

**Slough Children's
Services Trust**
www.scstrust.co.uk

Ensuring children in Slough are safe, secure and successful

The Vision for SCST

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1. Vision for the future of children's services

Our fundamental purpose is "Ensuring children in Slough are safe, secure and successful". This is the basis on which we will consult with children, families, staff and stakeholders in developing our vision for the Trust.

The aim is to provide:

- The best possible service – Slough Children Services Trust aims 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

1.1 The case for change

1.1.1 The national context

There is a commitment nationally to change and improve the status and quality of social work. As a profession we have been subject to numerous guidelines and changes in practice with the aim of improving the service that children and families receive.

In Professor Eileen Munro's Review of Child Protection 'Part 1 A Systems Analysis' she opens the debate by saying –

"Protecting children from abuse and neglect has been high on the political agenda for many decades. The reforms introduced by previous Governments have been designed by well informed and well intentioned people, so it is reasonable to ask why yet another review leading to another set of reforms.

The problem is that previous reforms have not led to the expected improvements in frontline practice. Moreover, there is a substantial body of evidence indicating that past reforms are creating new, unforeseen complications".

The Prime Minister announced recently that he has set up a child protection task force consisting of several Cabinet Members in response to Rotherham and child sexual exploitation cases. This demonstrates that this area remains a key priority for the Government. Whilst it is unclear what the outcome of this task force will be, the onus is on the profession to lead developments, and to demonstrate how a good quality social work service can make a difference in children and families lives.

1.1.2 Slough children's services has been in the spotlight for a number of years as failing, with two Ofsted inspections which delivered

judgements of inadequate. A further management review in 2014 concluded that the local authority had not made the necessary improvements, and in October 2014 the Government issued a direction and a notice for removing children's services from local authority control. Slough Children's Services Trust was formed and assumed responsibility for children's services from midnight on 30 September 2015.

1.2 Pace of change

1.2.1 Whilst a number of improvements have been made, the pace of change in some areas has been slow and there is now an 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 required. It is even more important that we get it right first time, with families receiving the right service at the right time, reducing the need for repeat interventions, with a focus on prevention and less intrusive interventions. This cannot be achieved alone and partners and other stakeholders need to be part of the solution - a whole systems approach. Together we must:

- Ensure the safety of children and young people at home and in the community where they do best.
- Close the inequality gap by focusing services at need, based on effective, evidence based and early intervention.
- Ensure all looked after children have a good quality place in learning and a universal health offer.

1.2.2 Local delivery of services will influence the way we work and need to take account of arrangements with schools, GP's and health professionals and the shape and strength of voluntary and community groups. We will need to work hard with partners to make sure these arrangements make sense to children and families.

1.2.3 We must take account of the new duties placed on Children's Social Care (CSC) in relation to children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN), and the expectation that we produce comprehensive Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans by working across services and agencies to involve parents, children and young people in their own plans and the development of services as part of the 'local offer'.

1.2.4 In addition, we will want to learn from the Youth Offending Team (YOT) example, now well established, of how agencies and professionals can work together as part of single teams and services, in the interests of children and young people.

1.2.5 In common with many local authorities, Slough has not always evidenced improvements and the lack of a robust approach to quality assurance and performance has meant that it is difficult to evidence impact particularly when assessing the outcomes of the changes. There are clear inconsistencies in practice and the over-reliance on an agency workforce has resulted in too many changes of social workers and variability of practice. We therefore need to ensure risks are minimised, staff feel well supported and have the right tools to do the job. Evidence from other local authorities that have introduced different models of working show that changing the model of delivery can have a major and positive impact on service delivery and the recruitment and retention of staff. More on this in Section 3.

1.2.6 Our guiding principle is underpinned by the knowledge that children do best in their own homes, families and communities. We also know that outcomes are greatly enhanced by maintaining children in their own family where it is safe to do so. In order to deliver on the above we need to be very clear on the competencies that we require to undertake social work tasks and create a strong learning environment to support a stable, confident workforce.

