

Slough Children's Social Care Services

Report to Department for Education

June 2014

Client	Department for Education
Title	Slough Children's Social Care Services
Date Modified	10 June 2014
Status	Final
OPM Project Code	9853
Author	Hilary Thompson with Deborah Rozansky, Dave Hill and Helen Lincoln
Quality Assurance by	Hilary Thompson
Main point of contact	Hilary Thompson
Telephone	020 7239 7800
Email	hthompson@opm.co.uk

If you would like a large text version of this document, please contact us.

OPM

252b Gray's Inn Road
London
WC1X 8XG

0845 055 3900
www.opm.co.uk
info@opm.co.uk



Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Terms of reference	4
<hr/>	
Process	5
Background	6
Our analysis	10
Scale and funding	10
Current structures and processes	12
People and culture	14
Capacity for improvement	17
Transition issues	18
<hr/>	
Criteria and options	19
Criteria	22
Options	24
<hr/>	
Recommendations	26
Scope	26
Organisational and governance arrangements	27
Transition	31
Duration of arrangements	32
<hr/>	
Appendix 1 – Local contributors	33
Appendix 2 – Documents	35
Appendix 3 – Good governance standard	37
Appendix 4 – A ‘classic’ model of a children’s service	39
Appendix 5 – Proposals from SBC	40

Introduction

Following the Ofsted inspection of children's services in Slough in November and early December 2013, the Department for Education (DfE) appointed a review team to look at arrangements for the future. The team was led by Hilary Thompson, working with OPM colleague Deborah Rozansky and with Dave Hill, Executive Director of People Commissioning (and statutory DCS) at Essex County Council, and his colleague Helen Lincoln, Executive Director for Family Operations. The team was supported by Ian Valvona and Duncan Walls from DfE.

Terms of reference

The terms of reference agreed for the review were as follows:

1. The review will provide recommendations based on clear criteria as to the best structural and governance arrangements for securing a decisive and long-term improvement in Slough's children's social care services. In particular:
 - a. Which organisational arrangement outside of the control of Slough Borough Council should be implemented to provide the greatest likelihood of securing such improvement.
 - b. Which children's services should be transferred outside of the control of Slough Borough Council.

The review may also make recommendations about how to support effective transition to the new arrangements, including governance relationships.

2. The review will consider the evidence of the failings in the delivery of children's services identified by Ofsted and other performance information as appropriate, the role of partners and the options for delivery arrangements outside of Local Authority control for a period of time. The review team will discuss the issues and progress with the Leader, Councillors and officers in Slough and with key stakeholders in children's services locally, and any other key stakeholders they identify.

3. The review team will be led by an organisational design expert and supported by a children's services expert and a DfE official, plus further agreed support from DfE. The review will be conducted between 16th April and 16th May and a report will be submitted to the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families by Thursday 22nd May 2014. The report will subsequently be published.

Process

The team gathered evidence, in line with the terms of reference, in order to consider Slough's analysis of the problems and to make an independent assessment of the situation before recommending future arrangements. We collected evidence from a series of in-depth interviews, meetings and facilitated workshops, and we reviewed existing documentation and reports, including council plans, reports, financial and performance data. It was never the intention to revisit the evidence or challenge the conclusions of the Ofsted inspection. Rather, during our review we investigated the factors that contributed to Slough's problems in children's social care services; we sought to understand the nature and extent of recent improvements and how any future proposals might build on existing strengths within children's services; and we took account of principles of good social work practice and organisational models being applied elsewhere. From the evidence, we were able to construct a set of conditions for success, and these became the criteria we used to evaluate a number of options for addressing Slough's unique situation.

During late April and early May 2014, we visited Slough Borough Council (SBC) to conduct interviews or meetings with people involved with leading, managing, supporting and working for children's social care services. To understand the experiences of children in care, we held a supervised workshop with children and young people on the Children in Care Council. Two workshops were held with front-line staff and a separate workshop was held with team/practice managers. Representatives from key partner agencies were also interviewed. (See Appendix 1 for more details). In addition to the workshops and interviews, we made available a confidential email inbox for staff who wanted to share their thoughts and ideas directly. We received four responses.

We examined a number of documents as part of our evidence gathering process. These helped us form a picture of both the history of Slough's children's services, earlier efforts to make improvements, and recent progress and performance. Key documents we reviewed are listed in Appendix 2.

Fully aware of developments elsewhere in the children's services sector, we spoke with the Director of Children's Services (DCS) for both Hampshire and the

Isle of Wight, the Managing Director of Achieving for Children, a new community interest company jointly owned by Richmond and Kingston Councils, and the Commissioner for children's services in Doncaster appointed by the Secretary of State.

The review team is very grateful to all those who took the time to meet or speak with us. We appreciated their thoughtfulness and candour, and their willingness to accommodate meetings, interviews and workshops at short notice. We were struck by the dedication to Slough's children from many staff and partners, and the commitment to build on recent progress and to make further improvements, and also the pride of place. The Council was supportive in providing us with documents we requested and helping to arrange the interviews and workshops. Perhaps most important, we are grateful to the children and young people from the Children in Care Council who met with members of our team: the messages we heard underlined the significance of our task of proposing a sustainable solution and transition arrangements that are in line with their best interests.

Background

The problems in children's social care in Slough are not new and there is evidence that insufficient progress has been made to rectify them.

Ofsted carried out an inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services in Slough between 4th and 15th April 2011. The overall findings of the report published on 1st June were as shown on the next page.

Safeguarding services

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
-----------------------	------------

Capacity for improvement	Inadequate
--------------------------	------------

Safeguarding outcomes for children and young people

Children and young people are safe and feel safe	Inadequate
--------------------------------------------------	------------

Quality of provision	Inadequate
----------------------	------------

The contribution of health agencies to keeping children and young people safe	Good
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------

Ambition and prioritisation	Adequate
-----------------------------	----------

Leadership and management	Inadequate
---------------------------	------------

Performance management and quality assurance	Inadequate
----------------------------------------------	------------

Partnership working	Adequate
---------------------	----------

Capacity for improvement	Adequate
--------------------------	----------

Services for looked after children

Overall effectiveness	Adequate
-----------------------	----------

Capacity for improvement	Adequate
--------------------------	----------

How good are outcomes for looked after children and care leavers

Being healthy	Good
---------------	------

Staying safe	Adequate
--------------	----------

Enjoying and achieving	Adequate
------------------------	----------

Making a positive contribution, including user engagement	Adequate
-----------------------------------------------------------	----------

Ambition and prioritisation	Adequate
-----------------------------	----------

Leadership and management	Adequate
---------------------------	----------

Performance management and quality assurance	Adequate
----------------------------------------------	----------

Equality and diversity	Outstanding
------------------------	-------------

Findings of the 2011 Ofsted inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services in Slough

As a result of the shortcomings identified by Ofsted, the Council was issued with an Improvement Notice in September 2011.

An Improvement Board was appointed in June 2011 following the Ofsted review, and membership included an independent chair, leadership from SBC, its key partners and the DfE. Slough chose to be an early adopter of Targeted Sector Led Support, and following a scoping review, this brought professional advice, peer mentoring and other expertise in children's social care to the improvement board's activities. However, membership of the board was not stable and changed over time, with some loss of children's services expertise in particular.

The incumbent DCS and the interim AD both left the Council over summer 2012 as part of a Council restructure. The DCS role was not directly replaced; the role of Strategic Director of Wellbeing was created with responsibility for adults and children's services. The previous Director of Wellbeing was appointed to the role in July 2012 at approximately the same time as a new Assistant Director (AD) was appointed.

There was a peer review of safeguarding in November 2012: key messages were to focus on social work practice, improve early help pathway and partnership working, and lay the essential foundations for improvement. SBC refer to a 'second improvement plan' starting soon after. Work during 2013 included a review of early help, a review of thresholds into social care, additional work on children in need thresholds and additional head of service posts.

