



**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE – 18 NOVEMBER 2020**

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

**REPORT OF THE  
DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the outcome of a diagnostic assessment of the Department and to outline the plans to take forward work to develop the department to improve outcomes for children.

**Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

1. The Children & 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 key 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 and the responses to parents and young carers.
2. The Children Act 2004 allocates duties to Local Authorities to ensure that children are safeguarded, and their welfare is promoted. This key piece of legislation underpins the work of Children and Family Services with respect to 'Looked After Children', 'Children in Need' and 'Child Protection' cases.
3. Furthermore, The Children Act 2004 places a duty upon Local Authorities to make arrangements to promote co-operation between itself and organisations and agencies to improve the wellbeing of local children. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 strengthens this important relationship with partners by placing new duties on key agencies in a local area. Specifically, the police, clinical commissioning groups and the Local Authority, to work together in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area.

4. It should also be noted that the 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018' guidance provides a framework for all the relevant legislation and sets out the importance of early identification and response to issues of concern, particularly for vulnerable groups.
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 2017-2020;
  - Voice & Influence Strategy 2020-2023;
  - Children & Family Services – Commissioning Strategy 2016-2020;
  - Children & Family Services – Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework (QAIF)
6. All the relevant legislation and policies outlined above will inform the proposed programme which will help to develop and future proof Children and Family Services, such that the right interventions are delivered 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.
7. A report is being presented to the Cabinet on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2020 to seek approval to move to the next stage of work based on the outcome of the diagnostic assessment.

### **Background**

8. The diagnostic analysis was undertaken in the context that:
  - Leicestershire County Council is already an efficient organisation with a good track record in delivering transformational change and savings.
  - There is a clear vision for Children and Family Services, with a set of activities and strategies already in progress to deliver this vision.
  - A range of efficiencies and savings from some of these activities are already profiled and assumed to be delivered within the existing Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
  - The assessment team undertaking the diagnostic were received positively by staff and managers across the service, as well as across the Council's corporate departments.

- The approach of the assessment team has been one of partnership and collaboration with the authority, with team staff working closely alongside the Department.
  - The outputs and findings have been reviewed, validated and iterated, in order to provide the Council with an evidence-based, realistic view of the opportunities that could be pursued, extending beyond the Department's existing plans.
9. The Children and Family Services Department faces significant challenges due to increased growth and demand on its services; this is reflected in the growth approved within the MTFs by the County Council on 7 February 2020.
  10. Leicestershire County Council is also facing additional financial pressures in addition to the MTFs approved by the County Council on 7 February 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic; this has increased the challenge to the Children and Family Services Department of ensuring continued delivery of effective outcomes for Children, Young People and Families in a financially sustainable way.
  11. It is proposed that the diagnostic assessment helps to inform the next steps in the ongoing development of the Department. The opportunities identified in the assessment will support the future proofing of Children and Family Services so that the right interventions are delivered in the right way, at the right time, to ensure that children, young people and families achieve the best possible outcomes whilst also ensuring that the service is financially sustainable going forwards.
  12. The development will be achieved through the implementation of a holistic change programme, focusing upon optimising practice, systems, culture, and operational delivery through the delivery of four areas of work alongside additional enabling work.
  13. The diagnostic identified several areas for consideration. These were subject to further validation and had been considered through a planned series of engagements with staff and managers leading up to a gateway review. This was held in October and was attended by representatives from across Children and Family Services with independent challenge provided by the Director of Adults and Communities.
  14. The gateway review assessed each of the opportunities in turn looking at confidence in delivery, timescales, change complexity and organisational

change capacity, alignment to the department's vision, impact for service users, wider County Council impact and impacts for external partners.

15. The identified opportunities will:
  - Maximise the improvements that can be made to how the Department delivers its services to achieve the best outcomes for children.
  - Support the Department to achieve and sustain a high level of performance across all children's pathways and settings.
  - Provide expertise and knowledge transfer that could be applied to transformational work in other council departments or services.
16. Broadly the opportunities are categorised into four main themes:
  - Children's Pathways – Greater focus on earlier interventions and preventing the level of need escalating into higher tier interventions.
  - Timeliness of interventions – Ensuring that interventions are delivered in a timely way as part of a Child/Young Person's journey in order to meet needs at the right time and by the right team.
  - Settings – Ensuring that Children and Young People are placed in the most appropriate setting for their level of need.
  - Children with Disabilities – Ensuring that Children and Young People with Disabilities are supported to achieve greater levels of independence.
17. The opportunities identified are a combination of potential service user benefits, in terms of enhanced quality and outcomes for Children, Young People and Families across Leicestershire, improved productivity and processes, and a savings contribution which will be reflected within the MTFS. It is proposed that the cost of the programme will be commensurate and in line with the expected return on the investment.
18. Over the next five to six months it is proposed that further work will be undertaken to develop these themes and opportunities in partnership with staff across the Department, officers from the Transformation Unit and colleagues from Newton Europe.

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

19. Equality and Human rights implications will be considered fully in the next phase of the work and any implications will be fully assessed in respect of potential impact of any proposals and the timing of any proposed changes.

20. Specific proposals will be subject to robust engagement with service users and other people affected, and EHRIA screening at the appropriate time.

**Background Papers**

21. None.

**Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

22. None.

**Officer(s) to Contact**

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