
Meeting of the Children's Services Select Committee – 11th September, 2023

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Children's Services Phase Two Redesign

Purpose of report

1. This report is to provide an update to Members on the proposals put forward in relation to Children's Services Phase Two.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended:-
 - That members of committee note the content of the report.
 - Members to provide comment on the proposals as part of the formal consultation arrangements.

Background

3. The children's services directorate has a crucial role to play in ensuring that children and young people receive the support they need to achieve their full potential.
4. The gross budget for the directorate is approximately £90m for 2023/24, excluding Designated Schools Grant (DSG). During 2022/23 there has been significant budget pressure resulting in overspends that are not sustainable for the Council. The redesign is designed to change the approach to supporting children and families to deliver better outcomes whilst achieving long term sustainability.

Current context

5. Since 2019, Children's Services have been working on major improvement programmes for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and for Children's Social Care. This work is overseen by DfE and NHS England for SEND, and by DfE and an external improvement advisor for Social Care Services. Progress has been made in a number of areas. There remains a significant amount of further improvement to ensure that our aspiration to deliver consistently good services is achieved and sustainable.
6. Our staff are our most important asset and we are committed to ensuring that the conditions are in place for good professional practice to flourish. The approach to workforce planning and development is to ensure that there is focus on
 - **Capacity** – ensuring there are the right staff in the right place to ensure that outcomes are effectively achieved
 - **Capability** – ensuring that staff are trained, developed and supported to achieve the high expectations that we have. We work in a restorative way providing high support and high challenge
 - **Culture** – ensuring that the way we do things is consistently child focused and that children and young people remain at the heart of everything we do. In order to support a positive culture we will need:
 - An operating model that is truly child focused and fit for purpose
 - Genuine positive engagement, listening and challenge
 - Consistent stable leadership
 - Staff who want to work, grow and learn
 - Accountability both personally and professionally
 - An appreciation of how we all work together to put children at the heart
 - Staff who are well supported and supervised

Current performance and children's experience

7. Our external regulators are telling us our services are not consistently good enough. Our data tells us that we have higher than expected numbers of children in care and with Education, Health and Care Plans and that we do not consistently respond in a timely way to identified need. Our educational outcomes are lower than they should be across our borough. We have made progress in these areas but we have much more to do.

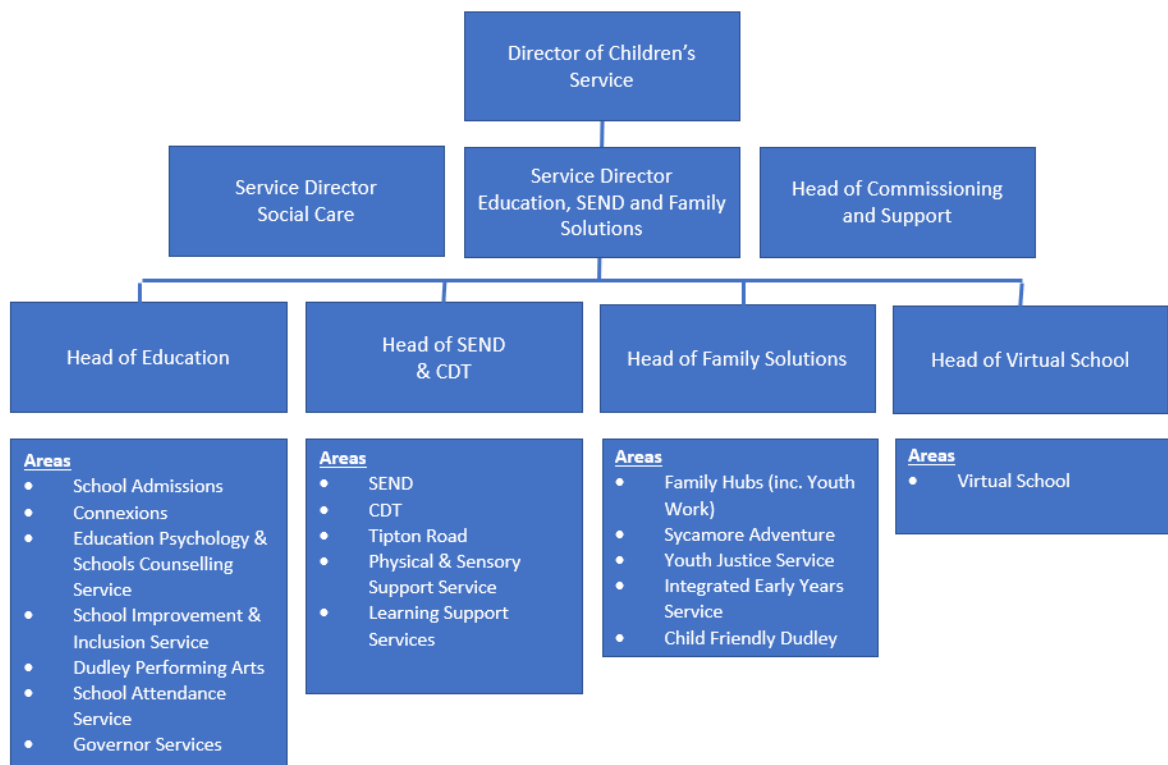
8. In 2022 Ofsted and CQC carried out a revisit of our SEND Written Statement of Action and Ofsted carried out an Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS). We have an Approved Progress Plan (APP) for our SEND services and five key actions to deliver from our ILACS inspection. It is important for us to respond to our regulators, but this redesign is about much more than that. This is about doing the right things for children, supporting positive change in families and building on strengths in families and communities.
9. Over the past two years we have increased our work to understand how children and young people experience our services and what they would like us to consider when working with them. There are key messages about too many changes of worker, handover from team to team, repeating their stories consistently, things taking so long to happen, staff not doing what they say they will do and the need to listen more to the child directly, rather than their parent or carer.
10. Many of these areas can be improved by better ways of working but there are important considerations about whether our services are easy to access so that children and their families receive the right support at the right time to respond early to need.

