

CABINET

18 OCTOBER 2022

MOSAIC - CHILDREN'S URGENT FORMS DEVELOPMENT

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Mrs Josie Iles, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services – Lead Member

Report from: Lee-Anne Farach, Director of People – Children and Adults Services

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Summary

This report sets out an urgent proposal to rebuild the Children's Services side of the Children & Adults Social Care System, Mosaic, by removing unworkable licenced forms and replacing with bespoke simplified forms that would need to be fully designed with the service and built using codes that map data across to all the performance reporting, which will ultimately better embed the Council's practice model framework.

The report asks Cabinet to recommend that Council agrees to the addition of £1.7m to the revenue budget to be funded from reserves.

1. Budget and policy framework

- 1.1. The decisions in this report are within the Council's policy and budget framework, and are for Cabinet determination, with the exception of the addition of monies to the revenue budget from reserves which is a matter for Full Council.
- 1.2. It is imperative that the service remove barriers to good practice by simplifying case management recording, and that progress is made at pace in the face of Ofsted monitoring visits and the full inspection.

2. Background

- 2.1. During the 2019 Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS), it was recommended that Children's Services review their practice model framework. Subsequently the service agreed to introduce Signs of Safety, a widely used framework that aims to reduce the need for children to

enter care. It is a framework developed to encompass a strengths-based approach to casework. The service also made a decision to implement Signs of Safety accredited forms that reflect the framework in the Mosaic system. This required a significant change in system configuration to support recording on the children's database.

- 2.2. Approval was granted to Children's Services to purchase the licence to use the suite of 20 Signs of Safety accredited forms from Elia, the Signs of Safety owner, via Access, the Mosaic supplier, for these forms to be implemented in the Mosaic database. The licence was for a two-year period starting on 26th June 2020 and was due for renewal on 26th June 2022 for a further two years.
- 2.3. The Signs of Safety forms implementation in Mosaic, had an impact on the local and statutory performance reports, which required 68 SQL database reports to be converted in Mosaic to include the Signs of Safety data.
- 2.4. Children's services have been using the accredited Signs of Safety forms in Mosaic since 1st April 2021, and almost immediately raised concerns about the significant challenges experienced by users. This included the forms not meeting service requirement, recording is onerous and difficult to understand. They are not helping practitioners to analyse or record effectively. This has been a repeated criticism in external reviews of the service by the regulator Ofsted and other external organisations.
- 2.5. As the Signs of Safety forms are accredited, local changes to them cannot be made without Elia's prior consent. Elia was approached to consider requests to alter forms to meet Medway's requirements. Unfortunately, this was not successful.
- 2.6. This led to discussions with other local authorities who use Mosaic and Signs of Safety, who have shared that they are having a similar experience and have either moved away or in the process of moving away from Signs of Safety accredited forms.
- 2.7. Children's Services are clear that this is having a negative impact on staff morale and our capability to improve practice and there is a need to significantly simplify the forms if we are going to move the service forward and out of intervention.
- 2.8. Ongoing work to address the challenges with Elia has not been successful. Elia maintains that they are unwilling to support the extent of changes needed. Options for moving this forward have been explored and it has been reiterated that the Council cannot amend the Elia Signs of Safety forms without leading to potential legal challenge as Elia own the intellectual property rights.
- 2.9. The service has considered whether it could work with Elia to reach a middle ground in the development of the forms. However, Access has given notice to end their contract with Elia. This means that whilst Access may support Medway with technical issues on the existing Signs of Safety forms, any

further development work would not be supported including changes necessary for any policy or legislation.

- 2.10. It is therefore clear that maintaining the Elia Signs of Safety forms is no longer viable. They are significantly hampering practice, preventing improvement and reduce the potential to move successfully through our next Ofsted inspection.
- 2.11. We cannot risk this having an impact on Children's Service improvement, so an alternative solution must be considered.

3. Options

- 3.1. The Signs of Safety forms are a unique set of forms that are licensed and trademarked to Elia. There are no alternative products from other suppliers that could be considered. Therefore, the options are:

- 3.2. **Do nothing**

This is not a viable option as the forms will remain in their current state. Elia do not consent to Medway altering forms 'in-house' due to intellectual property rights. Access's withdrawal to work with Elia means there will be no further form developments which places children's services and the Council at risk of not moving out of intervention. This option is not recommended.

