

# Children’s Trust Joint Committee

8<sup>th</sup> July 2024

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>NCT Transformation and Efficiency Board Update</b>
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<b>Executive Member</b>	Cllr Fiona Baker – Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education, WNC  Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education & Skills, NNC

<b>Key Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Are there public sector equality duty implications?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972</b>	

## List of Appendices

Appendix A T&E Approved Projects Update June 24

### 1. Purpose of Report

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- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to provide an update on Transformation and Efficiency activity that has been agreed at the Transformation and Efficiency Board and work that has commenced in Northamptonshire Children’s Trust relating to improving operational efficiency. All activities relate to improving outcomes for children and young people.

## **2. Executive Summary**

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- 2.1. The Transformation and Efficiency Board was introduced in November 2023 as part of the informal step in arrangements. The remit of the board has three core responsibilities:
  - 2.1.1. Transformation – providing strategic capacity and support to progress core children’s and joint Councils/NCT transformation projects and programme.
  - 2.1.2. Programme Oversight and Management – robust governance, plans and business cases.
  - 2.1.3. Right sourcing – considering/changing the delivery model or commissioning of services.
- 2.2. All are managed with a 3-way shared ownership and oversight of spend, benefits realisation and end user experiences and impacts.
- 2.3. Since the last report there have been two additional meetings of the Transformation Board alongside day-to-day operational support provided by seconded in transformation support.
- 2.4. As set out in Appendix A eight Transformation & Efficiencies business cases have been approved in Wave 1 at a total cost of £1.546m. Two further business cases submitted as part of Wave 2 have received agreement at T&E Board in June 2024 totalling £0.443m.
- 2.5. The remaining Transformation & Efficiencies balance of £1.302m will be retained by each Council as per the Contract Sum with WNC retaining £0.727m (55.84%) & NNC £0.575 (44.16%)
- 2.6.

## **3. Recommendations**

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- 3.1. To note the contents of the report and progress made to date.

## **4. Report Background**

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- 4.1. North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) and West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) are committed to supporting Northamptonshire Children’s Trust (NCT) and ensuring a whole system approach to transformation and efficiency.
- 4.2. Additional capacity provided to NCT has helped to better understand the operations of the Trust and the inter-relationships with both Councils alongside wider partners.
- 4.3. The Transformation and Efficiency Board was created in November 2023 and oversees the Transformation and Efficiency Programme which looks at NCT core transformation as well as Council and NCT transformation activities.

- 4.4. In terms of spend within the NCT, the key significant areas of spend are Placements (approximately 50% of the Trust's budget) and Staffing (30%) with smaller percentages relating to Children's Homes and Adoption (approximately 6.5%).
- 4.5. To develop a comprehensive work programme, the work has been split into six key themes and they also align to the inspection framework supporting the improvement plan for both WNC and NNC's future Ofsted inspections of Children's Services.
- 4.6. **Commissioning and Procurement** – Projects looking at how we deliver services, who delivers services and different models that deliver better outcomes, meet our needs and are more cost effective. This picks up the highest level of spend relating to placements.
- 4.7. **Demand Management and Early Help** – Projects considering how we can reduce, delay or prevent demand and do more to stop escalating need. This picks up the work to help avoid more children and young people going into the Children's Trust and preventing demand as well as looking at how best to manage demand in NCT from front door to fulfilment of services and advice.
- 4.8. **Workforce** – Projects that consider the development and makeup of the workforce. Again, this is one of the higher spending areas.
- 4.9. **Technology and Innovation** - Systems and innovations that can support greater productivity through automation and reduced duplication.
- 4.10. **Operational Efficiency** – Reviewing how we do things to establish areas where we could reduce costs, optimise processes and reduce administrative burdens.
- 4.11. **Policy and Practice** - Consideration of changes in approach, policy or practice interventions to drive improvement.

## **5. Progress on Improvement and Efficiency Activity**

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- 5.1. As set out in Appendix A eight Transformation & Efficiencies business cases have been approved in Wave 1 at a total cost of £1.546m. Two further business cases submitted as part of Wave 2 have received agreement at T&E Board in June 2024 totalling £0.443m.

