

Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee

29 September 2021

Children First Improvement – Workforce and Management Development Programme Update

Report by the Executive Director of Children, Young People and Learning

Summary

To assist the Committee in its role of scrutinising the Children First Improvement Programme, this report provides an update on recent developments in workforce change and the creation of a strong management function, and considers their impact on culture, morale, and overall service capability. It sets out the following:

- a) The background to the work with staff and management, and the drive to introduce a supportive and open environment that promotes both high quality performance and staff satisfaction.
- b) An update on the Social Work Offer to staff, its launch, the benefits and the impact to date and future prospects.
- c) An update on the continuing Management Development Programme, its impact to date and future prospects.
- d) Also included for information are an update on the Early Help Redesign programme (Section 4) and the latest Performance summary report (Appendix 1).

The focus for Scrutiny

The Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the progress made on this aspect of the Children First Improvement Programme, as set out in the report.

Key areas for scrutiny include:

- a) To consider whether the current and continuing transformation activity with workforce and management provides assurance that the objectives of improved outcomes for children and young people will be met.
- b) To consider the progress being made towards creating a culture aimed at openness, delivering professional excellence in work with children and their families, and achieving high levels of staff confidence, motivation and capability.
- c) To confirm what further scrutiny the Committee would wish to undertake to assess the ongoing progress and impact on performance achieved from the transformation activity outlined in this report (paragraph 6.1).

The Chairman will summarise the output of the debate for consideration by the Committee.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report is part of a series that provides the Committee with a regular update on plans and actions from the Children First improvement and service transformation programme. The staff and management are the chief asset of the service. The report examines the continuing programme to create a professionally skilled, high-performing, competitively rewarded and well managed corps of permanent staff, motivated to provide a good service to the vulnerable children and families of West Sussex.
- 1.2 The Ofsted inspection in February 2019 and the subsequent Commissioner's report of Autumn 2019, identified a range of issues associated with management and professional capability that adversely impacted on the workforce in terms of service performance, professional standards and staff morale. These can be summarised as:
- An incoherent management structure linked to an inefficient use of human resources and finance.
 - The perception of excessive caseloads, linked to inefficiencies, too much bureaucracy, and a lack of management oversight and support.
 - Less competitive and attractive employment conditions relative to West Sussex's neighbouring authorities.
 - Low morale and stress in the workforce, affecting the quality and timeliness of work and leading to increased absence.
 - Consequent difficulties in recruiting and retaining permanent staff, leading to a reliance on expensive agency workers, resulting in a lack of continuity of support for vulnerable children.
 - Poor outcomes generally for children and young people and their families.

The following narrative explains how these challenges are being tackled, focusing on two key strands of improvement work, the Social Work Offer (Section 2) and the Management Development Programme (Section 3).

2 Social Work Offer

Background and introduction of the Offer

- 2.1 The new Social Work Offer articulates the competitive remuneration terms and other benefits that are available to staff within the redesigned service, and make these permanent. It ensures that West Sussex is competitive in the employment market with its local authority neighbours and supports the establishment of this county as an attractive and rewarding place to work. The Offer was launched to coordinate with a new staffing structure (see 2.8 below) on 1 July 2021. The Offer replaced the interim Recruitment and Retention package, which by June 2021 had gained a 98% take-up by eligible staff, thereby demonstrating a strong commitment from the workforce to engage with the future direction of the service and the improvement agenda.

Introduction of the Offer

- 2.2 The introduction of the Social Work Offer significantly changes the dynamics of the relationship between the authority and its staff in a range of positive

ways. In creating a permanent competitive pay and reward model, the Offer provides a stable and assured employment environment in which professionals can build and enhance their careers through a long-term commitment to this authority. The Offer complements the other service transformation activity which cumulatively helps to brand West Sussex as a service with high aspirations for the future and a progressive stance towards introducing the best professional techniques and standards. The Offer was initially set out in briefing sessions with staff, where comments were invited; these have been listened to and detailed changes made to the scheme as a result.

