Digital Innovation and Efficiency Commitee

Report title:	Use of Technology in Education
Date of meeting:	14th November 2018
Responsible Chief Officer:	Simon George – Executive Director, Finance and Commercial Services Sara Tough – Executive Director, Children's Service

Strategic impact

The Norfolk County Council Strategy 2018-21 recognises that we need to transform the way we work to keep up with changing demands and better ways of working. With an increase of over 40,000 homes a year planned for Norfolk, the County's population is forecast to grow to be more than a million in twenty years' time. With this growth, more school places will be needed with an estimated 9% increase and the current trend of increased children with special needs who require learning support is set to grow further.

This proposal focuses on:

1) Making best use of digital technology to increase engagement with parents to provide information and decisions quicker
2) Improving our customer journey, with reduced number of handoffs and login details
3) Continuing to build on the transformation programmes already under way in Children Services
4) Enhancing the NCC core system already in place to ensure value for money and growth for the future demands
5) Reviewing our internal processes to ensure efficiency savings and adopting to customer changing digital behaviours
6) Improved data quality for children services
7) Reduction in number of customer complaints

Executive summary

Synergy is NCC's Children Services' Education case management system used since 2000. It is a core system for NCC and its availability and functionality are business critical to provide information about Admissions, Free School Meals, Family Information Service, Special Education Needs and Pupil Support Services. It currently has 450 NCC users and a number of children's centre users. The growth of the population and demands on this service is set to rise, but unfortunately there is no expected growth for Children Services' budget so transforming the way we work needs to be reviewed.

There is a general impression that in recent years the focus on Social Care has meant that the development of Synergy system has been lacking and the efficiency of education services is being adversely affected. The following report outlines examples of where the education team can introduce additional functionality to provide process efficiencies and better interactions with parents thus delivering a more efficient customer journey and outcome for the child.

Recommendations:
Members are asked to review the content provided in this report and to approve the proposal for: 1) **Parent Portal Implementation for 2 Year old funding, Free School Meals and Education Health and Care Plans** 2) **Parent Portal implementation for Children Centres online registrations** 3) **Integration of a parent portal with My Norfolk accounts for Single Sign On phase 1**

1 Proposal (or options)

Parent Portal

The modules mentioned below are additional to the Parent Portal which is already utilised for online admissions applications. Expanding its use within other Education areas provides the parents with a one stop shop for its interaction with NCC and thereby improving their customer journey with us. There are currently 37,000 active accounts on the parent portal and we are estimating this will increase to approx. 100,000 active accounts with the introduction of this proposal.
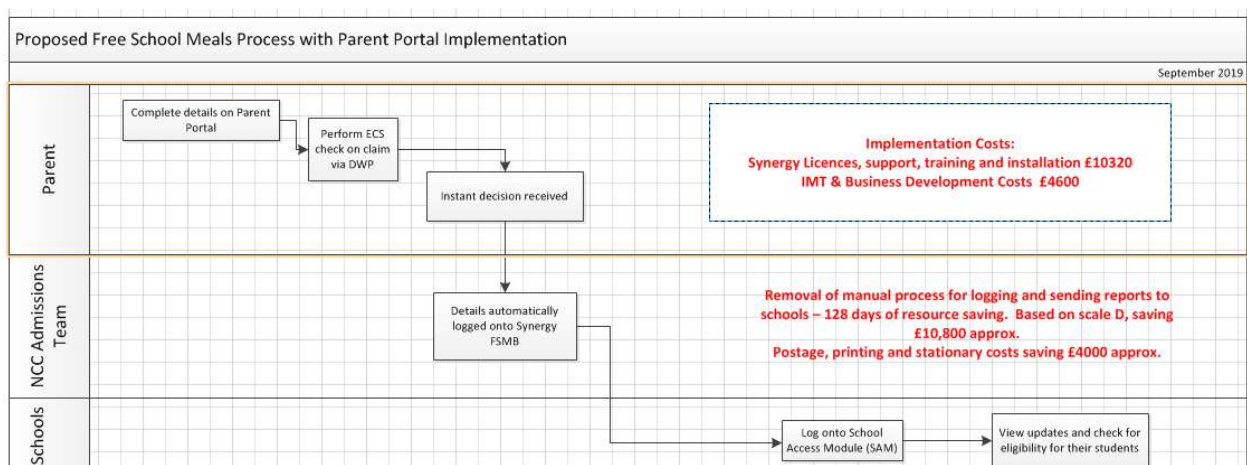
1.1.1 2 Year Old Funding

