

Forward Plan reference number: Not applicable

Report title: Tending Multi-Disciplinary Team Pilot Extension. Drawdown of additional funding from the Children's Transformation Reserve.	
Report to: Cllr Christopher Whitbread, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs	
Report author: Helen Lincoln, Executive Director, Children and Families and Education	
Date: 24 th April 2023	For: Decision
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County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Everyone's Essex

- 1.1 Everyone's Essex sets out the strategic aims to make Essex a good place for children and families to grow. Within that aim are commitments to help all children get the best start in life by promoting health, care, and wellbeing for the most vulnerable children and families. Most specifically the funding supports existing frontline teams working with families with multiple, complex needs to reduce overall numbers of children in care and re-referrals into the care system.
- 1.2 This report requests a drawdown from the Children's Transformation Reserve to fund an extension of the Tending Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) pilot project for a period of 14 months. Although positive benefits have now been confirmed via the University of Essex (UofE) evaluation, this extension period is needed to evidence *sustained* change, to further assure the level of achievable benefits from the MDT approach and to progress the establishment of partner agency support/funding – all of which is necessary to provide the information for Senior Leaders to make a sufficiently evidence-based decision pertaining to the future of Tending MDT, such as the endorsement of a potential move to business as usual (BAU).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Agree to the drawdown of **£473,000** from the Children's Transformation Reserve; £402,000 in financial year 2023/24, and £71,000 in 2024/25 to extend the Tending MDT pilot.

3. Summary of issue

- 3.1 ECC's Children and Families Functional Leadership Team (FLT) recognised that a multi-disciplinary approach to support vulnerable children and their

families held within the existing services could support frontline teams to affect change in a more efficient and sustained way, with associated fiscal and non-fiscal benefits (e.g., *by reducing the number of children escalating to becoming accommodated and/or 'stepping-down' level of need*). This led to the creation of the Tendring MDT which brought together subject matter experts (SMEs) for domestic abuse, mental health, substance misuse, youth and housing and benefits support. It was originally intended for the team to be mobilised in October 2020; however, due to external impacts such as COVID19 and a subsequent related delay in recruitment, Tendring MDT were not fully operational until July 2021, almost 6 months after its actual 'Go-Live' on the 1 February 2021.

- 3.2 The delay in recruitment was partly due to agreement with partners on secondments in the MDT team being delayed and the availability of staff to be released into the MDT team due to the added pressures within their host organisation due to COVID.
- 3.3 The impact of COVID and the ability to work face-to-face with families due to social distancing also resulted in the engagement and building of relationships and trust with families taking longer than anticipated.
- 3.4 The Tendring MDT pilot project was scheduled to end in July 2022, with a full external evaluation report presented following 18 months of operation. A Change Control Notice (CCN) to request an extension to the Tendring MDT pilot project was endorsed in March 2022, which would have effectively seen the 'pilot' phase end May 2023.
- 3.5 The University of Essex (UofE) was commissioned by ECC to conduct a comprehensive external evaluation of the Tendring MDT pilot. They used a mixed method approach to assess both the outcomes of the Tendring MDT pilot and to gain insights into how the Tendring MDT pilot worked for the MDT team, Social Care staff and families. This was completed in November 2022 and evaluated the findings from the first 18 months of activity. (*Appendix 2*)

The UofE evaluation concluded that during the evaluation period, Tendring MDT achieved cost avoidance in the range of £1.06 and £3.8 million, (*representing Foster Care placement and Residential placements, respectively*) against a spend of ~£599k. Further significant impact for children and families include:

- Children and young people's mental health issues decreased by 83%
- Children and young people's alcohol issues reduced 63% and drug issues by 70%
- Children and young people at risk of child exploitation decreased by 50%
- Children and young people's suicidal ideation decreased by 60% and attempts by 67%
- Gang affiliation decreased by 67%
- Reduction in domestic abuse incidents by 50%
- Improved mental health was reported by 59% of adults
- Drug misuse stopped/reduced by 75%
- Parental alcohol misuse stopped/reduced by 84%

