

Report to: EDUCATION AND ATTAINMENT IMPROVEMENT BOARD

Date: 16 March 2021

Executive Member: Cllr Leanne Feeley - Executive Member for Lifelong Learning, Equalities, Culture and Heritage.
Cllr Bill Fairfoull - Deputy Executive Leader, Children and Families

Reporting Officer: Richard Hancock – Director of Children’s Services

Subject: TAMESIDE AND STOCKPORT PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Report Summary: Tameside and Stockport are neighbouring authorities with a shared ambition of excellent outcomes for the children and young people of each borough. This is centred on a place-based approach that places individuals, families and communities at the heart. Our ultimate aim is to improve outcomes for children and families by delivering the best possible services through challenging times and within diminishing resources, supported through an emphasis on collaboration and partnership.

We believe there are opportunities to do things differently with less and share best practice across traditional boundaries and this work is designed to explore this hypothesis.

Tameside and Stockport have a track record of working successfully together in Childrens Services over the past three years, including through the DfEs Innovation Program and as Partners in Practice.

We believe that now is the time to more fully explore the opportunities that exist to potentially extend and accelerate this partnership. A position given further impetus as a result of the impact of the current pandemic and the wider financial pressures that Local Authorities find themselves in, not only in 2020/21, but for the foreseeable future.

This initial scoping exercise undertaken jointly across, in the first instance both Local Authorities Education and SEND departments, will underpin the development of more detailed options appraisal (where the evidence supports this), which will in turn then be available for consideration through the due governance processes of each Authority.

This work will be underpinned by and seek to support, three of Tameside’s Corporate Themes namely Transformation, Continuous Improvement and Commercialisation.

It will also be informed in its development by the GM Framework for Integrated Public Service Reform and the Greater Manchester Children’s and Young People’s plan 2019-22.

Recommendations:

- (i) That EAIB note the content of this report and the potential opportunities that it presents
- (ii) That EAIB note the proposed arrangements (for an initial period of 2 years) for a single “Director of Education”

position working across both Local Authorities to lead this work.

- (iii) That EAIB note that these proposals will be presented to Executive Cabinet on 24 March for consideration.

Links to Corporate Plan:

This proposal supports three of Tameside's Corporate Themes namely Transformation, Continuous Improvement and Commercialisation

Policy Implications:

It is likely that a number of Policies and associated Procedures will be impacted and those will be identified and appropriate governance completed to consider and agree any changes as may be necessary.

Financial Implications:

(Authorised by the statutory Section 151 Officer & Chief Finance Officer)

It is recommended that a joint financial baseline exercise is carried out for both Tameside and Stockport to enable the cost benefit analysis to evidence the benefit any joint working arrangement proposals.

	Gross Expenditure £000's	Gross Income £000's	Net Budget £000's
Children's Social Care	64,286	(10,288)	53,998
Education	32,898	(26,500)	6,398
Total Children's	97,183	(36,788)	60,395

The council funded budget is currently overspending by £3,840m.

Tameside's DSG is £212.556m which expected to overspend by £2.838m due to pressures on the High Needs allocation. Shared services and joint approach to service delivery may result in savings to support a DSG deficit recovery plan, evidenced financial implications should be explored as part of the proposed partnership approach.

The secondment arrangements would mean some financial savings in relation to the Assistant Director of Education role, which is funded from DSG grant, these funds may be needed to support any backfill arrangements.

The legal responsibility for sound financial planning and sustainability will continue to be the responsibility of the separate Section 151 Officers of the respective organisations.

Legal Implications:

(Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

This report sets out the ambition to explore possible models of partnership working with Stockport Council to deliver quality services and deliver efficiencies.

The first step will be to undertake an options appraisal both in terms of the scope of any partnership and the model for delivery. The models to be explored will range from an informal collaborative working arrangement to a formal shared services arrangement.

These options will include an assessment of the delivery of statutory duties, forms of governance, financial implications, HR especially TUPE and legal vehicles. It will be necessary for that report to set out the methodology for the options appraisal together with a detailed business case in relation to the preferred option.

Risk Management:

The program will be overseen by a Program Board from both LAs including Lead Members, DCSs, finance, legal, HR and school representation. An explicit objective of this programme board will be to initially identify and firm up the areas for collaboration and in doing so quantify the risks, impact and outcomes, including the tangible savings that can be achieved within an agreed timeframe. Then steer proposals through due diligence and appropriate governance including any necessary policy changes and oversee implementation.

