



achieving
for children

Interim Business Plan 2018/19

Executive Summary

Introduction

The admission of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead into Achieving for Children in August 2017, alongside a change to the political leadership of the two founding Councils in May 2018 and the retirement of the company's Chief Executive in September 2018, provide a timely opportunity for the Councils and the Board of Directors to review the future direction and business strategy of its company. For these reasons, the company has produced an interim business plan for 2018/19 so that future priorities can be determined by the longer-term vision and strategy. A full three year business plan will be produced for 2019 to 2022.

All three of the owning Councils face challenging financial settlements which means that the company must operate within its budget, including the delivery of planned efficiency savings. At the same time demand for services is increasing, predominantly support and placements for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and new statutory responsibilities to provide support and accommodation for care leavers until the age of 25. The business plan for 2018/19 must focus on ensuring the company is able to better manage demand, deliver the required efficiency savings and achieve longer-term financial sustainability; balanced with a drive to maintain the quality of those services and support innovation.

The programmes in the business plan are based on our conviction that, in order to meet the financial challenge, manage demand, maintain the quality of services and achieve the best possible outcomes for children, young people and families, we must truly focus our work on four key areas: building resilience in families; creating local provision that meets identified needs; promoting inclusion; and supporting independence. The business plan sets out the projects that the company will deliver, or start to deliver, over the next 12 months to meet these aims. The majority of these projects will be delivered across Kingston, Richmond and Windsor and Maidenhead; however, some actions and projects have been designed to meet specific local challenges or circumstances. The business plan does not include day-to-day business, but we will continue to maintain our attention on providing those early help, education, health and social care services that many families rely on.

The delivery of the each programme will be championed by a senior leader in Achieving for Children. A senior manager will be responsible for leading each project to ensure it remains on track to deliver the desired outcome and efficiency savings. Key milestones, success measures and risks have been identified and these, together with progress, will be monitored and reported quarterly to the Board of Directors and to the Councils through the Operational Commissioning Group.

Programmes and projects

We want to transform the way we deliver services so that we can continue to achieve excellent outcomes for children, young people and their families within a climate of reducing financial resources. The programmes in our plan are ambitious; however, we are confident that they will provide children and young people with the best possible opportunities to live safe, happy and successful lives. We have identified five key programmes:

- Resilience;
- Capacity;
- Inclusion;
- Independence; and
- Resources.

Underneath each of these programmes are the key projects that will help us to deliver the desired outcomes. Each programme has success measures attached to it which will enable us to identify the impact of the work we are undertaking. Senior managers have been allocated to each of the projects and progress will be monitored by the senior leadership teams in Achieving for Children quarterly and reported on annually in the annual report, the impact report, and the community interest company report.

Programme: RESILIENCE

We want to build resilience so that families and communities are better able to help, support and protect children without the need for statutory interventions. We will achieve this by adopting more reflective, collaborative and strengths-based approaches to working with the whole family so that parents are able to make positive and lasting changes to the care they provide to their children.

Projects:

- Strengthen family-based solutions, including family group conferencing (FGC) and use of the family drug and alcohol court (FDAC), so that vulnerable families are better supported to care for their children without the need for them to become looked after.
- Embed the systemic family therapy model across social care services to support social workers in their approach to building resilience in families.
- Fully implement the Signs of Safety practice model across all services to ensure a consistent, collaborative and strengths-based approach to supporting children and young people in need of help and protection.
- Develop and improve the consistency of social work practice in Windsor and Maidenhead so that children and young people are safe and experience high quality support and care.
- Continue the integration of health, social care and wellbeing services, with a particular focus on meeting the emerging emotional health needs of children and young people at the earliest opportunity.

Success measures:

- Number of early help assessments
- Number of child in need cases
- Number of child protection plans
- Number of children looked after

Programme: CAPACITY

We want to create local provision so that children and young people can stay closer to their families and support networks, and benefit from integrated education, health and social care services. By 2021, demand for school places in all our operational areas is forecast to rise by almost 15%. Meeting this demand, and maintaining choice for children and young people, will require the creation of more Free Schools and the permanent expansion of good and outstanding schools. This programme also seeks to increase the range of local placements and supported accommodation for children in care and care leavers to reduce our reliance on high-cost external placements.

