

Home to School Transport Service Improvement Programme Update

September 2021



1. Background and Context

- The Birmingham Home to School Transport service **is the biggest service of its kind in the country**
- We provide services to support over **4,000 children and young people** with SEND
- **There are over 1000 routes operated each day**
- These journeys are supported by a team of **over 600 guides**
- We partner with **33 operators, of which 18 undertake routes currently** and **243 schools**
- Annually we **assess over 1,450 new applications** and **administer over 3,200 bus passes**
- We are a **central point of contact for pupils, parents or carers, schools, guides, and operators**

1. Background and Context

- The Service is a demand-led service and is seeing high levels of increasing demand that are impacting on the cost and have led to a significant overspend. An overspend of 28% is predicted for the current year
- There was a 17% increase in pupils with EHCPs between 2018 and 2020
- Covid has had an impact on costs, bringing both savings and increased costs, as well as additional funding to meet some of these costs although this has now been ceased
- Staff costs have seen considerable growth in 20/21 and 21/22, resulting in significant overspend. A number of roles have been filled by interims over the last few years and a significant number of additional interim roles have been needed to support service recovery, further to the challenges experienced in September 2020, and to mobilise new routes which needed to be re-procured in 2021. There is therefore a need to quickly design and deliver a permanent structure that is fit for purpose and to carry out modelling to enable the service to better predict and plan to meet demand.

2. Recent Service Performance

- Service performance has, as expected, experienced a dip during the mobilisation period for the start of this academic year. This was compounded by the fact that a new provider had to be brought on board at short notice (HATS) following the identification of a provider that was not compliant with our requirements.
- Early September saw some initial problems with route mobilisations
- Performance is now stabilising following this period and recent performance for **September 17th** is as follows:
 - 97.65% routes operated (1040 out of 1065 routes)
 - 99.47% of pupils were transported
 - 91% of all calls were answered

3. Service Performance Summer Term 2021

Service performance during the summer term of 2021 was good:

- 99.94% of routes expected were delivered throughout April, May, and June
- 99.44% of routes delivered were on time throughout April, May and June
- 99.95% of pupils expected to travel were transported throughout April, May, and June
- Over 96% calls answered each week (corporate standard is 90%; 4,002 calls since April)
- 85% reduction in bus pass applications taking more than 20 working days to assess since April
- 84% reduction in transport application taking more than 15 working days to assess since April

4. The Improvement Journey

There have been well-documented failures in the performance of the Travel Assist Service over a number of years. As a result of this, investment has been made in improving the service and this has paid off with performance improving steadily over the academic year 2020/21.

The improvement journey is documented below:



The Improvement Journey - Phases

The Improvement Programme was divided into three planned phases:

- **Immediate Actions** – this phase of transformation was designed to address the key failings identified in the EY Report. An Immediate Fixes Plan was designed and has now been completed.
- **Change to Improve** – this phase of transformation focused on stabilising the service and introducing improved ways of working, processes and an improved culture of co-production and user involvement. This period also encompassed the mobilisation of services in time for the Autumn Term 2021, routes were re-procured through the Dynamic Purchasing System. During this period additional staff were recruited on an interim basis to carry out key functions that were under-resourced in the substantive structure in order to ensure a quality service can be delivered
- **Transformation** – this next phase beginning post-mobilisation will focus on designing and implementing a service that is fit for the future and has at its heart a right sized and well-designed structure and set of processes that can deliver a safe and quality service. If Cabinet approve the proposal, the service will move to become part of an Integrated Transport Unit.

