

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

TO:	POLICY COMMITTEE		
DATE:	15 JANUARY 2018	AGENDA ITEM:	6
TITLE:	CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE, EARLY HELP AND EDUCATION SERVICES IN READING - UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN'S COMPANY		
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report is to update on the latest position on establishing 'The Children's Company', an independent local authority company, for the delivery of children's services to Reading Borough Council.
- 1.2 The report also outlines the procurement process for engaging specialist expertise and support for the development and transition to the company.
- 1.3 In order to comply with the in principle direction of the DfE and the recommendation of the Commissioner to establish a 'full service' children's company, the Council would need to agree formally to transfer its education and early help services to the Company. The operational strategy, governance and commissioning arrangements and service scope are set out in the current version 'Reading Prospectus' at Appendix 1
- 1.5 The report also seeks authorisation for the Chief Executive to accept the Department for Education funding to enable the establishment of the company.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the latest position in the development of an independent local authority company for the provision of Children's Services be noted.
- 2.2 Reading's children's company include education and early help along with child protection functions.
- 2.3 Approve the programme support contract being awarded to Mutual Ventures Ltd.
- 2.4 That the Chief Executive/ Director of Children, Education & Early Help Services be authorised to accept funding from the Department for Education on behalf of the Council to enable the set-up of the new Children's Company.

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| 2.5 | That the Chief Executive be given delegated authority to undertake all necessary steps required to establish the company by autumn 2018. |
| 2.6 | A report to Policy Committee be required to transfer and agreement of a service contract with the Company. |

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 Statutory Direction notice from the Secretary of State UNDER SECTION 497A(4B) OF THE EDUCATION ACT 1996.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In August 2016 Ofsted published their findings following an inspection of Children's Services in Reading. Children's Services were rated 'Inadequate' on a four point scale of inadequate, requires improvement, good and outstanding.
- 4.2 As a result of the rating and in line with the Government's reform programme 'Putting Children First' the Department for Education issued a statutory direction notice (September 2016) to the Local Authority and appointed a Commissioner. The direction notice required Reading Borough Council to comply with any direction of the Commissioner in improving services for children.
- 4.3 The Commissioner submitted his final report to the Secretary of State which was published by the Department for Education (September 2017) and his recommendation was that children's services come out of the direct control of the Council for the period of their intervention.
- 4.4 A second statutory direction notice was issued (September 2017) to the Local Authority and a commissioner appointed. The direction notice required the Local Authority to develop and draft, in consultation and agreement with the Children's Services Commissioner:
- i. a business case for the agreed alternative delivery model, and outline implementation plan, by 30th August 2017;
 - ii. an updated long-term improvement plan to address the findings of the 2017 report by 30 September 2017, and to include the proposed arrangements for monitoring progress and reviewing the improvement plan as appropriate;
- 4.5 The Local Authority submitted a Transition Project Business Case to the Department for Education which outlined the intentions of Reading Borough Council, in line with the statutory direction notice. The document identifies the estimated costs associated with establishing a new company to deliver children's social care, education and early help services. Reading Borough Council has requested £2.929million from the Department of Education to enable the set-up of the company. The cost to Reading Borough Council is estimated at £577k, much of which relates to staff time and is therefore an opportunity cost.
- 4.6 Initial mobilisation meeting took place on 14 September 2017 and was attended by representatives from the Department for Education with the Commissioner, the Chief Executive of Reading Borough Council and the Director of Children, Education and Early Help Services. This set the scene for the transition to the new company and worked through the arrangements for the programme and governance.

