

Report to:	Health and Wellbeing Board	Date of Meeting:	8 September 2021
Subject:	Children's Social Care Workforce Review		
Report of:	Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Children's Social Care Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To agree additional posts within the structure of Children's Social Care. The additional posts outlined in this paper aim to provide some further injection into the workforce and begin further improvements in practice for children, as well as addressing costs.

The following report is for the Health and Wellbeing Board's Information, and was presented to Cabinet on the 2nd September.

Recommendation(s):

To confirm in consultation with the Cabinet Member – Children's Social Care and Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services that delegated authority be given to the Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education Excellence and the Executive Director Corporate Resources and Customer Services to proceed with adaptations to the model of the department.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

Sefton Metropolitan Council is committed to delivering the best services for our most vulnerable children and families. There is a commitment by Members and Officers to make rapid improvement in the delivery of these services. There is a shared ambition for good and outstanding rated services.

Over the last 6 months a significant amount of diagnostic work has been undertaken and triangulation of the quality of services has been informed through the OFSTED focused visit of March 2021 and previous inspections into children's services and the experience of children in receiving those services. The Council accepts the issues raised by OFSTED in their visit and wishes to improve outcomes for children and families.

The Improvement notice issued by the DfE in June 2021 has led to the establishment of an Improvement Board, with an Independent Chair. The notice lasts for 12 months and is supported by a DfE Advisor. The activity and recommendations are not limited to this 12-month notice because the request and design of the services aims to provide long term sustainability, continuous improvement and capacity to manage increased demand for services. The recommendations are based upon “what good looks like” and to address critical issues in the delivery of successful outcomes for children.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

N/A

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

At the Cabinet meeting of July 2021, members agreed to the creation of a budget of £1.5m for Childrens Services for increased staffing levels. To date some temporary resources have been brought into the service that will be the first call on this amount.

The Phase 1 staffing proposal contained within this report will have a part year effect in this year and at this stage it is estimated that this will also be able to be funded by this temporary £1.5m allocation.

The full year effect of the Phase 1 structure will be £2.3m from 2022/23. This demand pressure will be built into the council’s medium term financial plan for the period 2022/23 to 2024/25 and this will be reported to both Cabinet and Council in the autumn of 2021. The ongoing cost of the structure will therefore need to be met from options presented through the local government finance settlement or savings made within the councils existing budget. This will be included in the budget report for 2022/23 for council decision and will follow a similar path to previous demand led pressures which are identified mid year and have a longer term impact.

In addition to the staff requirement within Childrens social care there is also a need to increase resources in Early help (for a period of 6 months) and legal services (for a period of 2 years)- these costs will be met from existing cost of change resources or additional funding that the council already holds and will be subject to delegated decision.

(B) Capital Costs

N/A

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):

This report has staffing implications therefore the agreed processes and engagement with staff and Trade Unions will be followed.

There will also be additional resource implications such as IT equipment.

Legal Implications:

Equality Implications: There are no equality implications.	
Climate Emergency Implications: The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	No
Have a neutral impact	Yes
Have a negative impact	No
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Yes

Contribution to the Council’s Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: This report sets out how the service supports children and young people and protects children at risk of harm.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Children’s social care work with children and their families to improve outcomes for children
Commission, broker and provide core services: Children’s Social Care supports the aspiration for all services for children to be good or better.
Place – leadership and influencer: N/A
Drivers of change and reform: N/A
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: N/A
Greater income for social investment: N/A
Cleaner Greener: N/A

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.6493/21) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.4694/21) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

None

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Appendices:

There are no appendices to this report

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

Principles and Rationale for Additional Capacity:

- 1.1 Through diagnostic we have followed the journey of the child through the system, in other words the ability for services to effectively respond and meet children's needs at the earliest opportunity
- 1.2 Staff engagement has also occurred to look at the barriers and issues to delivering quality services in a timely and effective way.
- 1.3 By doing these things we have established gaps in function, capacity and barriers to meeting key activity.
- 1.4 The request is cognisant of the established model and does not propose a restructure but rather an adaptation and addition of resource which will drive quality and meet needs of children, families and the workforce. Any changes will be subject to appropriate consultation with Trade Unions and employees and subject to the existing policies that operate in respect of employees.
- 1.5 This request has been made as part of the development of a business plan/ vision for sustainable quality children's services over a 2021/23 financial cycle. The evidence bases for this are:
 - Diagnostic and advice from OFSTED inspections and Partner in Practice reviews. (Cheshire West are the regional Partner in Practice which is a DfE collaboration between authorities to support practice improvement).
 - Reviews of strengths and weakness in the social care delivery have been made since the 2016 Inspection of Local Authority children's services known as ILACS. We are due a repeat of this type of inspection and it can occur anytime from September 2021.
 - Learning from complaints on service delivery and an analysis of service delivery issues.
 - Workforce engagement sessions around practice issues and tools to do the job.
 - Statutory compliance and functions.
 - Data and finance analysis on areas of greatest spend, especially high cost placements and permanence.
- 1.6 In terms of the workforce, a phased approach is being considered and phase one is recommended on the basis that a wholesale restructure is counterproductive. A transformation of this sort would take at least 12 months to prepare and launch effectively. The timing of this is not aligned with our need to make immediate improvements. Staff need to see immediate relief in capacity and positive outcomes and there are many areas of the service where the structure works well but where more capacity is required to address demands.
- 1.7 The phase allows us to modify our capacity and take stock of how improvements have provided workload relief and better outcomes without necessarily disrupting existing arrangements.