In October 2013 DfE officials conducted a review to gauge progress. As part of the review focus groups were held with social workers, managers and frontline partners before a final formal meeting with the Leader, Lead Member for Children's Services, Chief Executive, Strategic Director and AD. At this point, progress had been slower than expected and there was still a concern with the quality of social work practice with social workers, managers and partners indicating that they believed that the quality of social work was 'inadequate'. The issues affecting the quality of social work practice identified included: recruitment and retention, high turnover, working relationships with partner agencies, and engagement of social workers.

A review of staffing levels was completed in early November leading to a growth bid for up to four new teams in children's social care (interim funding was agreed in November and the full bid formally agreed by SBC Cabinet in January 2014) .

Also in November, Ofsted announced that they had begun an inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, looked after children and care leavers and a review of the effectiveness of the local safeguarding children board. The report, under Ofsted's new inspection regime, was published on 11th February 2014 and includes the following summary:

The overall judgement is **inadequate**

There are widespread and serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm and serious failures and unnecessary delay in identifying permanent solutions for looked after children which result in their welfare not being safeguarded and promoted.

It is Ofsted's expectation that as a minimum all children and young people receive good help, care and protection.

Summary of Ofsted's inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, looked after children and care leavers

1. Children who need help and protection	Inadequate
2. Children looked after and achieving permanence	Inadequate
2.1 Adoption performance	Requires improvement
2.2 Experiences and progress of Care Leavers	Inadequate
3. Leadership, management and governance	Inadequate

The effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is **inadequate**.

The LSCB is not demonstrating that it has effective arrangements in place and the required skills to discharge its statutory duties.

The priorities for immediate action included: a comprehensive workforce strategy, protected caseloads for newly qualified social workers (NQSWs), ensuring confidential discussions can take place (not be overheard), review capacity of senior management to ensure there is sufficient dedicated time to drive improvement, improvements to assessments and visits to children, improvements to performance management and audit programme with regard to risks, ensure that the local authority as corporate parent makes aspirations and attainment of children in care and needs and experiences of care leavers the highest priority and reflected in all partnership agreements, and improvements for care leavers.

Ofsted recognised that SBC's improvement plan had focussed on the right areas, but had been hindered because efforts to recruit permanent and experienced social workers did not go far enough. The new local improvement plan focuses on four programmes: early help, safeguarding, looked after children and care leavers, and workforce.

Our analysis

We aimed to understand the roots of problems and measures applied and progress, especially since the 2013 Ofsted review, in order to shape recommendations for the future. We found evidence of recent improvements in social work practice and caseloads and inter-agency working, especially changes instituted since January 2014 and focused mainly on improving social work for children in need and care. We did not identify a sense of secure momentum for improvement: Slough's children's social care provision continues to be compromised by a combination of workforce, strategic, structural and cultural factors. These factors are inter-dependent. The following sections summarise what we identified as key points (it is not possible in this report to set out every measure that SBC and partners have undertaken).

Scale and funding

SBC is a small unitary, as we were frequently reminded. In terms of population aged 0-17¹, there are other unitaries and London boroughs of a similar size:

Thurrock	38,900
Telford and Wrekin	38,800
Blackburn with Darwen	38,800
Slough	38,000
Southend-on-Sea	37,700
Islington	36,700
Westminster	36,200

In terms of total population², the closest authorities in size are other unitaries:

Knowsley	145,893
Windsor and Maidenhead	144,560
Blackpool	142,065
Slough	140,205
Middlesbrough	138,412
Isle of Wight	138,265

Like all councils, SBC has faced the need to make major budget reductions and associated difficult decisions. We were told that national funding formulae have tended to exacerbate these pressures for councils like Slough.

¹ Figures provided by DfE, from Characteristics of children in need in England, 2011/12

² Figures provided by DfE, from 2011 census

In terms of deprivation, Slough is above England averages.

	Percentage of children in low income families ³	Percentage of working households
Slough	22%	49%
England	21%	53%

Average deprivation figures, Slough vs. England

Compared to statistical neighbours, the spend per child in low income families is higher. Spend per working household is lower.

	Total spend on children's services / number of children in low income families	Total spend on children's services / total number of working households ⁴
Slough	£3,701	£1,218
Average of Slough and its Statistical Neighbours	£3,427	£1,390

Children services spend, Slough vs. its Statistical Neighbours

In the context of budget constraints, the Council has outsourced several support services, such as transactional HR and IT, and there is a managed vendor service for agency staff. These corporate arrangements are designed to help control costs for the Council, but the last (the service for agency staff) in particular has not been seen as helpful by children's services managers.

The Council has increased the budget for children's services. The spending for Children's and Families Social Care shows increased funding after the first Ofsted review in 2011 and more resources following the Ofsted review in 2013⁵.

³ Figures provided by DfE, from Children in low income families local measure, 2011

⁴ Figures provided by DfE, from Annual population survey January to December 2012

⁵ Figures provided by SBC

	2008/09 £'000	2009/10 £'000	2010/11 £'000	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000
Children & Families Social Care Budget (Excluding Early Help and Youth Offending Team)	10,185	10,570	10,723	10,795	14,922	14,180	17,187
Total Children & Families (Budget)	10,989	11,476	11,510	11,956	16,312	16,224	18,993
Total Children & Families (Spend)	12,049	12,901	12,503	14,911	17,150	19,116	

The additional resources have been spent in 2013/14 mainly in two key areas: Looked After Children, including placements, and Commissioning and Social Work. This corresponds with recent staffing changes, particularly the restructuring of social work teams and the hiring of additional social workers.

Given continuing budget pressures, the Council's aim is to get to a point of more efficient use of children's social care budgets, with for example more preventative services and reduced costs of agency staffing. We feel a reducing profile of spend should be achievable in the medium and longer term.

Current structures and processes

Focus of leadership and management attention

Decision-making within the Council appears to us to have been rather reactive and focused on short term rather than sustainable solutions for the longer term; there is an impression of fire-fighting at all levels. It is clear, from several sources, that the year after the Spring 2011 Ofsted inspection was a period in which there was significant staff turbulence and firm foundations for improvement were not achieved. When the new senior leadership team for children's services was put in place in 2012, they discovered that the quality of social work was poorer than performance indicators suggested, and they had to tackle a series of fundamental improvements to address both the quality of social workers and social work practice. Getting to the depths of some of the problems kept management attention on operational issues, leaving little room for strategic leadership and delaying improvements in other areas of children's services. The planning for the Early Help service is one example of good intentions not being implemented as quickly as would have been desired. (The Council commissioned a review of Early Help between March and June 2013, and detailed plans were then produced, but there is still much to do in terms of real progress with implementation).

Local policies have been improving – for example Ofsted noted that thresholds are now at the right level – but after a period of a lot of change, there is unsurprisingly more to do to embed these securely and to ensure that a consistent framework of policy and practice is widely communicated and understood across the whole children's services system.

Organisational structure

Good intentions may also have created service fragmentation and other anomalies for children, young people and families when they interact with services. To spread the management load, some of the services that might normally be expected to be included within children's services have been located elsewhere. For example, the Chief Executive has played a significant role on education issues; following a separate review of education services, Children's Centres were outsourced in October 2013 to a private provider along with other educational services. (We understand that a recent Ofsted review of Children's Centres will be published shortly). Social work services for disabled children have been managed by the head of early years, education and special educational needs, who does not report to the AD for children's services. Operational commissioning is managed through the care group commissioning and contract management team.

How social care services have been organised is not fully consistent with the concepts of the Munro Review, which emphasise clarity of roles and responsibilities for a DCS (and lead member) and building a system in which professional judgement and practice can be valued. The current Strategic Director of Wellbeing has a wide span of responsibilities, and the professional group has been relatively dispersed, rather than closely integrated.

There are "very significant" corporate concerns about retaining 'critical mass' and about the potential impact of 'out of control' arrangements on other services, such as housing, that also support children and families.

