

13th December 2021

Agenda Item: 9

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

DELIVERING THE WHOLE FAMILY SAFEGUARDING PROGRAMME

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform Members of the development of the Whole Family Safeguarding Programme.
2. To seek approval for the establishment of the following temporary posts (three years, fixed term):
 - 1 FTE Service Director – Transformation and Improvement (grade subject to job evaluation)
 - 1 FTE Practice Lead (Group Manager) (grade subject to job evaluation)
 - 3 FTE Social Work Practice Consultant Development Leads (Hay Band C)
 - 1 FTE Communications and Engagement Officer (grade subject to job evaluation)

Information

3. In July 2021, Children and Young People's Committee received a report summarising the Case for Change published by the Independent Review of Children's Social Care. The report highlighted a range of national challenges, reiterated below:
 - the report identifies that there is a need for further investment in focussed, evidence-informed family help. It finds that within social care there is too much emphasis on investigating and assessing, and not enough focus on providing help and support
 - the report identifies that social workers are still spending too much time adhering to bureaucratic processes rather than spending time doing direct work with children and families. It identifies the need to do more to recruit, retain and support social care staff
 - the report identifies the need to improve the response to teenagers who face harm from outside the home, for example due to criminal or sexual exploitation
 - the report identifies that improvements are needed to placements for children in care, both giving a much greater focus on supporting kinship carers so that more children can live with carers that know and love them, and addressing the 'broken' placement market
 - the report is clear that "change will not happen without addressing the system causes", going on to state that "there is no situation in the current system where we will not need to spend more – the choice is whether this investment is spent on reform which

achieves long term sustainability and better outcomes, or propping up an increasingly expensive and inadequate existing system” Josh MacAlister, Chair of the Independent Review (p.12).

4. The report noted that the challenges identified broadly align with the situation in Nottinghamshire, and that a refreshed transformation programme was being developed to set out the local actions required to achieve the Council’s ambitions of achieving the best possible outcomes for children and young people through a more financially sustainable operating model, which places support to families in their local communities at the heart.
5. Prior to the publication of the Case for Change, the Council had approved through the former Improvement and Change Sub-Committee (23 November 2020), the development of four cross-cutting transformation programmes as the means of securing improved outcomes for residents and improved efficiency in the delivery of services, in areas where the Council devotes significant resource. The overarching aims of the four programmes are outlined as follows:

Improving Residents Access

- To make it easier for residents to access information and services, ensuring that we continue to develop an approach that focuses on people’s strengths
- To take a joined-up approach to digital development and a review of our systems.

Early Help and Prevention

- To develop and expand place based, whole system, integrated approaches to supporting those who are vulnerable, providing them with support early to prevent their needs escalating, helping them to maintain independence and simplifying their experience of getting support
- To develop a cohesive approach to early intervention, removing duplication both within the Council and across the system, ensuring effective use of resources and assets and providing an evidence-based approach to targeting resources and supporting activity to reduce demand for higher intervention/higher cost services.

Whole Family Safeguarding

- To develop a whole system operating model which takes a strengths-based approach to supporting families so that children in need of help, protection and care achieve their best possible outcomes.

All Age Approaches

- To take a “whole life course” approach, focussing on improving outcomes for people with disabilities including autism and mental health, by minimising risk factors and making effective interventions at key life stages.
6. The Whole Family Safeguarding Programme, under the leadership of the Corporate Director, Children and Families, will be the key programme through which services to children and families will be transformed, however the other programmes will also make a significant contribution. Through the Improving Residents Access programme, a

workstream is focussed upon further developing the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and Early Help Unit, in recognition of the pressures that the services are facing and the risk this creates in responding effectively and in a timely way to the needs of children and families, as reported to Committee in September 2021. A detailed progress report on this area will be presented to Children and Young People's Committee in March 2022.

7. Through the Early Help and Prevention programme, the Council will develop its future model for early help, including the role of Family Hubs and the Supporting Families programme, in providing support to families in their local communities. Further detail is awaited following the comprehensive spending review on funding for these programmes prior to a more detailed report being brought before Committee.
8. The All Age Approaches programme will include, within its scope, activity to provide more joined up and effective local support to children and families and schools, to enable children with special educational needs and disabilities to have their needs met earlier.