Progression and specifying professional standards

- 2.3 One of the key features of the new offer is that it allows staff to apply for progression to higher pay grades and levels of responsibility, but only where they can demonstrate more developed skills within their working practice. This applies to experienced social workers wishing to build a career towards team management level; it also includes the opportunity for newly qualified staff to advance rapidly to a higher level, supporting their retention within the service. A working group has been established to oversee this process and the detailed progression criteria requiring to be met are being finalised. The evidential approach includes demonstrating the ability of the individual to hold more complex casework and the presence of good practice within their work; this is supported by evidence from case audit and feedback from both managers and the children and families worked with. Thus strong performance and reward are tangibly linked in a way that directly benefits the service and its customers.

Embedding Quality Standards

- 2.4 These provisions in turn allow the service to specify to staff in a clear and emphatic way what its expectations of practice standards now are and develop a culture in which maintaining high standards becomes the norm. This helps to develop and reinforce an ethos – needed in any high-performing service – of good quality being understood as an integral part of all working practice, with ‘what good looks like’ being applied as a standard element. The new incentives in place offer staff a choice as to whether they wish to continue with the service on its journey to ‘good’ under these terms, they do so in the knowledge that as they strive for these higher standards they will be fully supported by the organisation to do so.
- 2.5 As indicated above, the overwhelming majority of staff have welcomed and fully subscribed to the new approach. This aspirational framework is supported by a more robust system of case supervision, whereby managers regularly review children’s progress with staff members and discuss the professional and technical matters arising. Additionally, the Council’s revised performance management and development framework will allow all staff to check in regularly with their manager to ensure that their progress and development remains on course. This is based on a ‘12:4:2’ model, which is a regular cycle of performance conversations where there are 12 monthly conversations, four of which are focused on individual development, while an additional two sessions are held as a team to discuss team performance.

Reception and Impact - Prospects for Recruitment and Retention

- 2.6 The new Social Work Offer has been well received. Early indications are that the competitive remuneration is leading to strong interest from external candidates and attracting higher calibre social workers, albeit in small numbers to date. It is clear that competitive pay rates are only one factor influencing candidate decisions, and the growing profile of West Sussex as an employer of choice: the Council's change process, and the opportunity to adopt new leading-edge techniques, such as those within Family Safeguarding, are equally attractive to those wishing to commit to be high achievers in the social work field. This effect gives the West Sussex brand a stronger identity at the various recruitment events where the service will have a presence in the coming months. Additionally, four agency workers have agreed to convert to be permanent staff, where the service wished this to occur; and two experienced social workers rescinded their notices to resign and have remained with the authority. These are small numbers but significant in the context of the change process. Agencies have also acted on behalf of the service to recruit external workers of requisite ability to a talent pool with a view to transitioning them to permanent staff status.
- 2.7 The very strong degree of internal engagement with the Offer, and the culture it represents, is shown in the smooth transition and the ability of the service to retain staff this Summer. Attention is drawn at 2.9 below to the results of a recent staff survey, which demonstrated that three quarters of staff regard morale within the services as at least satisfactory – a very significant improvement on any other period in the recent history of the service. The available evidence suggests that the factors involved in this positive feedback include the following:
- The benefits of the Social Work Offer, including the prospect of grade and career progression.
 - Stable, energetic and visible senior management.
 - Improved communication and trusted two-way messaging.
 - Much greater support from line managers through supervision.
 - Stabilising caseloads in most areas and a reduction in the vacancy gap.
 - Greater clarity about roles, responsibilities and expectations.
 - Introduction of new social work techniques.
 - A clear route into a post-Covid-19 world, with recovery led by senior management, and openness to 'new ways of working'.

