

TTF LEGACY REPORT – CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND LEARNING**Chairman's Foreword**

While many emerging Unitary Councils were afforded the luxury of 18 months or more to prepare for the change, Central Bedfordshire was faced with the task of completing its preparations in just twelve months.

The first 'informal' meeting of the Children, Families and Learning (CFL) Transitional Task Force (TTF) was held on 1st April 2008. It was immediately obvious to all members of the TTF that its meetings would need to be quite frequent for the range of issues to be considered and commented on to the Shadow Executive within the required timescale.

I would like to express my appreciation and thanks to the members of the TTF and the officers who supported it for the commitment they gave to its work. In particular I would like to thank John Dean, who would be the first to admit that the challenge of getting to grips with issues relating to Children, Families and Learning presented him with a steep learning curve. Without John's commitment and sound guidance in the early days, the TTF would have struggled to achieve its objectives. Everyone recognised the critical importance of some of the areas within the CFL portfolio and the need to minimise risk to service delivery on vesting day.

Having invested so much time and effort in discharging its brief, it was particularly regrettable that the work of the TTF was prematurely halted in October 2008 in such an abrupt and arbitrary way. It was especially insulting to the members and officers of this TTF that the only justification that was offered for the termination of its activities was that some (other) TTFs had strayed from their brief and were consuming too much officer time. It also reflects badly on the management style of the senior executive(s) who either made or implemented this 'decision' as it was not communicated directly to the Chairman of this TTF who only learned of it through the 'grapevine'.

It should be noted that the work of the TTF, particularly in gaining the trust and confidence of Headteachers, has been a major factor in helping Central Bedfordshire in its preparations for unitary status in this service area. The benefit of involving a broad grouping of elected members in policy formation in an informal and participative process has been proven. It is more than a little sad that the TTF was not able to continue its work for longer to consolidate and develop those benefits

Councillor Andy Rayment

Chairman, Transitional Task Force

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Background

The Transitional Task Force (TTF) for Children, Families and Learning (CFL) provided an overview and advice on service development and policy proposals for the emerging unitary council in relation to Learning and Schools, Integrated Services (i.e. Youth Support and Extended Schools); Children's Specialist Services (Social Care); Policy, planning and Commissioning; and Culture and Leisure (including Lifelong Learning).

The TTF provided support and guidance to the Portfolio Holder and Officers involved in designing the Directorate, particularly in relation to the longer-term vision for the Directorate and decisions relating to ensuring a safe and smooth transition with no adverse outcomes to service users.

The priorities for the TTF were to:

- review key issues for Children's services, especially significant disaggregation and joint working arrangements;
- provide advice on what is needed on day one and other short term issues;
- provide strategic input to the development of business plans;
- highlight any concerns to the Shadow Executive through the Portfolio Member;
- oversee the handover of information to the new Council to help inform future priority setting for Central Bedfordshire.

The work of the TTF was guided by the following overarching principles:

- to achieve integrated services and partnership working with other service providers, e.g. PCT
- to give consideration to locality service delivery structures
- to ensure required education standards are met and
- the paramount importance of safeguarding vulnerable children and young people

Membership of the TTF included elected members, headteacher representatives and officers.

Cllr Andy Rayment (Chairman)	Cllr Julian Murray
Cllr Christina Wyles (Vice Chairman)	Cllr Anita Lewis
Cllr Norman Costin (CFL Portfolio Holder CBSA)	Cllr Robin Younger
Cllr Jenny Fairbairn	

The following members joined the TTF or assisted its work at various stages:

Cllr Rita Drinkwater	Cllr Peter Snelling
Cllr David McVicar	

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The following Headteachers were among those co-opted onto the TTF in an advisory capacity, each attending one or more meetings:

David Brandon Bravo	Parkfields Middle School
Carl Peters	Weatherfield Special School
Gill Ellyard	Southcott Lower School
Nigel Croft	Redbourne Upper School
Sean Fell	Harlington Upper School

The following officers directly supported the work of the CFL TTF:

John Dean
Roy Waterfield
Annette Eversden
Patricia Coker

The following provided consultancy support:

Tony Dessant
Jan Didrichsen

Key Issues Considered by TTF

The TTF drew on the expertise of professionals across the breadth of its work and in making recommendations to the Shadow Executive on key policy and transitional issues. In addition, the TTF hosted a series of workshops with Headteachers, School Governors and Voluntary Organisations to shape service design for the longer-term.