Background Information:

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting - Richard Hancock



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Tameside and Stockport are neighbouring authorities with a shared ambition of excellent outcomes for the children and young people of each borough. This is centred on a place-based approach that places individuals, families and communities at the heart. Our ultimate aim is to improve outcomes for children and families by delivering the best possible services through challenging times and within diminishing resources, supported through an emphasis on collaboration and partnership.
- 1.2 Tameside and Stockport have different areas of strength and areas for improvement and recognise that there is a mutually beneficial opportunity for us to each learn from one another to deliver whole system improvements. We strongly believe that there are opportunities to accelerate ambitious plans for transformation across both localities sitting within the Greater Manchester (GM) area, which in turn could positively influence and support the delivery of shared services more widely across the combined authority.
- 1.3 We believe there are opportunities to do things differently with less and share best practice across traditional boundaries and this work is designed to explore this hypothesis.
- 1.4 Tameside and Stockport have a track record of working successfully together in Children's Services over the past three years, including through the DfEs Innovation Program and as Partners in Practice.
- 1.5 We believe that now is the time to more fully explore the opportunities that exist to potentially extend and accelerate this partnership. A position given further impetus as a result of the impact of the current pandemic and the wider financial pressures that Local Authorities find themselves in, not only in 2020/21, but for the foreseeable future. This collaboration therefore provides an opportunity to respond to the challenges of the pandemic and to help deliver on our shared 'build back better' ambitions.
- 1.6 This work will be underpinned by and seek to support, three of Tameside's Corporate Themes namely Transformation, Continuous Improvement and Commercialisation.

2. OUR PROPOSAL IS:

- 2.1 To explore and scope the options available to deliver enhanced and sustainable services to improve the life chances for individuals 0-25 years. This will draw on the experience and learning already gained to develop a model, which aligns with the GM Framework for Integrated Public Service Reform, and the Greater Manchester Children and Young People's plan 2019-22.
- 2.1 This initial scoping exercise undertaken jointly across both councils' education and SEND departments will enable the development of detailed options appraisals. Supported by a strong evidence base this will seek to identify ways to improve services and improve outcomes. This proposal will be subject to the due governance processes of each council.
- 2.2 The ambition is to explore options and present these over the next 12 months, with a view to establishing an agreed new joint operating model to encompass wider areas for collaboration
- 2.3 This work will:
 - **Build** upon the strong foundations of partnership between Stockport and Tameside
 - **Support** a proactive response to the porous borders between each local area and those children crossing the boundaries for settings/schools and care arrangements
 - **Secure** significantly better outcomes for children and young people through sharing and rolling out of best practice and innovation and co-creating solutions to system issues.
 - **Identify** potential economies of scale and savings.

- **Establish** the conditions for further innovation and reform.

- 2.4 That this work is supported and lead by a joint Director of Education working across both LAs. This joint post will lead the current Education/SEND services across both LAs and together with this joint senior Education/SEND team, reporting to and supported by the Program Board, also lead on this work to explore possible models of partnership working between the two LAs. Initially envisaged for a period of circa two years, which it is anticipated will cover the period of exploration, development and presentation of options, the establishment of any agreed model and its implementation.
- 2.5 Further to this proposal it is anticipated that in parallel to this initial scoping work in relation to Education and SEND services, that preliminary work will begin to scope out for Phase 2 exploring potential wider opportunities across Children's Services. Although it is early days this is likely to include areas such as placement commissioning and sufficiency, quality assurance and independent review. These are area areas that deliver challenge, support and services to the core delivery teams within both local authorities.
- 2.6 These proposals will be presented to Executive Cabinet on 24 March for consideration.

3. PROGRAMME PLANNING

- 3.1 The programme will be overseen by a Programme Board from both LAs including Lead Members, DCSs, finance, legal, HR and school representation. An explicit objective of this programme board will be to initially identify and firm up the areas for collaboration including an appropriate options appraisal and in doing so quantify the risks, impact and outcomes, including the tangible savings that can be achieved within an agreed timeframe. Then steer proposals through due diligence and appropriate governance including any necessary policy changes and then oversee implementation.
- 3.2 To support this and to ensure impact can be evaluated, this will be set up as a 2-3 year fixed term arrangement in the first instance, which will be subject to regular review to evidence success before committing beyond this timeframe. The programme will be phased and incremental in its development, with a strong project plan and key milestones.
- 3.3 The programme will have at its core improved outcomes across the lifespan for children and young people, pre-birth to 25, with a strong focus on learning, improvement, co-production and excellence. An outcomes framework will build, and will also be underpinned by a cost benefit analysis to support the evaluation of impact.
- 3.4 There is the potential, not yet confirmed, for Practice Improvement Partner/DfE seed funding to be available to support the set up costs e.g. Program Management and to support any agreed transition.
- 3.5 Should the above not be forthcoming though, it is anticipated that the temporary cost reduction across the two LAs of having one shared senior lead for the duration of the secondment, will be re purposed to ensure the provision of the necessary capacity to support the effective delivery of the project.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The aim of this project is to explore the opportunities that we believe exist to improve outcomes for children and families by delivering the best possible services within diminishing budgets, supported through an emphasis on collaboration and partnership, doing things differently with less and a desire to share best practice across traditional boundaries. This project will fully explore and test out this hypothesis and make proposals accordingly.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 As set out at the front of the report.