

**Children's & Young People Scrutiny & Performance Panel
Scrutiny and Performance Panel**

**Agenda
Item No.**

DATE: 20 SEPTEMBER, 2011

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The New Operating Model for Children's Services

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr R Andrew – Children's services

Purpose

To inform the Panel about the New Operating Model.

Introduction

The accompanying Executive Summary and Briefing are intended to provide Panel Members with guidance prior to the presentation to be received at the meeting on 20 September 2011.

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“keep me safe from harm and make my life better for me”

Children's Services New Operating Model

‘Working Smarter by reducing step up, increasing step-down’

June 2011

Executive Summary

“Keeping children and young people safe through strengthening families and their communities”

A radical systems based approach to delivering children's services focused on improving outcomes for children – our primary customers.

There is a growing body of evidence that earlier investment both in terms of age of early support and at the onset of issues is cheaper and more effective than specialist support once problems become complex and entrenched. This was the premise of the Headstart programme in America which became Surestart in the UK and was evidenced by Westminster Council who calculated that for every £1.00 spent at an early stage saved £4.00 later on.

Munro evidenced that an increasingly prescriptive approach to children's services did not make children any safer and indeed caused an expensive malfunctioning system with staff unable to do the job “help people” that they had signed up to do. This new operating model describes the detail of how Walsall intends to buck this trend.

Work has already been undertaken within the social work service at level 3 and the IYPSS service at level 1/2 using systems approaches and better procurement techniques to drive down costs. Part of this has been realised as savings but part is being used to increase our robustness for children who are just, or are in danger of, crossing over from level 2 to level 3 of need. This is based on evidence that once children have been in the social work system for more than 6 weeks the likelihood of a return home diminishes rapidly the longer they stay in the system.

The government has now accepted the Munro recommendations and is also clear that the way to keep children safe and enable them to thrive is to have a strong EARLY HELP OFFER and for those children who require a more intense service that SECONDARY PREVENTION is available.

We know in Walsall our average length of stay in care has increased from 2 ½ to 4 years in the 4 years to 2009/10. Therefore a key way of driving cost out of the system is to either prevent children entering the system, enable those who do to get home earlier and for those children who need alternative parenting to reach permanence earlier. This does not just make economic sense but is about “doing the right thing for children”.

It is critical that we gain control and reduce costs at that end of the system because we know the long term sustainable answer is to strengthen level 1 and level 2 of the system ie. Strengthen parents and their communities enabling them to deal with the key factors, poverty, domestic violence, substance misuse, neglect and abuse which lead to children entering the care system.

This requires a radical new approach not simply the many professionals and voluntary organisations whose key business is children working together in an integrated multi agency manner but a new culture of working with the whole family and community to build capacity to keep children safe and enable them to thrive.

We need to work together as a whole council in order to strengthen our work with the Child (CAPs) and Local Area Partnerships recognising the different strengths and needs of each, to design services that work with and for those partnerships rather than ‘doing to them’ which is where we believe some of the previous programmes lost their focus.

The paper that follows details our journey to date and key milestones on this new operating model for children. It explains how we will reduce the cost of children’s services to the council by £3m and will start to move our resources into prevention to free capacity to empower local people working on local solutions to meet local need.

Children's Service – Working Smarter New Operating Model (NOM)

Briefing Note No 1. Summer 2011

Introduction

As part of the Council's Working Smarter Programme to deliver better outcomes for children, young people and their families, to improve services and reduce duplication, Children's Services has developed a New Operating Model (NOM). This builds on the good practice already been undertaken within the social work service at level 3 of the Child Concern Model and the Integrated Young People's Support Services (IYPSS) at level 1/2 of the Child Concern Model and using systems approaches and better procurement techniques to drive down costs and improve service delivery.

The key driver for the NOM is to **improve the life outcomes** of all children in Walsall whilst reducing overall costs. The key way of driving cost out of the system is to prevent children entering the system, enable those who do enter the system to get home earlier and for those children who need alternative parenting to reach permanence earlier. This does not just make economic sense but is about **"doing the right thing for children"**.

The NOM will also help deliver our Council Corporate Priorities of **'fewer children need to be looked after'** by the council and they stay **in care for less time'** and our Children and Young People Partnership & Directorate Priority to 'Reduce the number of Looked After Children **through effective help when a problem first arises'** and 'Reducing length of stay will **improve life outcomes of looked after children'**.

If you would like any more information or clarifications regarding this Briefing Note please contact; Sally Gamston at gamstons@walsall.gov.uk



Walsall Council

NOM summary

- The New Operating Model (NOM) has been designed to support the drive to improve the life outcomes of all children in Walsall.
- The NOM builds on the existing Child Concern Model, re-focusing resources to provide a robust offer of early help to vulnerable children and coordinating the resources and services delivering secondary prevention.
- The Model establishes 5 key points of focus – 'Steps'. Each 'step' locates a pivotal potential point on a child or young person's journey within the Child Concern Model. The NOM is premised on the impact of focusing resources around these steps to reduce the number of children whose needs become more complex – 'step up', and increasing the number of children whose needs can be met with an offer of early help – 'step down'.
- The NOM also requires service resources to be moved down the levels of the Child Concern Model to ensure early support is accessed when needed.
- The NOM requires and is based on the joining up of all aspects of Children's Services and partners.
- The NOM reflects the joint efforts of the Heads of Service who recognise the need and opportunity presented by the focus the NOM provides, to re-shaping services across traditional boundaries.

Children's Service – Working Smarter New Operating Model (NOM)

Briefing Note No 1. Summer 2011

Key Milestones

July – November 2011	Engage with staff, partners and stakeholders to finalise the NOM
December 2011	NOM approval by Council and partners
April 2012	Area Family Support Service operational
September 2012	NOM fully implemented - Whole system re-design complete

Managing the Change

A NOM Delivery team has been set up with all Children's Service Council Heads of Service and Assistant Directors, Michelle Whiting and Louise Hughes.

Purpose is;

To improve outcomes for children by implementing the Working Smarter New Operating Model in Children's Services through whole system change and ensure £3 million budget reduction by 2014/15.

Progress update

By the middle of August 2011 progress has already been very good:

- Looked After Children numbers have fallen from 520 to 505 – the biggest fall in over 2 years
- Budgets are effectively managed so we are on track to deliver the target for 2014/15
- Staff are enabled to make improvements to service delivery.

These substantial achievements over the last 3 months are due to staff expertise and commitment to improving life outcomes for children and young people and embracing new ways of working.

While we should congratulate ourselves on good work and progress so far, we cannot 'ease off' and we need to keep the momentum going because;

1. We will always meet the needs of children who require public care where it is the best option for them; and these can vary month to month.
2. The number of children with Child Protection Plans has increased and some of them may become Looked After.
3. Our Looked After Children and Child Protection Plan numbers mirror the number of unemployed and this has fallen recently; so the reduction may be due, in part, to demand reduction.