Case for change

11. The current system is under pressure. Referrals into children's services continued to rise during 2022 and many children bounce between services for too long. We have too much work and too many processes to be able to respond in a flexible and responsive way to families. Our approach to risk of harm is disproportionate and families describe us either over intervening or not doing enough to help them. We assess too much and support too little. Our challenge is to harness the passion and commitment of our staff, to streamline our structure and processes so that capacity is released to work alongside families to improve their experience of our services. We know that we can do this and we are determined to keep children at the heart of everything that we do during this redesign.
12. Our services touch on the lives of all children in the borough from birth through to adulthood (and up to age 25 for some young people). There needs to be different responses for some age groups and levels of need, but there are common principles about early intervention, valuing multi-disciplinary working and only working directly with families for as long as it is helpful and productive. Our role is to support and liberate families to bring up their children with confidence. Our focus is to enable resilience to reduce the need for services. We plan to reduce silos, increase

accountability and ensure that there is strong and effective leadership to support and challenge staff to work in this way.

13. We are revisioning our family centres into **Family Hubs**, providing a vibrant base in local townships where a range of partners and services will come together with children and families. We will ensure that our early years provision is closely aligned with partners through the 1001 Days programme. We will redefine early help to provide clarity about the breadth of definition and will reshape our MASH and Early Helpdesk into a single streamlined Front Door that will respond swiftly to ensure children are moved to the service they need swiftly.
14. As a result of Phase One redesign we have implemented a **Family Safeguarding** model that fits with our valuing family life value and brings together multidisciplinary teams to focus on supporting parents to meet their children's needs. We will ensure that our education teams are focused on driving up educational outcomes for all children, encouraging schools to be inclusive for those pupils with additional needs and focusing on those vulnerable learners who do not achieve as they should. We will design a system that pays particular attention to transition points for children – entry to primary school, move to secondary, moves between different services and teams. For teenagers with complex needs and/or at risk of the range of exploitation challenges, we will ensure that staff with the right skills and experience work with them, again in a multi-disciplinary way.
15. Our redesign will also ensure that we are prepared to implement the DfE direction of travel for Stable Homes, built on love and the implementation plan for the SEND and Alternative Provision Green Paper.
16. Children's Services will be organised in three service areas, with Education, SEND and Family Solutions organised into a further four areas:



17. This structure, whilst similar to our current headline structure, will deliver some significant changes within each service area. It will facilitate the implementation of both our Family Hub and Family Safeguarding programmes and strengthen our organisational support arrangements. The approach to change will be delivered in two phases:
- Phase one – **(COMPLETED)** overall directorate service design, with detailed changes in social care, parts of family solutions and business support, as well as integration of some services currently in ICH
 - Phase two – detailed changes in education, including education business support, SEND, the other parts of family solutions
18. The reason for this is that there was a time pressure to be prepared for Family Safeguarding and Family Hubs implementation, which needed to be progressed in the coming weeks and completed by 10th July 2023. This also allowed the new Service Director for Education, SEND and Family Solutions the time to appropriately work through the Phase Two proposals.
- 19 The Service areas identified above will be responsible as follows:

Education Outcomes

20. This Service will work with key partners in our education system to improve outcomes for all learners. We will move our connexions service from Family Solutions and align within Education outcomes in order to redevelop the relationship between good Education, Employment and Training (EET) outcomes and our Education Outcomes Teams. The service will also respond to new duties in relation to attendance, supporting schools and settings to enable their pupils to remain in school and support their learning. The Service will work closely with all stakeholders in developing an inclusive education system that supports the best outcomes for all vulnerable learners.