Growing new generations of Social Workers internally

- 2.8 There are now three initiatives for training new social workers within the service. In September 2021 the latest cohort of 30 Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWS) commenced on their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE). The same month sees 10 new apprentices joining the service. In January 2022, the third annual cohort of 6 students will join the service under the Step up to Social Work programme: this is run in conjunction with the University of Chichester and funded by the Department for Education (DfE), and allows able students with degrees in non-relevant subjects to fast-track into a social work qualification through blended academic study and operational experience. This will be the third cohort to commence this journey into a new career, and its graduates will become

permanent qualified members of staff in 2023. These three schemes have been highly successful in nurturing fresh talent, building workforce capacity and narrowing the vacancy gap. This can be considered as a medium-to-long-term investment in the service, and it should be recognised that NQSWs do not carry the same volume of intensive casework as an experienced social worker. Nonetheless these are very welcome initiatives to build sustainability in an area where recruitment has traditionally been a challenge, and where there has been an excessive reliance on agency workers.

Senior Management engagement with the workforce

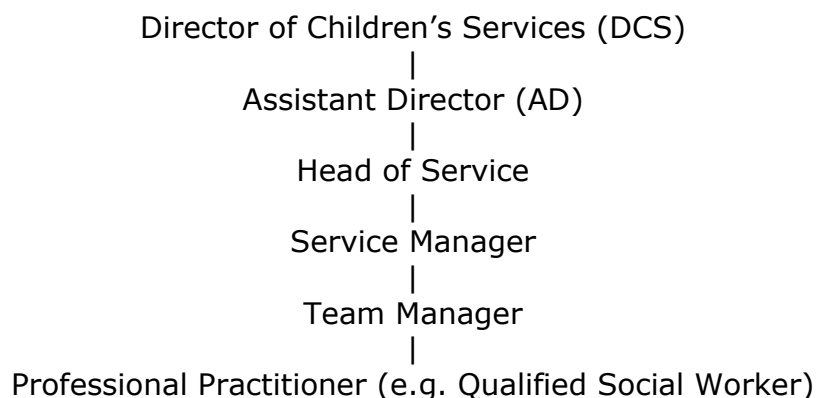
2.9 The Executive Director and her departmental leadership team (DLT) have set out a commitment to engender a new positive culture within the service that emphasises openness, good communication and a supportive working environment; in pursuance of this aim, a number of initiatives are being taken, including the following:

- **Covid-19 Renewal and Recovery Group:** this is a representative group comprising staff, partners, providers and children and families from across the service, meeting regularly to discuss operational recovery from the pandemic and to advise management on issues to be addressed. Its work has included a pan-partnership stakeholder survey (May 2021) on attitudes towards work during lockdown and other cultural matters. In terms of the pandemic response, in spite of a better work/life balance for some, others regretted the isolation of home working. Mental health and wellbeing is at the top of the agenda for management concern, and since the survey a partial return to face-to-face working has commenced – for instance so that teams can meet physically on occasion in a safe environment.
- **Staff response to survey:** 521 staff responded to the stakeholder survey, and gave generally positive feedback on changes within the service: 75% felt that morale within the service was satisfactory or better, with 37% rating it as good or excellent; 76% felt well informed about Children, Young People & Learning and recognised how the departmental matters discussed related to themselves and their role; 50% agreed that there had been a positive change in culture in the previous year, with only 12% feeling that culture had deteriorated; 75% affirmed that departmental communication had improved over the same period, and had helped them to feel more connected; 86% agreed that the Executive Director's weekly communication to staff is helpful and informative. These results provide encouraging early evidence of a tangible improvement in service culture, although it is recognised that changes of the magnitude being undertaken require a significant time to embed fully. It is intended to run further surveys at approximately six-monthly intervals to assess progress.
- **Staff Conference:** a conference for 250 staff at all levels representing their teams is being held at Arundel on 28 September 2021, with the proceedings being streamed and available to all staff. This is the first event of its kind held by the service, and will focus on topics such as reconnecting with colleagues within the service, post-pandemic, and maintaining personal wellbeing.