Partnership working

The complexity of safeguarding children in any local authority requires cooperation and coordination from across many partners, including health commissioners (CCG) and healthcare services (primary, community and acute services), schools, and the police. This is quite complex, for example, Thames Valley Police covers 13 local policing areas, including the six ex-Berkshire unitary authorities, and have struggled to find capacity to respond to different local ways of doing things. Governance of the system in Slough is – as in other councils - in several places including the Wellbeing Board, the Children and Young People Partnership Board (CYPP, which is a subcommittee of the Wellbeing Board) and

the Local Safeguarding Children Board. We understand that the peer review of safeguarding in November 2012 suggested scope for strengthening the CYPP and that effort has been put into that; however there is still room for the children's partnership board to have more of an impact on vision, strategy and implementation. In our view, partnership discussions have lacked sufficient focus. The CYPP has published a vision, plans and priorities. We did not however identify a single, overarching children's services strategy that is actionable, with clearly stated and measurable outcomes and expectations for both the council and its partners, and which is widely understood across local stakeholders. System governance has suffered from this lack of sharper focus.

The Improvement Board met regularly and reported to Ministers about every six months between October 2011 and January 2014. The Improvement Board initially produced a detailed improvement plan with five themes and numerous targets and milestones, responding to specific points raised in the Ofsted review and to the Council's own baseline assessment in August 2011, although it apparently took some time for the Council and its partners to accept the extent of the improvement that needed to be made. Meetings were designed to review progress through scrutinising reports and sector-led reviews that were commissioned. The Improvement Board focussed on holding children's services to account and did not operate in ways which offered much challenge to the wider Council and partners.

There is evidence that the LSCB has been improving the focus and structure of its work, and that there have been some positive developments such as those acknowledged by Ofsted during its inspection and at the feedback meetings, for example the new scorecard for monitoring quality and performance. But there is clearly also room for more robust challenge across partners.

At operational level, we heard from Council staff as well as the police themselves about the impact of capacity issues within the police, for example officers inconsistently turning up to child protection strategy meetings. On two of the issues raised by Ofsted, we understand that there is progress: a pilot to test a multi-agency safeguarding hub for Slough has been agreed and development work is now underway; and work is in train with additional staffing to improve the quality of police referrals.

People and culture

When we met frontline staff and practice managers, and more senior managers, both agency and permanent, we heard a lot of commitment to improvement and to better outcomes for children and families.

Workforce and recruitment

The churn of social work staff in the last couple of years has inevitably had a direct and negative effect on children and young people. Some of the children and young people we met could not remember how many social workers they had had, or their names; they spoke about not being informed of changes in their social workers, and they described specific instances illustrating a lack of support and advocacy on their behalf, especially with schools.

Workforce problems were cited frequently and consistently by those we met, from staff to partners: so much change of personnel inevitably disrupts working relationships and leads to loss of confidence within the system. Although the number of permanent social workers has risen, the ratio of permanent to agency social workers has not improved as the total establishment has been increased. This raises risks about the security of improvement initiatives and about consistency of quality. Recruiting permanent social workers is difficult across a market that includes outer London on one side and shire counties on the other. There have been, and there are now, action plans and specific steps to aid recruitment and retention, including market supplements, workforce development and staff engagement, but we did not see a comprehensive and targeted current workforce strategy for social workers. Slough has a new programme for newly qualified social workers, and there are opportunities to do more to develop and retain them. During our meetings with staff, we heard about the need for more training and development and a clear career pathway for social workers, with further opportunities to “grow your own”. On balance, there is optimism that recruitment could be improved and a number of interviewees suggested positives that can be cited in recruitment, including opportunities to gain wide professional experience and ‘a nice place to live’.

Slough has also struggled to maintain sufficient capacity and capability of more senior level staff: we heard about a series of interim post holders in Heads of Service roles; until late December 2013, the ratio of permanent to interim Heads of Service was 1:4. Staff commented that this contributed to instability in the service, introduced inconsistent ways of working for social work practice, and limited improvements to short term gains. Slough’s improvement planning has increasingly recognised the need to invest in the management capacity to drive improvement. Recruitment of permanent or longer term Heads of Service was underway in autumn 2013 and appointments made in early 2014. Other steps were initiated in late 2013 to support improvement. For instance, additional funding for up to two years has been made available for an additional Head of Service to manage operational improvements and a second post to re-design the looked after children and care leavers transformation programme.

Social workers and staff in related roles are usually motivated by an ability to focus on direct work with children and families, and a culture that supports and values this (as set out in the Munro report). In Slough, the additional resources allocated to services for children in need and children in care have reduced social workers' caseloads and led to improved provision and staff morale, especially since January 2014. Other improvements include adjusting the threshold for children in care and restructuring social work teams and physically relocating them with their managers within the same space, with dedicated desk spaces and greater opportunities for case supervision. Staff gave a strong message about taking into account recent progress and improvements, but we also heard – particularly from staff and practice managers – a plea for stability and for strong leadership and management. Staff also recognised that in order to create a learning organisation that strives for the best for each child, there is a need to be able to look outwards and draw on new ideas and social work practices that work in other places.

Staff noted the importance of a clear vision and strategy for children's services across Slough. They were conscious that improvements need to be put in place across the whole system (i.e. that the model should cover a range of services, not just social care, for children, young people and families, especially those with complex needs). This broad scope was highlighted during the workshops because not everyone who attended had experienced improvements. For example, staff recognised that recent steps to improve frontline services would be limited unless similar investments were made elsewhere across the wider system of children's services, such as in early help. Staff were also clear that services could be realigned to better reflect the child's journey and that better engagement of partners would lead to improved multi-agency working. We heard a strong message about ensuring sufficient resources are allocated in the right places, and that internal systems and processes support good social work practice. Specific problems with HR procedures and IT were cited.

Culture

Examples of a blame culture in the past were mentioned, but we were told that the culture has shifted over recent months. One partner commented about the need to inject hope and optimism back into the service. During the interviews and workshops, we heard much about what it is like to work in Slough and the borough's ways of working. One striking point was that the culture in the past had not supported challenging poor social work practice and the quality of children's services overall.

We have seen much evidence of another aspect of the Council's culture - the number of external, sector-led and internal reviews, improvement boards (there are boards for four programmes in the current improvement plan), plans, reports,

initiatives and monitoring processes. There has been something of a well-motivated improvement industry, which may in fact have hampered rapid action by managers.

The CMT and other senior managers were keen to stress the commitment of the whole corporate organisation to supporting improvement in children's services, and this is evidenced for example by involvement in some of the boards and in improvement planning. There are however some tensions between children's services and some corporate functions, where procedures for sign-off or the configuration of common corporate systems (e.g. for agency staff or office space) has not been optimal for children's services.

Capacity for improvement

We tested our findings and thinking against a simple change model – the four factors that need to be in place for successful change to occur (see table below). Our recommendations for organisational and governance arrangements aim to help secure all four factors.

Factor	Assessment
Clear shared vision	<p>There has been progress in the last 18 months, but there is not yet a clear shared vision that is embedded across partners and relentlessly communicated to staff and implemented across the system.</p> <p>This is a result of insufficiently strong partnership governance arrangements and of the level of children's services leadership capacity.</p>
Pressure for change	<p>The pressure for change has been growing, from an apparently slow start in 2011, and it is clear that the Strategic Director of Wellbeing (DCS) and though the AD Children's Services have felt pressures in the last year or more. Different inspections and reviews have created a number of operational imperatives for change, one after the other.</p> <p>It is less clear that there has been consistent pressure for change on partners and the Council corporately.</p>
Capacity for change	<p>As identified consistently, social worker and manager recruitment and retention is the main factor. Without a stable workforce, it will remain difficult to get onto a sustained improvement trajectory.</p> <p>Change management expertise also appears to have been in insufficient supply: when wide and rapid change is needed,</p>

Factor	Assessment
	service managers need expert support to implement change and partnership bodies need mechanisms to enable their decisions to be implemented.
Actionable first steps	Perhaps as a result of shortage of capacity to plan and manage change (as above), there have been lots of actions, to the extent that some of them have been false starts and there has been much piecemeal activity.

Factors that need to be in place for successful change to occur

Transition issues

The Council and social work staff have rightly raised the risk of damaging the progress that is being made, and the potential distraction that could be caused by a lengthy transition process to new arrangements. (If anything, staff seem more concerned about the transition than about the nature of future arrangements). There is always some tension between creating conditions for faster change to secure arrangements for the longer term and upsetting existing conditions in the short term. In any transition, leadership is a key factor, for the services in question and from the parent Council.

