

## HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Report

<b>Committee/Panel:</b>	Corporate Parenting Board
<b>Date:</b>	28 January 2021
<b>Title:</b>	Modernising Placement Programme
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Children's Services

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#### **Purpose of this Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Corporate Parenting Board about the Children & Families transformational programme of work, the Modernising Placements Programme (MPP).

#### **Recommendations**

1. That the Board notes the work being undertaken in the Modernising Placements Programme.
2. That an update is provided to the Board in July 2021.

#### **Executive Summary**

3. This report seeks to provide the background to Modernising Placements Programme, setting out the context within which it sits within the Children & Families branch, the current progress achieved and describing the key objectives and milestones of the work to be undertaken.

#### **Contextual information**

4. The Modernising Placements Programme (MPP) commenced in October 2019. The programme is working in partnership with the Children & Families Transforming Social Care Programme (TSC) to help realise the Hampshire County Council (HCC) vision for ensuring that children and young people have the best possible start in life. The focus of TSC is to ensure that more children

can remain safely at home. The focus for MPP is to ensure that when children and young people do come into care, they are provided with the most appropriate placement and support that will meet their needs. Working together, TSC and MPP can ensure that only the right children come into care, and when they do, we are able to provide them with an environment which will give them the best possible care and support that they need to move into adult life.

5. Children in care are one of the most vulnerable groups in society with national and local data showing that their needs are becoming more complex as societal influences change. The cost of care is also the most significant expenditure to Hampshire County Council's (HCC) Children's Services, influenced by market forces including high demand and limited supply in the national 'market' for external provider placements. Placements in Hampshire are a mixed economy between in-house provision and external, usually private, providers. It is a statutory requirement for Children's Services to ensure sufficient placements that meets the needs of its children<sup>1</sup>.
6. Nationally, there continues to be a shortage of placements particularly for children with complex needs and in Hampshire, this challenge is no different. Foster carer approvals in Hampshire have not increased and in parallel, matching complex children alongside each other has led to lower bed occupancy within our residential homes.
7. Over the past 12 months, the programme has undertaken extensive research to capture the challenges we are facing and design and plan services and responses that will help us overcome these. This has included national and international research as well as conversations with other local authorities. A strong driver of MPP is to have the voice of children and families in the development of the new approach. The programme commenced work with a group of care experienced young people in February 2020 as paid 'Expert by Experience' researchers who would design and deliver consultation with young people in care and care leavers. Unfortunately, soon after they commenced their training, the COVID 19 lockdown commenced and this work had to be postponed. The work has recently resumed but will need to be delivered differently from the original plan to ensure that the COVID restrictions can be adhered to. In addition to the voice of children, the programme will also be commissioning research from The Rees Centre to ensure that the voice of families is also part of the development work. This will be beginning in April 2021.
8. MPP has identified the following issues that we need to focus on:
  - Meeting the needs of children with complex needs
  - Increasing the number of HCC foster carers

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<sup>1</sup> Section 22G Children Act 1989

- Increasing the number of children placed in our residential children's homes
  - The need to make improvements for staff recruitment and retention in our residential homes
  - Improving placement stability
  - Responding to the needs of children who require urgent placements
9. The aim of the Modernising Placements Programme is to develop a continuum of care which can provide the right accommodation and support at the right time for our looked after children in Hampshire. Approaches to care need to be more fluid, offering different pathways to children at various points in their childhood that pull on the different skills and experiences of carers and staff in all settings who share a common understanding and language around trauma. This focus will ensure that we have sufficient placement opportunities that are able to offer high quality, flexible, stable and local support to meet the needs of our young people.
10. The programme has secured funding through the Department for Education's (DfE) Partners in Practice Understanding Excellence, a grant given to support innovation and creativity whilst contributing to wider local authority learning. This funding has been used to start some of the work in the programme whilst a business case has been developed for corporate funding. Following detailed discussions alongside the business case, agreement has been reached for MPP to be incorporated into the annual budget report at Cabinet on 9 February 2021, to seek corporate investment from 1 April 2021, based on a case of cost avoidance.
11. The work of the programme is broad and wide ranging with a focus on attracting foster carers to come to Hampshire through an evidence-based, renewed marketing strategy and stay with Hampshire through providing wrap around support and finances to foster carers. There is a strong commitment to increasing the skills and resilience of residential staff through specialist provision, better work life balance and training. Overall, there is a whole department drive to ensure a culture of respect and value across all placement types and services.
12. The specific four service developments proposed in the business case are:
- To simplify foster carer payments
  - To implement Hampshire Hive foster carer networks
  - To deliver trauma informed parenting to all our looked after children
  - To implement an Urgent and Extended Care Service.