- 4.7 The Council has received a letter from the Department for Education on 21 November 2017 confirming that it will receive a Government grant of £250,000 for the first phase of the development of the company. This is in the form of a Section 14 grant, which means that it is paid in monthly in arrears and upon submission of a satisfactory and evidenced claim for the eligible expenditure. This initial grant is intended to enable the set up and some of the initial design work to be done.
- 4.8 The Leader of the Council met with the Minister of State for Children and Families, Robert Goodwill MP, on 20 November, to agree a way forward which would enable the Government to fund establishing the local authority company. The meeting ended in an informal agreement on the approach. We will await the formal outcome of the department's consideration of the Council's request for funding as set out in section 11 of this report.
- 4.9 The Leader provided the Minister with a Prospectus for the Company which is approved.
- 5.0 LATEST POSITION - PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND PROCUREMENT OF SUPPORT
- 5.1 Reading Borough Council plans to make the transition to a new company by autumn 2018 and work is now underway to drive implementation. This includes setting up the company in shadow form as soon possible in the spring/early summer of 2018 and appointment of the chair and board.
- 5.2 Mutual Ventures Ltd.(MV) has been identified as a specialist supplier to provide expertise and programme management to enable the transition to take place in the agreed timescale to the agreed outcomes.
- 5.3 We are contracting for their services using a framework called Bloom, operated by the North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO). NEPO is one of the local authority owned procurement consortia specifically tasked with setting up framework agreements for the UK local government sector. Although NEPO are based in the North East, the various regional procurement organisations now work collaboratively to provide agreements with national coverage to avoid duplication of effort and to maximise the benefit of aggregating demand across a larger number of buyers. Use of the framework to engage MV without running a competitive tender is permissible under the Contracts Procedure Rule 4.(2) (e) (1) , as the contract may be awarded "by application of the terms laid down in the framework agreement without reopening competition".
- 5.4 MV will deliver a phased programme of work that has an estimated total value of about £600,000. The funding for this work is expected to be provided through the grant from the DfE which will cover a broader range of set up costs with a total of approximately £2.929m of which the £250,000 is a first tranche.
- 5.5 Any necessary operational decisions required to meet DfE milestones and other establishment decisions for example the appointment of resources to support transition to the new company will be made by the Chief Executive.
- 5.6 The programme phases, which are subject to further scoping work, are in summary:

Phase one -2 months

Project set up:

- Setting up programme governance structure and arrangements

- Establishing the programme plan and developing the work streams with clarity on content of the work, roles and responsibilities and interdependencies across work streams.

The preparation work is underway to ensure that we can meet the timetable for delivering the company. The governance structure has been set up and preparation sessions with MV and council officers have taken place. MV staff are now working on site to set up the programme and work stream leads within the Council have been identified and have commenced work. The work stream plans are all being developed by MV and lead officers for each stream.

The programme plan is under development and a key decisions document has been produced. This document lists the key decisions that need to be made during the transition of RBC's children's services to a new children's services company. Decisions are arranged by work stream. Key decision-makers have been identified with dates.

Phase two - 5 months

N.B. This overlaps with the set up phase.

Design:

- Development of the blueprint for the new company around all the workstreams
- Ensure that the company complies with the conditions of the statutory direction to deliver operational independence and focus on improvement in children's social care.
- Agree the underpinning principles around the rights and responsibilities of the board of directors, the Council and the DfE.

Key early tasks have been identified and under way. This includes the process for appointing the chair of the board which has already started.

Phase three - 9 months

N.B. This will overlap with phase 2.

Pending completion of the design phase the project will move into the implementation phase:

Implementation:

- Ensure effective and timely delivery of the establishment of the company
- Ensure delivery is efficient and achieved value for money, within the transition cost budget set by the Council and DfE.
- Ensure that from 'go live' the company is able to operate independently and has the appropriate support services in place to do so.

5.7 As part of the development and implementation of the new company, a range of specialist advice will be procured including VAT and Legal.

5.8 Further resources will be identified and procured throughout the design phase to support transition to the new company.

6.0 DEFINING THE SCOPE OF SERVICES

6.1 The Statutory Direction issued by the Secretary of State on 12 September 2017 requires that RBC transfers 'children's social care functions (as defined in the Direction). The principle the DfE and the Commissioner are working to is that the

new company should be a ‘full service’ children’s company and therefore include education and early help services. The Council will need to decide formally to transfer its education and early help services to the new company as they are not specifically defined in the Direction. This is the Council’s in principle stated intention in its Transition Project Business Case and are included in the ‘Reading Prospectus’ (Appendix 1) as being within the scope of the services being offered by the new company.

