

<b>EXTRAORDINARY CABINET</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM No. 3</b>
<b>3 AUGUST 2015</b>	<b>PUBLIC REPORT</b>

Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Andy Coles Cabinet Member for Children's Services	
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**IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN PETERBOROUGH**

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S	
<b>FROM :</b> Cabinet Member for Children's Services	<b>Deadline date :</b> N/A
<p>Cabinet is recommended to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Endorse the strategic proposals relating to the provision of services for children and young people, namely: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The approach taken to the recruitment and retention of social workers, team managers, conference chairs and reviewing officers;</li> <li>b) Reviewing management of referrals into the service, the role of the local authority designated officer and the audit function;</li> <li>c) Creating a more sustainable social work service in the longer term through multi-disciplinary teams;</li> <li>d) The strategic approach to tackling neglect; and</li> <li>e) Implementing new technological approaches to assist business transformation.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Agree that a further financial analysis is completed of these proposals to enable full consideration of the financial implications arising, with a report presented back to Cabinet in due course.</li> </ol>	

**1. ORIGIN OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Cabinet of the issues highlighted by the self-assessment of the quality of services for children and young people.

**2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT**

- 2.1 The report asks Cabinet to endorse an approach which seeks to secure that outcomes for children and young people are to improve in a systematic and sustainable way.
- 2.2 This report is for Cabinet to consider under its Terms of Reference 3.2.1 'to take collective responsibility for the delivery of all strategic executive functions and lead the Council's overall improvement programmes to deliver excellent services'.

**3. TIMESCALE**

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	<b>NO</b>
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#### **4. MAIN BODY OF REPORT: IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN PETERBOROUGH**

##### **Background**

- 4.1. A new senior leadership team was established in Children's Services in March 2015. Following this, a self-assessment of the quality of services in the City was completed in April, and further reviews of service delivery have taken place since then.
- 4.2. This report summarises key actions that need to be addressed if we are to enable outcomes for children and young people, in need of help and protection and who need to come into our care, to be consistently of a good quality.
- 4.3. Key areas identified for action include the following:
  - A review of recruitment and retention arrangements for key staff;
  - The need for additional capacity in key service areas;
  - A review of some of our processes to ensure that we work with the right children and young people at the right time;
  - The need to ensure that key personnel have the information and communication technology equipment to work effectively and in an agile manner;
  - The requirement to improve existing Council ICT infrastructure to enable 'live' reporting of performance data;
  - Development of a strategic response to high levels of neglect in the City;
  - Longer term strategies to reduce the number of qualified social workers we need to employ;
  - Full financial appraisal of all options.
- 4.4. In most cases, we believe that the changes that are required should provide financial benefit over the longer term (either through cost avoidance or reducing existing cost). There will be a need for additional resources while we re-design the system to make it more effective in meeting the needs of the children and young people in the City.

##### **Recruitment and Retention:**

- 4.5. Our self-assessment identified that there are significant issues affecting the recruitment and retention of key staff – namely qualified social workers, team managers, conference chairs and reviewing officers.

##### **Social Workers**

- 4.6. It is known that nationally there is a serious shortage of skilled Children & Families Social Workers.
- 4.7. High levels of vacancy and of churn in social workers and team managers in particular have an adverse impact on too many children, young people and their families. Changes in key staff mean that children and families have to re-establish relationships, delaying progression against child in need and child protection plans. This is self-evidently not good for the children concerned, but also leads to other costs, as delays in progressing plans mean that children and families remain open to the service longer, increasing the numbers of social workers needed to provide the service they require or increasing the case load of the current social worker establishment.
- 4.8. Social work caseloads and stable management are known to be key factors in retention of staff and so this pattern risks becoming a self-reinforcing pattern.

