

Report to:	JOINT MEETING OF OVERVIEW/EXECUTIVE CABINET
Date:	9 February 2022
Executive Member:	Cllr Leanne Feeley, Executive Member for Lifelong Learning, Equalities, Culture and Heritage
Reporting Officer:	Tim Bowman, Director of Education
Subject:	SHARED SERVICES UPDATE
Report Summary:	<p>To update members on progress with Tameside and Stockport shared services programme which aims 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.</p> <p>The programme aims to explore and realise the opportunities to do things differently to build capacity and share best practice across traditional boundaries.</p>
Recommendations:	To note the progress made so far and the proposal to develop an integrated school improvement team.
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)	<p>The proposed shared service arrangement outlined in this report, is estimated to be affordable within the existing financial envelope with a minor £3,000 saving.</p> <p>Further detailed work now needs to take place with Stockport in relation to the allocation of costs between both authorities and to ensure the costs reflect the activity appropriately for both parties. It is possible that further savings may be achievable once this has taken place.</p>
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	<p>This report provides Members with a helpful overview of the work done to date and the proposed next steps.</p> <p>This report is not seeking approval to establish the integrated schools improvement team as this will be brought forward to Cabinet in due course with advice having been taken from finance, legal and HR</p>
Risk Management:	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 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 Tim Bowman.



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In March 2021, Executive Cabinet agreed to establish an “enhanced partnership” with Stockport Council. This partnership was included to explore and bring forward proposals for a model of integrated service delivery between the two authorities. The partnership was focused on Education and some wider Children’s services. The agreement also established (for an initial period of 2 years) for a single “Director of Education” position working across both local authorities to lead this work.
- 1.2 This report provides the first formal update on progress with this work.

2. UPDATE ON PROGRESS

- 2.1 A shared services programme board has been established with representatives from both councils including lead members, DCSs, finance, human resources and school representation to explore areas for collaboration, scope and options.
- 2.2 The remit of the group is to:
- Oversee and steer the programme of work to explore and scope the options available to deliver enhanced and sustainable services to improve the life chances for individuals 0-25 years.
 - Receive feedback from an initial scoping exercise undertaken jointly across both councils’ education and SEND departments to enable the development of detailed options appraisals.
 - Agree the phasing of this programme and priorities for the first stages of collaboration. To advise and inform more detailed evidence-based proposals and then approve for taking through wider decision-making governance processes of each council.
 - The programme board is advisory and all decisions will be brought through the governance processes of each Council.
- 2.3 The programme board has had three meetings to date. The initial meeting to establish terms of reference, membership, aims and objectives of the scoping exercise; the second to approve recommendations from the scoping exercise. The third meeting receive initial proposals and agree next steps.
- 2.4 We have now completed the initial scoping phase of the work and have made an initial set of proposals to the programme board. Following our recommendations, the board has agreed that there is merit in taking a phased approach to development and implementation of shared services across Stockport and Tameside. As such it is proposed that implementation is phased as follows:
- Phase 1 – 21/22 focused on:
- developing a joint team, with a Head of Service in each borough, responsible for education improvement and partnerships across both authorities
 - quality and improvement hub
 - a shared out of hours service.
- Phase 2 – 22/23 onwards:
- Focus on SEND, Virtual School and School Place Planning
- 2.5 For phase 1, we will firstly explore a model of education improvement and partnerships across both authorities which will increase leadership capacity and to realise opportunities across the breadth of the teams’ responsibilities. The purpose of this work will be to influence early years practice by increasing early years education strategic leadership, building on existing strengths and sharing best practice. We are clear that our teams must

be able to offer support to all schools and settings, regardless of their governance, and ensure that we continue to focus on high quality relationships and partnerships with school and setting leaders. This strengthening of our offer will enable integrated knowledge and local experience to improve services to children and their families.

- 2.6 Secondly, a unique quality, improvement and innovation hub, as a centre of excellence to review and consider all services provided across the two local authorities that support improvement and quality across the children's system, including but not exclusive to, quality in, safeguarding and learning, inspection preparation and income generating external improvement support.
- 2.7 Finally, to consider opportunities for a shared Out of Hours service to maximise capacity and skills across both authorities. This service provides emergency help out of normal office hours staffed by people with a good working knowledge and understanding of health and social care services. The team works in partnership with other professionals and aims to make difficult situations safe and provide emergency social work support to people in crisis.

3. PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP AN INTEGRATED SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM

- 3.1 The initial focus within this proposal is on influencing practice in settings and schools and therefore focuses on strategic and operational leadership in Early Years and begins with the development of the following shared leadership roles:
- Head of Early Years and KS1
 - Lead Childminder Officer
 - Lead officer for QTS (Qualified Teacher Status) work
 - Lead for Early Years Settings (PVI)
- 3.2 Stockport and Tameside share the ambition to develop their strengths in Early Years practice. The shared leadership model provides the opportunity to draw from a larger pool of practitioners, utilising the skills and best practice across the two authorities and nurturing innovation that is created from collaborative working. This should encourage broader thinking, encourage the sharing of ideas and support a culture of mutual challenge which in turn should enable us collectively to develop more creative solutions to common problems.
- 3.3 The roles will be funded by each authority and take account of existing leadership posts. There is still work to do on establishing the ratios of the funding by each borough. Ratios will need to reflect the number of settings and schools in each authority (Stockport has slightly more) as well as the remit of each leadership role. The Early Years employees will continue to serve their own authorities, with the Shared Leadership Team working across both authorities. Job Descriptions for the new roles will be reviewed and updated to reflect the new shared responsibilities. The details about terms and conditions of the joint roles are still to be worked out with the support of HR, but the shared post-holders are likely to remain on their existing terms and conditions.
- 3.4 We also intend to review and update the Job Descriptions of the Head of School Improvement in each area to reflect new shared responsibilities across the two boroughs.
- 3.5 The proposal for shared leadership across the early years teams in Stockport and Tameside will involve some staff currently in post working across both authorities. Whilst these will be new posts with job descriptions developed and evaluated to reflect the changing responsibilities, the posts will be ring-fenced to those currently in post where appropriate. The early years team in Tameside is undergoing a service review and, as part of this, has already been transferred to Education Improvement and Partnerships from Early Help. There is no reduction in the number of posts directly working with settings, and the strategy is to increase posts working directly with schools as funds allow. One officer post is currently vacant so the service will look to convert this to a QTS post to work with Early Years in

schools.

- 3.6 Estimated costs have been prepared and show that these improvements can be funded from within the existing financial envelope with some small savings with high level figures that have been shared by Stockport. Further work is now needed, with Stockport colleagues to work through the detailed information to resolve the precise element of the shared costs to ensure the overall structure is both affordable and can deliver an ongoing saving.
- 3.7 Shared costs are likely, in the first phase, to only include three of the four shared leadership posts as the QTS Lead is not required for the early stages of the structure due to the small scale of the Tameside QTS team. Schools improvement meetings start week commencing 31 January 2022.
- 3.8 Further to the work outlined in 3.5 above, there has been a reduction of Early Years DSG allocation for 2022-23 which requires an overall review of what the grant is being used for within the council, to ensure value for money from all the services funded by this grant. This will need to be done to ensure a pressure is not created on this funding stream, as some of the team in 3.4 are funded from this grant.
- 3.9 A timeline of activity is being prepared along with a paper, if agreed, for February ECG so that implementation can take place between April and September 2022.

4. NEXT STEPS

School Improvement

- 4.1 The process for reviewing governor services will mirror the approach used in the Early Years and will begin in February, starting with an exercise involving the service leaders from both authorities to generate a series of shared proposals.
- 4.2 Review the School Improvement provision in both authorities to understand and identify opportunities for further integration. This is likely to include a new Schools and Education Data Function which Tameside will lead on through the Education Data Lead post.
- 4.3 Ultimately, the ambition is for all these School Improvement services (including the senior leadership in both authorities) to function as an integrated model across two boroughs bringing together opportunities for best practice and collaborative working. This will enable us to further develop effective partnerships both between the two authorities and beyond (for example with Teaching School hubs), pool expertise and collectively bring the highest quality challenge and support to our schools.
- 4.4 Further proposals for the areas in focus for phase 1 are being worked on and detailed information will be brought through the governance of both Stockport and Tameside for discussion.
- 4.5 As further opportunities emerge within the other work streams members will be updated.

Quality, Improvement and Innovation Hub

- 4.6 This work brings shared learning and improvement and at the same time improves our understanding of the context of each council's service offer. This will allow us to develop the scope for a shared lead role whilst ensuring each council has fully functioning service offer which can respond to specific local needs and demand.

Out of Hours Service

- 4.7 The plan is to appoint to the vacant OOH Team Leader post with Stockport as the host authority, the shared post will take a lead role in the review of the two teams.
- 4.8 The detailed proposals based on this review will be brought through governance when the full review is complete.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The aim of this programme is to explore the opportunities that we believe exist to improve outcomes for children and families by delivering the best possible services with diminishing budgets, supported through an emphasis on collaboration and partnerships. This programme is exploring and testing out this hypothesis.
- 5.2 This is careful and deliberate work which although is progressing at a pace, which will allow considered and detailed analysis of the opportunities as it is important that we are satisfied in every case that this is the right thing for the residents of Stockport and Tameside.
- 5.3 A further and more detailed update will be provided to Cabinet in April this year (12 months into the partnership arrangement).

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 As set out at the front of the report.