

Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Thursday 01 September 2022

Children's Transformation Six Month Review

Recommendations

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Receive the findings of the Children's Transformation Six Month Review.
- b. Scrutinise the plans to address the areas identified for improvement.

Local Member Interest: N/A

Report of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Summary

1. Following the Children's Transformation, we committed to conducting a review at six months. This review was a commitment to the aspiration for Children's Services to instil a learning culture into the department so that we continued to learn and evolve. This review gave us the opportunity to reflect on:
 - a. What is working well?
 - b. What could be better?
 - c. How will we make it better?
2. This report summarises the findings from the review. It also presents an overview of the changes proposed and the work that is being initiated on the basis of the feedback.
3. As part of the review, we provided all participants with the opportunity to present alterations that may be needed. They were asked to consider this proposal on the basis of £1 in £1 out so if they identified additional spend required, they also needed to discuss the support that they would forgo.

Report

Background

4. This report provides an overview of the findings of the Children's Transformation six-month review. This provides details of the key themes that have emerged and the plans we are putting in place to address them.

Methodology

5. The feedback provides an overview of the feedback that was submitted as part of the transformation six-month review. There were over 25 responses however these responses often reflected a broader group of people's feedback for example the IRO service submitted a collective response. The feedback represents a much larger cohort of staff who have contributed.
6. In addition, the Local Authority conduct the Net Promoter Score across the council. Much of the feedback from this was related to the Children's Transformation. These findings that present further insight as to how the workforce are feeling about the transformation. Following this feedback, the main themes were analysed and presented back to the workforce allowing for reflection and discussion.

Key Findings

What is working well?

7. The vision aims and outcomes of the transformation: The vision for the transformation, the way in which it sought for us to work as a system placing the needs and families at the centre was the right thing to do. The feedback indicated that this was already starting to have an impact and people reported being able to see the improvements for children and their families in several areas. There was also a wealth of feedback to suggest that the closeness of working in a district/ borough was making more local and meaningful connections as part of a broader system of support for children and families.
8. Improves working conditions and environment: People commented on a number of occasions that there was better working conditions for several staff such as the Family Practitioners who now benefit from essential care user for example which has made a difference to staff who have benefitted. People reported that working more flexibly with agile working was having an impact on their work life balance. Although people appreciate the benefit of being in the office or meeting together as a team. Remote working and MS Teams offer teams an opportunity to engage more meaningfully in meetings with little or no travelling time. Many commented that team identity was emerging post transformation via regular in person meetings in a central location.
9. Better collaborative working: Front line staff within district teams often reported seeing improvements in terms of the efficiency for example

many staff commented on 'less paperwork' and 'less bureaucracy.' In addition, there was overwhelming feedback that staff being located in a place was have an impact and many felt the most significant impact was 'improved co-working' which was adding value and improving outcomes for families. Many people who had move teams such as SENDIASS commented that they had a better awareness of other people, their roles, and the ways in which they were working better together. A lot of the feedback indicated that informal opportunities to know and learn more were actively being encouraged. This was and continues to be a system aspiration and it is great to see this happening so early into the changes.

10. More front-line staff: A lot of the feedback demonstrated that people could see the benefit in the investment in additional social workers and family practitioners. Whilst there appeared to be a lack of awareness across all staff groups in the increases and some staff absence which was impacting on the feel this was having people acknowledged that this was a welcome addition.
11. Improved service for children and families: A number of staff reported that the new model was bringing about positive change for children and families, particularly where there was consistency of practitioners providing a more cohesive offer of support. There were early signs of sharing practices that work in Early Help for example to ensure that more families benefitted from this support systematically. There was evidence that from a child's perspective the aspiration was the right thing to do.
12. Improved systems and processes: Some people commented that there was an improvement in the system view of how we worked, this included access to policies on the desktop and Power Bi. There was feedback to suggest that the systems and processes were getting better but there was still more to do for example all practitioners on one system, access to the right technology to support them and more visibility of processes that people should follow.
13. Training and opportunities to develop: Several staff reported that they felt well supported by their team, a sense of being in it together was evident where people pitched in to help and support where there were challenging workloads and visibility and access to training and support was mentioned several times. People commented positively on the opportunities afforded to them such as ASYE opportunities being made available to support their development and more training opportunities being accessible by them and team members. There was a lot of feedback which suggested that the transformation had provided an opportunity to grow, learn and push themselves in a good way out of comfort zones. Many experienced an increase in the availability of training.

What could be better?

