

CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 7
1 NOVEMBER 2018	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	Wendi Ogle-Welbourn: Corporate Director People & Communities	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Sam Smith, Cabinet Member for Children's Services	
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DEVELOPMENT OF SHARED APPROACHES AND RESOURCES IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES TO DATE AND CONSIDERATION OF POSSIBLE FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S	
FROM: Wendi Ogle-Welbourn: Corporate Director People & Communities	Deadline date: N/A
<p>It is recommended that the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the progress in developing shared services in a range of areas relevant to children's services in Peterborough and Cambridgeshire; 2. Note the opportunities for increasing resilience of services, improving outcomes for service users or both that follow from the development of shared services to date; 3. Provide support to officers to continue to develop shared approaches to service delivery where this makes sense in terms of improving outcomes, increasing resilience or value for money or any combination thereof, subject to further scrutiny as appropriate. 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 This report is presented at the request of the Committee.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 This report summarises areas where shared approaches to delivering children's services have been developed between Peterborough and Cambridgeshire.

2.2 This report is for the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference Part 3, Section 4 - Overview and Scrutiny Functions, paragraph No. 2.1 Functions determined by Council :

- Children's Services including
- a) Social Care of Children;
 - b) Safeguarding; and
 - c) Children's Health.

2.3 This report is relevant to the corporate priority relating to supporting and safeguarding vulnerable people.

- 2.5 This report is directly relevant to the Children in Care pledge in that it includes information about Independent Chairs or Reviewing Officers. This officers have a key role to play in ensuring that care plans for children progress without delay. They are independent of line management for service delivery in order that they can raise concerns about the circumstances of individual children and young people in care with line managers up to and including the Director of Children’s Services.

3. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	N/A
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4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 4.1. Members will be aware that a number of shared senior roles across the two local authorities have been in place for more than one year now. The Service Directors in the People and Communities Directorate have, for example, for service delivery held responsibility across both councils since July 2017.
- 4.2. The two Councils have agreed to the exploration of shared approaches to service delivery where doing so makes sense in terms of improving outcomes, building resilience or delivering better value for money.
- 4.3. Within children’s services, there is now an integrated team of three assistant directors who form the management team for children’s social care, early help and quality assurance across Peterborough and Cambridgeshire.
- 4.4. Within this structure, two areas of joint delivery are now taking shape. The two local authorities are also increasingly entering into joint commissioning arrangements with providers and are currently developing proposals to jointly commission for a voluntary adoption agency to operate a Regional Adoption Agency covering Peterborough and Cambridgeshire, in line with Government requirements.
- 4.5. The most established shared approach to service delivery is the Integrated Front Door, which is the focal point for managing referrals about potentially vulnerable children to either Peterborough or Cambridgeshire’s children’s social care or early help services. The Integrated Front Door includes a number of specific teams and functions: The Early Help Hub, Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, The Missing, Exploited and Trafficked Hub, and arrangements for managing Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences, which consider high risk domestic abuse concerns.
- 4.6. Peterborough joined this shared service in June 2017, and since then all referrals into both authorities have been managed through the Integrated Front Door. The Early Help and Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs work together to screen all referrals and agree on the most appropriate response.
- 4.7. The shared approach has been helpful for partners, who have one point of contact for both authorities. A number of key partners already provide service across the two authorities – most notably the police and many health services. The single Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub has also provided the framework for better and more efficient partner involvement in decision making about children, since partners only have to service a single location.
- 4.8. It is fair to say that the two respective children’s services are only now beginning to take full advantage of the benefits that this shared model can bring, however. In large part this has been because the structures of the two authorities and in particular within children’s social care, have until now been very different. This has meant that the Integrated Front Door has essentially had to operate two different systems for the two authorities.

- 4.9. This is now changing as Cambridgeshire has restructured children's social care services to move away from the Unit model and instead to develop a team structure that is similar to that in Peterborough [and, in reality, to most other local authorities].
- 4.10. This change has also provided us with the opportunity to revisit the operation of the Integrated Front Door, with the result that are moving the majority of screening activity for both authorities to the Cambridgeshire Customer Service Centre at St Ives as from December 17th 2018. The centre will screen all referrals, sending clear children's safeguarding referrals to the children's social care assessment teams in each authority and clear early help referrals to the Early Help Hub for further advice and support. The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub will now only consider the needs of children for whom it is unclear from the referral information what the most appropriate response is. This will mean that multi-agency discussion and decision making will be concentrated on the management of children where it can add most value.
- 4.11. The expected impact of this change is better decision making, less likelihood of children and young people for whom children's social care support is appropriate being missed in the sheer volume of referrals that have until now passed through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, and better signposting for children for who social care assessment is not required.
- 4.12. These changes are in line with the findings of the Peer Review of the operation of the Integrated Front Door that took place in March 2018. As explained above, implementation has had to take place in line with broader extensive changes across Cambridgeshire's children's services.
- 4.13. The new model will be supported by a single guidance on accessing support for children and families, published by the Safeguarding Children Board at the beginning of October 2018. For partners, including schools who may have children attending from both local authorities and who currently have to navigate different guidance and different responses, this new approach will present far greater consistency.
- 4.14. Children and young people will benefit from better decision making and a quicker response, while it will be possible to devote more time to decision making for those who will benefit from multi-agency input discussions in order to determine the most appropriate response. Arrangements will be further improved once Cambridgeshire moves to the same children's information system as used in Peterborough – Liquid Logic.
- 4.15. At the same time, the function of the Missing, Exploited and Trafficked Hub is being expanded to include Peterborough. This previously Cambridgeshire-only service has been very effective in engaging young people at risk as a result of going missing, sharing important intelligence with police and other partners and helping to safeguard vulnerable young people.
- 4.16. The response to referrals about children and young people is a very important aspect of ensuring that children at risk from harm are properly safeguarded. This new and truly integrated approach will benefit the children of both local authorities.
- 4.17. At a less advanced stage, but as important in terms of significance, are plans to develop a shared approach to quality assurance across the two local authorities. The two services are now reporting to a shared senior officer, who is an equal member of the joint children's services leadership team described above.
- 4.18. Quality assurance functions are of great significance in ensuring that children's safeguarding and early help services are operating effectively. The recent Peterborough Ofsted inspection praised the quality assurance service for providing effective support to front line practitioners through regular audits of quality of service, followed by practice workshops to build practice quality in areas where development is identified as being needed. The service was also praised for offering practitioners opportunities to reflect on practice at an individual level, supporting the overall approach to supervision.