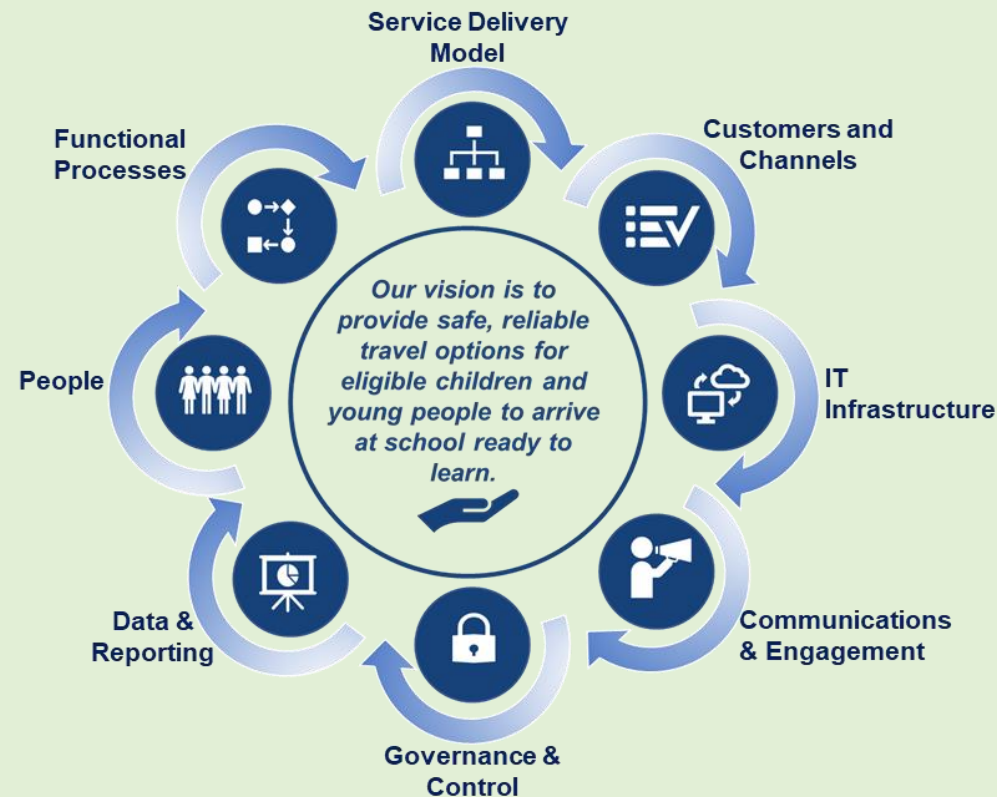
The Improvement Journey - Focus

Transformation
Oct 2021 onwards

Change to Improve
Feb 2021 – Sep 2021

Immediate Actions
Sep 2020 – Jan 2021

The Improvement Programme was designed to address the weaknesses identified in the EY Report and focuses on all of the areas below:



