

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee:	Children and Families Advisory Panel
Date:	12 October 2021
Title:	Modernising Placements Programme
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Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to introduce the Children & Families Advisory Panel to the Modernising Placements Programme (MPP) and give an update on its current progress.

Recommendations

2. That Panel notes the progress of the programme.
3. That Panel notes the work proposed to expand the wider understanding of shared partnerships, companies, businesses and communities of children in care and the foster carer role, and considers the contribution that Councillors could make in this area.

Executive Summary

4. This report seeks to provide the Panel with an overview and update on the progress of the key developments of the Modernising Placements Programme since corporate funding was agreed in February 2021 and describe the next steps in the timeline.

Contextual information

5. The Modernising Placements Programme is part of the transformation journey for Children's social care, building on and complementing the work completed in Transforming Social Care. Its aim is to ensure that when children come into the care of Hampshire County Council, they are provided with the most appropriate placement and support that will meet their needs and have the same life changes as every other child.
6. The following issues that MPP has been structured to focus on are:
 - Meeting the care needs of children with complex needs.
 - Increasing the number of Hampshire County Council foster carers.
 - 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.
7. Corporate funding was approved by Cabinet in February 2021 with funding secured against the MPP business case.
8. Since this approval, work has focussed on progressing the new developments which has included recruitment to roles and further detailed planning.
9. **The Hampshire Hives**



- 9.1. MPP has developed a support network for HCC fostering families that is based around an extended family model for children in care. 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.

This model has been developed with the support of Hampshire foster carers and brings together 6 – 8 fostering households offering mutual support in a natural extended family environment. Each Hive of fostering families is supported by a Hive Carer Support Worker (an experienced foster carer) who in conjunction with support from the fostering service social workers, provides coaching, training, social events, flexible telephone support and sleepovers.

Six Hive Carer Support Workers were recruited in April 2021 and cohort one of the Hives was launched in May. These are current foster carers with significant experience who have been employed alongside their fostering role. Supporting Hive Carer Support Workers are Hive Link Carers who are available for sleepovers and day care.

The six Hives are currently supporting 80 children in care, 56 fostering families and 23 birth children of foster carers. The Hive Carer Support Workers have been providing a high level of 1:1 support and feedback is overwhelmingly positive. The Hives are also attracting interest for prospective foster carers wanting to foster for Hampshire so to date the objectives that the Hives set out to achieve, are being met.

In response to this success and need from prospective foster carers in assessment, two additional Hives have been agreed in year. Cohort 2 of a further 4 Hives will commence shortly also with the aim of these being in place for April 2022.

10. Paying Foster Carers

The processes the Council use to pay foster carers have been reviewed following foster carer feedback. Foster carers now have access to an online form which they can submit reducing delay that was sometimes experienced through the previous paper-based system. Feedback has been positive from foster carers.

The skills criteria that are applied to the payment that a foster carer receives in addition to the fostering allowance for the child, is being reviewed currently to ensure that foster carers are rewarded for the skills, knowledge, and experience that they have in caring for Hampshire's children. Foster carers will be invited to give their views on this, and it is anticipated that this will be in place before the end of the calendar year.

11. Training Pathway

The foster carer training pathway has been revised and refreshed. Hampshire Approach training will shortly be rolled out to all foster carers. The training pathway has identified and made available shared learning with children's home staff that will bring benefits to all.

12. Foster Carer Approvals

Hampshire needs to grow the number of foster carers approved by the Council to ensure that children are cared for locally and able to maintain relationships with their families and friends and remain at the same school.

The Fostering Hampshire Children marketing strategy has been updated and developed using the learning from the discovery phase of the programme that looked at learning from other agencies and local authorities.

Significant work has been carried out by the Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Team to streamline their processes and ensure that the

customer experience they offer is high quality and engaging. A recent mystery shopper survey which was undertaken as part of the South East Sector Led Improvement Partnership (SESLIP) with a group of south east local authority fostering services, judged Hampshire to be the top performing authority.

The Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Team has received additional investment to bring additional roles and skills including a dedicated Head of Service for two years to establish new approaches and developments to support the required increased recruitment of new foster carers. The new Head of Service started in role on 9 August 2021.

