

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 5
SEPTEMBER 2023

QUESTIONS ASKED BY AN ELECTED MEMBER UNDER
STANDING ORDER 7

Questions asked by Mr. M. Hunt:

1. “On 23 June 2023 the Cabinet approved an extension to the contract with consultants Newton Europe (NE) as variations under the procurement exercise authorised in April 2022. This was described as “necessary for the move to the next phase of the Transforming SEND and Inclusion in Leicestershire (TSIL) programme”. When was it apparent that NE were essential to the second phase and will there be further phases requiring their participation and, if so, over what period?
2. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) only included a figure of £939,000 for the remainder of the medium term financial period. What is current projection?
3. What specific measures are being put in place to meet the projected savings under the TSIL project of £3.12m in this financial year?
4. The report to Cabinet stated that it is likely that there will be a 20-40% reduction in children starting in a specialist school, and this would be confirmed before September 2023 as placements are finalised. Can the Chairman confirm the figures and how it was achieved? (eg which mainstream schools taking children who would otherwise have special education in which settings)

Other Children and Families Projects included

5. I understand from the Children’s Social Care Panel Performance Update that the Mosaic Case Recording System Project is going well with any risks escalated to senior management as necessary between January and July 2023. Could you tell me what risks, if any have been escalated to senior management for this project, and for the TSIL Project.
6. Our Strategic Partner, Newton Europe (NE), is contracted to help deliver the next phase of the Defining Children and Family Services for the Future Programme including 100 hours of support to Looked After Children of Leicestershire. The number of Looked after Children has apparently dropped this year breaking a long term year on year rise. What new interventions that might have helped to reverse this trend and is it expected to continue in reverse?”

Reply by the Chairman:

1. Continuation of the arrangement with the Children and Family Service's strategic partner, Newton Europe, was required to enable the Authority to capitalise on the required expertise and skills required to deliver the identified improvements and savings needed in the complex national and regional Special Educational Needs (SEN) landscape. The continuation of the relationship ensures that there is a fully contingent model under which £10m of annualised recurrent savings will be delivered, along with key other non-financial benefits.

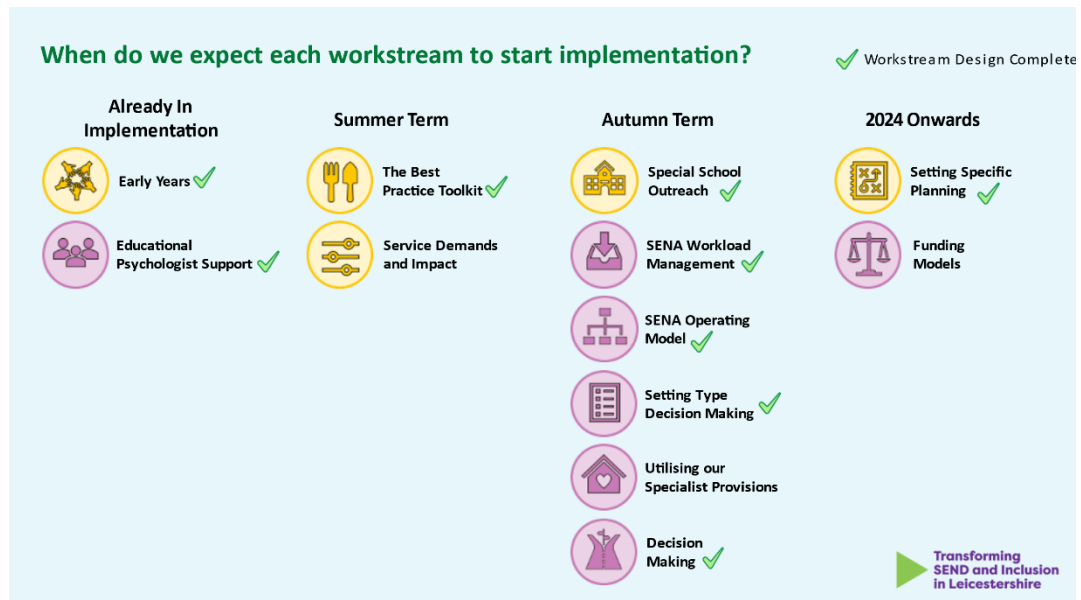
The progress of the Transforming SEND and Inclusion in Leicestershire Programme has been monitored from the outset of the programme against the benefits set out to be achieved, as well as the scale of work to be included and lead through the programme. In March 2023 it was clear that in order to fully realise the benefits set out in the initial diagnostic the Council would need to extend its arrangement with Newton Europe. A paper was presented to Cabinet in June 2023 to set out the financial and non-financial benefits of the continuation of the relationship with the strategic partner:-

- Achieve greater depth and scale of benefits than would otherwise be achieved;
- Ensure that all workstreams reach the point of sustainably, and have all changes embedded with the business as usual service structure;
- Complete the data quality workstream, as currently defined, with a solid foundation of financial, operational and case management data. This workstream will ensure that the service's data quality improves, and the service is left with a solid foundation of financial, operational and case management data on which it is able to make fully informed decisions; 152
- Deliver a stable set of performance dashboards, which will be operational and embedded in improvement cycle meetings at all levels;
- Establish a robust forecasting of financial performance, fully entrenched into business as usual activity;
- Identify further benefits and opportunities for delivery beyond this phase of the TSIL programme;
- Provide longer and closer support to the Children and Family Services leadership team both on programme delivery and wider challenges and opportunities;

The contract with the strategic partner does not allow for a further extension.

2. The £939k included in the MTFs relates to the 'invest to save costs', within the Children and Family Services Department to support the delivery of the TSIL Programme. This amount is currently only built into the first year of the current MTFs (23/24). The Department is currently looking at what needs to be in place to sustain the delivery of the programme and to continue to make improvements going forward.
3. There are a number of workstreams within the programme that will contribute to the achievement of the financial benefits set out in the MTFs. There include

supporting children in Early Years to ensure their needs are assessed and they are supported in the right place at the right time, developing the capacity within the educational Psychology Service, a best practice toolkit for inclusion, developing special school outreach support and remodelling the SENA service to ensure it is able to meet the demands of the education, Health and Care Plan process. The timescales for the delivery of each element of the workstreams is set out below:



4. The report to Cabinet set out that the diagnostic review undertaken in early 2022 identified that if something had been different earlier in their educational journey, there were a number of opportunities including for up to: 68% of children and young people in specialist settings to have their needs met in mainstream schools or resource bases. This opportunity was identified through reviewing a large number of children's cases and identifying that if support had been provided at an earlier stage children's needs could have been met in a mainstream setting rather than specialist setting. This finding has led to a range of work being undertaken to both support children in mainstream schools as well as ensure assessments are undertaken that identify a child's needs so that support can be provided in the right place, at the right time and at the right level. The two work streams of the programme that are specifically supporting this work are Early Years and Setting-Type Decision Making.
5. There have been no risks escalated from the Children and Families systems Board or the Transforming SEND and Inclusion Board to senior managers.
6. The stabilisation of the number of children in the care of the local authority is as a result of both preventative and direct work, including building family networks and strengthening parenting, as well as rigorous work on permanence planning which means that children leave care, where

appropriate, earlier, for example under special guardianship plans. In addition to this, the service has developed its support for domestic violence and its approach to working with adults causing harm.

The Department is projecting that the number of children coming into care will continue to rise, albeit at a slower rate.