processes and communication
> Improved strategic relationships with partner agencies
> "Ripple effects" on wider practice and culture
> Increased appetite to innovate

GM system

I think we have understood that this is not about consistency, it [is about being] the best thing for that place (GMCA).

> Increased capacity and infrastructure for innovation and collaboration
> Improved understanding of system conditions for innovation
> Increased connections and collaborative activity between authorities

Organisations and local partnerships

Some local authorities were able to describe early signs that these positive outcomes in individual cases were having an impact on budgets and decision-making at a local authority level.

Early indications of system-level impact identified by one or more adopting local authorities included:

> Reduction of use in secure welfare placements.
> Reduction in re-referrals into early help
> Reduction in out of borough placements.
> Reduction in rates of looked after children in particular age groups.

As well as these measurable outcomes, authorities report improvements in the internal processes that indicate improved experiences for children and families, including:

> Better awareness of how to identify potential problems and make a referral among professionals in the wider system.
> Improved signposting to early help, decreasing referrals to social care.
> Earlier and identification of need for specialist support for pregnant women with previous children removed.

Previously school settings had little or no direct support but the TAS approach gives them confidence in their decision making and threshold judgements leading to better outcomes for families (Practice Manager).

For some, it was too early in the process of implementation to see results on budgets or numbers of children moving through the social care system but local leaders identified wider benefits of the process of innovation that they had experienced so far.

Local authorities that did not have the system conditions for innovation in place have made significant progress in developing them and this had laid the foundations for adopting future innovations. The impact on those authorities that already felt confident in innovating is less obvious, and some of these authorities question the value that the Programme brought to them.

Authorities have seen benefits to improved partnerships and better working relationships with police, health agencies and schools from an early stage. Authorities further into the delivery phase report increased commitment and inter-agency working with partner agencies beyond the core partnership, including mental health support and counselling and housing support.

Within the pilot area, there has been development of some really good partner relationships. We are starting to have some good strategic discussions about the future shape of early help, how we deliver this in localities and the role of different partners (Project Lead).

In some areas, conversations sparked by the Programme led to much wider strategic conversations and plans to address the wider context facing children, young people and families, with the potential to embed the innovation in wider practice and thereby more sustainable to changing circumstances, while providing an explicit set of values and approaches to inform the wider strategic approach.

There is evidence that practice within the innovations is starting to have a "ripple effect" out into wider organisations and partnerships in some, but by no means all, local areas. Here the experience of establishing and developing the innovation has provided a strong foundation for developing training and workforce development approaches for a wider group of practitioners. Where organisations were developing wider practice reform inspired by the innovations, there were signs that this was creating a feedback loop, amplifying and accelerating changes to practice both within and outside of the innovation teams.

My other managers look at my team and think, I want to try some of that! (Project lead)

Enablers and barriers

The distribution of external Programme funding in equal portions to each local authority, and the requirement for local authorities to contribute additional funding, meant that the resources available to implement innovation were uneven across the ten. This severely constrained some authorities' ability to commit dedicated resources and meant that team sizes and roles differed substantially. The short-term nature of the funding arrangements led to the use of fixed term roles and secondments, giving the innovations a temporary feel in some places.

Some authorities were able to secure additional resources from partner agencies, local transformation funds and external sources. This funding allowed them to recruit practitioners and managers afresh, rather than transferring existing staff. This was felt to be important in securing practitioners with a commitment to the ways of being, and with the right skills and experience. Others were struggling with recruiting, especially to specialist roles, and this caused significant delay in seeing the full potential impact of the service when fully staffed.

Some local authorities were able to talk confidently about emerging budgetary impact because they had invested in the recording and reporting systems to provide them with the information they needed to decide if the innovations were having a positive impact on costs. Others had struggled to establish those systems and were less confident that they could demonstrate the reductions in social care activity and cost-saving effects.

The existing practice culture could be an enabler or a barrier to embedding the new ways of working. Where the organisation's practice approach mirrored that of the innovation, by underlining the importance of relational and strengths-based practice, this meant families received a more consistent form of support and practitioner advocacy for families was more likely to be heard. Maximising ripple effects requires substantial senior leadership support to consolidate and solidify. Local authorities were developing training materials to use with wider teams, promoting practitioners in the innovation teams as champions and advocates and drawing on the voices of children and families to make the case for the new ways of working. It was too early to tell how effective these attempts might be.

GM and the wider system

The overarching achievement for the GM system as a whole was bringing all ten authorities on the journey and maintaining a collaborative approach to the Programme. This was by no means a certainty at the start.

Not one single local authority walked away from the Programme. I'm immensely proud of that (GMCA).

