

Children's Services Committee

Date: **Thursday 20 November 2014**
Time: **2 pm**
Venue: **Edwards Room, County Hall, Norwich**

SUPPLEMENTARY A g e n d a

- 13 Getting in Shape – Restructuring Children's Services** (Page A2)
Report by the Interim Director of Children's Services
- 14 Presentation by Members of the Youth Parliament about the "Make Your Mark" Ballot.**
Presentation by Members of the Youth Parliament.

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Children's Services Committee

Item No 13

Report title:	Getting in shape – Restructuring Children's services
Date of meeting:	20 November 2014
Responsible Chief Officer:	Sheila Lock
Strategic impact This report sets out the way in which restructuring Children's Services has been approached. It sets out the strategic vision for the service in the form of the Business Case, the consultation that has been carried out and the key issues arising from that, it describes the way in which services will be organised in the future and highlights the key headlines. The premise behind the restructure is to deal with the challenges of the Ofsted reports and to drive further improvement in outcomes for children. Delivering a structural solution will in itself not deliver change and improvement except that the simplified structures will provide greater clarity in how families access our services and will reduce multiple transfers of responsibility.	

Executive summary

This reports sets out the approach to developing a new model for Children Services for Norfolk, details of which are contained in the 'Getting in Shape' Business Case. Within the Business Case, 24 recommendations to improve service delivery were highlighted and consulted upon. It was recognised that if we were to improve further, services needed to be organised in a way that makes sense to families and children. The Business Case was the culmination of an extended period of activity, research and engagement and was the product of a considerable amount of co-production with staff and partners.

Recommendations: Members are asked to consider the report and make the following recommendations

1. Comment on the objectives set out in the Business Case and endorse the strategic direction for services in Norfolk
2. Note the consultation and engagement exercise and the feedback received
3. Endorse the headlines in respect of the key elements of the structure going forward
4. Approve the indicative timetable set out and the proposals for future update reports including a report setting out any risks as a result of implementation and its impact on performance
5. Note that this will be delivered within the current financial envelope which takes into account the additional savings targets identified by Policy & Resources Committee.

1. Proposal (or options)

Throughout the improvement work to date, members have been keen to ensure that any proposal to restructure Children's Services considers not only the improvement work and continued progress in the immediate and short term, but that a sustainable system is developed which creates capacity for ongoing development. The Business Case (Appendix 1) sets out 24 recommendations to achieve this. In short this requires change in six key areas:

- Reducing the demand for children's social care
- Increasing the positive impact of children's social care involvement
- Strengthening quality assurance across the safeguarding system
- Consolidating Education and Learning services and improving learner outcomes and support to schools
- Increasing the positive impact across all services
- Ensuring value for money and good commissioning outcomes

This framework was the basis for extensive consultation activity which ran from mid-September until the end of October, it was developed through the bringing together of the improvement work to date, a number of smaller reviews and analytical data around caseloads and complaints.

Key Changes proposed – Headlines:

It is worth summarising the key headlines from the model proposed. These are clearly set out in sections 3.0 to 5.0 of the Business Case, but can be summarised as follows:

- The development of a new Early Help model
- A single unified social work service
- Consolidation of the education function
- The creation of a new Education Inclusion Service bringing together areas dealing with individual pupil outcomes
- A new Performance and Challenge function
- A locality model of working based on six districts and aligned with policing boundaries
- The alignment of commissioning to strategy
- The development of a new underpinning model for working with families based on Signs of Safety

The Consultation:

As part of the consultation, a number of key events were held including:

- Focus groups with staff
- Focus groups with partner agencies
- Five head teacher briefing sessions
- Three member workshops
- A focus group with District councils
- Two focus groups with Chief Officers from other agencies

In addition to feedback through these forums, there was discussion in the children's strategic group and the NSCB. The observations of these groupings were taken alongside some 121 individual and group responses received via the online consultation feedback process or directly by members of the leadership team.

The response to 10 key consultation questions posed by the Business Case was extremely positive and the overwhelming view was one of support for the direction of travel which sees us investing in our early help offer, unifying our social work service, bringing a more holistic focus to the needs of vulnerable children through the creation of an Education Inclusion Service and supporting all of this with strong collaborative locality working across our services and with our partners.

This summary of key questions/themes and leadership responses has been shared with all staff.

You said...	Leadership Response
We're concerned about the pairing of Norwich and Broadland in the proposed district model .	On reflection we agree, and will review the district model based on your feedback.
It is not the right time to integrate the Education Admissions and Place Planning & Organisation Services .	The amalgamation of these services remains part of the strategic plan, but we have listened to your feedback and will not be proposing this change now as part of 'Getting in Shape'
Can you tell us more about the plans for the Children with Disabilities (CWD) service ? We want to understand how this will look in the future and are concerned to ensure continuity in all aspects of the service, when it is integrated more closely with core social work operations.	Michael Rosen met a wide range of staff from CWD to listen to their concerns and ideas and talk about plans for CWD. In response to contributions the detailed structures proposed will recognise the benefits of retaining discrete CWD teams within local social work structures. They will also recognise the value of retaining occupational therapists within these teams. The proposal will be to retain Linked, co-located with the residential services. Proposals will be for CWD referrals to take place through the MASH , allowing a greater focus on supporting families to access services through dedicated posts located in the early help structure.
A few of us disagree with the proposals relating to commissioning .	We have listened to your views, however standby the proposals made in the business case which place accountability for commissioning firmly with senior officers responsible for service delivery. This is absolutely key to achieving more clarity between strategy and purchasing activity. It will also bring a greater sense of articulated need and secure better arrangements for accountability and reviewing and challenging performance.
Can you give some assurance that the Portage Service will continue as part of the new operating model?	It was always the intention for this service to be maintained, and it proposed this continues to sit as part of the Sensory Support Service going forward.

You said...	Leadership Response
We support the proposal to integrate business support into core services but are concerned about business support officers being lined managed by people who are not business support professionals.	We do propose that Business Support Officers are managed by team managers of the teams they support. A 'check and balance' is built into the proposals in the form of a role reporting through the 'Performance and Challenge' structure which will span the business support network and ensure the necessary professional support and development takes place in relation to the business support function.
We're concerned Section 17 work may play the 'poor relation' to child protection cases in the new social work teams	Robust management processes and the development of our early help offer will be in place to ensure this does not happen.
We are concerned about the future of the role and work done by Development Worker roles.	We recognise the continued need for much of the work currently carried out by Development Workers but it will need to be delivered through new roles in both the Education and Early Help structures. In both areas the proposal will be that work is much more targeted than it has been in the past.
What does this mean for the dedicated Norfolk Family Focus programme team which delivers reporting requirements to DCLG?	There will be a dedicated project team to carry out this function.
Can you get our partner agencies to configure their services to a similar footprint and working to the same objectives?	The two Chief Officer forums have endorsed the business case for change and are committed to further discussion to create a model of locality working which is the same for all agencies. This work will continue to develop over the next two months

As this restructure was built up from a number of smaller review pieces there has been significant involvement of children and young people. These are highlighted in the Business Case at section 2.3.

Proposed Timetable:

Having consulted on and finalised the future operating model, subject to committee endorsement the proposed next steps are to:

- Starting week commencing 24 November, run a two week formal staffing adjustment consultation with affected staff in relation to appointments to the Tier 4 posts within the new structure so that as far as possible managers are in place in January to participate in the process of appointing people to posts below Tier 4
- Alongside this publish a timeline for the formal staffing consultation process relating to other posts in the new structure below Tier 4 level

- Complete appointments into the new structure and implement new operating model by 31 March 2015
- Provide update reports to Committee in January and March 2015, including an outline of any risks as a result of implementation and its impact on performance
- Provide update reports to the Chief Officer Group from other agencies

2. Evidence

The evidence for this proposal is contained in the detailed Business Case (Appendix 1).

3. Financial Implications

This restructure will be cost neutral after delivering required staff cost savings of £490k, these were published as part of the Policy and Resources Committee requirement. However the objective in this restructure has been to ensure front line delivery is strengthened and to strategically apportion spending more wisely on the things that most influence positive outcomes for children and young people. Financial headlines as a result of the business case are:

- Total staffing cost of new operating model is £45.653m
However what we are now able to do as a result of this restructure is to clearly quantify some new elements of service and their cost as follows (these are included in the total staffing cost outlined above):
- Cost of Early Help model £7.932m
- Cost of additional social workers in social work service £2.137m
- Cost of new Education Inclusion Service £3.229m

All of the above to be delivered within budget by streamlining management structures, realigning the commissioning function, which puts accountability for commissioning firmly back with senior officers responsible for service delivery and by aligning business support resource with early help and social work teams.

4. Issues, risks and innovation

The need to refocus resources to the right place is also a key feature of the model going forward, and is set out below. However if Norfolk is going to strategically reduce social care expenditure there must be something more than simply reappportioning spend.

Summary of spend across new operating model	
Executive Director of Children's Services	£0.163m
Early Help	£7.932m
Social Work	£25.076m
Education	£9.046m
Performance and Challenge	£3.436m
TOTAL	£45.653

The long term financial plan must align spending with a strategic plan which acknowledges the need for the following significant shifts and decisions:

- Reapportionment of spending based on a review of commissioned services within Early Help as contracts come to an end (currently £22m worth of contracts in place). The strategy must be to better meet articulated need (based on most up to date data) by delivering services via augmented structures or by re-commissioning.
- A gradual reduction over the next 5 years in the number of cases at the higher end of the social work system, as Norfolk's Early Help offer develops and grows. The estimated staff cost associated with a social work case is £1,650, compared to £800 for an Early Help case, therefore costs are projected to fall as the shift from Social Work to Early Help is delivered and detailed modelling is planned to project the impact of this.
- Reduced need for statutory social work over the next 5 years with changes to post numbers managed through natural wastage and redeployment to Early Help or other areas.
- Work to be undertaken with partners to increase the overall contribution to Early Help across the Norfolk Partnership

As the Chief Officer Group for all agencies has endorsed the business case this creates an opportunity to use the 24 recommendations contained within it as a catalyst for much more significant change across the whole of the children's system for Norfolk. This includes identifying core priorities, understanding need, jointly commissioning and delivering improved outcomes. Using the Signs of Safety model will help us to achieve the cultural and behavioural shift needed.

5. Background

There have been a number of previous papers including the Ofsted reports, the improvement plan and the performance and monitoring reports which set out the challenges that must be addressed by this restructure.

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained or want to see copies of any assessments, eg equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

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Getting in Shape

A New Shape for Norfolk Children's Services

The Business Case

(September 2014)

This report summarises the work of a number of service reviews into the work of Norfolk Children's Services. These have been conducted as part of the Improvement work so far. In addition it contains proposals drawn from the intelligence gleaned from the experience of working within the children's system, including the experience of children and their families and the views of staff.

The report identifies the work undertaken to inform the review, provides an analysis of the evidence gathered, describes the key issues and questions of significance to the service and makes recommendations about the development of Children's Services in the future.



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1.0 Summary of Key Recommendations

In order to put in place a Children's system that is financially sustainable and improves outcomes for children and young people in line with the Improvement Journey thus far, this Business Case makes 24 separate recommendations which are summarised here for ease of reference:

Reduce demand for Children's Social Care services by:

1. **Embedding the use of the new Threshold for Risk** across the Children and Young People's Partnership agencies as the key reference point when discussing children's safeguarding needs.
2. **Continuing development of new systems to improve the connections between universal and Early Help services and Social Care** –This includes building on the Hub development in South Norfolk and better defined pathways of support before and after social care involvement in line with the Early Help Strategy.
3. **Providing access to social work advice and guidance to Early Help practitioners** in order that referrals to social care are appropriate and risk management in Early Help is good.
4. **Working with adult services to address unmet needs in the adult population** that lead to increased risks to children, particularly where the level of these risks does not require a statutory social care intervention and there is a gap in service provision. The development of an Early Help offer that mirrors that in children's services will support this development.

