

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 21st January 2021

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, People

PORTFOLIO: Children, Education & Social Care

SUBJECT: PAUSE Delivery Model for Halton as part of the Liverpool City Region

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for Halton to enter into a partnership with the registered charity Pause and the other city region authorities Wirral, Liverpool & Knowsley to develop a regional Pause programme to address the increasing demands on statutory services and rising numbers of looked after children and the need to safely manage a reduction in children becoming looked after.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Members of the Executive Board approve that:

- i) In consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education & Social Care, the Strategic Director People and the Strategic Director of Enterprise, Community & Resources accept grant funding from Pause for the establishment of a Pause Practice in Halton.
- ii) Authority be granted for the Council to enter into a collaboration agreement with the registered 'Pause' charity, Halton Borough Council, Knowsley Council and Wirral Council to oversee the delivery of Pause Practices within the local authority areas.
- iii) The Strategic Director, People in liaison with the Operational Director, Finance seeks to identify potential sources of funding for the Council's contribution to enable the continuation of the project once the DfE funding ends.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Within the Liverpool City Region, work has been undertaken to develop a pilot project involving a regional Pause model to work with women, who have had multiple children removed from their care, and who are at risk of having future children removed, and to provide intensive support to break this cycle. It is proposed that two Pause Practices are developed, Liverpool and Wirral and Halton and Knowsley. The project will be delivered by Pause, a national charitable body, who will recruit and employ staff and oversee the programme which will commence in March 2021. Pause has secured DfE funding to enable this regional development and match funding from the four local authorities will not be needed until late 2021/22.

- 3.2 Pause is an intensive trauma-informed relationship-based model that aims to reduce the damaging consequences of children being taken into care. The programme does this by working with women who have had multiple children removed from their care, and who are at risk of having future children removed, supporting them to break the traumatic cycle of repeat pregnancies and removals. An 18-month individually tailored package of support for women is delivered by a dedicated Practitioner working intensively with the individual woman, to address a broad range of emotional, psychological, practical, and behavioural needs. The level of support can range from access 24 hours a day at the beginning of such an arrangement, to 5-10 hours per week.
- 3.3 Time when they have no children in their care and are not pregnant, allowing them to focus on their needs. There is a growing body of robust independent evidence that demonstrates that Pause is a highly effective intervention. This is in terms of both supporting women to make important changes in their lives and providing significant cost avoidance for local authorities as it reduces the number of infants brought into care.
- 3.4 There are currently 28 Pause Practices working across 32 local authorities in the UK, with more practices in development. St Helens implemented the Pause model in October 2017 and have been successful at engaging and supporting women and are now working with their second community of women.
- 3.5 An independent evaluation, commissioned by Department for Education's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme (2017), found that Pause improves the lives of those it works with, increasing engagement with other services, including healthcare, and tackling issues of self-esteem and trauma. Most significantly, it was found to reduce the number of children needing to go into care. The economic impact was explored in the first external evaluation of Pause which identified that for every £1 spent a saving of £1.38 was made. Further work has been undertaken in the second evaluation which was commissioned by the DfE and is due for publication later in 2020. This study found that the estimated benefit to cost ratios (savings per £1 spent) were significant at £4.50 over 4 years and £7.61 over 18 years.
- 3.6 In 2018, the Merseyside local authorities of Liverpool, Wirral, Halton and Knowsley expressed an interest in establishing Pause Practices. A scoping exercise was undertaken to determine the scale and pattern of recurrent removals in the Liverpool City Region with a view to developing a regional Pause. Across the four local authorities, 401 eligible women were identified who had between them 1724 children removed from their care. Halton's figures evidenced that there were 173 eligible women and 470 children removed into care. The exercise revealed that almost three quarters of the women had experienced domestic abuse; issues with drugs and/or alcohol were extremely prevalent in 57%; almost half of the women had mental health issues and nearly a quarter had been known to children's social care as children.
- 3.7 To enable the development of a regional Pause, the national team, Pause – Creating Space for Change, submitted a bid to the DfE's Innovation Fund and was successful in being granted £1.1million. The funding relies on each local authority committing an amount as match funding for the DfE funding which has been granted to Pause.

St Helens have been allocated £290,000 and the remaining funding is available for the four interested local authorities. To meet the grant requirements the Pause Practices will need to go-live by March 2021.

- 3.8 Due to the way in which Pause is to be delivered in the region and the requirements of the DfE grant funding, Pause are required to spend the grant by passing it on to each local authority (or to a single local authority acting on behalf of the others) and for the money to then be reallocated back to Pause (together with each authority's match funding) for the actual delivery of the pilot project.
- 3.9 It is proposed that there will be two Pause Practices, one practice in Liverpool and Wirral and one in Halton and Knowsley. The Pause charity itself would deliver the project (by way of a delivery arm within its organisation) as this would be more cost effective. The Pause programme would be largely funded in 20/21 and 21/22 by the DfE grant, with the local authorities only contributing a small amount in Quarter 4 in 21/22. Match funding will be required in 22/23 as detailed in the Financial implication section below to fund the programme until December 2022.
- 3.10 As this is effectively a pilot project for the region to understand whether the Pause methodology can be successfully implemented here, each Council will pay their contribution towards the pilot to Pause by way of a grant to allow Pause to undertake the project.
- 3.11 In addition, it is proposed that a collaborative agreement be entered into by the four local authorities and Pause, to allow the local authorities in their capacity as key stakeholders to supervise the delivery of Pause in their respective areas and across the region.
- 3.12 Pause – Creating Space for Change will deliver the two Pause Practices, through a new division of their organisation, recruiting, employing and training staff. The Liverpool/Wirral Practice will be slightly larger than the Halton/Knowsley practice, reaching 48 women as detailed below:

Pause Practice	Liverpool & Wirral	Halton & Knowsley
Number of women reached	48 women in total: Liverpool: 24 Wirral: 24	32 women in total: Halton: 16 Knowsley: 16
Practice size	1.fte Practice Lead (team manager) 6.fte Practitioners 1.fte Coordinator	1.fte Practice Lead (team manager) 4.fte Practitioners 1.fte Coordinator

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 This pilot project for Pause in Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool and Wirral will be based around grant funding being provided to Pause as match funding for Pause's DfE funding as well as all parties entering into a collaborative agreement which will essentially establish a project board to allow the local authorities to oversee the

Pause delivery in their respective areas and across the region.