As a result, the capacity of the system to support innovation and collaboration has significantly increased. Individuals in leadership and infrastructure roles have developed significant knowledge and skills about the process of innovation and the skills and behaviours needed to work collaboratively across a diverse system.

In putting the four innovations into practice, the ten local authorities and their partners have made a significant contribution to the understanding of how to put the Public Service Reform principles into practice when working with children and families, and in doing so have generated learning for the wider system about the leadership qualities, behaviours and structures that support this way of working. There is now a group of practitioners and managers across GM with a strong commitment to the value base and who champion this way of working and are keen to advocate for it more widely.

The Scale and Spread Programme has been a catalyst for significant change in the dynamics and connections within the GM complex system. The collaborative activity described in this report has increased and enriched the number and quality of connections between individuals, teams and authorities. There is increased mutual understanding within and across groups of leaders and networks of authorities and respect for each other's strengths and progress.

GM as system has developed many of the features of a learning organisation on a multi-organisational scale (Senge, 1990). The infrastructure to allow individuals to develop personal mastery, to learn within and across teams and to reflect on the wider system in which they work is in place, and practitioners and managers benefit from developing their practice in this way.

The success of the Programme has contributed to increased support for collective action to meet the needs of children and families across GM in GMCA and the strategic leadership of GM authorities. The Programme has shown that the tensions between a desire for a uniform approach across GM and the variety of structures, cultures and approaches across the ten authorities can be navigated.

This isn't about consistency anymore. I think we have understood that this is not what it is about, it [is about being] the best thing for that place. The adaptation and variation is a good thing, and it is necessary to make this work (GMCA).

The strategic relationships formed and enriched by this Programme at a GM level have provided a foundation for closer working during the pandemic. The relationships between individuals in strategic roles facilitated quick and meaningful conversations about how to respond based on a shared set of values and an understanding of each other's local context. These relationships were put under strain as the pandemic unfolded, pulling authorities in different directions, but the commitment to working together for the benefit of children and young people across the city region remains, and the peer support provided by the various networks have been highly valued as people navigate this unknown and emotionally charged terrain.

Enablers and barriers

Collaboration, like the new ways of working with children and families, is a "way of being" as much as a formal Programme of activities and structures. There are similarities between the attitudes and behaviours of collaborative leaders and those required of practitioners. Where leaders consistently demonstrated these behaviours, collaborative activity was strengthened.

There is a tipping point where relationships are established and trust is evident. This enables conversations that are both supportive and can offer challenge – a key feature of the restorative practice principles underpinning the innovations. In some groups and networks, there were signs that members felt able to have honest conversations about challenges they are facing, to ask the network for help and, crucially, to voice disagreements about the approach being taken and to engage in constructive discussion to find solutions and compromise. Some groups were still navigating the journey of building the trust required to have these conversations.

I'm not telling you anything that I haven't already said to the group, they know how I feel. We'll find a way through (DCS).

The funding received from the Department for Education to support the Scale and Spread Programme was a critical catalyst for the collaborative activity that followed. The idea of scaling and spreading had been around in GM for some time, but the funding enabled some key infrastructure, and brought all the local authorities into the discussion.

The infrastructure for innovation, including that provided by the exporting authorities and GMCA was critical in making such progress in such a short time. Individuals within these organisations committed significant time and energy into making the project work and in removing barriers and building connections across the system. The administrative activity associated with driving collaboration across GM cannot be underestimated, much time and capacity of sometimes quite senior staff was spent sending meeting invitations, booking rooms and managing contractual details.

Where next for GM

There is significant support for continuing much of the work undertaken through Scale and Spread, and the resulting services. Practitioners, managers and leaders all express their belief that these new ways of working are beneficial for children and families and are an improvement on 'business as usual'.

Continuing the four innovations

Most of those we spoke to were committed to continuing the work they had started in some form. The seed funding provided through the Department for Education has provided sufficient momentum to get many services through the design phase and into delivery and there is enthusiasm for ensuring the benefits of this upfront investment are realised. However, there are concerns about the cost and sustainability of these services, and how far the innovations can be scaled to meet the level of need in the community. A number of authorities felt that there was a need for consolidation and review of what had been achieved so far and the impact on individual families, on practice and on budgets. The cost-benefit analysis at a GM level will contribute to the conversation about sustainability of the innovations in their current form.

1) How will GM authorities come to a shared position about future investment in and development of the individual innovations, based on both the cost benefit analysis and wider learning captured to date?

Authorities are not standing still waiting for the results of the evaluation. A number of authorities have identified the need for ongoing adaptation of both the operational model and the surrounding strategy to respond at scale and to emerging needs.

