

Project ID:	ChTran3	Project Name:	Children in our Care
Organisational Challenge Statement (Inc Local/services issues):	<p>Stockton has a CLA population of 133 per 10k children population compared with a statistical neighbour average of approx. 82 CLA per 10k making Stockton a significant outlier in terms of the number and therefore cost of CLA.</p> <p>There are currently 587 children experiencing care in Stockton. As per the national picture, overspend on placements is putting pressure on the Children's (and wider council) budget and several contributing factors have been identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rising numbers of children in care with an increase of children who require specialist provision that can support complex needs, • The need for more targeted & needs-led Edge of Care provision, • Commissioning, data and monitoring of placements, • An ageing cohort of (in-house) Foster carers, • Increasing numbers and costs of Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs), • Previous lack of focus on reunification and High numbers of children subject to care orders and living at home with parents, • Numbers of 15/16/17-year-olds entering the care system, • Inconsistency in the quality of practice. 		
Director Lead:	Elaine Redding/Majella McCarthy	Project Sponsor:	Ruth Lacey
		Project Delivery Manager:	Francesca Magog
Project Team:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jane Smith • Dave Willingham • Martin Skipsey • Debbie Farrow • Lisa Tague • Ricky Cooper • Lucy Cook • Consultancy: Carl Edwards/Inner Circle 	Key Stakeholders:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children, Young People and Families • Cabinet • Members • Children's Services Workforce • Partners (Health etc)
In Scope:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of current placement operational and social work assessment practice and financial position including fostering, reunification, and edge of care processes and stable loving homes strategy. • Commissioning, procurement, and partnership arrangements. • Potential development of Spark of Genius • It covers all placement provision as outlined below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Children's Homes – Foster Carers 	Out of Scope:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restructuring of senior leadership team • Adolescent and MACE Teams/Function • Delivery of the Strengthening Services Plan

Document was classified as: OFFICIAL

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Staying put/supported lodgings– Independent Fostering Arrangements (IFA)– Special Guardianship Order (SGO)– Child Arrangement Order– Supported Accommodation				
Constraints:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduced budget envelope in line with Medium Term Financial Plan• Budget Envelope for Transformation not identified.• Meeting Ofsted standards in line with focused visit early 2024• DFE funding based on homes to be purchased by the end of March 2024• Changes to National policy• Current provider market	Financial Position:	Budget Envelope 23/24	TBC	
			Budget Forecast 23/24:	TBC	
			Est Budget Envelope Reduction:		
			24/25	25/26	26/27
			TBC	TBC	TBC

Baseline Performance:**Baseline Data**

At the time of the initial inception of the project the following data was available.

- Number of Children in care broken down by placement type (31.10.23)

	0 – 4 years	5 – 10 years	11 – 15 years	16+ years	Total
Special Guardianship	41	107	89	23	260
CIOC – Connected Persons	23	56	54	21	154
SBC Fostering	22	27	32	21	102
External Fostering (IFA)	10	42	38	29	119
Total	96	232	213	94	635

Outcomes to be achieved: *(The impact of activities on the organisation/customers and/or the wider population)*

- The number of children in our care reduces, and more children stay in their family home.
- Where children are placed in our care, it will ensure that placements are cost effective and meet the required standards and agreed needs of the child.
- Reduction in costs and financial sustainability.

Key Milestones / Deliverables *(The things that need to be achieved/delivered to achieve outcomes)*

Description:	Due Date:
Assessment of Need / Reduction in Children in Care	
Analysis of all external residential placements and Supported Accommodation to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify cohorts of need / service requirement to inform commissioning plans, - Children currently in Care and projections. 	May 24