Increase the positive impact of Children's Social Care involvement by:

5. **Establishing a new model of social work intervention using the 'Signs of Safety' work that Norfolk has committed to bid for Innovation Funding to support;** minimising bureaucracy and maximising direct intervention with families that brings about change through recognition of family strengths, giving frontline social workers the skills to work more directly with families and ensuring the management and supervision capacity and systems to support this.
6. **Establishing a single social work service** –operating under a single Assistant Director who will act as the Head of Social Work services.
7. **Moving towards a single Assessment framework with dedicated assessment workers**
8. **Procuring, alongside Adult Social Care, a new Social Care Information System** as part of a One Council approach to DNA, and seizing opportunities to enable frontline staff to spend more time with families
9. **Sustaining multi-professional specialist assessment and intervention services** to complement field social work services by delivering specialist support earlier in the child protection journey, preventing the need to escalate to court intervention wherever possible, and identifying more quickly those families where parents do not have the capacity to change within the timeframe for the child
10. **Developing a kinship care service** to support children and young people to stay in their own families with support wherever possible
11. **Continuing to prioritise finding permanent homes for children who cannot be looked after by their birth parents**, through expanded use of Special Guardianship Orders, Residence Orders, long-term fostering agreements and adoption.
12. **Re-establishing a Leaving Care service** to support the independence needs of children and young people leaving the care system

Strengthen quality assurance across the safeguarding system by:

13. **Implementing a new children's quality assurance (QA) framework** within Norfolk and commissioned services. This builds on the model that has been critical to the success thus far with the improvement journey and involves bringing together all services for QA and performance in one service.
14. **Strengthening the systematic inter-agency quality assurance of practice** across the whole system in partnership with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).
15. **Locating Business Support capacity in teams and making them very firmly accountable to the services they support.** This places the responsibility for day to day management, including priority setting, at a team level. While intended to reduce management bureaucracy, it is recognised that there is a need to ensure consistency and quality which will be achieved through the quality assurance role afforded through the new QA structures and function.
16. **Developing a stronger client side relationship with shared services** which sets out clearly the service specification, and QA features and operational arrangements for shared services across the council that provide support services to children's operational services.

Consolidate the Education and Learning service and improve learner outcomes and support to schools by:

17. **Bringing together all services related to the provision of education and learning, under the leadership of one Assistant Director.** During this phase of improvement it has been essential to clarify the relationship the Authority has with its schools, particularly in defining what the Authority does and more importantly what it does not do. While this has included a more robust approach to institutions, the needs of individual learners remains a challenge, this must be clarified to ensure no confusion exists. This will include the Authority no longer providing services that should be provided by schools.
18. **Expand the 'virtual school concept' to offer additional support to all vulnerable learners.** There remains too much variation in individual performance across the county, resources must be more appropriately targeted and prioritised to ensure the most vulnerable do not miss out.
19. **Align the admissions and school place planning functions and maximise new technology opportunities**

Increase positive impact across all services by:

20. **Commissioning services that are aligned to and managed by the strategic leadership of the Business area.** This includes making commissioning much more accountable to service needs and to ensure that performance of commissioned services is appropriately monitored.
21. **Planning and delivering services using the District footprint.** Norfolk is a large county, with significant variation; services will therefore be aligned to need. The opportunities for joint commissioning with District colleagues and with the CCGs will be fully exploited.

Ensure value for money and good commissioning practice by:

22. **Pursuing joint commissioning approaches with other local authorities** – for example with our Eastern Region partners – to identify where there is mutual interest in a particular service area and where this will contribute to the financial sustainability of the system and ensure good outcomes for children and young people.

23. **Continued development of in-house provider services**, specifically for specialist assessment, residential, adoption and fostering services, to manage the market and costs effectively and give a choice of provision, based on ongoing unit cost comparison.
24. **Developing the commissioning of services with schools** by working with the schools Forum to address significant gaps in services and to work together to fill those gaps particularly around early help for pupils with special needs and to support young people with emotional wellbeing.

2.0 Introduction to the review

2.1 Context and policy drivers

Norfolk Children's Services has been under the spotlight for the last two years since Ofsted inspections of its services for Children in Public Care and Safeguarding were found to be inadequate. This concern was further heightened by an inspection of the Local Authority Arrangements to Support School Improvement (LASSI) in June 2013 which were judged ineffective. In totality, these three reports led the Department for Education to express considerable concern regarding systemic failings in Norfolk's children's services and led to the Department issuing a Directions Notice in respect of Children's social care on the 18th December 2013. While this Directions Notice did not extend across to education, it is clear that the publication of the LASSI report on the back of two other failings was a contributory factor.

Although subsequent reviews, including the Peer Review of services and the strategic Review conducted by ADSW on behalf of the DfE have highlighted 'green shoots' of recovery, there remains a significant task in turning around services that have been subject to significant disinvestment and malaise for many years. The more recent judgement of the Arrangements for School Support as now effective is positive, however there is recognition that to drive further improvement aspects of the structure of services and the way in which they are configured must change. This is not for change's sake but to ensure that the journey of children through the Norfolk system is as seamless as it can be, that the number of transition points is minimised and to ensure that the right staff with the right skills are offering support at the right time. This includes providing a unified offer to schools that makes sense.

This has been an on-going feature of dialogue with staff themselves over many months.

There are a number of other key points that have emerged during the improvement work to date that must be addressed within the restructuring proposed.

Standards in Norfolk schools have been unacceptable for some time, many schools have coasted and too few are outstanding. The Local Authority has been complicit in this, a factor recognised by Ofsted in its ineffective judgement. The Local Authority has worked hard to redefine its relationship with schools over the last 12 months but there is more to do. It is imperative that the more recent improvements are not compromised by the restructure going forward.

Norfolk County Council has a duty to protect children from harm and deliver a range of statutory functions in relation to children and young people's wellbeing, the current improvement work has been focused on driving improvement in outcomes for those children and their families in whose lives we intervene, it has also focused on ensuring that services reach the right children. Demand for child protection and safeguarding services in Norfolk has increased significantly in recent years. This has been the case nationally, but in Norfolk the rise in demand and the associated costs has been above that in other similar authorities.

There are a number of factors that contribute to this, variance in relation to agreements on risk and thresholds across the children's system, low rates of conversion from contact to referral which is a bi-product of the former issue and a poorly defined local Early Help offer.

In delivering a response to improvement it has been critical to understand underperformance well, to consider the reasons behind the performance story, to critically consider Norfolk's response to its statutory functions for children, to assess the contribution of the council to the system leadership of services for children across the county. It is all of these parts that contribute to this Business case.

As part of the improvement work a number of service reviews have been completed to critically evaluate how we undertake those duties at the moment, with a key question as to

what we might do to deliver more effectively and efficiently in the future as part of a cycle of continuous improvement.

Accordingly this Business case is structured to draw together in one place the outcomes and findings of the improvement work to date, to capture the outcomes of reviews completed in order to establish a sustainable system of support for vulnerable children and young people in Norfolk, alongside a strong and robust universal school offer that sees the availability of 'A Good School For Every Norfolk Learner'.

This is a significant review for Norfolk and the Children's Services Department for several reasons.

Firstly, the budget of the Department represents one of the council's largest service budgets. There are also significant resources vested in schools which the Department works closely with the Schools Forum to administer. These budgets total some £637m.

The service area employs over 2000 members of staff that work directly and indirectly with children and young people in some way – supporting a pathway for children through universal services in local communities, to early help and support, short-term support and long-term protection alongside care alternatives for some children and co-ordination of partnership approaches to supporting children who need more than a single agency response.

Although prior to the current improvement work the availability of accurate performance information was weak it is clear that projections developed within the department estimated that on the current trend costs of social care for vulnerable children would continue to show exponential growth. For the council to meet its ambitions to protect the most vulnerable, improve the outcomes for all children and in order to manage services to the public within the resources we have available, the reliance on care packages as a solution to reducing risk is not the only solution long term. This approach relies on cultural change across the children's system and the development of alternative solutions.

Secondly, this report responds to a changing policy context in social work, safeguarding, Education and children's services. The direction of travel nationally – in particular as expressed in the Munro review of Child Protection but also in Government responses to this - allows a significantly greater degree of local determination, and challenges us more than ever to see children's social care services within a whole system of support for vulnerable children. In Education, the changing nature of accountability and expectation of structural solutions to perceived failings in standards has shifted substantially the role of the LEA.

Alongside this, the bar is being raised in terms of inspection expectations. There are increasing opportunities outside of the Local Authority to deliver services and Norfolk, if it intends to retain control of its service delivery in children's services must drive forward the improvements as identified by Ofsted and must demonstrate a clear intention of no complacency. In short, Norfolk with its partners, must deliver a sustainable children's services system.

Thirdly Norfolk Children's services staff, particularly those in the front line, have been in the spotlight as a consequence of the three negative Ofsted reports and yet many of the determinants of good services lie in the gift of leadership. There is some excellent practice in Norfolk thwarted by systems and structures that compromise the ability of staff to deliver a good service – the leadership must tackle this and this review must result in improved ways of working.

Finally, and most importantly, the improvement work to date and the reviews completed within it conclude that by changing how we work with children, young people and their families we can significantly improve their chances in life.

Whether that is by providing better help when families are first struggling to cope, reducing the number of teams involved by simplifying the way children experience our services or by removing children swiftly from families that cannot meet their needs, there is a clear

imperative to work across organisations in Norfolk to continuously improve the help we can offer.

The Authority has completed a risk analysis of the restructure and its timing. This is a challenge but the reality is there is never a good time to restructure services. There are issues of risk, the fact that there is not yet a sustainable leadership team, the risks of potentially moving cases and staff to different offices, but there are also risks in relation to not proceeding, particularly in compromising further improvement and slowing down the pace of change that is so necessary for Norfolk.

In order to mitigate and manage these risks a comprehensive programme methodology will be adopted throughout any change programme to appropriately manage and reduce risk. This is outlined in Appendix 1.

2.2 Principles underpinning the Development of this Business case

The improvement work to date and the development of the business case has been informed by the following principles relating to the role of Children's Services and the needs in the wider safeguarding system:

- A recognition of the inter-connected nature of Children's Social Care services with others, most significantly those services designed to prevent poor outcomes for children, young people, and adults in the first place
- A multi-agency agreed approach to thresholds and risk, which sees the issues of risk as being vantage points, to critically scan the best way to support and assist the child, rather than gateways to qualify /not qualify for services
- Services that are seamless from the perspective of the child and not bound by unnecessary paperwork and bureaucracy
- A system that recognises that to deliver effective outcomes and have impact , analysis of need , the development of strategy , the commissioning of services and the review of performance must be interconnected
- The importance of a strong universal offer that provides the best possible start for children in early years and in school settings. Getting children to school ready to learn is critical to future success, but this must be complimented by a good early years childcare and play offer
- A locally differentiated offer of early help, built on a strong philosophy of recognising family strengths to problem solve with the support of agencies
- A need to ensure that social work resources are focused on those children where urgent action has to be taken to protect them, where risks remain or intensify following Early Help provision; and those children who, following social work assessment subsequently require longer term social work intervention to ensure that their welfare is safeguarded and promoted
- Recognition that each individual child's journey through the safeguarding system is different and will have different end points. For some children it will end with the provision of effective Early Help, some will be referred to Children's Social Care, some will become the subject of statutory Child Protection Plans, whilst some will require long term help to ensure their welfare is safeguarded and promoted, including the possibility of removal from home and placement with a new family
- The centrality of workforce and professional practice, given that staff resources, wherever they are employed and deployed and across the Social Care and Early Help system, are the most important that we have in building stronger, more resilient

families, who are less dependent on services and better able to both nurture their children and contribute to their communities

- The need to maintain a consistent focus on the child's needs and best interests developing meaningful, consistent and direct contact with the child, including recognising when it is in the child's best interest to be looked after by the Local Authority
- The role of Children's Social Care services in supporting wider system leadership and in developing high quality safeguarding practice across the wider safeguarding system, including the NHS, Police, and a range of other statutory and voluntary sector partners.