- 6.2 It is proposed that the in principle direction of the DfE and the Commissioner that the new company should be a ‘full service’ children’s company and include education and early help services be endorsed as being the stated intention of the Transition Project Business Case and included in the Reading Prospectus (appendix one). The rationale for why any service should therefore stay within the Council would need to be clearly set out.
- 6.3 It must be borne in mind that deciding on whether these other services will be transferred into the new company is a critical decision for the project and impacts on all transition work streams. Narrower combinations of transferred services may involve VAT rules and other liabilities that would negatively impact upon the new company.
- 6.4 The scope of the support functions (for example I.T / HR) provided by the Council, to the new company, will also be included in the design phase and will cover financial implications.
- 6.5 The headline structure captured in the section ‘Management’ (p.9 Prospectus: Reading Borough Council’s Children Services Company) identifies a Chief Executive (Director of Children Services) and five Director’s Quality Assurance and Improvement; Children’s Social Care; Early Intervention and Prevention; Education Service and Governance and Resources. This headline management structure encapsulates ‘full service’.
- 6.6 In order to define the primary responsibilities/functions of the company the key areas of accountability attached to each of these directors is as captured in Fig 1 below - Key Areas of accountability in the Children Services Company.

Quality Assurance and Improvement Director	Safeguarding Service Director	Early Intervention and Prevention Director	Education Director	Governance and Resources Director
Independent Reviewing Officer Service	Single Point of Access Including Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub	Universal plus - Community Intervention	Quality and Standards in Schools - Including compliance curriculum Governors	Support the Company Board and ensure strong governance
Child Protection Chairs	Safeguarding Service	Plus Partnership - Family Support	Pupil Admissions	Commissioning Access to Resource Team
Audit -	Edge of Care Service	Specialist Youth	Pupil Place Planning & School	Managing relationships

		Provision (Missing/ Criminal Exploitation)	organisation (diversity/choice)	with local authority provided support services
Learning and Improvement Plan - Children Service Improvement Board	Children Looked After	Young Carers	Special Education Needs and Disability	Medium term financial strategy for the Company
Principal Social Worker	Care Leavers	Educational Welfare Service	Post 16 Education/ Apprenticeships	Data & Performance management
		Youth Offending Services	Virtual Head Teacher Children Looked After	Mosaic Business Objects
		Under 5's Children Centre Early Years Health Visiting	School Meals	HR policy and workforce development
		Troubled Families	Children Missing Education	Trading and Business development to include set up of social work academy
			Home/School Transport	Preparing annual business plan and budget for the company
				Risk management

6.7 Contextually this replicates the 'ordinary' delivery of a directorate of Children Services with the addition of supplementary functions attached primarily to the Chief Executive and the Director of Governance and Resources.

6.8 The functions identified and proposed for inclusion in the company permit the operation of a distinct system of delivery for Children Services under a single governance structure (i.e. The Board of Directors p.13 Prospectus, Reading Borough Council's Children Services Company) The supplementary functions support both the transactional and strategic delivery of the company whilst maintaining independence from Reading Borough Council, and at the same time providing continuity of relationships with existing internal partners thereby providing organisational memory.

6.9 The Local Authority will need to consider the best method for holding the company to account. Key considerations it will need to oversee are:-

- Quality of decision making and suspension and support of social workers
- Management of risk

- Financial sustainability
 - Control of financial commitments being made by the company
 - School placement planning and support
- Policy development and coordination with adult social care and corporate parenting

6.10 The cost of the client side will need to be funded by savings against the current staffing structures in the Company.

6.11 It is proposed as part of the wider transformation programme that the suggested model of delivery for the Children's Services Company is tested and quality assured by an external 'expert' with a view to verifying the capacity and capability of the model. External advice will provide the Local Authority, Board of Directors and the DFE with challenge and/or reassurance on the authenticity of the Children's Services Company and its aspiration to deliver high quality children's services independent of Reading Borough Council.

6.12 Further discussions with members will take place to confirm intentions for the new company and reports prepared for Adult Care Children's Services and Education Committee or Policy Committee as required.

