



North
Northamptonshire
Council



West
Northamptonshire
Council

Shared Services Joint Committee Wednesday 23rd March 2022

Report Title	Schools Admissions Disaggregation
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Executive Members	<p>Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills, NNC</p> <p>Cllr Fiona Baker, Portfolio Holder for Children, Families and Education, WNC</p>

Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972	N/A

List of Appendices

None

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To seek approval to proceed with the disaggregation of the Schools Admissions service that is currently hosted by North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) and provided to West Northamptonshire Council (WNC).

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The Schools Admissions service is intending to disaggregate by September 2022.
- 2.2. On 15th December 2021 the Shared Services Joint Committee resolved that the Education Admissions disaggregation timeline be re-profiled to allow for the work required to be undertaken at the most appropriate time to minimise risk and impact to delivery to customers for this high-profile service with the physical disaggregation work conducted at the least busy time of the year prior to the new academic year commencing in September 2022
- 2.3. 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).
- 2.4. Approval is sought to disaggregate the service on an equal basis.

3. Recommendations

3.1. That the Joint Committee Shared Services:

- a) Approve the disaggregation of the Schools Admissions service in its current form and on an equal basis by September 2022 as set out within Option 2 (section 5.1 of the report).
- b) Grant delegated authority to the Monitoring Officers for North and West Northamptonshire Councils, in consultation with the Section 151 officers, to take any further decisions and actions necessary to implement recommendation a) above and conclude the requirements of the exit plan for IAA schedule 2B3.

3.2. Reason for Recommendations

- The proposed option to disaggregate the Schools Admissions service adopts and adheres to the Local Government Reform Blueprint, outlining services such as this, that are hosted for a period prior to safely and legally disaggregating.
- The Council (or customers) will receive the maximum benefit from the option proposed by localisation of service delivery.

3.3. Alternative Options Considered

- One alternative option has been considered in the preparation of this report. Namely, not to disaggregate and remain as a service hosted by North Northamptonshire Council and provided to West Northamptonshire Council. This option would be counter to the approval and adoption of the Disaggregation Blueprint by North Northamptonshire Shadow Executive

Committee on 24 September 2020.

4. Report 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 manages 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, 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 the national statutory 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 national statutory timescales within the School Admissions Code.
 - Ensure that a Fair Access Protocol Panel 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 WNC / NNC are the admission authorities (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. The Service has 29 staff (24 FTE) with an actual staffing cost of £730k; The Admissions Team budget for 2021/22 is £969k.

5. Issues and Choices

5.1. **Staffing** – Two alternative means of service provision were appraised, with option 2 being the recommended option.

Options	Benefits	Dis-benefits
Option 1 – Remain as a hosted service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No disruption to the team or service• The skills and knowledge remain in one team• Relationships with schools, Academy Trusts and other stakeholders are easier to maintain with a single point of contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not compliant with blueprint for future service delivery• Accountability issues• No ability for receiver authority to shape service delivery• Duplication of work with other services that have disaggregated
Option 2 – Disaggregate on an equal basis by September 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No increase in budget requirements• Each authority has control over respective service delivery and team structures• Compliant with Blueprint	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Less resilience from smaller teams• Short term disruption (mitigate by selective timing of disaggregation)

5.2. **Resources** – As a joint project between North and West Northamptonshire Council Enabler resource across both authorities will provide support to the project within the expected timescales however, this is dependent on capacity and has been included as a risk.

5.3. **Budget** – Both Councils will meet the funding requirements through a review and realignment of existing budgets across the teams as required. No additional base budget is required to fund the service from either Council.

6. Next Steps

6.1. A decision is to be made by the Directors of Education and the Assistant Directors of the respective service area to agree employee allocation across North and West Northamptonshire Councils against the disaggregation principles agreed with the Trades Unions.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1. Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1. There are no resources or financial implications arising from the proposals and all costs arising will be met from within existing base budgets.
- 7.1.2. North and West Northamptonshire Council will meet the funding requirements through a review and realignment of existing budgets across the teams as required. No additional base budget is required to fund the service from either Council.

7.2. Legal and Governance

- 7.2.1. The Joint Committee (Shared Services) is responsible for “ensuring there are robust plans for any disaggregation of services and that there is a smooth transition to new service delivery arrangements”. They are also responsible for ensuring that statutory arrangements are in place for each Council.
- 7.2.2. The Schools Admissions service is a statutory service which is currently hosted by North Northamptonshire Council and provided across North and West Northamptonshire. Upon the termination of this hosted Inter-Authority Agreement arrangement, an Exit Strategy will be put in place.
- 7.2.3. As part of the disaggregation process, employees will undergo a consultation period where the outcome of employee allocation will be determined, and some employees will transfer across to West Northamptonshire Council under TUPE rules, and against the disaggregation principles agreed with the Trades Unions.

7.3. Relevant Policies and Plans

- 7.3.1. The disaggregation of the Schools Admissions service complies with the requirements of the approved Blueprint, whereby it outlines the hosted services in each authority that require disaggregating.

7.4. Risk

- 7.4.1 The split of the team would need to ensure a balance of skills, knowledge, and experience, if this is not achieved there is a risk of disruption to the service

7.5. Consultation

- 7.5.1. Consultation with affected employees, supported by the Trades Unions, will take place prior to September 2022.

7.6. Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel

7.6.1. No considerations arising from this report.

7.7. Consideration by Scrutiny

7.7.1. No considerations arising from this report.

7.8. Equality Implications

7.8.1. At present it is not possible to fully assess the actual impact on all protected characteristic groups, at this point in the process. During consultation, the situation will be reviewed and as any impact becomes apparent, appropriate mitigating action will be taken (where this is possible).

7.8.2. Standard Council HR policies and procedures will apply, and all of these have been equality impact assessed.

7.9. Climate Impact

7.9.1. None arising from this report.

7.10. Community Impact

7.10.1. This proposal will deliver a positive community impact because the disaggregated teams will be solely responsible for service delivery in each administrative area.

7.11. Crime and Disorder Impact

7.11.1. None arising from this report.

8. Background Papers

8.1. [Joint Committee \(Shared Services\) 15 December 2021 SSJC/48 Hosted and Lead Change Request - Education Admissions](#)