This module enables the parent to check if they are eligible for 2 year old funding and apply online. This functionality will only be available when the system identifies a 2 year old child linked to the parent, to avoid other people selecting this by mistake. The system is linked directly to the ECS checking system, giving parents an instant decision. Imported directly into the Synergy back end system, this module will reduce the current manual entry process and improve decision times for parents.

This proposal recommends this functionality be available for parents from September 2019 in line with admissions round for 2020/21.

1.1.2 Free School Meals Applications

This module enables parents to apply for Free School Meals at the same time as the admissions process. The module is linked to the ECS checking service for parents to receive an instant decision.

By automatically importing into the system, this module will reduce the manual paper process and subsequent manual entry keying into the Synergy system for NCC staff, thus saving resources and time as demonstrated in the below process flow:


Proposed Free School Meals Process with Parent Portal Implementation

September 2019

Parent

Complete details on Parent Portal → Perform ECS check on claim via DWP → Instant decision received

Implementation Costs:
Synergy Licences, support, training and installation £10320
IMT & Business Development Costs £4600

NCC Admissions Team

Details automatically logged onto Synergy FSMB

Removal of manual process for logging and sending reports to schools – 128 days of resource saving. Based on scale D, saving £10,800 approx.
Postage, printing and stationary costs saving £4000 approx.

Schools

Log onto School Access Module (SAM) → View updates and check for eligibility for their students

This proposal recommends this functionality be available for parents from September 2019 in line with admissions round for 2020/21.

1.1.3 Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP)

The parent and child are a key part of the EHCP. The parent will be able to complete information, be kept up to date with progress and fully collaborate with the development of the plan. By using the information and reports already held by the parent, it is estimated we can reduce the gathering evidence process by five and a half weeks of the current six it takes. Control is placed in the hands of the NCC SEN team so only information they want to display to the parent is published.   By being able to upload the plan onto the portal will enable increased process time, avoid the need for paper copies to be produced and improve data storage/accessibility. This will in-turn allow better efficiency within the team to produce plans within deadlines and increase performance to Norfolk Children.

This proposal recommends this functionality be available for parents from early 2020, due to dependencies on professional portal deliverables during 2019 and the SEND transformation programme.