7.0 CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

7.1 The following strategic aims will contribute to the following strategic aims:

1. Safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable;
2. Providing the best start in life through education, early help and healthy living;

8 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

8.1 The set-up of the company is under the direction of the Secretary of State and at this stage there has been no opportunity to engage with the community.

9. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has not been completed at this stage.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The Secretary of State for Education's decision to transfer Children's social care functions to a new company has been taken under Section 497A(4B) Education Act 1996.

10.2 The procurement process for engaging a specialist supplier, Mutual Ventures Ltd.(MV), to support the design and transition to the new company is being carried out in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules .Contract Procedure Rule 4(2)(e), allows works, services, or supplies to be obtained by calling-off from a framework agreement, where this can be demonstrated to offer best value.

10.3 A decision to transfer education and early help services, not defined in the Direction, to the new company will involve a significant change to the Council's policy framework and as such will need to be taken formally by full Council.

10.4 The creation of a new Children's Company will require amendments to the Council's Constitution, including changing the terms of reference of Committees, and will

therefore need to be agreed by full Council in accordance with Article 4.2.2(a) of the Constitution.

10.5 Staff will be transferred to the company with the protection of the Transfer of Undertaking Provisions to ensure their terms and conditions are protected on transfer.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The costs of setting up the company have been requested in a business case submitted to the DfE. The total cost of Company set-up is estimated at £3.506m of which £2.929m has been requested as a grant from the DfE, leaving £577k of support (mostly in kind) to be delivered by the Council

11.2 As set out above, the first £250,000 of this funding will flow to the Council via a section 14 grant.

11.3 The Company structure included a CE post and a governance and resources director post, a chair and non-exec director. It is aimed to recruit these posts by June 2018 and the costs will need to be net of the grant and transformation funding in the first year. The companies' first business plan will indicate ongoing resource requirements and it is assumed that client side costs and these posts will add £0.5 million to the Councils annual budget, on an on-going basis.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1 Putting Children First

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/putting-children-first-our-vision-for-childrens-social-care>

12.2 Direction Issued to Reading Borough Council September 2016

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/direction-issued-to-reading-borough-council>

12.3 Direction Issued to Reading Borough Council September 2017

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/643864/Reading_Direction_Sept-2017.pdf

12.4 Independent Report to the Secretary of State September 2016

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reading-childrens-services-report-to-the-secretary-of-state>



PROSPECTUS
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL'S
CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMPANY

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Summary

Following the Ofsted inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers in August 2016; Nick Whitfield was appointed Commissioner for Children's Services for Reading. He has reached agreement with the Council that it is right that the Council and its partners should set up an alternative delivery model to provide services for children in the borough. The Council has already shown strong leadership in promoting the vision, for a children's company in Reading with a working name – Children's Team in Reading.

This document sets out a vision for an independent local authority owned company to provide children's services across Reading and explains how, by working with partners, the Council can provide modern, responsive services with minimised management and administrative costs.

The aim is for the company to recruit a governance body which will raise the profile of Reading's Children's Services, provide expert support to managers and staff, include local stakeholders and be part of Reading's wider public service team. Our ambition is to be a national leader in social work practice and training and to put safeguarding and developing children's life channels at the heart of everything we do.

By taking a joined-up approach with its partners in a culture of social enterprise, the new company will be able to improve services for the residents of the borough even in a time of financial constraint by combining a business like and commercial discipline with a public service ethos.

The Council will work with partners to create local centres of excellence and also use ICT solutions to provide easy access to services and advice for residents to ensure efficient delivery.

Our ethos can be summed as taking a TEAM approach:

T – Everyone together across all sectors in Reading putting children first

E – Efficient and effective use of public resources to maximise our impact

A – Ambitious for our children and the company

M – Monitoring and Measuring to make sure we make a difference to children's life chances



Foreword by Nick Whitfield, Commissioner for Children's Services in Reading

A new way of delivering public services for Reading

Reading Borough Council is determined to improve the quality of its services for children. It will work with partners in a new way to create an independent local authority owned company that can be commissioned to deliver high quality children's social care, early help services, health services and education across the borough.