- 4.19. Bringing these audit and practice development functions together across the two authorities offers the opportunity for practitioners and managers from both services to share best practice, helping to secure improved outcomes for children and young people in the process.
- 4.20. This part of the service in both authorities also includes a number of other important functions that together help to ensure that our most vulnerable children and young people benefit from independent oversight and challenge. The first of these are our independent chairs and reviewing officers, who provide independent chairing for child protection conferences and reviews for children and young people in care.
- 4.21. These officers have roles that go far beyond chairing of meetings; they play a very important role in ensuring that plans for children and young people are progressing effectively. Where they have concerns, they provide independent challenge to practitioners and managers who have case accountability. They develop key relationships with children and young people in the care system in particular, and provide important checks and balances within the system, ensuring that placements and plans are meeting the long term needs of children and young people.
- 4.22. Bringing the two respective teams together again offers opportunities to share best practice, while also helping to build resilience. While it is important that independent reviewing officers, for example, are consistent figures in the lives of children and young people in care, there will be opportunities for the two teams to support one another in managing spikes in demand.
- 4.23. The Designated Officer function [formerly known as the Local Authority Designated Officer or LADO] is also part of the quality assurance in each authority. These are highly specialist roles that help to oversee the management of allegations against professionals working with children and young people. The new arrangements will offer opportunities for the officers concerned to share experiences and best practice. The nature of these roles is that they are vulnerable to spikes in demand, which can result in them becoming overwhelmed at times – for example where allegations are made in relation to an individual who may have had contact with children and young people in a variety of settings. As with other areas, developing a shared service offers real benefits in building resilience and helping the two services better manage such spikes in demand.
- 4.24. A further function located in both service areas relates to securing participation by children and young people, and children and young people in care in particular. Again there are clear benefits in bringing the two functions together; similar advantages as outlined above in relation to other functions apply – sharing best practice and building resilience – but there are also possibilities of developing participation in new and exciting areas.
- 4.25. One example is to bring children and young people in care and who have left care together in order that they can share experiences. A number of Cambridgeshire children live in Peterborough and vice-versa and may therefore benefit from attending events and groups in the area where their placements are located.
- 4.26. Links such as these have the potential to expand so that, for example, children and young people in care are able to comment on the good and less good aspects of being in care in each authority, further enabling our services to develop and share best practice.
- 4.27. What is clear from developing shared services to date is that most of our staff instinctively recognise the potential benefits and are generally welcoming of working more closely together.
- 4.28. As noted above, both local authorities continue to explore joint commissioning arrangements in areas ranging from supporting young carers through to commissioning of supported living for young people leaving care aged 16 and 17. This approach means that both councils [and by extension] children and young people, benefit from greater purchasing power and economies of scale. Bringing these benefits to additional areas of direct delivery does now probably require further explicit in-principal agreement from the two Councils.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The development of shared services described has been or will be the subject of formal

consultation with staff in both authorities, including unions and other representatives.

- 5.2 The possibilities of bringing together consultation functions for children and young people will be the subject of further consultation with the children and young people concerned.

6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

- 6.1 The move to establishing shared services as outlined in this report will deliver improved outcomes, improved value for money, enhanced resilience, or a combination.

7. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 As noted above, the experience of developing shared services and approaches across the two local authorities is delivering a number of tangible benefits. It is reasonable to consider where and how these positive outcomes can be developed further.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 8.1 Services delivered by the two local authorities could remain entirely separate. Such an approach is unlikely to deliver benefits of sharing best practice, increased resilience or value for money.

9. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 9.1 There are no specific financial implications: The main aim of these proposals is to improve quality, learning and resilience; there may be an opportunity for efficiencies at a later date, but these are not envisaged at present.

Legal Implications

- 9.2 There are no specific legal implications associated with the content of this report and the proposals will be implemented in compliance with the Council's agreed HR Policies and Procedures

Equalities Implications

- 9.3 There are no specific equalities implications associated with the content of this report.

Rural Implications

- 9.4 There are no specific rural implications associated with the content of this report.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 10.1 None

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 None

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