Continuity of social work support for children in need and care is important. In turn this means creating stability for front-line workers and enabling them to focus on direct work. The children's services management team and staff signalled significant determination to 'stick with it'. Whatever the transition process, it will require enough leadership capacity to make the case for change, to lead the transition for social workers, and to secure commitment from partners. Good communications – both internal and external – will be critical, as there are numerous stakeholders who have learned to be sceptical and need to be bought in to the proposed arrangements. In addition, attention to effective planning and the identification of achievable milestones (and associated timetables) will be needed; early successes will demonstrate proof of concept and keep staff and partners on board.

Criteria and options

Dimensions of future arrangements

In the context of the terms of reference for this review, in particular the question of out of control of the council for a period, any future arrangements need to address a number of dimensions.

- **Whole system.** There has been a lot of attention in recent years to leadership of place and to best use of all local resources. Current initiatives include health and social care integration (including the government's Better Care Fund) and community budget pilots. In our view, 'control' is not the main issue at whole system level. Systems thinking recognises that trust, informal relationships and influence are as (if not more) important than formal structures like partnership boards. Local government should be well placed to provide leadership of the local system and to encourage effective partnership working. Children's services will clearly remain part of the local system too, so that the vision for children is part of the wider vision, children's services are linked to other local services (including council services like housing and adults and partners' services like health and policing) and budget setting can take account of needs analyses, priorities and funding pressures on councils.
- **Governance.** The Good Governance Standard for public services has six core principles (see Appendix 3) including clarity about governance roles, about decision-making and about making accountability real. Future governance of children's services will need to reflect such standard principles and to respond to the specific challenges identified by Ofsted and by this review.
- **Senior management and organisational design.** The executive leadership of children's services should be responsible for shaping plans, policies and practice, and needs appropriate delegated authority to make operational decisions and to lead the drive for improvement. The degree of future independence and authority of senior children's services managers will be relevant to how much control lies where. A local authority is required by law to appoint a DCS.

Common principles of good organisational design require that structures take account of spans of management control, how tasks are grouped into job roles, work flows across team and organisational boundaries, information flows and supporting systems and functions. (This would include arrangements for commissioning).

A 'classic' model for children's services is illustrated at Appendix 4.

Future arrangements should get the best mix across these dimensions, including appropriate checks and balances.

Conditions for success in children's services

For children's social care services, there are particular conditions which we believe are important to success.

1. **Articulating values and vision** – senior managers and other leaders talking and acting as a team. They must have a shared approach and view about their intention to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable children and about the provision of social care for children and families. This includes being clear about what children's social care is seeking to achieve
2. **A whole systems approach to strategic planning and service delivery for children** – from early help through protection to care and adoption – including
 - a. service design and delivery based on learning from experience, including feedback from service users about what works
 - b. a coherent mix of interventions, available at the right time and at the right level
 - c. the whole system promoting a culture of meeting need in the least intrusive and most universal way, reserving specialist services such as social care for those in the highest need
 - d. an adequate resource envelope for each tier of services, based on an analysis of need that promotes targeted, evidence-based interventions and prevents escalation of need/risk to the child.

This whole system approach needs to be developed, agreed and owned by all statutory partners and all providers of children services.

3. **A unifying use of theoretical models of evidence-based social work practice** – approaches should be used that are in line with local values and vision - such as systemic, strengths based, solution focused, motivational interviewing, and social learning approaches. Relational based approaches provide the skill base to enable social workers to help families to change, helping them to find solutions, so that the safety, development and well being of their children is enhanced. Having a unifying approach to social work across the organisation promotes good, evidence-informed practice, a coherent and consistent focus on the way the organisation operates and fidelity to an approach that can persist over time. This will lead to embedded

cultural change and improvement that is sustainable over the long term.

4. **A relentless focus on the recruitment, development and retention of social workers and social work managers in frontline practice with children and families** - clinical social work practice must be valued highly and this should be reflected in the support, qualification and career structure for social workers and their pay grades. Career progression must reflect individual performance – how learning is translated into practice and delivers better outcomes for children. A strategy must be in place and regularly reviewed to keep good social workers in frontline practice but also to achieve a healthy level of succession planning – growing high quality supervisors and managers from within the organisation whilst also being seen as an employer of choice by external applicants
5. **Social workers with a manageable workload which is regularly reviewed.** Social workers can only work effectively with a limited number of families. Allocating more than they can manage means workers and managers formally or informally decide to prioritise some cases and give limited attention to others. Whilst there is no ideal number because manageability depends on the nature of cases and the professional capabilities of the practitioner, a range should be set beyond which an alert should be made. Controlling workload through high-quality supervision is necessary to promote effective analysis of risk and appropriate intervention. This means that social workers get involved with the most vulnerable children, so work with few cases but more intensely and decisively.
6. **Social care teams small enough to allow team managers to know both staff and families well.** The complexity of the families that social workers deal with requires them to receive high quality, regular, reflective and appropriately challenging supervision and for cases to have good case management oversight with careful and thoughtful decision making in respect of risk and next best steps.
7. **Service design which minimises the number of changes to key worker/transfers between teams and also respects the need for some specialism across children social work teams.** There needs to be clarity about the role and purpose of each team from contact and referral through to adoption, with simple rules about the management oversight of the way in which cases flow between teams. Co-location and integration or secondment of multidisciplinary professionals may be appropriate.
8. **An operational culture of dialogue, reflective thinking, feedback, learning and support.** The organisation needs to be proactive in respect of the risks that present in children's social work and to

promote sensible approaches to growing confidence and expertise. High quality performance should be expected from all staff, and learning and accountability woven into the fabric of operating approaches. This includes having clearly understood systems, supported by the culture of delegation in respect of decision making in respect of casework and financial management, and of promoting accountability and responsibility at the appropriate level right through the organisation

9. **An aspirant and system-wide approach to improvement and performance.** In addition to action to address specific issues identified by inspections, peer reviews, self audits and local performance analysis, a broader and long-term view about the total improvement journey to 'outstanding' is needed. This should be supported by a comprehensive performance approach, with good and timely information across a range of indicators and outcomes at individual, team and service level. A good quality case audit process will reliably look at quality of practice, the outcome for the child and family and the business processes.
10. **Appropriate practical support** – such as adequate working space, good ICT systems and strong administrative support to reduce the bureaucratic burdens on social workers and social work managers.

Criteria

From our analysis and understanding of typical conditions for success, we identified criteria to guide our recommendations for future arrangements. These are specific to Slough and focus on children's social care services. In addition, future arrangements for Slough need to comply with general requirements including statutory requirements in relation to a DCS and responsibilities for youth justice, and new legislation for example in relation to health visitors.

Our criteria

We identified the following specific criteria:

— Focus on outcomes for children, including

- able to firmly establish the local model of relationship-based social work and a culture of reflective practice and peer challenge
- ensuring the bed rock of social work practice, supervision and caseloads
- bringing key services together

- supporting pathways from early help services through to children in need and looked after children and associated arrangements for commissioning external services (such as early interventions)
- **Capacity to focus on improvement and consistency of implementation**, including
- out of control of SBC for a period - as required by our TOR - and able to concentrate on shaping and sticking to a longer term improvement plan
 - executive leadership and senior management which has the capacity, depth of expertise and delegated authority to build on recent progress and quickly drive forward further improvement in operational performance
 - sufficient budget and predictable resourcing for an initial period
- **Clear and focussed governance**, including
- sustained focus on improvement and 'clout' for children's services in discussions with partners
 - constructive and efficient relationships with related Council services
 - accountability and openness challenge, with appropriate "checks and balances"
- **Tailored support functions**, including ability to arrange
- support for workforce strategy - recruiting, motivating, retaining, and developing social workers and other staff
 - suitable working environments
 - enhanced change management capacity
- **Rapid and smooth transition** to a 'soft landing', including
- minimising unsettling impact on children and staff, and accelerating good improvement initiatives already in train
 - capacity to manage transition process without placing the entire burden on children's services managers.

