

SUBJECT: CHANGING PRACTICE, CHANGING LIVES IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES

MEETING: ADULT AND CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT

DATE: 16TH DECEMBER 2015

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to obtain approval for a 3 year Service and Financial Plan for Children's Social Services which will form part of the overarching Social Care and Health transformation programme, *Changing Practice, Changing Lives*.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the 3 year Children and Young People Services and Financial Plan be referred to Cabinet for approval.

3. KEY ISSUES:

This plan forms part of an overarching transformation programme in Monmouthshire County Council Social Care and Health which was designed to deliver the cultural and practice change necessary to realise the benefits from the legislative framework in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (2015). The transformation programme in Social Care has delivered both improved outcomes and quality of life for people and significant savings over the last 4 years in adult social services.

Recognising the differences in children's services, and the different starting place, the first phase of the transformation programme in children's services has focussed on getting the basics right and improving performance. The *Changing Practice, Changing Lives* programme will continue to be sensitive to those differences between adults and children's services, but also build on the strengths within the different part of the business to deliver a coherent purpose and governance for practice and commissioning in Social Care and Health.

A shared understanding of 'what good practice looks like' and alignment of all systems (from supervision to quality assurance to management meetings) is needed. Change is delivered by individual practitioners and teams coming together around a common purpose, supported by managers and leaders who set direction and remove the barriers that exist. Some limited external support from a recognised expert in children's services will be sought to develop the detail of practice transformation programme within children's services.

This plan has been developed for a very specific purpose – to ensure there is clear set of prioritised actions to deliver service and financial recovery. It builds on the very positive progress which has been made in children's social services over the last 2 years and sets

direction over a medium term time frame to address increasing challenges around managing need, workforce stability and financial sustainability. It reflects increasing challenges since the Service Improvement Plan (SIP) for 2015/16 was agreed. As such, the plan includes a set of actions which are additional to current SIP. The 3 year timescale of the plan and financial model, recognises that practice led transformation requires sustained direction and effort over a prolonged period of time.

The detailed plan is appended to this paper. There are 4 themes contained within the plan which detail the improvements required:

Quality and Effectiveness of Social Work Practice
Capacity and Capability of the Workforce
Improved commissioning
Service and Financial Performance and Accountability

The plan also contains within it a financial model, risks, mitigations and measures which will enable robust tracking of whether the plan is delivering the outcomes required. The key actions from this transformation plan will form the core of an updated Service Improvement Plan for 2016/17. The plan will also need to be flexible and contain within it a dynamic model which allows service and financial performance to be monitored robustly and challenged.

4. REASONS:

The Children and Young People's Select Committee is responsible for monitoring the performance of services provided to children and young people in Monmouthshire.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

Children Social Services in Monmouthshire County Council have been focussed on improving practice and performance for a number of years. Considerable progress has been made, particularly in improving performance against priority performance indicators and addressing the recommendations of the CSSIW review of children's social services which was undertaken in November 2014.

It is critical that the improvements made are: embedded sustainably in practice and commissioning; are delivered by a permanent children's services workforce which is confident in practice who can access a range of evidence based support options which can achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people; and are delivered within the budget for the service set by the Council.

Since April 2015, numbers of looked after children have risen and the service is operating with a significant agency workforce due to a combination of vacancies and absence. These are the predominant reasons for net projected overspend in 2015/16 month 6 of £986K (adjusted for £115K reserve funding). The absolute priority is a robust medium term (3 year) service and financial plan which is based on informed analysis, projections of need and evidence of what works. Delivery of the plan needs to be driven by social work practice which is modern, evidence based, underpinned by a principle of intervening at the earliest opportunity and agreeing outcomes which with children, young people.

6. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

The impacts from this report's recommendations will be reviewed quarterly. Criteria for monitoring and review will include performance against national and local performance indicators, the experience of children, young people and families, the number of looked after children, children on the child protection register and children in need and financial performance.

7. SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

This service and financial plan has been developed to ensure that children's social services in Monmouthshire continue to provide the highest standards of practice in safeguarding children.

8. CONSULTEES:

Senior Leadership Team

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None

10. AUTHOR:

Claire Marchant – Chief Officer, Social Care and Health

11. CONTACT DETAILS:

Tel: 01633 644487

E-mail: clairemarchant@monmouthshire.gov.uk

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL SERVICES

SERVICE AND FINANCIAL PLAN

2016-2019

Introduction

This Service and Financial Plan has been created to set out the steps that will be taken to bring about culture and practice of continuous improvement in service and financial performance of Children and Young People Services in Monmouthshire.

