

Report To: Corporate Governance Committee
Date of Meeting: 27th. April, 2016
Lead Member / Officer: Nicola Stubbins
Report Author: Steph O'Donnell

Title: **Joining Education and Children's services**

1. What is the report about?

The Corporate Governance Committee is asked to note the attached Test of Assurance report. This report presents findings from the Test of Assurance (ToA) for joining Education and Children and Families services in Denbighshire County Council (DCC). These two services have been operating as a single service, Education and Children's services, since January 2016.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

The report is presented to Corporate Governance Committee for information and to offer assurance that the transition to the new service has been well managed and risks mitigated.

3. What are the Recommendations?

It is recommended that a follow-on test be completed with summary feedback to the corporate Governance meeting before the end of 2016/17.

4. Report details

4.1 Background

In September 2014 the CEO communicated proposed changes to the Council's organisation structure, including bringing together the Education Service and Children and Families Service to create a new service, Education and Children's Services. This has been compulsory in England for over a decade and is increasingly common in Wales.

It was agreed for a Test of Assurance (ToA) to be developed and carried out as part of the process of transition to the new organisation structure. The Test aims to provide assurance that the Council's statutory duties towards children and young people will be maintained and strengthened through the new organisation structure. Repeating the ToA will offer assurance over time that the new service is compliant with statutory accountabilities.

4.2 Scope of ToA

The ToA provided assurance on:

- ✓ meeting statutory duties of the Director of Children's Services and Director of Education
- ✓ delegated decisions and any associated risks and how these will be managed
- ✓ strengths and areas for future focus for the new service in terms of meeting and exceeding statutory duties and maximising the potential of a combined Education and Children's team.
- ✓ input into Legal and Democratic Service's ongoing review of the Council's constitution, specifically around delegated accountabilities of key officers.

The key statutory instruments which have informed the development of the ToA are listed in the ToA attached (APPENDIX A).

4.3 Approach

The Test of Assurance consisted of the following:

- Desk-top review and documentation of all statutory accountabilities
- Process of structured interviews with senior managers for Education and Children and Families Services and the Director, Communities
- Review of meetings attended by members of both management teams
- Review of the delegated decisions for both management teams
- Ongoing consultation with staff related to organisational changes
- Ongoing engagement with elected members, involving the two Lead members and the Leader directly, and attendance at all MAGs in Autumn 2015.

4.4 Key Findings/Actions – see ToA (Appendix A) for Detail

- The organisation structure was revised and senior posts allocated (see page 4, Appendix A)
- Attendance at external meetings was reviewed and delegations agreed
- Internal management meetings were reviewed and structure agreed
- Delegated decisions were fed into the review by Legal services, of the council's Constitution
- The risks and mitigating actions were identified and agreed.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

The main outcome of the change has been an immediate improvement in collegiate working between the different groups. The new service's ability to be "fleet of foot" in its response to the needs of children and young people in the county, to ensure their safety and support them in attaining their potential through education and social opportunities. In this respect, joining the services aligns to the corporate priority that "vulnerable people are protected and able to live as independently as possible" and the objective of "improving our performance in Education".

7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report

The EqIA is attached to this report. The key findings are:

- Overall some positive outcomes are being seen, even at this early stage, in relation to safeguarding children and young people, for example.
- The collegiate working across the service should enable greater equality of opportunity for this vulnerable group
- There is potential risk to the management team from the additional workload entailed and the changes in management structure, This will be reviewed on an ongoing basis through regular management meetings

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

This paper is to be tabled at the Corporate Governance Committee on 27th. April 2016, to ensure there is an opportunity thorough scrutiny. The work has also been reviewed with the Lead Member for Social Care, Cllr Bobby Feeley, the Lead member for Education, Cllr. Eryl Williams and the Council Leader.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

Not required – cost neutral.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

See Risk register on next page.

No.	Date raised/by	Description/Mitigation	Action Owner	Inherent		Residual	
				Prob	Impact	Prob	Impact
001	Management Team workshop 17.03.2015	<p>By joining the two services, the workload of the HoS increases significantly, necessitating a higher level of autonomy and delegated accountability for middle managers. There is a risk of an impact on service delivery as the senior leadership team may find themselves more stretched.</p> <p>Mitigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Head of Service has a responsibility to ensure the delegations are effectively managed and is committed to this • Review delegated accountabilities and meeting matrix with managers and ensure clarity of ownership -at all senior management meetings • Retain a service manager vacancy and review the requirement to fill the role at 6 months and again at 18 months when the ToA is repeated 	Karen Evans	C	2	D	3
002	Leighton Rees 01.09.2015	<p>Risk that increased operational demands of delivering the service may take precedence and the strategic vision become less robust.</p> <p>Mitigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The HoS for the new service has a significant experience in Education and the transition to managing children's social care will be informed and influenced by that specialism and knowledge of working with children and young people and related statute • The regional and national meetings will support the new HoS in developing the vision for the service • Middle Managers will contribute towards the development and implementation of the vision. Final accountability will rest with the HoS • The robustness of the arrangement will be validated and tested on an ongoing basis through scrutiny and performance management • Test of Assurance is planned at 6 months and 18 months into the process 	Nicola Stubbins	D	3	D	4
003	Julian Molloy 22/09/15	<p>Risk that transition to new service becomes a distraction so standards in schools drop.</p> <p>Mitigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear planning, Clarity of roles and Job outlines • Making sure that we manage the new teams effectively and make the service better with less resource. • Be mindful that overall the transition to a new joined-up service must have a positive impact on children. 	Karen Evans	D	3	D	4