Options

Main options

The team have been keen to explore a range of potential options.

We have recognised in this process that the social work practice pilots⁶ support looked after children but do not cover the full range of social care functions and that there is not an established provider market for the full range of children's social care services⁷. This means that out-sourcing (and associated joint venture) options are not readily available at this point.

While the team were available on-site, we sought suggestions from the Council. The option of a new improvement board was raised, involving experienced experts in improvement and partnership working, to challenge strongly both the council and partners. There were also suggestions that this might be supported by a strategic partnership with another authority. These approaches would leave control of children's social care with the council. At the end of the review the Council shared proposals which would achieve 'out of control' through the role of a commissioner reporting to Ministers with the power to direct the Council on children's social care improvement, with a supporting external panel of experts, and additional management capacity in children's services. These proposals are included in full at Appendix 5. As the Council acknowledges, under these proposals the precision of governance and accountability would need to be worked out. Our criteria require simpler governance, clear positioning of top management authority and responsibility for marching children's services out of present difficulties, and more focus on workforce issues. We do not support the Council's proposals.

We have therefore focused on two types of option: provision by another local authority and an independent organisation.

Provision by another authority

We looked at the arrangements between Hampshire County Council (HCC) and the Isle of Wight Council (IOW) and the conditions which enabled this agreement to be reached.

⁶ See

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130802215226/http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/social/socialworkreform/a0068761/swp-additional-pilots>

⁷ Report to the Secretary of State for Education and the Minister for Children and Families on ways forward for children's social care services in Birmingham, Professor Julian Le Grand, Alan Wood, Isabelle trawler et al, February 2014

In addition to a constructive approach from the receiving authority, self-evidently there needs to be another authority with the capacity and willingness to take on the provision of leadership and management of children's services. There are clearly significant risks for the providing authority and these were carefully assessed by HCC. Key factors were the stability of the provider's children's management team, the scale of the provider's services, the degree of control delegated to the incoming DCS and, more practically, travel times between the two councils. Under the HCC/IOW agreement, HCC provides the DCS for IOW who reports direct to the IOW Council, so the arrangement is not fully out of control of IOW Council.

We were informed that the Chief Executive and DCS at SBC have had informal conversations with a number of other authorities, and we understand that SBC's interest at least in partnering has therefore become quite well known in the sector.

The review team also explored options of this type with a small number of directors of children's services. From these discussions, it seems that in principle the sector feels that authorities should be open to this option. However DCSs clearly have to take account of political acceptability in their own authority, and of the available management capacity and local service pressures and the ability to make a long term commitment. We understand that, if there were to be a more formal approach from DfE, one large authority would be prepared to look at this option seriously.

Independent organisation

We have looked at spin outs from local authorities⁸ and at the trust arrangements being developed for Doncaster⁹, not as blueprints but as frameworks from which an independent organisation might be shaped to fit our criteria for Slough.

The Education Act 1996 as amended by the Children Act 2014 gives the Secretary of State (SoS) intervention powers with respect to a local authority's performance of its functions. In essence, a direction which transfers responsibility for children's social care from the council can take three main forms:

- a requirement that a local authority to act in a certain way. A direction of this kind was used to support the voluntary HCC/IOW arrangements;

⁸ Such as Achieving for Children, a social enterprise established jointly by Richmond upon Thames and Kingston councils

⁹ Including

Report to the Secretary of State for Education on Ways Forward for Children's Services in Doncaster. Professor Julian Le Grand, Alan Wood, Dame Moira Gib et al, May 2013

Proposal for a Doncaster Children's Trust, Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council, August 2013

- a direction that certain functions will be performed on behalf of the council by a specified organisation (under subsection 4 of section 497A of the 1996 Act). We understand this approach was applied to the Hackney Learning Trust and is being applied to the Doncaster Trust. It is likely to result in a contract to deliver services to the Council. The Council retains client functions. Negotiation of the arrangements between DfE, the appointed commissioner and Doncaster Council have been lengthy;
- a requirement that a nominee undertake functions instead of the local authority (subsection 4a). This would be likely to result in a contract between the Secretary of State and the provider organisation.

Recommendations

Scope

Our terms of reference require us to advise which services should be out of control of SBC for a period. In order to achieve a strong and consistent focus on outcomes for children, we recommend the future organisational arrangements for children's social care should bring together the following services:

- First contact/front door, Early Help
- Troubled families and targeted family support
- Assessment and Children in Need
- SEN and LDD
- Children's centres
- Child Protection
- Looked after children
- Placements, including fostering and adoption, and residential unit
- Council-owned children's home
- Virtual school
- Operational commissioning for children's services – such as commissioning of early help and placements, and in future commissioning of Health Visitors as well as School Nurses
- Quality assurance, IROs and LADO
- Safeguarding and LSCB support
- Administrative and business support for above services

- System improvement and change management.

The future arrangements should allow the children's services organisation to make choices about support functions including

- Finance
- Performance management
- HR – strategic and transactional
- Learning and professional development
- IT and information systems
- Communications
- Facilities and office accommodation.

We assume that the following would remain under Council control:

- Education functions (including school places, education client function and out-sourced provider of school support and related services)
- Youth Services
- Youth Offending Team.

Organisational and governance arrangements

Of the two options, the option of provision by another authority remains speculative at this point. At the end of the review process, only one possible provider authority had been identified as prepared to consider it, and the team has not been in a position to take forward detailed discussions to develop this option. We recommend that this option should be rapidly explored. (The agreement in principle between HCC and IOW was reached quickly, and this should not be a prolonged process).

In terms of the criteria we have identified, this option could potentially offer:

- a benefit in faster pace of change and a less complex transition;
- experienced top and senior level management capacity able quickly to
 - Focus on outcomes for children and social work practice
 - Lead a faster drive for improvement.

To meet our governance and other criteria, the incoming DCS would need to have clear delegated authority (including in relation to the organisation of children's services within the scope recommended above and in relation to support functions) and to be accountable outside of the Council, for example to a commissioner or a board appointed by Ministers.

We are confident that the second option, an independent organisation, could fully meet our criteria. It would require a more complex transition, which could be managed. We set out below the key features that we recommend for an independent children's services organisation (CSO).

An independent children's services organisation

Governance

There would be a small, integrated board of governance for the CSO, with a majority of non-executives and with specific expertise and track record in shaping and sharing a 3-5 year vision and improvement plan for children's services, and with ability to work within the context of other local plans and appropriately to challenge partners.

The board membership should therefore include

- Robust non-executive chair with experience of successful improvement planning and monitoring performance, ideally in children's services
- SBC lead member with responsibility for children and families – to link with wider Council developments and to maintain and build the Council's knowledge of children's services improvement
- Two non-executive directors with following expertise
 - Staff engagement and HR – to take particular responsibility at board level for hearing the voice of social workers, the principal social worker, and other key staff¹⁰ and for workforce strategy
 - Sector knowledge of effective partnership working for children – helpfully this would be a sector 'name' with experience from another council to provide links to wider developments and ways of working
- Up to three executive board members (see below).

We would expect the chair and the two external non-executives to be appropriately remunerated.

Senior management and organisational design

The design of the organisational structure for the CSO should provide enough senior leadership and management capacity to focus on improvement and to manage what will be (in EU terms) a medium sized enterprise.

¹⁰ This is similar to arrangements that have been used at Central Surrey Health (community health services owned by the employees) and is an alternative to a directly elected staff representative.

We would expect to see at least three senior managers as follows:

- a CEx with experience as a top manager of children's services
- a social care senior manager (cf current AD) with line management of the heads of the core social care services from front door to looked after children
- a senior resources manager able to cover finance, workforce, commissioning and other support functions.

Given the turnover and demand in the local government market for directors of children's services, and the cost of chief officer level posts, we suggest there is a strong case for the CEx of a CSO to provide the statutory DCS role to the Council and to be seconded to the Council to cover other DCS functions. This would need to be agreed by the Council and reflected in the nature of the direction. This approach might also ease future transition back into the Council in future.

We would expect the detailed organisational design be worked out during the transition process, and indeed to evolve as improvement plans are implemented. (Some of the functional splits between existing teams might for example be changed over time). From the outset the organisation should include capacity to manage change programmes.