- 4.9. Longer term, this requires a strategic response that reduces the number of social workers needed by the Council. However in the short term, urgent action is needed to improve recruitment and retention.
- 4.10. Within Peterborough, the proportion of social worker posts covered by locums continues to increase and has increased significantly since 2013, when only 15% of frontline posts were occupied by locums. As of July 2015, of the 87 children's and families' social work practitioners, 30 posts are now covered by agency workers (locums). While many locums have a long term commitment to the City, many stay for only short periods. Consequently, turnover amongst locums is high, in turn, contributing to disruption in the progress of plans for children and young people.
- 4.11. At a charge rate of £36 per hour, based on a 35 hour week and 48 week year, a locum social worker costs £60,500 per annum to employ. Including on-costs, the annual cost of employing a social worker is between £37K and £45K. Despite a recent regional agreement to cap the fees paid for locum social workers and team managers, the costs of employing a locum social worker are much higher than those associated with permanent staff.
- 4.12. Whilst the pay and benefits on offer are seen as attractive, they alone will not ensure the recruitment and retention of skilled Social Workers in what remains an extremely competitive market.
- 4.13. Therefore proposals will be formulated on both financial and other benefits (such as increased access to training) for these roles. Proposals will be the subject of consultation with trade unions and where these impact upon existing terms and conditions of employment, proposals will be submitted to Employment Committee for approval.

### **Team Managers**

- 4.14. Recently we have seen an increase in turnover in team managers. Team managers are arguably the most important layer of management in terms of securing consistency across the volume of children and young people with whom the service works. It is also the case that good team managers are a major factor in the retention of good social workers. When teams change team managers, there is a knock on impact on the stability of the team, often resulting in the loss of social workers in the team.
- 4.15. Because of the key role of the team manager in ensuring progress against plans of the children in the teams for which they are accountable [typically around 300 children and young people], loss of team managers can have a significant impact on the progress of children and young people.
- 4.16. It is therefore important that team manager pay and reward is kept under the same consistent review as that applied to social workers. It is also essential that at any one time we have a strong supply of team managers in place. Therefore proposals relating to the remuneration and benefits to social workers will also be considered for team managers. We will also look at the number of team manager roles with a view to increasing capacity.
- 4.17. One proposal is to over-establish by two team manager posts, providing us with a cushion against the impact of loss of key individuals in the service. At times when the service is permanently staffed with team managers, these additional managers would play a key role in supporting the improvement of the consistency of quality of practice across the service and would be managed within the Quality Assurance Service. Securing improvements in consistency of practice is a key priority for the service – second in priority to ensuring recruitment and retention of key staff – and so this proposal will help us to address our two key priorities.

- 4.18. Whenever a team manager resigns from the service, these roles would be used to cover any gaps caused by delays in recruiting permanent replacements. This would reduce our reliance on agency staffing and, more importantly, result in less instability for frontline practitioners who, although affected by a change in line management, would have prior knowledge of the covering manager. The manager would already know systems and practices in Peterborough, so avoiding the need for detailed induction and the risk of inconsistencies in practice developing

#### **Conference Chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers**

- 4.19. Conference chairs and reviewing officers play a significant role in ensuring that plans for children and young people are effective and are proceeding without drift or delay. They need to be experienced practitioners with the credibility to challenge team managers and heads of service in order to ensure that outcomes for children are being achieved.
- 4.20. In Peterborough, there are 7 FTE conference and reviewing officer chairs who are accountable for ensuring that plans relating to 350 children and young people in care and 250 children and young people subject to child protection plans are of a high quality, are outcomes focused and progress in accordance with the child's timescales. Of these roles, 2 full time equivalents are currently covered by locum staff; attempts to recruit to these posts have not been successful.
- 4.21. It is therefore intended to review the remuneration levels of these roles with a view to bringing them into line with existing team manager grades. Many authorities have already done this with successful results.

#### **Other Areas Where Additional Capacity is required**

- 4.22. There is a need for the development of additional professional capacity in three other areas within the service:
- a. Screening,
  - b. Local Authority Designated Officer role
  - c. Audit functions.