- 3.3. **Medway Council's Children & Adults Systems Team reconfigure Mosaic**

The Children & Adults Systems Team have the knowledge and technical skills to complete this work. However, they also support three other systems used by Adult Services, Youth Services, Education and SEND. If the team were to reconfigure Mosaic and build the new forms for Children's Services, in the timescale required, they would not be able to maintain, support and develop the other systems and divisions. The Care Reforms and CQC Assurance Review of Adult Social Care will require significant changes to Mosaic, in addition to the critical systems work that is needed for Education which cannot be paused or stopped.

- 3.3.1. In addition, the lack of SQL Database Report Writers due to vacancies and continuous challenges in recruiting to the posts, means the database report conversions and testing would not be at the pace required, which would delay go live, which places Children's Services and the Council at risk of moving out of intervention. This is not a viable option.

- 3.4. **Commission an external team to reconfigure Mosaic**

Due to the technical expertise required to build the forms in Mosaic, resource must be procured from a specialist IT agency who provide consultants with the knowledge and calibre required to build forms, configure the system along with the SQL skills and Mosaic database table knowledge to convert and test reports. This would create a dedicated project team delivering specified 'in-house' forms and SQL reports.

- 3.4.1. The use of an external team will allow the reconfiguration to be carried out at the pace required by Children's Services and will enable the Children & Adults

Systems Team to provide the support needed to Adults, Education and Youth Services.

This is the recommended option.

4. Advice and analysis

- 4.1. The service cannot continue using the Signs of Safety forms.
- 4.2. Following recent negotiations, agreement to support the move away under cover of a licence from Elia has been negotiated to lessen the impact and ensure that intellectual property rights are not breached.
- 4.3. Elia have agreed in writing to our request to use the accredited forms as a basis of the urgent redesign work. This is subject to removal of the Signs of Safety logo and having a licence agreement in place with them, until the service is able to move entirely away from the Signs of Safety forms. The licence will be in place for a year where it will be reviewed and if necessary, would be extended until Medway have transitioned away from their forms and onto our own in-house forms.
- 4.4. Considering the above, Mosaic system configuration urgently needs to commence to simplify the assessment and planning forms given the detrimental impact this is having on practice.
- 4.5. The preferred option, set out at paragraph 3.4, is to commission a dedicated project team of experienced external technical IT resource and a project manager, to fully develop the forms and convert reports.
- 4.6. The outline plan and estimated timeline for the project can be seen at Appendix 1. This includes resource requirement for the duration of the project.
- 4.7. Details of the project team, including the number, the roles and estimated cost are detailed in table 1 below. The costs are based on day rates paid to external consultants, as there is not the resource available with the necessary skills to employ on a fixed term contract.

4 Systems Analysts/specialists	£583,000
Business Intelligence resource	£41,340
6 report writer/ testers	954,000
Project Manager	£94,444
Project Support officer	£29,900
	£1,702,686

(Table 1)

- 4.8. £1,702,686 is the worst-case scenario and has been calculated based on the resource used and length of time it took for Signs of Safety to be implemented in Mosaic during 2020-2021. It is important to note that whilst this was being implemented, other systems and performance work across Adults Services, Education and Youth Services were paused.

- 4.9. The cost may reduce if the number of SQL database report writers is not necessary. Unfortunately, this cannot be determined until the 'User Acceptance Testing' phase, as per Appendix 1, is complete. The C&A Senior Systems Administrator will work with the dedicated team to ensure that the smartest approach is used, so that work is not prolonged unnecessarily.
- 4.10. The project will deliver clear benefits. Simplifying forms will remove barriers to good practice, improving analysis, clearer plans and will reduce the amount of time spent undertaking case recording. It will have a positive impact on staff morale. The Service will have direct control over future developments of forms including changes necessary for any policy or legislative changes.
- 4.11. A Diversity Impact Assessment is attached at Appendix 2. There are no adverse impacts for any of the protected characteristic groups.

5. Risk management

- 5.1. There are risks associated with the recommended option. The significant ones are detailed in the table below.
- 5.2. If the Council can source the project team and tightly project manage the scope, build and implementation of the project, our confidence level of a successful implementation can be high.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Difficulties with procurement of resource	Risk that difficulties with procurement of the resource delays the start of implementation	Early planning of procurement and optimise timing of gateway decision.	C2
Lack of skilled resource	Availability of skilled external consultants to undertake configuration work	Review and amend the timescale for implementation. Consider increasing day rates. Early conversations with agencies setting out our requirement for resource.	C2
Quality of work individual external technical IT resource	The quality of the work of the external technical IT resource may not be to the required standard.	Competency testing at interview. Senior Systems Admin sign-off of all configuration work	D2
No ICT equipment for external consultants	ICT do not have spare equipment to loan- purchase of equipment required.	Amend timeline to take account of equipment lead time	C2
Project is not delivered on time	The project has drift and delay and is not delivered on time or budget	Appoint a project manager to coordinate plans, track progress, escalate issues, manage	C2