The new company will be formed by current staff members who have local knowledge and an excellent understanding of the needs of the Borough. Initially the company's client will be the borough of Reading; however, the company will also trade with schools and other organisations to provide a wide range of services designed to improve the lives of children and those who care for them.

The new company will be enabled and owned by the Council, but controlled and run by its directors under a contract in order to ensure operational independence.

The main emphasis of the company will be on improving the quality of services for children, whilst dealing with the challenges of central government funding reductions and meeting the rising aspirations of residents for high quality, locally delivered services. The new organisation will be in a good position to work with others due to its incredibly good public transport links and the Council is aspirational to ensure that the company plays its part in improving the delivery of public services through innovative and entrepreneurial approaches to transformation.



Our Commitment

Leader, Reading Borough Council

Reading Borough Council are fully committed to a new childrens service through creating this new company. We will do everything we can to support,nurture and resource the company so it can meet our objective of protecting children at risk and improving the life chances of all children in Reading.

Councillor Jo Lovelock



Chief Executive, Reading Borough Council

I am delighted to be leading the project team which will create this new company. I believe the new Governance Board and our staff team are capable of creating an organisation which will break new ground and become a leading organisation in developing services for children. We know children in Reading need this to be a success and for us to fulfill our aspiration.

Peter Sloman



Operational strategy

Management

The company will be formed with a strong senior management team comprising a chief executive and managers (known as directors) within the company. It is envisaged that the company will need five posts at director level: one with a background in education, one in social care, one in early help, one with skills in quality assurance, and one focused on governance and resources. In order to create business continuity, these posts will be appointed to during the period leading up to the establishment of the new organisation.



The Chief Executive

The Chief Executive will also hold the post of Director of Children's Services (DCS) on behalf of the Council and be the link to the Local Safeguarding Board.

Director for Quality Assurance and Improvement

The Director for Quality Assurance and Improvement will ensure the quality of services and compliance with statutory obligations and report to the Board and Council on quality assurance management information.

Director for Children's Social Care

The Director for Children's Social Care will ensure the delivery of strong, integrated and responsive safeguarding and social care services for children and young.

Director for Early Intervention and Prevention

The Director for Early Intervention and Prevention will ensure targeted services are in place which support the universal services available to all children and young people. The post will maintain a strong focus on early intervention and prevention, so that children do not

require higher-cost specialist provision and are supported within the universal or mainstream services delivered locally.

Director for Education Services

The Director for Education Services will be responsible for all those functions that relate to education and remain within the Council's statutory functions. The postholder will be responsible for joining up the agenda for all education providers and ensuring that there is strong challenge and support for schools and providers in the Borough. They will also be responsible for informing services in order to meet the needs of a changing and diverse community.

Director for Finance and Resources

The Director for Governance and Resources will be responsible for all those functions that relate to finance, the company secretary role and human resources and resources. The postholder will be responsible for the setting and management of the budget and driving business development. They will also be responsible for ensuring a medium term and longer term financial plan in line with available funding.

Working in Partnership

Reading as a part of Berkshire already works with other local authorities in the area to provide some of its services. The new organisation will seek to build upon these partnerships rather than working in competition.

Partnerships with schools, health and the voluntary sector will be developed and they will all be able to fully contribute and influence the company.

The company will work to ensure that all children have their voices heard where decisions are made that affect them. Young people are some of the most vulnerable in society and it is vitally important that we ensure they are at the heart of all we do.



Governance

Ownership and control

The construction of the governance for the new company needs to achieve two things. Firstly, in order to avoid the VAT trap it needs to allow the Council to own and control the destiny of the company. But secondly, in order to pass the control of services test required by the Government as part of intervention, it needs to have handed over operations to the new organisation.

Reading Borough Council has recognised the need for this operational freedom and is clear that whilst it would, in partnership, own the company delivering children's services, it will not control day to day operation. The Council is clear that as a commissioner it would seek to hold the new organisation to account through a contract rather than through direct employment.