Revised new process:
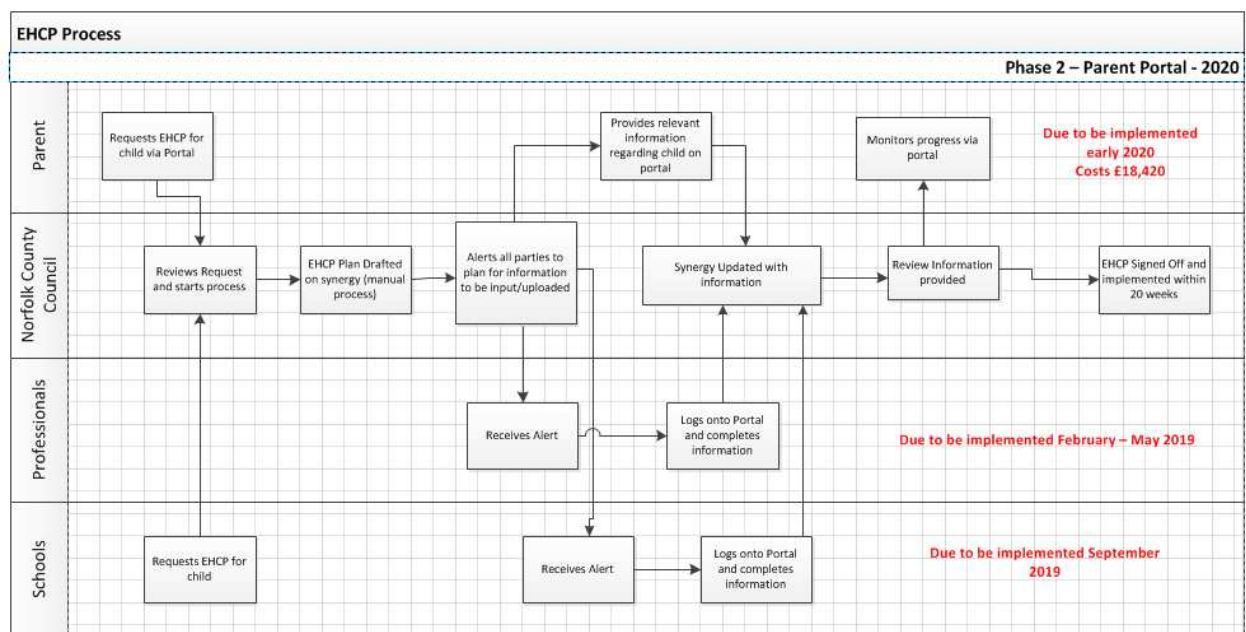
1.1.4 Children Centres Online Registration

Registering with a Children's Centre is currently a paper based exercise at each building but this module will enable the automatic feed into Connect + with the parent details. This module will allow a parent to register at their local children's centre, or one which they wish to go to outside of the outreach area to provide choice and flexibility. This engagement will mean they are more likely to return to the parent portal in the future for 2 year old funding and school admissions.

This proposal recommends this functionality be available for parents from September 2019 in line with parent portal implementation.

1.2 My Norfolk Single Sign On (phase 1)

This module and development work will allow for the parent portal to be accessed via their My Norfolk account to provide a single point of interaction with NCC for all of our services. The proposal for phase 1 is to adopt the same approach as liquid logic of a link

to the parent portal once on the NCC landing page. At this phase there will be no integration with our CRM system to provide details of these transactions under their My Norfolk account, this is to be considered for future development. Existing parent accounts used for admissions will be migrated across to My Norfolk ones.

This proposal recommends this functionality be available for parents from September 2019 in line with the increased parent portal functionality implementation.

2 Evidence

2.1 **Parent Portal**

In 2018, 88% of Primary and 84% of Secondary Admissions applications were submitted via the current Parent Portal. This means that many Norfolk parents are familiar with the functionality of the portal.

2.1.1 **Free School Meals**

NCC receive approx. 4,000 paper applications for free school meals each year as part of the admissions process. Each of these has to be manually logged onto the Synergy system and an ECS check performed.

2.1.2 **2 Year Old Funding**

The DfE Statistics for January 2018 show 2170 children in Norfolk benefited from funded early education.

[Provision for Under 5 tables January 2018](#)

2.1.3 **EHCP**

- Existing SEND transformation programme
- Complaints regarding EHCP received to NCC increased by 82% from 95 to 173 (information from Policy and Resources committee).
- Norfolk are processing only 8% of plans within the 20 week statutory deadline, making us within the bottom 3 on the national local authority league tables.
- The Local SEND offer and the requirement for children to have an EHCP plan in place to secure additional school funding has seen an increase of referrals of approx. 200% in Norfolk, which is higher than the national average.
- We are seeing an increase in the number of parents requesting plans directly, previously 80% came from schools, but now the number of requests come from parents equates to 80%.
- There are currently 6000 EHCP live in the Synergy system, with another 902 currently going through the assessment process.

