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Slough Children's Services

Business Case for a New Target Operating Model
for Children's Services to be Delivered by the
New Local Authority Owned Company

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Executive Summary

Following an inadequate Ofsted judgment in 2013 report published in 2014, Slough Children's Social Care Services were placed under Statutory Direction by the Secretary of State. For the period during which the Direction remains in place, the DfE requires that Children's Social Services have 'operational independence' from the Council, and Slough Children's Services Trust was established in October 2015.

Whilst Children's Social Care services were delivered by the Trust, Universal Services, Early Help and Targeted Youth Support Services remained within the Council. Responsibility for the administration of the Troubled Families programme later moved from the Trust to the Council.

A further Ofsted inspection in January 2019 found services to be "requires improvement to be good". Following an options proposal in July 2019 to look at future models of delivery and further consultation, it was agreed by the Council's Cabinet, the Trust Board and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families, that articles would be amended to enable Children's Services in Slough to move towards a local authority owned company (LAoC), with all services under the single accountability of a new combined Director of Children's Services (DCS)/Chief Executive post. With the move to a new LAoC and combined DCS comes the opportunity to look at the Slough's Children's Services Target Operating Model.

Demand for statutory social work interventions in Slough continues to rise. Although lower than statistical neighbours, Slough's child in care population has increased per 10,000. This is attributable to children staying in care for longer periods of time and an increase in appropriate decision making in respect of children's welfare. Children are being supported with increasingly high and complex needs. To be able to improve outcomes the Council, Trust and the DfE recognise the need to reconsider the current operating models and move towards a whole systems approach.

This Business Case outlines two options in achieving this whole system approach and considers the risks associated with each option. **Option 1** is to take a phased approach to transformation where Universal Services operating at Tier 1 and 2 and Troubled Families will remain within the Council. The Family Support Service and the Targeted Youth Prevention Service, inclusive of NEET under the new structure agreed as part of the Councils Our Futures Programme, will transition across to the new LAoC at a mutually agreed date no later than the 1st July 2021.

With option 1 comes the recommendation to review this structure once embedded, to ensure that outcomes are being maximised in the most effective and efficient way. **Option 2** is to move all services delivered by the Council (excluding Education) into the LAoC at a mutually agreed date no later than the 1st July 2021.

The Transition Steering Group (a joint DFE, Trust and Council Officer group TSG) meeting on the 15th December 2021, proposed that Option 1 would at this time be the preferred approach. Details of the posts that will transition from the Council are included within a separate confidential document Appendix 1. It has also been agreed that all current services (intensive intervention and statutory services) delivered by Slough Children's Services Trust operating at Tier 2,3 and 4, will transition across to the new LAoC on the 1st April 2021. Given the observations of how dependent the current system process is on business support, it is proposed that the business support posts move across from the Trust to the LAoC to ensure service stability, with the recommendation that a health check of the Children's Services Case Management System Liquid Logic is undertaken. If functionality is maximised this should be a system that is not time consuming for practitioners and allows them to manage their own workflow accordingly. This could see a reduction in the business support staff currently operating elements of this process on behalf of practitioners, but would need to be carefully planned to minimise any impact on recording.

It should be noted that this Business Case relates to the Teams directly involved in the delivery of Children's Services including Business Support but not Corporate Support Services such as Finance and HR. Corporate Support Services are dealt with in a separate business case.

Background

Demand for statutory social work interventions in Slough continues to rise. Although lower than statistical neighbours, Slough's child in care population has increased per 10,000 which is attributable to children staying in care for longer periods of time and an increase in appropriate decision making in respect of children's welfare. Children are being supported with increasingly high and complex needs.

To be able to improve outcomes Slough recognise the need to reconsider the current operating models and move towards a whole systems approach.

Whilst there is lots of offerings to support children, young people and their families in Slough, there are also significant gaps in the delivery, as the population changes over time these gaps will continue to widen if they are not addressed now. The Council have already made the decision to integrate NEET services with Targeted Youth Support. This decision was made following the consultation undertaken as part of the Our Futures Programme in 2020. This integration is hoped to have a positive impact on the early identification and prevention of NEET children, along with increasing the targeted intervention for this cohort of children and young people who are NEET, to support re-engagement in education or training.