The Plan forms part of a wider transformation programme of Social Care and Health within Monmouthshire which is underpinned by the changing legislative basis for social services in Wales contained within the Social Services (Wales) Act 2014 which needs to be implemented by April 2016. The plans needs to be considered within the context of improvements to the wider systems that support the protection and wellbeing of children who need intervention from social services.

Governance

Improving the performance of its children and young people social services function is a high priority for the Council.

To ensure that the improvement work is effectively led and delivered, the Senior Leadership Team will provide regular oversight, challenge and direction. Children Services Improvement will be a standard agenda item at each Senior Leadership Team meeting.

Improving outcomes for children and families is also a partnership priority and it is critical that senior partners from the NHS, police, housing, education and third sector are fully involved in the next phase of improvement. It is proposed that the Programme Board performs that function, reporting to the Local Service Board.

Targeted, short term, external support from experienced, independent professionals will be procured to support this improvement work as necessary, building on the progress already made within the service and the benefits realised from the external review of safeguarding.

The Senior Leadership Team will use this development plan as its route map and this will be supplemented by a performance framework which will allow progress to be tracked. This will include information from a set of performance indicators, workforce trackers, financial monitoring and supported by a range of quality audits which will enable the voice of the children, young people and families to be

captured. On a monthly basis, the Senior Leadership Team will receive highlight reports on the previous month's performance as well as progress on the development plan. Quarterly, or more frequently if necessary, the Senior Leadership Team will review progress in greater detail.

Reports on progress against the Plan will be regularly brought to the Children, Young People Select Committee, Cabinet and Council as appropriate.

Background

Children's Social Services in Monmouthshire have made significant progress in improving practice and performance over the last 2 years particularly. This resulted in significant improvement in national performance indicators for 2014/ 2015 which, most importantly, were indicative of improved outcomes for children, young people and families. The service has responded positively to the CSSIW inspection of November 2014 which found no widespread or serious failings but noted the need to embed and sustain the work that had commenced to improve practice in children's services. In the most recent evaluation of performance published in October 2015, the Inspectorate note 'Progress has been made in a number of areas to date. In particular the council has made improvements around statutory visits to looked after children and the timeliness of reviews for children in need as well as recruitment to permanent posts. However, there is still a journey of improvement that children's services will need to continue over the next year'.

It is in recognition of the stage of the improvement journey in which Children's Services, and the need to ensure that improvements in outcomes and performance are built upon, and that the workforce and budget of children's services are put on a sustainable footing going forward, that this plan has been developed.

Current Position

There has been a significant increase in the number of looked after children in Monmouthshire in the last year. At the end of the second quarter of 2015/16, there were 121 looked after children, compared with 100 in November 2014. The service is also operating with high numbers of agency workers,. There has also been some deterioration in performance against prioritised performance indicators in the same period. The pressures in the external placement budget and the workforce budget (as a consequence of agency usage), have resulted in a net projected overspend in 2015/16 of £986K (adjusted for £115K reserve funding).

The improvement work continues to take place against a backdrop of extremely challenging financial settlements for local government in. It is also the case that pressures on families are increasing at this time, with incomes squeezed as a consequence of the economic climate. It is therefore critical to the Council that this is a medium term service and financial plan which is based on informed analysis and projections of need and evidence of what works. In a nutshell, it is critical that the children's service is put on a sustainable footing.

Experience of successful transformation from elsewhere, and from the experience of adult services in Monmouthshire County Council, is that progressive practice, by a stable workforce is the key to keeping children safe, improving outcomes for children and young people and achieving financial balance.

A clear and simple plan is needed to unite everyone around what needs to be done and to get everyone pulling in the same direction. This is the right cultural conditions for recovery. This relies upon strong, resilient leadership from Members, senior leaders and service management. Potential obstacles to recovery need to be overcome collegially and quickly, like prompt production of clear financial and performance data and management of the personnel issues

Purpose

The purpose of children's services in Monmouthshire is:

- Working alongside people to enable them to live their own lives
- Enable families and communities to keep children and young people safe and to reach their full potential.

