

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper sets out the initial thinking and draft proposals for the scope of the proposed Birmingham Children's Trust. In July the Council's Cabinet agreed the case for change and the exploration of potential models.

The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to provide a discussion document for the Council and partners to set out some parameters for the scope of the proposed Children's Trust.

- Section 2 describes the rationale for the scope.
- Section 3 outlines the proposed scope.
- Section 4 outlines areas which are still unclear and require further consideration
- Section 5 outlines services unlikely to be in scope.
- Section 6 sets out the outcomes, ambition and purpose for children's services in Birmingham.

The scope will be open to modification during the design phase of the proposed Trust and, indeed, it is recognised that incremental change to the scope would continue to be possible when the proposed Trust is in place.

**Comments, queries and observations are welcome and can be emailed to [ChildrensTrust@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:ChildrensTrust@birmingham.gov.uk)**

## 2. RATIONALE FOR SCOPE

It is proposed that Birmingham Children's Services (BCS) and its core social work and related functions are retained in the proposed Trust as one system that covers the whole of the City: one system of targeted social work practice for those children and families with greatest needs.

Children's Services is one whole system from first contact right through to adoption. All parts of this system affect each other and effectiveness is dependent upon close collaboration throughout the system to achieve the desired outcomes. Children's Services nationally work with the 3% to 4% of most deprived and disadvantaged children and families at any given time. To support such children and families in a way that makes a significant positive difference in their lives requires intensive personal relationship-based work by skilled practitioners.

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To undertake this, practitioners need to be well supported in their work. Attention must be paid across the system to creating and maintaining the best possible conditions for effective practice.

Many teams and service areas are integral to the delivery of effective children's social care and meeting the Children Act and subsequent statutory requirements. However, there is a national change and reform agenda and any Trust needs to be flexible enough to adapt to that and future emerging responsibilities.

BCS has set out in the last two years on an improvement journey centred on relationship-based practice with children and families, and this approach has been welcomed and adopted in all three geographical areas. This is a journey of cultural change, of growing practitioner skill and confidence and of improving practice supervision support and oversight. Increasingly, centrally managed services such as Independent Reviewing Officers, CP Chairs and leaving care are being located in the main area offices, so more collaborative support and challenge relationships have been developed. Greater consistency is being developed across family support and each area has the same structure and workflow. Managers are meeting together across areas to plan and deliver improvements and support and learn from each other. This is all a process of cultural change and giving the whole service a strong identity, sense of purpose and clear direction of travel.

In a large organisation the process of cultural change takes longer and Birmingham acknowledges that the pace of change is not fast enough and there is still a lot of variability and inconsistency. But these need to be measured against the distance already travelled. The proposed Trust would need to give more pace and focus on excellence in practice with high expectations. However, to fragment BCS where stability has been achieved in turnover, caseloads and calmness and where staff are increasingly committed to the DfE reform agenda (Frontline; Accreditation; systemic supervision; working with families collaboratively) would be a step that would seriously risk disruption and the erosion of confidence.

The direction of travel of DfE children's social work reform is for more collaborative, cross-boundary and innovative delivery of social care services. A number of recent initiatives have prioritised greater co-operation and integration between children's services to build scale and resilience. It is worth noting that counties – by virtue of their size – have many of the benefits these reforms are seeking to achieve: In urban terms the experience of Tri-borough argues for the benefits of scale and a consistent approach across a wider area. Birmingham already has this benefit of scale.

### 3. PROPOSED SCOPE – what is included?

1. **Single point of entry for all contacts and referrals** – Child & Family Advice Service and Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), including Emergency Duty Team for children.
2. **Family Support – intensive interventions with disadvantaged families** – locality based –delivered by primarily non-social work qualified staff.
3. **Assessment and Short-Term Intervention (ASTI) teams** – in main area offices – good timely assessment of needs of those referred and short-term solution-focused help to children and families.
4. **Safeguarding teams** – in localities – long-term intensive child in need and child protection interventions with the most disadvantaged families.
5. **Children in care teams** - in area main offices – supporting children in care into permanency or return home, including through family court process and up to 18 – includes specialist teams for unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC).
6. **Leaving Care teams** – in area offices – supporting care leavers up to age 25.  

