

Audit and Governance Committee

Meeting to be held on 26 September 2016

Electoral Division affected: <u>N/A</u>
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Liquid Logic System Update

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Executive Summary

The Audit and Governance Committee requested that a report be presented at the September Committee that set out the proposed improvements to the Liquid Logic system. In response to this request, this report sets out the recent progress that has been made improving the system since the Ofsted report of September 2015 and also the proposed next steps for the system and the new governance arrangements for system developments and implementations.

Recommendation

The Audit and Governance Committee is asked to note the progress to date.

Background and Advice

In September 2015, Ofsted raised concerns about the Liquid Logic system and its ability to produce reliable information on which decision making could be based. In response to this, a working group 'Project Accuracy', chaired by the deputy Chief Executive, was established. The group was made up of a range specialisms from service delivery and business intelligence to systems development. This was in recognition of the fact that the issues raised resulted from a range of problems and that in order to resolve these, the input of a wide range of services was needed.

The programme of work that was developed took both a short term and a longer term view due to the fact that some issues could be resolved relatively quickly however, there were some fundamental issues that would take a longer time to resolve. Significant progress has already been made and this been recognised in the recent Ofsted inspection, however a continued programme of improvement and governance is still needed and is in place as there are still some considerable challenges to overcome before the council can be confident that the data in the system is as accurate as it can be across all services. Of equal importance is the need to ensure the culture of accountability for systems and data that is starting to emerge continues and becomes an embedded part of social care. Achieving this will take longer and a framework for monitoring and governing the data and the way in

which we make changes to our systems. This framework has been developed to assist monitor progress and identify any new issues that may emerge and to ensure the improvement in the accuracy that has been achieved will be maintained on an ongoing basis through 'business as usual' activity.

The learning from Project Accuracy can be equally applied to all systems and will be used as the model to be applied elsewhere across the council. To illustrate this, the approach that is being adopted for Liquid Logic Adults is set out later in the report.

Project Accuracy

The work of the project accuracy group has focussed on the following types of activity;

- **System ICT Implementation**

Liquid Logic is used successfully by many different local authorities so the choice of the system itself was not an issue. All systems however need to be configured to meet the processes of individual organisations and it was clear that the way in which the system had been configured in Lancashire was causing problems operationally. Backlogs of work were building up and social workers were developing and using off-line, manual workarounds to overcome some of the problems.

Getting to the root of the problem was key and after discussions with Liquid Logic it was established that Lancashire had customised its system more than other local authorities. Blackburn with Darwen Council use the Liquid Logic successfully and a comparison of the two systems was suggested as a way forward to compare how others use their system and see if any learning could be obtained. Rather than undertake a full comparison of the system that could potentially take months and may cover processes that were operating efficiently, it was agreed that those processes that were proving to be the most problematic for Lancashire's social workers would be focussed on. A workshop involving key individuals from practice, corporate services (systems and business intelligence), BTLS, Liquid Logic and Blackburn with Darwen was held and from this the following priority areas/actions were determined;

- The way in which data was requested from social workers was the same for every type of process even though some of the questions were not relevant to all cases. This was both frustrating and taking up valuable time for front line social workers. A refinement of the forms that made them more intuitive and relevant to particular types of cases and risks was developed in conjunction with the service and these 'smart' forms are currently being introduced into the business. Some of the forms needed to be developed by Liquid Logic were originally planned to be in place for September but were delayed due to the Ofsted inspection. The next available date for resources being available from Liquid Logic is October and this has been secured for the outstanding changes.
- Some work processes were not moving through the system and were therefore not being authorised/actioned etc. This was largely due to the fact

that were no processes in place to ensure that changes to staffing hierarchies, i.e. as staff moved within the organisation or joined or left, were reflected in the Liquid Logic system. This meant that social workers could not move tasks on or could not have a clear view of what work was left in their worktrays to action. A significant piece of work was undertaken to ensure that the actual social work structure, authorisation levels etc. were updated in the system and processes have been defined and implemented to ensure that they remain up to date in the future. This has required a significant amount of work by Children's Social Care service as well as HR, BTLS and the Core Systems team. As a result of this, transactions are now flowing through the system in the way that they should and social workers have worktrays that only contain the outstanding tasks that they need to carry out.