OPERATING PRINCIPLES:

- We will work in **partnership** to facilitate solutions, building meaningful rapport/relationships with family's individuals and partners.
- We will know/be clear about the people who we will support in a **timely** manner.
- We will have a plan of how we will support people to develop a 'whole life' plan, and have a method to track progress and **communicate** effectively.(including commissioning)
- We will take an **outcome focused** approach to future planning (long terms and short term) with families and individuals to meet their own aspirations and goals.

- We will involve the **right people** at the right time to help people in crisis and take and will take responsibility for the appropriate pace and continuity of our on- going intervention.
- We will have **honest and transparent** conversations with **all** people.
- We will work with and **respect** other colleagues and challenge systems to ensure best practice and service delivery.
- We will use 'Check' to reflect **learn** and develop on our practice and decisions.
- Everything we record will be **purposeful** and proportionate.
- We will **value and respect our staff** and trust their judgement; and promote wellbeing in the workforce.
- Our IT system will work for us.
- We will work **creatively** and equitably within **all** resources available.
- We will improve **commissioning** to deliver of a range of evidence based services which will make a difference in the lives of children and young people
- We will **redirect resources** to reduce the need for children to come into care and to remain safely within their families through **early intervention** ensure that effective help is provided quickly, thus reducing the need for statutory intervention is reduced
- We will **manage resources** effectively to ensure that the children's service, whilst always putting the safeguarding and well-being of children and young people first, is able to do so in an agreed resource envelope
- We will **develop our workforce** to ensure a permanent workforce with the right skills to do the job in the right way.

Values

Work in children' social services will always be rooted in the values of the social work profession and the United Nations convention on the rights of a child:

- To hear and listen to the voice of the child or young person in everything that we do
- Respect for the inherent worth and dignity of all people
- Promoting social justice
- Acting with integrity
- Ensuring our children are safe
- Treating all people with respect, compassion, empathy and care

- Ensure the staff are respected and involved
- Ensuring the proper stewardship of scarce public resources

Overarching Aims

At the outset it is important to articulate what we are expecting to achieve. The following quality statements illustrate the types of outcomes and experiences we are striving to provide.

- Children, young people and their families receive help and support to optimise their well – being and reach their potential at every stage. To ensure they get the best start in life and enjoy positive, rewarding experiences growing up in safety, protected from abuse or harm at home, at school and in the community.
- Children, young people and their families benefit from effective support as soon as needs arise. Get help early and frequently enough, at times, in places and in ways that meet their needs. In particular, those children and parents who are most vulnerable get help from staff who are able to reach out to them and facilitate the support they require for as long as it is needed. Support will be provided by Staff that that have the necessary skills and are clear about their roles and responsibilities.
- Children, young people and their families feel valued and engaged as important contributors supported to work with services and as a consequence have positive experiences of the system. As a result children have confidence that they will be protected promptly and effectively when there are concerns about their safety or well-being.
- At all times staff listen carefully to children and have a thorough understanding of their views, wishes, and expectations and, accurately record what they say. Children are supported to make a contribution to their assessments to support sound and timely decisions about their lives.
- Children are not left to “drift” in the system. Review and decision making meetings take place regularly and at required intervals with sufficient independent challenge to drive progress forwards within timescales. Looked After Children experience nurturing and stable environments within local communities which support them to reach full potential.

Improvement Approach

Although improvements across all performance areas has been a service aim; particular focus has been, and will continue to be made on the following 4 national performance indicators/measures:

- Increasing the percentage of looked after children reviews carried out within statutory timescales
- Increasing the percentage of children in need reviews carried out within statutory timescales
- The percentage of initial assessments that were completed during the year where there is evidence that the child has been seen by the Social Worker
- The percentage of eligible, relevant and former relevant children that have pathway plans as required

Appendix 1 provides a breakdown of comparative performance in the 5 national performance indicators/measures, between the period's 2013/14 and 2014/15 and quarter 1 and quarter 2 of 2015/16 respectively as well as the locally determined indicators for these areas.

