

## **STOCKPORT AND TAMESIDE PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Report of the Director of Children's Services**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 Tameside and Stockport are neighbouring authorities with a shared ambition of excellent outcomes for the children and young people of each borough. This is centred on a place-based approach that places individuals, families and communities at the heart. The ultimate aim is to improve outcomes for children and families by delivering the best possible services through challenging times and within diminishing resources, supported through an emphasis on collaboration and partnership. We believe there are opportunities to do things differently with less and share best practice across traditional boundaries and this work is designed to explore this hypothesis.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to propose that the Council explores how it will work together with Tameside Council ("Tameside") in relation to exploring the opportunities for shared services and to update the committee in relation to the secondment of Tameside's current Director of Education to Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council ("Stockport/the Council") to act as a joint Director of Education across both authorities.
- 1.3 Tameside are reporting on this opportunity to their elected members on 24<sup>th</sup> March, the papers for which will be published on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

#### **2. BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSAL**

- 2.1 Stockport was awarded Partners in Practice (PIP) status by the Department for Education (DfE) in March 2018. Stockport Family has been active nationally, regionally, and locally over the past three years developing innovative and excellent practice whilst supporting other councils to deliver better services for children and families. The PIP programme has provided Stockport with opportunities to secure additional funding through our success in delivering sector led improvement and working in partnership with other councils. This programme has also provided benefits for our workforce and services by building skills and strengthening knowledge and understanding of what works in the delivery of services to children and families.
- 2.2 Stockport has worked in partnership with Tameside since 2018 as part of the PIP programme sharing learning and providing support to enable Tameside to move out of intervention through significant improvements in the delivery of children's services. Stockport has supported Tameside to adopt and successfully implement the Stockport Team around the School (TAS) model. This joint work has forged a strong relationship between the senior leadership teams of both councils, and this provides both with unique opportunities for closer collaboration.
- 2.3 Stockport and Tameside share the ambition of achieving excellent outcomes for children and families through a place-based approach, which puts children and our communities at its heart. Our aim is to drive improved outcomes for children and families by delivering the best possible services during challenging times, with diminishing resources, and through strong collaboration and partnerships.
- 2.4 Stockport and Tameside have different areas of strength, and areas for improvement, and recognise that there is a mutually beneficial opportunity for us to each learn from one another to deliver whole system improvements. We strongly believe that there are opportunities to extend and enhance ambitious plans for transformation across both localities which in turn could positively influence and support the delivery of shared services more widely.

- 2.5 We are confident there are opportunities to do things differently with less and share best practice across traditional boundaries and this proposal is designed to explore this hypothesis.

### 3. PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The Director of Education for Tameside is a high calibre individual who has considerable experience in his field. He is the Directors for Children's services nominated lead for the Education to be Ready for Life priority in Greater Manchester and senior responsible officer for Early Education in GM. He will be seconded from Tameside to Stockport and operate as joint Director of Education working across both councils. He will bring sustainable leadership, which will have a substantial and early impact, supported by his existing relationships and knowledge of Stockport.
- 3.2 The secondment will be set out in a service level agreement and will be delivered within existing budgets held by each council. The secondment will initially be for a period of two to three years and this timescale will be kept under regular review.
- 3.3 As joint Director of Education, he will be responsible for all education and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) services across both local areas and will lead the programme of partnership working between the two councils.

The proposal is to explore and scope the options available to deliver enhanced and sustainable services to improve the life chances for individuals 0-25 years. This will draw on the experience and learning already gained to develop a model, which aligns with the GM Framework for Integrated Public Service Reform, and the Greater Manchester Children and Young People's plan 2019-22.

- 3.4 An initial scoping exercise undertaken jointly across both councils' education and SEND departments will enable the development of detailed options appraisals. This will seek to identify ways to improve services and improve outcomes and introduce efficiencies from economies of scale. This more detailed evidence-based proposal will be subject to the decision-making governance processes of each council.
- 3.5 The ambition is to explore options for wider collaboration to be presented over the next 12 months for consideration and approval by each council's decision making governance process.
- 3.6 This work will:
- **Build** upon the strong foundations of partnership between Stockport and Tameside
  - **Support** a proactive response to the porous borders between each local area and those children crossing the boundaries for settings/schools and care arrangements
  - **Secure** significantly better outcomes for children and young people through sharing and rolling out of best practice and innovation and co-creating solutions to system issues.
  - **Identify** potential economies of scale and savings.