- **Talking with DLT:** DLT has changed practice in moving its own meetings around the county, taking the opportunity to be present in different hubs and to engage with staff in these localities. To further develop this approach, from 15 September 2021, a weekly opportunity has been created for staff at team manager level and equivalent across the entire service to attend a drop-in session with the Executive Director and members of the Department Leadership Team (DLT). These meetings are optional and provide a regular opportunity for staff at this level to have a direct conversation with the DLT and receive answers to questions. It is hoped that managers will find this helpful; staff are encouraged to make their managers aware of key issues that can then be discussed directly with DLT.

New Staffing Structure

- 2.10 As previously reported to this Committee, a simplified staffing structure was brought into place from July 2021. This addresses a concern expressed in the Children's Commissioner's original report (2019) regarding excessive layers of management and ambiguity of job titles and roles, which he advised were hampering service effectiveness. The new structure is as follows:



- 2.11 This greatly simplified structure provides a basis for addressing the Commissioner's original 2019 challenge that there were 'more managers than management'. It removes the previous role ambiguity and creates clear accountability that forms the basis of strong management oversight. It also enforces parity between roles, and allows management to set unambiguous professional standards which can be applied and measured consistently across the service. It supports a sound supervision regime which will ensure that the quality of case-working can be kept under continuous review, and staff supported to achieve their personal professional aims, and those of the authority, while providing the best service to children and families.

3 Management Development Programme

Background

- 3.1 The Ofsted inspection in February 2019 and the subsequent Commissioner's report of Autumn 2019 highlighted significant weaknesses in the ability of

managers to ensure that good quality social work was delivered to improve outcomes for children and their families. The response has been framed in the practice improvement plan as follows:

- Commissioner's recommendation CR6: Develop and improve the competence and capability of our managers to improve the quality of our Social Work practice for Children.
- OFSTED Recommendation OR8:
 - A children's services management training programme should be designed and implemented.
 - Training to managers in performance coaching and how to utilise business intelligence to support them in managing staff and teams.

3.2 The Ofsted focused visit in October 2020 also highlighted the need to continue to develop and support managers to improve practice:

'Management oversight and supervision, while mostly regular, is not consistently addressing the lack of progress of plans to ensure that children's daily lives are improved.'

To respond to the challenges identified above, work commenced in May 2020 to co-produce, plan and procure a Leadership and Management Assessment and Development programme. This was to complement and accelerate continuous practice improvement by improving management capability, confidence and competence to raise professional standards. A procurement process led to Odgers Interim, a specialist consultancy company, being engaged to assist with providing an objective assessment and development process for the heads of service, service managers and team managers. In order to ensure ownership and understanding of the skills and strengths and areas of development for our managers, senior managers from the service, together with our HR partners participated in its delivery: this ensured both internal ownership and a clear identification throughout the process of the specific organisational and development needs of individual managers and the wider service in West Sussex.

Analysing Competencies

3.3 The competency framework used to assess all managers was developed using the County Council's values and behaviours document, amalgamating this with national frameworks such as that of the College of Social Work. This provided detailed questions and a framework to assess managers' understanding and competency in the following nine areas:

- Knowing the Business
- Leading yourself: Authenticity and Integrity
- Leading yourself: Resilience
- Leading yourself: Emotional Intelligence
- Working with others: Collaborating and Influencing
- Working with others: Relationship and Trust building
- Leading others: Vision and Communication
- Leading others: Empowering

- Leading others: Achieving Results

Odgers provided and shared individual data on each manager's performance on every competency, and a detailed development plan for implementation. Line managers are now responsible for linking this to the process for 'performance conversations' that has recently been implemented in West Sussex to replace the appraisal system, thereby ensuring that the assessment exercise feeds through into embedded management practice throughout the service.

- 3.4 The leadership and management development programme is one of the key elements to provide our staff with the leadership skills and knowledge to affect the cultural change needed in the service. The programme that has been developed offers a significant investment in our managers; it responds effectively to the Ofsted report and the Commissioner's recommendations; and it supports the required changes in culture and practice needed to bring sustainable, long-lasting change to the service. The latest developments can be summarised as follows:

- A total of 173 Heads of Service, Service Managers and Team Managers have been assessed, have had their feedback session and have a personal development plan in place.
- Managers have been supported to understand their strengths, skills and their areas for development.
- Further staff cohorts will become part of this process up to April 2022, in Education, Commissioning, and for Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) and Child Protection Advisors (CPAs).
- Following on from the assessments, development training held with Heads of Service, Service Managers and Team Managers will run to October 2021, as set out below.
- This work will be complemented by regular engagement events between the senior leadership team and the different layers of management across the service, which will focus on providing the evidence required by the Commissioner that effective management capability is in place.