### **5.2. Commissioning and Procurement Update**

**Alternative Residential Accommodation** - Both Councils have started to identify alternative residential accommodation for all ages of children and young people, including care leavers, that could be added to the current programme of new provision being jointly developed by the Councils and NCT. This supports work on the increasing demands of post 16 and post 18 accommodation needs which has been significant in the past two years. It also looks at the provision of high cost and

specialist placement alternatives such as mother and baby and provision for individual children with very specific needs and requirements.

It is expected that in the autumn of 2024 both Councils will be considering capital bids in relation to the provision of residential accommodation, including the conversion of current stock and the potential of buying suitable properties from the open market.

**Strategic Partnership for Placements** - At Transformation and Efficiency Board in December 2023, it was agreed for NCT to explore the options to enter a long-term contract (until 2030) with one provider as an opportunity to co-design ways to work together to flexibly provide Ofsted registered homes for children in care and care leavers, and additional services to meet needs of our children and young people, whilst also providing stability through existing arrangements.

This supports the development of a mixed model of provision for residential placements and helps to avoid the number of unregistered placements. More work will need to be done to work through the detail and fully evaluate this approach by both WNC, NNC and NCT.

**Circle to Success** - Work continues positively with the reduction of placements by stepping children down and reducing the impact of children coming into care. There is currently work being undertaken to develop a model of assessing strengths and capabilities in the wider system (councils, NCT) to ensure good practice can be embedded and the work continues on “Valuing Care” assessments.

### **5.3 Demand Management and Early Help**

**Front Door** - Work continues on the design of the front door and redesign of MASH and a programme of work has been developed. It is expected that initial changes to improve the front door commence in early autumn (subject to agreement from the June T & E Board).

**Early Help** – It was agreed at the previous T & E Board that unspent Transformation & Efficiencies funding would be returned to both Councils to support the development of their early help offers. The remaining Transformation & Efficiencies balance of £1.302m will be retained by each Council as per the Contract Sum with WNC retaining £0.727m (55.84%) & NNC £0.575m (44.16%). Development of WNC and NNC early help offers remains a key priority for the wider system to help prevent more significant demand resulting in statutory interventions through the NCT and support family resilience.

### **5.4 Workforce**

The Trust has continued to be successful in converting a number of agency workers into permanent workers alongside recruiting to full time members of staff. Work with OPUS has also led to improved rates for temporary direct recruits. The key areas where temporary members of staff are still required are the Safeguarding, Initial Referral and Court Teams which is in line with other Councils.

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## 5.5 Technology and Innovation

There has been a successful procurement of a new case management system for children's services. The decision has been to award to System C (Liquid Logic).

Once contracts have been signed an agreed implementation plan will be co-produced with System C. In preparation for this, a draft implementation plan based upon a 13-month implementation has been developed, with a potential go-live in July 2025.

A contract extension with the incumbent supplier OLM is being sought, as the existing contract ends January 2025. A key element of the work is data migration from the current systems in place.

## 5.6 Operational Efficiency

**Office Optimisation** - Roll out is continuing in both West and North. The plans for West and the changes to One Angel Square (OAS) and Towcester have been signed off and the Trust has agreed its interim and final plans for OAS, including a new home for the Social Work Academy and Learning and Development. The work programme for Towcester has been reprioritised to ensure improvements to the ground floor commence first.

Accommodation plans are progressing in the North to provide a number of locality hubs for NCT including changes at William Knibb in Kettering, finalising the plans in Wellingborough and a feasibility study for a longer term option in Corby. In addition to this, work is progressing to plan the development of a leaving care hub in Kettering. It is expected that a request for approval of capital to fund these developments will come before the Executive in the Autumn.

**Legal Services** - Work to move towards Council provision is working at pace and a new service level agreement has been developed alongside working arrangements to allow a smooth transition from Pathfinder Legal Services to the Councils inhouse legal team.