3.6 It is proposed to extend the pilot phase to end in May 2024.

3.7 The extension (to May 2024) of the Tending MDT pilot will deliver the following positive outcomes:

- Clearly evidence sustained positive change for children, young people, and families
- A clearer understanding of the needs of children, young people, and families in the Tending area, and enabling access to the right services when they need it
- Improving the health and wellbeing of children, young people, and their families so they are safe, happy, and achieving in stable home environments
- Enhanced partnership collaboration and funding opportunities, working to deliver coordinated services to children and families
- A central point of contact for frontline teams to efficiently access a pool of specialist/SME resource when they require intervention and support quickly, at the right place and time particularly when families are in crisis
- Relieve pressure on frontline teams through a reduction in time spent on complex cases and more manageable workloads, thus creating the environment and opportunity for meaningful, direct work across their caseloads with the SME's
- Overall reduction of social care involvement either through early intervention or avoiding escalation through a coordinated approach, thus creating potential to see an increase in the number of permanent exits from care
- Cost effective method of coaching/mentoring to support professional development, making use of in-house established skills and methods therefore increasing the skills, motivation, and confidence levels within the service
- Support the development of a proposal to stand-up a second Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) pilot in a different part of the County through shared experience and lessons learned.

4. Links to our Strategic Ambitions

4.1 This report links to the following aims in the Essex Vision

- Provide an equal foundation for every child
- Strengthen communities through participation

4.2 This report links to the following strategic priorities in the emerging Organisational Strategy 'Everyone's Essex':

- Health wellbeing and independence for all ages
- A good place for children and families to grow

5. Options:

5.1 Do Nothing (Not Recommended)

- 5.1.1 Doing nothing would mean ECC could risk not meeting its statutory obligations and could have an adverse impact on children, whereby they do not receive the necessary level of support to maintain stability both individually and within family settings.

5.2 Recommended Option

- 5.2.1 Approve the drawdown of additional funding from the Children's Transformation Reserve to fund the Tendring Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) pilot project for a period of 14 months (to May 2024).
- 5.2.2 The funding released will help manage the ongoing activities that requires the continued services provided by the resources already in place.
- 5.2.3 The funding will enable gathering of further evidence of sustained change and cost benefits/savings alongside consolidating the lessons learned to ensure the final Tendring MDT offer, if moved to a BAU service, best meets the needs identified through the pilot work and wider service input and delivers the intended benefits.

6. Issues for Consideration

6.1 Financial implications

- 6.1.1 This recommendation requires a total drawdown of £473,000 of which £402,000 will be in 2023/24 and £71,000 will be in 2024/25 from the Childrens Transformation Reserve.
- 6.1.2 The new timescale of 40 months ending May 2024 will allow enough time to demonstrate the outcomes for families in Tendring and the impact of the team in reducing the numbers of children in care and the associated costs.
- 6.1.4 The Childrens Transformation Reserve has a closing balance of £6.0m at the end of 2022/23, and £1.8m is currently committed to projects in progress or due to start. No savings are currently forecast.

6.2 Legal Implications

- 6.2.1. Any drawdowns from reserves must be approved by the Cabinet Member for Finance.
- 6.2.2. This report does not authorise the expenditure of any money – all spending decisions will need to be undertaken using delegated powers or a further decision by the relevant Cabinet Member.

7. Equality and Diversity implications

- 7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:
- 7.1.1 Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful
 - 7.1.2 Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - 7.1.3 Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (7.1.3) or (7.1.4) although it is relevant for (7.1.2).
- 7.3 The equality impact assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.
- 7.4 The proposal in this Cabinet Member Action (CMA) will protect eligible children who are more at risk due to Covid 19 because of their age or disability.

8. List of appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment
- 8.2 Appendix 2 – UofE Executive Summary

9. List of Background papers

- 9.1 None

<p>I approve the above recommendations relating to my portfolio for the reasons set out in the report.</p> <p>Councillor Christopher Whitbread – Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs</p>	<p>20.09.23</p>
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In consultation with:

Role	Date
Councillor Beverley Egan – Cabinet Member for Children & Families	03.08.2023

Executive Director Children and Families and Education Helen Lincoln	25.09.2023
Executive Director for Finance and Technology (S151 Officer) Andrew Page on behalf of Nicole Wood	01.06.2023
Director, Legal and Assurance (Monitoring Officer) Laura Edwards on behalf of Paul Turner	24.05.2023