The Improvement Journey – Governance and Safeguarding

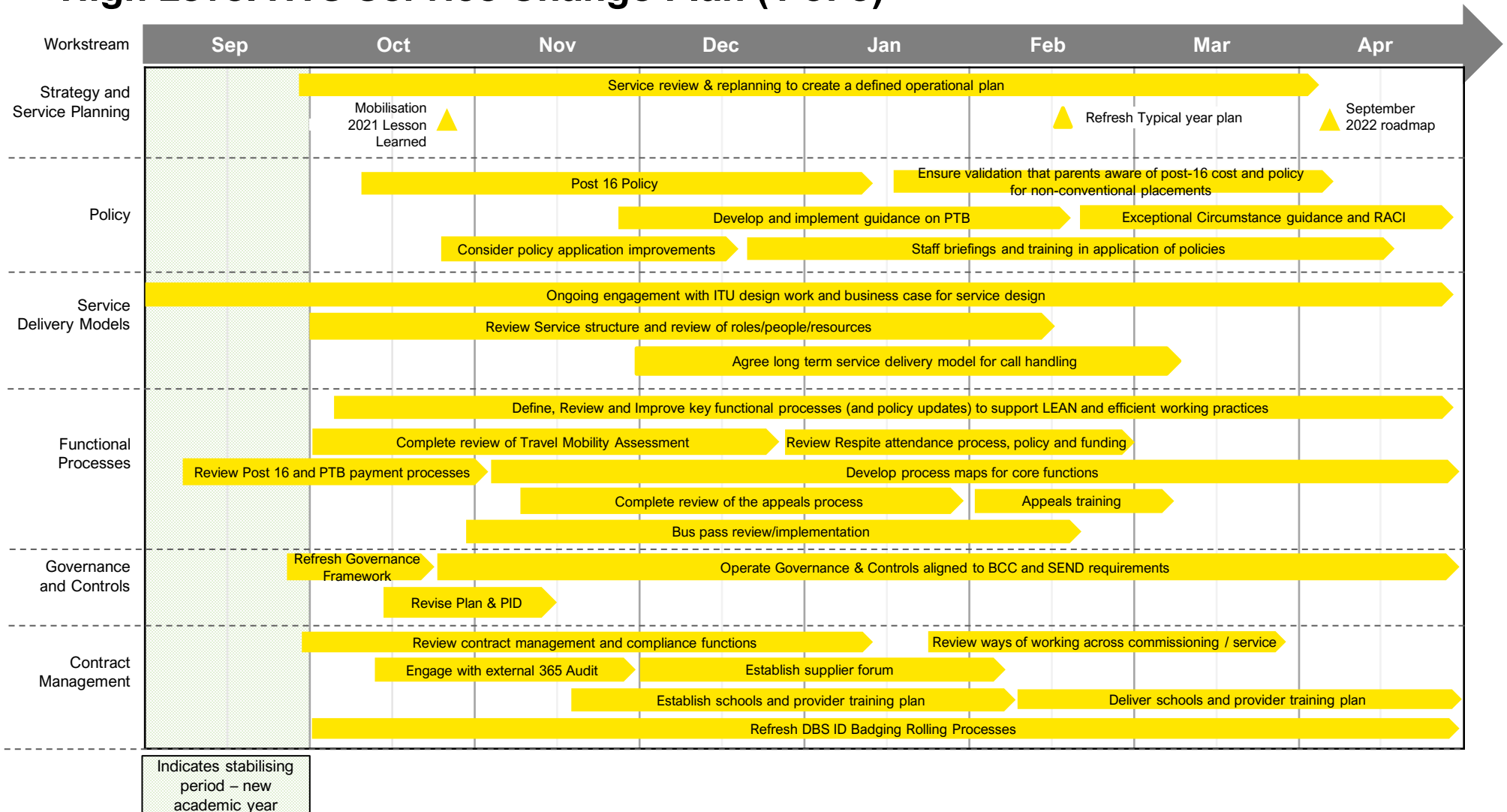


- The Improvement Programme dual reports to the Leader's Task and Finish Group, which is made up of a group of stakeholders, Members and Officers and is chaired by The Leader and to the Home to School Programme Board
- There is a separate Safeguarding Stocktake that meets six weekly that considers progress against recommendations made regarding safeguarding in the Service by Internal Audit, the Weightmans Report and internal reviews into safeguarding practice
- An Internal Safeguarding Review has recommended that a Safeguarding Lead for the service is appointed on an interim basis, whilst permanent structures are designed and implemented and that request is included in this proposal
- The Council has commissioned an audit of all providers which is being carried out by an external organisation (365R)