What the Assessment achieved

- 3.5 Following the comprehensive assessment process, senior management is now confident that it understands both the strengths and the specific areas of development required within the manager cohorts to improve performance and achieve outcomes for children and families. These areas for further development are now integrated into the leadership and management development programme, and include:

Knowing the Business

- Having a clearer understanding of the children's services landscape, the role of partners, managing the political context, a focus on integrated children's service delivery and putting in place measurable plans to improve outcomes for children.

Resilience

- Learning from setbacks and applying this learning into practice.

Relationship building and trust

- Putting diversity and inclusion at the centre of relationships, and drawing on the diversity of skills, backgrounds, and knowledge of people to achieve results

Vision

- Improving the understanding of the wider Children's first vision, the organisational direction, corporate values, and translating these corporate priorities for their teams
- Embedding the consistent use of data and the approach to performance management of staff and service delivery to improve outcomes for children

Empowering

- Setting clearer expectations and promoting learning and accountability, including using reflective practice to recognise and celebrate successes

Achieving results

- Providing more clarity on team priorities, expectations, and performance standards.
- Having the skills and tools to undertake regular and effective management and oversight of the team's performance and ability to evidence good outcomes
- Using customer data and feedback to continually improve services. Managing their team or service area and people performance for continuous improvement.

In terms of its reception by the managers, the feedback has been generally positive. Managers have recognised the imperative to acknowledge the need for change, the investment being made in them, and their vital contribution to the service improvement journey. The insights provided have supported individuals towards greater understanding of development needs and reinforced a sense of identity and commonality within the service.

Leadership and Management Training

- 3.6 To move from analysis into implementation, in December 2020 the senior leadership team developed and commenced delivery of a management training programme designed to build on the areas of development identified in the assessment phase. This development work was started with sessions to develop a clear focus and vision for the planning and implementation of a strong and effective management of the service.

Work has now been completed to link the focus on effective leadership and management with the key themes arising from the assessment phase, in order to:

- improve management competence, confidence, and capability.
- improve leadership skills, particularly in communication, vision, and continuous planning to achieve outcomes for children.
- provide clarity of expectations and accountability for managers.
- provide toolkits and practical advice, and enhance understanding of what being a manager entails.
- problem solve key issues as and when these arise.

- build trust and develop relationships across the cohorts of managers to build a strong sense of one Children Young People and Learning Directorate.

Manager feedback and initial outcomes

- 3.7 The training has received very high ratings from all service managers attending, with an overall score of 4.3 out of 5. Specific comments from managers included the following:
- "first training in management ever received - great"
 - "inspiring"
 - "reset"
 - "good pace and thought-provoking"
 - enjoyed most: "other sector perspectives" and "change concepts"
- 3.8 Leadership and management training has now been delivered to all heads of service and service managers, with team managers being trained in late September and early October 2021. Impact is starting to be felt as managers report that the culture in West Sussex is starting to shift. The impact of the programme will continue to be closely monitored via the practice improvement plan, with expected improvements in management oversight, engagement, problem solving and in the quality of practice for children and their families.

