

## **REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES**

### **TRANSFORMING CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. This report is intended to provide an update on performance in Children's Social Care services over the last eighteen months and to seek agreement for the implementation of a new operating model for the division, to be delivered through the Children's Social Care Transformation Programme.

#### **Information and Advice**

2. Child protection services within Children's Social Care and safeguarding services within the wider Children's Trust have been the subject of focussed improvement activity over the last two years. This followed a period in which the service was found to be inadequate by Ofsted in an unannounced inspection (October 2009) and announced inspection (March 2010), and which led to the Department for Education issuing an Improvement Notice. The independently chaired Safeguarding Improvement Board, established in response to the Notice and involving the Chief Executive, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, Corporate Director, Service Director for Children's Social Care and senior colleagues from across the Trust, has overseen an improvement programme, which has culminated in improved performance across a range of performance indicators, including improved timescales for core and initial assessments, a reduction in re-referral rates and improved sickness absence rates for front line social workers.
3. These improvements have been recognised in a successful unannounced Ofsted inspection of our duty points in February, a successful Peer Challenge in May and a successful Ofsted inspection of our safeguarding services in September, leading to the removal of the Improvement Notice. The inspection found safeguarding services are now adequate, with good capacity to improve, ambition and prioritisation and performance management arrangements. The Safeguarding Improvement Board has now handed over scrutiny of the ongoing improvement programme to the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board.
4. The Fostering Service was recently judged by Ofsted to be good, whilst all residential homes are deemed to be good or outstanding. The Adoption Service awaits an inspection, which is due in January. A further unannounced inspection of safeguarding duty points is expected in the New Year.

5. The investment by the County Council in additional staffing for the service has been critical in supporting service improvements and enabling the service to manage the increased demand which continues to be placed on the service. This includes social workers, team managers, locality support workers, child protection co-ordinators, independent reviewing officers and occupational therapists. Alongside this, the advanced practitioner team, introduced in September 2010 to provide additional support to our front line staff has been embedded into our service. In summer 2011, a central team for managing contact between looked after children and their parents was established. In September this year, resources were reconfigured to establish a new team of 9.5 social workers and two team managers to improve performance for those children who require permanency, through adoption. This is an area which continues to be a challenge in terms of performance.
6. In Regulated Services a placements team and a central point of contact for identifying looked after placements have been established. Over time these two developments will impact both on performance and on the budget, as they will enable smarter procurement of placements and reduce the length of time children are in care.
7. A quality management framework (QMF) has been embedded in Children's Social Care. The QMF includes case file audit, supervision audit and case load management review. The QMF has been evaluated positively through external audit and allows managers to quickly identify performance issues requiring action. The QMF has recently been revised and now includes a tool for seeking service user feedback. Lessons are also learnt from complaints received by the service, with the Team Manager (Complaints and Information) regularly attending service management meetings to give feedback.
8. As Children's Social Care has moved from a period of crisis 18 months ago to a period of stability, work has been ongoing to improve the culture of the division. In March 2011 the Council approved a "statement of intent for children's social care", which contained a new vision for the division:

"Giving the most vulnerable children and young people in Nottinghamshire the support and protection they need to be safe, secure, happy and to achieve their full potential".

Work to develop culture has included improving communication throughout the division, ensuring a senior leadership that is visible and listens to front line colleagues. A culture of accountability is developing with managers and staff holding each other to account and action is now taken when required to challenge poor and unacceptable performance.

9. Despite the changes already made and the external recognition of the improvement in the service, there is still much to do. There are higher numbers of children on protection plans than almost all of Nottinghamshire's statistical neighbours and whilst the number of looked after children remains significantly lower than the average for England and our statistical neighbours, the number continues to rise. This places pressure both on colleagues delivering the service to these children and on the budget.
10. It is against this backdrop that our Transformation Programme has been established. The Programme is overseen by a Board which is chaired by the Corporate Director and includes colleagues from Children, Families and Cultural Services, HR, Finance and the Improvement Programme. The Transformation Programme is a standing item on the

Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board and Children's Trust Executive, and reports into the Council's Improvement Programme Directors Board.

