

North Lanarkshire Council Report

Education, Children and Families Committee

Does this report require to be approved? Yes No

Ref BS / JM

Date 20/05/25

Review of Education and Families Service Operating Structures

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Executive Summary

Education Authorities have a duty, as outlined in the Education (Scotland) Act 2016, which amends the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000, to continually endeavour to improve the quality of education provided in the schools managed by them.

In North Lanarkshire, the Education and Families (E&F) Service aims to provide the highest quality education services for our children and young people. However, it is understood that Education cannot, and should not, operate in isolation.

It must operate as part of a broader range of services delivered across North Lanarkshire (NL), that aim to ensure inclusive growth and prosperity for all to bring equal benefits and a fairer distribution of wealth to all North Lanarkshire's people and communities.

Therefore, the contents of this paper should be understood in the wider context of the E&F Service's contribution to the overarching ambitions outlined in The Plan for North Lanarkshire and Programme of Work, particularly in relation to Brighter Futures and Resilient People programmes.

This paper offers an overview of an ongoing service review aimed at assessing current progress and identifying new opportunities to enhance achievement, promote equity, and improve outcomes. The goal is to ensure all learners transition successfully to positive post-school destinations that are sustainable in the longer-term. This will be supported by bolstering the central team's capacity and support, contributing to improvement efforts at the establishment, cluster, and community levels.

Furthermore, the paper outlines a strategy for a new operating model that emphasises locality-based leadership. This approach focuses on building relationships and preventative measures, placing children, families, and communities at the centre of planning. The model aims to improve the Service's ability to respond to local needs, integrate practices, improve attainment, and enhance long-term outcomes for children, families, and communities in NL.

The paper is intended to stimulate discussion and offer the Education and Families Committee the opportunity to comment on the developing approach, to help shape and inform future operating models.

This report is split into three parts for ease of reference:

- Part 1 of the paper provides context by summarising the impact of The Plan for North Lanarkshire and Programme of Work at local authority and subsequently service level.
- Part 2 focuses on the evolution of the Education and Families Service in response to local and national policy developments.
- Part 3 of the report focuses on the current, and proposed new operating model for Education, within the broader Education and Families Service.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Education, Children and Families Committee:

1. Endorse the revised operating model for the Education and Families Service.
 2. Acknowledge the cost implications as outlined in 2.81.
 3. Acknowledge the next steps as outlined 2.82.
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The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority	Support all children and young people to realise their full potential
Ambition statement	(6) Raise attainment and skills for learning, life, and work to enhance opportunities and choices
Programme of Work	Brighter Futures

1. Background

- 1.1 The Standards in Schools Act (2000) places specific responsibilities on the Local Authority to improve the standards in schools. Specifically, it requires Local Authorities to:
- Promote a reduction in inequalities of educational outcomes experienced by pupils due to socio-economic disadvantage.
 - Secure improvement in the quality of school education, aligning improvement and reporting activity with the strategic priorities identified in the National Improvement Framework.
- 1.2 To achieve these objectives, education must be viewed in its broadest sense; as the process of facilitating learning, acquiring knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and behaviours. This includes formal teaching in educational establishments, as well as informal learning experiences gained through life, work, and social interactions. The overarching aim of education is to prepare children and young people to contribute effectively to society and lead fulfilling lives.
- 1.3 It is recognised that to achieve this aim, the E&F Service must collaborate and align service objectives within the wider, overarching objectives outlined in The Plan for North Lanarkshire, to remove barriers, address inequalities and ensure children, young people and families are appropriately supported through a relationship based, person-centred approach. This collective commitment permeates all aspects of The Plan for North Lanarkshire. It demonstrates how strategic decisions to integrate and align approaches within the Programme of Work and the broader Children's Services Plan 2023-2026 are enhancing service delivery and, consequently, improving outcomes for children and families.

- 1.4 To exercise our responsibilities in relation to statutory duties, and to contribute effectively to NL's overarching aim to ensure NL is a place to Live, Learn, Work, Invest and Visit, the E&F Service has established a central operating model/structure.
- 1.5 However, like many other services across NL, this structure has changed and evolved. This paper summarises the evolution of the Education central structure over time, in response to local and national policy drivers and financial pressures. It highlights strengths, identifies risk, and outlines the Service's proposal to refine and create a new operating model that gives the Service the flexibility to continue to respond to local needs, strengthen integrative practice, raise attainment, and improve long-term outcomes for children, young people and their families within NL.
- 1.6 This paper focuses specifically on Education within the wider integrated service operating model whilst recognising there are further opportunities to strengthen existing collaborative practices and improve outcomes for children, families and communities.

2. Report

Part 1: The Plan for North Lanarkshire and Programme of Work

- 2.1 The Plan for North Lanarkshire, established in 2019, aimed to ensure inclusive growth and prosperity for all to bring equal benefits and a fairer distribution of wealth to all North Lanarkshire's people and communities. It was endorsed by all Community Planning Partners including NHS Lanarkshire, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue and Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire, as a shared ambition.



- 2.2 Implementation of The Plan signified the start of the transformational change programme for the place that is North Lanarkshire which had, at its core, a one council approach that endeavoured to break down silos to create an integrated, council wide service delivery model that improved efficiency and the ability to provide the right support at the right time, for children, families and communities.
- 2.3 It is recognised within The Plan that improving the lives of people and communities involves creating positive social and economic conditions, through a place-based approach. This includes maintaining a healthy population, attracting and sustaining a balanced demographic, and drawing investment to generate jobs, businesses, and housing. By developing vibrant town centres and innovative employment pathways and providing holistic support for families during key life transitions, NL aims to reduce poverty and foster self-sufficiency, ultimately boosting the local economy.
- 2.4 The Plan emphasised the necessity for all council and partner services to work collectively to make a positive difference for children, families and communities, across NL. The diagram below exemplifies some of NL's key objectives, as outlined within The Plan. Notably, these objectives are not service specific; they present our collective

ambitions and outcomes. Achievement of these objectives requires meaningful collaboration and integration between, and across, services and partners, including E&F.



2.5 Since its inception, The Plan has strengthened synergies across services and embedded integrated approaches to service re-design and delivery. Subsequently, this has led to several significant successes including those outlined below. These achievements are particularly noteworthy given the challenging post-pandemic context in which they were accomplished.

2.6 Successes:

- Latest data indicates that the gross weekly pay for North Lanarkshire's residents has reached £740.40, compared with £740.00 nationally.
- Employment-related benefit claims have decreased by nearly 48% since 2020 and NL's latest data indicates that that is now 8% lower than the baseline set.
- Economic growth continues to show a positive picture with the latest results showing an increase of 9% in gross value added per head, since the previous year. This marks a significant improvement from a -3.1% growth rate during the pandemic to +8.9% over the past two years.
- £47,935,822 income from social security benefits has been generated for residents. This is +35% since 2022-2023.
- 30 children have been supported to stay or return home through family group decision making for better outcomes - avoiding c.£1.6m in costs.
- School exclusion rates continue to show significant improvement overall for all pupils, and specifically for Care Experienced Learners. NL's exclusion rate for Care Experienced Learners is now the sixth lowest in Scotland.
- Within the primary education sector, attainment in literacy and numeracy continue to show improvement, exceeding national attainment figures, when comparing P1, 4 and 7 combined data for literacy and numeracy.

2.7 The success of The Plan is unequivocally linked to the strategic approach taken across services to ensure our children, families and communities benefit from a place-based, one service approach, which focuses on improving outcomes and economic regeneration. However, the position remains fragile and therefore susceptible to any wider (and uncontrollable) economical or environmental impacts on society. Therefore challenges, including those outlined below, remain:

2.8 Challenges:

- Child poverty remains high, with almost one in four children living in poverty, compared with just over one in five nationally.
- 28,616 pupils live in SIMD1-4 (second highest in Scotland)
- Educational qualifications: 21% of the working-age population have no formal qualifications.
- Economic inactivity: It is estimated that almost 54,000 of the working age population (24.9 %) are economically inactive, with many long-term sick or not actively seeking employment.
- While the change in recorded crime in North Lanarkshire has increased to 4%, higher than the national average (3.6%), the number of crimes recorded by the police has not returned to pre-pandemic levels and remains lower than The Plan for North Lanarkshire baseline.
- Over 34% of young people within NL have an additional support need.