Specific Training Initiatives for managers and staff

- 3.9 Additionally to the above, a wide range of activities are either already in motion or planned, including the following:
- Service and team managers are benefiting from peer mentoring with Hampshire County Council as the partner in practice starting in June 2021.
 - The existing training pathway is being re-publicised for managers to attend modules on diversity, coaching styles, managing change, as well as setting up specific workshops to focus on HR processes, the use of data and finance.
 - Half day supported learning is being offered for all managers around specific problem solving identified within the leadership and management training to bring to impact on our priorities for improvement and significant practice issues across the service
 - Supervision training will become available by Autumn 2021, linked to the implementation of the Family Safeguarding Model to improve skills in this area.
 - Motivational interviewing will be provided in the Autumn 2021 for social workers and managers.
 - Restorative practice training is being commissioned to further improve a strengths-based relationship approach for managers and staff.
 - Regular bi-monthly reporting by managers to Directorate Leadership Team (DLT) on key aspects of the Practice Improvement Plan to improve accountability and responsibility (from July 2021).

- The Performance Action and Assurance Board has been re-focused to ensure individual teams and managers are accountable for their team's performance and take action to address any shortfalls
- Review – As part of the overall process annual reviews of managers' performance and their ability to provide strong and effective management oversight across the service will be maintained.

Family Safeguarding

3.10 Although not covered in detail in this report, alongside these developments and intrinsic to the service improvement vision, the programme to roll out the Family Safeguarding model has been progressed to ensure the new service goes live in early 2022. Its goal is to put children, young people and their families right at the heart of all service decisions, delivering services in a truly preventative, contextual manner, through multi-disciplinary teams, and the Committee has already received detailed briefings on this topic. Family Safeguarding is a 'game-changing' practice model that has the potential to transform the lives of children and families. There is evidence from within the service that this development is strongly welcomed by staff. By the end of September 2021 over 1,200 will have attended initial briefing sessions, resulting in very positive feedback, including the following:

- "Thank you so much, we have a lot to learn and far to go in West Sussex, but we are starting at such an exciting time"
- "Very informative - I look forward to seeing how it all works"
- "I think this, combined with what I am hearing about motivational interviewing is going to make a real difference to how we work differently with children, young people and families"

As part of the implementation, a major training programme for all of our practitioners and managers in the Motivational Interviewing framework, a key part of the new model, will commence in the Autumn.

Demonstrating Impact

3.11 It is essential to hold in view that the purpose of all work with managers and staff is to improve the service to children and families, and customer needs must remain at the heart of all endeavours. Accordingly it is intended to monitor the unfolding outcomes with specific reference to the anticipated service improvements. In the medium term, these are to be expected in the following areas:

- Evidence from Ofsted Monitoring Visits.
- The views of the Commissioner for Children's Services, reporting to the Department for Education, who has previously published a set of criteria that he will use to evaluate progress.
- Feedback from the Partner in Practice, Hampshire County Council.
- Improvements in a range of performance indicators – for instance timeliness of visits, the routine presence of case supervision and other compliance with specified professional practice standards.

- Reduction in court activity, especially the number of Care Proceedings needing to be placed before the Court.
- Measures of quality, as identified through the monthly internal auditing process.
- Evidence of improved customer outcomes and increased customer satisfaction, reductions in complaints etc.
- Evidence of improved working with partners.
- Positive feedback from managers, staff and Unison.
- Improved recruitment and retention of staff and associated wellbeing indicators.

4 Early Help Redesign programme - update

- 4.1 The Early Help Redesign Staff Consultation was launched on 8 September 2021 with staff briefings to those in scope. The Consultation will conclude on 29 September and a formal response be issued to staff on 12 October. Following this the leadership team will conduct an interview and selection process for staff at risk of redundancy and a general preferencing process.
- 4.2 Early Help has also developed a shared plan with the Council's Assets Team, which schedules the handover of properties that are surplus to future Early Help requirements. The service is also working closely with a number of partners to ensure they are aware of the changes, and a communication was sent during the week commencing 13 September about the vacation of centres. The Assets Team is working closely with Health services to understand their specific requirements to lease additional centres and minimise disruption to their service delivery. The vacation period has been extended at the request of a few partners, and some partners have also been made aware of the opportunities to deliver from the retained centres. The last centre is expected to be handed over on 20 December 2021. The options appraisal work on the assets surplus to Early Help use is expected to be completed by the end of October. However, some properties may require more detailed work to determine the best way forward. Implementation of the preferred options will take time and not be resolved in many cases until well into next year.
- 4.3 Once the interview and selection process is completed, the new Offer will be launched on 01 January 2022. There is a Communication Plan to support this, ensuring the widest possible reach to partners and members of the public, which will be circulated to the Committee separately.
- 4.4 During the transition period, the service is committed to ensuring that current work with children, young people and families is maintained. Any incomplete work being delivered at the time when the new model is put in place will be continued to conclusion, ensuring that no one is left unsupported. The service is in the process of developing some detailed practice guidance and training to support staff to transition to the new model of delivery.