Although Slough currently has a very large under-9 population, the graph below tells a very interesting story (figure 1). The population within the 0-9 age banding is expected to decrease, year-on-year. Slough's total population is expected to increase by almost 1.67% by 2030, with the population within the 10-18 age banding expected to increase by over 17.35% by 2030, peaking in 2027. The adolescent population is expected to increase at a faster rate than any other age banding below the age of 65.

Costs to meet the needs of these young people are generally very expensive, coupled with the significant challenge of complex behaviours. Complex behaviours are a key driver of the need for intervention, and if we consider youth crime statistics in figure 2 which indicate Slough sits within the second highest % across the country at 115 per 10,000 in this age group, this will be having an impact also evidenced by the high demand in children and young people subject to a child protection plan. This would indicate that targeted, well-coordinated and intensive intervention is required to improve long term outcomes and support sustainable change for young people.

Figure 1 % Population Variation from Current Group

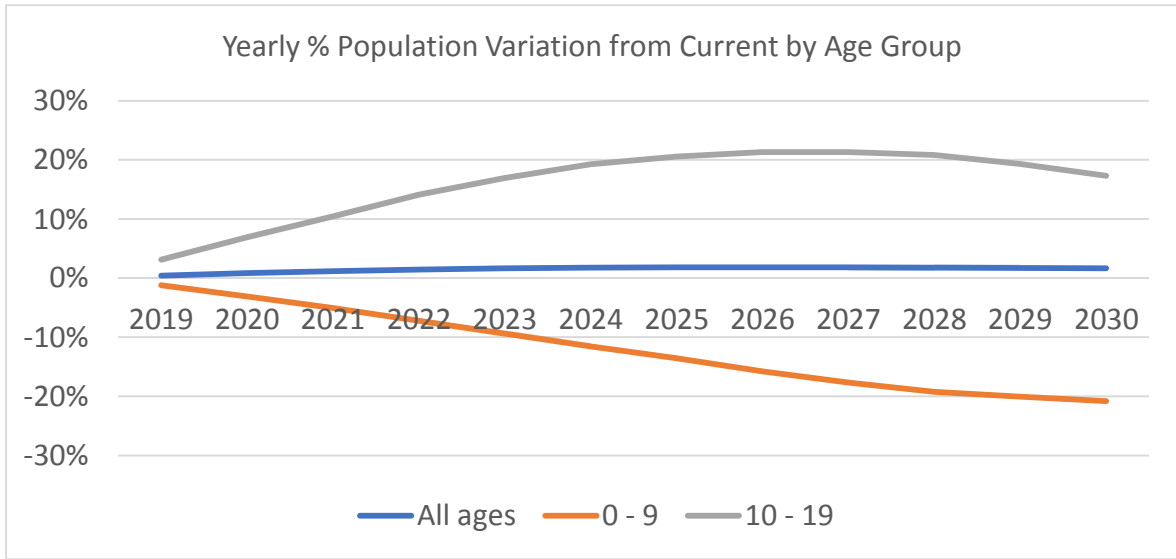
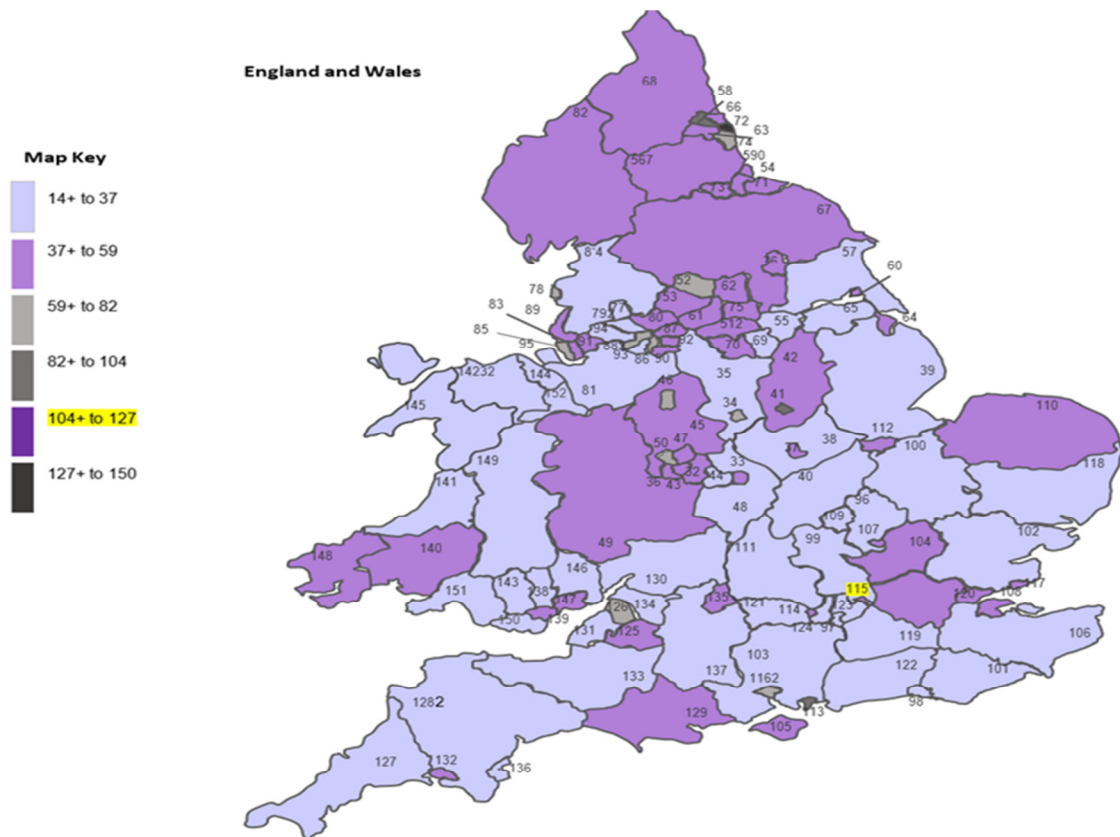