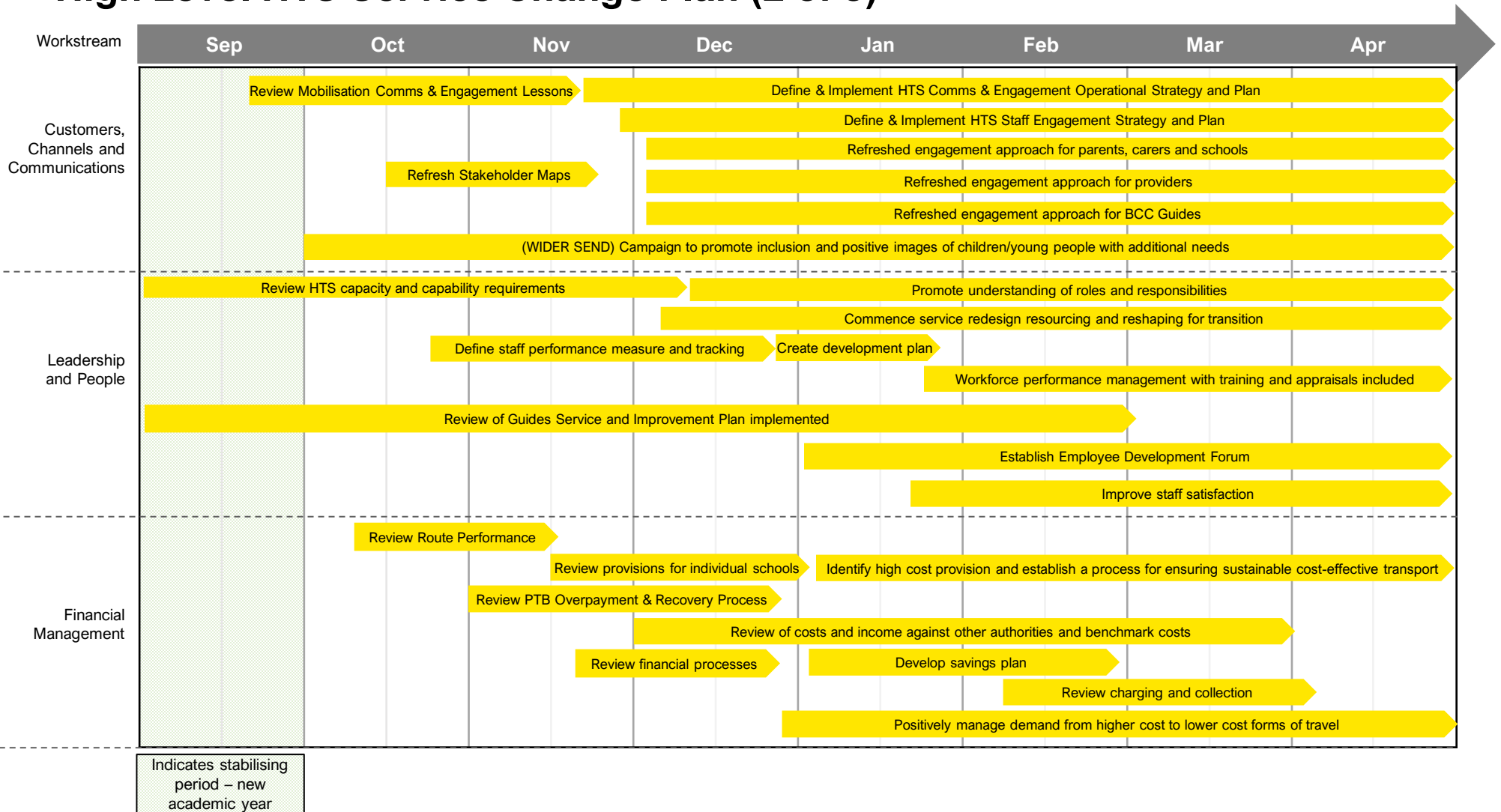
5. Transformation – Next Steps

- As the mobilisation period ends (end September) and services are stabilised, the Service will move ahead with implementing ongoing service improvements as shown on the next three slides
- These will demand ongoing transformation resource, which is recognised in the Resources Slide at the end of this slide pack in order to ensure that it is successful
- A proposal will be put to Cabinet in October that the Home to School Transport Travel Assist Service moves to become part of an Integrated Transport Unit (ITU)
- If this is agreed, work will be carried out over the next few months in order to ensure an orderly and effective transition and this is being scoped currently in tandem with the Programme Manager for the ITU