- Some processes had been configured so that they had to be carried out sequentially when this did not always reflect operational practice. This meant that social workers were prevented from moving on to the next part of their work by the system and so they were recording things off line. A review of practice and processes was carried out and where it was determined that there was no real risk of allowing access to the next stage of the process before the previous one was fully completed, the system controls were changed.
- Some changes were identified as being beneficial but discussions with Liquid Logic established that these had already been identified by other local authorities and in response to this they had developed a new release of the system to accommodate the changes. Lancashire is currently on V10 of the system and the changes are in the new V12. A review of the benefits has been carried out and a decision has been made that Lancashire moves to V12. In making the decision, it was recognised that this upgrade must be implemented in a controlled way that identifies impacts, allocates adequate resources to key activities such as testing and training and manages the system change into the business. As a guide, a 20 week implementation period is needed and it is anticipated that the new version 12 will be implemented before the end of March 2017. Preparatory work has already started.
- System changes were being requested by a range of individuals in the service and control and ownership of the system was not clear. Without this, some changes were contradictory, impacted on reporting and meant that resources within BTLS and other teams were not always focussed on priorities. The need to instil enhanced governance, discipline and control was established as being vital to overcome these as well as giving overall visibility of system changes to senior managers. New governance arrangements have been agreed and are set out later in the report. When implemented, this enhanced control will ensure that all system changes are planned for, have clear timescales, have identified resources and crucially are implemented in such a way as to give a period of stability within the service. The constant change process that was in place previously will not continue.

- **Reporting from Liquid Logic Systems**

Addressing the reporting issues was key to improving confidence in Liquid Logic and aiding decision making. A number of actions have been required not only to address the structure of reports but to ensure there is consistency in working practices and a discipline amongst social workers that ensures data is captured and entered into the system in a consistent way and on a timely basis,. To address the issues identified, the work was divided into 2 waves:

- Wave 1 of Project Accuracy concentrated on seven priority areas to address specific areas of weakness identified by Ofsted and managers. The project was launched with briefings to all children's social care practitioners and managers. A suite of weekly reports was generated and weekly improvement cycles (comprising reporting, analysis, brief meetings and short term action plans) were used to investigate anomalies and put plans in place to improve data quality. The work is largely complete for Wave 1, and there is a recognised improvement in the quality of data being reported in these areas by Ofsted and by managers in Children's Services.
- Wave 2 of Project Accuracy is focussed on the delivery of a wider suite of accurate, useable and timely management reports and the production of Annex A. Annex A is required by Ofsted and is child-level data supplied by every local authority prior to an inspection. It provides data analysts within Ofsted with a means to assess data quality and supplies inspectors with a way of selecting cases for further tracking. A robust Annex A is therefore essential.
- Work is underway to finalise the management information requirements for children's services. Initially concentrating on Children's Social Care, a suite of regular reports which will be provided weekly or monthly to operational managers is being developed. These reports will ultimately enable managers to have full oversight of the work being undertaken by their teams, and will aid planning and decision making at all levels. Particular emphasis is being given to developing reports that are easy to use and truly informative. They will complement the performance analysis reports that are supplied for monthly Practice Improvement Meetings and will form part of a Performance Framework for Children's Services.
- There is a report release schedule which shows that the reports required by Children's Social Care will be written by the end of November 2016. Each report will have a full implementation plan, including assessing the accuracy of the data and the usability of the report. Experience gained in Wave 1 of Project Accuracy means that there is an accepted process of assessing the reports and dealing with any issues being identified.
- A plan is also being developed to address the reporting requirements for Fostering and Adoption Services and SEND (children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities). The work is starting to be scoped up, and the plan will include developing a list of requirements, a report release schedule and an implementation plan for each area of work.

- Work to improve Annex A is well underway; the suite of reports required to generate Annex A have now been written and these are used to create a monthly analysis of data and performance. Plans are developed to deal with any issues highlighted and progressed is tracked monthly. A synopsis of data and performance issues was provided to Ofsted in their recent inspection which demonstrated a much better understanding of data deficiencies.
- The structure of the reports is however only one element of the process and to be meaningful data accuracy is key. As previously mentioned, Project Accuracy undertook a process to improve the accuracy of the data in the systems. This identified a number of key issues that needed to be addressed that related to practice and culture:
 - Some additional training needs were identified for data that was consistently input into the system in the wrong way. The correct processes were reviewed and, if still relevant, were communicated to all social workers. Where necessary, additional training has been provided;
 - Some processes had not previously been fully defined and consequently were operating in different ways in different teams. Team managers as well as social workers have been informed of/trained on the correct processes and mechanisms are in place to produce exception reports that can be referred to team managers so that action can be taken where these are not being followed;
 - Training on the Liquid Logic system was in two parts. The first part was the general overview of the system and how to access key parts of it as well as data protection etc. This training is delivered on-line and is mandatory before any social worker can have access to the system. The second part of the training is delivered face to face by the Learning and Development team. This training is specific to the processes that operate in Lancashire and is therefore key in ensuring that social workers understand key processes and how data should be captured and entered in the system. Previously this training was not mandatory and therefore take-up was very low. This training is now compulsory and must be undertaken by all social workers within 3 months of starting work. The training is also available to current social workers and regular training on the system and processes is being built into the ongoing annual CPD requirements for social workers in Lancashire.
 - A framework for ensuring data accuracy is maintained and that changes to reporting requirements are identified early and can be fully specified and implemented has been developed as part of the enhanced governance arrangements that are now in place within the social care service.