One focus of the work will be on expanding our reach internally through Hampshire County Council and our shared partnerships, with companies and businesses and in the community to expand understanding of the needs of children in care, the role of foster carers and how businesses can support Hampshire Fostering Children and contribute to their corporate social responsibilities.

The Children and Families Advisory Panel are asked to consider what contribution and impact they can make to this area of work?

13. The Psychological Service and Trauma Informed Approach

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.

The Lead Clinical Psychologist will design, deliver and embed Trauma informed parenting across Children's Services and develop the consultation approach. The first two rounds of interviews for this post were unsuccessful but partners in Health are supporting the programme to progress this. In the meantime, recruitment has commenced to a Psychologist role and a Mental Health Coordinator for the residential service (including Urgent Care as described in the next paragraph). The Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is supporting this service financially and also through clinical supervision arrangements.

14. Urgent Care Service

The Urgent 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 Hampshire 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. The Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has agreed funding to embed practitioners from Health

disciplines into the home. Police have been very positive with a clear commitment to support the development and educational pathways will also be established to ensure that children in the home have access to meaningful educational activities.

Recruitment continues to fill the additional roles that the service has created. The service needs to be registered with Ofsted before it can go live as the purpose it will be used for differs from the current registration.

15. Extended Care Service

Extended Care will be delivered as an outreach service which will support the transition for children living in the Urgent Care setting to a permanent placement - including transition back to family (where appropriate) and time-unlimited support to prevent the placement breaking down. Moving between placements can often be an unsettling time for children so continuity of care and additional support will support a higher chance of a child feeling less anxious and parents, carers and staff understanding and being able to support a child in a familiar way to the previous setting.

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.

A Deputy Manager and the first Extended Care Worker for the service have been appointed. The focus of the work will begin within our existing children's homes.

16. Voice of the Child

The views of children are paramount to the development of the services the programme are creating and in determining further work that needs to be undertaken in the service as a whole. A survey was co-produced with children aged 14 to 20 years who have experience of being in care to understand what is important to them. This survey was live between 26 April and 31 May 2021 and was sent out to all social workers and foster carers to encourage completion, also supported by the Independent Reviewing Service.

68 responses were received, 18 from children aged 4 to 7 years and 50 from children aged 8 to 18 years.

The key findings from the survey were:

- Most children in care see their social worker often enough with a preference for face-to-face meetings.
- Children want to understand why they are in care and to be told the truth, using language they can understand.
- Most children wanted the place where they live to stay the same. When things change, such as moving home or changing school,

children would like to have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the new setting before the move happens.

- Children experience a range of negative and positive emotions when coming into care. Just over half received an explanation of why they were coming into care and most of them could understand this information.
- Children aged 16 and over had mixed feelings about moving out of care and living independently, with some feeling that they had sufficient support and some who felt they hadn't.

These findings are now being shared with senior managers and every team to agree the actions that will be taken. A letter has been sent to children thanking them for their response and advising them of the next steps. When actions are agreed, these will also be shared with the children as well as communicated more widely.

17. Voice of the Family

In addition to the views of children, the discovery phase of the programme found little research of what is important to families when their children are in care. The Modernising Placements Programme commissioned research through The Rees Centre, University of Oxford, to undertake a literature review and then engage families of children in Hampshire's care in interviews to understand Hampshire's current practice and support future developments. Interviews were undertaken in July and August 2021 with 17 parents of 16 families. The researchers have advised that some valuable information has been gained for Hampshire within these interviews.

This information is now being analysed with a report anticipated in October 2021.

Finance

18. A business case was approved by Cabinet in February 2021 for the work of the Modernising Placements Programme.
19. Additional funding is also available through the DfE Partners in Practice Understanding Excellence grant.

Performance

20. 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 Steering Group, Children & Families Management Team,

the Children & Families Departmental Management Team (CSDMT) and the Children & Families financial resilience meetings.

Consultation and Equalities

21. *No consultation has been required for the developments to date.*

Conclusions

22. 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.
23. Following the approval of funding, progress has been made to take forward the new service developments with the launch of the Hampshire Hive and significant recruitment activity in the other areas. The voice of children in care is informing the work both of the programme and wider Children & Families work and analysis of families' voices should be available in October.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

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

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

0. 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.

1. 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:

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