Figure 2 In Slough the rate of young people cautioned or sentenced per 10,000 of general 10-17 population was 115 year ending March 2019.



Moving to a whole-system approach will help Slough create a unifying methodology, language and understanding that supports multi-disciplinary working and promotes consistency in families' experience by encompassing the wider workforce, young people, families and communities.

This also supports the principles of Our Futures, a corporate initiative to develop a world class whole system approach in Slough with Community Hubs at the core. Working with partners and local communities to support the needs of the local area with a critical focus on prevention and timely intervention.

Slough's Early Help and Prevention

Associated Benefits

Integration of services and a review of the operating system as a whole across children and young people's services has the strong potential to drive financial efficiencies over time.

A robust Early Help and Prevention offer that operates a single continuum of need model with children's social work services and the wider universal offer, will create a resilient service where the right support is being delivered at the right time. As this model of working embeds the escalation of need to risk will reduce, and as such demand throughout the system should also reduce, with only those children and young people with the highest needs receiving statutory social work services.

As the Local Authority and the Trust have operated separately for some period of time now, there is likely to be duplication in some areas within the workforce potentially within the family support roles. As the longer-term vision of integration is planned in detail there maybe the opportunity to reconsider the family support workforce in light of a new whole system approach.

Business support is used in a variety of ways throughout the current operating model. It would appear that the support functions assist the practitioners in using the case management system. It would be recommended that the case management system is reviewed in light of potential streamlining of processes. If the systems functionality is being used effectively this should be a system that is not time consuming for practitioners and allows them to manage their own workflow accordingly. This could see a reduction in the business support staff currently operating elements of this process on behalf of practitioners.

There is also the possibility of duplication of roles throughout the Local Authority and the Trust in terms of business support functions. Greater and wider integration will bring about the opportunity to streamline these services to maximise efficiency and resource.

Key Assumptions

There is a clear vision across both the Council and the Trust for the transformation of all services to create a whole systems approach to Social Work Practice. This is not a simple process the system is complex, relying on context, precedent, relationships and culture.

