

Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee

BRIEFING NOTE – No. 05/23

Briefing paper to: All Members of the Business Support Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Purpose: Update to business overview & scrutiny on progress children's signs of safety project

Report from: Donna Marriott, Assistant Director Children's Services

Author: Sue Brunton-Reed, Head of Improvement

1. Introduction

- The Signs of Safety (SofS) practice model for Children's Services was launched in 2021, using accredited forms purchased and installed into Mosaic. Following the launch, it was identified that the forms did not fully support practitioners to evidence good practice and any changes to the forms were restricted by the supplier, who would not allow any development of their system, so a decision was taken to move away from the accredited forms.
- Medway Council approved additional funding of 1.7million from reserves to rebuild the Children's Services recording system in Mosaic by designing bespoke simplified forms, which will ultimately better embed the Council's practice model. This investment was deemed essential to support the delivery of the Improvement Plan and achieve the required consistency and provide evidence of practice improvement across all service areas. The Council will now be able to take ownership of the forms and will have direct control over future developments including changes necessary for any policy or legislative changes.
- A Project Manager experienced in using Mosaic was appointed, supported by members of the systems team, Business and Intelligence team to ensure reporting was accurate and consistent, and a Practice lead to work closely with the service.
- The project went live in October 2022.

2. Progress to date

- The project is working ahead of timescales.
- Configuration of the core forms is complete, following an intensive programme of workshops across all service areas to fully engage practitioners and managers in the design process.
- UAT (User Acceptance Testing) sessions concluded in December 2023 to test application of the updated forms.

- The project scope has increased from 41 forms to 70; incorporating fostering service forms and other systems improvement forms.
- 51% of the new forms have gone live ahead of schedule
- The remaining redesigned SofS forms will go live the first week in April 2024, in line with the Project Plan.
- Training sessions have been booked for January/February for practitioners; these are face to face and attendance is mandatory.
- Phase 2 of the project will run from April '24 to March '25 to resolve issues, make any further necessary changes to the SofS forms once fully embedded into practice and review transition pathways into adult services. Further work required after this date will revert to existing staff as 'Business as Usual'

3. Impact

- The SofS Project Manager tracks progress on milestones and tasks using the SofS detailed project plan, and manages the RAAIDD (risks, issues, assumptions, dependencies, actions, and decisions) Log.
- Feedback from practitioners is routinely sought using an online survey, to check that changes to forms reflect the objectives of the project and meet the needs of practitioners, in order to improve quality of their recording.
- Several surveys have been conducted over the life of the project with services at workshops, service meetings and via email when a form goes live. The responses have been very positive, and evidence the journey of improvement. It is still early days to evidence impact on practice as the majority of forms will not go live until April 2024, but feedback on the process of development has been positive and impact on practice will be monitored as each element of the project comes on stream.
- The lessons learned from the Discovery Workshops and User Acceptance Testing stage, have been used to inform the final training phase and go live for the duration of the project.

4. Budget

- The actual spend for this year is forecast to be less than the original budget, forecasts for next year have been revised to include the Phase 2 deliverables but remaining below the overall budget forecast.
- This has been achieved through commissioning a project manager who has previously worked with the supplier so has been able to use her knowledge and expertise and thus avoid the use of additional external consultants. The commissioned report writers and business analysts have existing Mosaic experience, which has also reduced the need for additional capacity. The involvement of existing internal permanent staff has been maximised and their

knowledge of local systems and processes has speeded up the implementation of the new forms.