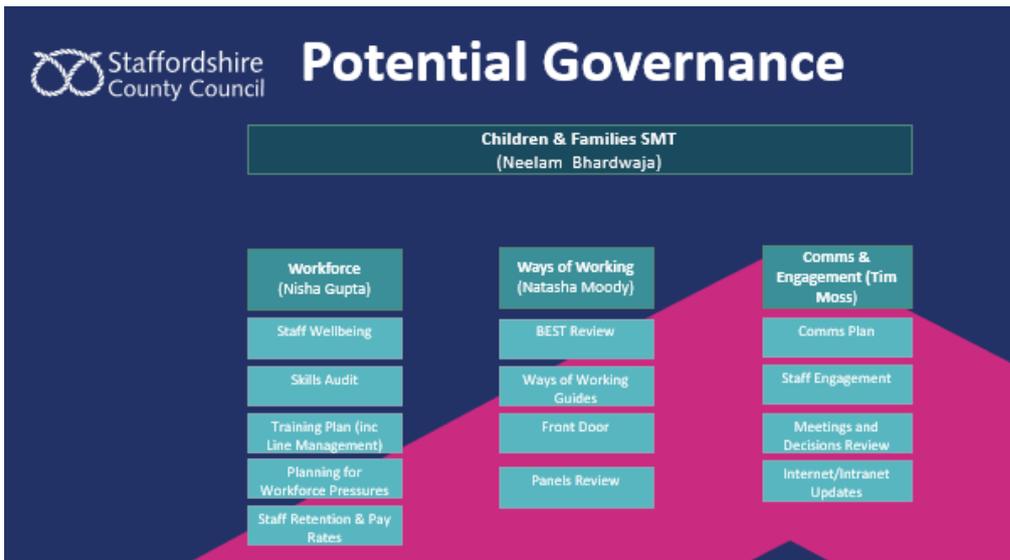
14. Workplace pressures: Staff reported that there were pressures on their time. This seemed to be caused by two primary things, the increased demand and the volume of change that took place at one time.
15. Wellbeing of staff: Staff felt that they would benefit from more of a focus on their personal and teams wellbeing. The impact of the pandemic had clearly had an impact on many staff. In addition, the complexity of needs of children, young people and their families has increased meaning that staff would welcome greater opportunities to meet together, reflect and check in on each other and focus on their wellbeing. Staff were asked what support might be beneficial and they added that more time to connect would support them to feel well at work.
16. Clarity on people's roles and functions: Staff reported that the systematic review of the whole of children and families' services had resulted in people being unclear about the different roles across the system. Staff asked for opportunities to share their roles e.g., videos or information on their role so people could access this independently.
17. Central management support: Some roles that are now part of the district model feedback that they would benefit from central management support and oversight as the technical know how was important to them and their role for example the education inclusion officers. Following this feedback, the district roles have access to central management support in addition to the district engagement as part of their team.
18. Training Plan and Continued Professional Development: Whilst staff felt that there was a range of training available, they reported that this training was not necessarily aimed at the areas where there were the greatest gaps. As a result, the workforce suggested a skills audit was needed to help to identify the priority gaps and ensure that the training plan was fit for purpose. In addition, some staff felt that their training needs were not considered e.g., education welfare or commissioning teams.
19. Increased demand: The Children's Transformation was structured based on the number of children known to the service at that time. However nationally and locally the number of children needing our care and support has increased. This has meant that there is insufficient staff to deliver against the aspirational numbers we were trying to achieve.
20. Communications: Staff felt that they wanted more regular and consistent feedback and communications. They feel that they are not getting the information that they need and want consistently. They reported

receiving regular emails but were seeking more innovative ways of communicating with them and the most cited method was face to face or videos.

21. Changes to team structures: Some specific feedback was provided about changes to the structure that was required now people were embedding the transformation. For example, the development of the Family Hubs, new requirements in relation to children
22. Quality of support from the contact centre: As part of the transformation there was a change to the front door for children and family services. This created better links with the Contact centre as the aspiration was to build greater resilience and signposting to the local community networks of support. The feedback suggests that this is not working effectively. As a result, more 'Early Help' which could be supported independently by partners and communities is ending up being referred into the district teams.

Our Plans

23. This feedback is important to us, and we want to make sure that we take steps to address the areas for improvement. There were concerns within the feedback about identifying priorities and whilst we think this feedback is all important, we think it is important to address the key priorities first.
24. We have agreed the following plans to address these areas for improvement.
 - a. We will review the staffing structure to ensure it is fit for purpose. We will maintain the principles of the transformation and live within our means, but we think it is important to reflect on the feedback and make the required changes.
 - b. We will establish three task and finish groups to take forward the areas that received the most feedback, workforce, communications and engagement and ways of working. These groups will be led by multidisciplinary teams to ensure that they reflect the needs identified and the feedback from the workforce has been shared with them to ensure that a coherent plan is developed.
 - c. We will continue to keep the workforce up to date with progress and we are committed to continuing to engage in regular dialogue about how the system operates so that we can continue to learn and evolve to better meet the needs of children and their families.
25. These plans will be overseen by the leadership team for Children and Families Services. The outline of the task and finish groups is detailed below.



Link to Strategic Plan

26. The Children’s Transformation was a key part of the previous strategic plan. This work now aligns with Staffordshire County Council’s Strategic Plan’s priorities in terms of giving children the best start and encouraging communities to help themselves and the workforce being ambitious, courageous, and empowered.



Staffordshire County Council **Vision:** An innovative, ambitious and sustainable county, where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy

Outcomes

Everyone in Staffordshire will:

-  Have access to more good jobs and share the benefits of economic growth
-  Live in thriving and sustainable communities
-  Be healthier and independent for longer

Priorities

-  Support Staffordshire’s economy to grow, generating more and better-paid jobs
-  Tackle climate change, enhance our environment, and make Staffordshire more sustainable
-  Encourage good health and wellbeing, resilience and independence
-  Fix more roads, and improve transport and digital connections
-  Offer every Staffordshire child and young person the best start in life, and the chance to achieve their potential

How we work

-  Encourage our communities to help themselves and each other
-  Lead our workforce to be ambitious, courageous and empowered
-  Use digital technology and data to connect, inform and support the people of Staffordshire
-  Engage and listen to our communities, partners and business, working together to improve our county

Pledge: Live within our means and deliver value for money

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1: Children’s Transformation Cabinet Paper

Contact Details

Report Author: Natasha Moody
Job Title: Assistant Director for Wellbeing and Partnerships
Telephone No.: 07976191079
E-Mail Address: natasha.moody@staffordshire.gov.uk

