



# Children's Services Transformation Update

January 2024



# Children's Services Transformation – Background

- There has been an unprecedented increase in demand nationally and locally since 2020. This includes a 32% increase nationally in children subject to Child Protection Plans in the 10 years to 2019/20.
- Cases referred post pandemic have seen a higher degree of complexity in children and young people's circumstances.
- The [Independent Review of Children's Social Care](#) noted that the current way of working by managing risks, responding to episodic need, and having high thresholds to access help, may be restricting the purpose of social care to 'rescuing' children, and keeping services from meeting the needs of families.
- The current structure of our service creates too many hand-off points and lends itself to process driven case management which does not appropriately support children and young people. Inspection activity and feedback from children, young people and families has been critical of unnecessary hand off points, creating drift and delay for families and resulting in families having to share their story with multiple practitioners.
- Current structures have led to issues with recruitment and retention in certain parts of the service, particularly where staff have carried higher than desirable caseloads contributing to an over-reliance on a high-cost agency workforce and difficulty in maintaining a financially sustainable structure.
- Across the Early Help landscape, Government has introduced the Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme to strengthen multi-agency Family Hubs in line with the levelling up agenda. Family hubs are a place-based way of joining up locally in the planning and delivery of family services bringing services together to improve access, improve the connections between families, professionals, services, and providers, and put relationships at the heart of family support.
- As part of their review of Children's Services in January 2023, iMPower noted there was opportunity to enhance the effectiveness of support provided by improving collaboration through increased system-wide multi-disciplinary ways of working.

# Children's Services Transformation – Background

- We are committed to realising our ambitions to deliver good quality, effective services for children and young people.
- There is opportunity for whole system change and to redefine the support to children and families, including redeveloping our operating model to be more responsive to children's needs and move away from process-led referral pathways.
- Other Local Authorities have already moved to create multi-disciplinary locality-based services and are able to firmly evidence positive outcomes for their children and families, e.g. Hampshire, Wakefield.
- The move away from process-led referral pathways has been endorsed by the Government in their response to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, '[Stable Homes, Built on Love](#)'.
- A strong Early Help strategy and partnership necessary to create change in the system and ensure families that do not require statutory intervention can be supported effectively within communities.
- Service transformation presents the opportunity to rebalance the skills and knowledge of the workforce equitably to ensure children and young people receive the right support from appropriately located and qualified practitioners that meets their needs.
- A locality-based model will in time create a whole-system approach with multi-agency professionals who understand the localised needs and pressures within their communities and effectively influence how the resources are used to positively impact outcomes for children and families in a joined-up way.

# Key Principles for Transformation

Ensure that Children and Young People are at the centre of our thinking and decision-making.

Opportunity to innovate, appropriately address demand and respond to new and emerging threats.

Reduce hand off points, minimise assessments and enable the system to respond to changing risks.

Ensure there is alignment between services and seamless transition at all points of the child's journey.

Introduce and embed a clear practice model and methodology that is all about nurturing relationships with children and families.

Ensure that the most trusted lead professional is working with the child and family.

Support the continuous professional development of staff.

Multi-disciplinary locality-based teams working closer to the communities and supporting effective relationships with partner agencies to enable better outcomes for children.

Ensure there is a balanced system across preventative and statutory services.

Ensure families are supported to access effective early help services, reducing the need for more intrusive interventions.

# Key Workstreams



**The Front Door:** To operate an effective and well resourced 'front door' for children and young people where agencies work effectively together to ensure children and young people get the right support at the right time.



**Early Help:** To have a strengthened and more consistent approach across the partnership that supports the early identification of, and response to, emerging problems that children, young people and their families face.



**Development of Locality teams:** To create locality based cohesive teams of multi-agency professionals enabling responsive services attuned to local need skilled at delivering a range of interventions to children, young people and families at the earliest stage.



**Culture and Workforce:** To attract, retain and develop a workforce that is skilled and motivated coupled with the development of a cultural framework and implementation of a clear practice methodology to improve outcomes for children and young people in Buckinghamshire.



**Strategic Commissioning:** To develop and deliver a Placement Sufficiency Strategy that accurately reflects the current position and clearly articulates the service's plans to increase the availability of provision for our children and young people that meet their needs and provides them with a safe place to live and thrive within Buckinghamshire.

# Transformation Governance

- Children's Services Transformation Board established to oversee progress against transformation priorities.
- Introduction of an Early Help Partnership Board to engage key partners and the voluntary and community sector which is critical to shaping our model.
- Establishing a set of metrics to monitor the impact of change.
- Ensuring effective links with other service transformation activity across the Council.
- Regular updates on progress to Cabinet and the Children's and Education Select Committee as required.
- Dialogue at regular intervals with the Department for Education and Ofsted around Transformation Programme.