Links to:

Department for Education Statistics – Statements of SEN and EHC Plans in England 2018
https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statements-of-sen-and-ehc-plans-england-2018

Policy and Resource Committee Annual Reports of Complaints and Complaints
24th September 2018 Meeting – Page 215

2.1.4 **Children Centres Online Registration**

- Norfolk is reported to have 47,000 children aged between 0-5, of which 41,455 are currently registered with one of the 53 children's centre.
- Current consultation regarding Children Centres in Norfolk is likely to increase the demand at centres.

Children Centre consultation documentation
https://norfolk.citizenspace.com/consultation/childrenscentres-2/

2.1.5 **My Norfolk Single Sign On (SSO)**

The multiple customer accounts in use across www.norfolk.gov.uk have proved confusion for some customers. The roadmap for Customer Services transformation looks to join up these accounts as part of our Single Sign On project. This would be via the My Norfolk account and the aim would be to make sign in, password, account profile updates etc. much more consistent and only done once.

3. Financial Implications

	Year 1 costs (incl. Licence, development and implementation)	Year 2 Costs (excl. BAU Support costs)	Cashable Savings	Non-Cashable Benefits
2 Year Old Funding	£11,520.00	£1,000.00	Switch off the current NCC developed EYPP checker on Norfolk.gov.uk Reduction in manual process for applications	Improved and quicker customer journey for parents, with instant decisions
Free School Meals	£14,920.00	£1,000.00	£4000 p.a. postage, printing and stationary costs £10,800 p.a. - 128 days of resource saving by removing manual process	Improved and quicker customer journey for parents, with instant decisions Reduction of paper applications being stored within NCC
Education Health and Care Plans	£18,420.00	£1,000.00	Resource saving for dealing with complaints Reduction in paper	Improved and quicker process for child to get help they require NCC meeting the statutory requirement to deliver plans within 20 weeks No resource saving for Children Services to maintain volume and review of plans Improved data quality and compliance
Children Centres online registration	£13,520.00	£1,000.00	Removal of paper form for registration	Access to a wider area of children centres for parents Beginning of My Norfolk

				account journey
My Norfolk SSO	£14,000.00	£1,000.00	Less than £1000 p.a. - reduction in calls to Customer Services / Children Services regarding logins and passwords for the current admissions portal.	Increased digital interactions with parents through a NCC single gateway for all services Avoids confusion for parents over logins and passwords for multiple accounts
Total	**£72,380.00**	**£5,000**		

4   Issues, risks and innovation

4.1 **Issues:**

- A lack of robust Synergy application support structure is creating a risk in the continuing operation of the system. Increased usage of the application will increase the demand for support and some of the financial savings highlighted will need to be spent on an enhanced support model.
- Where the parent does not have access to the internet at home, they will be encouraged to use public libraries, schools and community groups to complete the process. If this is not possible, we will still receive a small proportion of paper based applications, less than 10% is anticipated.

4.2 **Risks:**

- These proposals are considering low risk as the portal is already being used by the admissions team, and the liquid logic My Norfolk model is being used for the Single Sign On approach. Any lessons learnt from these implementations will be incorporated into this programme of work.
- Staff not fully embracing changes in ways of working that are required. The teams have responded very positively to the recommendations in this report and communication and training of staff are a key deliverable of this proposal to minimise this risk.

4.3 **Innovation:**

- Joined up services between Children Services and Customer Services on My Norfolk implementation to deliver a Single Sign On portal for our customers for all their digital interactions with NCC.
- Ofsted CQC check for SEN services is due to be completed on Norfolk Children Services within the next 2 years. By having a plan of transformation will evidence that we want to improve our services and have a plan available on how we are going to achieve it.
- Removal of current spreadsheets used across many areas of the business by holding the data in the Synergy system will enable the business to produce intelligent reports,

statistical analysis, KPI measures and better predictive analysis that will help inform the future needs for supporting children.
- Building on Children Services transformation journey further