- 4.2 Due to legal and audit requirements, Pause has stipulated that they must “spend” the DfE funding by passing it on to the local authorities. However, as Pause is itself going to deliver the Pause pilot project in the local authority areas, the local authorities involved will pass the DfE grant, together with their respective match contributions, back to Pause to allow Pause to fund the staffing resources required for the pilot.
- 4.3 While the more usual operating model for Pause is for each authority to run its own Pause practice, this is not considered practical in this instance, because a regional approach has been required by the DfE and hence due to differing employment terms, pay structures, as well as the need to coordinate and manage the pilot across the region, it has not been deemed practical for each authority to do so in this instance.
- 4.4 Accordingly, each local authority will instead grant-fund the project to be carried out by Pause and to provide this opportunity for women in the community to engage with Pause.
- 4.5 The collaborative agreement will operate at a high level to allow the local authorities and Pause to regularly meet and discuss the progress of the project. In addition, the local authorities will be able to assist in the facilitation of local partnerships in order to champion the Pause programme in their respective areas.
- 4.6 It has been confirmed by Pause during discussions that technically each authority could choose to exit the project at any time and that if the project were to fail (or to be considered as failing) then the project could be abandoned before completion. There is hence no obligation on any authority to continue, should issues be encountered.

5.0 **FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Pause model is an invest to save initiative. Alongside the scoping exercise, the potential return on investment was explored. This analysis focused on the cost avoidance associated with 16 women in Halton taking a pause from pregnancy for the 18 months duration of the programme. Pause has created a bespoke tool that summarises costs associated with the removal and support of children who are looked after away from home. It identifies typical costs associated with achieving permanence for children – pre-birth risk assessments, decision-making processes and the cost of accommodating the child.
- 5.2 Costs are split into three categories:
 - *Cashable costs*: relate to the procurement of additional service; costs associated with the removal of children, including legal costs and the placement costs that are provided by the local authority or by the private and voluntary sectors.
 - *Internal costs*: comprised of local authority internal costs, for example the cost of social worker time and the cost of internal adoption processes.
 - *Total costs*: this is the sum of cashable and internal costs.

The findings set out in the table below detail the assumed spend incurred by the local authority without Pause and the cumulative net cost avoidance attributable to running a Pause Practice in the local authority area.

	1.5 years	3 years	5 years
Spend (without Pause project)	£704,448	£826,818	£989,978
Net cost avoidance attributable to Pause Practice	£504,448	£626,818	£789,978

The calculations relate to a pause in pregnancy during the 18-month programme and the associated avoided births nine months after the end of the programme. Pause, if successful, will continue to influence a reduction in children being removed, as risks will have lessened and enabling women to parent their child/children safely. There will also be ongoing costs that are saved with fewer children in care.

Revenue implications

The Pause programme would be funded in 2020/21 and 2021/22 by the DfE grant, with the local authorities only required to contribute a small amount in Quarter 4 in 2021/22. Match funding will be required in 2022/23 as detailed in the table below to fund the programme until December 2022.

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Total
Expenditure				
Liverpool & Wirral practice	98,065.10	430,381.14	325,871.57	854,317.81
Knowsley & Halton practice	73,548.82	322,785.86	244,403.68	640,738.36
Total expenditure	171,613.92	753,167.00	570,275.25	1,495,056.17
Funding				
DfE contribution	171,613.92	623,442.25	-	795,056.00
Liverpool contribution	-	37,064.22	162,935.79	200,000.00
Wirral contribution	-	37,064.22	162,935.79	200,000.00
Knowsley contribution	-	27,798.16	122,201.84	150,000.00
Halton contribution	-	27,798.16	122,201.84	150,000.00
Total funding	171,613.92	753,167.00	570,275.25	1,495,056.00

Although it is anticipated that local authority contributions will be funded from the cost avoidance of children not being taken into care in the year as a direct consequence of the programme interventions the Strategic Director People will work with Chief Finance Officer to identify other funding streams and grant allocations to fund the continuation of the project.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

This targeted intervention will have a universal benefit as it will help reduce the numbers of children coming into care.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

Support for these vulnerable women to develop the skills and confidence to become independent and recover from trauma will enable them to access learning and employment opportunities.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Experience elsewhere has found that these women usually have unmet and complex health needs. Through this targeted intervention they will have their health needs met and reduce the impact of chronic long-term problems.

6.4 A Safer Halton

These vulnerable women are often subject to Domestic Abuse and exploitation this targeted intervention will safeguard them and reduce the chance of their criminalisation.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

NA

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 The invest to save proposal is made on the basis that there is an established track record that the Pause programme delivers positive outcomes and results in less children coming into care. This is a time-limited programme and an evaluation will be undertaken of the first cohort to assess whether there has indeed been a cost avoidance or not. If not, then the Pause programme will not be commissioned for a second cohort.

7.2 Pause has confirmed that should the programme cease after 21 months there will no redundancy costs to any local authority as the staff will be Pause employees.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 Support for these vulnerable women to develop the skills and confidence to become independent and recover from trauma will enable them to live free from statutory involvement.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

9.1 None under the meaning of the Act.