#### Screening

- 4.23. Screening functions take place within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub [MASH]. There are typically between 800 and 900 contacts made with children's services about individual children, all of which need to be screened to establish whether there are any indications that there are risks of harm, and that action is needed to safeguard the child concerned.
- 4.24. Furthermore, effective screening helps us to reduce the numbers of children accepted into the service for further assessment. Generally fewer than 25% of children about whom contacts are made are opened for assessment, and many of these are then referred to targeted support without further assessment by children's social care at the end of that assessment. This is undesirable on three counts. It means that children and their families are exposed to unnecessary intrusive social work intervention and results in significantly higher costs to the service because workloads increase, and the progress of children who require the support of Children's Social Care is delayed.
- 4.25. Our long term aim is to reduce the numbers of children and young people who are opened as a referral to the service by diverting more to our extensive range of Early Help support. This is a better outcome for the children and families concerned and will reduce the overall costs of the service.
- 4.26. Currently, there is only one screening post in the MASH. This has obvious risks associated with sickness, annual leave and turnover. Providing additional

screening capacity within the MASH will assist us to reduce the number of cases that progress for assessment by Children's Social Care as it will enable more time to be spent on making better informed decisions as to whether children and young people require support by Children's Social Care or can be supported through Early Help services.

#### Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

- 4.27. Statutory guidance requires local authorities to have suitable arrangements in place for responding to concerns about people working with children. The Local Authority Designated Officer [LADO] is the officer who responds to any concerns or queries about those who work with children. The current post is a 0.5FTE; however increasing demands being placed on this service mean that we will look to increase the role to full time.
- 4.28. Now that the responsibility for the LADO lies within the People and Communities Directorate, there are also opportunities to develop the LADO service in parallel with the continuing development of the equivalent service for managing concerns about people who work with vulnerable adults. This will also open up other sources of funding to support increased capacity through funding available to support the implementation of the Care Act.

#### Audit

- 4.29. Audit functions are vital to ensuring that practice within the services is consistent, effective and safe. Auditors undertake audits of children's case files identifying strengths and weakness of practice and developing action plans to address these. There are issues within children's social care relating to the quality of assessments and care planning, and to ensuring that our approach to promoting the wellbeing of vulnerable children is demonstrably and consistently informed by their wishes and feelings.
- 4.30. Increasing auditor capacity will be essential in ensuring that these improvements are embedded and sustained.
- 4.31. It is proposed to develop a joint approach to quality assurance that covers our work with children, young people and families with those services that meet the needs of vulnerable adults and older people. Developing a joint approach will provide us with the opportunity to access Care Act funding in order to increase capacity, in the same way as in relation to the LADO role above.

#### **Improved Outcomes**

- 4.32. There are currently too many children and young people being supported by Children's Social Care as children in need. This is leading to caseloads that are too high, which in turn means that children who have higher priority needs – those in need of protection – will be prioritised in any social workers' caseload over the needs of children in need.
- 4.33. We therefore need to do all we can to ensure that only those children and young people who require the specialist support provided by Children's Social Care are managed through this service; others will receive a much better service through are well-developed early help services.
- 4.34. Increasing screening capacity in the MASH will help us to divert more children and young people towards early help services, as described above. Moving forward, we will develop an approach that requires professionals referring children and young people to our services where there is no risk of immediate significant harm to complete an early Help Assessment in most cases. Referrals would then only be accepted where it is clear that support at the early help level has not had impact.

- 4.35. This will help to reduce the numbers of children and families experiencing intrusive assessments by Children's Social Care that result in no further action or a referral back to early help services.
- 4.36. As we reduce the numbers of referrals accepted into Children's Social Care, we may need to increase investment in supporting our Early Help offer. However, supporting children and young people at an Early Help level is not only more effective than undertaking intrusive and extensive assessments that either result in no further action or a referral back to Early Help, it is also less expensive. Therefore any additional resources needed at an Early Help level would be offset by reduced costs within specialist services.
- 4.37. We also need to accept the reality that there is a shortage of experienced qualified social workers. Improving our pay and reward offering will help us to compete in a very competitive market, but cannot address the fundamental issue of supply and demand.