# Development of the Front Door, Locality Teams and Family Hubs - Employee consultation

- Over recent months, the service has been developing a new operating model focused on ensuring children and young people benefit from integrated services and seamless transition at all points of their journey.
- Between 16 November 2023 and 15 December 2023, formal consultation with staff took place in relation to the front door, early help pathways, the initial child's journey and prevention of escalating need. The consultation involved employees within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, Family Support Service, Social Care Assessment and Help and Protection Teams.
- This consultation was the initial step in moving to a locality-based, whole-system way of working.
- Transformation at this stage centres on a strong Early Help Partnership to ensure families that do not require statutory intervention can be supported effectively within communities and the introduction of Locality Family Support Teams to ensure children and young people benefit from cohesive teams of skilled, multi-agency professionals provide responsive services attuned to local need skilled at delivering a range of interventions. In addition, work is underway to strengthen the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub as a single point of access for families seeking advice, support and guidance.
- The initial phase will be an alignment of internal services only, but the long-term aim is to secure a more integrated approach with other partner agencies and the voluntary and community sector to bolster the range of support available within a locality. It is anticipated that a fully embedded integrated model of practice will be achievable in time.
- Throughout the consultation period, staff groups engaged positively in the process providing valuable feedback and informing the final model of service delivery.
- The service will implement a new operating model from April 2024.

# General consultation feedback

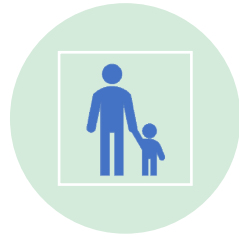
- HR related queries relating to individuals including grading, fixed term contract arrangements, redundancy, personal circumstances etc.
- A desire to understand in more detail the selected locality areas and what future working arrangements may look like.
- Questions regarding pay and grading and role evaluation.
- Queries around roles and responsibilities as set out within the proposed job descriptions.
- Queries around part time and flexible working arrangements as well as locality preferences.
- Clarification on the delivering of level 2 activity and Family Centre operations.
- Ideas and suggestions around system changes and changes to system pathways/practice standards.
- A desire to understand more in relation to demand management within a locality area.
- Reflections on the importance of maintaining consistent practice standards across locality teams and monitoring arrangements that reflect impact of changes for children and young people.
- Reflections on developing a 'one service' culture and practicalities of bringing together Early Help and Social Care services into an integrated arrangement.



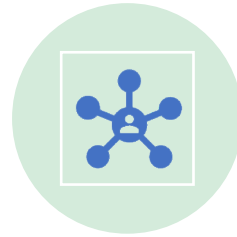
# Locality Family Support Teams



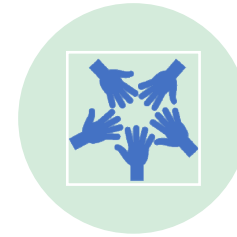
Small, cohesive **teams of skilled, multi-agency professionals** that are attuned to local need and deliver a range of interventions.



A **trusted lead professional** that works with the child and family to ensure the best possible offer of support at the right point in time.



Building of **strong collaboration with local partners**, (including the voluntary and community sector) that can target need variation through locality specific services.



