Important Information: Developing an Integrated Leadership Team in Children’s Services
Information for staff and partner agencies: Cambridgeshire County and Peterborough City Councils

Background
We have recently completed a reorganisation of the responsibilities of the Assistant Director roles within children’s services. The changes below take place on 27th August 2019.

While responsibilities of the Assistant Directors change on this date, there are no other changes in the way in which we deliver services taking place at this time.

This briefing note summarises the changes, and the reason why we have decided to take this approach.

Our Assistant Directors: Changes to key responsibilities
There are three Assistant Directors in Children’s Services in Peterborough City and Cambridgeshire County Council, which is not changed by this reorganisation. What has changed is the responsibilities and accountabilities of two of the three.

Alison Bennett remains in her role as the Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Quality Assurance across both Councils. Alison leads quality assurance and safeguarding services across the two authorities.

Nicola Curley is the current Assistant Director for children’s services in Peterborough, and also has responsibility for the Integrated Front Door, Emergency Duty Team, Early Help Hub and MASH at Chord Park, which are shared services across the two authorities.

Nicola has now been appointed to the new role of Assistant Director Children’s Services for Cambridgeshire County and Peterborough City Councils [Early Help, Assessment & Family Safeguarding].

Nicola will therefore have management responsibility for early help services, assessment and services to children in need, in need of protection and those in care proceedings across the two authorities, retaining her responsibility for the Integrated Front Door, EDT, MASH and Early Help Hub.

Nicola has significant experience in managing these services in both Peterborough as well as in Hertfordshire. She has also implemented the Family Safeguarding approach in Peterborough, and brings this experience to Cambridgeshire, where we have recently been awarded a significant level of funding in order to develop the model in the County.

Sarah-Jane Smedmor is the Assistant Director for children’s services in Cambridgeshire. Sarah-Jane has been appointed to the new role of Assistant Director Children’s Services for Cambridgeshire County and Peterborough City Councils [Corporate Parenting & Specialist Services].

Under the new arrangements, Sarah-Jane will have operational accountability for children in care and young people leaving care across the two authorities, together with service for children and young people with disabilities and their families, the fostering service, reunification and placement
stability team and the Business Support service in Cambridgeshire. Sarah-Jane will also have the lead for adoption across the two authorities.

Sarah-Jane has significant experience in managing these services and bringing these services more closely together across the two authorities offers real opportunities to share best practice.

Sarah-Jane also has management responsibility for the Cambridgeshire adoption services and will have lead responsibility for developing productive relationships between fostering and adoption services across the two authorities.

**Why are we making these changes now?**

The first thing to say is that these changes are designed to last. They are about the continuing development of an integrated and resilient leadership team that is able to support improvements in services and outcomes across both local authorities. The shared nature of the roles has the backing of the most senior leaders in the two councils and our respective key Members.

Beyond this, there are three main reasons:

- **Ensuring a consistent model of Family Safeguarding across the two authorities:** Cambridgeshire has been awarded funding from the DfE to establish the Family Safeguarding model in Cambridgeshire, which offers us the opportunity to make a real difference to outcomes for our most vulnerable children. We need to establish this model as soon as we practicably can – by the end of the current financial year at the latest – and we need to ensure that it aligns with the model in Peterborough, or we risk causing confusion among our key partners, many of whom work across the two local authorities. This means that it makes sense for the responsibility of developing and operating the model to be with a single Assistant Director.

- **Making sure our children get the consistent and good services while managing demand:** Resources available to children’s services are likely to decrease further over coming years, while populations continue to grow in both authorities. This means that we need to think differently across the system so that we can continue to meet needs and prevent escalation for children and young people at all levels in the system, from early help through to those in need of protection. Given that our most important partners provide services across the two authorities, it makes sense for a single assistant director to have lead responsibility around early help, assessment and family support.

- **While we are working in these areas, it is also vital that we do not lose focus on some of our most important children and young people – those in our care or who are leaving our care. This is why we have decided to have a dedicated Assistant Director to lead these services and ensure that we are delivering the best outcomes for children in care and our care leavers. Similarly, it is important that we retain clear focus on supporting our children and young people with disabilities in Cambridgeshire [the equivalent service in Peterborough sits in Adult Social Care and so is not affected by these changes] as well as those who need fostering or adoption placements in Cambridgeshire [TACT operate these services in Peterborough];**

- **Ensuring that leadership arrangements are resilient across the two authorities:** These assistant director roles carry very significant responsibilities. Changing their focus so that all
of the roles cover service across the two local authorities means that Nicola and Sarah-Jane are in a better position to understand the issues in each authority, support one another to address these as well as to share strengths, and provide cover to one another when this is needed.

Any Questions?
If you have any questions about these changes, you are welcome to contact me directly if you wish. I will do my best to answer any queries and can be contacted on:

Lou.williams@peterborough.gov.uk
Lou.williams@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Lou Williams
Service Director, Children and Safeguarding
August 2019