2.3 Scope of the Review and Summary of Activity

During the improvement work a number of reviews of service have already taken place. These have varied in size and scale, from formal process conducted with external capacity, to dialogue and discussion with staff about what works well and what doesn't. In part these were to understand the reasons why performance looked as it did in a number of areas where there were significant concerns. It is worth summarising those areas:

- The MASH arrangements
- The role of Duty and Assessment
- Early Help and Locality working
- Children with Disability
- The LADO service
- Aspects of the commissioning Function
- Early years
- The Local Authority arrangements for School support (ISOS)
- Arrangements to support children in care
- Business Support Arrangements

To support the review, and in addition to the work set out above, the following activity has also taken place:

- Research visits to other authorities and a review of other local authority practice, for example in relation to school improvement and system leadership
- Benchmarking and data analysis on social care demand and outcomes
- Reviews of evidence and research on intervention models and projects elsewhere, for example the systems approach to child protection and pilots regarding the Duty and Assessment function
- Review of national expectations in terms of the Government ratified Munro report recommendations, and social care workforce reform
- Norfolk working alongside other Local Authorities in bidding to the 'rethinking children's social work' strand of DfE's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme. The approach sets Signs of Safety as the philosophy and basis for Social work involvement in the lives of Children and Families.
- Collecting staff and stakeholder feedback on the strengths and weakness of our current system
- An exercise to gather service user feedback at case conference stage through asking what families would like more and less of during the child protection process, and interviews with a small group of those receiving social care support
- Two staff surveys that considered issues around work style
- Critical evaluation of different models of social work practice and service delivery able to deliver the necessary change

In addition there have been a number of 'deep dive' activities that have considered performance issues or trend data arising from complaints, which have included:

- An independent review into fostering
- An analysis of training and workforce development
- A Task and Finish Report into Pathway Planning
- Consideration of the work for Troubled Families- Norfolk Family Focus

All of this work has contributed to this 'whole system review' of services in Norfolk

2.4 Achieving a financially sustainable Children's Social Care system

The challenge in Norfolk's children's system currently is 'how do we improve services at a time of financial constraint' when there is a backdrop of failings against the Ofsted framework and where improvements have been made they remain fragile.

With this in mind the objective of this review has therefore been threefold: to inform the development of a redesigned and financially sustainable social care model and deliver better outcomes for children, families and the wider community, alongside the delivery of an effective school improvement system that continues to hold schools to account to deliver improved standards .

We must work on the basis that the overall social care area would be able to operate within the available resource on an on-going basis. This review therefore seeks to articulate how Norfolk in the restructure might drive investment in activities to reduce demand while at the same time reshape the system and the way resources are used in order to reduce currently rising costs back to a level which can maintain the new system in three years' time .

In this regard the review takes account of the benchmarking data from the Chartered Institute of Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) that analyses spend and performance in Norfolk compared to other authorities.

2.4.1 In Social Care

Within the work completed as part of the Improvement Plan and driven through the work of the Early Help Board there are many other initiatives and projects which aim to reduce demand on the safeguarding system, principally through the development of Early Help services. These are supported through the Early Help Strategy agreed during the period of this review, and this review supports the recommendations of that strategy.

In addition to projected rises in expenditure which would occur without significant change, the service area is affected by the savings requirements of the County Council as a whole. The extent of savings required are not a driver of this review but it is clear that there are a number of issues that must be considered:

- (i) Overall investment in social work in relation to the CIPFA data is low
- (ii) Year on year additional funding has been put into supporting children in the care system through increased amounts spent on placements , while unit costs have reduced on a child level, overall spend has continued to rise
- (iii) Investment in Early Help has been low, a factor which must be addressed if (ii) above is to be tackled

2.4.2 In Education

The focus on Improvement through the Education improvement plan has been in demonstrating a changing relationship with schools in which the Local Authority holds schools and the leaders in the system to account for standards. It is also clear that the next phase of improvement work must focus on:

- (i) District variation
- (ii) Individual pupil performance including outcomes for vulnerable pupils
- (iii) Increasing the proportion of good or better schools across the county
- (iv) System leadership

To achieve this in a financially stable model the Local Authority must:

- (i) Ensure the delivery of these services from a full cost recovery model
- (ii) Only deliver services that the Authority must provide within its statutory role
- (iii) Ensure that services are organised in a coherent way to make sense to the schools that buy them

3.0 Reducing demand for Children's Social Care services

Children and young people are referred to, and worked with by, Children's Social Care services because they are judged to be at significant risk of harm. Reducing demand for statutory social care services therefore has to be about reducing the risks of harm for those children and young people affected, but it also has to address the issue of who is making that judgement and whether it is evidence based and shared by others. In recent years in Norfolk we have seen very significant rises in the number of children referred to Children's Social Care services, the number that go on to be assessed by a social worker, and the number that are judged to require a statutory Child Protection Plan.

There have been national increases in all of these areas, but the growth in Norfolk has been significantly in excess of the national trajectory and that of our statistical neighbours.

Within this overall high level of activity we also know that there was a high proportion of referral and assessment activity that did not lead to any ongoing help being provided by social care teams. This is demonstrated both through high proportions of referrals and assessments leading to no ongoing social care family support, and a high proportion of referrals being about a child or young person already referred in the last year.

The analysis is that there are three distinct issues behind the rise in referrals and assessments in particular:

- (i) A lack of shared understanding amongst professionals and agencies on what constitutes a risk of significant harm to children and young people, and what circumstances might require Children's Social Care involvement or a Child Protection Plan
- (ii) Inefficient systems causing families to 'fall through the gap' and not be offered service provision from elsewhere when Children's Social Care involvement isn't required but where they do have needs to be addressed
- (iii) A lack of understanding of respective roles between social care services and others, including universal services and settings such as schools, and early intervention services, a lack of connectivity in what these services and settings offer vulnerable families

3.1 Developing a shared understanding of children's needs and service responses

The lack of a shared understanding of what should trigger referral to Children's Social Care and what might require statutory social work intervention is an issue for the wider children's partnership. It has been a constant theme in the MASH and is evident in the contact to referral data. A more recent hypothesis might be that in the climate of inadequate Ofsted judgements some professionals, both in the wider children's services system and in social care services, are instinctively more risk-averse than others and a shared reference point for organisations, commissioners and providers to calibrate individual practitioner judgements was lacking. It is also clear that the Threshold Documentation set out by the NSCB and due for timely revision has seen risk decision as gateways to access services, rather than vantage points on which to assess a 'Continuum of Need'.

The work of the NSCB has to support the development of a shared understanding of risk and the Signs of Safety bid to the innovation Fund will expedite this.

Key Consultation Question 1: Will having 'Signs of Safety' embedded as a tool across the partnership assist in understanding risk better?

It is also clear that at present if a referral doesn't meet MASH criteria – the access to step down provision through Early Help is inconsistent. It is clear that if referral patterns are to be captured and held in one place which is safe, the referral route for professionals must be through the MASH, where the assessment of the presenting problem must decide on the route into services.

The strengthening of the MASH approach seeks to address all of the issues identified above in relation to high numbers of referrals and should be pivotal in the implementation of the threshold of risk guidance. It should bring together practitioners from the partnership with social care and Early Help services on a daily basis to review the appropriate service response for children. The cases discussed are triaged so that only those that need more

considered multi-agency and multi-professional judgement are explored, and those referrals that clearly need social care intervention go directly to social work teams. Through inter-agency discussion and sharing the range of information available the MASH manager who should be Social Work trained should make decisions on the next steps for each case discussed.

This may be social care assessment, further information gathering from universal services or schools, or direction to support from Early Help services. This addresses system issues where children whose needs did not meet the threshold for social care intervention were not enabled to receive alternative help in their local community.

The approach referred to above has been running in East Sussex since April 2012. Across the County the rate of referral to Children's Social Care halved between October 2011 and October 2012. More significantly in terms of the release of professional time and avoidance of unnecessary work, the rate of statutory assessment by social workers has reduced by more than half in the same period.

In East Sussex in September 2011 Duty and Assessment social workers initiated 829 initial assessments against 390 in September 2012. This dramatic change in activity and demand is coupled with practice developments that they adopted within social care assessment covered later in this report, which meant that social workers have more time to assess fully and provide some expert family input before deciding whether a statutory protection plan is necessary. This more purposeful and better quality assessment activity has contributed to a reduced number of Initial Child Protection Conferences called to consider the use of a Child Protection Plan and a reduction in the number of new plans needed.

In summary the changes made to screening and assessment have resulted in better use of professional resources and a higher chance of families receiving the support that they need from Early Help services in order to prevent situations getting worse. To some extent this has addressed the relationships between different professionals and providers and has closed the gap in the pathway of support that has persisted for some time. There is no reason to suggest that here in Norfolk the approach suggested alongside an adoption of Signs of Safety would not produce similar results across the children's system.

Key Consultation Question 2: Would having one referral point for professionals made clear, assist in avoiding confusion and in facilitating the pathway for children, either through Early Help services, Statutory work such as S17 or S47, or No Further Action?

3.2 Preventing Children Falling through the gap

The current arrangements here in Norfolk are in effect two distinct social work offers – a Children in Need service and a social work safeguarding service. This creates a number of issues some of which were highlighted by Ofsted and others which were picked up in the two reviews completed early this year.

In summary, these present as the lack of an overarching social work philosophy, difficulties in navigating the social work system for professionals, changes in social worker, and multiple transitions for families.

Escalating children up the system is challenging but de-escalating children to provide family support is probably more challenging. It is the view reached in this Business Case that in part this will be addressed by having a single point of entry into the social work system for all children, but there is recognition that it also requires a common and shared approach to working with children in need of social care.

Accordingly to progress these issues it is imperative that going forward there is a single social work service. This needs to report in a unified management structure in which all social work services on the children's pathway are managed locally by a single senior manager.

The impact of this should be a minimisation of worker changes and a reduction in the number of transitions.

Alongside this though there has to be changed expectations about the way in which local management works.

- (i) Locality management must co-ordinate the activity of team managers managing all aspects of children's statutory services from Children in Need to Leaving Care services. A full list of accountable social care services at a locality level is highlighted in 'Appendix 2'
- (ii) Locality management for statutory social work must work closely with the Early Help locality lead (also illustrated in Appendix 2)
- (iii) Together these managers must act to assess local need, working closely with the Commissioner for Social Care services on the commissioning plan for the Authority
- (iv) There is an expectation that this also supports and drives local partnership working through locality safeguarding boards
- (v) The quality of service delivery and performance management, in terms of impact and outcomes, will be managed locally but with overall Children's Services performance management co-ordinated centrally

This approach is intended to provide a seamless service that prevents children falling through the social care gap and ensures consistent quality of service delivery.