In summary what is clear at this stage is that a revised and integrated, whole system approach to Early Help and Prevention in Slough is required. The greater consideration is not what the model should look like, but more how best to achieve a one system service offer.

Key assumptions/ considerations in achieving this goal are set out below:

- A phased approach to reaching this goal will allow time for detailed review and planning, along with wider stakeholder engagement to ensure each step is being taken forward at the right time with the right engagement.
- A joint management structure straddling both the LAoC and the Council will improve greatly the integration, the buy in and the continued joint approach to future transformation.
- The current Early Help and Prevention operating model requires rethinking. There is good practice happening within the Council, the offer is well embedded, understood and sees good engagement from families and partners. However, these services appear to target primarily tier 1 and lower end tier 2 on the threshold of need.
- The current model encourages a “refer to” culture and the capacity of the service is limited, resulting in waiting lists for “step downs” from social care.
- There is an evidenced gap in the effectiveness of the offer for high end tier 2 and lower end tier 3 cases. Statutory demand is increasing and the complexity of need, particularly in the adolescent years is high.
- Whilst it is imperative that all services work together seamlessly to offer a joined-up approach at the earliest opportunity, the impact on business continuity is an important consideration in next steps planning.
- To transition to a whole system approach will be a substantial transformation journey for the workforce, the move to a single leadership should bring immediate alignment and opportunity for strategic review of the service offering as a whole.

Risks

There are two approaches to achieving the same end goal. **Option 1** is to take a phased approach to transformation. **Option 2** is to move all services into the LAoC from day one.

Risk associated with Option 1

- This approach could encourage a continued divide between service delivery, this can be mitigated by a strong joint leadership structure with the DCS, Head of Early Help and Prevention and Early Help and Prevention Group Manager working across both organisations.
- Prevents control of all resources by LAoC (although this should be mitigated by having one DCS).
- Reducing the resource in tier 2 delivery in the Council would mean that the Children Centre to Family Centre transformation would need to be reconsidered. Whilst the overall offer is not minimised, the way in which intervention is delivered to maximise resource should be reviewed.

- Could result in duplication of service delivery if the offer is not a seamless service and pathways clearly defined from the beginning.

Risks associated with Option 2

- The current offer is well embedded, a bold shift could be destabilising.
- Does not allow for planned development for greater integration under a co-production approach with wider stakeholders and the community.
- There is the potential for reduction of family engagement with families, if the narrative is not well delivered and the model clear. Planned consultation and co-production could alleviate this.
- Impact on wider partner agencies continuing to develop and work together, this would be mitigated by the joint Early Help leadership.
- Possible disruption to the imminent transformation of children centres to locality family centres. The wider system would benefit from a review of service effectiveness and gap analysis prior to the move to family centres reviewing how this shift of resource will impact upon delivery, and how to improve the offer by greater partnerships with wider agencies.
- Confusion of the Early Help offer and change to pathways could increase statutory referral rates.

The Scope of the Services Going into the LAoC

TSG has proposed that at this time a phased approach to change is the best option. Children and Young Peoples Services in Slough will continue to plan for a whole systems approach to delivering intervention. It is recognised that achieving this requires time and planning. A phased approach will allow time for the Early Help system to be reviewed in detail in order to maximise the skill set and will operate under an integrated leadership team spanning both the LAoC and the Council Early Help services from day 1.

By taking this approach there is confidence that impact to business continuity is minimised and the immediate need for intensive intervention is addressed.

Proposed services moving to LAoC as phase 1:

- ✓ Early Help Hub (Family Support Services)
- ✓ Targeted YPS (Inclusive of NEET)

Proposed services to remain in the Council and undergo an effectiveness review as a community partnership offer:

- ✓ Children Centre's
- ✓ Quality Care and Learning
- ✓ Mental Health
- ✓ SEND Outreach/SEDIASS
- ✓ FIS
- ✓ Early Years
- ✓ Troubled Families

Figure 3 Phased Approach to Change



Slough's Target Operating Model

Figure 4 below depicts the agreed Target Operating model for transitioning by the 1st of July 2021. TSG has recommended that Universal Services operating at Tier 1 and low level tier 2 will remain within the Council. The Family Support Service and Targeted Youth Prevention Service inclusive of NEET will transition across to the new LAoC to create a targeted Tier 2 and 3 prevention service. Refer to the separate confidential Appendix 1 for details of the posts which will transition to the new LAoC at a mutually agreed date no later than the 1st July 2021.