5 Background

5.1 Children Services are undergoing a transformation programme for SEND and other services it provides. Successful implementations and current projects underway include:
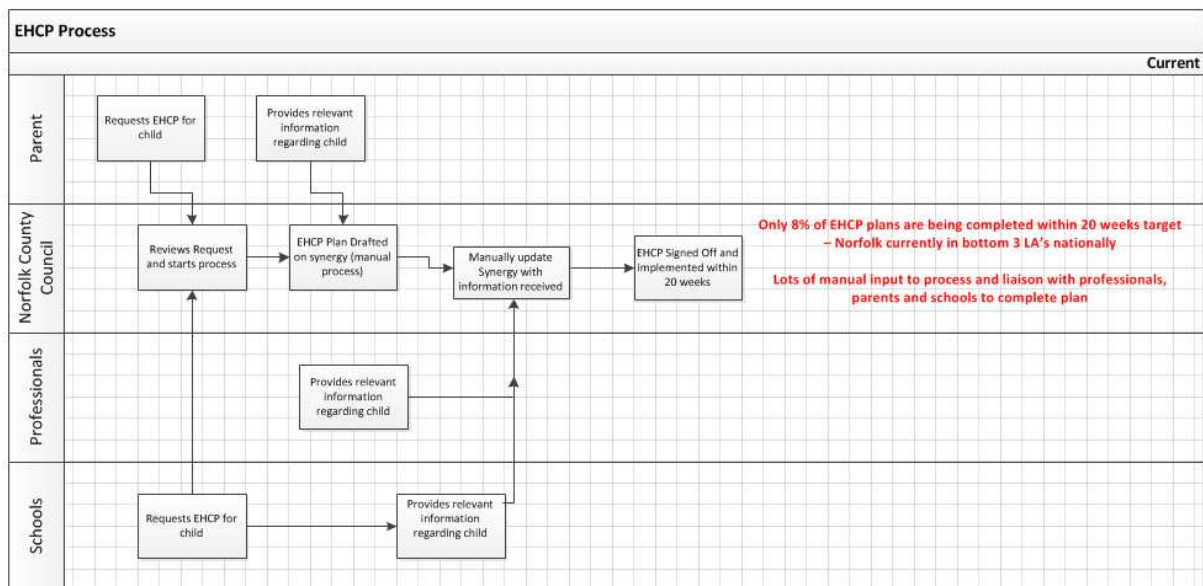- Parent portal implementation for the admissions sign up process, currently used by 37,000 parents to request places in both primary and secondary schools in Norfolk.
- SEND transformation programme – a detailed review has been carried out of the EHCP process which the recommendations are feeding new developments, including the ones mentioned in this proposal.
- Utilising automatic integration tools with Schools' MIS systems to collect real-time attendance and exclusion data within Synergy which reduces our vulnerability as an Authority of not having this accurate up-to-date data.
- Introduction of professional portal for health care officials, child specialist services and School to securely input data directly onto the EHCP plan to improve process time and compliance with GDPR. This is also being explored as an option for schools to log/upload information pertain to prosecutions.
- Encouraging the use of schools to use the School Access Model (SAM) to gain access to information instead of receiving reports from NCC. Currently only 2% of schools use this module and there is an ambitious target to have 90% using it by September 2019.