Key Consultation Question 3: Is having a unified social work service a positive step forward?

Key Consultation Question 4: Will locality management that manages and has responsibility for team managers who lead teams that follow the child's pathway in social care – improve transitions and changes of workers?

3.3 Strengthening Early Help services, supported by social work expertise

An illustration of the proposed model for the delivery of Early Help functions can be found in 'Appendix 4'.

The Early Help Strategy has clear objectives to reduce need for social care services by intervening earlier and more effectively with those most likely to have needs that escalate in the future. This includes, for example, improving the preventative and early intervention response to those experiencing domestic abuse, which make a high proportion of initial referrals to Children's Social Care, and putting in place better service responses for those with known vulnerabilities.

As an example the Strategy seeks to improve the service response for women who have had children taken in to care in order to help them to improve their ability to parent safely before having another child. This has been at the heart of the bid for funding recently from the

Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to support mental health, made in conjunction with the mental health Trust.

A small number of families currently account for a large number of children that become Looked After.

The reality is that the Early Help hub must have access to social work expertise and have the flexibility to escalate up the system if the safeguarding of children requires this. The expectation that local managers work together at a senior level is in part to ensure that there is local management of the system, for step up services as well as step down.

The Early Help offer will be delivered on the basis of six localities, modelled on the existing District council boundaries, with the exception of Norwich which will be aligned with Broadland to mirror the housing planning area.

Key Consultation Question 5: Does the locality model add the right capacity for delivering local services?

Key Consultation Question 6: Is it right to ensure social work advice is available within the local hubs?

3.4 Improving services for adults with conditions that affect their parenting

For those adults whose children are at risk of significant harm and who require the protection of a Child Protection Plan, specialist treatment services are commissioned jointly with NHS commissioners.

This is a successful and well-regarded model targeted on those with high level needs. Many adults in families currently supported by Early Help services have lower level needs relating to their substance misuse, mental health, and domestic abuse. In some cases these needs are appropriately being met by treatment services for adults, but there are also gaps.

The Early Help Strategy provides for better training for those working in children's services so that they can explicitly identify and address some of these adult needs through brief interventions and onward referral. In relation to mental health services specifically, however, there is a gap between what those in children's Early Help services can appropriately provide and what is available in commissioned adult mental health treatment services. This gap leads to poor quality parenting and a need for ongoing support to ensure the wellbeing, development, and good care of children, and ultimately increases demand for more significant children's services involvement.

This gap is not evidenced in other areas, such as substance misuse, where pathways of support, availability of brief interventions, lower tier support and coordinated whole family work are in place. Whilst the Early Help Strategy will go some way to address this demand we are reliant on the wider system in relation to mental health in particular. The return of the Mental Health Social Work service to the Authority will go some way to make improvements as will the outcome of discussion regarding a whole council approach to Early Help work.

In dialogue with Adult Social Care, it is agreed that early help services in children's services which will be led by an assistant director will be mirrored by an Early Help Assistant Director post in Adult services. These two posts working closely together will develop the Authority wide approach to 'Think Family' and enhance the kind of services available above, they will also work collaboratively to make transition work more effective.

This approach is supported by the recent Transformation challenge bid to DCLG which has support from the District councils, the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and the

voluntary sector.

Key Consultation Question 7: Is the decision to ‘mirror’ an early help senior post in Adult services a positive step forward in developing a ‘Think Family’ approach

3.5 Improving support after a Child Protection Plan has concluded

Even where social care intervention has been very successful at lowering the risks to children and ensuring that families are on the right path to maintain these improvements there is always a risk that circumstances change or motivation decreases following the end of Child Protection Plans and risks escalate again. This may lead to a re-referral and the need for another period of statutory intervention but as likely is that the standard of care declines for children and young people without the intensive involvement of professionals. Ensuring that Child Protection Plans end well with a clear plan to support families to sustain changes and a higher standard of care is therefore an important part of reducing demand in the medium term. In Norfolk rates of re-referral are too high, and the restructure must help in addressing this.

Work undertaken in other Authorities has been successful in reducing demand for Children’s Social Care and has ensured that planned support from other services is put in place for families following social care intervention. This kind of support is referred to as ‘step down’ support, and is a key way to prevent re-referral by providing a level of help to maintain changes made or deal with challenges that come up subsequently. The provision of good and well-planned ‘step down’ support can also enable some Child Protection Plans to be ended earlier than if no other ongoing support is available, or for robust Children in Need plans to be used as an alternative to a Child Protection Plan.

High performing authorities are consistently clear on arrangements for this, in a way that we are not in Norfolk.

Whilst there is good practice in many cases across the County it does not appear to be consistent, and there are issues both in the impetus to put this support in place and the availability of the support needed. In other areas formal processes are also in place to ensure a monitored multi-agency follow-on plan for families leaving Child Protection Plans.

Many of those working in our Early Help services have the skills and in some cases existing relationships with families to enable them to take on a greater role following the end of statutory intervention, but we do not systematically use these opportunities to prevent future escalation.

3.6 Recommendations for social care work

- **Embed the use of the new Threshold for Risk across** the Children and Young People’s Partnership agencies as the key reference point when discussing children’s safeguarding needs
- **Continue the development of new systems to improve the connections between universal and Early Help services and Social Care** –This includes building on the Hub development in South Norfolk and better defined pathways of support before and after social care involvement in line with the Early Help Strategy
- **Provide access to social work advice and guidance to Early Help practitioners** in order that referrals to social care are appropriate and risk management in Early Help is good

- **Work with adult services to address unmet needs in the adult population** that lead to increased risks to children, particularly where the level of these risks does not require a statutory social care intervention and there is a gap in service provision. The development of an Early Help offer that mirrors that in children's services will support this development.

4.0 Increasing the impact of Children's Social Care involvement

An illustration of the proposed model for the delivery of Social Work functions can be found in 'Appendix 5'.

Nationally we are in a time of change in expectations of Children's Social Care provision, driven by a national commitment to move from what is perceived as an over-prescribed and inflexible system to one that returns the focus to the professional decision-making of qualified social workers. But it is also a system that is highly regulated in which local authorities are often found wanting.

In common with many local authorities and consistent with the findings of the Munro Review, this review concludes that the recent model of social care delivery in Norfolk does not prioritise social workers having enough direct time working with children and families. Focus on rigidity of timescales and statutory prescription alongside issues of the nature of the pathway conspire to impede the development of positive relationships with families that could more effectively achieve the delivery of sustainable change.

Analysis of staff consultation through survey activity and of complaint material tell us that children and their families want social workers to spend more time working directly with them, and parents and carers are concerned that they are insufficiently involved in the decisions about themselves and their children. Social workers themselves also want to be freed to work more directly with families, and to sharpen their skills in a range of techniques that could help those families. This relates to the range of tasks that they feel take them away from working with families – the demands of the electronic case management system – but also to the model of practice employed.

Research indicates that crucial to the effective helping of families and achievement of necessary change was the availability for parents and children of a dependable relationship with at least one authoritative professional who could be trusted to provide reliable information about problems, and help all family members whilst holding the safety of the child as a paramount concern.

Ofsted highlights that in Norfolk children experience too many changes in both social worker and team.

Social work education has focused in recent years on assessment of risk and decision-making regarding whether families provide safe enough care for their children, at the expense of supporting the skills to intervene and generate changes in families' behaviours. However, this review concludes that insufficient support has been given to frontline social work staff to bring about changes in parenting and adult behaviours and in working directly with children and young people themselves.

In addition the business processes that have been used for some time in Children's Social Care – partly as a result of centralisation – have not supported sufficient and efficient frontline engagement with children and their families.

While the unification of a single service will help there are other steps that are required.

4.1 Changing the model of children's social work

We need to change the focus of children's social work intervention to one that:

- (i) Minimises bureaucracy and maximises direct intervention with families that

brings about change

- (ii) Enables children to be safely supported within their families in the community where that is likely to be the best outcome for them
- (iii) Moves from a workforce skilled in assessment and case management to a workforce skilled in directly providing effective and valued help that improves outcomes for children
- (iv) Enables social workers to provide more direct evidence-based interventions for family members, rather than managing cases and supervising risk whilst others deliver the intervention.

The business case development concludes that the framework for taking forward this workforce development is to embed relationship-based practice across our Children's Social Care delivery, including Locality Social Work and Looked after Children's services.

Relationship-based practice prioritises the relationship developed with families as the main vehicle to effect change, informed by an understanding of systems theory.

Adopting a systems-based approach to practice is a fundamental change for practitioners, supervisors and managers. It requires an understanding of how systems interplay and impact on the way in which the family is functioning. Through listening, observing, reflecting, understanding and involving the family a hypothesis is developed on what is going on in a family, based on knowledge of attachment and child development. That hypothesis, underpinned by social work knowledge in attachment, child development and life span development is tested out in supervision where a plan of interventions and support is agreed. The quality of the supervisor / practitioner relationship is crucial to achieving the practice change, alongside good quality supervision and direct observation of practice.

The Signs of Safety model will be adopted to underpin this approach.

4.2 Developing our workforce

This is a significant cultural shift and will require investment in practice and workforce development to embed a different way of working. Adopting a new paradigm for the social work role in Norfolk and delivering the change in practice that we wish to see is reliant on significant development of the workforce at all levels.

Research into management of change in social care services, and the experience of other authorities' implementation of practice and cultural change, highlight the significance of managers' ownership and commitment to changed ways of working, and the need for them to be trained and familiar with new methodologies. To implement this model particular emphasis will need to be given to practice managers' understanding of the model, and this should be supported by a leadership development programme to support a systems-based approach.

To support the change we set out in social care practice there is an aligned need to strengthen and widen the supervision framework for social care staff to include group supervision and structured opportunities to reflect on practice. These have been pivotal in other authorities who have successfully implemented change programmes, and go beyond the individual management supervision that is currently provided in Norfolk. Supporting the change in professional practice needs to be led and sustained by confident and capable experts and managers who have the capacity to assist in direct practice judgements.

The development of the workforce and training plan will support this. Also critical though is the nature of Partnership working through the NSCB, in this regard the partnership group made up of the agencies represented as defined by working together have also signed up to the adoption of Signs of safety.

Through making these fundamental changes in what we expect of our social care workforce, of our partner agencies and in our work with children and families, we should see more families with significant need helped, through expert social care input, to make the changes required to enable them to look after their children well and in a way that allows them to thrive.

We will also enable sharper and quicker decision-making when the signs are strong that parents will not be able to make those changes and local authority care is necessary for the children involved. We want to achieve more shared management of risk, and importantly allow time in the process for the development of more collaborative and respectful working where change is possible, and family members are able to contribute to finding a solution to the presenting difficulties.

4.3 Minimising bureaucracy

The revisions to the Care First electronic social care recording system have made significant improvements to this working tool for staff. However the lack of local accountability for business support has not assisted with making local priorities for work. The restructure must address this.

When staff in Norfolk have been asked how they would want to make changes to their work they frequently cite the overload of bureaucracy and an IT and physical infrastructure that does not support their professional practice.

Within Norfolk the development of Digital Norfolk Ambition (DNA) will need to be considered in order to ensure that the perspective has been broadened to encompass the wider range of information recording, encompassing both Early Help and social care services, so that the entire 'journey' for a child can ultimately be captured on a single case recording system.