#### **Team Support Workers & Multi-Disciplinary Teams**

- 4.38. OfSTED require children who are looked after and those who are subject to child protection plans to be allocated to qualified social workers. The position in relation to Children in Need is less clear; certainly many authorities have adopted an approach where differently qualified workers can work with children in need, providing there has been a robust assessment and there is some oversight of the direct work by appropriately qualified social workers.
- 4.39. In reality, outcomes can often be better when differently qualified practitioners are brought into the workforce to compliment the work of qualified social workers. Family support workers with nursery nurse qualifications are often much more able to provide robust support and challenge to parents with younger children, for example, while youth workers are often much better at forming positive relationships with young people who are displaying significant levels of risk taking behaviour than qualified social workers.
- 4.40. We are therefore intending to pilot recruitment of 12 differently qualified team support workers, who will work with children in need with lower priority needs and support the work of qualified social workers working with some more complex situations.
- 4.41. We are also developing a project to improve our response to young people who are experiencing significant difficulties that if left unresolved may result in them suffering significant harm or becoming looked after. Young people at risk of homelessness because of breakdowns in their family relationships or who are engaging in significant levels of risk taking behaviours often have a complex set of needs that are most likely to be addressed via a multi-disciplinary team that includes some social work support, youth work support, psychological support and practical parenting support.
- 4.42. At present, many of these young people are open to Children's Social Care, either as Children in Need or on Child Protection plans. Often, the response they require is a time intensive one where they are able to build up a trusting relationship with a key support worker. Social workers are unlikely to be in a position to offer this type of relationship, given the other pressures on their time. Social Work training is less focused on working with adolescents and many social workers feel that their skill set is more attuned to working with families with younger children.
- 4.43. Some social workers do have a particular affinity with working with challenging young people, but are still unlikely to have the time to focus on developing the close relationships needed to effect change because of the other demands on their caseloads.

## **Youth Offending Service**

- 4.44. Except in specific circumstances, placing young people on child protection plans is often unlikely to be effective in reducing risks. Young people at risk of sexual exploitation, for example, often have families who are very worried about their child and want to do all they can to help and support them. Because they are seen as being at risk, however, there is often pressure from some partners for a child protection plan. Better results may be obtained by focused work by a youth worker, perhaps with some oversight from a social worker.
- 4.45. The Youth Offending Service offers a multi-disciplinary approach to working with young people at risk of offending. The service includes social workers, psychologists, support workers and there are very close links with targeted youth services. Our view is that this service will be in a better position to offer the type of support that many young people need in order to be at less risk than harm than a traditional social work service.
- 4.46. We are therefore exploring how additional capacity can be added to the Youth Offending Service so that it can expand its' remit to include a multi-disciplinary adolescent service to support this group of young people with complex needs. In the longer term we would expect this approach to be managed within resources that can be transferred from children's social care to the Youth Offending Service. There may, however, be a shorter term need for some additional funding to ensure effective transitional arrangements are in place while this new services becomes established and operational.

## **Strategic Approach to Tackling Neglect**

- 4.47. The majority of children subject to child protection plans in the City are in need of protection because of the impact of neglect. Chronic neglect is often associated with some of the poorest long term outcomes for children and young people.
- 4.48. Patterns of parenting associated with chronic neglect are often some of the hardest to change, and require assertive and intensive interventions.
- 4.49. We are proposing to explore the viability of commissioning an evidenced-based approach to tackling neglect from a leading third sector organisation. This is an approach that has demonstrated impact in another local authority and, given the high levels of neglect in the City, is one that we should explore whether we can bring to Peterborough.
- 4.50. There would be a cost to such an approach. Again, however, if the outcome is that neglect is tackled more effectively, the likelihood is that children will remain on child protection plans for a shorter period, and fewer children and young people will be looked after.

## **Supporting effective working through development of effective ICT**

- 4.51. There are two elements to our needs around Information and Communication Technologies.
- 4.52. The first relates to providing our key staff with the equipment that they need in order to work as efficiently as possible. In short, this means a laptop, tablet or suitably advanced notebook and an iPhone, depending on role type and how staff want to work.
- 4.53. Peterborough is a 4G connected City and the council's new mobile phone contract is based on 4G connectivity. This means that laptops and notebooks can be tethered to iPhones meaning that anywhere that there is a data signal, workers can log in to the Peterborough system, and access the electronic children's records system. This would enable them to access information about the family they are visiting, and write up notes of visits during the visit. At present, workers visit

families and frequently make copious notes which they then copy type into the system on their return to the office. This is a duplication of effort and a source of considerable frustration to our staff.