This organisational design does not of course preclude working in partnership with other local authorities or with private or voluntary providers on particular improvement workstreams. For example in relation to workforce development for social workers, there could be advantages in developing a social work academy and a larger community of professional practice with a partner.

Legal form

The legal form of an independent CSO, and the ownership and constitutional documents, need to enable the above governance and organisational arrangements to be achieved. They should also:

- Lock in a purpose which focuses on children and young people (C&YP) and communities and ensures that resources/assets have to be used for that purpose. This will provide reassurance to staff and communities.
- Provide independence for the board of the CSO, by majority voting, to
 - Decide on the improvement strategy and associated corporate and team business plans and resource allocation within an agreed budget
 - Delegate authority to the executive leadership team to shape detailed structures, policies and procedures, including HR policies, staff terms and conditions, support functions, information etc.
- Have an ownership structure which

- Encourages accountability to C&YP and the local community
- Is not controlled by the Council (as required by our TOR)
- Avoids capture by any sectional interest.

The flexibility for C&YP representatives to have a voice, perhaps through membership or ownership would be valuable. Similarly staff could have a growing voice - as a more stable workforce develops¹¹.

- Provide limited liability
- Enable indemnities to be provided so that the Council and a new CSO are not open to inappropriate liabilities.

An important aim would also be to minimise unnecessary disruption or anxiety for staff on transfer out (and future return to) the Council. Access to the LGPS as an admitted body is likely to be important to staff and it would need to be emphasised that terms and conditions would be protected under TUPE on transfer of services out and in.

We feel that a community interest company, limited by guarantee, is likely to be a suitable form. The initial members of the company could be taken from the new organisation and should include the Council.

The finalisation of a legal form, with specialist input, should also take account of:

- The need to avoid competitive procurement in the provision of the social care services
- The status of the organisation in relation to acquisition of support services¹²
- The risk that VAT on input services will not be reclaimable.

Whole system governance

The statutory Local Safeguarding Children Board exists to co-ordinate and secure the effectiveness of safeguarding. It should hold all agencies, including children's social care and related council services, to account. The national Working Together guidance sets out the members who must be included on a LSCB including councils, partner agencies, schools and colleges, lay members

¹¹ There could be some learning from Aspire West Sussex, a spin out from West Sussex County Council. It is registered as a Company Limited by Guarantee. The Staff Representative Group are associate members of Aspire. The constitution outlines the role of staff as associate members to reflect the value of staff in the new company and this provides a platform through which to ensure employee input is properly considered.

¹² If the independent organisation is deemed to be a contracting body under public procurement regulations, we understand it would be expected to go to market to procure any of its support services.

and the lead elected member as a participating observer. The Slough LSCB has been making progress, but we believe this should be accelerated.

We recommend that to signal a further step change, for the future the independent chair of the LSCB should be jointly appointed by the Council and the Chair of the board of governance of the CSO or the incoming DCS, and should be subject to final approval by the Secretary of State. A CSO should have at least one representative on the LSCB.

The local Children and Young People's Partnership Board should remain an important forum for integrating the vision and strategy for local children's services across agencies, in the context of the local Wellbeing Board, and potentially for new developments such as joint commissioning of some services. We understand that the local objective is to keep a relatively small and senior executive group within the CYPPB, and a CSO should have at least one place on this executive group. A CSO should be required to consult this executive group (which is chaired by the Council) as part of the development of its plans, and to publish its annual plan to the Council and the CYPPB.

Transition

The Council will remain responsible for improving children's social care and for leadership and management of staff until new arrangements are in place.

This sort of process is bound to be unsettling for staff and to have potential to exacerbate any existing tensions within the Council. In terms of the impact on children, the aim should be to move smoothly and swiftly to new governance, leadership and organisational arrangements.

There will be an **interim period** while this report is considered and there are discussions between DfE and the Council. We hope this can be short – less than three months.

In any case, we recommend that a **strategic improvement mentor** should be appointed. This would be an experienced DCS who can advise on issues as they arise and work with children's services managers and staff on continuing improvements and support them as they go into the transition. It should be understood that this strategic improvement mentor would also have the right and responsibility to advise Ministers should any new developments arise which would materially affect the analysis and recommendations in this report or transition plans as they are developed.

We are well aware that **transition to an independent organisation** – whether voluntarily or under direction - can be complex and time consuming. There are

many aspects that might need to be addressed including setting up a new legal entity, staff consultation, budget disaggregation, assignment of contracts as appropriate, assets and facilities, arrangements for support services and making new governance and leadership appointments as required.

The aim must be to maximise the pace and the minimise distraction for services. The transition should therefore be managed as a discrete project. Children's services will need support during the transition process (spin outs often appoint a project manager and have independent professional advisers during transition processes) and there will be additional costs of the transition process. We understand that DfE is prepared to support relevant costs.

The nature of the direction is a matter for Ministers and will we assume take account of discussions with the Council. A principal determinant should, in our view, be the ability to achieve a smooth and rapid transition, in the interests of the children and young people.

Duration of arrangements

The timescale for improvement could be relatively quick, if the new organisation is able to focus on consistent implementation of improvement plans and if the commitment of staff can be built on alongside a new workforce strategy. We recommend that the direction and arrangements should be reviewed after four full years of operation under new arrangements, which should give time for the achievement and resilience of improvements to be assessed.

Appendix 1 – Local contributors

List of people who contributed to the review through meetings, interviews and workshops

From Slough Borough Council:

- Council Leader
- Lead Member for children's services
- Chief Executive
- Strategic Director for Wellbeing (and Director of Children's Services)
- Strategic Director, Customer and Community Services
- Strategic Director, Resources, Housing and Regeneration
- Chair, Slough Local Safeguarding Children's Board
- Former Chair, Slough Children's Services Improvement Board
- Assistant Director, Children, Young People and Families
- Heads of Service in Children, Young People and Families (7)
- Team/Practice Managers (workshop)
- Social work and other staff (two workshops)
- Head of Early Years, School Services and Special Needs (including social work with LDD children)
- Assistant Director, Finance and Audit
- Assistant Director of Professional Services (HR)
- Assistant Director, Adult Social Care

Children and Young People

- Members of Slough's Children in Care Council

Thames Valley Police

- Borough Commander (Local Policing Area Commander)
- Former Borough Commander (Local Policing Area Commander)
- Detective Superintendent, Protecting Vulnerable People

Cambridge Education Service

- Divisional Director

Schools

- Headteacher, primary school – member of LSCB
- Executive Headteacher, secondary college – member of LSCB

Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust

- Regional Director, East of Berkshire
- Deputy Locality Director

NHS Berkshire East CCG Federation (including Slough CCG)

- Director of Nursing

NHS England Thames Valley Area Team

- Safeguarding Lead, Nursing Directorate
- Assistant Director, Nursing and Patient Experience

Appendix 2 – Documents

List of documents and materials related to Slough children's services

Background information

- Ofsted Review, February 2014
- Ofsted Review 2011
- Improvement Notice, 2011
- Note of DfE ministerial meeting with SBC, May 2012
- 'Getting it Right for Children in Slough' - Improving Children's Services in Slough – Journey travelled and progress update (SBC, March 2014)
- Summary Position Statement for the DfE Review (SBC, April 2014)
- Children and Young People's Plan 2011-14 (and needs analysis)
- Children and Young People's Plan Refresh 2013-15
- SBC budgets and expenditures on children's services (SBC, including trend data)
- Population and expenditure data comparing SBC to similar local areas (DfE)
- Timeline 2011-2016 (SBC, April 2014)
- Redbook (March 2014)
- Needs and Risk Assessment Framework for Children's Social Care (February 2013)
- LSCB Constitution 2012
- LSCB Annual Report 2012-13
- LSCB Business Plan 2014-17
- Slough Children and Young People's Partnership Board Children and Young People's Engagement Plan 2013-2015
- Slough Children and Young People's Partnership Board Children's Workforce Strategy 2014-2016