In setting the vision for the Service “that every child, young person and family has the opportunity to achieve their potential and contribute successfully to society”, TTF felt that the Directorate Plan and service design should be based on the principles of inclusion, involving key stakeholders, particularly with schools and third sector organisations.

The TTF was involved and received regular updates on the appointment process for the Director of Children, Families and Learning.

Shared Services

In considering shared services and transitional arrangements, the TTF agreed that it was important to establish the merit of budgetary advantages of working in partnership and ensuring best value, whilst also considering the need for Central Bedfordshire to establish its own identity and to be a flagship authority.

The TTF looked at the following service areas:

- Special Education Needs
- Commissioning
- Learning

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- Children & Young People Strategic Partnership
- Integrated Youth Services
- Looked After Children

The TTF took the view that service continuity in these areas was paramount and recommended to Shadow Executive that some elements of Commissioning, Integrated Youth Services and Looked After Children should be shared. However, acknowledging the longer-term view that these services were integral to the Directorate, the TTF also recommended that shared services and transitional arrangements should be reviewed across the board within two years of vesting day.

Key Recommendations

- **Special Education Needs (SEN)**

SEN Services include statutory assessment and statement of special educational needs, annual review and monitoring of children with specific special needs. TTF noted the implications for shared assets with Bedford Borough in relation to Oak Bank School and the Pupil Referral Unit and the feedback from the head teachers' workshops and head teachers present on the TTF is that there are opportunities for improvement, particularly around early intervention services. Members felt that SEN as a front facing service, Central Bedfordshire would wish to stamp its own identity on the Service. The TTF recommended that the SEN Service be disaggregated. Work is now on-going regarding disaggregation..

- **Commissioning Service**

The Service is a multidisciplinary team of senior managers responsible for the commissioning of a broad range of services for children and young people, including children's Centres, Extended Services, Nursery Education funding, Children's Health, and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). The service undertakes needs analysis and develops strategies to support delivery of high quality services. The team benefits from effective partnership relationships with other agencies, including voluntary services in Bedfordshire.

TTF felt that early disaggregation would have important implications on existing contracts and agreements. There is also the issue of capacity to deliver and manage commissioning, and the demands of the Annual Performance Assessment if the team is split. The TTF recommended not to disaggregate commissioning but have a defined plan in place to review and develop an action plan towards disaggregation within two years. Subsequent events have led to the need for some disaggregation; however close links with Bedford Borough Council remains to ensure continuity.

- **Learning**

Learning covers the broad agenda with much specialised areas such as Schools Improvement, Schools Standard and performance, admissions, strategy and planning. Learning and schools is a key issue for Central Bedfordshire. Feedback from the head teachers' workshops highlighted the need for learning and education to have a higher profile within the new authority. Head teachers present at the TTF supported a Central Bedfordshire council facilitated children services authority, with closer working relationships with schools. TTF also noted the implications for Learning Communities which cross boundaries but felt that this could be addressed through the planning process. The TTF felt that Central Bedfordshire Council, as an emerging flagship authority, should want to shape and influence the provision and future of learning in its area. The TTF recommended not sharing Learning Services. The services have been fully disaggregated with the exception of the small 14-19 team funded by the Learning Skills Council.

- **Children and Young People Strategic Partnership**

The Bedfordshire Children and Young People Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) is responsible for setting the overall direction, agreeing strategic objectives, overseeing progress and reviewing outcomes and is also the partnership group for Children's Trust arrangements. The partnership comprises chief executives and non-executives from voluntary, independent and statutory agencies and organisations that work with children across the county.

TTF felt that this is a key partnership for determining future strategy and direction of services for children in Central Bedfordshire. Much of these will be influenced by the Children's Plan, Building Brighter Futures and the government's determination to improve services for children. Consequently, based on the criteria for decision making this should not be shared. TTF recommended not sharing a CYPSP. Subsequently, the Central Bedfordshire Shadow Executive approved its own Partnership arrangements in November 2008.

- **Integrated Youth Support Services (IYSS)**

The IYSS includes, Youth Offending, Connexions Service, Youth Service, Education Welfare and Workforce Development for working with young people.

