

Shared Services Joint Committee Wednesday 15th December 2021

Report Title	Hosted and Lead Change Requests – Education Admissions	
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Appendix A

Transformation Task and Finish Timetable

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To approve the recommendations to re-profile the timeline of the Education Admissions disaggregation from 2021/22 to 2022/23

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The School Admissions Service performs a high profile and statutory led function. The service manages the allocations of school places across Northamptonshire including transfer of schools in-year, the appeals process and ensuring the 'fair access' protocol panels are in place and operational across the county for the placement of unplaced children (especially the vulnerable).

- 2.2 It was agreed in the Blueprint that the service would not disaggregate prior to the formation of the unitary authorities. The Blueprint agreed for the North to host the service for 12 months.
- 2.3 In practice there is a very small window (end of August) in any one educational or financial year when the team can split safely due to the time-led and robust demands of the admissions statutory calendar. There are additional requirements that must be fulfilled, including budget identification, and planning, to enable a safe split. It was not possible to carry out the necessary discovery and planning to split the service this year.
- 2.4 Approval is thus sought to support the recommendations to re-profile the timeframes (set out in the Transformation Task and Finish Group proposed timeline) for the Education Admissions service disaggregation to 2022/23

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that the following is approved

- 3.1 It is recommended that (**Timeline** Change):

Education Admissions: disaggregation timeline is re-profiled into 2022/23 to allow for the work required to be undertaken at the most appropriate and least risky time for this high-profile service, 31st August 2022.

Reason for recommendation

The recommendation is being made to mitigate the significant risk to this high-profile service of an earlier disaggregation, and thus to reduce the impact of the change to this key service for our customers and the resultant reputational risk to the Council.

4. Background

- 4.1 The School Admissions team (the 'Service') deal with the allocations of school places across Northamptonshire, including the transfer of schools in year. This is a statutory service delivered in accordance with The Department for Education (DfE) School Admissions Code 2014, (as amended). The Provision includes delivery of 'Co-ordinated Schemes' pursuant to Schedule 2 of the School Admissions Regulations 2012. The service also applications via the 'Fair Access' process (for unplaced children, especially the most vulnerable).
- 4.2 The team plays a key role in championing and protecting the rights of parents and children and young people in terms of their access to education in an increasingly academy-led education environment, providing robust challenge to schools and academies where required.
- 4.3 The team perform several statutory duties under the following Acts:
- School Standards and Framework Act 1988 and the law relating to admissions
 - School Admissions Code (2014)

The councils have a statutory duty to:

- Ensure that the 'Co-ordinated' Schemes for admission to primary, junior, and secondary schools are delivered in accordance with statutory the national timescales within the School Admissions Code.
- Formulate and publish 'Co-ordinated' Schemes for admission to primary, junior, and secondary schools and ensure that they are delivered in accordance with statutory the national timescales within the School Admissions Code.
- Ensure that the 'Co-ordinated' Schemes for admission to primary, junior, and secondary schools are delivered in accordance with statutory the national timescales within the School Admissions Code.
- Ensure that a Fair Access Protocol Panels is in place and operational in all areas of the county for the placement of unplaced children, especially the most vulnerable.
- Process in-year applications for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools in the county.
- Make arrangements for appeals against refusal of a school place (Community and Voluntary Controlled schools).
- Consult on any changes to the admission arrangements for schools where NCC is the admission authority (Community and Voluntary Controlled schools) and determine the arrangements annually according to dates specified in the School Admissions Code.
- Produce an annual report on admissions for the Schools Adjudicator for all schools in the area for which they co-ordinate admissions.

4.4 National reporting / KPIs are as set out in the School Admissions Code 2014 and related legislation.

4.5 Due to the restricted timelines¹ required for the admissions process, and to avoid additional risk to the delivery of the above key statutory services whilst the unitary authorities were forming, it was agreed not to attempt to split the service prior to Vesting Day.

4.6 The Blueprint agreed for the Service to be hosted by the North for a period of 12 months. In practice there is a limited window of opportunity available to disaggregate on the 31st of August of any relevant year to ensure alignment with the Service provision and to ensure minimal disruption to Service delivery. Alternative dates will lead to a risk of Service delivery failure.

¹ The co-ordinated schemes have 'National Offer Days' where places become available, 19th April 2022 for primary schools and 1st March 2022 for secondary schools. Workload in the team is higher in the run up to and after these dates. These dates and the academic year 1st Sept - 31st August are timeline constraints to be considered in any team change.

- 4.7 Further planning needs to take place for the teams to split safely.
- 4.8 Work to prepare for the disaggregation and completing impact assessment is ongoing and will be reported end of year.

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1 The Joint Committee may wish to leave the disaggregation of the two services in line with the current task and finish group. This choice would incur significant risk to the stability of the Service. This is a key priority service for many customers and to attempt to disaggregate prior to August 2022 would incur significant risk for the Service and impact negatively on the reputation of the Council.

6. Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Resources and Financial

No expected change

6.2 Legal

There are no legal implications arising from the proposals

6.3 Risk and Issues

The recommendations reduce the significant risk that would be incurred through disaggregation in 2021/22. No other risks are incurred through the change.

6.4 Consultation

Consultation with the Service Area leads, and SMEs has been carried out

6.5 Consideration by Scrutiny

Not applicable.

6.6 Climate Impact

Not applicable.

6.7 Community Impact

Not applicable.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None

Appendix A

Transformation Task and Finish Timeline