11. Children's Social Care has been working in partnership with iMPower consultancy over recent months to develop a new operating model for the service that will deliver improved outcomes for children and young people requiring support from Children's Social Care, and deliver the division's vision, as set out in the statement of intent
12. The process of developing the future operating model has involved meeting with frontline staff in Children's Social Care and understanding current performance information. This has ensured that the proposed operating model reflects what is working well, opportunities to address the challenges the service is still experiencing and builds on the improvements already made. The operating model proposes the journey children and families will make through the service in the future, the way the service will be configured, and the infrastructure and workforce development opportunities that will be needed to support colleagues to do their job effectively.

### **The proposed future operating model**

13. In the future operating model, it is proposed that services will be grouped as described in the paragraphs that follow.

### **Fieldwork Services**

#### **Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub**

14. A multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) will be the first point of contact for all work entering Children's Social Care. The MASH will act as the front door for the service. This is an approach that is already working effectively in other local authorities in the country.
15. Children's Social Care staff will work in the MASH alongside colleagues from a range of services including the police, health, adult social care and early intervention services to ensure that families access the right support for them. The MASH will only hold work for a very short period of time, in the vast majority of cases for no longer than twenty four hours.
16. The MASH will pass contacts that do not meet the Children's Social Care threshold to early intervention services. For cases requiring allocation within Children's Social Care, the MASH will gather multi-agency information before passing to Children's Social Care. The plan is to have a MASH in Nottinghamshire no later than November 2012.

### **Locality Teams**

17. Developing a MASH allows the service to revisit the current reception & assessment and children's services teams model, opening the way for social workers to do what they have said they want to do and work in 'locality teams', covering relatively small geographical areas. Locality teams will undertake assessments, and hold responsibility for child in need and child protection cases.

### Through care teams

18. The increase in numbers of looked after children month on month together with a huge increase in the number of children with child protection plans has put enormous strain on children's services teams. This has resulted in a number of looked after children experiencing significant delay and drift in the care system, which can have a negative impact both on outcomes for the child and on the budget due to placement and allied costs.
19. Feedback from front line staff and managers has been that a dedicated service for looked after children needs to be considered. The new permanence team referred to previously has been a first step, with the plan over the next twelve months to develop a dedicated through care service to support looked after children and young people, including those who require support from the aftercare service.

### **Children's Disability Service**

20. In line with the consultation that took place in April 2011, services for disabled children will be provided by an integrated Children's Disability Service, bringing together fieldwork services with residential homes, homecare, sitting and befriending, occupational therapy and short breaks. Services delivered to children and young people with disabilities will come together under one line management structure with effect from January 2012. As part of the transformation programme, a transitions project is exploring the best way to support young people with disabilities with the move from children's to adult's social care.

### **Access to Resources**

21. It is proposed that specialist provider services (with the exception of services to children with disabilities) are brought together in an "Access to Resources group". Bringing provider services together will allow vulnerable children and young people to access specialist help flexibly and equitably and the targeting of resources where it is identified they are most needed. Fieldwork teams will be able to access a wide range of specialist services to best meet the needs of children and families. The services falling under the Access to Resources group will include:
  - the Contact service
  - the Family Resource service
  - Family Support
  - the Family Intervention team
  - the Placements team
  - the Fostering service
  - the Adoption service
  - mainstream residential homes
  - Children's Social Care child and adolescent mental health services
  - commissioned services such as family group conferencing and advocacy support.

## **Safeguarding, Independent Review and Quality Assurance**

22. The Safeguarding, Independent Review and Quality Assurance group will remain in its current grouping within the Children's Social Care division, encompassing strategic safeguarding responsibilities, management of the NSCB and independent chairing.