1.3 Culture and change

1.3.1 For organisations to deal with change, whilst maintaining integrity and retaining quality staff, there needs to be a conducive environment in which this can happen. Change is at the heart of social work, expecting change, supporting change and demanding change for our children.

“organisational culture may be thought of as the collective values and beliefs of the people in an organisation and how this translates into the way we practice” Munro.

1.3.2 The systems that allow us to translate our values and beliefs into practice can enable or hinder the quality of work with children and families. The intention therefore is to create an environment around all teams to support the most effective social work practice possible. The roles, decision making and processes we establish will help create this enabling environment.

1.3.3 The appointment of a range of staff from different disciplines will be key to the success of such an approach. A clinical lens will be essential in making the lasting difference we want to see in families.

1.3.4. We will adopt McKinsey’s framework to ensure we consider all parts of the system and ensure that form follows function.

2. Improvement priorities and improvement plan

- 2.1 Slough Children's Services has experienced a multitude of improvement plans and improvement priorities over the years and there is an element of people being 'improvement weary'. The task, therefore, is to re-energise this approach by making improvement far more about our core activity, rather than being seen as a stand-alone activity or one where people fail to take ownership of what needs to change and see the process as being done to them, rather than one that they own. There has to be an acknowledgement of the current position and the lack of a clear benchmark does hinder this analysis.
- 2.2 Over recent months there have been discreet audits and this needs to develop into a coherent programme driven by the Quality Assurance Framework. Similarly the analysis of performance management information will develop into a routine activity, accessible to managers and practitioners at all levels. There is a need to revisit the findings of the Ofsted report to ensure that the improvements have been targeted at the areas of most need and that we can evidence the trajectory of improvement. To assist in this process a team of three social care experts has been commissioned to undertake a benchmark diagnosis which will look at both casework and performance information.
- 2.3 The benchmarking diagnosis will be undertaken to obtain comparative insights along 50 to 60 children's journeys through children's services systems, including SEN cases, and to assess borough-wide data quality.
- 2.4 A particular focus will be to review practice with children in care and who are on child protection plans as the data around these children is not robust. This information will help inform the Trust's understanding of what is happening to children and young people in Slough and ensure that the targeted use of data, ensures the right services for the right child by:
 - Scrutinising qualitative and quantitative data about the journey of the child from early help to the experiences of care leavers.
 - Identifying specific practice areas, for example, domestic violence, neglect, substance abuse and child sexual exploitation.
- 2.5 The diagnostic assessment will take place and report in the first three weeks of the Trust assuming services. The methodology including grade descriptors used by the project will be consistent with the draft Quality Assurance Framework which we will shortly be consulting on.
- 2.6 Subsequently, in five months' time, after the February half term, the same team will conduct a similar exercise to assess progress and the improvement trajectory. This time the analysis will include evaluation of peer audits and audit by managers and Independent Reviewing

Officers, as well as a look at the demographics of Slough, taking in to account the rapidly changing population.

- 2.7 There is a need to bring all the information together to inform the continuing improvement journey, intelligence analysis, national issues, local specific issues, community issues and those from individuals and social groups within Slough.
- 2.8 The outcome of this work will be reported to the Board and will inform the shape of the improvement plan.
- 2.9 Requirements from the Ofsted report, Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and Care Leavers and Review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), February 2014

Priority Immediate Action

- Develop and implement a comprehensive workforce strategy to attract and keep high quality, experienced permanent staff in Slough.
- Support newly qualified social workers to have protected caseload.
- Ensure social work conversations are confidential and not overheard by non-social work staff.
- Review capacity of senior management.
- Ensure early help, children in need and child protection assessments are comprehensive and timely; identify risk and protective factors to mitigate risk.
- Ensure children are seen regularly and seen alone.
- Make time for social workers to make relationships with children and workers understand wishes and feelings of child and use this to write assessments.
- Improve performance management and audit programme.
- Evaluate practice and efforts to reduce risk including reporting on work and whether outcomes for children have improved.
- Enact the local authority (LA)'s corporate parenting responsibilities to meet the needs of Looked After Children (LAC) by making it their highest priority.
- Improve preparation for independence for care leavers. Reduce Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

Areas for Improvement

- Thresholds for access to early help and CSC is disseminated effectively by LSCB applied and understood across the partnership.
- Ensure all plans both child in need and child protection have a contingency plan and are SMART.

- Child protection chairs should provide rigorous challenge to ensure child's progress is monitored.
- Ensure Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)'s track children effectively and have regular contact.
- Ensure foster carers are regularly supported and have access to professional development set out in a personal development plan which is subject to review.
- Ensure the views of the child are recorded and used in plans.
- Ensure that case records are up to date and reflect child's views and contribute to effective care planning.
- Conduct regular and rigorous monitoring of quality of education for looked after children and take steps to ensure schools raising aspirations.
- Ensure all reports of bullying of LAC are reported by schools to LA.
- Develop and implement strategy for recruitment of adopters based on analysis of need of children requiring adoption.
- Ensure that all care leavers have information regarding rights and entitlements in relation to housing, education and financial support and monitored by corporate parenting committee.
- Improve pathway plans.

These are just the headlines from the report. The main body of the report does include other areas for action, for example ineffective arrangements around private fostering. In addition, new requirements in relation to child sexual exploitation will require specific actions to be identified to progress improvements.

- 2.10 There is a danger that these requirements translate into an improvement plan with numerous actions, which people do not own, meaning a new approach is required. This new approach could be areas of improvement broken down into four different themes (improving quality, learning, improvement and workforce), under which everything else sits as part of a more detailed improvement plan.

2.11 Improving quality

We have clear strategic direction with good management oversight and effective management of risk. Our work involves looking at:

- Leadership
- Values
- Vision
- Practice
- Partnerships
- Environment

In the first month we will:

- Establish processes for management and governance of the Trust and clearly communicate with all staff and stakeholders. Meet key partners
- Ensure the safe transition of 1500 cases
- Identify any areas or gaps in service provision, for example, independent interviews for LAC who go missing
- Begin process of review of placements of all children looked after
- Move into new dedicated space in St Martins Place
- Review delegated authorities and establish clear processes for approval
- Establish inspection ready working group
- Complete 'health check' on the front door

In the first six months we will:

- Set out the strategic direction for achieving outstanding in five years
- Agree the values and principles of the Trust which will underpin our work
- Complete the consultation on Slough model of social work
- Recruit to key senior manager positions
- Identify savings and invest to save
- Identify a young person as a Board member
- Review placement strategy and establish clear alternative to care interventions and review use of residential care in area

2.12 Improving learning

Using what we know to continuously improve and enhance the services we provide for children and families. We will achieve this through:

- feedback from children and families
- feedback from employees, partners and stakeholders
- internal and external audits
- research

In the first month we will:

- Review complaints service and feedback processes from children and families
- Meet Children in Care council and agree how their views are to be represented to the Trust Board
- Audit of cases specifically targeted at establishing if the child is seen and seen alone

In the first six months we will:

- Establish a robust feedback loop for families as part of the quality assurance programme
- Introduce new and dedicated customer services team
- Engage the LSCB in new ways of working
- Appoint a permanent Virtual Head
- Receive regular feedback from schools

2.13 Improving information

We have the right tools to enable the workforce to deliver good quality services for children and families and evidence where we are making a difference. This will be enabled by:

- technology and IT systems
- management and performance information
- effective user friendly systems and processes that support the task

In the first month we will:

- Undertake a benchmark diagnostic
- Appoint Head of Quality and Performance
- Introduce overarching Quality Assurance Framework
- Consider progress against Ofsted 2014 requirements
- Present first draft improvement plan to Trust Board
- Draft run of pulling together Annex A

In the first six months we will:

- Embed the Quality Assurance Framework
- Introduce audit programme
- Set up monthly performance reporting to both Quality and Innovations Sub Committee and Trust Board