This includes Early Help services provided by our statutory partners and by commissioned providers from voluntary, community, and private sectors. As thinking develops within the DNA project it will be important that technology and information systems are driven by the business needs of services, rather than vice versa, and ongoing close involvement of operational staff will be key to success in terms of supporting better professional practice. There are also significant opportunities within the corporate mobile working programme that could assist in increasing the proportion of time that staff in social care services spend working directly with families, rather than travelling to and from central office locations where they currently need to undertake case recording and investigations.

It will be important that Children's Social Care services play a full role in developing business use cases within the programme, and that advantage is taken of these opportunities in the next two years.

4.4 Deploying our workforce well

Most importantly in this review it has been considered whether the structures of Children's Social Care services in Norfolk are fit for purpose, and in particular can effectively deliver the relationship-based model of practice. The review has examined in detail the structure of service delivery, the commissioning arrangements, and the practice model used.

In successful high performing authorities there is no common operating structure that can be identified as key to the success of these authorities, but common features of these authorities have informed this review.

The common features are:

- (i) A single head of social work services
- (ii) An overarching and shared practice philosophy
- (iii) The management task in social care is well understood
- (iv) A strong performance culture
- (v) Staff are deployed where the need is greatest

There is a clarity from the authorities on what they considered good social work practice coupled with an investment in training for social care staff in systemic approaches to their work to develop a shared language and set of interventions.

'Signs of Safety' will help with this but it needs something more fundamental. In order to move to this way of working in Norfolk a number of revisions need to happen.

The most significant change involves the development of a unified social work service, rather than the current model of a children in need service and a safeguarding service. It is proposed therefore to develop a locality based model, with a separate assessment function. This will cover all of the local authority's statutory responsibility to children in need of social care.

In addition, the proposals also set out the recommendation to incorporate the current arrangements for specialist therapeutic assessment undertaken by social workers in other parts of Children's Services and disperse this into locality social work teams.

The first point of contact for all professional contact will be through the strengthened MASH arrangements which will act as the decision point for professional decision making to social care assessment or early help

To support the development of relationship-based practice the deployment of social work expertise needs to minimise handover points, where the team and staff members working with a child and their family changes.

The business case has explored the option to reduce handover of cases between teams, the current structure of the service creates various points where the social worker working with a family changes, the proposed new arrangements will reduce this. One of these points of handover is particularly appropriate as it happens when a child becomes Looked After, and the focus of the social care input shifts, on the whole, to identifying the best options for their permanent care away from their birth family.

The service for Looked After children will be delivered on the basis of six localities, highlighted earlier and modelled on the existing District council boundaries, with the exception of Norwich which will be aligned with Broadland to mirror the housing planning area.

4.5 Changing processes to focus more clearly on outcomes for children

As part of the revised approach to social work the Authority will use the opportunity to move towards a Single Assessment framework.

The Single Assessment framework, in terms of a child's journey through social care services, is replacement of the previous assessment process and model with an approach that is more efficient and effective, and more in line with the empowered practice we need to see from our frontline teams.

The Business case supports the replacement of the previous two-stage assessment with a single assessment episode that removes duplication and the potential for different social workers undertaking each stage. This responds to the view expressed by staff but also to feedback from families and stakeholders who felt that lack of consistency of social worker input and changes of worker impair the support families receive.

The model which has been implemented in a number of Authorities is a single, proportionate assessment. It combines the aspects of assessment from the previous processes within one document and assessment episode, and supports professional judgement over the depth of assessment required and the appropriate duration in which to do that assessment. It is expected that the same social worker will see through the whole assessment episode.

The model includes safeguards to avoid drift, including the manager providing an assessment plan and indicative timescale at the beginning of the assessment to ensure that families are assessed in a timely way and that an initial view is reached within approximately 10 working days; whilst allowing the flexibility for workers, in consultation with their managers, to judge the right approach for different families. This also increases the possibility of joint assessment with other agencies involved, perhaps the referring agency, allowing more time to organise this and agree it with parents. The model also allows for the fluidity of providing support alongside assessment.

There is a clear expectation that every assessment leads to an outcome focused plan developed with the family if a need for on-going support either from social care or early help services is identified.

The second process change proposed applies should children or young people be considered to need a statutory Child Protection Plan as a result of the Family Assessment. In analysing the processes in place for planning for children's safety service managers and stakeholders have expressed concern that Child Protection Plans were not sufficiently outcome-focused and could, at their worst, tend towards a list of tasks for the family or other to complete. This focused the attention of those involved – including families - on inputs rather their impact on a child's safety.

To address this a new outcome-focused Child Protection Plan model is proposed based on nationally recognised Signs of Safety and Strengthening Families Frameworks and is intended to help workers to consider risk management in a different way. The model focuses on engaging families (including wider family and friendship groups) and professionals as part of the overall solution in a plan agreed jointly, and analysing the outcomes needed to indicate that child or young person is safer. This approach not only works better where families engage well but can also better identify non-engagement and whether change is possible for that family.

Using outcome-based plans is a central plank to ensure that the number of children with Child Protection Plans reflects the real need, as plans are more purposeful and timely and progress is more readily measurable.

In authorities that have adopted an approach that is akin to this, feedback suggests that it results in more tangible improvement in the wellbeing and safety of children and young people; that children, families, and professionals better understand the plans and improvements made; and that timescales for change are clearer. Importantly the model also encourages social care staff to move from monitoring to doing – in line with the model of support we seek to develop.

The new model of assessment, better use of robust Children in Need plans, and the more effective delivery of Child Protection Plans have contributed to improved management of risk. In East Sussex the use of outcome-focused plans has also contributed to the significant reduction in care proceedings initiated and admissions to care between 2011-12 as a result of engaging the wider family more effectively and more robust planning for their safety.

4.6 Developing multi-professional specialist assessment and treatment

There will be occasions where it remains necessary to complement the assessment skills and intervention practice of social work staff with additional skills. This allows a better earlier picture of parents' capacity to make changes and quicker action if this isn't likely. It means that the right professional evidence base is available to inform the decision on whether to move to statutory care proceedings and seek alternative care for a child or young person. This is intended to have the effect of reducing the need for care proceedings by more effectively identifying treatment alternatives, reducing the duration of care proceedings as courts are more satisfied with the quality of decision-making, and reduce the volume of external assessments ordered by the court to supplement those provided initially. The commissioning activity within social care will support this approach, particularly through the clinical commissioning function.

4.7 Prioritising permanence for Looked after Children (LAC)

For some children and young people it is in their best interests to live with carers that are not their birth parents. The difficult task of Local Social Care services is to arrive at a judgement on when the care provided by birth parents is not sufficient and cannot be so within a reasonable time period. Those children and young people who need to be looked after by someone else will benefit from a relationship-based model of social work practice as much as those who can safely remain with their birth parents, but we need also to ensure that they have the opportunity of a permanent home as soon as possible.

Children who come in to public care late in their lives have some of the poorest average outcomes of all children and young people as they grow up and as adults, so the quality and security of these placements is key.

In Norfolk performance in relation to LAC has traditionally been poor. Norfolk has twice the number per 10,000 of children who end up in the Looked After system. Not only does this run the risk of poorer outcomes, the cost to the authority detracts from the ability to invest in early help and prevention.

The direction of travel in Norfolk has for some years been to look for permanent alternative options for a child's care from an early stage, although far too many children still drift in the system. We have a well-established Family Group Conferencing service that brings together the wider family and social network of children and their birth parents, and we increasingly find opportunities for children to be looked after by a relative or friend as a safe and secure alternative to foster care or adoption. This is evidenced to enable better outcomes for children who are able to stay within their local areas and support networks, and is legally recognised through Special Guardianship Orders or Residence Orders.

The business case proposes two things to strengthen existing arrangements. Firstly to establish a kinship care service, that supports those families that could care for a family member with support. Secondly to establish a leaving care service to ensure that those young people in care are prepared appropriately and supported through to independence.

These two steps alongside a unified service for children's social care with clear identifiable pathways and good performance management should seek to ensure good timely planning that delivers best outcomes.

Key Consultation Question 8 – Will the development of a new kinship service provide the focused attention needed for children who are being cared for by friends and family or under the auspices of a Special Guardianship Order, and help mitigate breakdown of these placements?

Key Consultation Question 9 – Will the development of a new leaving care service help care leavers transition more successfully to adulthood?

4.8 Recommendations for increasing the impact of Children's Social Care involvement:

- **Establish a new model of social work intervention using the Signs of Safety work that Norfolk has committed to bid for Innovation Funding to support** minimising bureaucracy and maximising direct intervention with families that brings about change through recognition of family strengths giving frontline social workers the skills to work more directly with families, and ensuring the management and supervision capacity and systems to support this
- **Establish a single social work service** operating under a single Assistant Director who will act as the Head of Social Work services
- **Move towards a single Assessment framework with dedicated assessment workers**
- **Procure, alongside Adult Social Care, a new Social Care Information System** as part of a One Council approach to DNA , and seizing opportunities to enable frontline staff to spend more time with families
- **Sustain multi-professional specialist assessment and intervention services** to complement field social work services by delivering specialist support earlier in the child's child protection journey, preventing the need to escalate to court intervention wherever possible, and identifying more quickly those families where parents do not have the capacity to change within the timeframe for the child
- **Develop a kinship care service** to support children and young people to stay in their own families with support wherever possible
- **Continue to prioritise finding permanent homes for children who cannot be looked after by their birth parents**, through expanded use of Special Guardianship Orders, Residence Orders, long-term fostering agreements and adoption.
- **Re-establish a Leaving Care service** to support the independence needs of children and young people leaving the care system.

5.0 Strengthening quality assurance across the inter-agency system

An illustration of the proposed model for the delivery of Performance and Challenge functions (including quality assurance) can be found in 'Appendix 6'.

In order to safely develop a different model of social work delivery and ensure safety within the wider system we need to develop a quality assurance system that goes beyond our current arrangements, responding to national changes and flexibilities but also our local direction of travel. This is not just about accountability within Children's Social Care services but also in the wider safeguarding system through the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). Our arrangements are strengthening and have been supported by the improvement work, and we have established ways of learning from quality assurance work across the system and ensuring continuous improvement. However we are clear that as we change the model of social work and roles within the inter-agency safeguarding system we need to be even better at ensuring quality of practice and decision-making.

In the business case it is clear that from the consequential change, the system we need to develop must respond to the following:

- (i) The greater likelihood of risk being managed within the community where it is judged that remaining in the community is in the best interests of the child
- (ii) Greater professional autonomy and reliance on the skills of individual social workers and their managers to create relationships with families that enable them to change
- (iii) Greater involvement of Early Help and non-Social Care practitioners and services in supporting families facing significant difficulties
- (iv) New inspection arrangements and expectations from Ofsted, including the widening of inspection scope to cover Early Help services provided as part of a child's journey through the safeguarding system.

Quality assurance of our safeguarding practice is a shared responsibility between operational services across agencies, but this is supported through a specific set of activity and specific roles as part of our Independent Statutory Services function. Those roles include those of Child Protection Advisors, who chair and oversee Child Protection Conferences, and Independent Reviewing Officers, who provide oversight of plans for LAC.

In addition, this Independent Statutory Services function supports the LSCB to undertake its statutory functions and ensure good inter-agency quality assurance. We have a developing LSCB in Norfolk and good partner engagement in these processes.