5 Finance

- 5.1 The cost of the new social worker offer in the current year is £3m, and this has been funded through £1m within the Children and Young People's base

budget and a further £2m from the Improvement Fund. These monies had previously been used to cover the cost of the interim recruitment and retention package.

- 5.2 A further £0.6m has also been built into the Medium Term Financial Strategy over each of the next couple of years up until 2024/25 to cover the cost of the full year effect of the new offer and also the additional cost of social workers moving up pay scales each year.

6 Issues for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee

- 6.1 The Committee is invited to consider the progress outlined within this report and confirm that it is satisfied with the pace and quality of the improvement activity across the Children, Young People & Learning department, in the area of management and workforce development; that positive cultural change is in progress, and that the combined impacts are likely to significantly improve the performance of the service for children, young people and their families. Given that this is a major change process within the service that will take some months to embed, it is proposed that a further report be brought to the Committee at the end of 2021/22, to survey in broader perspective the progress made and the impact on performance achieved, once the change has become more embedded.

7 Consultation

- 7.1 Not applicable – this is a report for information.

8 Risk Implications and Mitigations

- 8.1 A summary of the risk areas identified in the current risk log of the service, and the associated mitigating factors, are given in the table below:

Risk Area	Examples of Mitigating Actions
The Covid-19 pandemic will continue to impact the delivery of the service in various ways: safeguarding of children must be assured; staff vaccinations need to be completed and staff kept safe from infection; protective equipment must be sufficiently available to sustain face-to-face interaction with children and families, and in residential settings	The service has dealt well with the pandemic to date, as confirmed by Ofsted; much learning has resulted, and new ways of working have been developed. This risk is thought to be under control, with safeguarding and wellbeing issues soundly catered for. The vaccination programme protects staff. The service with partners is now addressing a Renewal & Recovery agenda. Satisfactory performance information endorses this position.
A surge in service demand due to the pandemic	An increase in demand across the service was expected due to the pandemic, which has impacted vulnerable children and

Risk Area	Examples of Mitigating Actions
	families disproportionately. The next potential surge will be felt shortly after schools return in September. The service planned for these factors in advance, and the situation is under control. Service Redesign, the measures set out in this report and the new practice model (Family Safeguarding) will support greater efficiency in the management of future demand.
Knowing that the service is safer for children	Every aspect of the improvement agenda is orientated towards this fundamental issue, from Workforce through Practice Improvement, to Performance Management, Governance, Scrutiny and use of Technology: it is a whole-system issue. The service transformation work will further enhance outcomes in the round. The regular Ofsted scrutiny and DfE intervention, together with the views of the Commissioner and the partner in practice provide external assurance of improved service stability in this respect.
Understanding and applying quality practice as a prerequisite to service improvement	A Practice Improvement Plan is in place to implement quality standards and assurance, and will increase in effectiveness in a redesigned workforce with a new service delivery model. There is a robust monthly audit regime which contributes to raising practice standards across the service.
The imperative for improved multi-agency capacity and capability	The joint undertakings with partners are very strongly stressed in the design principles of the intended changes, and the departmental leadership team works with key partners to develop a joined-up approach to service delivery. Family Safeguarding also offers strong incentives to partners in terms of managing their own levels of demand.
Demonstrating to the Commissioner, Ofsted and the DfE that the service can continue its improvement journey	The service has demonstrated to the Commissioner, to Ofsted and the DfE that it has the ambition and capacity for comprehensive change. The Commissioner has signified that he is satisfied with the direction of travel to date, and his criteria for final assessment have been made clear. Ofsted feedback continues to evidence that the service has an accurate self-evaluation, that improvement plans are appropriately focused on key service areas, and that an