## **Foster Carer Payments**

13. This area of work aims to:

- Attract more foster carers with a wider range of experience
- Ensure sufficient recompense for foster carers
- Increase the number of fostering households in Hampshire
- Support carers to care for children with higher needs (older children and children with challenging behaviours)

## **Hampshire Hive Foster Carer Networks**



14. MPP is developing a support network for HCC fostering families that is based around an extended family model for children in care. The bespoke Hampshire Hive model will bring together 6 – 8 fostering households offering mutual support in a natural extended family environment. Each Hive of fostering families will be supported by a Hive carer (an experienced foster carer) who in conjunction with support from the fostering service social workers, will provide coaching, training, social events, flexible telephone support and sleepovers. The aim of the fostering network is to increase the support available to foster carers resulting in increased placement stability, and an increase in foster carers' confidence to support children presenting with challenging behaviours.

## **The Psychological Service and Trauma Informed Parenting**

15. A new psychological service, led by a clinical psychologist, will enhance how looked after children are parented by foster carers and residential care staff. It will support the implementation of trauma informed and therapeutically minded parenting and will provide a consultation service to those involved in caring for children. This will lead to an increase in staff and carers' resilience, confidence and capability to support children with more challenging behaviour.

16. Trauma informed parenting will build on the foundation of the Hampshire Approach that has been successfully rolled out in our social work teams. It is an evidence-based approach that enables carers to:
- Understand the impact of trauma on a child
  - Recognise the signs and symptoms of trauma
  - Respond in a way that supports the child without causing further trauma

It will be rolled out to all children and families' staff so everyone speaks the same language and provides consistency in how our children are parented.

### **The Urgent and Extended Care Service**

17. The Urgent and Extended Care Service has been designed to support young people with very complex needs. The service will deliver urgent care in the form of a 12-week assessment placement, repurposing a children's home, seeking to stabilise children through providing the opportunity to effectively assess their needs and plan a move to a permanent placement. This will be a multi-agency resource and initial discussions with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), CAMHS and Police have been very positive with a clear commitment to support the development.
18. Extended care will be delivered as an outreach service which will support the transition to a permanent placement - including transition back to family (where appropriate) and time-unlimited support to prevent the placement breaking down. The extended care service will also provide support to HCC's other children's homes to prevent placements breaking down, and transition to fostering or supporting living placements where appropriate.
19. The Urgent and Extended Care Service will benefit from the Psychological Service (see above) which will provide consultations and training for staff to help them support, understand and respond to the behaviour of children and their families in a trauma informed way.

### **Finance**

20. A business case has been developed which is supported by the Director of Corporate Resources and due to be presented to Cabinet on 9 February 2021.

### **Performance**

21. A full set of key performance indicators have been established to measure each aspect of the programme. These are being monitored and reviewed with the support of a dashboard. Governance is through the monthly MPP Board, the Children & Families Departmental Management Team (CSDMT) and the Children & Families financial resilience meetings.

## **Consultation and Equalities**

*22. No consultation has been carried out to date. A consultation regarding foster carer payments will be undertaken if the proposal to make changes to payments is agreed.*

## **Conclusions**

23. The Modernising Placements Programme is a substantial three year transformation programme of change building on positive changes already achieved and embedded through the Hampshire Approach and is based on evidence and research. Its aim is to improve the choice and sufficiency of placements available to children in Hampshire's care through increasing the capability and skills of staff and carers, thus creating better stability and outcomes locally.

24. The delivery phase of the programme will commence from 1 April 2021.

25. It is suggested that an update is provided to the Board in July 2021.

**REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:**

**Links to the Strategic Plan**

<b>Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:</b>	yes
<b>People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:</b>	yes
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:</b>	yes
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:</b>	yes

## EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

### 1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

### 2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

See guidance at <http://intranet.hants.gov.uk/equality/equality-assessments.htm>

Insert in full your **Equality Statement** which will either state:

- (a) why you consider that the project/proposal will have a low or no impact on groups with protected characteristics or
- (b) will give details of the identified impacts and potential mitigating actions