This constant adaptation and evolution of services has implications for what GM does next to sustain and develop the benefits they have seen to date. The Programme has demonstrated the benefit of a test and learn approach, with those local authorities further ahead providing learning to support others. Each innovation cluster has developed tools and approaches for supporting the new ways of working that would benefit other innovation teams and beyond. The reflective spaces and communities of learning that have been formed by the Programme provide a valuable framework for continuing to share learning and develop together. This has been supported by infrastructure and individuals tasked with capturing that learning and disseminating it to others, keeping an overview of the various adaptions and approaches across GM and providing opportunities for local authorities to connect and to walk together when they are on a similar path. This infrastructure also has a role in ensuring some underlying consistency of approach, a shared set of values, a commitment to core features of the service and shared tools for monitoring performance and quality.

> How will GM guide the development of adaptations to maintain the core features of the innovations, while exploring potential opportunities for growth and change?

> How can GM ensure that the infrastructure for sharing and connecting is maintained to maximise the learning from this experimentation across GM?

> How can GM continue to support established and emerging communities of learning of practitioners and managers who want to continue to learn and develop together as their roles mature?

Developing system-level approaches

Thinking beyond individual innovations, there is potential to explore how the experience to date can influence the wider system in which the innovations are based. Together, the innovations have explored new ways of working across the life course, with families with very young children, school-age children, adolescents and with parents at risk of losing a child in public law proceedings. There is increasing recognition that the individual innovations are only the start of exploring this new way of working and that the relational and strengths-based practice has broader applicability to a much larger group of children and families. Where the values and principles of the innovation are aligned with the principles of the wider system, the individual innovations benefit from, and in turn positively influence, wider practice and strategy. These changes are further drivers of the local adaptation of innovations, as authorities tweak the operating model to fit with wider strategy, or diffuse principles beyond the boundaries of innovation teams.

> How can the experience of the innovations contribute to the development of wider strategic approaches to early help, vulnerable adolescents and supporting potential and new parents?

> How can GM use the tools and approaches developed through the Scale and Spread Programme to support individual authorities to think strategically when adopting a new innovation in the future?

> How can GM support the development of organisational culture that supports relational and strengths-based working for more children and families?

Innovating in a period of uncertainty

GM, like the rest of the country, is in the midst of a global pandemic and the associated public health measures. As the final interviews were underway, GM was the focus of national news, negotiating with government over financial support and new restrictions on business and social life. Such a huge event will test existing relationships and dynamics within the system. While many of the consequences are not yet known, it is certain that the financial implications of responding to the pandemic are significant and will set the context for any further investment in innovative support for children and families in GM. The innovations have shown that they are able to adapt quickly to a crisis and offer important learning for the wider system about doing so.

> How can GM use the expertise and experience of the innovations to inform this ongoing response to Covid-19 and the economic and social impact on children, young people and families?

Resources and infrastructure

The funding received to support the Scale and Spread Programme is coming to an end and with it, some of the core infrastructure that has supported the progress to date.

There is a need for ongoing resource to maintain and develop the benefits seen to date, and to support ongoing learning and adaption. This report has highlighted the importance of key roles and infrastructure that have supported adopting and adapting and the ongoing learning and development process.

> Innovation leads and their teams: individuals tasked with bringing together clusters of local authorities to develop new services and to share learning in an ongoing journey of adaptation. One of these roles has been delivered by the Innovation Unit in their role of learning partner, others are on fixed term contracts.

> Programme team: the team providing significant project management, administrative and evidence-gathering support, making connections with different parts of the system and linking to governance structures.

> Learning partners: External, expert support in the process of innovation and of developing practice and in capturing and reporting learning back into the system.

There is a gap in the current infrastructure and the involvement of partner agencies in the collaborative GM activity with both leaders and practitioners. This leaves individual authorities to negotiate the resources and support required for these practitioners and services to contribute to the innovation and wider strategy. While there is value in these local relationships, there might also be collective benefit in having some of those conversations at a GM level.

Existing infrastructure roles may look different in the future, as they too evolve to meet the emerging needs of local authorities and their partners, but the support they provide is crucial 'glue' holding together the diverse networks of authorities and partners. The individuals in these roles have learned an immense amount about how to do this kind of work and forged important relationships across the system that are bearing fruit in increased collaboration and connectivity. Some of that expertise will be lost when external partners withdraw, or if the funding for temporary posts ends. This is a significant threat to the sustainability of the Programme.

> How can GM collectively resource the infrastructure needed to underpin future collaboration and mutual support?

> How can GM secure the capacity and capability to support future innovation and ongoing learning and adaptation from with the city region?

> How can GM bring partner agencies into the conversation at a GM level?

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