The legal framework to achieve this will be worked on in the coming months; initial thoughts are laid out below.



Legal form

In order to achieve the dual objectives laid out above, it is proposed that the new company be set up as an independent local authority owned company (limited by guarantee), owned by the Council and therefore exempt from EU procurement regulations through the Teckal Exemption. The company will have a Board appointed by the Council from a list agreed by the Department for Education and approved by the Secretary of State.

The Board of Directors

The membership of the Board would be as follows:

- The Chief Executive of the company, along with two Directors.
- Six Non-Executive Independent Directors (NEIDs) with expertise across the range of children's services delivery, as well as business development. All NEIDs would be appointed from a list agreed with the DfE and the Chair of the Board would be appointed directly by the Secretary of State. Two of the NEIDS would be drawn from the local partnership.
- The Council's Chief Executive would be a member of the Board.

This Board would have day-to-day control of the company's management team and would be responsible for ensuring high quality delivery by the company. The Chief Executive of the company would fulfil the role of DCS for the Council.

Improving and ensuring quality

In order to ensure both quality and a link to the Council and its partners, a system would be designed whereby information was triangulated so that the local authority would not be in a position where there was a lack of clarity about standards within the service.

This triangulation would have three elements. The first would be the management of the contract with a set of agreed success criteria and performance indicators (these would be reviewed on a quarterly basis with the Council in its commissioning role). Secondly, through information gained by the operation of the corporate parenting panel, which would be chaired by the Chief Executive of Reading Council (in order that issues could be raised

quickly where these affect the quality of the wider range of services that the Council needs to offer, such as housing). Thirdly, through the independence of the LSCB, which would sit outside the company (though receiving support from company performance officers). The independent chair would meet with the Chair of the company Board but also with the Chief Executive of the Council in order to share significant issues in the safeguarding of children.

Executive Directors x 3	CEO/DCS 1 x other members of the senior management team at director level from the new company
Non-Executive Directors x 2	Directors drawn from partner organisations with expertise in children’s services. One being the LSCB Chair
Non-Executive Directors x 4	Directors drawn from a range of backgrounds in Children’s Services with expertise in Children’s Social Care, Education, Early Help Services and business development
Council Nominated Director	Chief Executive of the Council

The Local Safeguarding Children Board

In order to strengthen accountability, the founding Council will adapt its relationship with the Local Safeguarding Children Board to achieve a higher level of independence for the service.

Support for the LSCB would not be provided by the company but would be commissioned directly by the Council and its partners in order to provide independent advice. The LSCB may be a sub-regional organisation bringing together work with other authorities within Berkshire.

Commissioning and working in partnership

Quality and value for money

Taxpayers desire high quality public services but at the same time they demand value for money in the way these services are provided. The new company will deliver this value for money by reducing the burden of excessive bureaucracy and by cutting management and administration costs. This will protect frontline services and enable the company to be flexible and innovative in the way it designs services to meet the changing needs of children.

The company will provide:

- Improved service delivery within the available resources
- Leadership and staff members with local knowledge and understanding
- Modern redesigned services, planned and created locally
- Protected frontline services with reduced management and administration costs
- Improved services for residents through a single service delivered across the partnership
- Strong accountability and high quality partnership working
- A strong focus on improving outcomes for children and families
- Access to private and grant funding through non-local authority status

Commissioning of services from the company

The main customer of the new company will be the local authority; however, the company will also work with other partners, such as schools, academy sponsors, general practitioners, health commissioners, public health and the voluntary sector. Our primary objective will be to improve outcomes for children. We will actively seek the views of children, their families, carers and local communities to ensure that service delivery is effective, efficient and continually improving.

In order to ensure that this is cost efficient, the commissioning arrangements will draw from partners across the Borough in order to create synergies in commissioning decisions.

- CEO of the new company
- The Lead Members for Children’s Services
- A Police representative
- A Health Commissioner from the Borough’s CCG
- The Director of Public Health
- The independent chair of the LSCB
- A primary and a secondary head teacher
- Other commissioners of local children’s services

This group would have a strategic role in ensuring high-quality commissioning, but would also be responsible for overseeing delivery of the agreed company business plan. The advisory group would meet six times per year. The Chief Executive and Director of Quality Assurance and Improvement from the company would attend to advise and agree strategy. The company would provide administrative support for the advisory partnership.



