

Children First Service Improvement Programme: Progress Report September 2020

Introduction

1. Children's Services is now ready to enter a period of accelerated development and improvement built upon a clear vision and service re-design that is intended to both sustain good practice and start to manage demand on the service. The transformation programme Children First, is based on high standards and underpinned by a clear performance framework. Ensuring we have the right staff in post is critical to our success and we are therefore designing a comprehensive employment offer for social worker staff that will make West Sussex an employer of first choice and rewarding place to work. We are also creating an efficient staffing structure in which roles and accountabilities are clear; and we are introducing a new service model that will offer significantly improved effectiveness and efficiency.

Leadership and Management in Children's Services

2. Further permanent appointments have now been made to the Senior Leadership Team. This will provide increased stability as the next phase of service transformation proceeds. New appointments that have been made are as follows:

Linda Steele	Assistant Director, Safeguarding, Quality and Practice
Daniel Ruaux	Assistant Director, Corporate Parenting
Jenny Boyd	Assistant Director, Social Care
Darlington Ihenacho	Principal Social Worker

3. These officers will be taking up their posts in West Sussex during October and November 2020. The Executive Director will maintain the services of a number of interim senior managers to provide the additional resource required to oversee the programme of improvement work, transformation programme and the delivery of the Trust.

Ofsted, Commissioner & Children's Trust

4. Ofsted has announced a focussed visit with the attention being on the journey of the child and the quality of decision making during Covid-19; taking place week commencing 19th October 2020. Inspectors will do offsite evaluation and analysis work from 12th – 16th October inclusive and will be onsite for three days field work from 20th – 22nd October. The outcome of the visit will be published in early December.

5. Members had an opportunity on 3rd September to hear directly from the Commissioner for Children's Services in West Sussex, John Coughlan. It is clear that the Commissioner, who reports to the Department for Education (DfE), has formed a favourable view of the Council's commitment to change, and the energy shown in taking the Children's Services improvement agenda forward so far, and he endorses the direction of travel.
6. With regards to the Children's Trust, the Cabinet has now approved the next stage of the process as we continue to agree the detail of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Department for Education. The Cabinet decision on 20th October has confirmed that the scope of the Trust will include all the current services within the Children Young People and Learning Directorate (Early Help, Social Care and Education).

Being a Good Service – and a Good Place to Work

7. This Autumn will see a period of significant service development, as the key components begin to be put into place to achieve and sustain the improvement required. As previously noted, the factors absolutely critical to success are:
 - a. The way in which management and staffing structures promote efficiency and effectiveness;
 - b. Having the best professional practice standards that we can;
 - c. Ensuring that high-quality staff are valued within the organisation and wish to develop their careers with us in West Sussex.
8. Therefore, the service is approaching a redesign and simplification of post structures and pay grades, which will allow us to deploy staff resources more effectively.
9. In addition, a new practice model known as 'Family Safeguarding' will be implemented in the Autumn of 2021, following a significant period of training for all staff. Work on the new model has started with a set of staff and manager engagement sessions throughout the summer. Further work will be undertaken in the Autumn to finalise the service redesign for presentation back to the Council in the Spring 2021.
10. The new service model is principally based on the Hertfordshire experience but also other nationally recognised pilot models. A very wide range of benefits have been seen to accrue, both for children and families, and for the service. Evaluation of these models has resulted in the following benefits being delivered:

- Significant reductions in repeat police call outs to domestic abuse incidents between the parents of the families in the model.
- Significant reductions in emergency hospital admissions for adults of the parents of the families in the model.
- Significant improvement in school attendance.
- A reduction in children subject to child protection plans.
- A reduction in care proceedings.
- A reduction in use of 'care' by the County Council (in Hertfordshire there were 200 fewer under 12's in care compared with the previous year without the model).

The Programme for the Autumn

11. The proposed next stage of the process to be embarked upon now can be summarised as follows:
 - Ongoing focus on practice improvement work which will be informed by the outcome of the Ofsted focused visit and augmented by work with our partners in improvement, Hampshire County Council.
 - The details of the Whole Service Redesign will be finalised as a proposal for political approval; further dialogue will be held with staff, partners and other stakeholders during the Autumn.
 - The consolidation of the permanent Senior Leadership Team will continue to full operational capacity in November 2020.
 - The existing service improvement activity will be maintained under the oversight of the Improvement Board.
 - Progress the workstreams within the Trust programme to achieve implementation in October 2021.

Conclusion

12. The next steps are an undertaking of considerable challenge, risk and complexity, and will be critical to achieving the journey of improvement which will take between 18 months and two years. However, the senior leadership team believe that they have the right strategic plans in place together with the Council's commitment to deliver significant improvements during that period.