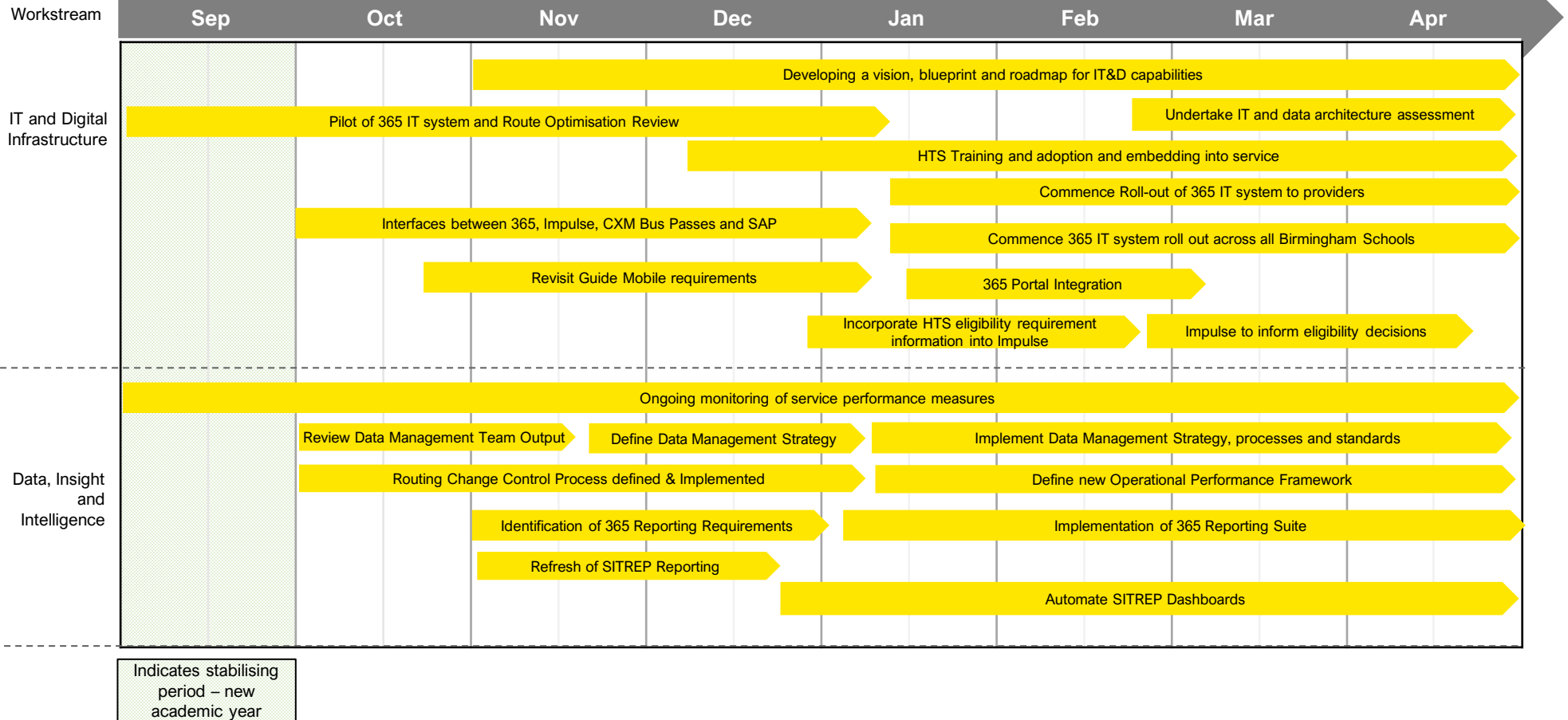
High Level HTS Service Change Plan (1 of 3)



High Level HTS Service Change Plan (2 of 3)