Assessment of current external placements and supported accommodation to articulate plans for movement / potential for movement.	March 24
Review of approach to identifying and recording of children's needs to inform commission and procurement. This should include outcomes to be achieved and long-term plan.	Mar 24
Review of panels, decision process for Children's care placements.	Feb 24
Clarity of decision making regarding any new initiatives or approval of additional support for children or carers	Feb 24
Development and Implementation of Edge of Care Model - Establish Team, - Develop practice model, - Develop mechanism for monitoring success of service.	Dec 23
Develop arrangements to implement where plans to move children identified.	May 24
Data and Information	
Baseline of current process and data quality for monitoring active children's placement including financial commitments.	Dec 23
Carryout process review to identify opportunities for process improvement, digitisation, improved quality of data and consistency with finance information. This includes opportunities for streamlining and rationalisation.	March 24
Commissioning, Procurement and Contract Management Approach	
Deliver a series of workshops for key internal stakeholders to identify their understanding of current Commissioning process at operational and strategic level	Oct 23
Undertake process mapping sessions with key stakeholders to visually represent current workflows to bring a child into care and secure a placement, to identify gaps and duplication	Nov 23
Design a proposed commissioning cycle at operational and strategic levels clearly defining the tasks to be undertaken at each stage and the resource needed. Propose staffing structure to deliver on this.	Dec 23
Review of all existing external residential & supported accommodation placements – assess current contract arrangements and pricing	Jan 24
Development of a detailed transition / training plan to move to the revised staffing structure and commissioning cycle	Jan 24
Implementation of revised staffing structure and commissioning cycle	April 24
Identify current and future needs/requirements for residential provision with the Borough	Jan 24
Development of a strategy for residential provision within the Borough – including Stockton owned homes and Spark of Genius	Apr 24
Development and implementation of a transition plan to move to the new model	May 24
Maximise utilisation and occupancy of SBC owned Childrens homes: - Plans for Ayton Place - Plans for Piper - Oak View - Tilery - Rose House - Our Place - Hartburn Lodge	
Development of Plans and business case for: - Mother and Baby Unit.	May 24
Potential Development of Spark of Genius Joint Venture	
Develop a business plan for the delivery of 5 x 3 bed properties to support Children currently in unregulated provision.	June 24
Develop a Business Plan for provision of a Residential Educational Setting for Children in our Care and to support SEND provision.	June 24
Development of plans and business case for Speeton Close.	April 24
Fostering	
Review and baseline of current approach to fostering and SGOs and compare to best practice.	Dec 23

Understand current cohort trends and analysis to establish a long-term view of foster care and SGO requirements.	Jan 24
Develop a strategy and a model of support for Foster Carers to meet the long-term needs/requirements of foster care and SGO provision including avoiding breakdowns.	Jan 24
Development and implementation of a marketing strategy.	Feb 24
Localised and targeted recruitment of foster carers to meet children's needs particularly adolescents.	Apr 24
Reunification	
Transfer of Reunification team to CIOC to strengthen offer.	Feb 24
Development of a training programme to support practitioners with implementation of reunification policy and approach.	Apr 24
Implementation of NSPCC practice model of policy for approach to reunification.	May 24
Project Evaluation and Closure	
Benefits Realisation	Feb 24 / Feb 25 / Feb 26
Revised budget envelope	Apr 24 / Apr 25 / Apr 26
Evaluation	Apr 26

Best Practice Model(s): *(Areas of 'better' practice' and how this review could use/link to them to deliver an alternative model)*

- Edge of Care provision using Mockingbird models including a therapeutic approach building on wider family network capacity (Leeds examples).
- Financial Modelling practice and approach to placements – Carl Edwards
- Valuing care – Norfolk – Inner Circle.
- Stockton is working closely with North Tyneside under Sector Lead Improvement Work (SLIP). North Tyneside have a successful and well-established model. North Tyneside will be assisting Stockton Borough Council in establishing and building the foundations of a successful model.

Key Resources / Skills Required: *(Resource and time needed to meet deliverables and ensure outcome are met)*

- Subject Matter Experts: Project Team identified above
- Finance: Lisa Tague
- Data Provision/Analysis: James O'Donnell
- ICT/Digital Transformation: Helen Ruddick
- Comms and Marketing – Emma Chudley
- PMO – Jo Wilkinson
- Business Analyst: Inner Circle

Benefits: *(A benefit is a measurable improvement resulting from the changes and outcomes introduced by a programme)*