Scope of services

Children's Social Care and Quality Assurance

Safeguarding

A single point of access for referral and assessment. Initial assessment and high quality services for children requiring protection.

The company will provide an integrated service to children and young people in need of protection. The company will develop systems and structures to provide a seamless service to children, young people and their families, focusing on multi-agency provision and a 'step down' approach to prevention and universal services.

Statutory provision will include:

- Holistic assessments and multi-agency interventions to support children, young people and families in need of Social Care services
- Comprehensive plans of protection for children and young people who are at risk of significant harm; these plans will be evidence-based with clear timescales for achieving outcomes
- Legal interventions for children and young people who need protection
- Support for the LSCB to perform its statutory functions

The company will also provide:

- A comprehensive qualification, training and development strategy for the children's workforce.
- Highly trained social workers supporting families and children through preventative work and early interventions
- Family group conferences in order to support strong partnership working in safeguarding

Benefits of our approach:

- A single point of contact for all professionals or those wishing to raise a concern about a child
- Seamless services for children in need with an emphasis on early intervention and prevention to maintain children in universal or mainstream services where this best meets their needs
- Joined-up work with Adult Social Care services to ensure that parents and carers receive the support they need
- Strong local partnership working based on sound local knowledge and evidence-based approaches
- Effective quality assurance mechanisms

Care

High quality provision for children in care including integrated fostering, adoption and leaving care services.

The company will provide an integrated service to children looked after and those leaving care. It will bring together local provision for Social Care, Health and Education to promote achievement and improve outcomes for those children receiving a care service from the Council served by the company. This service will be developed with local knowledge and evidence of what works best for those in care.

Statutory provision will include:

- A fully integrated fostering service to provide placement flexibility and to maximise placement choice for children looked after
- High quality recruitment and training for foster carers and prospective adoptive parents
- A multi-agency support service for children looked after in order to promote good educational outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people
- Positive relationships with health professionals in order to promote the health of children looked after
- An effective service for care leavers
- An effective Children in Care Council where children looked after and care leavers are able to shape the redesign of services

The company will deliver the statutory functions to children looked after and leaving care including fostering panels. It will advise the Council on its corporate parenting responsibilities and ensure it meets its statutory responsibilities.

The company will also provide:

- Cost effective arrangements for commissioning placements for children looked after

The Council would continue to directly manage the work of its statutory Independent Reviewing Officers for children looked after.

Benefits of our approach:

- High quality, flexible and responsive services for children looked after and leaving care
- Modern re-designed services will be planned using evidence of what works, including the views of children looked after and leaving care; these views will be gathered through a Children in Care Council
- Improved support and training for carers with a wide pool of specialist support provided by those with experience of looking after vulnerable children
- Cost-effective solutions for children who require care provision



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Education Services

Providing challenge and support for schools, early years providers and governing bodies so that they are able to carry out their statutory duties. Planning for pupil places and schools admission services.

The company will provide the statutory education role of the founding council and will provide the additional support services necessary to support and challenge school performance. The company's approach will be based on building strong partnerships with schools and early years' providers. It will start with the principle that where possible schools should be enabled to support each other.

Statutory provision will include:

- An annual School Places Plan based on current data and trend analysis in order to ensure adequate school places
- Proposals for school expansion with options for Members' consideration where required
- A high quality school admissions service
- Intervention to promote school improvement where required
- Intervention to ensure that schools provide good value for money
- High quality intervention for pupils with special and additional needs, children looked after, children with disabilities and for other vulnerable pupils
- Regular briefings for head teachers and governing bodies
- Advice to ensure compliance with statutory policies and codes of practice

Additional school and local authority support services which can be purchased will include:

- Services to promote high quality school leadership and high standards in schools
- Legal, financial and HR advice to support schools
- Ongoing support for those schools that wish to become academies and support for the setting up of new schools
- Additional traded services such as provision of Educational Business Partnerships, Governor Support Services, Learning Needs Services for vulnerable pupils, health partnerships and brokered school improvement activity

Benefits of our approach:

- Continued effective relationships with local schools
- Improved support for schools from multi-agency teams to support the most vulnerable pupils
- Support services tailored to individual schools' needs
- Cost-effective services for purchase by schools
- Cost-effective solutions created by better economies of scale
- A wider pool of talent created for school-to-school support



Early Intervention and Prevention

Children's Centres and Early Years services. Support for families. Targeted youth support. Support for additional special educational needs and integrated services for children with disabilities.

The company will bring together a broad range of early years' professionals, family support workers, education welfare officers, education psychologists, primary mental health workers, social workers, substance misuse workers, advisory teachers and youth workers to ensure the right team is available for an individual child, young person or family.

Statutory provision will include:

- Services for young offenders
- Special educational needs services and statements
- Tackling persistent absence from school
- An integrated services for children with disabilities

The company will also provide:

- A central single point of access to coordinate work, avoid duplication and ensure children and young people do not fall through the gaps
- Support for professionals in universal or mainstream settings to identify and support children and young people with additional needs
- Holistic assessments that identify children's and young people's needs and provide multi-agency, wraparound services for them and their families; this approach will be based on the offer of a lead professional and the creation of a team around the child
- Nationally-accredited parenting support programmes, including intensive family support and intervention for the most challenging families
- Targeted youth support including mediation, crisis management, behaviour management, support for alcohol and substance misuse issues, and pathways into education, training and employment
- Targeted support in schools supporting children and young people at risk of exclusion

Benefits of our approach:

- Maintaining preventative services at a time of grant and budget reductions by rationalising services and reducing management costs
- Seamless services for children in need, with an emphasis on early intervention and prevention to maintain children in universal or mainstream services where this best meets their needs
- Strong local partnership working based on sound local knowledge
- Intervention approaches that provide effective support for families by a team centred on each child's needs



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Children's Health Services

Working with general practitioners, Public Health and health care providers to ensure integrated services for all children and young people.

The company will ensure that it works with health partners to create an integrated service that addresses identified needs, accessing all routes by which health care can be delivered in order to deliver better health outcomes for children.

The company will work in partnership with:

- General practitioners and their consortia
- Schools
- Local healthcare provider services
- Acute hospital services – locally and regionally
- Public health – locally and nationally
- Local voluntary groups

The company will build on the integrated structure for services for children with disabilities to improve access for children and families by co-locating staff where this is possible and appropriate.

The company will collaborate to provide:

- Integrated treatment services for young people with drug and alcohol misuse issues
- Short stay facilities in both boroughs for children with disabilities
- Joint multi-agency teams in universal and specialist services
- Integrated ICT systems accessible to all staff working in children's settings
- Primary mental health workers
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- Local delivery sites for services
- Signposting and links to partners
- Support for immunisation and screening programmes for hard to reach groups
- Targeted sexual health services for young people

Benefits of our approach:

- Continued high quality partnerships with health commissioners and providers
- Good partnership working between universal providers and health provision in the Borough
- Collaborative and alternative approaches to delivery of the public health agenda
- Excellence in integrated provision for children with disabilities
- Incorporation and access to primary mental health assessment and advice

Timeline and consultation

Timeline

The following are the approximate timescales for implementing the plan to move Children's Services for Reading into a new organisational form.

- Next report to the Minister – November 2017
- Consultation with partners, DfE and the Council – September to November 2017
- Consultation with staff – October to December 2017
- Consultation with service users – January to March 2018
- Appointment of senior managers – Spring 2018
- Establishment of new organisation agreed by Cabinet – Spring 2018
- Appointments to the Board and appointment of a Chair – Spring 2018
- Board starts operating in shadow form – June 2018
- New organisation fully operational – October 2018

Consultation

The Council and DfE would consult with a wide range of partners as well as with staff and service users in order to ensure that the final proposals put to the Minister have the credibility of being endorsed across the partnership.