**Reduced hand-offs** between teams that mean families don't need to continually repeat their stories.

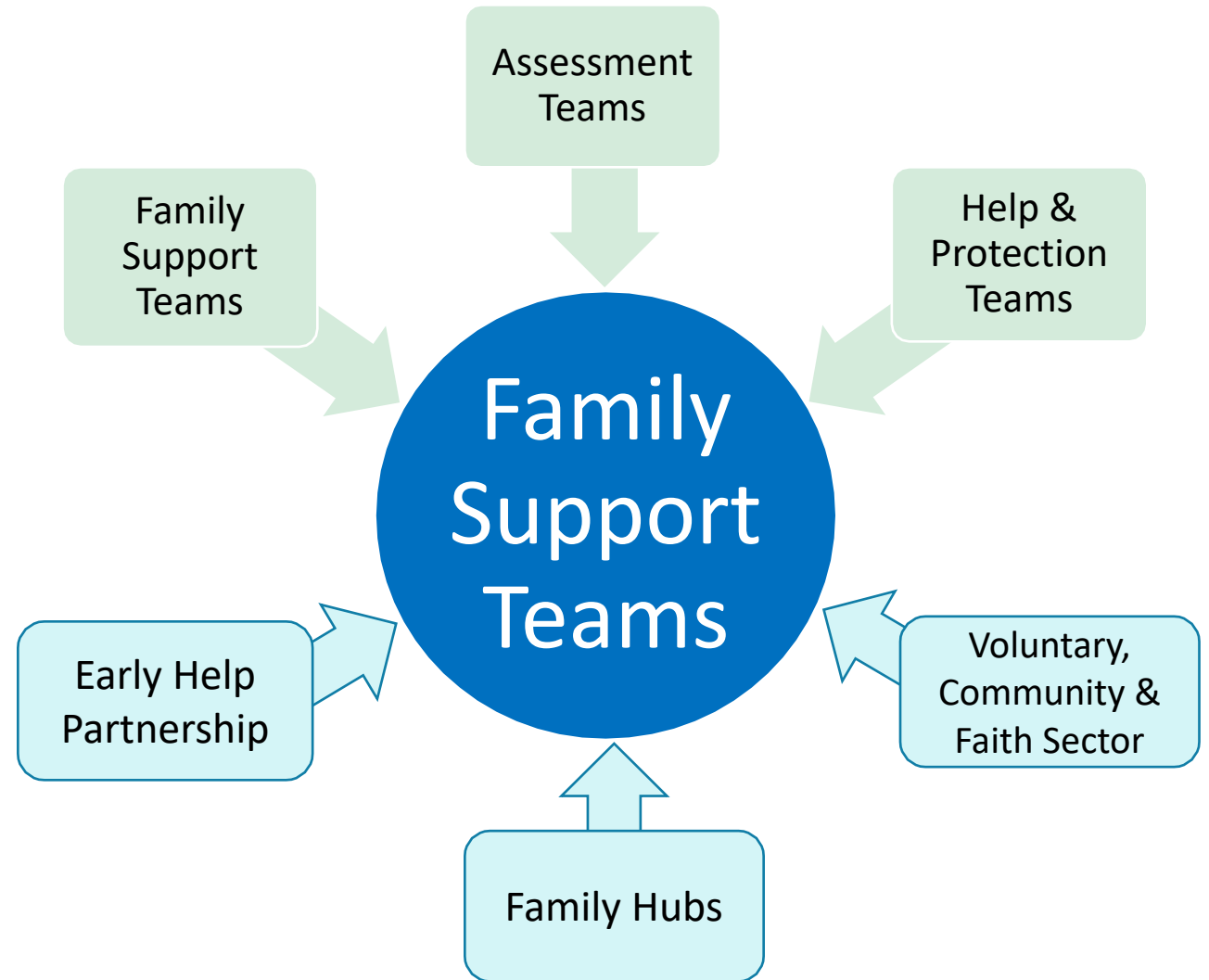


Sense of **one team, one service** leading to enhanced supervision, support and continuous development.

# Locality Family Support Teams

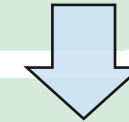
The proposed Locality Family Support Team structure brings together the separately managed case holding practitioners within the Family Support Service, Social Care Assessment and Help and Protection teams into smaller integrated locality-based teams that will undertake child in need, child protection and family support work under a single management structure.

The Family Hub structure will complement and support the Locality Family Support teams to ensure the seamless delivery of services to children, young people and families in need of additional support.

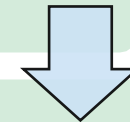


# Family Hubs:

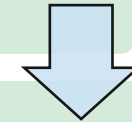
Drive the development of the Family Hub network across a range of agencies, including building partnership capacity, fully utilising community-based provision (including from the voluntary sector) to achieve minimum Family Hub expectations.



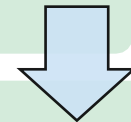
Coordinate and deliver activity within the Family Centre network and ensure provision meets the needs of the local community including the development of joint and partner-led community provision. This includes the delivery of Universal and Level 2 provision across Family Centres/Hubs.



Provide support and ongoing professional development and training to ensure high quality family work within the Council and across partner agencies and the VCS.



Provide advice and support to families on a wide range of issues at universal and level 2, as well as dovetailing into support provided by Locality Family Support teams.



Develop capacity and resilience in the community to enable local people to be able to support each other and resolve issues at the earliest stage with minimal intervention.

## Next steps

- In the lead up to implementation of the new model in April 2024, work is underway to recruit to roles within the new structure and prepare the service for the change in delivery model.
- There is a need to allow time and space for the initial changes to embed and for new ways of working to develop.
- This period allows the time needed to develop the longer-term view of multi-agency locality working, including the contribution of partners, focusing on the impact on children and families and how practitioners from across the entirety of a children's services system can contribute to the refinement of the model.
- Conversations with key partners are underway to find synergies across transformational activity and explore opportunities to better align respective services.
- Other transformation activity across workstreams continues to progress change at pace including the development of the Early Help Partnership and focus on placement sufficiency for children in care.