TTF noted that there are important geographic and demographic differences between the Bedford and Central Bedfordshire areas and that this is an important opportunity to shape Youth Service provision so that it meets the specific needs of young people in Central Bedfordshire. Furthermore, that Children and Young People Partnerships are required to deliver an improved and better coordinated service to young people through an Integrated Youth Support Strategy. TTF felt that Youth Services is a visible service and will also have congruence with future plans for Children and Young People in Central Bedfordshire.

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TTF acknowledged the special situation with regards to the Youth Offending Service. The multi-agency Youth Offending Service is overseen nationally by the Youth Justice Board. TTF recommended that Youth Offending Service should be a shared service. TTF recommended that the Integrated Youth Support Service should not be a shared service. That the Youth Offending Service remains a shared service and that this will be reviewed as appropriate.

- **Looked After Children**

The Looked After Children Service is responsible for delivery of long term support for children in public care as well as managing care proceedings in the court. There is a legislative requirement for each looked after child to have a dedicated social worker. Central Bedfordshire will also have corporate responsibility for Looked After Children originating from this area. TTF felt that this is a high profile service with important cost implications and took the view that in light of the statutory Corporate Parenting responsibility, this should be a Central Bedfordshire owned and managed service. TTF also noted that Adoption and Fostering should remain a shared service. TTF recommended not sharing the Looked After Children Service. Rapid disaggregation plans are ongoing whilst a key focus is securing individual child safety needs.

- **Culture and Leisure**

With the decision to include Culture and Leisure within the CFL Directorate portfolio, the TTF recommended that:

- Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Records service is run through an extended joint arrangement accommodating Central Bedfordshire, Bedford Borough and Luton unitary councils.
- Countryside Access Service and an Outdoor Education Service be provided as a shared service for all the unitary councils with Central Bedfordshire hosting
- Adult and Community Learning continue as a shared service initially, due to contractual commitments, but that this should be disaggregated in the future.
- Libraries should be run by Central Bedfordshire, but that the existing county procurement arrangements continue as a shared service as this gave considerable financial advantages.
- The TTF also considered the urgent need to begin the process of tendering of contracts for major leisure projects and recommended that this proceed.

Proposal to close Brooklands Middle School (BMS)

Consideration was given to the the Bedfordshire County Council proposal to close Brooklands Middle School. TTF felt that the future of Brooklands Schools should be managed within the overall context of the wider strategy for schools and learning in Central Bedfordshire. TTF recommended that BMS should remain open and its closure be considered in the wider context of a Central Bedfordshire strategy.

Review of Special Educational Needs (SEN)

TTF considered Bedfordshire County Council's review of SEN provision. The key recommendations of the report were:

- Endorsement of the concept of Area Special Schools
- A review of the funding formula for the existing Special Schools
- The continued use of Oak Bank Special School as a joint resource with Bedford Borough

- Further work into the development of services for children with literacy difficulties

TTF supported the main recommendations from the review, with a view to further work being needed.

Commissioning for Children and Young People (CYP)

TTF received a presentation on commissioning services for CYP. Following the presentation TTF resolved that Central Bedfordshire should be a strong commissioning authority with a strong locality feel. TTF recommended that future commissioning should be evidence based and that commissioning decisions should be sustainable.

Options for engaging young people

TTF noted that there is an absolute requirement to engage with children and young people across the entire Children's Services agenda and considered in depth the current web based solutions for promoting engagement with young people. TTF received presentations from the three operational websites currently promoted/funded or used by public sector organisations in Bedfordshire. Following further discussions with partners, TTF recommended that a working group should be set up to include headteachers, Bedfordshire Police, NHS Bedfordshire and the Integrated Youth Service to take this agenda forward. This will form part of the forward plan for Children's Services.

Free Swimming Programme

TTF received a report on the Government's initiative to introduce free swimming for people aged 60 and over and for those aged 16 and under. The report also set out the potential financial implications of the scheme and included information on the potential access to capital funding to support future leisure centre projects. TTF recommended that Central Bedfordshire should:

- Accept the Government grant to provide free swimming for people aged 60 and over for as long as financial provision is available.

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- Indicate an interest in the free swimming programme for under 16s but that further work on the potential implications of introducing free swimming for those aged 16 and under be carried out to enable a recommendation to be made to the Shadow Executive on the 16 and under initiative.

Following a further briefing note to the TTF in October 2008, Central Bedfordshire council implemented the government's free swimming scheme for people aged 60 and over and for those aged 16 and under.