Projects:

- Ensure effective medium-term planning for school places to ensure there is a school place for every pupil, and all schools are financially sustainable.
- Establish the company as an independent fostering agency and use the new operating model to increase our ability to recruit and support local foster carers.
- Develop the capacity needed to improve the commissioning of placements for children in care and those with SEND, as part of the delivery of the local Placement Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy.
- Develop and operate local residential children's homes to meet the requirements of children and young people with higher-level care needs (Kingston and Richmond)
- Develop and operate local supported accommodation to meet the needs of young people who are leaving care (Kingston and Richmond).

Success measures:

- Percentage of children who have a school place at the start of the academic year.
- Number of foster care households.
- Percentage of children looked after who are placed more than 20 miles from their homes.
- Percentage of care leavers who live in suitable accommodation.

Programme: INCLUSION

We want to develop more inclusive services and opportunities for children and young people with disabilities, complex needs and challenging behaviours. There continues to be growth in demand for support for children with SEND, with requests for Education, Health and Care Plans increasing year-on-year by 6% in all operational areas, and a notable increase in children with severe and complex needs. There is currently a lack education provision available locally to meet these needs, meaning that we are reliant on high-cost external provision, often at a considerable distance from children's homes and support networks.

Projects:

- Create local school places for children and young people with SEND through the development of specialist resource bases in mainstream schools.
- Develop respite care facilities for children with SEND and complex health needs at the Moor Lane Centre in Kingston (Kingston and Richmond).
- Develop resources to support assessment and early intervention in mainstream early years settings, schools and colleges so that they are equipped to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND who are below the threshold for an EHCP.
- Develop alternative education provision for children and young people with challenging behaviours who have been permanently excluded or are at risk of exclusion from school.

Success measures:

- Number of Education, Health and Care Plans.
- Percentage of children with special educational needs and disabilities who are educated in maintained mainstream schools or specialist resource bases
- Number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions from schools.

Programme: INDEPENDENCE

We want to support children and young people to develop their independence and skills for adulthood. This programme particularly relates to supporting young people leaving care and those with SEND. It focuses on putting in place the accommodation, vocational training and independent living programmes that will be needed to support young people to make a successful transition to adulthood.

Projects:

- Implement new eligibility criteria and a new SEND transport policy to deliver new transport options that promote independent travel and life skills.
- Expand vocational opportunities for young people, including the further development of local traineeships and apprenticeships, particularly for those leaving care or with disabilities.
- Support care leavers (including unaccompanied asylum seeking children and those with special educational needs and disabilities), to develop the skills and have access to the housing options they need to successfully transition to adulthood and independence.
- Work to reduce the gap in attainment in literacy and numeracy between children in receipt of the pupil premium grant and their peers.
- Work with colleagues in adult social care to improve the pathway and transition planning for young people with SEND.

Success measures:

- Number of children and young people completing independent travel training.
- Number of young people with special educational needs and leaving care in traineeships and apprenticeships.
- Number of young people with special educational needs and leaving care not in education, employment and training.

Programme: RESOURCES

We want to develop the skills and resources the company needs to deliver efficient, cost-effective and financially sustainable services. The company has plans to achieve £13 million in efficiency savings by delivering the projects in this business plan. It will involve transforming the way we provide services to families and reshaping our business resources so that they are flexible, responsive, efficient and offer good value for money. To achieve this, and the other projects in the business plan, we require practitioners to develop new skills and behaviours, and implement new ways of working with families.

Projects:

- Implement an innovative recruitment and retention scheme which attracts experienced and well-qualified practitioners and managers, and helps to retain a permanent and resilient workforce.
- Review and reorganise HR, and ICT services, and develop a strategic asset and accommodation strategy, so that the company has the corporate services it needs to be effective and deliver value for money.
- Develop and implement an engagement strategy that strengthens our relationships with children, families, schools, and communities so that our decision-making is increasingly informed by local needs.
- Develop the organisational culture of the company, including redefining our values, behaviours and ways of working, so that the whole workforce embraces strengths-based approaches to working with families, and feels valued, supported and motivated.
- Develop the organisation's improvement consultancy offer and its reputation as a children's services provider, by delivering support to local authorities through the Partners in Practice initiative.

How will we measure outcomes?

- Employee voluntary turnover rate.
- Sickness or days lost to sickness.
- Vacancy rate or agency rate.
- Percentage of employees who consider Achieving for Children to be a good place to work.