

# Cheshire East Council

## Cabinet

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| <b>Date of Meeting:</b>  | 6 <sup>th</sup> December 2016   |
| <b>Report of:</b>        | Kath O'Dwyer, Executive Director of People's Services and Deputy Chief Executive  |
| <b>Subject/Title:</b>    | Expression of Interest to the DfE Innovation Programme for Adopting Signs of Safety as our Way of Working in Children's Social Care |
| <b>Portfolio Holder:</b> | Cllr Liz Durham, Children and Families  |

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### 1. Report Summary

1.1. This report is to:

- inform Cabinet of the expression of interest that Cheshire East Council has submitted to the DfE Innovation Programme in partnership with Munro, Turnell and Murphy Consultancy for funding to transform Children's Social Care services
- and to request permission to proceed to the final stages of the bidding process and draw down funds should we be successful.

1.2. The DfE Children's Social Care Innovation Programme was launched by the Children's Minister, Edward Timpson, in October 2013. The programme is designed to support the redesign of service delivery to achieve high quality services, improved outcomes for children, and better value for money. Organisations are able to apply for funding and support from the Programme to implement innovative approaches to achieve these aims.

1.3. In partnership with Munro, Turnell and Murphy Consultancy and a number of other local authorities, we have submitted an expression of interest to the DfE Innovation Programme for funding to adopt Signs of Safety as our way of working across Children's Social Care.

1.4. Signs of Safety is widely recognised internationally as the leading progressive approach to child protection casework. There is a solid evidence base which demonstrates this approach improves outcomes for children and young people, and effectively supports families to develop their own sustainable solutions to keeping their children safe.

1.5. By adopting this approach, we will transform the way we work to protect our most vulnerable children and young people, and deliver consistently high quality services that put our children and young people first.

- 1.6. This is an extension to an existing project which was funded last year to implement Signs of Safety as the approach to working with families in ten local authorities. The extension involves up to 30 additional authorities joining the project, of which Cheshire East Council is one. These additional authorities would be 'buddied' with an authority from the first stage of the project to provide mentoring and support.
- 1.7. We have received confirmation from the DfE that our proposal has been successful in progressing to the next stage of the selection process.
- 1.8. This Programme is a significant opportunity for Cheshire East Council to enact change on a scale that we would not be able to support from our resources in house, and to invest in achieving sustainable changes for families, thus potentially saving money in the long term. It is also an opportunity to be involved in shaping the direction of change for children's social care and to be a leader for change within the sector. This project also offers significant opportunities for learning from and sharing best practice with other local authorities.
- 1.9. By re-designing delivery to put our children and young people at the heart of our service this project embodies the Council's values to Put Residents First. This work contributes to achieving outcome five of the Corporate Plan: ensuring people live well and for longer, and outcome six: being a responsible, effective and efficient organisation.

## **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1. In order to support effective and efficient implementation, should funding be granted for this project, it is recommended that Cabinet:
  - Authorise the Executive Director of People to submit the business case and proceed to the final stages of the bidding process to the DfE Innovative Programme
  - Authorise the Executive Director of People to undertake all necessary negotiations and enter into any Funding and associated agreements to secure the funding from the DfE Innovative Programme
  - Delegate the authority to make decisions on the use of funds for this project to the Executive Director of People including the procurement of services, provision of grants and entering into partnership agreements.
  - Authorise match funding to a maximum of £165,000.
  - Authorise the acceptance and use of funds for this project, should it be granted, for the duration of the project over the three year implementation period.
  - Authorise that funding may be received direct from the DfE Innovation Fund or from a named partner in the project.

- Endorse that any funds not spent in the allocated year are transferred into the following year's budget.
- Note that when the funding is received the funds will be allocated to the Executive Director of People within the Council's Budget
- Note that Cheshire East Council is not the lead organisation for this project.

### **3. Other Options Considered**

- 3.1. If we are not successful in receiving funding from the Innovation Programme, we will use the funding we have been granted from the Corporate Transition Fund for £165k to adopt a strength-based model within children's social care. This will be on a smaller scale due to the funding available but should allow us to achieve our aims. However this option will not bring the significant benefits of participating in the Innovation project, for example the learning and support from the other local authorities, and the opportunity for raising the profile of Cheshire East and having a role in leading innovation and the direction of service development nationally. The impact of this option would also be limited as we would need to limit the adoption of the new model to within children's social care services, whereas the collaborative Innovation project will allow us to extend a common approach across both children's social care and early help services.

### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1. Cheshire East Council has submitted this expression of interest to the DfE Innovation Fund to transform our children's social care services. If we are successful and are granted funding for this project, we want to ensure we have the appropriate authorisation in place to start implementation immediately.
- 4.2. As an innovative approach, this project will require that we are flexible and responsive to the needs of our residents, partners and workforce as the project progresses, along with feedback and direction from the DfE.
- 4.3. The project includes working in partnership with other local authorities, our partners and private, voluntary and community organisations to deliver the project. Key partners we will deliver the project in partnership with are named in the expression of interest.
- 4.4. This project is led by Professor Eileen Munro, Dr. Andrew Turnell and Terry Murphy of Munro, Turnell and Murphy Child Protection Consulting and Associates. As such Cheshire East Council may receive funds from the lead organisation rather than direct from the DfE, and we are not the accountable body for the entire project, although we remain accountable for the implementation within Cheshire East Council.
- 4.5. The project covers a three year implementation period.

- 4.6. Children's social care has achieved significant improvements in the quality of our services since our provision was found to be inadequate in March 2013. In order to make the next step-change in our services, and achieve good and outstanding levels of service for our children and young people, we need to change the culture to one that puts children and young people first in everything we do.
- 4.7. Signs of Safety has been shown to be effective in achieving culture change, increasing engagement with and improving outcomes for children, young people and families. This approach will unite our workforce with a common goal, language and understanding, and provide a clear process for assessing risk and involving children, young people and families in assessing and recognising their needs and planning how these will be met.
- 4.8. A request for funding to develop one way of working for children's social care was submitted to the Corporate Transition Fund for £165k, and this was granted. This project would be match funded at 50% by Cheshire East Council using the funding granted from the Corporate Transition Fund. The current estimated total cost of this project to Cheshire East is £165k (with the same amount funded by the Innovation Programme, so the total for Cheshire East Council's element of the project being estimated to cost £330k in total.)
- 4.9. Detailed work on costings will be completed for the full business case, and costings are provisional and estimated at this stage. The entire project for last year involving 10 LAs received £4.6m of funding. Any increase to the agreed Transition Fund would need to be requested in due course.

## **5. Background/Chronology**

- 5.1. Developing one way of working (a single model for intervention) across children's social care is a key component of our Children and Young People's Improvement Plan and LSCB Business Plan. These plans have been received and endorsed by the Children and Families Senior Leadership Team, the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), the Children and Young People's Trust, and the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 5.2. The expressions of interest were received by MGB on 27<sup>th</sup> July and the LSCB on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2016.

## **6. Wards Affected and Local Ward Members**

- 6.1. All wards and all members.

## **7. Implications of Recommendation**

### **7.1. Policy Implications**

7.1.1. By re-designing delivery to put our children and young people at the heart of our service this project embodies the Council's values to Put Residents First. This project will support delivery of outcome five of the Corporate Plan.

### **7.2. Legal Implications**

7.2.1. In submitting the business case to proceed to the final stage of the bid for the grant the Council must ensure that it can comply with the grant terms and conditions.

7.2.2. Officers should consider whether the partnership is such that it establishes or implements a co-operation between the parties with the aim of ensuring that the public services they have to perform are provided with a view to achieving objectives they have in common as otherwise it may be that the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR'S) apply and a call for partners should be advertised in accordance with the Contract Procedure Rules.

7.2.3. Guidance should be sought from the Data Protection Officer where the work of the Partnership will involve the sharing of data or information. It may be necessary to include an information sharing agreement within the Partnership agreement.

7.2.4. Services required must be commissioned in accordance with the PCR's. Where the Council is awarding a grant it must not constitute illegal state aid and guidance should be sought from Legal Services.

### **7.3. Financial Implications**

7.3.1. As noted in the report, funding from the Innovation Programme will be used to invest in our services, with the aim of reducing demand in the long term and increasing value for money. The total cost of delivery will depend on which options are successful in winning grant funding and the detailed costings that will be prepared in respect of full business cases.

7.3.2. In any event, other than existing budgets for staff time and service delivery, and utilisation of £165,000 from the Corporate Transition Fund, all additional funding required will come from the Innovation Fund grant.

7.3.3. When grants are secured and project arrangements are determined, fully funded supplementary revenue budgets for the Service will be approved by the Chief Operating Officer and Executive Director of People's Services, as required.

#### **7.4. Equality Implications**

7.4.1. There are no specific equality implications.

#### **7.5. Rural Community Implications**

7.5.1. There are no specific implications for the rural community.

#### **7.6. Human Resources Implications**

7.6.1. Additional capacity will be needed to support the project. Recruitment to support implementation is included within the cost of the project.

#### **7.7. Public Health Implications**

7.7.1. There are no specific implications for the public health of Cheshire East residents.

#### **7.8. Implications for Children and Young People**

7.8.1. The aim of this project is to significantly improve outcomes for our most vulnerable children and young people in Cheshire East. This approach has been shown to be effective in other areas.

#### **7.9. Other Implications (Please Specify)**

7.9.1. No other implications.

### **8. Risk Management**

8.1. This programme of work will be underpinned by a project management approach and as such will have a risk log which will be regularly reviewed and monitored.

### **9. Access to Information/Bibliography**

9.1. **Appendix 1: Expression of Interest for Implementing Signs of Safety**

9.2. Information on the DfE Innovation Programme can be found at: <http://springconsortium.com/>

9.3. Information on Signs of Safety can be found at [www.SignsofSafety.net](http://www.SignsofSafety.net)

## 10. Contact Information

Contact details for this report are as follows:

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