2.9 At the meeting of Policy and Strategy Committee on 16 March 2023, 'The Plan for North Lanarkshire – Programme of Work to 2028' was approved. The 28 Health Check Indicators contained within The Plan and Programme of Work provide clear measures that are used to track progress. They remain crucial in guiding the implementation of the Programme of Work delivery plan in line with The Plan for North Lanarkshire. They ensure data is used effectively and transparently to inform and drive resource allocation, policy developments, continuous improvement, and the transformation of North Lanarkshire.



2.10 Noting the challenges outlined above, it is imperative that services, including the E&F Service, individually and collectively, continue to evolve and respond to needs, building resilience and ensuring sustainable improvements, by leveraging community assets and strengths.

2.11 Schools represent the biggest investment in infrastructure across North Lanarkshire. They are also at the heart of towns and communities. Given the ambition to replace every school not replaced or remodelled since 1996, NL's vision is to make these places for the whole community rather than only the school community. The council is also committed to the Leadership and Operating Model, which integrates service delivery of multiple council and partner services as close to communities as possible through community hubs.

- 2.12 Community hubs act as a gateway for early intervention, preventative support and targeted activities based on local need, co-locating schools and a range of council and partner services. Hubs allow better engagement with local communities and provision of services at all stages of life and help to meet the objectives of each Local Outcome Improvement Plan. The range of activities in hubs is based on local need and the sharing of intelligence and best practice across council services and with partners. The range of services across the hubs includes:
- whole family support
 - community learning and development
 - housing support
 - Tackling Poverty activity
 - social work
 - employability support
 - active and creative communities
- 2.13 For example, since opening in June 2024, the Chryston Community Hub has become the cornerstone of the local community. It provides the local community with access to various support services, outdoor amenities, and enhanced leisure and recreational facilities. Inclusive learning environments and state-of-the-art facilities are available for children, young people, and community members. The operating model within the Chryston Hub offers clear benefits for education and health colleagues, and for members of the community, at all ages and stages.
- 2.14 With the Health Clinic located on site, health, education professionals and wider partners have gained valuable opportunities to collaborate and address community issues together. Notably, Chryston Primary School was the first primary school in NL to achieve the 'Breast Feeding Friendly' award; an award achieved with support from partners in health and community learning and development. Building on the success of this programme, 85% of NL's educational establishments have now achieved this award. Furthermore, North Lanarkshire was the first local authority in Scotland to receive the Gold Level Breastfeeding Friendly award in February 2024. This exemplifies how our educational estate and community hubs are empowering services to respond to local needs by mobilising assets and strengths across communities in North Lanarkshire.



Part 2: Evolution of the Education and Families Service

- 2.15 The creation of the E&F Service resulted in a significant change to education and social work operating models. The service has continued to evolve to date, and includes services such as, Education Services, Children's Services Social Work, Justice Services, Community Learning & Development, and Tackling Poverty Team, among others.

- 2.16 Bringing social work and education together allowed both services to better align resources and approaches to tackle complex issues in a more holistic, integrated way that empowers families and leads to more sustainable and tangible improvements.
- 2.17 The E&F Directorate identified several areas where provision would be subject to restructuring including the introduction of bespoke posts aligned to SNCT conditions of service. Key changes in relation to Education included:
 - Redesignation of Education Officer (NLC18) to Senior Education and Families Manager (SEFM), x 3FTE (subsequently reduced to 2FTE)
 - Deletion of Continuous Improvement Manager Post
 - Continuous Improvement Officers (CIO) reduced from 12 to 3
 - Creation of 8 new posts of Education and Families Manager (EFM) benchmarked to Continuous Improvement Manager salary scales.
- 2.18 Appendix 1: Provides an overview of the evolution of the service operating model since 2015.

Education and Families Operating Model: 2025

2.19 Table 1 below provides an overview of the pay and grades associated with the education roles that are within the current 2025 operating model. (It does not contain information in relation to social work/family roles.) Notably, the number of Education and Families Manager (EFM) posts increased to nine permanent posts from August 2024, with one additionally funded via Scottish Equity Funding (SEF). Table 2 summarises the overall Education and Families workforce for session 2025-26.

Table 1

Designation	FTE	Grade @ 1.4.24	T&Cs
Senior Education & Families Manager (SEFM) (redesignated from Education Officer)	2 perm 1 temp	NLC18	Single Status
Education & Families Manager (EFM)	9 perm 1 temp	QIM	Teachers (SNCT)
Continuous Improvement Officer (CIO)	3 perm	QIO	Teachers (SNCT)

Table 2: E&F Overall Workforce 2025

	FTE	Head Count
Services managed by 2 x Chief Officers (Education)	6,846.51	8,033
Services managed by Chief Social Work officer	798.98	949
Total	7,645.49	8,982

2.20 The introduction of the EFM post marked a significant advancement in the operating model, expanding officers' operational and strategic roles to strengthen collaboration across clusters and partnerships with various services. This change aimed to improve transition processes and ensure an equitable distribution of resources and opportunities to improve outcomes for children and families. Consequently, officers took on responsibility for a greater number of educational establishments.

- 2.21 EFMs and SEFMs play a key role within the operating model. As Senior Officers of the Council, EFMs have a specific focus on providing appropriate challenge to empower school leaders to drive forward improvements. They also have a responsibility for key improvement activity including but not exclusively, contributing to NL's programmes of work and authority wide self-evaluation and reporting processes. They provide direct line management for 118 primary and 13 ASN headteachers. (Chief Officers line manage the 23 secondary headteachers). They engage in cluster wellbeing meetings, collaborating with other services and partners to support integrated approaches, and contribute to improvement activity supporting meaningful improvements within local communities.
- 2.22 EFMs monitor the implementation of the Service's quality improvement framework and processes. They provide essential support and challenge, in all aspects of the improvement cycle, to maximise impact and to create an ambitious and effective model of school improvement that supports improved attainment and outcomes for learners. This includes leading and coordinating internal and external scrutiny activities including attainment reviews, validated self-evaluation (VSE) visits and HMle inspections.
- 2.23 During the recent Education Scotland Thematic Inspection, it was noted that the systems and processes outlined within the Service's quality assurance (QA) processes were effective and that *'almost all headteachers report that they receive a rigorous balance of support and challenging dialogue that helps to inform directly improvement priorities.'* However, the inspection team recognised the challenges faced by officers to ensure consistent, high-quality support and challenge for establishment leaders – *'There is a need to balance the desire within the central team to be responsive to demand with their own capacity to deliver support.'*
- 2.24 It should be noted when introduced in 2019, the Senior Education and Families Manager (SEFM) earned around £4k more compared with the Education and Families Manager (EFM), in keeping with the hierarchy of the management operating model, at that time. However, over recent years, the rate of teachers' pay awards has overtaken single status, resulting in the reverse effect, with EFMs now earning around £1,532 more. This is not the only grading anomaly across NL but is relevant in this context.
- 2.25 Since its inception, the E&F Service has effectively adopted a values-driven strategic approach to service delivery. This approach encompasses addressing poverty and inequality, fostering positive wellbeing and inclusion, enhancing cultural capital, and establishing effective pathways to employment.
- 2.26 New ways of working have been developed within, and across existing structures, building capacity to support children, young people and families, more holistically through partnership working, and service re-design. Across the Service, strategies and approaches taken are underpinned by The Promise, Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and Getting it Right for Everyone (GIRFE).
- 2.27 The development of more integrated approaches and creative use of core and external funding streams, such as Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) funding, Whole Family Wellbeing Fund (WFWBF) and Community, Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund (CMHWBF), has enabled the Service to pilot and upscale new service delivery models and approaches, that place children and families at the heart of planning processes, thus achieving better outcomes. The approaches taken have optimised the use of available resources, with a focus on enhancing outcomes for families.
- 2.28 The examples in paragraphs 2.29 to 2.37 below exemplify how the E&F Service has developed, and is continuing to develop, innovative and integrated approaches that

align and maximise use of available resources to address challenges and improve outcomes. Whilst acknowledging Education contribute to the examples included below, the new proposed operating model will increase capacity and enhance opportunities for greater collaborative working as these initiatives are primarily led by officers from other areas of the service. Further benefits are summarised in 2.40 below.