2.14 Improving workforce

The right staff are in the right place at all levels to deliver a consistent standard of good quality safeguarding services to children and families. We will achieve this by addressing:

- Skills
- training and development
- style
- structure

In the first month we will:

- Review workforce strategy and assess risks regarding all agency staffed teams
- Begin process of senior managers meeting with all staff members to begin career pathway mapping
- Review agency contracts and begin to identify mechanism for conversion
- Launch process for consulting on Slough's model of social work
- Establish a practitioner's board, which will be chaired by Nicola Clemo

In the first six months we will:

- Complete career pathway work
- Finalise the training programme
- Agree consultation on the new model, with clear implementation dates
- Implement a recruitment strategy
- Commission systemic training for all staff
- Appoint Head of Systemic Practice

3 Designing the Slough Social Work Model

We want to achieve the best outcomes for children, young people and families in Slough. To do this we must examine how we work with children, young people and families and develop a social work model that delivers for the population of Slough. In developing the model we will focus initially on practice and outcomes, which will lead us to consider how best to deliver these and whether we need to re-structure current children's services to do that.

3.1 National drivers for change

- Munroe Review:
 - Reducing bureaucracy
 - Keeping the child at the centre of our work
 - Keeping experience at the front line
 - Reducing assessments/changes/transfers for service users
 - Understanding the child's journey
- Focus on outcomes and evidence based practice
- Increase in 'Early Help' services and expectations
- Valuing multi agency / professional expertise
- Coordination of Services
- Learning from Ofsted inspections and Serious Case Reviews
- Improving efficiencies

3.2 The Slough business case

- Achieving an outstanding service in 5 years
- Focussing on the child's journey and keeping the child at the centre of everything we do
- Improving in line with Ofsted inspections
- Demonstrating Value for Money

3.3 Principles

To ensure our model focuses on the child's experience we will apply the following principles:

- Interventions should be 'right first time' in order to provide timely and cost effective help to families
- Children and families should experience the fewest number of transfers of cases and 'handoffs' as possible
- Decisions about which team provides a service should balance the principle of fewest moves, with the need to ensure the team with the most appropriate knowledge, skills and information is working with the child and their family

- Interventions should be timelier and should help families become more resilient and able to find their own solutions within the community
- Children should be listened to and their views taken on board about what they want and what difference interventions have made to them. Social workers should consistently seek children's views through direct work and use consultation tools and questionnaires to gather information about children's views of the service they receive.
- Only appropriate professionals should be involved in working with the child.
- At the end of an assessment, where there is no need for social work involvement and the child's plan can be delivered by another agency, the child and family should be informed of which agency will provide services, and when and how the plan will be carried out.

3.4 Information we will establish:

- Current journey of the child in Slough
- How we currently work with children, young people and families
- What does our data (quantitative and qualitative) tell us about outcomes for children in Slough?
- What does good look like? How do we know we are making a difference?
- What do children and families want?
- What do staff tell us?
- How can we support social work practitioners to do a good job?
- What can we learn from changes in other local authorities / models?
- What does evidence / research tell us about what makes a difference and successful social work teams.
- How well do we manage the involvement of other services involved with children and families.
- Potential case movement between teams/services based on the above principles

3.5 Methodology

It is important that practitioners, managers and support staff across services are involved in developing the Slough model, and therefore we will work together to bring forward some proposals for change. This will involve allowing staff in the Trust to have these discussions and be part of the thinking about what is needed in Slough. We will do this over the next six months, with a view to beginning implementation in April 2016:

Activity	Purpose	Timescale
Visits to teams/services	To provide further information about the work, receive feedback, representations for the working group.	October 2015
Working group in place with regular pattern of meetings and reporting.	To undertake the detailed work on the new model and prepare proposals for wider consultation	October – December 2015
Wider consultation and decision making	To agree the new model, identify impacts, changes.	January – March 2016
Begin implementation		April 2016

3.7 Reporting on Progress

Regular reports on the progress of the project will go to the Trust Board.