Improvement Board, improvement reports and improvement plans

- Confidential reports from the Improvement Board to the DfE (Reports 1, 2, 3 and 5)
- Sector-led improvement reviews, 2011-12 (C4EO reports – LSCB, Improvement and Prevention, Independent Reviewing Service, Performance Management)
- Peer review feedback presentation (November 2012)

- Learning and development framework for children, young people and families service 2013-16
- Draft LSCB Learning and Improvement Framework (April 2014)
- Draft Slough LSCB Threshold (August 2013)
- SLSCB Quality Assurance and Performance Framework Scorecard (March 2014)
- Briefing: Progress to Deliver Ofsted Priority and Immediate Actions (SBC, February 2014)
- Slough Children's Services Improvement Plan 2014 to 2016 (April 2014)
- Slough Early Help Report 'Getting It Right for Children in Slough' (July 2013)
- Early Help Improvement Programme
- Early help Project Plan 2014
- Looked After Children and Care Leavers Improvement Programme (SBC, April 2014)

Organisational structures

- Slough Wellbeing Structure, including Children's Partnership Board, LSCB and HWB
- Council Management Structure
- Care Group Commissioning and Contract Management Structure
- Children's Services in Slough
- Children, Young People and Families Structure

Social work practice and performance

- Weekly caseload reports (movement of cases allocated to CIN and Assessment)
- Child protection statistics and performance data
- Staffing profile (April 2014)
- Briefing: Snap shot team 'performance' April 2014 compared to December 2013 (SBC, April 2014)
- Briefing: Assessment and CIN Service – an improving picture (SBC, April 2014)
- Slough's Local Protocol for Assessment (March 2014)
- Good Practice Workshops – plans April 2014 to May 2015

Appendix 3 – Good governance standard

The standard comprises six core principles of good governance, each with its supporting principles.

1. Good governance means focusing on the organisation's purpose and on outcomes for citizens and service users

- Being clear about the organisation's purpose and its intended outcomes for citizens and service users
- Making sure that users receive a high quality service
- Making sure that taxpayers receive value for money

2. Good governance means performing effectively in clearly defined functions and roles

- Being clear about the functions of the governing body
- Being clear about the responsibilities of non-executives and the executive, and making sure that those responsibilities are carried out
- Being clear about relationships between governors and the public

3. Good governance means promoting values for the whole organisation and demonstrating the values of good governance through behaviour

- Putting organisational values into practice
- Individual governors behaving in ways that uphold and exemplify effective governance

4. Good governance means taking informed, transparent decisions and managing risk

- Being rigorous and transparent about how decisions are taken
- Having and using good quality information, advice and support
- Making sure that an effective risk management system is in operation

5. Good governance means developing the capacity and capability of the governing body to be effective

- Making sure that appointed and elected governors have the skills, knowledge and experience they need to perform well
- Developing the capability of people with governance responsibilities and evaluating their performance, as individuals and as a group
- Striking a balance, in the membership of the governing body, between continuity and renewal

6. Good governance means engaging stakeholders and making accountability real

- Understanding formal and informal accountability relationships
- Taking an active and planned approach to dialogue with and accountability to the public
- Taking an active and planned approach to responsibility to staff
- Engaging effectively with institutional stakeholders.

Appendix 4 – A ‘classic’ model of a children’s service

The structural model below has been put in place and used in some authorities to good effect to balance the need for a level of specialist understanding of practice and focus, such as work with children in care or families subject to child protection plans, whilst trying to provide consistency and a limited numbers of changes of social workers for the family. Some functions such as the provision of appropriate advice, information and triage, assessment and targeted early help require an authority-wide consistent approach. There are varying versions of the structure below; teams may be called different names, may have multi-disciplinary professionals, cases transferred at slightly different points etc.

A ‘classic’ model of a children’s service

Access	Child in Need and Child protection	Care Services	Quality assurance	Strategic support
Targeted Early Help services (maybe including troubled family work, possibly children’s centres or links with children centres)	Family support and child protection including ongoing children in need work	Children in Care teams Young people leaving care teams	Child protection case conference chairs Independent reviewing arrangements	Business support Performance information Children’s strategic commissioning
Advice, Information & Consultation	Children with disability Targeted support services that prevent the need for children to be in care or in receipt of child protection plans	Fostering (recruitment and support) Adoption (recruitment and support) Family finding post adoption support	Quality assurance Local authority designated officers LSCB support staff	Partnership support Customer complaints Advocacy Involvement Participation
Contact, Referral & Assessment children social care	Family centres (Work prior to care proceedings)	Special guardianship Children’s homes	Learning and development	Policy and procedure Contracts / commissioning
Multi-agency safeguarding hub	Principal social worker role operating across the whole service	Externally sourced placements		

Appendix 5 – Proposals from SBC

PROPOSAL FOR NEW IMPROVEMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE

Introduction

The proposal following has been developed by the lead Members and Corporate Management Team of the Council taking into account the draft criteria of the Review Panel, the Minister's direction that Children Social Care Services should be 'out of Council hands' for a period and the Council's criteria as discussed with the Review Panel.

We believe these proposals provide the optimum balance of achieving rapid and sustainable improvement whilst mitigating significant risks evident in models of out of council control, as they would apply to the conditions in Slough. We judge there to be very significant risks to the Children Social Care Services (CSC) of long drawn out yet radical change and to the stability of wider Council statutory and other services many of which are key to achieving good outcomes for all children in Slough. We believe that our proposed model could be implemented far more rapidly than other options and that the recruitment of improvement partner/s could be almost immediate and certainly faster than a takeover or trust model.

We have reached this proposal having considered the Trust and 'takeover' models and found them not to meet our criteria notably those of rapid improvement and minimising the risk to the services and to current improvement. We have also concluded that the Hants/IOW 'takeover' model has been an opportunity derived from a range of local and other circumstances which are not applicable to Slough.

Should these proposals be adopted, the Council will feel able to commit fully its corporate and service resources to accelerating the present trajectory of improvement. We will be able to build on the foundations and resources already laid and commissioned without delay and achieve Good within 3 years.

I set out below the criteria and rationale, a summary of the proposed model and some outstanding issues for discussion.

Aim

To ensure that life-enhancing outcomes for all Slough children and families are delivered against our Wellbeing Strategy partnership priorities.

We believe this is best supported by a unitary authority approach with services and partners working in an integrated way.

Criteria

- Enable rapid and sustainable improvement to CSC Services, introducing best practice and cultural shift to achieve Good within 3 years
- Deliver "out of council hands"
- Tailored to local circumstance
- Minimise the disruption to services and accelerate the current trajectory of improvement
- Mitigate the risks to sustained improvement of the future re-integration of Children's Social Care services if separated from other Council services
- Ensure the critical mass of any new model for provision is sufficient and that services within the Council that support the quality of life of children in Slough (adult social care, housing, health and leisure) continue to thrive and support Children's Social Care services
- Ensure that local partners remain committed and active stakeholders and deliver improvement
- Achieve a financially sustainable solution which will protect SBC's ability to deliver other essential services

Proposal

A Commissioner accountable to the Secretary of State and afforded the powers to control and direct the Council in decisions relating to the improvement of children's social care and, if it can be achieved, to direct key partners in education, police and health sectors. The Commissioner to have:

- Experience of public sector management at the most senior level
- Thorough understanding and a track record of responding to the challenges facing children's social care and the services supporting wider outcomes for children and families
- Expertise and experience of significant cross-sector partnership working
- The necessary powers to direct the Council in relation to the delivery of improvement in children's services

- Direct access to the Leader, Cabinet member, Chief Executive and DCS, who will be accountable to him/her for delivering action and improvement.

And will be the Chair of a multiagency panel, to which the Council and partners will formally report at agreed intervals and be held to account.

A supporting Panel to the Commissioner consisting of:

- Children's social care expert, e.g. DCS
- Police representative of national credibility and from a force-wide management team level
- Health representative of national credibility and experience at a regional/strategic management level, i.e. with experience or oversight of primary and acute services

The Panel will:

- Report to the Commissioner
- Provide expert advice to him/her,
- Provide critical challenge and provide the Commissioner with the capacity to hold the Council and, where possible partners, to account
- Act as the *improvement partners*; provide expert support, best practice, transformational capacity, possibly leadership of specific projects, and access where appropriate to calibre and capacity to drive rapid change
- Have access to senior leaders and meet with service managers and staff, to drive improvement in CSC services and partner services and to ensure that the Council's wider organisational development is aligned.