Risk Area	Examples of Mitigating Actions
	acceleration of the previous level of progress is now possible. These positive factors led to the pausing of the Children's Trust process at the end of 2020.
Leadership capacity and capability	The permanent leadership team is now well established, and some temporary high-level support has been retained to assist in the short-medium term. Leadership has been commended by the Commissioner, Ofsted and the DfE.
Organisational morale & retention of experienced social work staff, in the context of national market scarcity and competition from other authorities for their services	This risk is comprehensively addressed in the Service Redesign proposals and the Social Work Offer and management development provisions, set out in this report. Positive feedback has been received from all staff engagement exercises, and staff retention remains very strong, with encouraging signs of competitiveness in recruitment.
Social workers encumbered with administrative burdens are less effective	Within the Service Redesign the need has been recognised to remove unnecessary administration and to maximise productive professional time with clients. The Single Front Door is an example of this principle being operationalised. Improving technology is a cross-cutting principle of service redesign. Family Safeguarding includes measures for efficient and secure recording and data-sharing across partner agencies.
Risk of data management not supporting good practice	Using technology to improve the service is recognised as a priority; an ICT development workstream is in place, allied to quality improvement projects. Much has been learned from managing Covid-19 about more effective use of technology and further improvements are being sought as part of the Renewal and Recovery agenda.
Preparedness for cycle of Ofsted monitoring visits	The senior leadership team maintains regular Ofsted readiness meetings to plan and coordinate the work throughout the service. The successful Ofsted Focused Visit demonstrates that these processes are effective.

9 Other Options Considered

9.1 Not applicable – this is a report for information.

10 Equality Duty

- 10.1 The service recognises the primary importance of child safeguarding, sound family relationships, good parenting, and the nurture of children to fulfil their potential. The provision of the service is based on need, as determined through formal assessment protocols. This need is not explicitly related to formally protected characteristics, but any such characteristic is and will continue (as now) to be respected in compliance with equality principles and taken into account in the way in which the service is delivered.
- 10.2 In terms of those with a protected characteristic, the service will ensure enablement and support across all relevant categories, and this will both continue and be enhanced through the Children First agenda.

11 Social Value

- 11.1 The Children First agenda and measures for service recovery discussed in this report will directly support improved delivery of the West Sussex Plan priority to give every child the Best Start in Life. Enhancing the protection of young lives and support for family life will continue to build resilience and social capital and contribute towards stronger and more effective communities. The implementation of the service improvements will also respect sustainability principles in accordance with the County Council's strategic policies.

12 Crime and Disorder Implications

- 12.1 There are positive implications for Sections 17, 37 and 39 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 in the prevention and reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour, and in reducing offending and re-offending by young people, all of which are affected by the progress activity discussed in this report.

13 Human Rights Implications

- 13.1 The County Council has an overriding duty to safeguard the Human Rights of children and young persons in its area, and this has been recognised in the Children First agenda. The Council is mindful of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights – The Right to Respect for Family and Private Life - and has taken relevant factors into consideration in preparing this report. The processing of personal and special category data is subject to the Council's Data Protection Act policies and procedures in relation to discharging the Council's and its partners' legal responsibilities.
- 13.2 The County Council is also mindful of Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - which states that all children have the right to be consulted and to have their opinions heard on any decision that affects them. Hearing, understanding, and acting upon the voice and experiences of the child is a key design principle of the Children First service improvements. The Council will continue to ensure it fulfils all its statutory duties regarding meeting the needs of children and young persons in its area during the Children First service transformation programme.

Lucy Butler,

Executive Director of Children, Young People and Learning

Contact:

Vince Clark, Children First Transformation Director

Appendix 1 – Performance Summary Report (September 2021)

Background Papers- none