Description	Measure	Type
Reduction of children entering our care system.	Number of children in care	Improved Health / Outcomes / Reduced Future Costs.
Of the children are currently within our care, Increase the number reunified with their family.	Number, average time spent in and cost of children in care	Improved Health / Outcomes / Reduced Future Costs.
Reduced use of high-cost and IFA placements and make better use of remaining placement options which are more cost effective and better meet the needs of children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and cost of children in high-cost residential care • Number and cost of children in IFA placements 	Improved Health / Outcomes from Children / Reduced Future Costs.
Increase capacity of foster carers to reduce number of children in residential and IFA placements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of SBC Foster carers 	Improved Health / Outcomes from Children / Reduced Future Costs.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of children in IFA placements 	
Effective demand management and budget forecasting that supports provision of appropriate placements and financial sustainability.	Availability of real time data /financial information with reduced number of discrepancies	Improved availability and data quality.
Reduce the number of SBC owned children's residential homes and make better use of effective partnership arrangements to ensure the priority is given to SBC children.	Number of SBC residential homes/beds.	Partnership Working Improved Health/Outcomes/Reduced Future Costs.
Reduced number of complaints received from placements not meeting the needs of children.	Number of complaints received.	Improved Health/Outcomes from Children.
Procurement contracts are fit for purpose and robustly managed achieving best value and meet the needs of the child.	Establishment of a quality assurance framework.	Improved Health/Outcomes from Children/Reduced Future Costs.
Improved/Sustained Ofsted feedback on Childrens Homes.	Score/rating 2023.	Compliance Improved Process/Improved Health/Outcomes/Improved satisfaction.
Improved/Sustained Reg 44 visitor feedback- Childrens Homes.	Score/rating 2023.	Compliance/Improved Process/Improved Health/ Outcomes/Improved satisfaction.
Spark of Genius prioritise SBC children and bed base increases.	Numbers of SBC children placed by Spark of Genius at the time placement is required.	Reduced Future Costs.
Sustainable experience and qualified workforce.	Staff turnover rate.	Improved Health/Outcomes from Children/Reduced Future Costs.
Ensuring that interventions are sustainable and reduce longer term costs of children coming in to care unnecessarily.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance framework will be developed to monitor and track longer term outcomes for children. • Cost avoidance and saving trackers will be introduced to identify the potential avoidance costs as a result of interventions. 	Improved Health/Outcomes from Children/Reduced Future Costs.
Joint working with other services to ensure that interventions are timely and proportionate to promote stability whilst addressing need.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-agency meetings established and embedded. • Robust multi-agency plans developed and implemented. 	Improved Health/Outcomes from Children/Reduced Future Costs Partnership Working.

Risks: (Factors / barriers that may potentially impact the successful delivery of the project)

- Market conditions/forces - Shortage of appropriate placements and significant costs.
- Capacity and skills within the service to deliver including various arrangements in place around the corporate and senior management team.
- Culture and willingness to adopt new ways of working.
- Recruitment and retention of foster carers.
- Buildings and locations.
- Ability to reshape the Partnership with Spark of Genius to meet our needs.
- DFE Grant – Funding was granted for two specific types of homes to be delivered and need to be purchased by the end of March 2023. Current thinking alludes to a change of remit and delivery of proposed plan.
- Ability to recruit and retain qualified and experienced employees to vacant posts.
- Not identifying the most appropriate children and families to promote the success of interventions, e.g. too late.
- Significant demand from Social Care, which may outweigh capacity. This can result in diluted interventions which are not sustainable and result in children coming in to care in the longer term.

- Commissioned consultancy work does not deliver expected outcomes.

Interdependencies: *(Work within other tasks/projects both in the POF or wider organisational activity that has a potential to impact the project progress or sequence of activity)*

- Strengthening service plan
- Workforce planning recruitment and retention.
- Commissioned work:
 - Review of the child’s voice within our internal residential Homes – Sharmain Lawrence – Completed Jan 24.
 - Practice and quality assurance (with a workforce training and development aspect) – Nicola Wyatt.
 - Commissioned work from Peopletoo reviewing high-cost cases that require joint funding from Health partners.
- Early Help and Interventions. The current interventions are delivered by Family Solutions Team and Reunification Teams, who also provide support co-working support within Social Care for a range of complexities, delivering Early Help interventions and supporting step-downs from Social Care. Moving the function to a dedicated team would free up resources and create capacity within both Family Solutions and Reunification who will be moving to CIOC in Feb 24.
- Transitions – a portion of these children and young people will require social care support during adulthood so will form part of the remit of a future Transitions service.
- Partnerships – existing partnerships with health (e.g. Health Visitors), schools, Early Years providers, and wider groups will have a role to play in the new model (e.g. early diagnosis through visits).
- SEND High Needs – Some CIOC have SEND High Needs.
- Community Transport – Some CIOC are transported to schools and other venues.
- Admin – the work of this group will inform change across all services.

Approved By:

Date: