

To: **Gail Hancock**
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Please ask for: Gail Hancock

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Our Ref: GH/dh

Your Ref:

Date: 5th July 2021

Dear Colleagues

Re: Transformation remodelling children's social care and early help services

Further to the engagement communication that Chris Spencer, Director, sent recently to all members of Children's Services, this is a more targeted engagement communication regarding the proposed transformation remodelling and is directed at children's social care and early help staff.

Most of you will be aware that Gloucestershire was successful in gaining financial support from the Department of Education to remodel and refocus our services. This is an integral part of our ambition to improve the quality of practice and the effectiveness of our Children's Services. The key transformation workstreams for children's social care relate to remodelling and systemic practice. This communication focuses primarily on remodelling.

The remodelling transformation workstream is advanced and preliminary decisions have been made to proceed to formal consultation shortly. So, I have decided the time has come for me to communicate with the whole of children's social care and early help services about what is happening so that staff have some additional information ahead of the formal consultation. It is important for you to know how the proposed changes may affect you and to give you the opportunity to ask questions and make comments.

The proposed changes have 4 inter-linked strands:

- 1. Remodelling the leadership and management accountability structure for Safeguarding and Care Services:** This is about strengthening the senior leadership team and making accountability for the quality and impact of practice more explicit. In line with similar local authority children's social care services, we will be moving to an area-based model of delivery; **North Gloucestershire** (Cheltenham and Tewksbury); **West Gloucestershire** (Gloucester and Forest); and **South Gloucestershire** (Cotswold and Stroud). These services will be led by an Assistant Director and integrated management team for early help, children in need, children in need of protection and children in care. In addition to the three geographical areas, there will be a **Central Area** that will include specialist and county-wide services like the integrated front door to children's social care, including the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, the Reviewing Service with independent reviewing officers and child protection conference chairs plus the social work academy. This change will directly affect most Heads of Services and Service Managers. Every effort will be made to minimise the impact on operational teams. Area-based models are the cornerstone of most good and outstanding local authorities, especially Shire counties.

2. **A specialist 16+ Care Leaver Service:** The most highly rated services for care experienced young people are based on a specialist 16+ care leaver service made up of a multi-disciplinary team of practitioners. These teams focus exclusively on the process of preparing young people to make the transition from care to independent living. The approach is highly personalised, informed by the views, wishes and feelings of the young person, the progress they have made to process the trauma they have experienced as well as their needs, risks and strengths to reach their true potential and live a remarkable life. The edge of care service and 16+ service will come under the umbrella of an Adolescence Service. This change will directly affect those staff and managers working in the 11+ permanence teams, providing social workers, personal advisors and team managers in those teams with an opportunity to express interest in joining the new service.
3. **A specialist Edge of Care Service:** All children's social care services rated good or outstanding have a specialist edge of care service that builds family resilience and support and prevents unnecessary admissions to care. Our rising care population requires us to do something different. This change is about adopting an evidence-based model (Intensive Family Preservation) to support adolescents to remain safely at home or within their wider family. The new service will also support adolescents with a plan of reunification to return home safely to their birth family or wider network of family and friends. Where young people need to remain in the care of the local authority there will also be support to build capacity and stabilise placements where required. The new service will build on our existing strengths and involve re-training in the evidence-based methods. All staff will be given the opportunity to re-train in the evidence-based practice that underpins the Intensive Family Preservation Service model.
4. **Systemic Practice:** It has been a service ambition for some time to implement systemic practice across our service and many of you will have attended awareness sessions and introductory sessions about the benefits of systemic practice for children and families. Additional funding has been secured to push ahead with formal and accredited systemic practice as our unifying model for the way that we work with children and families in Gloucestershire. This aspect of our remodelling is not just for social workers. Implementation will be based on a rolling programme of training for everyone who works directly with children, young people and families. Over time, everyone working directly with children and families will be given the opportunity to train in systemic practice.

These proposed changes will affect people differently, with some of you being directly affected and some of you more marginally. It is our aim to keep any disruption to front line operational practice to a minimum. Whilst I will ensure engagement with the whole service, so that everyone knows what is happening, those colleagues who are directly affected will have the benefit of formal consultation to consider and feedback on the proposed changes in line with the Council's toolkit for bringing about change.

There are 4 project teams currently in place, supported by corporate colleagues who are skilled in organisational development and design. The teams include representatives from Human Resources, Finance, Property and Information Technology. The project teams report to the Children's Transformation Board chaired by Chris Spencer.

Preparatory work is nearing completion and engagement with trades unions has started. Subject to a full Ofsted inspection, when any work on the proposals and changes will be paused, it is anticipated that formal consultation will begin in July. The formal consultation process will last 28 days, with all feedback being considered carefully by the senior leadership team in consultation with corporate colleagues before any final decisions are made.

The agreed changes will be implemented in a phased way, starting with the recruitment of the most senior managers to the Area Assistant Director roles who will then assist and lead on the changes at the next

level. It is anticipated that this cascade change process will happen from the end of August / beginning of September for the Edge of Care and 16+ Services and through the early autumn for the wider organisational re-design.

One of the things I have learned over the years, both on the receiving end of proposed change and also when making proposals for change, is the importance of openness and good communication. I have also learned that it is important to be open-minded and flexible in taking account of feedback that can improve the proposed changes.

It is for this reason that I invite you to ask questions, let me have your thoughts and comments – but most importantly share your ideas for improving the way we support children and families in Gloucestershire. You can do this by emailing [Transformation Children Service](#)

I will be setting up an internal site for Frequently Asked Questions so that you can see what is being asked and the responses that are being given.

It is an exciting time for children's social care and early help services in Gloucestershire for two reasons. Firstly, we have made significant progress in improving the quality and impact of practice thanks to your commitment, hard work and achievements on behalf of local children and young people. Secondly, we are learning from the best children's services in the country and now have ambitious and realistic plans to rival their performance over the next 2-3 years.

Thank you for all you do for the children and families of Gloucestershire. I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G Hancock". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Gail Hancock
Interim Director for Children's Safeguarding and Care