We need to develop a Quality Assurance system that has the following key components:

- (i) A published commitment to quality
- (ii) Specifically designed standards derived from national and local standards and

modified by user feedback, findings from research and local learning on weaknesses

- (iii) A commitment to effective management of, and planning for children subject to Child Protection Plans and LAC, including the delivery of an outcome focussed planning framework
- (iv) Robust policy and up to date procedures and guidance that match the standards with good induction, training and support for staff
- (v) Expectations for regular monitoring and review of individual work practice from a range of sources, including user feedback
- (vi) Processes for the systematic collection and analysis of the information gained from the reviews on individual practice to inform review of the whole system. This monitoring and auditing of the system should include, in addition to performance management information, findings from case file audits and inspection processes, users' perspectives and views from frontline practitioners involved in service delivery
- (vii) Processes to ensure that findings from the analysis can be used to inform service development influencing and developing all the key components within the system including the standards, policy, procedures, training and service provision
- (viii) Continued development of a robust and effective dispute resolution process and professional expertise in this area.

To put this system in place there needs to be increased auditing skill and capacity to monitor and review practice across children's services along the whole Continuum of Need in order to inform good practice. The new Ofsted inspection framework will place an emphasis on assessing the effectiveness of Early Help services across the County and across agencies that work with children. We will therefore need to ensure our quality assurance system, including auditing, covers the child's whole journey, and that our auditing capacity and skills within our management structures can address provision across the whole spectrum of services.

The quality assurance performance framework needs to pull together a broader range of information across a number of different areas to ensure a more holistic and robust assessment of the health of early help and social care services.

This includes:

- (i) Monitoring of key performance measures
- (ii) Gathering and analysis of service user feedback
- (iii) Gathering and analysis of feedback from the advocacy service
- (iv) Gathering and analysis of the view of front line practitioners and managers across agencies
- (v) Analysis of complaints
- (vi) Analysis of HR data, vacancies, use of agency staff, turnover, sickness absence and attrition rates
- (vii) The outcomes of audit work and management file audits

- (viii) The outcome of inspections, peer reviews, and internal audits
- (ix) The outcomes of Serious Case Reviews and Independent Management Reviews locally and nationally

Whilst we currently collect and analyse this information the key priority is for us to bring this analysis together frequently and communicate the message clearly across the workforce so that learning feeds directly in to improvement plans across services. Our workforce should understand our quality assurance system and their role within it, and if it is working should be able to identify improvements to our practice that have been made through working in an environment where we are continuously learning from these sources.

A key development opportunity to connect practice with performance is through the development of a Principal Social Worker (PSW) network, with additional PSW capacity to support the development of early help, social care assessment and LAC and to influence practice at the frontline on quality.

Alongside this, if business support is to be accountable to the local arrangements it is important that there is some consistency and quality oversight from the centre. This management capacity will provide a link between QA processes and the procedures that operate locally

5.1 Recommendations for strengthening quality assurance across the safeguarding system:

- **Implement a new children's quality assurance** framework with Norfolk and commissioned services, building on the model that has been critical to the success thus far with the improvement journey. This involves bringing together all services for QA and performance in one service
- **Strengthen the systematic inter-agency quality assurance of practice** across the whole system in partnership with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).
- **Locate Business Support capacity in teams and making them very firmly accountable to the services they support.** This places the responsibility for day to day management, including priority setting, at a team level. While intended to reduce management bureaucracy, it is recognised that there is a need to ensure consistency and quality which will be achieved through the quality assurance role afforded through the new QA structures and function.
- **Develop a stronger client side relationship with shared services** that sets out clearly the service specification, and QA features and operational arrangements for shared services across the council that provide services to children's services in a supportive capacity.

6.0 Ensuring value for money and good commissioning practice

In developing the Business case consideration has been given to a commissioning function that currently sits distinct and separate from the operational and strategic business. This model has not provided the link across to needs analysis nor has it promoted a real sense of outcomes.

In the proposition going forward it is intended to end the current commission model and to embed commissioning practice within the strategic planning of services. This enables the Authorities spend to closely mirror need and to build on the Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA) work led by public health.

It is proposed that the monitoring of contracts and compliance will sit within performance management arrangements.

A key question posed for Norfolk has been whether there are potential alternative forms of service provision and commissioning options for Children's Social Care services. This included exploring social enterprise and mutualisation options, a review into other local authority practices and market options for a range of services, and analysis of current evidence of value for money.

Currently the Children's Social Care area works closely with other departments and commissioners, particularly in Adult Social Care, to maximise the benefit of jointly commissioning services. There is a significant degree of internal commissioning for specialist treatment between Adult Social Care, the NHS and the Children's Services Department and these opportunities will increase with 0-5 and 0-19 commissioning with public health.

In addition there are also procurement mechanisms in place to source best value placements for individual children from independent providers, in particular for Looked After Children. The Department also commissions externally provided advocacy services for children and young people, and supports a range of external delivery of family support services by local voluntary and community sector organisations.

The value for money of Children's Social Care services needs to be seen within the overall resources applied to the safeguarding system and children and young people's care. The best value for money is that which reduces levels of need and therefore avoids future costs, in particular the highest range of costs associated with accommodating children and young people as a corporate parent. In terms of the current context for exploring any alternative delivery models or commissioning approaches the risk of increasing costs needs to be balanced carefully.

6.1 Assessing value for money in LAC placements

For those who do need to become LAC the evidence available suggests that Norfolk has actively reduced unit costs and that the high use of fostering rather than residential placements has supported this.

Following market analysis the Children's Services Department has maintained a mixed economy of provision for LAC, with a focus on building in-house resources in fostering in particular where the unit costs of support are less than through Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs).

There are interesting examples of local authority collaboration in commissioning and procurement of LAC services that have taken place more recently. Reading Borough Council and Hampshire County Council have been involved in a large scale tender exercise for

Independent Foster Agency services alongside eleven other South-East councils - an exercise worth a potential £120m. Across the participating councils a 10% saving has been reported, with Reading reporting a £200K saving against previous spend. Analysis of the CIPFA benchmarking data for participating authorities suggests that these savings may have been possible due to higher previous unit costs than are currently in place in Norfolk, but such opportunities deserve on-going consideration and discussion with other authorities.

6.2 Reviewing alternative service delivery models

The business case also considered a review of the external commissioning options in relation to a range of services within the Children's Social Care area, based on the analysis of the review on the needs that services should be addressing and the outcomes we are seeking. This was inevitable as an approach to improvement. In the development of this review consideration was given to the commissioning experiences of twelve different local authorities, including their overall commissioning models, interest in social enterprise or staff-led mutual organisation, and the contracting of services to external providers.

In summary, the main messages from our contact with other authorities were:

- (i) Local authorities identified similar benefits both for external commissioning and retaining services in-house. These included cost benefits, services being tailored to meet demand, robust monitoring, and having more control of the service
- (ii) Local authorities who commission services externally also reported specific benefits, including supporting voluntary and community sector delivery, and services being received better by families because of their independence from the local authority
- (iii) Local authorities who have kept their services in-house reported a perception of less risk in terms of meeting statutory duties, and more flexibility to deploy services against changes in demand
- (iv) No responding local authorities had sought or were seeking to externally commission or spin off core statutory social care functions such as statutory assessment of children and families, oversight and implementation of Child Protection Plans, and care proceedings
- (v) Some local authorities were looking at bringing currently externally commissioned services back in-house in order to integrate the services with others delivered directly, or to reduce the cost base and trade with other local authorities
- (vi) Local authority colleagues shared the view that the risks of external commissioning of most children's social care functions are significant, particularly in a challenging financial environment, and need to be carefully assessed. In the context of Child Protection there are particular potential pitfalls in distancing the provision of services from those ultimately holding statutory accountability

The review concludes that there are no clear areas of social care service delivery where externally commissioning currently internal provision on a single authority basis is appropriate at this time. This is particularly important given the improvement journey. This conclusion is based on:

- (i) A lack of evidence of a market nationally or locally to deliver statutory Child Protection activities, and the inherent and complex risks in this approach
- (ii) A lack of evidence of any greater success in financial and outcome terms of those discrete areas of service that other authorities externally commission, and the trend for those authorities to be considering in-house alternatives
- (iii) The need to deliver changes in practice and systems in line with the revised structures in relatively short timescales, and a view that the internal commissioning mechanisms that we have are capable of delivering these
- (iv) The risks of too rigid a deployment of staffing and financial resources through external contracting in a period where we are changing the pattern of demand for different services
- (v) The experiences of current services areas that commission from both in-house and external provision in terms of value for money and the market offer at this time.

6.3 Developing in-house services

That said, it is critical that in house services deliver improved performance for children. If they do not, then the Authority must consider the position with regard to those services that have underperformed for some time. This includes the delivery of services to Looked after children.

Accurate unit-cost benchmarking exercises and careful analysis of alternatives should continue to support the achievement of best value in choosing between internal and external providers where there is a choice, and choosing the appropriate scale of internal provision. In line with findings from the areas it seems that some of our in-house services might fruitfully be offered to other local authorities on an income generation basis. This is not possible though at this time when recovery and improvement remains fragile.

6.4 Recommendations for increasing positive impact across all services:

- **Commission services that are aligned and managed by the strategic leadership of the Business area** – This includes making commissioning much more accountable to service needs and to ensure that performance is appropriately monitored
- **Plan and deliver services using the District footprint** – Norfolk is a large county, will significant variation; services will therefore be aligned to need. The opportunities for joint commissioning with District colleagues and with the CCGs will be fully exploited.

6.5 Recommendations for ensuring value for money and good commissioning practice:

- **Pursue joint commissioning approaches with other local authorities** – for example with our Eastern Region partners – to identify where there is mutual interest in a particular service area and where this will contribute to the financial sustainability of the system and ensure good outcomes for children and young people
- **Continue development of in-house provider services**, specifically for specialist assessment, residential, adoption and fostering services, to manage the market and

costs effectively and give a choice of provision, based on ongoing unit cost comparison

- **Develop the commissioning of services with schools** by working with the schools Forum to address significant gaps in services and to work together to fill those gaps particularly around early help for pupils with special needs and to support young people with emotional wellbeing .

7.0 Consolidating Educational Improvement

An illustration of the proposed model for the delivery of Education, Training and Learning functions can be found in 'Appendix 7'.

Although the Authority now has an effective judgement for school support arrangements, many of the services that support individual pupil performance do not sit with those services that drive school improvement. This is a challenge. The fact is that outcomes for children and how schools perform are inextricably linked. An inclusive school provides a good standard of education for all children as a rule and in Norfolk the approach to inclusion is not uniform.

As the commissioner of school places, the Local Authority has a role in ensuring that the vast majority of children are catered for in their local school. There are too many children not in their local provision, a factor in high transport costs for both mainstream and SEN.

There are a number of key actions for the Authority post Ofsted:

- (i) Tackling district variation
- (ii) Improving outcomes for individual pupils
- (iii) Increasing the proportion of good and outstanding schools
- (iv) Tackling and supporting system leadership

The business case proposition is that a district model of delivery for social care supports improved outcomes for children by promoting collaboration at a local level and by encouraging local partnership. This approach will enhance and improve outcomes for individual children and needs to be mirrored through work with school clusters.

There must also be recognition that 67% of the resources for Children's Services are vested in schools. Honest discussions must be had about how the Direct Schools Grant (DSG), Pupil Premium and cluster money are used to benefit overall outcomes for individual children.

The development of a mature partnership across the education family is critical, particularly in creating an early help offer, but also in relation to raising standards and getting children in the right place to learn.

Key consultation question 10: How do we create a partnership across the Local Authority, teachers and governors which feels equal and that allows open and honest discussion?

