



**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE – 2 NOVEMBER 2021**

**DEFINING CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES FOR THE FUTURE**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the progress made with respect to the Defining Children and Family Services for the Future (DCFSF) programme since the decision made at the Cabinet on 20 November 2020 to proceed with the programme alongside Newton Europe as delivery partners.

**Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

2. The Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 placed a duty upon Local Authorities to commission education, health and social care services jointly and provide more streamlined and co-ordinated assessment processes. These pieces of legislation are key influences for the future work of Children and Family Services with children and young people with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) and the response to parents and young carers.
3. The Children Act 2004 allocates duties to Local Authorities to ensure that children are safeguarded, and their welfare is promoted. This underpins the work of Children and Family Services with respect to Looked After Children, Children in Need and Child Protection cases.
4. The improvement journey and aspiration for Children and Family Wellbeing and Children's Social Care services, which sit within the Children and Family Services department, is set out in the *Continuous Improvement Plan 2021-2023, The Road to Excellence*<sup>1</sup> and underpins all change and development in the programme.
5. Other relevant policies include:
  - Leicestershire County Council's Strategic Plan 2018-2022
  - Children and Family Services Departmental Plan 2020-2023
  - Road to Excellence – Continuous Improvement Plan 2021-2023
  - Placement Sufficiency and Market Position Statement 2021-2023

- Voice and Influence Strategy 2020-2023
  - Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.
6. All the relevant legislation and policies outlined above have informed the proposed programme which will ensure that the department is able to provide the right interventions at the right time and in the right way, improving outcomes for children, young people and families while ensuring that the service is financially sustainable.

### **Background**

7. The Children and Family Services Department faces significant challenges due to increased growth and demand on its services; this is reflected in the £23.1m growth to 2024/25 approved within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) by the County Council on 17 February 2021.
8. The County Council as a whole is operating in an extremely challenging financial environment, following a decade of austerity and spending pressures, particularly with respect to social care. The position in 2020/21 was severely affected by Covid-19 with the on-going financial impacts of the pandemic unclear at present.
9. The growth reflected within the MTFS (2021/22-2024/25) is mainly due to pressures on the budget for placements, which are currently rising by over 10% a year, and difficulties in staffing (reflected by the use of agency social workers).
10. The Children and Family Services department is required to make £16.0m savings to 2024/25, with this figure including the expected £13.2m savings attributed to the DCFSF programme.
11. The diagnostic completed by Newton Europe in October 2021 identified an initial list of potential change opportunities. These were subject to further validation and prioritised into a short list.
12. A gateway review workshop was held in October 2020 and was attended by representatives from across Children and Family Services, with independent challenge provided by the Director of Adults and Communities.
13. The workshop assessed each of the opportunities in turn looking at financial and operational confidence, required investment, delivery timescales, change complexity and organisational change capacity, alignment to the department's vision, impact for service users, wider Leicestershire County Council impact and impacts for external partners.
14. The assessment provided assurance on the validity of opportunities from a financial and operational perspective, assessed the deliverability of

opportunities and sought to confirm whether opportunities represented an extension to existing work or new areas of work for the Department. Eleven opportunities were recommended for further work. These were categorised into four main themes:

- i) Greater focus on earlier interventions and preventing the level of need escalating into Social Work interventions.
  - ii) Ensuring that interventions are delivered in a timely way as part of a Child/Young Persons journey.
  - iii) Ensuring that children and young people are placed in the most appropriate setting for their level of need.
  - iv) Ensuring that Children and Young People with Disabilities are supported to achieve greater levels of independence.
15. The detail of these themes, resulting in projects, is provided in Appendix 1 of this report.
16. The recommendation of the gateway review, to approve the commissioning of Newton Europe to support the delivery of opportunities identified through the diagnostic assessment, was taken to CMT on 5 November 2020, where it was agreed that this be presented to the Cabinet at its meeting on 20 November 2020. This was also reported to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 18 November 2020.

### **Progress Update on Delivery of Identified Opportunities**

17. Following the approval of the Cabinet to commission Newton Europe to support the delivery of opportunities, this work has been divided into two stages:
- Design Stage – the development of new ways of working to realise the opportunities identified within the diagnostic.
  - Implementation Stage – the roll-out of new ways of working to front line social work and early help teams across the county.
18. The Design Stage has been concluded for all of the workstreams outlined above and the new ways of working developed by professionals within the department, supported by Newton Europe and the Transformation Unit, are now being rolled out across the service. This includes the development of:
- A new domestic abuse toolkit
  - The introduction of a domestic abuse intervention worker
  - Mosaic and report development for improved data capture and visibility of timely actions in plans

