

PROPOSAL FOR SHARED SERVICE FOR EARLY YEARS EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT

Report of the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To share a proposal for shared leadership for the early years functions of the School Improvement Teams across Stockport and Tameside Councils. This report builds on previous updates to scrutiny committee.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Information has been shared previously on the programme for shared services to explore and scope options to deliver enhanced and sustainable services to improve the life chances for individuals 0-25 years. Phase 1 of the programme has focussed on School Improvement, in particular the development of Early Years leadership.
- 2.2 This proposal will support Stockport's [Children and Young People Strategy 2020 – 2023](#) and [Borough Plan](#) ambitions for caring and growing and the vision for all children and young people to have the best start in life, our ambition is for Stockport to be the best place for all children to grow up and inclusion is at the heart of our work with children and young people.
- 2.3 This work builds on the strong partnership work between Stockport and Tameside through the Partners in Practice (PIP) programme and the strong shared ambitions between both authorities. This programme 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.

Consideration of Benefits

- 2.4 Key to the development of this proposal has been to focus on the benefits of the approach for our organisations but most importantly for the children and families in our boroughs. There is an ambition to strengthen leadership for early years school improvement in Stockport and a shared services approach is an effective way to deliver this in an environment of reducing resources.
- 2.5 There are challenges and issues facing both authorities around capacity and diminishing resources as a result of multiple factors not least the challenging financial landscape and the impact of the pandemic. There are opportunities through this proposal to support the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) position as well as bringing a collaborative approach to responding to the longer-term impact of Covid-19.
- 2.6 For school improvement there is much written on the benefits of collaboration across systems not least in education. Prof Mel Ainscow and colleagues have carried out a series of studies that have generated considerable evidence that collaboration can strengthen improvement processes by adding to the range of expertise made available (see: Ainscow, 2010; Ainscow & Howes, 2007; Ainscow, Muijs & West, 2006; Ainscow et al., 2003; Ainscow & West, 2006; Ainscow et al., 2005; Muijs et al., 2010; Muijs et al., 2011).
- 2.7 Together with the work of others (eg Chapman & Hadfield, 2010; Fielding et al, 2005; Hill, 2008), these studies indicate that collaboration between schools has an enormous potential for fostering the capacity of education systems to respond to learner diversity. More specifically, they show how such partnerships can help to reduce the polarization of schools, to the particular benefit of those students who seem marginalized at the edges of the system, and whose performance and attitudes cause increasing concern.

- 2.8 As we have developed the early years proposal the following additional benefits relating to collaboration and scale are emerging:
- Link the continuing professional development, whole service work of the advisers in Stockport and Tameside (assessment, curriculum development, leadership training)
 - Promoting peer support/collaboration across schools – facilitated on the basis of good quality information gleaned by officers
 - Brokering subject based/leadership contracts at scale when needed which potentially could be cheaper
 - Wider range of colleagues available to provide bespoke intervention using an ‘at a distance’ group of trusted colleagues
 - Create unified accountability structures
 - Create a more sustainable funding stream to support aspects of posts
 - Common issues will emerge which could be managed more swiftly and in a more cost-effective basis if done across two LAs to avoid duplication
 - Common representation at GM level for project development
 - Wider forums for practice sharing
 - More balanced roles, especially for the most senior post-holder, with a clearly defined job description
 - Clear understanding about how this post holder works with other strategic leads working with the under 5’s to deliver the whole LA offer to our youngest children
- 2.9 Further information on the Shared Services programme has been brought to previous meetings and is available by viewing past papers [here](#).

3. INFORMATION

- 3.1 Following collaborative assessment of the current structures, the roles currently in place across Tameside and Stockport, and skills and experience within the teams, there is a clear opportunity to share expertise at a strategic level across the 2 organisations.
- 3.2 Stockport and Tameside share the ambition to develop their strengths in early years practice. The shared leadership model provides the opportunity to draw from a larger pool of practitioners, utilising the skills and best practice across the two authorities. This should reduce the likelihood of insular thinking, encourage the sharing of ideas and support a culture of mutual challenge which in turn should enable us collectively to develop more creative solutions to common problems.
- 3.3 Whilst the leadership will be shared, both Local Authorities will still have dedicated early years teams and will be independent in their approach to delivery suited to local people and their needs.
- 3.4 The shared leadership approach will support improved communication and relationship management and create conditions for good leaders to lead provision of good quality schools within properly integrated children’s services. We are proposing an integrated model of school improvement that increases capacity but allows us to do things differently in each authority. Responding to differing priorities, leadership, and governance.