Whole Family Safeguarding

9. As noted at **paragraph 5**, the aim of this programme is to develop a whole system operating model which takes a strengths-based approach to supporting families so that children in need of help, protection and care achieve their best possible outcomes. Specifically, the programme will seek to achieve the following:
 - Children will experience stability and consistent relationships, to enable them to feel safe and to thrive
 - Families will be provided help and support from a range of professionals in integrated teams that meet parental needs as well as children's, so that more children and young people can live safely at home and in their communities
 - Friends and family and foster carers will experience better training and support so that more children who are in the care of the Local Authority will experience living in homes that are family-based and local
 - Teenagers and their families will receive more tailored support that recognises the risks young people may experience from outside of the family home, so that more young people are able to stay living in their community
 - Those young people that do need residential care will live locally and receive care and support that effectively meets their diverse needs as individuals
 - Having practitioners with different skills and expertise in teams working in a strengths-based way will enable a refocussing of the role of social workers and improve the quality of holistic support provided to families.
10. Through the programme, the following benefits will be realised:
 - A de-escalation of needs – more families receiving consent-based help and support, with fewer requiring child protection plans or care proceedings
 - Children spending less time in Local Authority care (through young people safely returning home more quickly or achieving permanence through well supported adoption, special guardianship orders or child arrangement orders)
 - Fewer older young people needing to come into care
 - More children experiencing consistency of relationship with their social worker

- Less reliance on procuring high cost external residential care at a distance for children whose needs can be better met in family-based or local residential homes
 - Less reliance on the agency social work workforce.
11. Whilst there is an ambition for fewer children to require statutory protection and care, there is an unwavering commitment to ensure that those children that do need such support will receive it in as timely and effective way as possible. Wider societal or regulatory changes or judicial case law have the potential to impact on the numbers of children requiring help, support and protection, for example an increase in social deprivation may lead to a greater number of families requiring help. These changes will be monitored alongside the programme benefits to ensure that ambitions articulated in **paragraph 11** remain appropriate within the wider context.
12. This indicates both improved outcomes for children, young people and families and also mitigation against the forecast budget pressures facing the Council in respect of children's services in future years.

Programme Portfolio

13. The project portfolio within the Whole Family Safeguarding programme is being developed, and has brought into its scope projects that were previously within the Council's Remodelling Practice and Remodelling Care programmes. In addition, it incorporates outstanding actions from the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Children's Services improvement plan, previously reported to Improvement and Change Sub-Committee. The outline portfolio is as follows:
14. **Strengths-based Practice:** This project aims to embed a consistent culture of strengths-based practice across the Children & Families department following initial implementation focussed within Youth, Families & Social Work teams. This principle will be designed into the planning and implementation across the portfolio. In addition, a range of design sites will be developed, to test strengths-based approaches to practice. Evidence suggests that strengths-based practice leads to a range of benefits, including improved quality of practice and therefore outcomes, improved retention of staff and more collaborative support to children and families at an earlier stage, and therefore cost avoidance due to reduced escalation and lower levels of statutory intervention. Early design sites being scoped include:
- Providing earlier, personalised and multi-disciplinary support to teenagers at risk of coming into care
 - Providing earlier, more focussed support to reduce the need for families to progress through care proceedings
 - Providing a more young person centred approach to looked after reviews for children in care
 - Providing earlier support to families and schools where the child has special educational needs and disabilities.
15. **Stable Workforce:** This project aims to ensure that social workers are effectively supported and that there are sufficient qualified and experienced social workers and managers to meet the needs of vulnerable children and families. It will focus on growing the number of social work apprentices the Council employs, developing alternative models

for supporting newly qualified social workers, reviewing the support for current and aspiring team managers, reviewing the conditions which support effective social work practice and developing workforce tracking data.

16. **Multi-disciplinary Safeguarding Teams:** This project will develop and implement multi-disciplinary approaches to providing help, protection and care to vulnerable children and their families. The first phase will involve implementing a multi-disciplinary approach to supporting children receiving help and protection through one of the district child protection teams, with a target implementation date of April 2022. The first phase will initially involve domestic abuse workers, substance misuse workers and adult mental health professionals.
17. **Kinship Care:** This project aims to deliver improved support to carers who are looking after a child of a friend or relative, whether that is an informal arrangement, there is a special guardianship order or child arrangement order in place, or the child is formally “looked after” by friends and family foster carers. This is to enable more children to be raised in a family home, preferably within their own family/close friends network, with reduced need for statutory social care involvement. A proposal for a kinship support service is being developed with the aim of implementing this by April 2022.
18. **Foster Care:** This project aims to increase the number of internal mainstream fostering households so that more children and young people who need to come into care can be found a local, family-based home. This project builds on existing project activity and includes the continued improvement of the fostering offer, development of recruitment, marketing and assessment processes, the establishment of hub peer networking and other methods of support such as short breaks carers and Family Fostering Workers, as well as a review and re-specification of data and reporting requirements. This project is also exploring where there are benefits to working on a sub-regional (Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire) footprint, building on the positive impact of Adoption East Midlands and the regional commissioning framework for children in care.
19. **Residential Care:** This project will deliver three new two bedded children’s homes previously approved as part of the former Remodelling Care programme, whilst also identifying the best model for securing residential care homes that effectively meet children’s needs moving forwards.
20. **16+ Accommodation:** This project will deliver the retendering of supported accommodation for homeless or looked after young people who are 16 or 17, unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people, young parents and vulnerable young adults including care leavers.
21. **Joint Commissioning & Delivery:** This project will improve the support to children and young people with complex needs who are on the edge of care with mental and/or physical health issues. The objective is to design and deliver timely solutions that support the child or young person either at home, in a medical setting, or stepping down from one to the other, which should lead to improved outcomes and reduced complexity of future demand. The first phase of the project focusses on improving the arrangements through which young people with complex needs access appropriate funding through the clinical commissioning groups so that their needs can be effectively met, and in addition

developing a proposal for developing specialist residential care for young people with mental health needs.