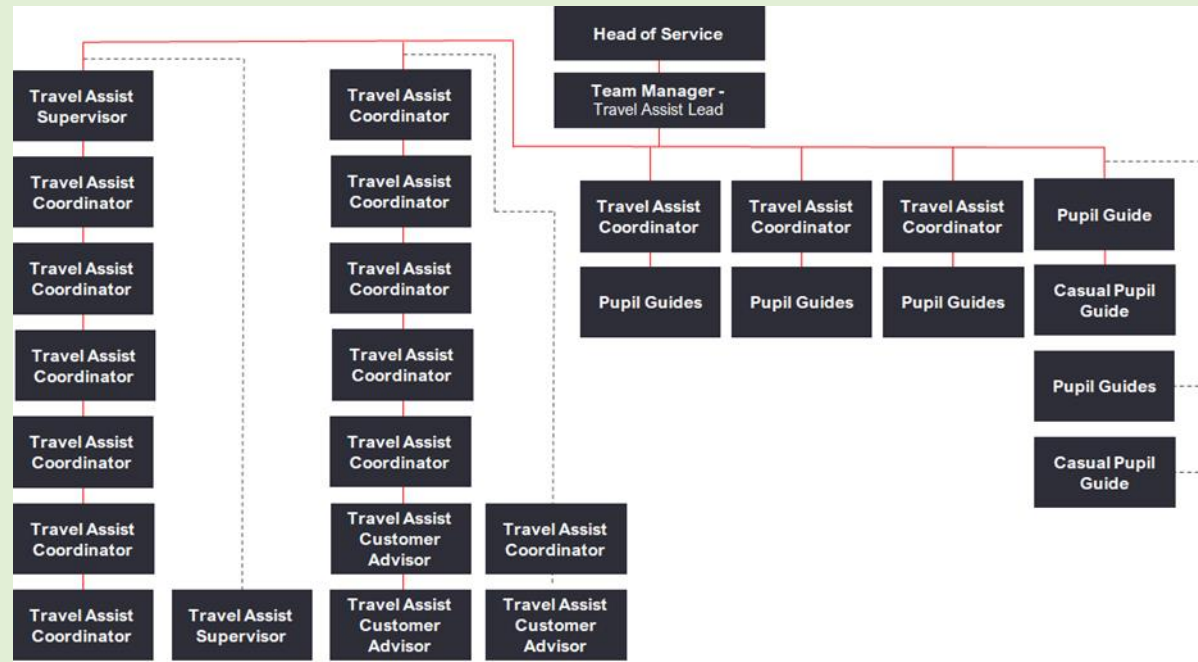


High Level HTS Service Change Plan (3 of 3)