Children's Services will continue to concentrate upon doing the basics well, prioritising the areas identified by the inspectors, under four themes:

- Quality and Effectiveness of Social Work Practice
- Capacity and Capability of the Workforce
- Improved commissioning
- Service and Financial Performance and Accountability

Theme 1 - Quality and Effectiveness of Social Work Practice

A relentless focus to improving practice is the key to success in children's services. A common understanding of 'what good practice looks like' and alignment of all systems to reinforce the primacy of this is critical. We will deliver safe, effective, high quality social work practice by:

- A diagnostic by a recognised expert in children's services to provide a robust assessment of the baseline position, particularly in managing the front door, thresholds and decision making. This needs to encompass a review of preventative alternatives as well as statutory thresholds;
- A training programme which ensures a common understanding of quality practice for every social worker;
- Implementation of outcomes training in all social work teams in preparation
- Ensuring there are agreed, functioning and consistent systems within all social work teams;
- Continuous improvement of the consistency and quality of decision making;
- Continuous improvement of the quality and consistency of assessments and care plans taking appropriate account of, and appropriately managing, risks, case recording including recording the views of children and key professionals;
- Ensuring looked after children and young people receive appropriate levels of support through effective multi-agency intervention which is responsive to their needs and ensures that no drift occurs in the care planning process;

- Ensuring that there is an appropriate performance management system in place at team level including a quality assurance process which ensures continuous improvement in practice
- Ensuring frontline managers are equipped to deliver effective supervision, management oversight, support and leadership to front line staff .

Theme 2 – Capacity and Capability of the Workforce

Delivering a comprehensive approach to workforce development to children’s services in Monmouthshire which delivers the following:

- Recruitment & Selection – we need to increase the speed of advertising for vacant posts, interviewing of successfully applicants and the ensuring safe recruitment process are concluded in a timely way;
- Management and Leadership programme to be implemented;
- Maximise attendance through effective management of sickness and other absences;
- Effective use of HR capacity and embedding people management skills with clarity of role between HR and service managers;
- Review existing staffing structure including a support framework for newly qualified social workers;
- Skills and capabilities assessment at an individual and team level linked to an appropriate training programme to create the culture and practice for change we are looking at models for this currently;
- Build on and progress to next stage in the cultural change/ OD programme;
- Explore the use of a case load supply and demand toolkit for social worker case load management.

Theme 3 – Improved Commissioning – Realigning Resources to effectively meet demand

For families that are showing signs of distress access to appropriate support at the earliest opportunity is critical. In areas where preventative services are successful, they can prevent them reaching a point where it is necessary for children’s social services to intervene. Initial analysis shows that investment in early intervention and prevention is commissioned from a number of different funding sources without a single commissioning plan which focusses funding (regardless of source) on the interventions where there is evidence that the maximum impact is delivered. A commissioning review and coherent set of robust and supportive services is urgently required to ensure that young people and children have the best start possible in their lives.

We will commission effective, high quality for children and families services by:

- Undertaking a baseline assessment of the availability and effectiveness of services available, to understand potential duplication, gaps and where evidence supports it, realigning resources with key pressure points;
- Young people and families are fully involved in co-producing the right services;
- Implementing a common access point for early intervention and prevention services to ensure everyone receives the right service for them;
- Establishing a common approach to commissioning in Social Care and Health, ensuring that children services can build on the skills and capacity in adult services
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the 4 Cs commissioning process;
- Reviewing assessment and commissioning of residential placements to ensure packages are 'right size' and 'right price' and that contributions from partners reflect assessed need;
- Work collaboratively with partners to identify the right range of accommodation and support options are available to ensure that young people are accommodated closer to home where appropriate;
- Ensuring there is a robust approach to realising the benefits from current business cases to increase the number of special guardianship orders and increase in in-house foster services What do you mean by 'realising the benefits from the current business case'.

Theme 4 – Service and Financial Performance and Accountability

Effective recording and reporting of our management information is essential in helping us to know whether or not we are making a positive difference to the lives of the children, young people and families. The new IT system for children's services provides opportunities to design meaningful local performance measures and report. Performance priorities are:

- A focus at every level on the prioritised performance indicators;
- Robust approach to tracking and evaluating the realisation of the benefits from the approved business cases;
- Full implementation of structured approach to audit and quality assurance of practice;
- Development of reports through PLANT to support operational management and continuous improvement;
- Implementing systems which support the new statutory performance indicators from April 2016 as a consequence of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act;
- A single review of business support roles and responsibilities to support operational teams in Social Care and Health;
- Continuing to develop and embed the culture and systems of financial control within the children's service.

FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS

A 3 year financial model for Children's Services has been developed. This is set out in **table 1** below. This model is based on a projected net increase in looked after children numbers of 12 over the next three years to 133. It is also based on: a reduction in agency workforce to the safe minimum (downscaling by

60% from the current projections), and an assumption that the benefits of the business cases approved by Cabinet in May 2015 will be fully realised to the anticipated timescales.