- 4.54. Similar issues arise in other areas of the People and Communities Directorate, and in Adult Social Care, Housing and Neighbourhood Services in particular.
- 4.55. We estimate that across the People and Communities Directorate, there are some 450 staff who would significantly benefit from provision of this level of equipment.
- 4.56. As well as leading to greater efficiencies in day to day work, providing this level of equipment will support a more agile model of working, with the potential for significant savings. This approach is also in line with the outcomes expected from the Customer Experience Project and is in line with the councils Technology Strategy.
- 4.57. The second element relates to the challenges faced by the current ICT infrastructure across the Council. Limitations on the capacity of the infrastructure has an impact on the ability of the service to produce real time performance data. This means that it is less easy to identify teams where workflows are less efficient, and take action to address any issues. The performance team are looking at solutions to this.

## **5. CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 Consultation on those measures that have staffing implications will take place with staff and trades unions with a view to reaching agreement.
- 5.2 We will also need to discuss any changes to the way in which we accept referrals into the service with our partners. These discussions can take place through the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board, which is already leading work on refreshing thresholds for access to our services.
- 5.3 Prior to any decision to change the grading of the Conference Chairs and Reviewing Officers, formal consultation with staff and their representatives will take place.

## **6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES**

- 6.1 The issues covered in this report are wide-ranging and envisage significant strategic change. The priority is to ensure that we enable our vulnerable children and young people to achieve consistently good outcomes in a sustainable way.
- 6.2 The critical issue is to improve our recruitment and retention of key staff so that children and families benefit from stable relationships with key members of staff and drift and delay is avoided for children in need of help and protection.
- 6.3 However, delivering improved outcomes for children, young people and families on a sustainable basis requires us to develop models of service delivery that are less heavily reliant on recruitment of experienced and qualified social workers. We envisage delivering a mixed model of delivery, with the most appropriate staff working with the most vulnerable of our children and young people, and complimented by a range of commissioned evidenced-based interventions such as that currently being explored to meet the needs of children affected by chronic neglect.



- 6.4 Better diversion from statutory services through continuing investment in prevention and early help services will ensure that only those children who need supporting by Children's Social Care will be referred to the service. This will enable the service to focus on delivering a focused and consistently effective service to a smaller number of children and young people for whom early help services are not appropriate. The result of this focused intervention will either be a quicker step-down to early help services as problems are addressed, or a quicker decision that the children concerned require action to protect them from continuing harm.
- 6.5 The development of capacity within the quality assurance and audit functions will enable us to be confident that this mixed delivery model is delivering the consistently improved outcomes we require.
- 6.6 Investment in information and communication technology will result in more efficient service delivery. This is also a retention issue for key staff who are becoming increasingly frustrated by not having the tools they need to work effectively and efficiently.

## **7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 The current model of delivery is too heavily dependent on high cost social workers, of which there is a national shortage. We need to take more assertive action to recruit and retain the best available social workers by improving our recruitment and retention offer. This will not all be about a financial package – we will also develop a much higher profile training and development programme for our staff – but financial incentives are an important element in successful recruitment and retention.
- 7.2 Social worker shortages are not going to disappear, however, and as evidenced above, social workers are not always the most appropriate practitioners to deliver the best outcomes for children and young people. We are therefore developing new models of delivering services that we believe will better address the variety of needs and challenges faced by children, young people and families in our City. This approach is based on a mixed delivery model of service delivery, including:
  - Continued deployment of experienced social workers in complex family situations, supported by a number of differently qualified practitioners to support them in direct work;
  - A new multi-disciplinary service that supports young people with complex needs, located within the Youth Offending Service;
  - Commissioned evidenced-based interventions to address particular areas of significant need, such as families affected by chronic neglect issues.
- 7.3 The longer term position is that we believe that services will be more effective in delivering improved outcomes for children and young people and will be resource neutral. However, in bringing significant changes in service delivery such as the ones proposed in this paper, it is inevitable that there will be a need for some additional resourcing while changes take place and new systems become established.
- 7.4 Successfully re-directing work away from Children's Social Care to Early Help where support by specialist services is not required is better for children and families who do not experience unnecessary assessments by social care. While there may be a need to increase resourcing in Early Heal as a result, this would be offset by cost reductions that would follow in Children's Social Care.
- 7.5 There will be costs associated with increased ICT support for mobile and agile working as outlined in this paper. These costs will not only be associated with