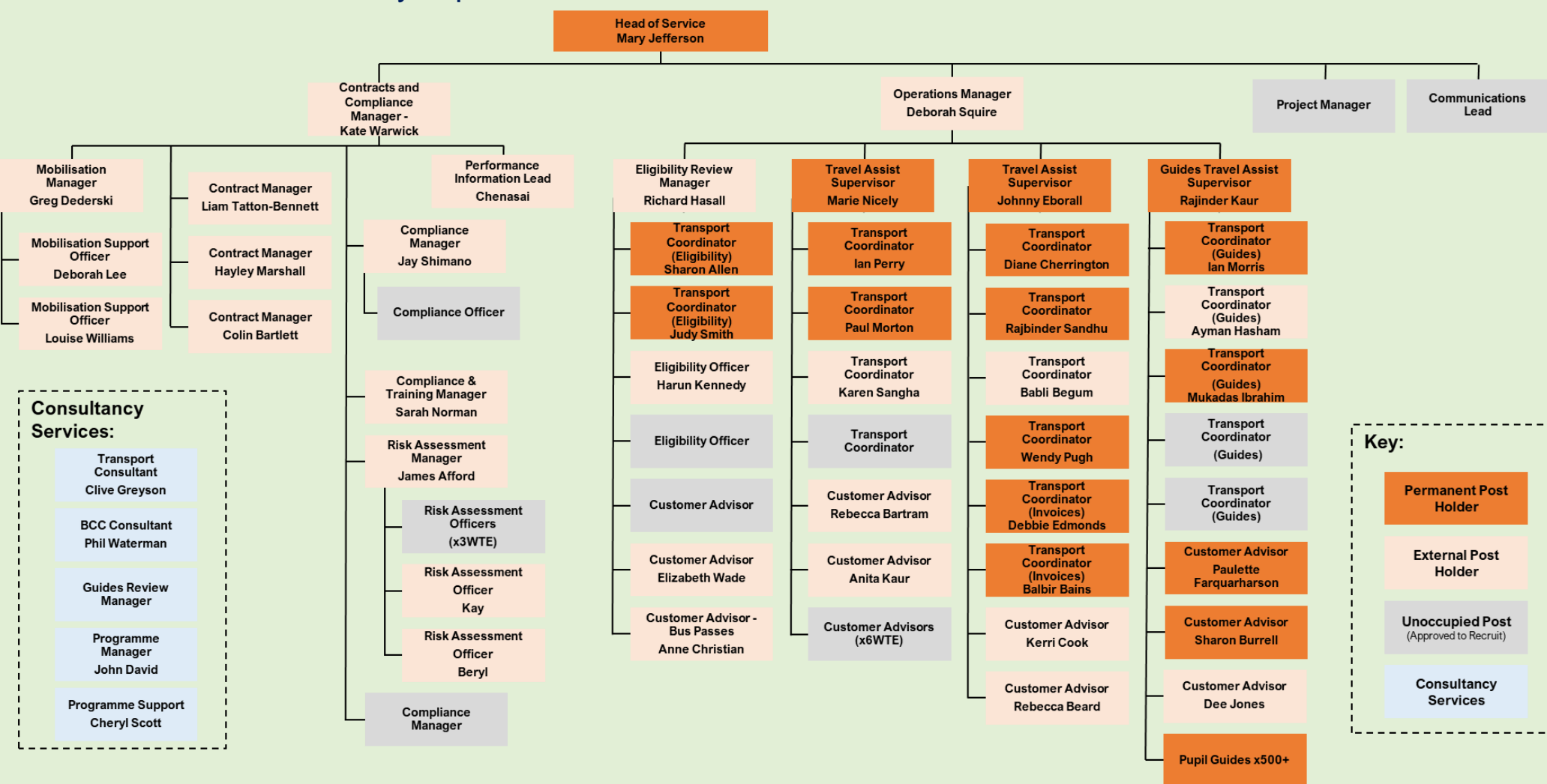


6. Service Structure and Interim Functions

- The Travel Assist Service has historically been under-resourced and as a result has under-performed.
- The Cabinet/CLT Paper highlights the fact that the current structure in place relies heavily on interims to delivery key functions. This is because those functions do not exist in the substantive structure yet are integral to safe and successful delivery of services. The substantive structure is shown below and the current structure is shown on the next slide for comparison:



Following work initiated by EY and continued by the Transformation Director and Head of Service, a number of interim roles have been initiated in order to provide an improved service. The structure currently in place is shown below:



6. Service Structure and Interim Functions

- These two diagrams illustrate the degree to which additional resource has had to be put in place in order to drive forward the necessary improvements in the service. Funds are requested in the paper being put to Cabinet and CLT to request the continuation of funds to continue these roles until a permanent structure is designed and approved.
- In particular, there is a need to retain the Contract Management and Compliance Function, which since being introduced has been able to improve the service's ability to identify and act on provider non-compliance.
- Work will now be carried out to design a permanent structure for the Service and this will be brought back for a decision in early 2022
- Costings for this interim period are shown in the Resource Slide at the end of this slide pack

6. Resource Request

- The request for funding is therefore made for three areas: to fund transformation roles to carry out ongoing improvement work including the roll out of the 365 project and safeguarding improvements, and to fund ongoing interim roles that are delivering key functions that don't exist (or are under-resourced) in the substantive structure but that are integral to safe and high quality service delivery
- A high level outline of these roles is given on the next slide
- Most of these roles are based on estimated costs (unless the person is already in post) so are likely to be at the upper end of the required. Where possible, we will secure staff on secondment or at the lower end of the daily rate in order to reduce the overall cost

6. Resource Request

- 1. Transformation Roles:** to deliver the Service Change Plan, carry out ongoing Safeguarding improvements, manage the transition phase before planned move to ITU