It should be noted that following discussions with the DCS and Assistant Director (AD) for Children and Families and the DCS it has been agreed that due to the strategic nature of the AD role across Early Help, Early Years and the Children Centre and Family Hubs it is anticipated that only 25% of the ADs time will be apportioned to the LAoC. However, it is envisaged that the Group Manager post will spend the majority of their time overseeing the larger portfolio of staff within the LAoC and therefore 75% of their time has been apportioned to the LAoC. This should be reviewed once the services are embedded. All current services (intensive intervention and statutory services) delivered by Slough Children's Services Trust operating at Tier 2,3 and 4, will also transition across to the new LAoC from the 1st April 2021. Refer to Figure 5 Directorate Structure Phase 1.

Figure 4 Proposed Target Operating Model Phase 1

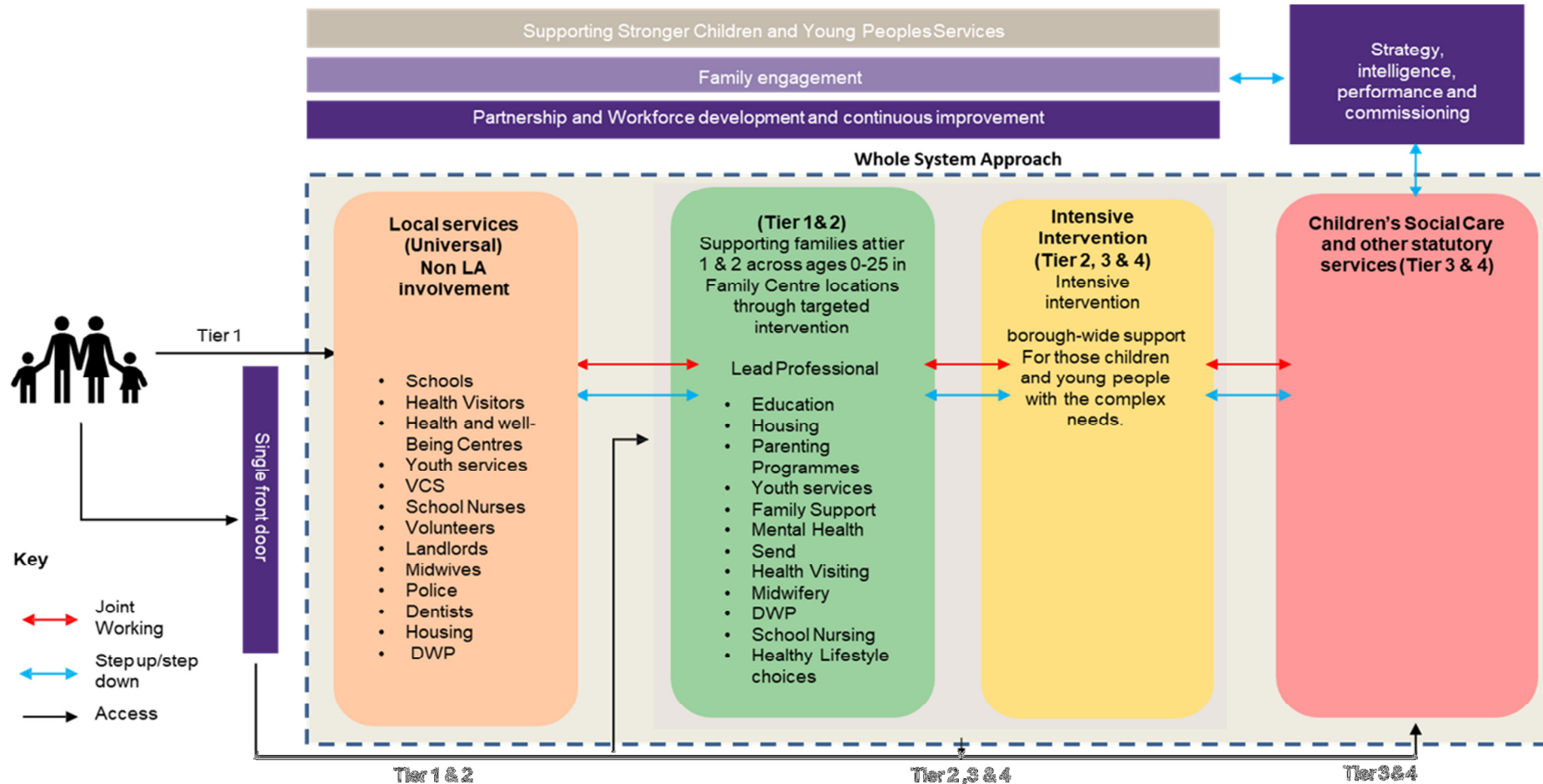
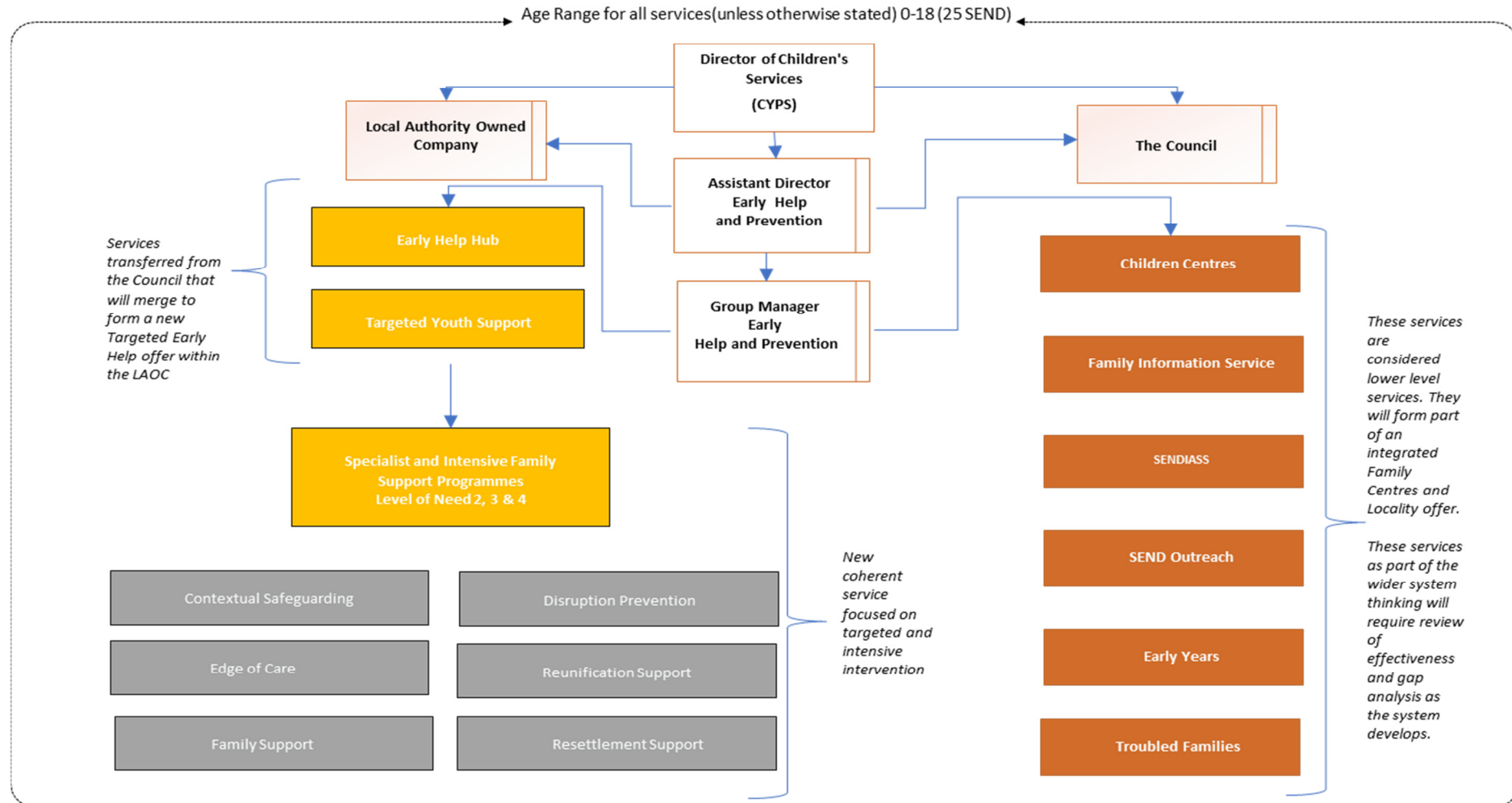