The resources and investment needed to realise these improvements have been identified and included in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme. Where appropriate, the work is also reflected in the allocations of other budgets or grant funding arrangements.

There are a number of significant risks to delivery set out below:

Financial Pressure - There is a risk that the reduction in looked after children predicted in the model underpinning the Plan will be delayed or not delivered and consequently a greater net increase and base budget pressure. The actions to improve practice and commissioning set out in this paper have been developed with the intention of providing the culture and practice for a safe reduction in looked after children.

Workforce Capacity – There is a risk that the improvements to practice will be delayed as a consequence of continued challenges in recruiting and developing sufficient numbers of social workers with the skills needed to respond to need/demand. The actions within the developing workforce plan for children's services mitigate this risk.

Service Capacity – This plan is predicated on a strategy of early intervention and prevention which requires a review of current investments from core budgets and funded through specific grants. There is a risk that reductions in specific grants and difficulties in decommissioning existing services, will mean the full spectrum of early intervention and prevention services cannot be commissioned to create safe alternatives in the timescale.

Capacity to deliver the Service and Financial Plan – There is limited capacity available within children's social services, across Social Care and Health and within the Council to deliver this plan within the timescales necessary. It is critical that priority is given to this area of work given the implications financially and service terms of not doing so. Reporting to Senior Leadership Team is critical to unblocking any blockages to progressing this work at the pace needed.

Children Services Projection (2015/16 - 2018-19)		
	£m	Notes
Yr 1 - 2015/16		
Forecasted Overspend (M6)	1.18	121 LAC
Yr 2 - 2016/17		
Forecasted Overspend b/f from 2015/16	1.18	
Projected Cost of Existing 121 LAC to Reflect Best /Worst Cases	0.00	
Projected Cost of 1 Additional LAC	0.02	
Net cost saving of 60% reduction in use of Agency staff	(0.20)	
Forecasted Over/(Under)Spend excluding Business Cases	1.00	122 LAC
<i>Cost Avoidance / Cost Saving re Business Cases re 2016/17</i>	(0.02)	
Forecasted Over/(Under)Spend including Business Cases	0.98	
Yr 3 - 2017/18		
Forecasted Over/(Under)Spend excluding Business Cases b/fwd from 2016/17	1.00	
Projected Cost of 5 additional LAC	0.32	
Forecasted Over/(Under)Spend excluding Business Cases	1.32	127 LAC
<i>Cost Avoidance / Cost Saving re Business Cases 2016/17</i>	(0.02)	
<i>Cost Avoidance / Cost Saving re Business Cases 2017/18</i>	(0.18)	
Forecasted Over/(Under)Spend including Business Cases	1.12	
Yr 4 - 2018/19		
Forecasted Over/(Under)Spend excluding Business Cases b/fwd from 2017/18	1.32	
Projected Cost of 6 additional LAC	0.34	
Forecasted Over/(Under)Spend excluding Business Cases	1.66	133 LAC
<i>Cost Avoidance / Cost Saving re Business Cases 2016/17</i>	(0.02)	
<i>Cost Avoidance / Cost Saving re Business Cases 2017/18</i>	(0.18)	
<i>Cost Avoidance / Cost Saving re Business Cases 2018/19</i>	(0.44)	
Forecasted Over/(Under)Spend including Business Cases	1.01	

Table 1

This 3 year financial model realigns the base line budget for 2016/17 by £1million. Between 2017/18 and 2018/19 the business case benefits can offset the predicted increase in LAC numbers. This is the realistic scenario.

Delivery strategies and action plans

In taking forward this work, four delivery strategies and action plans need to be developed:

- A workforce strategy and a workforce development plan that addresses the particular needs of the children and young people service workforce – **Lead: Peter Davies**

- Practice Improvement and Quality Assurance Strategy and Practice Standards - This framework and standards will ensure that as well as establishing effective strategic and operational management information to support decision making and the scrutiny of performance. There will be regular, systematic reporting of the quality of work undertaken directly by the service ensuring that outcomes and experiences of children and young people are driving the improvement efforts – **Lead: Tracy Jelfs**
- A Commissioning Framework for Children and Young People’s Services which will articulate the quantum and range of services to provide effective, evidence based range of options for people: **Lead Claire Marchant**
- A Communications and Engagement Strategy which ensures that communication and engagement activities are consistent and timely and that all stakeholders receive information and engage with the programme in the formats which are most appropriate for them – **Lead: Tracy Jelfs**