7.1 Recommendations for consolidating the Education and Learning service and improving learner outcomes and support to schools:

- **Bring together all services related to the provision of education and learning, under the leadership of one Assistant Director** During this phase of improvement it has been essential to clarify the relationship the Authority has with its schools, particularly in defining what the Authority does and more importantly what it does not do. While this has included a more robust approach to institutions, the needs of individual learner's remains a challenge, this must be clarified to ensure no confusion exists. This will include the Authority no longer providing services that should be provided by schools.
- **Expand the 'virtual school concept' to offer additional support to all vulnerable learners** – There remains too much variation in individual performance across the county, resources must be more appropriately targeted and prioritised to ensure the most vulnerable do not miss out
- **Align the admissions and school place planning functions and maximise new technology opportunities**

8.0 Conclusion

If we are to further improve the service provided across the Norfolk Children's Partnership, and ultimately improve outcomes for Norfolk's children, young people and their families, it is imperative that we provide services which demonstrate a positive impact, clear value and are organised in a way which makes sense for the people who use them. We will not achieve this unless we reshape our current offer.

This business case is the culmination of an extended period of activity, research and engagement and has been a huge exercise in co-production. In addition to the specific reviews and activities detailed in Section 2.3, it has taken on board views and ideas from Children's Services staff, elected members, our partners and families.

Ongoing co-production will be key to success and the views of staff and partners are invited and will be sought during our 'Getting in Shape' consultation which will run until the end of October.

Getting in Shape – Appendices

Part of the Consultation on

A New Shape for Norfolk Children's Services

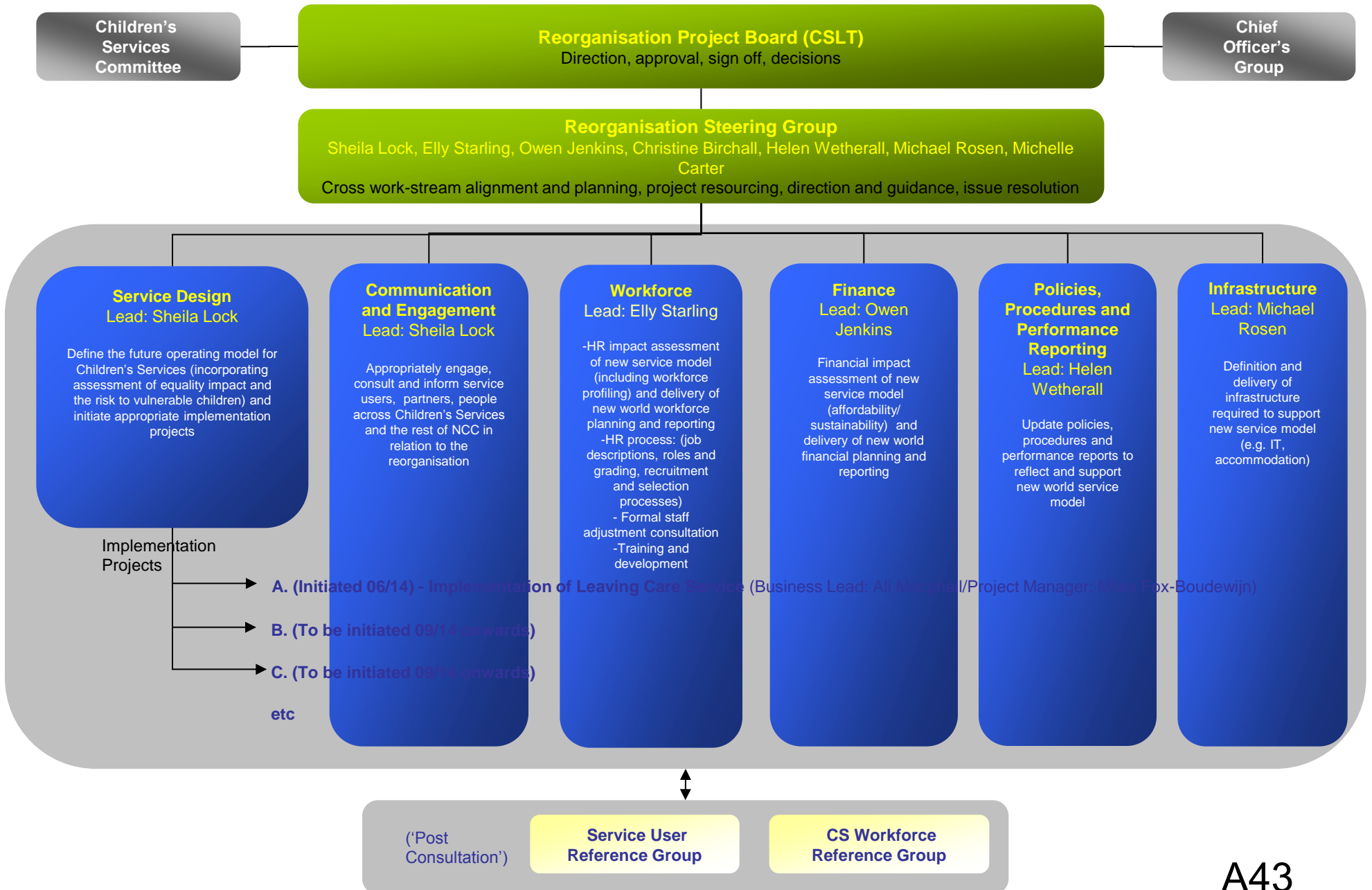
September 2014

Improving Times

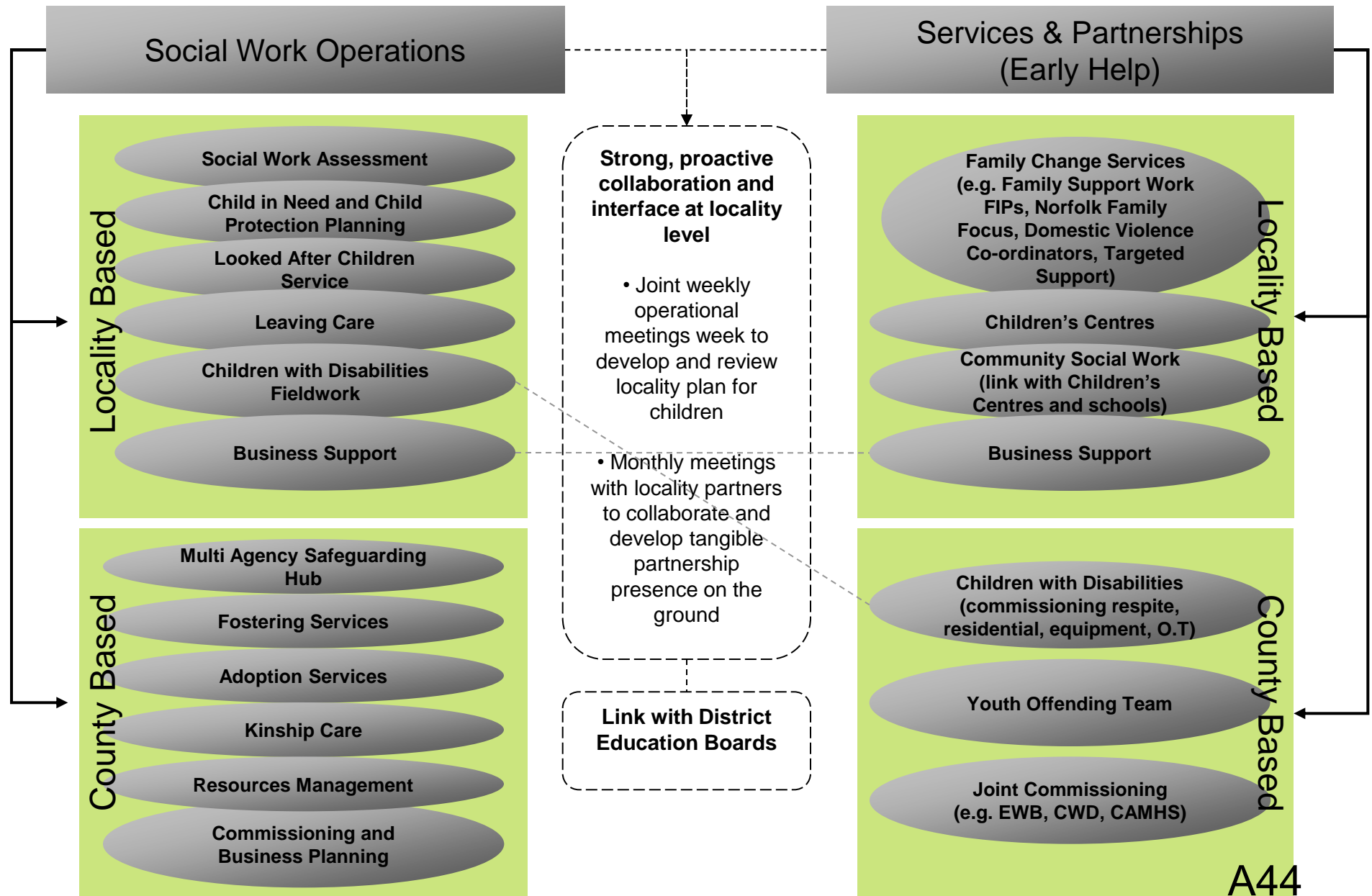


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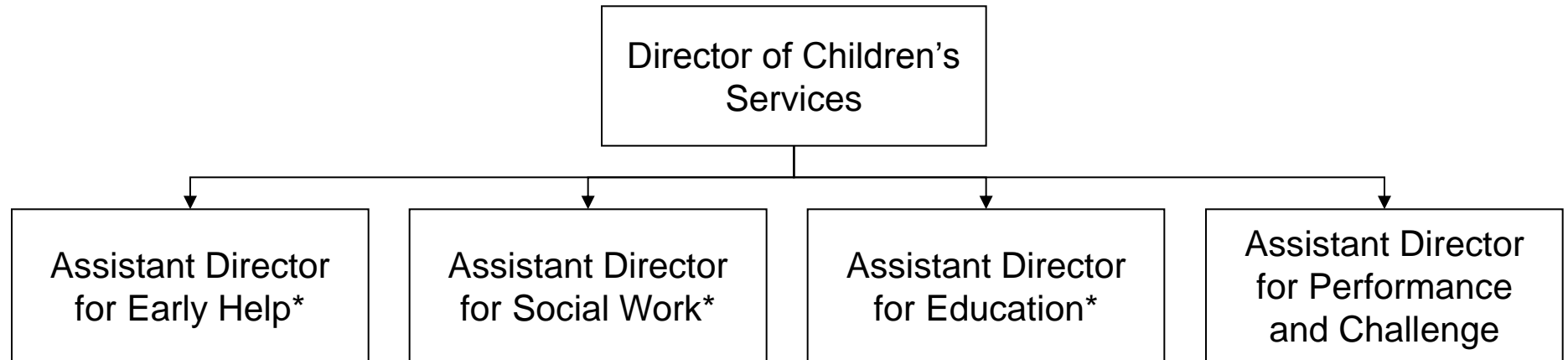
Appendix 1 – Programme Methodology