22. **Edge of Care and Placement Support:** this project will deliver a coordinated set of evidence-informed interventions for effectively meeting the needs of children on the edge of care and those at risk of placement breakdown. It will include within its scope existing projects, notably Safe Families for Children in Ashfield, the STARS social impact bond, and youth work support for young people at risk of placement breakdown.
23. To support the transformation programme activity, Essex County Council has been commissioned to act as a critical friend. They have been selected due to their role as a Department for Education “Partner in Practice” aimed at driving up practice standards in children’s social care, as a statistical neighbour to Nottinghamshire, and as an Ofsted “outstanding” local authority. In this role they will undertake a range of practice diagnostics, exploring the effectiveness of social work practice in Nottinghamshire, as well as undertaking a whole system review of the social care operating model, to identify what changes could be made to achieve the ambition of working in a consistently strengths-based, multi-disciplinary way, with a focus on providing support in communities, and improving the consistency of relationships that families experience with their social workers. As part of this review, consideration will be given to a differentiated approach to supporting children experiencing abuse and/or neglect and the approach to supporting teenagers. The first strand of this support involves a practice diagnostic of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, which took place on 18/19 November 2021.

Programme Resourcing

24. The Whole Family Safeguarding Programme outlined above is significant in scale and represents a major transformation of children’s services in Nottinghamshire. The Programme is led by the Corporate Director, Children and Families, supported by the Group Manager for Service Improvement who provides day to day professional direction to the programme in addition to her substantive role focussing on service improvement. This includes ensuring that the department meets regulatory requirements set by Ofsted and makes progress towards becoming an outstanding local authority. The Programme is supported by a team of colleagues from the Transformation and Change Group who provide professional programme and project management capacity as well as business change analysis.
25. Given the Council’s financial position and the operational pressures on children’s services exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic, there is an urgent need to ensure that the Whole Family Safeguarding Programme is developed and delivered at pace, whilst also maintaining a focus on the quality of social work practice, and ensuring effective help, protection and care to families during any period of transition to a new operating model. In addition, there is a need within the programme to ensure that children and families, as well as staff, are meaningfully engaged in developing the new operating model, to ensure that it effectively meets their needs. This will require dedicated and focussed capacity.

Proposal

Dedicated Leadership Capacity

26. Dedicated transformational leadership capacity is required within Children and Families to drive the Whole Family Safeguarding Programme forwards at the required pace and maximise the opportunities they bring for children and families, and to work closely with the Transformation and Change team in ensuring that the programme is effectively supported to deliver the required outcomes, both financial and non-financial. In addition, there is a need to ensure that a system-wide view is taken so that the wider cross-cutting programme portfolio outlined at **paragraph 5** delivers a joined-up service offer to children and families. There is currently insufficient leadership capacity within the Children and Families Department to achieve this. It is therefore proposed that a temporary, three-year fixed term 1 FTE Service Director for Transformation and Improvement post is established. This postholder would be expected to provide high levels of support and challenge within the Departmental Leadership Team to achieve the level of change required, and across the Council and with partner agencies, to ensure that the transformation of services is evidence-informed, child and family focussed, co-produced with staff and financially robust. The postholder would also be expected to ensure that the Council is outward facing in learning from best practice in other local authorities, and from organisations such as the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care, the Social Care Innovation Programme and Research in Practice. In addition, the postholder would lead the departmental response to any changes that arise following the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, with review recommendations anticipated in March 2022.
27. This post would take line management responsibility for the Group Manager (Service Improvement), which would free up the capacity to focus on continuous improvement and enabling the department to continue to progress towards becoming an outstanding authority. It would also allow better alignment between in-department service improvement and change activity focussed around practice, and Council-wide transformation priorities, and ensuring that operational performance is not destabilised to the extent of regulatory risk by any operating model changes.