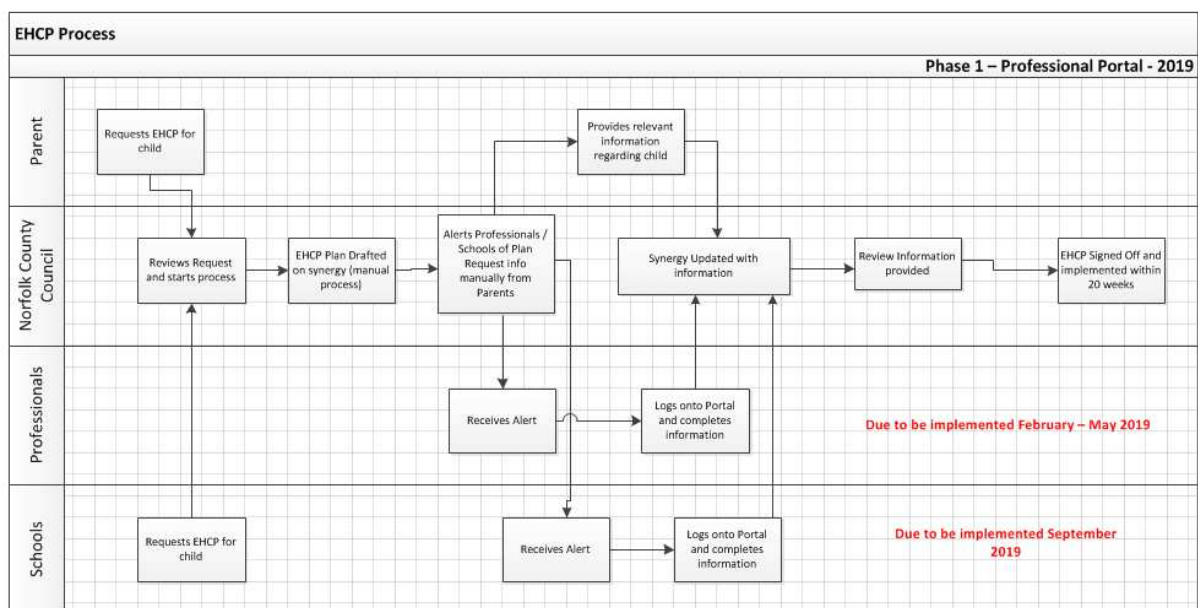5.2 Current Free School Meals Process to be enhanced by the introduction of the parent portal
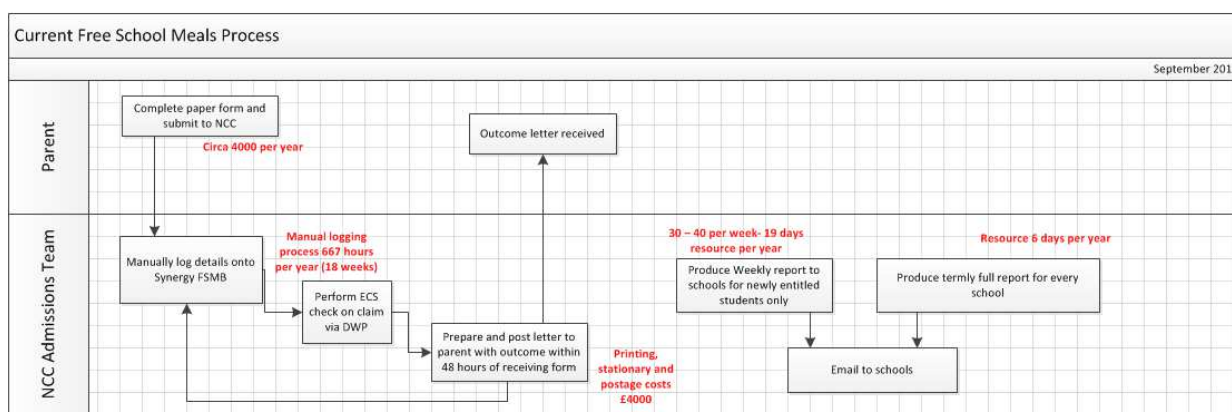
## 5.3 EHCP Plan Process

5.3.1 Current process:

5.3.2 Changes post professional portal implementation during 2019 (this project is currently underway within Children Services and is not part of this proposal but a dependency for EHCP plans on the parent portal).

5.4 Norfolk Synergy and EIS system overview

Below is a picture of how the Synergy system fits together, the boxes indicated in red are the areas that this proposal refers to.