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
		engagement and communications.	
Poor specification and the revised form does not deliver the intended benefits.	The service may not engage with the project to specify the new forms, and project fails to deliver a solution that works for families and supports simplified recording	Engage nominated workers to attend 'discovery' workshops to specify new forms. Engage nominated workers in User Acceptance testing. Attendance of technical staff at discovery workshops.	D2
Timing of reporting re-configuration	Risk that the timing of the report conversion work clashes with statutory returns	Review and amend the timeline if necessary. Smart specifications to reduce requirement for changes to the reports.	D2

6. Consultation

- 6.1. Detailed discussions have been undertaken with staff to understand the issues and the onerous nature of the recording which has informed the proposal put forward. There is widespread support for moving away from the current forms.
- 6.2. Consultation has been undertaken with Elia to address the challenges with the forms and to understand any scope there may be to amend existing forms.
- 6.3. Medway's DfE Improvement Adviser has facilitated senior level discussions with other local authorities who are having a similar experience with Signs of Safety forms to Medway. Senior leaders have also been consulted within the Council.
- 6.4. Consultation with procurement has been undertaken to advise on procuring the resources from recruitment agencies.

7. Climate change implications

- 7.1. There are no direct climate change implications resulting from this report.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1. The Cabinet will be asked to recommend that Council agrees to the addition of £1.7m to take forward the development of the forms as laid out in the proposal. Based on the current timeline, phasing over the financial years is £214,000 in 2022-23, £1,167m in 2023-24 and £322,000 in 2024-25. This is to be funded from reserves.

8.2. The cost of the licence with Elia will be no higher than the £15k per year previously paid to Access, provision for which is already in the base budget.

9. Legal implications

9.1. Elia is the owner of Signs of Safety which is the current solution used by the service. Under the terms of the Contract with Medway, Access agreed to grant to a Licence to Use the Licensed Solution (Signs of Safety Forms). This current solution is provided under a separate licensing arrangement which adds the accredited forms into Mosaic which is an established software package we have under licence from Access.

9.2. The Council was in a 2-year agreement for the Signs of Safety Forms as a licensed solution with Access. This ceased on the 26 June 2022. In addition to the Service's dissatisfaction with the current solution they are aware that Access has since relinquished their involvement with Elia.

9.3. The Intellectual Property Rights embodied in the Licensed Solution and/or the documentation remain vested solely Elia. The ownership remains with Elia after the expiry of this Licence. The contract terms state that Medway shall make no attempt to (or allow any third parties to attempt to) modify, amend, alter, or interfere with the Licensed Solution without the prior written permission of Elia. The Service have discussed their proposal with Elia who have provided caveated agreement to the adaptation of some of the forms provided that these are not made to any new forms and that any branding is removed.

9.4. The solution being recommended by the service involves Medway, reconfiguring the signs of safety forms and reporting to sit better within Mosaic. To the extent that this has been agreed by Elia this is unlikely to be in breach of their Intellectual Property rights but the Service will need to be diligent in ensuring that they do not breach of any of the caveats contained within Elia's agreement to the adaptation of their product. Elia have agreed in writing to the Council's request to use the accredited forms as a basis of the urgent redesign work. This is subject to removal of the signs of safety logo, and also having a licence agreement in place with them until the service is in a position to move entirely away from the signs of safety forms. The licence agreement will be for one year in the first instance, with agreement to extend if necessary.

9.5. Without the renewal of the licensing agreement the conditional agreement with the Intellectual Property owner to adapt the forms would be rescinded and therefore any adaptations to the forms would be in breach of their rights.

10. Recommendations

- 10.1. The Cabinet is recommended to approve the option detailed at paragraph 3.4 of the report, commission external resource to reconfigure Mosaic, develop forms and database reports.
- 10.2. The Cabinet is requested to recommend full Council to approve the addition of £1.7m to the revenue budget, to be funded from Council reserves, in line with phasing detailed at paragraph 8.1 of the report.

11. Suggested reasons for decisions

- 11.1. The recommendations will enable the service to transition away from the existing Signs of Safety forms and work to develop simplified forms and drive sustainable strengths-based practice improvement.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Outline plan and timeline

Appendix 2 – Diversity Impact Assessment

Background papers

None