Neurodevelopmental Family Support Workers

- 2.29 Recognising the challenges that children and young people who are neurodivergent may experience engaging with school, compounded by the stress experienced by families waiting for formal assessment, the Service funded neurodevelopmental family support workers to provide additional targeted support for families. Identified families were offered a range of 1:1 and family-based supports at home, in the community, or in school. 100% of families involved reported improved outcomes and only 35 of initial referrals progressed on to a further referral to social work or Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- 2.30 As part of this initiative, NHSL Neurodevelopmental Service, Educational Psychology, and Carers Together launched a pilot project across two clusters. The focus was on children from Primary 7 to S2, aiming to prevent the emerging trend of neurodivergent young people disengaging from school during this period. Almost all children involved in the pilot made a successful transition from primary to secondary school.

Income Maximisation: Additional Support Needs Sector

- 2.31 In March 2024, nine Additional Support Needs (ASN) schools collaboratively used Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to employ a dedicated Welfare Rights Officer (from NL's Tackling Poverty Team) on a temporary basis (August 2024 to June 2025) to provide an income maximisation service to the families of pupils attending identified ASN schools. Most schools within the pilot opted to use a targeted approach, focusing on P1 and S1 pupils. To date, the total income generated for identified families, through this direct contact approach, is £116,367, with a further 49 claims awaiting an outcome.
- 2.32 The Tackling Poverty team aims to leverage the success of this pilot by continuing to work closely with colleagues to create a sustainable model for service design and delivery. This model will support efforts to reduce child poverty and enhance family well-being through whole family support.

Virtual School (VS)

- 2.33 The Virtual School continues to make significant progress in reducing the number of exclusions for Care Experienced Learners, with NL's exclusion rate for Care Experienced Learners now being the sixth lowest in Scotland. However, the VS team are also increasing opportunities and support for Care Experienced Learners to achieve more.
- 2.34 During session 2023-24, central SAC funding was used to enhance teacher allocation for the VS team with a view to increasing opportunities for learners to achieve more formal National Qualifications in the Senior Phase. 27 young people were supported in session 2023/24 to achieve 88 National 3 or 4 qualifications across eight curricular areas. A Virtual School improvement priority has been agreed for session 2024-25 which sets a target of 60% of S4 learners, working entirely with the Virtual School, achieving a minimum of five full SQA course awards. 72% of this group are currently on track to achieve the target set. Improving qualifications for these young people will improve the likelihood of them progressing to a positive post-school destination.

Family Engagement Support Assistants

- 2.35 Although attendance rates increased across all sectors in academic session 2023-24, improving attendance remains a key priority. Notably, there is still a clear discrepancy between attendance rates of pupils in our most and least deprived areas, with young people in our most deprived areas less likely to attend school regularly.
- 2.36 To support improvements in this area, SAC funding has been used to invest in Family Engagement Support Assistants (FESAs). FESAs offer practical family support such as supporting families to establish routines, linking with the Tackling Poverty Team and facilitating communication with schools. Over session 2023-24, FESAs completed work with 192 children and their families. As a result of support provided, the FESAs prevented and/or stopped the declining attendance trend for 21% of young people and improved attendance rates for a further 56% of young people. Only 23% of the young people identified progressed to requiring intensive level support. This evidence supports the positive impact of early identification, intervention and family-based supports.
- 2.37 While noting the positive examples outlined above, the Service continues to face significant challenges in relation to wellbeing, inclusion, attendance and attainment. Therefore, the Service must respond appropriately to address these areas, removing barriers to achievement and ensuring excellence and equity for all children and young people.

Part 3: Current and Proposed New Operating Model

- 2.38 Part 3 of this report demonstrates how the Service plans to tackle these challenges through Service redesign within the E&F central Education team. It outlines a strategy to enhance the current operating model, optimising resources, efficiencies, and expertise across all operational and strategic functions. This aims to improve the wellbeing of children and families, raise attainment, improve attendance, and ensure equitable opportunities for all, through effective integrated service approaches.
- 2.39 Although this section of the report focuses primarily on the Education central team within Education and Families, it is important to emphasise that this proposal seeks to reinforce the E&F service in its totality, by strengthening the existing synergies and effective integrated practice that already exists between education, children and families and wider partners. In its simplest sense, this proposal would facilitate better alignment with other services and locality models. It would enable better alignment of E&F managers to the Empowering Clusters model, described below, to achieve better cohesion.
- 2.40 The proposed model will enable EFMs to better contribute to improvement activities at the establishment, cluster, and community levels, leveraging the Service's potential to enhance early identification, intervention, and prevention strategies, prioritising children and their families in decision-making to ensure the best possible start in life. The model will also strengthen EFMs' capacity to address audit recommendations to strengthen and enhance governance procedures around aspects of financial management (DSM) and procurement. This model offers a holistic perspective on education, emphasising its role in improving outcomes for children and families across all stages and contexts. Special focus will be on developing leaders capable of overseeing integrated services, including multidisciplinary teams and community leadership models.

Strengthening the Empowering Clusters Model

- 2.41 It is expected that all children and young people will benefit from universal supports and curricular experiences that foster positive health, wellbeing, and academic achievement, however, it is acknowledged that, at times, young people and families require additional or intensive support. Within NL, processes have been developed that enable support to be delivered through effective partnerships and integrated cluster working. This is referred to as the Empowering Clusters model. This model strengthens capacity to ensure that children and families have access to the correct supports, at the correct time, in their local community, placing children and families at the heart of our planning processes.
- 2.42 Key drivers for the Empowering Clusters model include Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), Tackling Poverty, Whole Family Support, Equity, Improvement, Inclusion, and Curriculum, Learning, Teaching and Assessment (CLTA). Since its inception in 2020, the effectiveness of the Empowering Clusters model in facilitating integrated practice and in improving outcomes for children and families has been recognised through several external inspection processes including the Joint Inspection of Children's Service's inspection, ADES collaborative improvement activity and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) National Thematic Inspection on Improvement.
- 2.43 Whilst the operational function of the cluster will remain the same, the Service's plan is to reduce the number of Empowering Clusters from 23 to 15 to better align with locality operating models. This will strengthen our ability to integrate further and respond collectively, with internal and external partners, to locality-based issues. The same children, from the same area, albeit at different schools, will benefit from an enhanced resource with a specific focus on whole family support, further strengthening, what is, an already effective integrated approach between services. New clusters will be expected to schedule termly 'Empowered Cluster' meetings, providing a forum to collaborate, share expertise and resources to respond to locality needs. Locality based planning for children's wellbeing meetings will further strengthen integrated working with partners and allow for trends and patterns to be identified and addressed more timeously, across localities. Reducing the number of clusters will allow for greater depth of discussion and collaboration, at locality level.
- 2.44 This proposal to reduce the number of clusters to 15 was recently approved at E&F Senior Management Meeting. It is intrinsically linked to the proposed Service redesign outlined below, which aims to bring the number of EFMs into better alignment with the new Empowering Cluster model, for the reasons outlined above. It is envisaged that aligning the Empowering Cluster model with the overall E&F operating structure, will provide better cohesion and strengthen self-evaluation for continuous improvement processes, and further enhance collaborative working and integrative practice.

Current Management Operating Model

- 2.45 Table 2 provides an overview of the postholders who form part of the current central team operating model. There are two permanent SEFM posts in the current structure and one additional temporary post, introduced in July 2024. Funding for this third post has been temporarily vired from HQ budgets for 23 months, approved via the Council's Workforce Change Steering Group in July 2024. The remits were realigned as follows:
- Inclusion and Early Learning and Childcare Lead (Permanent)
 - Quality and Improvement Lead (Temp funding for 23 months, as above)

- Business Solutions, Risk, Audit and Compliance Lead (Permanent position – appointment for 12 months fixed term)

2.46 There are currently nine permanent EFM posts in the structure, plus one additional temporary post funded via SEF until June 2025.

2.47 Within our current model, CIOs do not have line management duties or responsibility for a cluster of schools. Their role is to support inclusion activity.

Table 2: Education and Families Service (N.B. this report does not include information related to Social Work)

POSN	In Post	FTE	Grade
Chief Officer	Perm	2	HOS 2
SEFM	Perm	2	NLC 18
SEFM	Temp	1	NLC 18
EFM	Perm	9	QIM
EFM	Temp (SAC)	1	QIM
CIO Inclusion x3	Perm	3	CIO

Proposed Benefits of Creating a New Operating Model

2.48 There is an acknowledgment that the Service plays a crucial role in contributing to the Plan for North Lanarkshire, particularly in influencing and improving Health Check Indicators and the detailed data that sits behind them. Over the next 5-10 years, the service has identified several key improvement priorities taking cognisance of local and national challenges. Addressing inequality and poverty is essential for making progress in these areas. It is recognised that whole family support significantly contributes to tackling these issues, and schools alone cannot secure the necessary improvements whilst working in isolation. An integrated approach, multi-service collaboration, and strong partnerships that target interventions for families and improve outcomes for children and young people, is required to secure sustainable improvements.

2.49 The Service recognises that within the current operating model, there is significant inconsistency in the level of support and challenge provided to school leaders across the school estate. This is due to various factors including, differences in the number of establishments supported by EFMs, and the capacity to balance operational and strategic demands, ensuring core functions are delivered consistently. This presents risks to the Service in terms of quality assurance, governance and the Service's overall capacity to support integrated practices, raise attainment and improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.

2.50 Since the introduction of the EFM post, the local and national context has changed. Although the EFM role has evolved in response to these changes, the Service recognises the need to conduct a further review of the structure, to ensure it has the capacity to implement the Service's Raising Attainment and Achievement Strategy, which supports the wider objectives outlined in The Plan for North Lanarkshire.

2.51 At present, attainment within the primary sector is positive with NL comparing favourably with comparator LAs. Arguably, this is because the service deployed additional resources and support into this area; focusing on early identification and intervention to improve attainment and reduce gaps. Data indicates that this approach has been successful and has led to improved attainment levels and outcomes, in this sector.

- 2.52 However, in session 2023-24, performance declined across all measures in the Senior Phase, aligning with the national trend. Although some progress is evident in attainment at the S4 stage, further improvement is required in several key measures in the Senior Phase. Therefore, the proposed model will ensure this remains a key priority for the Service.
- 2.53 Therefore, the proposal to modify the current operating model offers advantages in two key areas: enhancing capacity to support and integrate partnership approaches to equity and achievement and strengthening the EFM team's ability to drive improvements at establishment level. This will be achieved by providing consistent, high-quality support and challenge to their assigned schools and clusters, with the aim of raising attainment and achievement, and closing the poverty-related attainment gap.
- 2.54 To support this, we propose to increase the number of central officers and establish a small resources team who will assume responsibility for some of the key service level activities, aligned to effective service delivery, but not directly linked to the Service's approaches to raising attainment.
- 2.55 Streamlining the responsibilities of EFMs, by re-aligning aspects of operational functions to the newly created resources team, will provide several advantages to service delivery, as outlined below.

Enhanced Focus

- 2.56 Restructuring EFM remits to align with the new Empowering Cluster model (15 locality clusters) will enable EFMs to contribute more effectively to locality-level improvement activities, addressing local issues and improving outcomes for children and families. This restructuring will also increase the EFM team's capacity, allowing officers to prioritise core strategic and operational roles and responsibilities, drive service-level improvement activities, and provide direct, high-quality support to headteachers and leadership teams. Consequently, this will lead to more effective and efficient service delivery, raise attainment and improve outcomes for learners.

Improved Quality of Support

- 2.57 EFM remits will be revised to better align with the Service's strategy for raising attainment and achievement, which supports the overarching goals of The Plan for NL. By reallocating specific business aspects of the EFM remit to the central resources team, officers will be able to devote more time and resources to their primary functions: supporting locality-level improvement activities and providing high-quality support and challenge to schools and establishments. This will facilitate improved outcomes for children and families.

Increased capacity and consistency

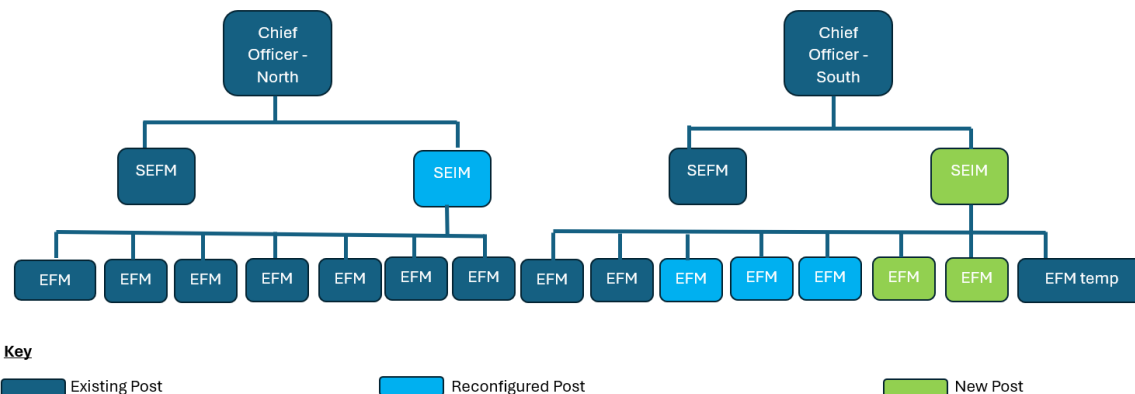
- 2.58 It is the Service's ambition to implement an operating model that results in EFMs having circa 12 establishments, as currently, some EFMs have responsibility for 19 establishments. The recent National Thematic Inspection by Education Scotland highlighted this as a key factor that contributed to an inconsistent level of support and challenge being offered to establishments by central officers. The introduction of two new Senior Education and Improvement Managers will add a strategic layer of governance and quality assurance to the central team. This will ensure better alignment, oversight, and moderation of the quality and consistency of support and challenge provided by the Service.

Specialisation and Expertise

- 2.59 By increasing the number of officers, remits can be reviewed and updated, maximising skills and expertise within the central team. This approach will build capacity across the team and ensure that our children, young people and families benefit from the officers' specialisms and knowledge.
- 2.60 As noted above, the Service also recognises the need to strengthen support around governance and compliance to ensure best practice and to adhere to audit recommendations. Therefore, the proposal to create a resources team is expected to offer the following benefits:
- **Enhanced collaboration and alignment of strategies**
A resources team can facilitate better communication and collaboration among different aspects of the Service, leading to more cohesive and coordinated efforts.
 - **Efficient resource allocation**
A dedicated team will ensure that resources are allocated appropriately and managed efficiently in accordance with the Service's Raising Attainment and Achievement Strategy. This team will enhance governance processes, optimise budget efficiency, and minimise risks to the Service.
 - **Improved project management**
The resources team will bolster the Service's existing project team by serving as a liaison between various cross-service teams, ensuring that all projects are managed according to the Council's project management framework. This team will collaborate with other services to oversee the planning, scheduling, and tracking of resources, ensuring that projects remain on track and within budget.

Proposed Operating Model

- 2.61 Prior to identifying the proposed operating model, officers conducted a robust options appraisal to determine the most effective and efficient operating model for the Service. The preferred option is outlined below. The model includes proposals to introduce new posts and to realign current posts.
- 2.62 For the purposes of this paper, the Families/Social Work aspect of the model has not been included, even though it is a crucial part of our integrated operating model. This is due to officers within this part of the Service not being directly impacted, at this time, by the redesign. However, potential scope for a further phase of work, to support the continued integration and strengthening of delivery across the full-service operating model, will be a priority moving forward.
- 2.63 Therefore, based on the rationale and expected benefits to the Service, outlined above, the proposed operating model is illustrated in the diagram below.



Changes to structure:

Blue are reconfigured posts and Green are new posts.

Position	FTE	Comments
EFM	3	Existing CIOs re- configured to EFM.
SEIM	1	Replacing existing SEFM post
SEIM	1	New post created by realignment of existing budget lines
EFM	2	New posts created

2.64 As illustrated above, the new operating model, below Chief Officer level, would comprise of 18 FTE permanent posts: two SEFM (existing posts), one new SEIM post and one reconfigured, and 14 EFMs, all permanent to the structure. **Specific points of note are listed below:**

- (1.) By utilising agreed benchmarking mechanisms, the Service propose to design a bespoke role, Senior Education and Improvement Manager (SEIM), that allows us to specify the salary placement on the SNCT pay and grade model that is equivalent to a similar type of post. It is therefore proposed that this would be aligned to a DHT/HT grade 13. Approval via our JNCT mechanism would be required. To introduce two new posts at this level would cost circa £0.258m. As previously noted, introduction of this new role would strengthen oversight and governance with SEIMs assuming responsibility for coordinating and overseeing the effective implementation of the Service’s Raising Attainment and Achievement Strategy.
- (2.) One FTE additional Temp SAC funded EFM is included in the diagram above in section 2.63, however, this is a temporary post due to end on the 30th of June 2025.
- (3.) Within this model, the Service is proposing to realign three CIO posts from the existing structure, to create a further three EFM posts through designation reconfiguration. By changing CIO posts to EFM posts, the identified officers can assume operational and strategic responsibility for a cluster of establishments, bringing the operating model in line with the new Empowering Cluster model.
- (4.) The affected staff would be subject to a ring-fenced interview process, similar to that of the 2019 exercise. If proceeding with this option, the Service would realign key functions associated with their previous inclusion remit across the team, to ensure

continued service delivery. This would increase the number of EFM posts from nine in the original permanent operating model to twelve, inclusive of the three new posts being redesigned from the CIO remodelling.

- 2.65 The proposed structure aligned to the management posts evidences a net cost/FTE increase of £0.402m/3FTE, as outlined in Appendix 3.
- 2.66 The effectiveness of this option relies on 16 out of the 18 officers line managing one of the 15 Empowering Clusters (EC), with the two SEFMs line managing the holistic ASN cluster due to the level of support required in this sector.
- 2.67 Furthermore, within this model, direct line management of 14 EFMs would be shared across the two SEIM posts. It's important to note the two SEIMs would not have responsibility for line managing a cluster as their role is for coordinating and overseeing the effective implementation of the Service's Raising Attainment and Achievement Strategy. They will also have responsibility for the coordination of all external inspection/validation activity. This will build capacity across the central team and improve consistency and quality of support and challenge for establishment leaders. It will strengthen the Service's overall ability to raise attainment and improve outcomes for children and families.
- 2.68 EFMs and SEFMs will be aligned to Empowering Clusters and Central Functions. Increasing the number of EFMs will facilitate better alignment of the 15 clusters across the 14 permanent EFMs and two SEFMs. Within this model, each EFM and SEFM will have line management responsibility for approximately 12 establishments.
- 2.69 As mentioned in 2.66, the two SEFMs will share responsibility for the Additional Support Needs (ASN) Empowering Cluster, providing bespoke strategic direction and support for ASN establishments. ASN is a significant area of growth nationally and locally therefore, it is prudent that the Service ensures it has the capacity to respond to the growing need in this sector, ensuring best outcomes for children, young people and families.
- 2.70 Early Learning Centres and Private Partner Providers will continue to be managed by Quality Officers (NLC14) under the direction of the EFM with strategic responsibility for Early Years.

Strengthening Inclusion

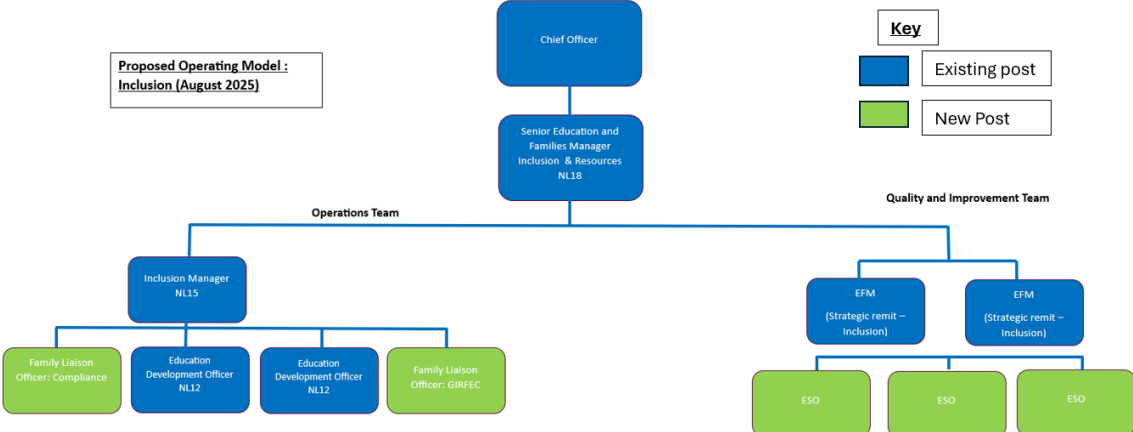
- 2.71 In Scotland there is a 'presumption of mainstream', established by Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000, which means that, wherever possible, children and young people with additional support needs (ASN) should be educated in their local mainstream school, alongside their peers. Currently, approximately 34% of pupils in North Lanarkshire have an additional support need. Of these, 93% are educated in mainstream schools, reinforcing the need for comprehensive, robust support mechanisms within mainstream settings.
- 2.72 To address the growing need and provide equitable, inclusive education for all pupils, the Service is currently finalising its five-year ASN and Inclusion Strategy. This strategy outlines key objectives to enhance outcomes for children and young people with ASN. It aligns current local and national policy guidance, including insights from the recent Audit Scotland Report and The Morgan Review (2020), which emphasised the need for tailored, well-resourced provision to meet the diverse needs of pupils with ASN.

2.73 In its broadest sense, this strategy is designed to strengthen educational provision to ensure all children and young people with ASN are nurtured, included and empowered to thrive in all aspects of their lives. The strategy aims to do this by:

- strengthening inclusive practices
- maximising use of resources and partnerships to remove barriers and deliver holistic supports for families
- investing in learning estates
- building a skilled and resilient workforce
- ensuring all learners have access to high quality inclusive learning experiences and curriculum pathways that support them into positive post school destinations.

2.74 This strategy exemplifies the Service's plan to implement systemic changes, that will ensure NL's ASN provision is ambitious, effective, sustainable, and appropriately resourced to ensure high quality and improved outcomes for children, young people and families. The full strategy will be presented to SMT and Committee in due course.

2.75 Therefore, in addition to the proposed operating model changes outlined above, the Service is also proposing to decouple the Early Years (EY) and Inclusion strategic remit, assigning EY to one SEFM and Inclusion to another. This is particularly important considering the increased national and local focus on supporting inclusive practices and ensuring effective implementation of the Service's longer term strategic plan for inclusion within NL. The diagram below illustrates these proposals:



2.76 To support this new operating model the Service suggests the introduction of the following new posts, as outlined in the table below.

Post Title	Area	Grade
Family Liaison Officer (Compliance)	Inclusion	NLC12
Family Liaison Officer (GIRFEC)	Inclusion	NLC12
ESO X3	Inclusion	ESO X3

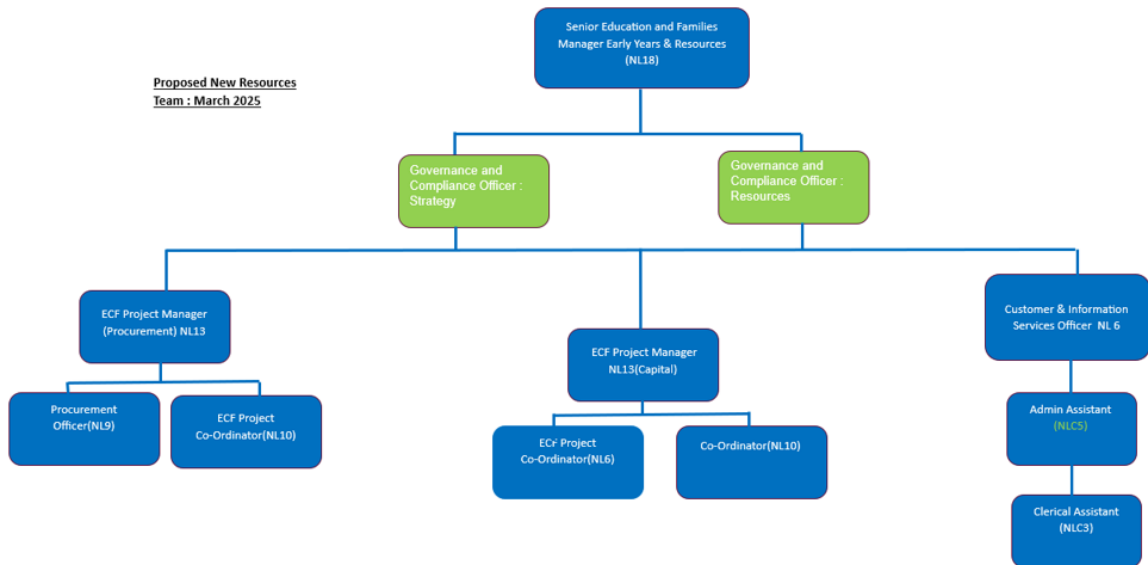
Resources Team

2.77 At present, Education has four teams who manage specific functions:

- Contract Management and Procurement
- Project Team

- Customer Service and Admin Team
- Contracts and Transport

2.78 Following approval by Council, the transport team will transfer to Enterprise and Communities early in academic session 2025-26. As part of this transfer process, the Service is currently reviewing all functions carried out by existing central resource-based teams. This is to strengthen operational capacity and to ensure continuity of service delivery across the remaining functions of this team. The Service is also seeking to create a resources team that will facilitate better alignment of core functions increasing efficiency, as outlined below.



2.79 To further strengthen the functionality of this team and to allow the Service to address recent audit recommendations, including the need to ensure better compliance with school fund procedures, the Service proposes the introduction of the following new posts:

Post Title	Grade
Governance and Compliance Officer : Resource	(NLC 14)
Governance and Compliance Officer : Strategy	(NLC 14)

2.80 The proposed structure evidences a net cost/FTE increase of £0.397m/5FTE and £0.156m/2FTE for the Inclusion and Resources teams respectively as outlined in Appendix 3.

Financial Summary

2.81 In summary, the proposals contained within the report will cost an additional £0.955m as outlined in Appendix 3. The funding source for each part of the proposal is summarised in the following table and has been confirmed by Finance:

	Cost (£000)	Funding Source
Management Structure (see para 2.65)	402	Prioritisation of service budgets, including funding previously set aside to manage service risks

Inclusion Team (see para 2.80)	397	Additional Scottish Government funding to support improvements in ASN service delivery
Resources Team (see para 2.80)	156	Allocated as part of the Council's 2025/26 approved revenue budget
Total	955	

Next Steps

2.82 It should be noted that this is the first phase of the Service Review, and a second phase will look at several different areas. Next steps include:

- The link to wider service management roles and structures aligned also to the agreed corporate review of third tier roles.
- Consideration of any additional changes in local delivery arrangements to accommodate the shift from 23 to 15 clusters.
- Consideration of the potential for greater alignment of business support functions across the service.
- Consideration of the potential for establishing a more integrated approach to the support of children with additional support needs across the spectrum of universal, additional and intensive supports. This will build on changes already made with regard to the integration of out of authority budgets and complex need pathways but will focus further on integrated approaches to the planning and delivery of support at universal and additional levels in line too with our focus on prevention, This will be informed by our learning from the Neurodevelopmental Family Link service and a planned Fairer Futures pilot aimed at addressing the disproportionate financial adversities faced by families of children with additional support needs. It will also involve further strengthening and alignment with work on carer support led through Adult Services and a review of our approach to Self- Directed Support within children's services. This will be an integral component of the ASN Service Review that will be reported to the Education & Families Committee in Cycle 3.
- Development and implementation of the Service's short, medium and long-term improvement priorities that will be reported to the Education and Families Committee in Cycle 3.

3. Measures of success

- 3.1 Better alignment and cohesion with the new Empowering Clusters Model which supports collaborative approaches and integrated practices.
- 3.2 Improved attainment and improved outcomes for children, young people and families.
- 3.2 More efficient deployment of officers to support the Service's Raising Attainment and Achievement Strategy.

4. Supporting documentation

Appendix 1: Operating model 2015-2025

Appendix 2: Proposed Education Operating Model Team Structures 2025

Appendix 3: Cost Summary: Proposed New Education Model

B Smedley

James McParland

Barry Smedley
Chief Officer (Education North)

James McParland
Chief Officer (Education South)

5. Impacts

5.1 Public Sector Equality Duty and Fairer Scotland Duty

Does the report contain information that has an impact as a result of the Public Sector Equality Duty and/or Fairer Scotland Duty?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?

If Yes, has an assessment been carried out and published on the council's website? <https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/your-community/equalities/equality-and-fairer-scotland-duty-impact-assessments>

Yes No

5.2 Financial impact

Does the report contain any financial impacts?

Yes No

If Yes, have all relevant financial impacts been discussed and agreed with Finance?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?

The proposals outlined within this report have been reviewed by Finance with an appropriate, permanent funding solution identified. This funding solution includes the prioritisation of Service budgets; utilisation of additional, Service-directed, Scottish Government funding; and part-allocation of the funding included within the Council's 2025/26 Revenue Budget.

5.3 HR policy impact

Does the report contain any HR policy or procedure impacts?

Yes No

If Yes, have all relevant HR impacts been discussed and agreed with People Resources?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?

HR are aware of the implications of this Service restructure and are advising the service to ensure compliance with all policy and procedures.

5.4 Legal impact

Does the report contain any legal impacts (such as general legal matters, statutory considerations (including employment law considerations), or new legislation)?

Yes No

If Yes, have all relevant legal impacts been discussed and agreed with Legal and Democratic?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?

<p>5.5</p>	<p>Data protection impact Does the report / project / practice contain or involve the processing of personal data? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, is the processing of this personal data likely to result in a high risk to the data subject? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, has a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) been carried out and e-mailed to dataprotection@northlan.gov.uk Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>5.6</p>	<p>Technology / Digital impact Does the report contain information that has an impact on either technology, digital transformation, service redesign / business change processes, data management, or connectivity / broadband / Wi-Fi? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact? Where the impact identifies a requirement for significant technology change, has an assessment been carried out (or is scheduled to be carried out) by the Enterprise Architecture Governance Group (EAGG)? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>5.7</p>	<p>Environmental / Carbon impact Does the report / project / practice contain information that has an impact on any environmental or carbon matters? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p>
<p>5.8</p>	<p>Communications impact Does the report contain any information that has an impact on the council's communications activities? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p>
<p>5.9</p>	<p>Risk impact Is there a risk impact? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the key risks and potential impacts, highlighting where the risk(s) are assessed and recorded (e.g. Corporate or Service or Project Risk Registers), and how they are managed? Introduction of new the Operating Model should reduce the risks associated with Raising Attainment and Improving Outcomes as outlined in the Corporate Risk Register.</p>
<p>5.10</p>	<p>Armed Forces Covenant Duty Does the report require to take due regard of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty (i.e. does it relate to healthcare, housing, or education services for in-Service or ex-Service personnel, or their families, or widow(er)s)? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the provision which has been made to ensure there has been appropriate consideration of the particular needs of the</p>

Armed Forces community to make sure that they do not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public services.

5.11 Children's rights and wellbeing impact

Does the report contain any information regarding any council activity, service delivery, policy, or plan that has an impact on children and young people up to the age of 18, or on a specific group of these?

Yes No

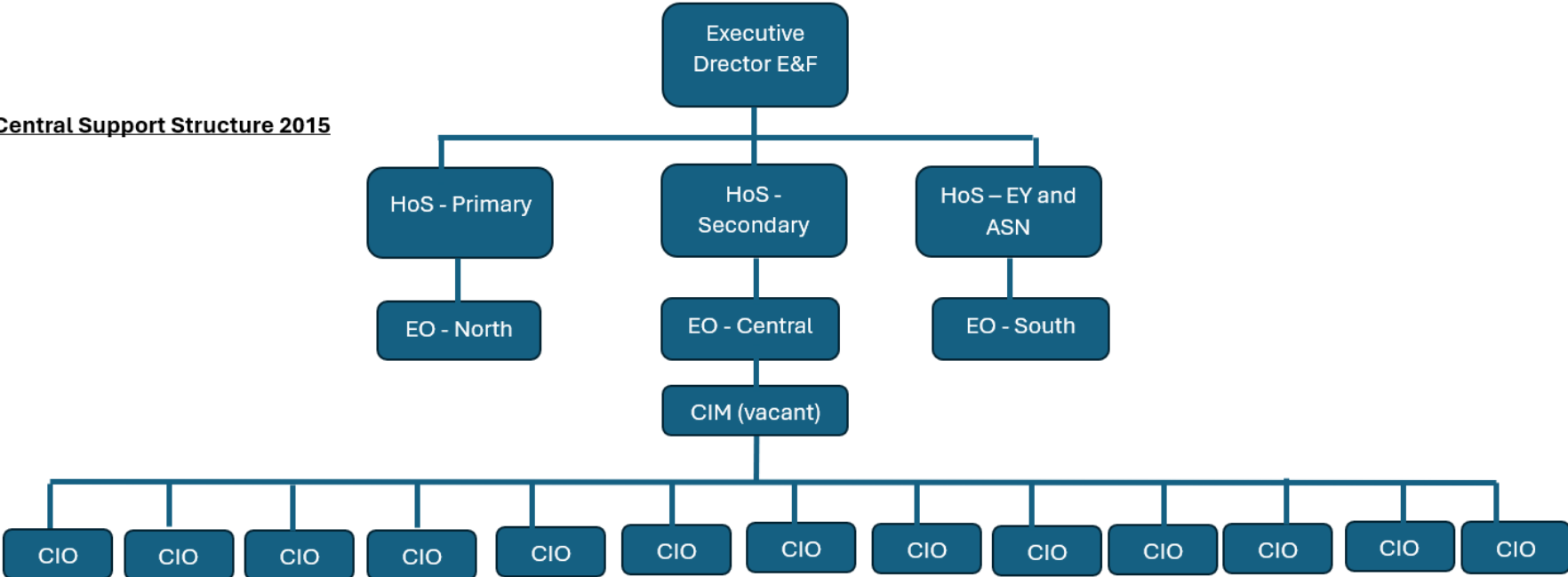
If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact and the provision that has been made to ensure there has been appropriate consideration of the relevant Articles from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). If approved, a CRWIA will be completed.

If Yes, has a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) been carried out?

Yes No

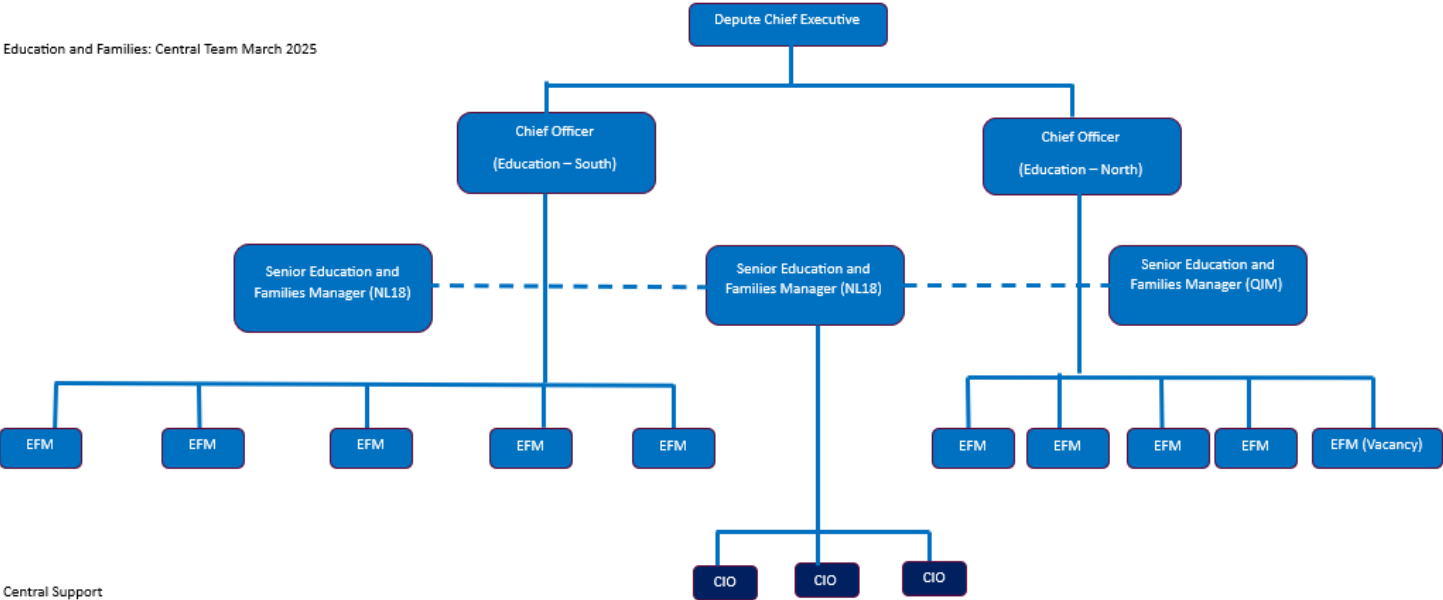
Appendix 1: Evolving Operating Model 2015- 2025

Central Support Structure 2015



Operating Model : March 2025

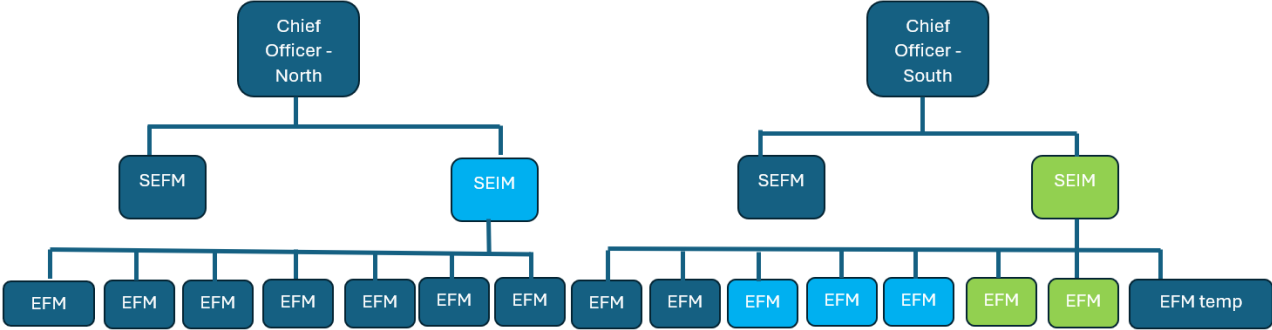
Education and Families: Central Team March 2025



Central Support

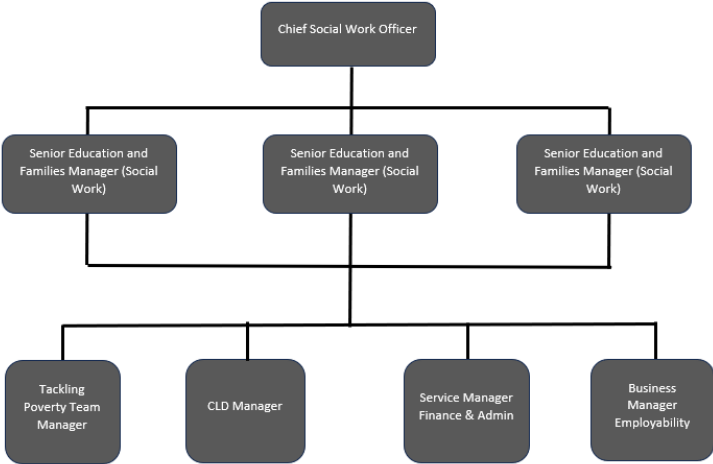
Appendix 2- Proposed new models August 2025