Children First Improvement Fund - September 2020

	Full Amount Estimated	Latest Full Amount Estimated	Actual spend in 2019/20	Planned spend for 2020/21	Projected spend for 2020/21	Variation to planned spend 2020/21	Planned spend for 2021/22	Planned spend for 2022/23
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Temporary investment in targeted improvement								
Senior Improvement Leads	1,160	1,064	446	580	315	(265)	303	0
Programme Management and support	1,500	1,307	571	537	716	179	20	0
Practice Improvement/Behaviour Change Programme	3,600	1,251	571	3,016	680	(2,336)	0	0
Leadership Development Programme	500	500	0	500	125	(375)	375	0
Specific Project Consultancy	1,000	31	31	802	0	(802)	0	0
Communications Lead	55	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Complaints Officer	75	22	22	0	0	0	0	0
Neglect Strategy work	64	155	78	0	77	77	0	0
Casework Audits	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Improvement Leads	194	610	196	0	414	414	0	0
Additional Corporate Posts	128	128	0	50	95	45	33	0
Transition to Childrens Trust	0	29	0	0	29	29	0	0
	8,148	5,097	1,915	5,485	2,451	(3,034)	731	0
Temporary additional capacity (service & corporate); retention offer								
Retention Payments	2,150	2,152	2,152	0	0	0	0	0
Additional Service Posts	611	5,253	479	130	3,107	2,977	1,637	30
HR Support	188	140	140	0	0	0	0	0
Commissioning Support	106	94	94	46	0	(46)	0	0
Additional Corporate Posts	248	337	161	13	56	43	120	0
Admin/Business Support for Social Work Teams	150	120	0	120	120	0	0	0
Leadership Team redesign	386	285	157	128	128	0	0	0
Mosaic Improvement	0	285	0	53	150	97	135	0
	3,839	8,666	3,183	490	3,561	3,071	1,892	30
Contingency	579	280	0	898	280	(618)	0	0
Temporary funding requirement	12,567	14,044	5,098	6,873	6,292	(581)	2,623	30
Permanent increase in base budget								
Cover for ASYE lower caseloads	1,000	1,000	1,220	1,000	1,000	0	1,000	0
Review of Social Work Remuneration/Retention	2,000	2,000	0	2,000	2,100	100	2,000	3,000
Admin/Business Support for Social Work Teams	700	700	30	700	150	(550)	700	700
Backfill for Social Work Apprentices	600	600	0	30	30	0	30	30
Workforce Retention Initiatives (staff parking; pool)	350	350	23	350	300	(50)	350	350
Additional Service Posts	337	337	215	309	433	124	465	465
Leadership Team redesign	151	151	204	204	204	0	204	204
Transfer of work to Customer Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	120	120
Additional Corporate Posts	0	0	0	32	0	(32)	0	0
	5,138	5,138	1,692	4,625	4,217	(408)	4,869	4,869
Contingency	0	0	0	513	0	(513)	269	269
Permanent funding requirement	5,138	5,138	1,692	5,138	4,217	(921)	5,138	5,138
Totals	17,705	19,182	6,790	12,011	10,509	(1,502)	7,761	5,168
Available funding				12,011	12,011	0	5,138	5,138
Additional funding required				0	(1,502)	(1,502)	2,623	30

The following items have also been submitted as pressures to the MTFs for 2021/22 and 2022/23	Additional Allocation Estimated	Actual spend in 2019/20	Planned spend for 2020/21	Projected spend for 2020/21	Variation to planned spend 2020/21	Planned spend for 2021/22	Planned spend for 2022/23
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Temporary							
Estimate for IT Systems improvements	750	0	0	0	0	750	750
Extension to PMO supporting improvement work	260	0	0	0	0	260	260
	1,010	0	0	0	0	1,010	1,010
Permanent							
SLT central support team	360	0	0	0	0	360	360
	1,370	0	0	0	0	1,370	1,010
Total funding	20,552	6,790	0	(1,502)	(1,502)	3,993	1,040

Notes:

1. The original Children First Improvement Plan detailed £12.567m of temporary funding and £5.138m of permanent funding. The latest Improvement Plan shows a further £3.497m of **additional temporary** and £0.360m of **additional permanent** funding will be required to fund the project to 2022/23. These additions have been submitted as pressures into the latest MTFs.

2. In April, our new Executive Director for Children's Services joined West Sussex and took the opportunity to review and amended the project plan. The main area of change related to reducing the consultancy spend on Targeted Improvement Funding For Practice Improvement/ Behaviour Change Programme and using this investment to employ experienced agency staff into social worker teams to work within the practice setting to improve practice and change behaviour within key areas. It is important to note that the funding is still being used for its intended purpose, however the delivery of this activity is being enacted with experienced agency staff working in practice rather than consultancy staff.