- 1.8 Additionally, with the sequencing of the phases especially around Placement Commissioning and management of children in care cohorts in high cost arrangements, we can begin to reduce the spend in this area. Financially this is the biggest area of potential efficiencies and improved quality.
- 1.9 The other additional capacity in phase one provides for our workforce support and timely interventions for children which supports our ambition around a stable and permanent, high skilled workforce.
- 1.10 Phase 1 is key in providing critical support and improvements into the service. This means ensuring that there is function in the service which meets statutory compliance. These are also “spend to save” initiatives on workforce recruitment retention and permanent staff and reducing high cost packages and numbers of children in care. Subject to Council approvals a review of phase 1 will be undertaken before phase 2 is instigated to ensure it is providing effective assistance to children and families and is providing the necessary support to meet the OFSTED visit recommendations and the financial support is contained within the available resources for 2022/23 and beyond.

Phase 1

- Ongoing recruitment of social workers - this should continue throughout all phases
- Assistant team managers in social care locality teams
- Additional administrative capacity
- Case manager - overseeing care proceedings and Public Law Outline
- Additional team within the fostering service for assessment of new foster carers to develop in-house capacity, adoption support function and a support service for the assessment and support of Special Guardianship placements, Kinship and connected carers
- Family Support workers (children social care locality teams and corporate parenting)
- Pilot an assessment team within First Response and Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub known as MASH.

Phase 2:

- On-going recruitment of social workers
- Development of the assessment team, this will be tested through piloting in the first instance
- Assistant team managers for other teams (i.e. corporate parenting, assessment team)
- Creating one family support worker per team for the remaining teams (for those teams who are identified that require support workers i.e. Children with Disability).
- Recruitment of an administrative manager.

Phase 3:

- On-going recruitment of social workers
- potential for a commissioned contact service to provide capacity but to review how we deliver some of our services
- Permanent recruitment to some posts currently filled by interim staff at a senior level such as the Executive Director of Children’s Social Care and Education.

2. The Financial Case

- 2.1 Members will recall that within the Council's outturn report of July 2021, a recommendation to create a £1.5m budget to increase staffing levels within the service was agreed. To date some additional capacity has been brought into the service and this will be funded from that sum.
- 2.2 If agreed, the phase 1 proposal will start in the current year and it is estimated that the part year effect of this could be up to £0.970m. It is estimated at this time that this can be contained within the £1.5m already approved.
- 2.3 The full year effect of the phase 2 structure is estimated to be £2.3m. As with previous years, when such a pressure is identified in year that is unavoidable, the Council reflects this immediately in its Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for the following 3 years. As a result this future potential cost will be reflected in the upcoming MTFP that will be presented to Cabinet and Council in the autumn of 2021. Following this the Council's budget report for 2022/23 will reflect this cost and future financing which will be subject to decision at Budget Council. The additional cost will need to be met from either the options presented in the local government finance settlement or savings from existing budgets. With the additional investment in staffing it is anticipated that over the next 2-3 years the council's placements and packages budget which has been under unprecedented pressure could reduce. If this is the case, this will reduce the funding that needs to be found however this cannot be defined at this stage therefore this will be reported in future to members and will net off against this future budget increase. All additional costs will be contained within the budgets identified in this report
- 2.4 The proposals and costs reflected in this report reflect those in relation to Children's Social Care only, however additional support is also required in Early help (for a period of 6 months) and Legal Services (for 2 years to reflect increased caseload). As these are temporary posts, it is proposed that these teams will be funded from existing resources eg cost of change budgets or other external funding sources- these allocations will be subject to agreed delegations

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 The whole adaptations and additions to the workforce are proposed to be undertaken over three phases. The additional posts outlined in this paper are the first of those three, which will aim to provide some initial injection into the workforce and begin some improvements in practice, outcomes for children as well as driving down cost. Each phase will be reviewed to understand the impact this has on children and families, workforce and outcomes and the costs will be reviewed to ensure it sits within the available financial framework.