We believe that the commitment requirements of the DCS in this improvement relationship will most likely be greater than the time requirements of the other two panel members. If expertise on all improvement needs cannot be provided by the panel, other specific project support will be commissioned.

There are a range of established multi-agency fora which are responsible for delivery and improvement, e.g. LSCB, Early Help Board. We would not propose to add to these but would expect that the senior leadership of the Council and its partners would meet the Commissioner and Panel periodically as above.

Management and support capacity

The Council CSC service to be led by a Director of Children's Services with responsibility for Children and Families and Education services and an Assistant Director for Children and Families. The present Directorate of Wellbeing would as a consequence be split up.

These posts will be supported by new posts already recruited to:

- Transformation Programme and Development Manager (20 month contract). This post, which is designed for a transformational change agent, will initially focus on transforming the Looked after Children and Care Leavers pathway and services with the aim of achieving better outcomes whilst building in sustainability and future proofing. It is also designed to prove the concept of a change agent and, if the role and individual prove effective, will firstly be focused on other projects and secondly the permanency of the role will be considered. It will report both to the AD C&F and for the LAC project to the Strategic Director of Regeneration, Housing and Resources who is chairing the related corporate working group.
- Head of Service Special Projects: 12 months minimum (renewable) This post, for a qualified experienced social worker at Head of service equivalent, is designed to remove important but routine decision making from the desk of the Assistant Director of C&F and allow that role to concentrate on driving improvement in service quality. Recruited.
- Improvement programme management, 24 month, currently being recruited
- The Effectiveness of Social Work Practice Audit: 24 month (renewable) providing additional highly experienced senior social work capacity to increase the volume of case files audited through the existing monthly audit programme, and in so doing increasing the assurance of improvement in quality of work and the experience of children, young people and families. In discussion.

The Council is also injecting capacity from other services and reducing obstacles to improvement through:

- Looked after Children and Care Leavers working group – led by the Strategic Director as above and comprising senior representatives from all relevant services
- Workforce Strategy group – led by the Strategic Director of Wellbeing and comprising senior representatives from across the Council and commissioning additional support

- Business processes group – led by the Strategic Director of Customer and Community Services which is reviewing businesses processes with the aim of reducing unnecessary process and ensuring the right action is taken by the right person and achieving the best balance between social workers and administrative support.

The Council's other corporate programmes will support improvement and ensure the impact of the Council acting corporately will be felt. They are embraced in our 'Fit for the Future' headline derived from a past outline Workforce Strategy and a more recent review and adoption of an OD strategy aiming to change the culture and practice of the Council and achieve transformation in a changing world. Those completed or in progress include:

- Senior Leadership Programme – first phase completed; Aspiring Leaders Programme – first cohort completed; Management Development Programme to embrace every manager within the Council – second cohort in progress and third in planning. All levels include managers from within Children's social care
- Council-wide and comprehensive staff engagement programme – planning completed and launch planned in June
- Comprehensive review of governance to create a Council for the current environment and particularly to enable an empowered management and staff practice. This has entailed reviews of our financial and procurement processes and delegations – completed; our Scheme of Delegations – close to completion; review of remainder of Constitution – elements completed.
- Upgrading of our of programme management approach and increase in capacity
- Ongoing staff wellbeing strategy – in place for two years
- Management Charter and competencies – adopted a year ago.

The Council will in June be launching a restructure of HR and L&D functions, the proposals of which will increase the strategic organisational development and HR capacity of the Council. This will enable more intensive support and challenge to be provided to organisational change.

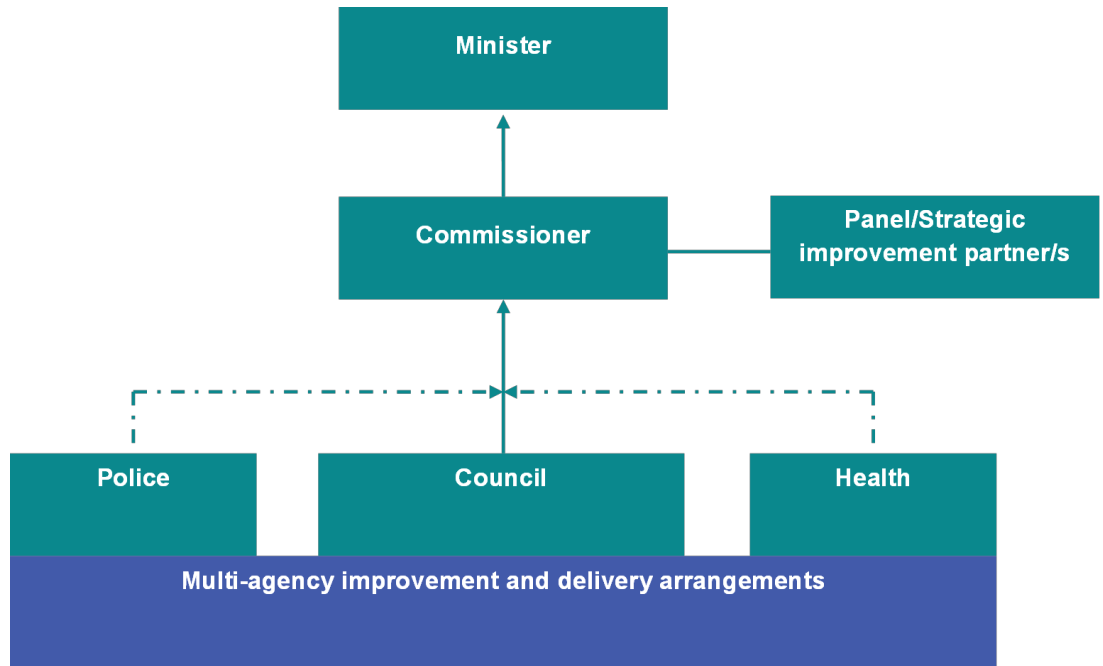
Rationale

Our rationale for this approach is that:

- It delivers 'out of Council control' and gives clear governance – subject to comments below on an earlier model
- It can be swiftly delivered so delivering rapid drive, mitigating the risks of delay or disruption to the improvement trajectory and particularly to staff stability. This model can be implemented far more rapidly and without diversion of valuable resource than other options. The recruitment of improvement partner/s could be almost immediate.
- It provides significant expertise through the Commissioner, Panel and strategic partners to challenge and support all local partners
- It ties partners in, offers them challenge and potentially direction
- Discussions with possible local authority partners suggest there will be willing partners, so mitigating the principal obstacle to the 'takeover' model
- It enables a simple re-entry strategy with options for a swift or incremental reduction in oversight
- The basic availability of key individuals for the Commissioner and Panel is little different from the Trust model, yet may be more able to recruit
- It maintains and offers greater focus on the Council's ability to bring other services to support CSC
- It does not render other Council statutory and essential delivery less viable

It will have the support of the Council leadership and management and, we anticipate of local partners

Outline structure



Unresolved matters

- Can the Commissioner be given powers to direct or heavily influence other sectors?
- The precision of the governance, accountability and roles needs discussion. The Council's earlier model clearly separated accountability and delivery since that appeared to be a key requirement of any model. We were advised that it was unnecessarily complex and we recognised the risk of multiple and conflicting specialist views. This model has the benefit of reducing the range of specialist views yet this would have to be balanced against the risk of creating a conflict of interest for Panel members.
- Agreeing suitable individuals and agencies with the necessary expertise as Commissioner, Panel and strategic improvement partner. The Council has had initial discussions with various organisations and individuals and would wish to be consulted.
- Cost. Clearly there are costs over and above the present arrangements, as there would be with a Trust or Takeover. In whichever case the Council would expect available expertise to be brought to bear on sustainable financial solutions. We will also look to the DfE to close a significant gap. Ian indicated this would be a possibility.