Children's Services, as there are other service areas in the People and Communities Directorate where we need to move to a more agile working approach if we are to maximise effectiveness and efficiencies.

## **8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 8.1 The option of doing nothing would be likely to result in the continued current pattern of increasing numbers of children and young people being referred into statutory children's services before sufficient support has been given to families to address their difficulties through our wide range of early help Services.
- 8.2 This continuing increase in referrals would result in increasing caseloads for our social workers, resulting in a poorer service to children and young people who are in need of protection and a likely increase in staff turnover. This would result in ever increasing agency social workers costs, and the likelihood that a Cabinet report would follow, requesting that we increase the establishment of social workers further to deal with the increased pressures within the service.
- 8.3 Such an approach would not be sustainable. We already struggle to recruit and retain sufficient numbers of experienced and qualified social workers to meet current levels of demand, and need to find other ways of successfully delivering good outcome for children, young people and their families.
- 8.4 This will rely on us being able to divert those families who are currently being referred to the service for assessment but who do not require this to Early Help services. This will be assisted by a more robust screening process within our front door.
- 8.5 For those children and young people who do need support from Children's Social Care, developing an approach that is based on a different working practice and that uses differently qualified practitioners such as Nursery Nurses and Youth Workers to support the work is not only more sustainable since the need for qualified staff reduces, but is also likely to result in better long term outcomes. This follows from youth workers, for example, often have more success in engaging with young people exhibiting challenging behaviour than many social workers.
- 8.6 Where we know that significant numbers of children and young people are affected by issues such as neglect in the City, it is sensible to look to evidenced based approaches that are successful in helping families to change their approach to parenting through partnerships with other organisations.
- 8.7 Long term costs of neglect can be very significant; outcomes for children and young people can be significantly affected by, for example, making less progress in education. In the most serious circumstances, children and young people can end up becoming looked after, again with often poorer outcomes and at high cost.
- 8.8 In the longer term we are of the view that this will reduce our reliance on qualified social workers, while delivering better outcomes for children and young people. However, we need to improve our recruitment and retention offer in the present, in order to help stabilise our workforce while we make the longer term sustainable changes to delivery.

## **9. IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There may be a need for limited formal consultation with staff in relation to the proposals to increase the grading of Conference Chairs and Reviewing Officers and, depending on the final delivery model agreed, which flow from our proposals around developing an adolescent service.

- 9.2 The Human Resources implications are contained within the body of the report. These will be subject to formal consultation with staff and respective trades unions. Where these result in proposed changes to terms and conditions and/or HR policies, the matter shall be submitted to Employment Committee for approval.
- 9.3 There will be a need for a full financial analysis of the proposals being considered. This will need to include (as a minimum)
- Analysis of the additional funding approved by Council for social work resource in the current year, how it is being used and what additional pressures are being faced
  - Full costing of the proposals contained within this report (including the impact on other areas of the council)
  - Analysis of the financial benefits arising, including whether they are reductions in current budgeted levels of spend or are cost avoidance (and hence whether there is a net cost compared to the MTFS)
  - The required approval route for any additional funding if required
- This analysis should be reported back to Cabinet, enabling final recommendations to be made.
- 9.4 The additional ICT capacity improves employees' ability to work efficiently and effectively.
- 9.5 We will work closely with partners and the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board to ensure that the transition in expectations around referrals and the role of early help is developed in partnership and understood by all.

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