## 5.7 Policy and Practice

There are considerable pieces of work associated with improving practice and the quality of the offer and ensuring that there is sufficient support for both WNC and NNC.

Resources have been agreed by the T&E Board for the development of an Edge of Care Early Help Service (diverting children and young people from care) and the creation of a Family Drug and Alcohol Court which helps to prevent children coming into care.

A work programme is being developed with North Yorkshire Council as WNC and NNC's Sector Led Improvement Partner.

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## **6. Issues and Choices**

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- 6.1 The work to date has been in response to the informal step in arrangements.
- 6.2 Following approval of business cases, progress is monitored by the Transformation and Efficiency Board.

## **7. Next Steps**

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- 7.1 Further business cases and updates on improvement activity and informal financial step in will continue and robust monitoring arrangements developed to ensure full benefits are realised.

## **8. Implications (including financial implications)**

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### **8.1 Resources and Financial**

- 8.1.1 When the Trust was being developed, detailed work was completed to calculate how costs would be split between North and West Northamptonshire Councils. This was based on the relative populations and demand for children's social care services in each council area. It was agreed that WNC would contribute 56% and NNC would contribute 44% exclusive of any specific grants that are given directly to NNC or WNC to passport to the Trust.
- 8.1.2 To support the Trust to deliver their business plan the Councils and NCT agreed a Contract Sum of £180.009m made up of Block 1 core funding (£177.429m) and Block 2 transformation individual items (£2.580m).
- 8.1.3 WNC and NNC have made provision for a Block 3 transformation costs totalling £3.291m. The use of this funding is subject to business cases being presented to and approved by the Transformation and Efficiency Board.
- 8.1.4 Appendix A sets out the approved Business Cases which amount to £1.989m with the remaining Transformation & Efficiencies balance of £1.302m being retained by each Council for investment into Early Help this has been split per the Contract Sum with WNC retaining £0.727m (55.84%) & NNC £0.575m (44.16%).

### **8.2 Legal and Governance**

- 8.2.1 The relationship between NCT and the Councils is governed by a series of contractual and legal agreements.
- 8.2.2 There are no immediate legal implications arising from the proposals. Consideration for specific legal implications is reviewed as part of the business case development and approval.

### **8.3 Relevant Policies and Plans**

8.3.1 NNC has identified 'Brighter, Better Futures' as a key priority in its Corporate Plan recognising that children, young people and their families may need help at different stages in their lives. They will aim to provide help as early as possible and provide the right support, at the right time in the right way to ensure that children are safeguarded and get the best start in life.

8.3.2 WNC has identified 'Improved life chances: Best Start in Life' as a key priority of its Corporate Plan, including a focus on early help services to ensure children have the best start in life and parents have the right support at the right time from the right service, to enable families to thrive.

8.3.3 Both NNC and WNC's identified priorities will be achieved by supporting NCT to provide higher standards of support.

### **8.4 Risk**

Risk summaries have been completed for each project and a programme risk register is being developed.

### **8.5 Consultation**

Appendix A which details the project summary has been approved by the Transformation & Efficiencies Board has been reported at both the Children's Trust Operational Group and Strategic Group in May 2024.

### **8.6 Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel**

This report has not been considered by NNC's Executive Advisory Panel.

### **8.7 Consideration by Executive Leadership Team (WNC)**

This report has not been considered by WNC Executive Leadership Team

### **8.8 Consideration by Scrutiny**

This report has not been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees of either NNC or WNC.

### **8.9 Equality Implications**

There are no specific equality implications arising from this report.

### **8.10 Climate Impact**

There is no specific climate impact arising from this report, however as NNC and WNC committed to considering impact on the environment which is managed via the individual strategic lead partnership organisation via organisational policy and commitments.

NNC, WNC and NCT are aware there are emissions associated with publishing web content and will seek to minimise the impact where possible.

### **8.11 Community Impact**

There is no specific community impact arising from this report.

### **8.12 Crime and Disorder Impact**

There is no specific crime and disorder impact arising from this report.

## **9. Background Papers**

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None