Central Team Leadership Model



Key

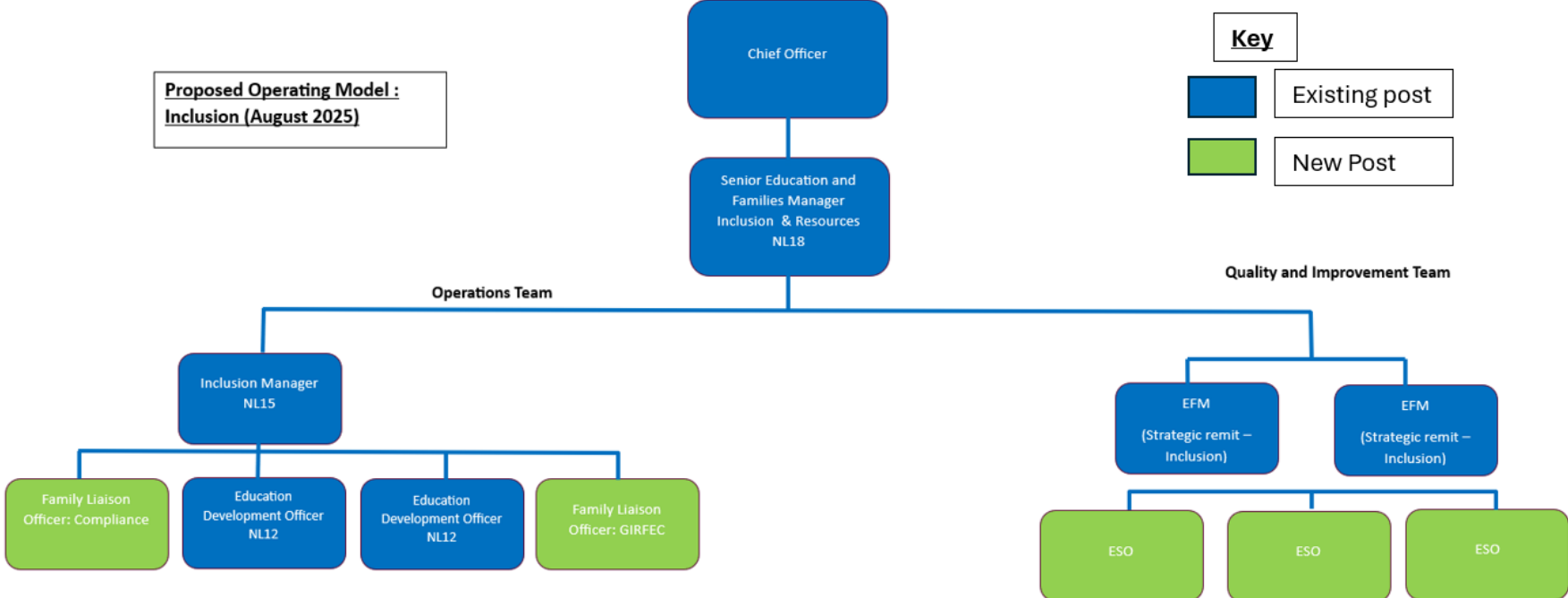
- Existing Post
- Reconfigured Post
- New Post



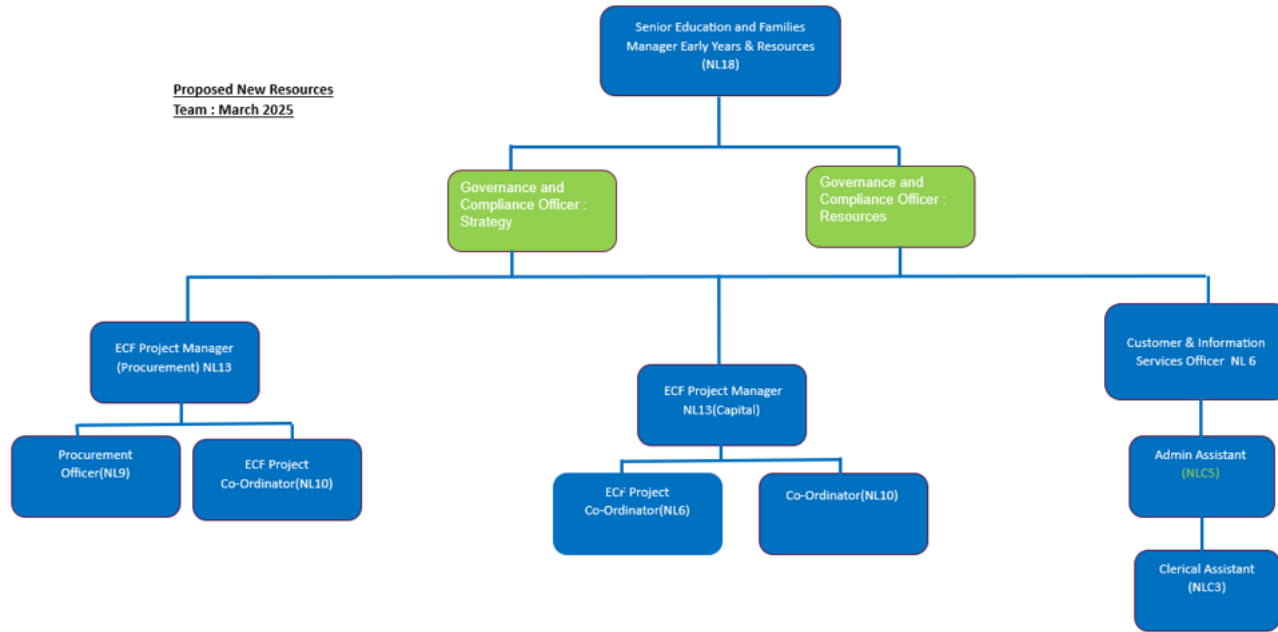
**Proposed Operating Model :
Inclusion (August 2025)**

Key

- Existing post
- New Post



Proposed New Resources
Team : March 2025



Appendix 3: Summary of Establishment Changes

Structure / Designation	Grade	Current FTE	Proposed FTE	FTE Change	Financial Impact	Actions
Management Structure						
Chief Officers (Education)	HOS2	2.00	2.00	NIL	£NIL	No change
Senior Education & Families Manager (SEFM)	NLC18	3.00	2.00	(1.00)	(£0.110m)	Delete 1.00 FTE
Senior Education & Improvement Manager (SIEM)	DHT13	-	2.00	2.00	£0.258m	Create 2.00 FTE
Education & Families Managers (EFM)	QIM	9.00	14.00	5.00	£0.597m	Create 5.00 FTE
Continuous Improvement Officer (CIO)	QIO	3.00	-	(3.00)	(£0.343m)	Delete / Reconfigure 3.00 FTE
Sub-Total: Management Structure		17.00	20.00	3.00	£0.402m	
Inclusion Team						
Family Liaison Officer (Compliance)	NLC12	-	1.00	1.00	£0.068m	Create 1.00 FTE
Family Liaison Officer (GIRFEC)	NLC12	-	1.00	1.00	£0.068m	Create 1.00 FTE
Education Support Officers (ESO)	ESO	-	3.00	3.00	£0.261m	Create 3.00 FTE
Sub-Total: Inclusion Team		0.00	5.00	5.00	£0.397m	
Resources Team						
Governance and Compliance Officer (Resources)	NLC14	-	1.00	1.00	£0.078m	Create 1.00 FTE
Governance and Compliance Officer (Strategy)	NLC14	-	1.00	1.00	£0.078m	Create 1.00 FTE
Sub-Total: Resources		0.00	2.00	2.00	£0.156m	
Total Proposal Impact Increase / (Decrease)		17.00	27.00	10.00	£0.955m	

The financial impact of the proposed structure is reflective of prevailing grading structures and legislative rates. In addition, for the posts that are to be created, the indicative impact of the job evaluation process would also need to be considered.

