

Executive Summary – Slough Social Work Model

The Trust recognised that a new social work model in Slough is needed to improve current services so that we achieve the best outcomes for children, young people and families in Slough. We examined how we work with children, young people and families and what sort of social work model will deliver for the population of Slough. In developing the model we focused initially on practice and outcomes, how best to deliver these and whether we need to re structure current Children's Services to do that.

The business case for examining the way we deliver social work at present was informed by both the national and local drivers for change.

National Drivers for Change

The Munro Review¹– placed emphasis, based on evidence and feedback from practitioners and children and families.

In addition, the government's new reform programme for children's social care focuses on skills, knowledge, practice, systems, governance and accountability, and places responsibility on the sector to bring about improved standards. ²

Local Drivers for Change

Slough Children's Services Trust needs to acknowledge and respond to the recommendations from the two Ofsted inspections, undertaken in 2011 and 2013, in addition to the recommendations from the most recent inspection in November 2015. Whilst improvements have been made, the pace of change in some areas has been slow with a consequent urgency to deliver sustainable improvements to ensure children are safe, secure and successful. New policy initiatives, as well as changes in demand, require a different approach and the financial pressures placed on all public services mean a more targeted and cost effective way of delivering services is needed, which requires us to deliver value for money, whilst still focusing on the child's experience and 'journey'.

Also, when speaking to our service users some of their feedback included:

- Poor communication from staff about decisions or recommendations that affect their lives
- Not seeing or being able to contact the Social Worker
- Resources not being awarded and the reasons for this not being communicated
- Appropriate procedures not being followed

We believe the impact of a new model on Children, Young People and Families will be positive and result in them experiencing a more complete and responsive service to address some of their most common concerns.

¹The Munro Review of Child Protection: A child-centred system. Department for Education. May 2011

² Children's Social Care Reform: A vision for change. Department for Education January 2016

Principles underpinning the proposals

The Trust's fundamental purpose is:

“Ensuring children in Slough are safe, secure and successful”

Our aim is to provide:

- The best possible service – Slough Children Services Trust aspires to be an outstanding service in five years
- The best possible outcomes for vulnerable children and families – Ensure children and families are the focus of everything we do
- The best possible support to staff – To enable families to change and flourish

Methodology for developing the new model

In seeking to develop a new model of social work for Slough it was important to involve all practitioners, managers and support staff in the work. This involved a range of staff engagement and activity, and in October 2015 the Slough Social Work Model Project commenced with a number of information sessions. Following which we ran staff workshops, using comprehensive communications on a weekly basis to feedback and further involve staff in the process.

The staff workshops (in November and December 2015) looked at a range of information and data, including 'what works' in other local authorities, and then in detail at two models:

- Traditional social work team model
- Hub model – typified by small group of professional staff, led by a Consultant social worker, cases 'owned' and co-worked by the group, supported by a hub coordinator (enhanced business support), a weekly case discussion, and systemic approach.

Informal Consultation with Staff

During January 2016 informal consultation sessions were held to discuss the models. All staff in the Trust was invited to attend these sessions as part of their service meetings, as well as additional meetings on a group or individual basis, in order to provide informal feedback on the key benefits and opportunities and the challenges and risks of implementing the Social Work Hub or Team Model.

Staff have been increasingly attracted to the hub model, and whilst there are further questions, there is a real interest and excitement about working in this way. The informal consultation brought forward a number of positives and a rationale about how this model can work to improve outcomes in Slough. In summary staff feedback was congruent with the confidence that the hub model would meet the ambitions set out under drivers for change and demonstrate fidelity to the principles underpinned by systemic methodology.

Approved Model

The Trust Board and SMT agreed in early February that on the basis of the informal consultation and the rationale the hub model would be the preferred model to take forward. This is further supported by national research, including the independent evaluation of 'Reclaiming Social Work' led by Eileen Munro, who found significant evidence of positive change achieved through this new model of practice. More recent research of comparative models concluded that the systemic unit model is an innovative and effective way of

developing a service, in that it addresses fundamental questions about how we want to deliver social work.³

The preferred model of hubs was presented to staff at the whole service meetings on 10th February 2016. The informal consultation has resulted in further attention being paid to the number of hubs, the specialist nature of those hubs, values and behaviours, and helping staff who will join the hubs 'up skilling' or bridging the gap between their current competencies and those required as part of the hub working.

The proposed changes to the structure and method of delivering Social Care services in Slough will require a full review of the internal operational protocols, procedures and guidance. An operations manual and practice guidance will be produced which reflect the new structures and methodology.

Formal Consultation

We are now in the process of Formal Consultation which commenced on 3rd March and will run for 20 working days to listen to comments and suggestions from staff; consider alternatives that meet the identified objectives; understand where there may be negative impact for staff that has not previously been considered and find ways of reducing that impact to a minimum.

Consultation Process

The Trade Unions have been taken through these proposals and how they impact on the staff group as part of that consultation process. All staff affected by these proposals will have been invited to the consultation sessions and receive a copy of the proposals. Formal written responses and comments from all affected staff and the trade unions are to be sent via email to the designated person.

Transition Arrangements & Implementation

Our aim is to cause as little disruption to families as possible, whilst ensuring we keep the service safe during the change period. We will therefore complete a full risk assessment of all children and young people open to teams currently, with a view social workers taking children and young people with them into their new hubs to complete any planned work.

The planning for phase 1 of the Slough Social Work Model began in October 2015 and the timescale for full implementation will be governed by recruiting the right staff to the right posts. This will be done incrementally and the process of interviewing staff will start in April of this year.

Our model focuses on the child's experience, informing us about how we want to deliver social work in Slough.

³ Summary report of a comparative study of practice and the factors shaping it in three local authorities. Donald Forrester et al. University of Bedfordshire. June 2013