Appendix 2 – How a New Shape Locality Will Work

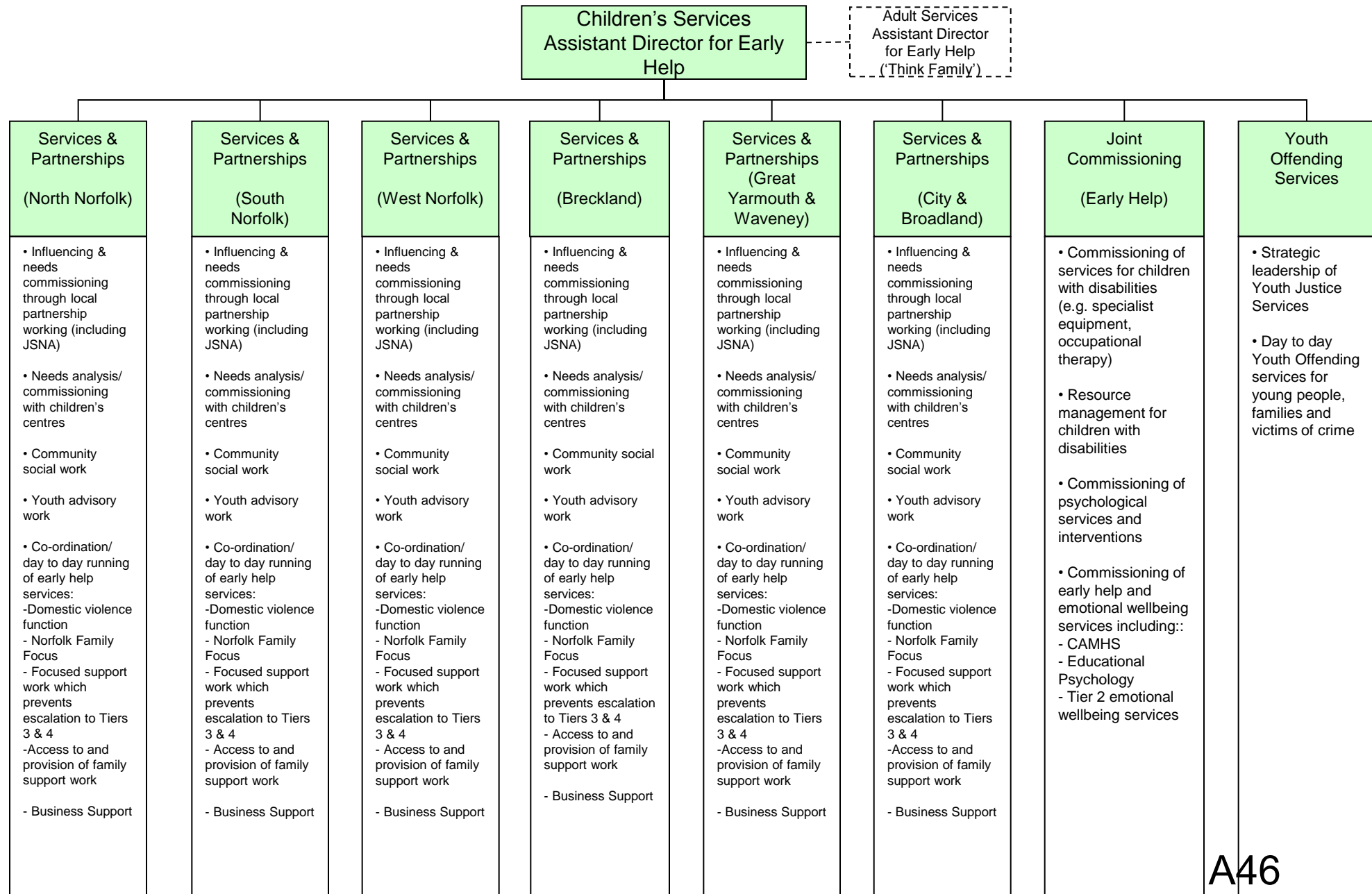


Appendix 3 - New Shape Senior Management Structure

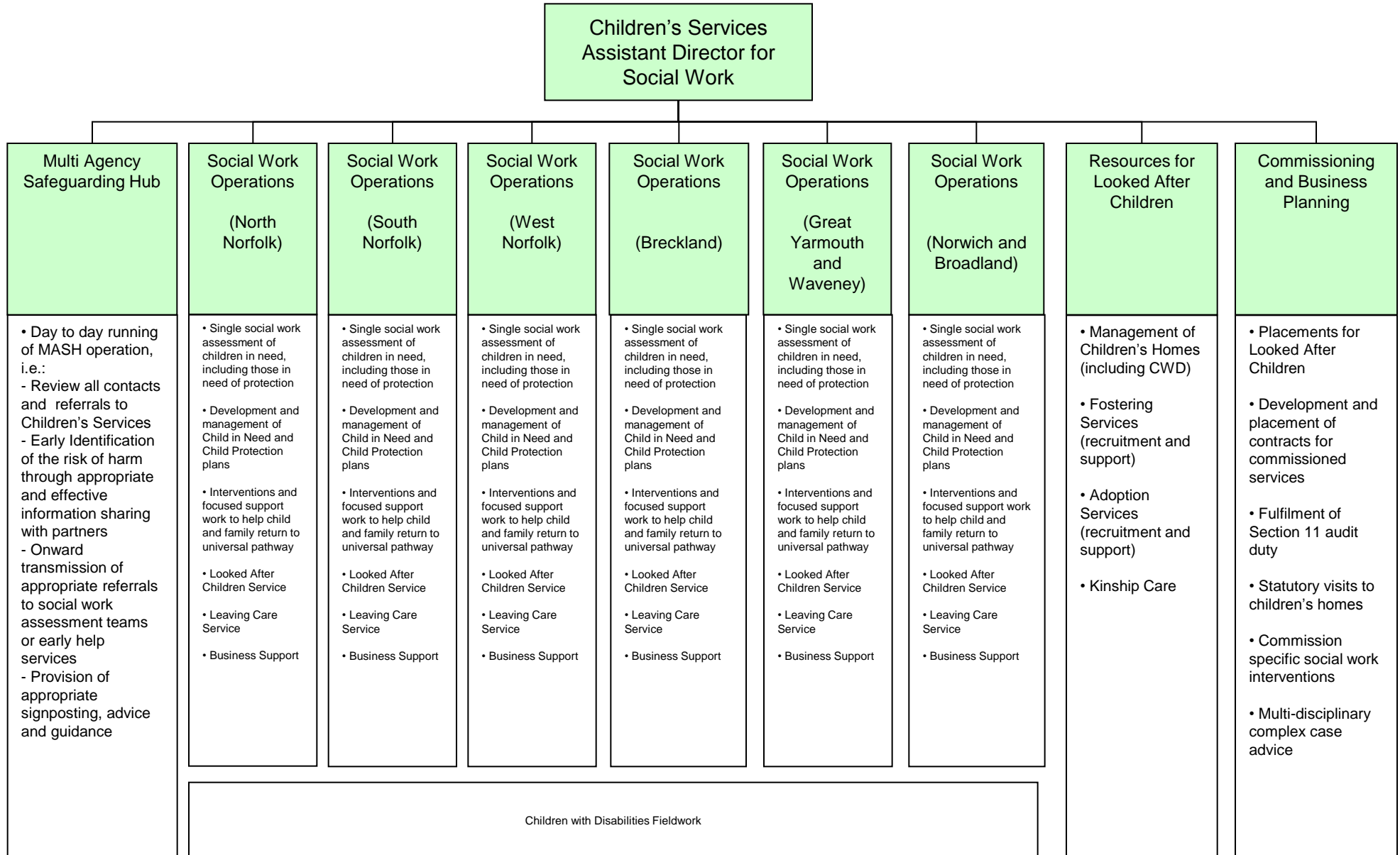


- *A structure and approach to services which better reflects the pathway for children
- Performance and Challenge holds accountability for driving and enabling improvements across all of Children's Services
- Senior management team collectively responsible for the development and delivery of a strategic plan (through appropriate deployment of department and corporate resources) which continuously improves outcomes for Norfolk's children and their families, and is at the same time aligned with corporate strategic priorities

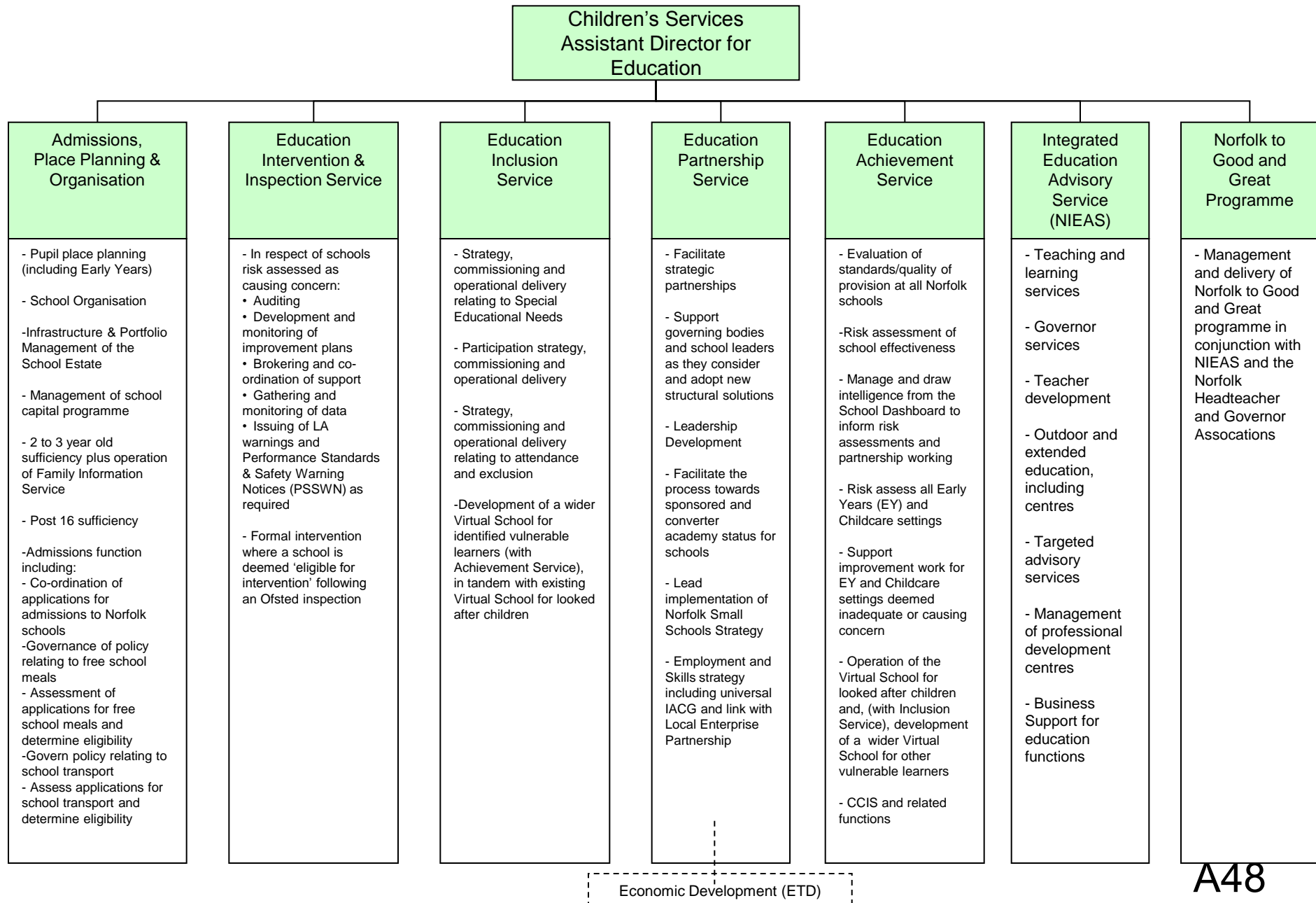
Appendix 4 - Early Help Functions



Appendix 5 - Social Work Functions



Appendix 6 - Education, Training and Learning Functions



Appendix 7 - Performance and Challenge Functions