Specialist Delivery Capacity for Whole Family Safeguarding

28. Additional temporary delivery capacity is also required for the Whole Family Safeguarding Programme, in addition to the allocated resource through the Transformation and Change Group. This is in recognition of the need for subject matter expertise to inform the development of the operating model. This would be for a period of three years. The proposed additional resources for the next phase of programme development and delivery include:
- 1 FTE Practice Lead (Group Manager – grade subject to job evaluation) - to provide social work practice leadership to the development of multi-disciplinary teams, strengths-based practice and to work in partnership with the external partner on the development and implementation of the new operating model
 - 3 FTE Practice Development Social Work Practice Consultants (SWPC Hay Band C) - to provide subject matter expertise working across the multi-disciplinary teams and strengths-based practice projects to ensure evidence-informed social work practice is fundamental to the design of new ways of working and service structures
 - 1 FTE Communications and Engagement Officer (grade subject to job evaluation) – to ensure effective programme communications and staff engagement internally and across the partnership.

29. It is proposed that the Service Director would line manage the Practice Lead role, who in turn would manage the associated staff. In addition, it is intended that coproduction capacity will be externally commissioned to order to provide sector specialist support, and enable the voices of vulnerable children and families to be heard and have influence in the development of the operating model.
30. The maximum budget for the posts to be established, including on-costs, is £439,443. Within this budget, £45,245 has been allocated for externally commissioned coproduction capacity. Where grades of post have not yet been evaluated, a nominal maximum budget has been allocated:

1 FTE Service Director – Transformation and Improvement*
1 FTE Practice Lead – Group Manager*
3 FTE Social Work Practice Consultants (Hay Band C)
Coproduction Capacity – externally commissioned
1 FTE Communications and Engagement Officer *

** grade subject to job evaluation*

External Critical Friend

31. As noted in **paragraph 23**, Essex County Council has been commissioned to act as a critical friend to the Whole Family Safeguarding Programme. The costs for this support are expected to be no more than £60,000.

Other Options Considered

32. The Council could seek to deliver transformation and service improvement within existing resources, however operational demands and regulatory burdens are such that the level of change required is unlikely to be achieved and the Council would continue to deliver services in an increasingly unsustainable financial way.
33. The Council could seek to commission an external partner to deliver the transformation programme. This has not been advised due to the need to build on the foundations for improvement and transformation that have been put in place through the Remodelling Practice and Remodelling Care programmes in recent years, along with the development of the new corporate approach to transformation and change. It is instead advised that sector specialist support should be commissioned in a more focussed way, on relevant projects. This is the basis on which Essex County Council has been commissioned.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

34. For Children and Young People's Committee to understand and agree the investment needed now to enable the transformation of children's services in order to improve outcomes and deliver a financially sustainable operating model.

Statutory and Policy Implications

35. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty,

safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

36. The costs for the posts to be established are outlined in **paragraphs 30 and 31** and are subject to approval by Full Council as part of the budget setting process for 2022/23. Any costs required in the current financial year will be met through contingency.

Human Resources Implications

37. Recruitment to the posts outlined in **paragraph 28** will be undertaken in line with the Council's Human Resources procedures and engagement with the Trade Unions. The appointment of the Service Director post will be undertaken by the Senior Staffing Committee.

Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Implications

38. The proposals outlined in this report will lead to a strengthening of the Council's approach to safeguarding vulnerable children and young people.

Implications for Service Users

39. This further investment in children's services will enable improvements in outcomes for children as outlined in **paragraph 11** as well as improved experience of services through the implementation of more consistent strengths-based ways of working.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the Committee:

- 1) gives approval for the required resources outlined in **paragraphs 30 and 31** to support the implementation of the Whole Family Safeguarding Programme
- 2) approves the temporary establishment of the following posts for a period of three years:
 - 1 FTE Service Director (Transformation and Improvement) (grade subject to job evaluation)
 - 1 FTE Practice Lead (grade subject to job evaluation)
 - 3 FTE Social Work Practice Consultant Development Leads (Hay Band C)
 - 1 FTE Communications and Engagement Officer (grade subject to job evaluation).

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Constitutional Comments (ELP 01/12/21)

40. The recommendations fall within the delegation to Children and Young People's Committee by virtue of its frame of reference.

Financial Comments (JG 23/11/21)

41. The costs for the posts to be established are £439,443 and are subject to job evaluation and approval by Full Council as part of the budget setting process for 2022/23.
42. The cost for Essex County Council to act as a critical friend to the Whole Family Safeguarding Programme is expected to be no more than £60,000 and will be met through contingency.

HR Comments (BC 01/12/21)

43. The staffing implications are contained within the body of the report. All new posts will be subject to job evaluation. The Service Director appointment will be a matter for the Senior Staffing Committee.

Background Papers and Published Documents

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.

[Independent review of Children's Social Care: Case for Change - report to Children & Young People's Committee on 26th July 2021](#)

[Transformation and Change Programmes and the transformation model and structure - report to Improvement & Change Sub-Committee on 23rd November 2020](#)

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C1528