NORFOLK SYNERGY AND EIS - SYSTEM OVERVIEW
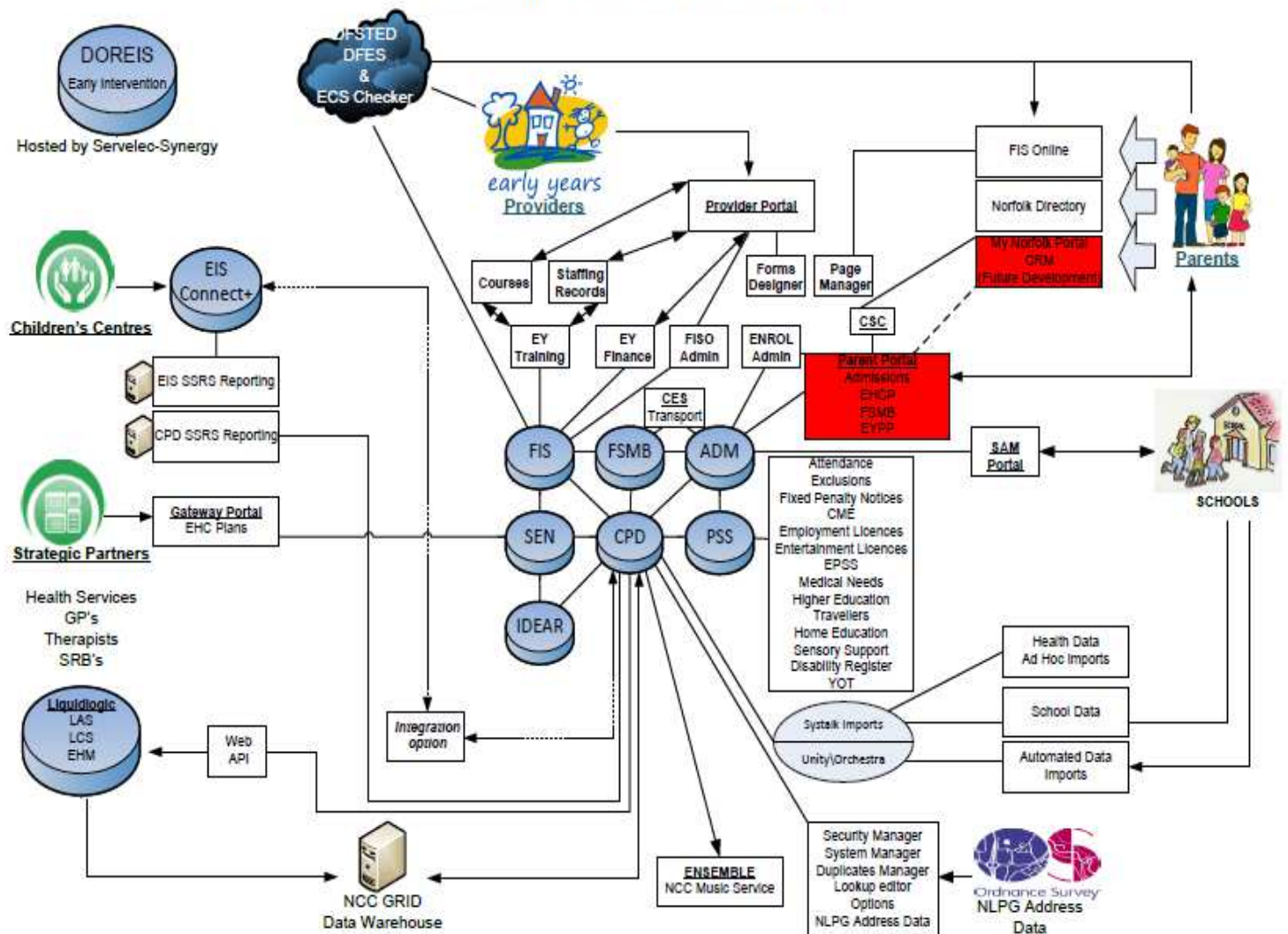
Officer Contact

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

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