The proposed Trust would need to be able to explore the possibility of establishing with other LAs/ the third sector a Leaving Care trust that included Birmingham care leavers. The relationship and collaboration with children in care teams would have to remain connected and strong and the Leaving Care Trust arrangements would be best negotiated from within the proposed Children's Trust to ensure continuity of care.
7. **Youth Offending Service (YOS)**. There is considerable overlap between safeguarding and children in care teams in relation to young people worked with. The current Ministry of Justice review of YOS nationally is suggesting closer integration with Children's social care.
8. **No Recourse to Public Funds team; homeless young people's team; Edge of Care teams; specialist assessment and contact service.**
9. **Fostering** - central service located close to placements service – recruiting and supporting in-house foster carers.

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10. **Adoption** - central service – recruiting and matching potential adoptive families and post-adoption/SGO support. We are exploring regional adoption agencies and would want the Trust to be able to move its adoption service into any such agreed regional arrangements in future. The proposed Trust would work with the new provider to ensure continuing close collaboration with children in care teams.
11. **Therapeutic Emotional Support Service** - mental health support primarily for children on edge of care/ in care and foster carers.
12. **Child Protection chairs and Independent Review Officers, LADO, Disclosure team.**
13. **Partnership management and development.**
14. **Complaints service; quality assurance; policy; research; PSWs.**
15. **Professional Support Services.**

At present Children's Services do not manage administrative support to the service (Professional Support Services). These would need to be included in any Trust arrangement.

### 4. PROPOSED SCOPE – service areas to be further considered for inclusion in the scope

#### 1. Disabled Children's Social Care

Disabled Children's Social Care (DCSC) has been temporarily moved to children's services (formerly part of the Special Educational Needs [SEN] service within Education). This service is closely connected to SEN and Health in relation to Education, Health and Care plans for disabled children and young people up to the age of 25. Integration needs to continue and plans have been discussed to join this service up with the Transitions (18 to 25) team in Adult social care. BCC and Health partners may wish to develop a combined SEN, social care and health 0 to 25 service for disabled children and young people, which would then work closely with young adults service.

#### 2. Residential care homes for disabled children

The 5 BCC residential homes for disabled children should be managed alongside DCSC.

#### 3. Virtual School for children in care

One area of the education function which deserves consideration is the virtual school (VC) for children in care. This service relates directly and exclusively to children in care who are the responsibility of BCC. Including the virtual school in the proposed Trust would allow for more holistic planning for children in care and a stronger focus on achievement. If this was agreed, BCC would need to disaggregate the Head teacher's two roles: Head of VS and Head of Exclusions Management.

**4. Children's legal services**

The children's legal services function in relation to the Family Court and Public Law Outline (PLO) process could be part of the proposed Trust. Children's legal services need to work closely and collaboratively with social workers in order to ensure the needs of children are effectively represented in the Family Court, delays are minimised and social workers are given sound legal advice.

**5. Support Services – HR, IT, Property, Finance and Communications**

An HR and a finance function would need to be part of the proposed Trust, even where transactional work might be provided elsewhere. Similarly the delivery of IT services, property, accommodation and communications needs to be considered.

**6. Performance Data and Analysis Function**

The performance data and analysis function, including the maintenance of the social care data base and staff support and training around use of the system, would need to be part of the proposed Trust. This would include support to implement and maintain the system which is to replace CareFirst. The performance unit would also need to report back to the Council commissioners in terms of performance of the proposed Trust against commissioned outcomes.

**7. Workforce Development Function**

A workforce development function would need to be part of the proposed Trust.

**8. Commissioning and Contracting**

In summary this area would need to cover:

- The contracting interface with BCC (contract management, performance reporting).
- The proposed Trust commissioning services.
- The proposed Trust commissioning services in conjunction with partners.