- **Maximise** the learning, experience, and successes of the Stockport Family model, including scale and spread of What Works evaluated programmes; Team around the School (TAS), social workers in schools in Greater Manchester, and PIP programme
- **Benefit** from the improvement that leaders in Tameside have delivered through clear improvement priorities ([Tameside Loves Reading](#)) and increasingly strong early help offer, recently peer reviewed by colleagues in Stockport. Tameside is committed to an evidence informed school improvement model with school-to-school support at its heart and enjoys strong partnerships with its schools and with local and national (EEF, Ogden Trust) partners.
- **Establish** the conditions for further innovation and reform.

#### 4. KEY BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSAL:

- 4.1 As set out above the secondment of the joint Director of Education will bring a strong track record of robust and sustainable leadership to deliver excellent outcomes for children in Stockport and Tameside. It will also enable a joint analysis and options appraisal of the further opportunities the partnership brings. This first stage of collaboration and shared leadership will focus primarily on education and SEND services, and consider the following areas:
  - Leadership
  - School Improvement
  - SEND sufficiency and commissioning plan
- 4.2 Tameside is interested in Stockport's review of the high needs block of the Dedicated School Grant (DSG). It is expected that work across both councils to date will identify and support joint developments around SEND, which is an area of focus through a written statement of action for Stockport.
- 4.3 The pandemic has significantly affected our children, young people, and their families, whether that is through the pressures of remote learning, the cancellation of exams, missing going to university, not being able to attend local baby groups or simply being unable to spend time with friends and family. Whilst we continue to understand the longer-term impact of Covid-19, the collaboration between Stockport and Tameside will enable us to work together on our response. Harnessing the best practice and capacity in each borough to ensure there is both breadth and quality in the offer of support, we make available to school leaders, children, and families. Stockport's recently completed review of the early help offer in Tameside identified key strengths within their blended offer to children and families, high take up of online provision, excellent family feedback and effective communication strategy all of which can benefit our families in Stockport.
- 4.4 It is anticipated that this partnership approach will bring further benefits and these will require further exploration and evidencing through this initial phase of scoping and options appraisal prior to bringing them through each council's governance process for agreement.

#### 5.0 PROGRAMME PLANNING

- 5.1 A board with representatives from both councils including Lead Members, DCSs, finance, legal, human resources and school representation will explore areas for collaboration before bringing a further report to scrutiny in the future. This report will quantify the risks, impact/outcomes, and tangible savings that can be achieved within an agreed timeframe.

- 5.2 This opportunity will have at its core improved outcomes across the lifespan for children and young people, pre-birth to 25, with a strong focus on learning, improvement, co-production, and excellence. An outcomes framework and cost benefit analysis will support the evaluation of impact.
- 5.3 There is the potential for PIP/DfE seed funding to be available to support the set-up costs e.g., secure programme management and support any agreed transition. The DfE are seeking to fund PIP councils who can evidence strong ability and success in the scale and spread of innovation to improve outcomes for children and families and this programme will strengthen and enable Stockport's position to attract further investment.

## **6. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1 The current post is currently funded from School Improvement grant funding. The arrangements would mean some cost savings in relation to the role, and therefore would free up resources within the grant to support our priority educational improvement and attainment outcomes.

## **7. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 7.1 Once the options have been explored a further report will be presented to members outlining the options considered and setting out a details business case. Depending on what the proposed options are, advice will be provided to the board as to the appropriate decision making governance process (e.g. in the event it may be considered a Key Decision under Stockport's Constitution). There may well be consequential impact on policy that may require changes to be agreed and implemented.

## **8. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT**

- 8.1 There has not been a permanently appointed Director of Education for Stockport in post since the previous postholder retired mid-2018. There is a challenge regionally and nationally in recruitment to Education Director posts which has affected the extent of the available candidates from which to recruit a permanent director.
- 8.2 This proposed secondment arrangement gives Stockport a pragmatic solution to this challenge, providing sustainable leadership at a time when significant transformation is taking place. This involves the integration of Stockport Family and Education which requires strong and distinct leadership across a complex landscape of differing cultures, pay and conditions and partnership working to develop a collaborative system that is inclusive and effective. It is imperative that the system is kept safe as this change is well navigated and a stable and sustainable Director of Education will be key to this.

## **9. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 9.1 None at the moment but a review will be undertaken prior to any further reports coming through the governance process.

## **10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 10.1 None anticipated.

## **11. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 11.1 The aim of this programme is to explore the opportunities that we believe exist to improve outcomes for children and families by delivering the best possible services with diminishing budgets, supported through an emphasis on collaboration and partnerships. This programme will fully explore and test out this hypothesis and make proposals accordingly for

consideration by the Council through the appropriate governance process. By embarking on this programme and building on our reputation to do things differently with less, showing our skills in sharing best practice across traditional boundaries, Stockport will continue to strengthen our national and regional reputation and secure the benefits that this brings.

11.2 That members note the report and provide any comments and observations.

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