## **Service Improvement**

23. The recently established Children's Social Care service improvement team has played a vital role in the ongoing improvements within Children's Social Care and in particular has supported the transformation programme, has led on the development of the Quality Management Framework, the improvements to the Framework-i case management system and the updating of the division's policy, procedures and guidance. The service improvement team has also worked closely with colleagues in the central learning and development team to commission external training for front line staff and managers in Children's Social Care. How this service is provided in future will need to be reviewed in the context of wider developments within the Children, Families and Cultural Services department around the data management, performance reporting, business planning and operational policy functions. For these reasons, the future configuration of the service improvement team is still under consideration.

## **Supporting Service Delivery**

24. Alongside the new service groupings, a revised budget structure and scheme of budget management will be developed and implemented, aimed at improving transparency around spend, improving budget management and forecasting and providing the opportunity to seek efficiencies through better understanding of unit costs and the merits of internal versus externally provided services. Based on the recommendations of the Munro review, a new key performance indicator set will be developed to give managers the information needed to make effective decisions and drive service improvements.
25. The new operating model for Children's Social Care is not just about the way that the organisation is structured. Over the next twelve months, employees will be equipped with better technology to support them to do their job more efficiently, including improved ICT support to managers and mobile ICT solutions for frontline workers. The costs for such improvements will be identified using existing resources, and where appropriate, drawing on Ways of Working funding. Work is also underway with colleagues in other services to identify bases in communities that can be used when meeting with families.

## **Workforce development**

26. As the new structure for the division is developed, it is critical that there is a focus on developing employees and the culture within the division. Workforce development will therefore be a key project moving forwards. The workforce development strategy will include embedding how performance is reviewed to commission learning and development opportunities for front line employees and managers. Models of social care intervention will be evaluated to develop a framework for a consistent standard of practice across the service, under-pinned by professional supervision. The wellbeing work started through the social work health check programme will be progressed to ensure that appropriate and robustly applied policies and procedures are in place to

safeguard employee health, safety and well-being. This will include ensuring that the various employment processes around cover, flexible working and more general time off arrangements are consistently applied to enable service needs to be fully met and where it is possible, to align those with individual preferences. These will be consistent with the working practices adopted by the wider County Council.

### **Next Steps**

27. Over the coming weeks, detailed work will be undertaken to develop the range of projects that will transform Children's Social Care services. There will be a particular focus on developing a detailed organisational structure, with proposals for these teams/services intended to be published in February. This will be followed by a consultation period with employees and trade unions and a phased implementation process in line with the County Council's agreed processes.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

28. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Implications for Service Users**

29. The proposed operating model is intended to improve the service provided to children and families by ensuring they are able to access support by appropriately skilled professionals at the earliest opportunity within their local communities.

### **Financial Implications**

30. The budget for the future operating model for children's social care will be set in line with the division's budget for 2012/13 and 2013/14 as set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

### **Equalities Implications**

31. A full equality impact assessment has been undertaken on all HR policies.

### **Safeguarding of Children Implications**

32. Implementation of the proposed operating model for children's social care will improve the arrangements for safeguarding children and young people.

### **Human Resources Implications**

33. The human resources implications of the proposed operating model will be considered in full through the development of detailed organisational structure.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That the improvements made thus far in Children's Social Care are noted and that the proposed plan to transform services to achieve the aim of developing high quality, financially sustainable and resilient services is endorsed.

**Councillor Philip Owen**  
**Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

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### **Constitutional Comments (SG 20/12/11)**

34. Cabinet is the appropriate body to consider the matters set out in this report.

### **Financial Comments (NDR 23/12/11)**

35. The financial implications are set out in paragraph 30 of the report.

### **Background Papers**

Children's Social Care Statement of Intent (April 2011)  
Ofsted Safeguarding Reinspection report (September 2011)  
Ofsted Fostering Inspection report (October 2011)  
Monthly Operational Performance Report (November 2011)

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

M19C2936