- 3.5 The first phase of due diligence has explored the opportunity of the appointment of three Shared Service Leadership roles. These roles are to be full year, and will be initially delivered as a 12 month arrangement with robust evaluation of outcomes to inform future direction.
- 3.6 The new proposed roles are as follows:
- Principal role – Head of Early Years Education (Shared Service) Stockport are host employer
 - PVI Lead (Shared Service) – Tameside Host employer
 - School based Lead (Shared Service) – Stockport Host employer
- 3.7 The current assessment of the teams in terms of grades duties and roles means there is scope for assimilation or ring-fenced recruitment process for the new roles. In addition, the new structure enables the leadership roles to operate at a Strategic level – rather than the current mix of mainly operational responsibilities with a relatively small element of leadership. Again this will strengthen Stockport's early years leadership.

4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The roles identified in the new School Improvement early years leadership structure will be funded half by each authority, this has the potential to release efficiencies to support the Council's medium term financial plan.

5. KEY TIMESCALES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY YEARS PROPOSAL

The broad indicative timescales for consultation are outlined below, although these may be subject to change. We will continue to provide you with updated time lines as we move through the various stages of the consultation and implementation phases. The consultation period can be shortened with agreement by both parties.

Activity	Week Commencing Date
Notify Unions – Educational JCG	May 2022
Consultation with staff	After 15 June 2022
Recruitment, selection and assimilation activity	After 15 June 2022
Implementation of new structure	September 2022

6. CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

- 6.1 Engagement with partners involved with the Shared Services programme has taken place, including with schools. The Shared Services programme board includes colleagues from both Stockport and Tameside and with schools from both boroughs represented.
- 6.2 Updates have been shared with Children and Families Scrutiny Committee. Feedback from Scrutiny Committee will continue to inform the development of these proposals.
- 6.3 Updates have been shared regularly with Union colleagues at Education Joint Consultation Group (EJCG).

- 6.4 Updates are shared with Parent Carer forum PACTS, feedback will inform the development of this proposals.
- 6.5 The PVI Forum will be a co-consultee throughout this process
- 6.6 The Stockport Schools Forum will be a co-consultee throughout this process.

7. RISKS

- 7.1 These proposals are being developed and delivered in partnership with another council and it is essential there is adequate senior officer and member oversight of individual shared services initiatives in both Councils. A shared services programme board is advising this programme of work with representatives from both councils including lead members, DCSs, finance, legal, human resources, and school representation to explore areas for collaboration, scope and options. The programme board is advisory, and all initiatives and decisions will be brought through the relevant scrutiny and governance processes of each Council.
- 7.2 There are differences in the structures, processes and levels of need across both authorities. It is important that both Councils retain their current level and quality of service as a minimum to children and young people as a result of sharing services. As part of the design process of this new model we will ensure governance arrangements are clear and robust. This proposal is based on an initial twelve month period and will be underpinned by agreements stipulating performance levels and risk sharing clauses to inform future direction.

8. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 Effective governance and oversight is key to ensuring the effective and safe delivery of the shared services programme. Ultimately accountability resides within individual organisations and decision making on final proposals will be overseen through council governance arrangements. The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education and the Council's Director of Children's Services (DCS) have lead responsibility for this programme.
- 8.2 A shared services agreement is in development to document both the Council's and Tameside's contribution to the shared structure.

9. HR CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 The proposal for shared leadership across the early years teams in Stockport and Tameside will involve the senior level staff currently in post working across both authorities. There is no reduction in the number of posts.

10. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 The development of shared services for school improvement and early years leadership and does not propose any change or reduction in frontline services, either to the early years setting or to families and children. Therefore, on balance, the proposal is not expected to have a direct impact on service provision and a full Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is not required. However, further developments or changes to the proposal will be monitored for any disproportionate outcomes and may be subject to equalities analysis, in which case an EqIA will be conducted as and when we acquire new information that suggests a potential impact on service users.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

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

For further information please contact tim.bowman@stockport.gov.uk or lynn.perry@stockport.gov.uk