Culture

The need for a culture change around systems and data has been mentioned previously. This covers the full spectrum from control and governance through to operational accountability for using the system in the prescribed manner and being accountable for the data. This culture change is starting to emerge as social workers

see the importance of accurate data and how it impacts on decision making. At the same time, there is the need corporately to recognise the importance of 'gatekeeping' and carefully overseeing the way in which changes are managed into the business. Ongoing engagement with stakeholders at the right level is also key to successful and integrated working relationships across a range of professional services. Systems do not sit outside the business but are integral to it and this is starting to be recognised in our services.

Governance Arrangements

Strong governance arrangements are now in place and the Director of Children's Services is required to sign off all changes to the system. To support this;

- System ownership for all systems has been transferred to the Core Systems/Transformation team with dedicated, named resource attached to the system. This first line of contact will be crucial in ensuring a line of sight for the Director of Children's services on all system related activity.
- Roadmaps will be developed for each system and will set out timelines for changes, resource requirements etc. This will be a key monitoring document for senior managers within the service.
- Best practice guidance for all system implementations has been developed and will be followed in all cases. The Core Systems/Transformation team will be responsible for carrying out the 'gatekeeper' role for all changes.
- A series of working groups will meet on a regular basis, chaired by senior staff, and will report to the Startwell Senior Management Team and the 0-25 Board on a regular basis. Sign-off and approvals are required, in most instances, by the Director of Children's Services to ensure that senior oversight of these issues remains as part of the ongoing 'business as usual' processes. The remit of the working groups covers reporting, systems and accuracy and ensures there is a both a top down and bottom up approach to identifying service needs, change requirements and understanding impacts. Expectations about the knowledge, skills and level (seniority) of staff expected to attend the meetings has been determined.
- From January 2017, the accuracy of data and governance of reporting requirements will be managed via a fortnightly 'Accuracy Working Group'. The Accuracy Working Group will be chaired by the Head of Service for Children's Social Care (Central) and will have full oversight of all issues impacting on accurate recording and reporting. Any changes to reports, and the implementation of new reports will be managed through this group.

Other Systems

There are already a number of systems under development that affect Children's Social care including the need for an Early Help Module and a module for Education, Health and Care Plans. Work has already taken place to determine the statement of requirements for these. The governance processes set out in the section above will be followed to ensure these modules are implemented in a controlled way.

The adults systems and how they operate are similar to the children's systems and it is important that these are not overlooked. There is a considerable amount of learning from the Project Accuracy Group that can be used and passported into a similar process for Liquid Logic Adults systems. Preparatory work is already underway to determine what needs to be done, the resources required and by when. As a first step, hierarchies are in the process of being cleansed and enhanced with authorisation/approval levels etc. Once this work is completed, the data can be migrated into the Liquid Logic system. The scale of the adult's service is significantly larger than that for children's and therefore the scope of work and the length of time it will take to complete will be longer. An assessment of realistic timescales is underway as any migration of new data will need considerable resource from the service to check, correct etc. This will need to be done in a controlled and planned way.

To oversee the work on the adult's system, a Steering group is to be set up. This will set the direction and pace of change and will meet on a weekly basis to ensure the pace of change required is being achieved. The data accuracy Improvement cycle will be determined by the group and will need careful planning given the amount of resource that will be required from the service to quickly check data reports, highlight inaccuracies and return for correcting. To do this in children's social care, additional capacity has been brought in both to help clear a backlog of work and also to focus on data that is known to be a particular issue/problem. It is estimated that this additional capacity has cost in the region of £400k. In planning the programme of work for adults, there will be a cost of carrying out the work and this will need to be factored into the budget for the current and next financial year. At this stage this cannot be quantified but is likely to be significantly more than the cost for children's social care due to the fact that adults is significantly bigger.

Consultations

N/A

Implications:

Financial Implications

The cost of the work to date is estimated to be £400k. Additional funding will need to be identified to support the work on the Liquid logic Adults system. At this stage this cannot be quantified but will form part of the financial planning arrangements within the council.

Risk management

None. The report updates the Committee on progress made to date.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
N/A		