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The proposed Trust would need its own commissioning/ contracting arrangement, especially in relation to purchasing external placements. It would be essential that the **placements service** is part of the Trust and it is focused on current plans to reduce costs, grow in-house foster placements and hold providers to account for quality of work with children.

The commissioning function would be needed for forward planning so that the proposed Trust would be able to make best use of available resources by determining which services / functions it buys in, the contractual arrangements for new approaches (e.g. Adoption; Leaving Care) or using resources differently.

### 9. **BSCB support team**

In the light of the Alan Wood review of LSCBs, and the partnership nature of the BSCB, it would seem an appropriate opportunity to consider the best location for the BSCB support function. This would need to allow for new models including regional options to be explored. The support team supports the whole safeguarding partnership function. This could be combined as a wider partnership support function (adult safeguarding; health and well-being; community safety).

## 5. **PROPOSED SCOPE – service areas unlikely to be in scope**

### 1. **Education Services**

It is proposed that the Council's statutory responsibilities for education, including its work with schools around school improvement, school places, tracking pupils, supporting schools to fulfil their range of safeguarding responsibilities, ensuring the full education offer for excluded children and those with EHC plans are not part of the proposed Trust's responsibilities.

Were some of these services in scope, this would broaden the proposed Trust's professional responsibilities and dilute its primary social work Children Act 1989 functions.

It would also further fragment the Council's education offer/ service which is already partly in the Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP) and Services for Education (S4E).

### 2. **Early Years, school nursing and health visiting**

These services are currently subject to a large scale commissioning redesign. These services are at Levels 1 (universal) and level 2 (universal plus) and are not part of the targeted levels 3 and 4 social care offer to families in greatest need.

## 6. OUTCOMES, AMBITION AND PURPOSE

### Outcomes agreed by the Early Help and Safeguarding Partnership

In our operating model we have set out five broad outcomes that we seek to achieve for children and their families in Birmingham that need support from children's services:

- **Healthy, happy and resilient children living in families**
- **Families (especially parents, but also young people) make positive changes to their behaviour**
- **Children and young people able to attend, learn and maximise their potential at school**
- **Young people ready for and able to contribute to adult life**
- **Children and young people protected from significant harm**

BCS seeks to further these outcomes in all their work with children and their families in accord with the following ambition and purpose.

### Ambition and Purpose for BCS

- Our primary purpose is to ensure that children are protected from significant harm and their development and wellbeing are promoted. We do this by working openly with children and families and collaboratively with partners across the city.
- We will work openly with children and their families to bring about change, in solution-focused ways, building on their strengths, so that parents and other family members are able to provide good parenting, consistent boundaries and emotional warmth, allowing children to develop life skills and resilience.
- We are committed to supporting children to remain within their family wherever possible. We emphasise the importance of direct social work and family support work with families as a means of enabling change, responding through support and challenge to the diverse emotional, cultural and material needs of each child and their family.
- Where care at home is not possible, we seek to provide high quality substitute care within family settings, wherever possible within the city, and to maintain links with birth family whenever this is in the child's best interests.
- We have a specific responsibility to ensure that children in our care and care leavers receive stability through high quality support and care planning from us as corporate parents.

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- We recognise that bringing about change and building resilience in families, who are often very disadvantaged, is difficult and challenging work requiring skilled and confident social workers and family workers who need to be supported by good leadership and management, supervision and learning opportunities.
- We will deliver effective services for children and families within the resource envelope allocated to us. We will eliminate inefficiency, bureaucratic barriers, duplication and waste and we will only fund that which is effective and adds value.

It would be important for the proposed Trust to be characterised by one whole systemic approach that would be able to deliver a co-ordinated and proportionate social care response to children and families in accord with their needs. It is now well established that the social care response includes targeted early help/ family support, and in leading LAs this incorporates Troubled Families, so that a spectrum of interventions is available (Family Support; child in need; child protection; edge of care; children in care).

This whole integrated system delivers Birmingham's statutory responsibilities in relation to the Children Act 1989 and subsequent relevant and related legislation, regulations and guidance.