SEND & CDT

21. This service will work with key stakeholders, including children, parents and carers, on delivering timely and high-quality Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), and supporting Annual Review activity. The Service will also focus on work with parents and carers on supporting children with a disability, to effectively safeguard and ensure access to opportunities, provision and resources appropriate to meeting children's needs.
22. The Service will also review the operational delivery models of the proposed Physical and Sensory Service and Learning Support Service in order to reflect a greater level of support for schools and settings to increase confidence and skills that lead to greater inclusion.
23. Tipton Road, our residential home for children with disabilities, transferred to SEND & CDT as part of phase 1 redesign, and the service will look to releasing greater opportunity to develop services that respond to need in a more timely way for more children.

Family Solutions

24. This service shall continue the development of the Family Hub agenda, bringing together partners and services within locality areas to provide for families and meet the needs of children and young people. Partnering with health colleagues to ensure the best possible support for expectant mothers and the best start for life for babies and toddlers, supporting early years settings to develop readiness for school for younger children, and delivering youth work to support the needs of young people.

Virtual School

25. The Virtual School supports and challenges schools, carers and all relevant partners to ensure children in the care (CiC) of Dudley Council achieve the best possible educational outcomes and life chances. With expanded duties the Virtual School will also work with Social Care and Settings on championing outcomes for children who have or who have had a Social Worker and will provide ongoing educational support for care experienced young people remaining within education post 16. The Virtual School will provide advice and guidance to children, parents, carers, social workers, schools and others, as appropriate, around the education of CiC and previously looked after children.

Child Friendly Dudley

26. The Service will provide oversight and support to the Child Friendly Dudley programme which works across key partners and stakeholders to put the voices of children and young people at the heart of everything we do and helps shape Dudley in a way that puts children first.

Staff affected by Phase Two of the re-design

27. There are 405 contracts across Education, SEND and Family Solutions, and Business Support in scope of the redesign (some individuals may have more than one contract).
28. The re-design of the Directorate will result in a number of posts deleted from the structure. This will mean that some staff will be placed “at risk” of redundancy. The redesign has also created new or replacement posts within the structure which, along with the vacancies currently being held, will mitigate much of the redundancy risk.
29. It is anticipated that the number of staff placed “at risk” of redundancy will be 31 staff.
30. A comprehensive consultation process will therefore be undertaken with the Trade Unions and those staff who are affected by the re-design.
31. It is anticipated that there will be suitable alternative posts available for some of the affected staff, however some staff may ultimately remain at risk of redundancy.
32. In a redundancy situation it is anticipated that the skills of the individuals will result in redeployment and therefore ultimately minimise the number of redundancies. The Managing Employees at Risk of Redundancy policy

and Retraining and Redeployment policies will be followed when consulting with staff. The costs of redundancy will be funded corporately as part of the Council's MTFS savings approval.

Finance

33. Funding for the redesign is within existing directorate budgets, noting the pressures and savings identified in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). Any redundancy costs will be funded corporately as part of the MTFS.

Law

34. The Council may appoint staff as it considers necessary for the discharge of its functions under Section 112 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Risk Management

35. Any risks are being managed through the Project Risk Register.

Equality Impact

36. An initial Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken for service and staffing and the outcome has indicated that a full impact assessment does not appear to be required based upon the information identified.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

37. The timeline for implementation has been set as the 4th December 2023
38. HR&OD have been part of the proposals for the restructure and we have the Directorate HR&OD Business Partners supporting the process. Positions have been sent for evaluation, time and consideration has been spent on working through the new proposed structures.
39. The restructure will be implemented in accordance with the Council's [Managing Employees at Risk of Redundancy Policy](#).
40. Effective and timely consultation will be conducted between the Council and the affected employees in accordance with statutory requirements. The selection process for redundancy will be consulted on and applied where applicable. Redeployment will be considered for all roles where appropriate and placing employees within the service will be the last resort.

41. Communication plans and information/engagement of staff will need to be considered to ensure that everyone is aware of the timelines, different proposals and phases of implementation.
42. Trade Unions will also need to support as part of the process for individuals. Information will be shared with the Trade Unions as part of the consultation process.
43. Frequently asked questions are also being devised to support individuals throughout the process and help give better communication to any related queries.

Commercial/Procurement

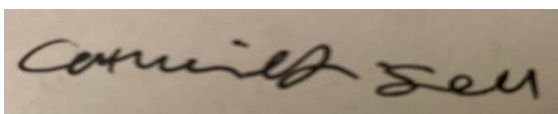
44. There are no commercial or procurement implications to the proposed restructure.

Environment/Climate Change

45. There is no impact in this area.

Council Priorities and Projects

46. The recommendations in this report will support key Council priorities including:
 - Dudley the Safe and Healthy Borough: introducing Family Hubs as part of a broader re-design will ensure that the resources are available to support children and families at the right time and the right place.



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