- A meeting to improve access to services (right service at the right time) for children and families
  - New processes to ensure that children achieve permanence through other legal routes and as such, less time in care
  - Risk of residential meeting to ensure children have access to family-based placements and/or service that will reduce the need for residential care
  - Residential review meetings led by Heads of Service that focus on the robust use of trajectory planning to ensure children and young people exit residential care in a timely way
  - Enhanced responses to enquiries to be foster carers
  - Reduced times for completion of fostering assessments
  - Improved utilisation of fostering provision through the introduction of a duty system
  - Weekly change improvement meetings to identify barriers to improved performance in fostering, reporting to the Assistant Director
  - New focus for child in need plans for children with a disability, focusing on the future and preparing for adulthood.
19. The new ways of working have been piloted and tested with practitioners in real world situations, with digital tools being developed to support and embed these.
20. Training has been provided to front line practitioners accompanied by intensive support to practitioners in order to apply the training in new ways of working to their caseloads.
21. As of 9 September 2021, the new ways of working are currently delivering an annualised benefit of £7 million, which represents significant progress towards the target annualised benefit of £8.7 million.
22. As the implementation period progresses and new ways of working become embedded it is expected that the annualised benefit which can be achieved will approach the stretch target of £13.4 million. Work is currently being undertaken to translate the expected benefits into savings for the MTFS up to the financial year 2024/25.

### **Remaining Programme Work**

23. There are two areas of work that are still in design or in pilot phase – consideration of how non-social worker qualified staff can be best used to provide services to children and families at the right time (called ‘further establishment modelling’ workstream) and the domestic abuse intervention officer (evaluation scheduled for December 2021).

24. All other projects and related workstreams are in implementation phase, with focus on evidencing sustainability of benefits and moving to business as usual.

### **Equality and Human Rights Implications**

25. Public authorities are required by law to have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
  - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not
  - Foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not.
26. Rigorous assessments of the impact of emerging proposals during the 'Design Stage' were undertaken by individual workstreams and assured by the Programme Management Office function; these assessments did not indicate any adverse impacts on people with protected characteristics. In addition, the assessments undertaken demonstrated that all of the proposed changes were consistent with current policy with changes designed to improve service delivery to people with protected characteristics.
27. Furthermore, the decision-making governance of the programme included legal representation, in order to provide an appropriate level of assurance and challenge to inform decision makers, so that the decisions taken would not adversely impact upon people with protected characteristics.
28. The views of children and young people were also captured through a specific piece of work and these views have influenced how services will be delivered in the future.

### **Environmental Implications**

29. Based upon cross referencing the proposals outlined within this report with the Environmental Implications Tool, it can be seen that the proposals are neutral with respect to the Council's environmental impact.

### **Background Papers**

30. None.

### **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

31. None.

### **Officer(s) to Contact**

Jane Moore, Director of Children and Family Services  
Tel: 0116 305 2649  
Email: [jane.moore@leics.gov.uk](mailto:jane.moore@leics.gov.uk)

## Appendix 1

### Appendix 1: Project line descriptions

The Pathways Project area comprises the following workstreams.

<b>Safeguarding Case Drift</b>	<b>Description</b>
Practice	To ensure that that we provide the best outcome for every child requiring support from our services, in the most appropriate timeframe.
Intervention Effectiveness	To ensure that the support services that are provided to a child or family are effective and prevent children from escalating to higher levels of care or returning to the service in the future.
Interfaces	Enhancing the way that professionals work together across services to provide the best outcomes for children and families.

The Placements Project area comprises the following workstreams.

<b>Workstream</b>	<b>Vision</b>
Redefining Residential	To ensure that every child has access to the setting of care that will deliver the best outcome for them, focussing on reducing the inappropriate use of residential care by creating viable alternatives and a robust system of reviewing and stepping down.
Internal Capacity	To deliver improved outcomes for children and young people in care in Leicestershire by maximising the availability and utilisation of our high-quality in-house services, including mainstream and special fostering, and supported lodgings.
Permanence	To ensure that more children achieve permanence outside of care settings, by promoting the use of SGO's.

The Children with Disabilities Project area comprises the following workstreams and the corresponding vision.

<b>Workstream</b>	<b>Vision</b>
Enabling Children with Disabilities	This workstream is looking to enable greater independence for Children and Young People as they progress towards adulthood by: Using formal and informal networks of support, linking people into their own community capacity; Working with individuals, families and carers to reduce the impact of the transition to adulthood; Ensure Children and Young People are supported to develop the skills they need to lead a more independent life; Taking a holistic approach to Education, Health and Care Plans working collaboratively with partners to offer the most appropriate solutions for Children and Young People.
Planning for Adulthood	This workstream is looking to develop and implement a model which will better enable Children and Young People with Disabilities and ensure that they are better prepared for adulthood.

<sup>i</sup> The Road to Excellence:

[https://www.proceduresonline.com/lr/childcare/leicestershire/user\\_controlled\\_lcms\\_area/uploaded\\_files/U0706%20CFS%20Road%20to%20Excellence%2013.pdf](https://www.proceduresonline.com/lr/childcare/leicestershire/user_controlled_lcms_area/uploaded_files/U0706%20CFS%20Road%20to%20Excellence%2013.pdf)

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