Role	Proposed Cost (until April 2022)	Remit
Programme Manager	£93,438	To manage Improvement Programme
PMO Manager	£64,688	To manage Programme Management Office and coordinate activities
365 Project Manager	£93,438	To manage 365 roll out
365 Lead PSO Officer	£64,688	To support the PMO and provision of data governance skillset
365 Lead Data Analyst	£57,500	Supervise data cleansing and other data requirements for 365 rollout
365 Data Analyst x5	£287,500	Support data cleansing and other data requirements for 365 rollout
Guides Review Consultant	£86,250	Carry out review of Guides to improve processes
Organisation Design Lead	£117,013	To carry out work to design a new fit for purpose structure for Home to School Transport Service
Transport Consultant	£71,875	Manages daily relationships with providers and agrees cost variations (role will not be needed once 365 implemented)
Transformation Compliance Officers x6	£215,625	To provide transformational capacity in parallel running to operational service across compliance activities

Resource Request

2. Safeguarding Roles: to deliver the Service Change Plan, carry out ongoing Safeguarding improvements, manage the transition phase before planned move to ITU

Role	Proposed Cost (until April 2022)	Remit
Safeguarding Lead	£113,850	To provide expert leadership of Safeguarding in H2ST and oversee implementation of recommendations from reviews and embedding of new processes
Business Process Mapping	£7,500	To continue work to map H2ST processes and redesign them to ensure safeguarding embedded throughout operations and services
Safeguarding Programme Manager	£134,500	To oversee the programme to deliver safeguarding improvements and consider future options for Safeguarding including bringing the DBS process in house

Resource Request

3. Continuation of Interim Functions: to deliver the Service Change Plan, carry out ongoing Safeguarding improvements, manage the transition phase before planned move to ITU (more detail on final slide)

Role	Proposed Cost (until April 2022)	Remit
Operations Manager	£81,250	To manage Improvement Programme
Eligibility and Process Review Manager	£56,250	To manage Programme Management Office and coordinate activities
Eligibility Assessment Officer x2	£81,250	To manage 365 roll out
Contract & Compliance Manager	£82,500	To manage the Contracts & Compliance function
Performance/ Data Lead	£57,500	To manage the service performance metrics and dashboarding
HTS Data Officer	£50,313	To support the provision of data quality
Compliance & Training Manager	£64,688	To manage school and operator compliance and training requirements
Contract Manager x3	£280,313	To manage the contract across providers
Compliance Manager x2	£115,000	To manage compliance standards across providers

Resource Request continued

3. Continuation of Interim Functions: to deliver the Service Change Plan, carry out ongoing Safeguarding improvements, manage the transition phase before planned move to ITU (more detail on final slide)

Role	Proposed Cost (until April 2022)	Remit
Compliance Officer	£43,125	To support compliance standards and checks across providers
Risk Assessment Manager	£53,906	To manage the Risk Assessment function
Risk Assessment Officer x5	£215,625	To support the completion of Risk Assessments
Comms and Engagement Lead	£57,500	To manage the Comms & Engagement strategy
Customer Care Manager	£93,438	To develop the Customer Care strategy across all stakeholders
Customer Advisors x6	£86,250	To provide customer service support
Guides Coordinator	£28,750	To manage the coordination of Guide resources

7. Work Programme for Contracts and Compliance Team

The contracts and compliance team has brought in a number of new processes since its inception in its current form in spring 2021 and will continue to build upon the solid basis of the last 6 months. Tighter DBS and badging processes have added an additional, proven, layer of security around safeguarding, audit and penalty points processes have been rewritten, and a number of Deeds of Variation enshrining the new processes have been drafted, agreed, and sent to operators.

Over the coming months the team will continue to help shape the market by forging stronger relationships with operators, imbuing them with BCC HTS core values in order to deliver the best service to our children and families. In particular it will need to work closely with its newest supplier, HATS, to help them mobilise and establish, help NEAT adjust to new T&Cs, and work with smaller operators to help them navigate the recent changes to the market and to BCC's processes.

The team will work closely with the external 365 audit to establish a firm baseline from which to monitor and report in future, linking in with the 365 Response implementation project team to establish the requirements and input data ready for the system's launch.

It will overhaul the badging process, implement the revised rolling audit process, and rethink how management information is captured and processed in order for the BCC HTS service to more efficiently harness the power of data to move from the back foot, to the leading one.