Figure 5 Directorate Structure Phase 1



Operational Business Support

There is currently a significant dependency on business support within the Trust. It is apparent that the business support functions greatly assist the practitioners in using the case management system. Currently both the Local Authority and The Trust use the IT solution Liquid Logic Children's Social Care System (LCS) and the Early Help Model (EHM).

In the previous internal review July 2020 there was reconfiguration of functions within the Trust. The largest group affected was the business support function. In effect the business support function now sees four business coordinators one in each service, the roles undertaken here are coordination aspects, supporting the service directorate and the associated admin. These roles are not so entrenched in day to day LCS recording.

There are eight business support roles for MASH and Assessment who are integral to the completion of the workflow on LCS and EHM. Responsibilities include form completing, contact records, meeting organisation, delegation of information sharing elements within the MASH episode, to minuting and record strategy discussions on LCS, data and performance management, chronology and genogram (a detailed family tree and significant events) inputting.

The system is a workflow-based case recording management style. Elements of the workflow are dependent upon another to proceed throughout the record that reflect the children's journey, and also shows what status the child is in terms of need and risk. If certain parts of the system are not completed, then other parts cannot be commenced. A good example of this is the Child Protection pathway. If the strategy discussion was held and the minutes were not added to the system, the pathway cannot progress to conference.

This carries a multitude of risk including the record not being accurate and the child or young person's status not being visible. Thus, Emergency Duty and other partner agencies would not know a child was subject to a plan or a likelihood risk of significant harm. Back log forms and workarounds are then developed away from the system and the use of spreadsheets and word documents often replace the system template in order to physically progress the work.

Other elements of the business support function across the Trust support and track performance, facilitate transferring of cases, booking required services and on occasion supporting Social Work Practitioners and Managers with adding case recordings and supervision notes to the system.

Given the observations of how dependent the system process is on business support it is proposed that the current business support posts move across from the Trust to the LAoC to ensure service stability, with the recommendation that a Liquid Logic health check is undertaken.

If the Liquid Logic systems functionality is being maximised this should be a system that is not time consuming for practitioners, allowing them to manage their own workflow

accordingly. This will also enable reporting to be presented in a meaningful way by use of dashboards and real time tracking. This could see a reduction in the business support staff currently operating elements of this process on behalf of practitioners but would need to be carefully planned to minimise any impact on recording.

This will allow for complete review of functionality and also reconsider the current system configuration in line with the staffing and service restructures, to ensure that the system mirrors the practice, and the business intelligence is integrated and measures the success of the new operating model.

Conclusion

Slough are working together across children and young people services to create a one continuum of need approach by integrating services. It is clear that as the population grows so will the increase in the demand in adolescents requiring support. This is an identified gap in the current service offering. It is recognised children's services is a system and that the wider Early Help aspects of this system may well benefit from closer alignment in the near future.

An iterative approach is considered the best way forward. This approach should address the immediate needs identified and current gaps, whilst also allowing the time required to consider the wider complexities and impact of the One Futures Programme and establishment of the LAoC. A phased approach will ensure the required collaboration is undertaken and that the model is robust, well received and sustainable.

Services will require review in the near future to determine effectiveness and how best to maximise the Early Help resource as a whole system. We would strongly recommend that Business Support services and use of IT systems are also reviewed to ensure maximum benefit and efficiency following the establishment of the LAoC.