Establishing a Children's Trust

There is a requirement for the new unitary council to have a Children's Trust or Children's Trust arrangements in place for April 2009 and for a Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) to be developed. THE CYPP is a key partnership document for Children's Services in a local authority. It outlines the vision for children and works to achieve that vision. TTF also discussed the opportunities for the creation of local trust boards within four possible locality areas. TTF recommended to the Shadow Executive that a Central Bedfordshire Children's Trust should be established by March 2009 and that the Trust Board membership should include headteacher representation. The Shadow Executive recommended the establishment a Children Trust in Central Bedfordshire in November 2008.

Community learning Funding arrangements (Learning Skills Council)

TTF received a presentation from the Learning Skills Council on the background and context of the LSC, the adult and community learning programme areas, funding streams, quality and compliance issues, and the links between Sixth form within schools and adult community learning. There was discussion in respect of how things will move forward when the LSC ceases to exist in 2010 and local authorities take the responsibility for commissioning and funding 14-19 provisions. Discussions with the Learning Skills Council are ongoing.

Schools Forum

TTF considered the requirement to establish a Schools Forum for Central Bedfordshire and recommended draft terms of reference to the Shadow Executive. The first meeting of the Forum was held on 15 December 2008.

Directorate Plan, Business Plans and Directorate Structure

The TTF considered in detail the Directorate Plan, individual Business Plans and the future structure for the Directorate. Key recommendations were:

- That there should be an emphasis on a preventative approach
- That a full range of services, including specialist services, were needed
- That schools should be a key element in achieving the best for children
- A commitment to involving children, young people and families

In terms of structure, the TTF supported the inclusion of Culture and Leisure services within the Directorate, which reflects the Directorate's overall vision.

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Key Immediate Issues of Concern before Vesting Day

The TTF were keen to ensure that a Risk Register was produced and updated regularly to take account of Day One Imperatives, which were considered to be as follows:

Area	Key Issues	Progress
Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of Director and robust transition team. • Development of a workforce accommodation plan. • Implementation of common core induction standards. • Management structure established and line management agreed and communicated. • All staff appointed on approved terms and conditions. 	<p>Achieved</p> <p>Underway</p> <p>Being developed</p> <p>Achieved</p> <p>Partially achieved</p>
Working arrangements/ regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of a Central Bedfordshire Children's Trust. • Requirement to have a Children and Young People's Plan. • Locality Service Delivery. • Agree shared services. • Governance structure for policies and procedures. 	<p>Achieved</p> <p>Achieved</p> <p>Planned</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Achieved</p>
IT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disaggregation of data to support key functions and activities for the new Central Bedfordshire Council. 	Work ongoing
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure communication with key stakeholders and partners. 	Ongoing
Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disaggregation of LAA targets and other performance related data to unitary level to enable priority setting for the new council. • Identification of key statistical neighbours to provide comparative analysis. 	<p>Achieved and ongoing</p> <p>Achieved</p>
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security of contracts with existing providers. • Decisions on schools funding. • Current budget expenditure and adequacy of budget for Children's Services to meet emerging national strategies and new funding streams. • Establishment of service level agreements for shared or joint service provision. 	<p>Achieved</p> <p>Achieved</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

Key Medium Term Issues – The Legacy for the New Council

Key medium term issues highlighted by the TTF for the new council are:

- Develop integrated, locality service planning, decision making and service delivery.
- Embed and ensure a multi-agency approach to safeguarding practices across Central Bedfordshire.
- Create a clear vision and strategy for the direction of learning and how Building Schools for the Future will deliver modern learning environments.
- Further develop the positive relationship with schools and families in Central Bedfordshire. This will include establishing working relationships and strategies which will accelerate the rate of performance improvement in schools.
- Establish with Learning Skills Council new arrangements for educational provisions for 14-19 Year olds.
- The development of an Integrated Youth Service including the provision of Connexions Service, and have in place arrangements for managing the central elements of the Connexions service.
- Undertake a comprehensive Early Years needs analysis for Central Bedfordshire to identify community level priorities.
- Design and develop an early intervention and prevention agenda.
- Work with the PCT to commission Child Health Services and develop strategies for tackling childhood obesity.
- Developing Central Bedfordshire Strategy for Culture and Public Arts.
- Developing a single staff development framework.

These medium terms issues will be considered within the new Children and Young People's Plan for Central Bedfordshire.