

**Wiltshire Council**

**Cabinet**

**19 June 2012**

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**Subject: Children in Care Commissioning Strategy 2012-2015**

**Cabinet member: Councillor Lionel Grundy - Children's Services**

**Key Decision: No**

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**Executive Summary**

The report outlines the background and context for producing the Children in Care Commissioning Strategy 2012-2015. It summarises the content of the strategy highlighting the commissioning priorities.

**Proposal**

**To agree the strategic direction and priorities outlined in the Children in Care Commissioning Strategy 2012-2015 (see Appendix 1).**

**Reason for Proposal**

The Wiltshire Children and young People's Trust brings together a wide range of stakeholders including young people and partner agencies. The Trust has developed a commissioning strategy covering placements and services for children in care which sets out the strategic direction. The Council has a role as the Corporate parent for children in care and Wiltshire Council Cabinet is being asked to endorse the strategy including the commissioning priorities.

**Carolyn Godfrey  
Corporate Director**

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### **Purpose of Report**

1. This report introduces the revised Children in Care Commissioning Strategy 2012-2015. This has been written following a period of consultation. It highlights key commissioning priorities where the Wiltshire Children and Young People's Trust is seeking endorsement from the Wiltshire Cabinet.

### **Background**

2. Wiltshire Children and Young People's Trust commissioning strategy for children and young people in care has been produced in line with the Trust's commissioning framework. The strategy is holistic and covers all services for looked after children. Work on the strategy is being co-ordinated by the Children in Care Commissioning Group.
3. The Commissioning Strategy takes account of the issues raised following the recent Ofsted Inspection on Safeguarding and Looked After Children. The report raised some specific immediate actions which have been addressed and also identified that the commissioning strategy sets out clear priorities for on-going service development.

### **Main Considerations for the Council**

4. The purpose of the Children in Care Commissioning Strategy 2012-2015 is to achieve better outcomes for children and young people by making sure there are sufficient good quality services available locally. This will involve ensuring:
  - There are services available which, where appropriate, prevent children and young people from coming into care ('edge of care' services) and assist with a return home.
  - A good range of high quality services for children in care, including placements (our aim is 'local placements for local children').
  - All services are cost effective.

#### 4.1 Consultation

Consultation on the initial draft took place from August 2011 to the end of January 2012. This consultation included:

- Consultation with children and young people in care through focus group work, a paper based SNAP survey and an electronic SNAP survey. Focus groups were carried out with Wiltshire's Children in Care Council and paper based surveys were sent to every looked after young person over the age of 7 in Wiltshire's care. All paper survey results were imported to the electronic system.

The electronic SNAP survey and a copy of the full consultation document were promoted on Sparksite, the young people's website (<http://www.sparksite.co.uk>).

- 2 focus group discussions with foster carers.
- 2 workshops were held for social care staff.
- The report was circulated widely and all partner agencies were encouraged to discuss it at regular meetings and forums.

#### 4.2 Summary of the commissioning strategy

The Strategy is divided into two parts:

- Part 1 covers the introduction to the strategy which includes the purpose, links with existing strategies and information on development of the strategy.

Part 1 also covers the context (both national and local), the needs assessment, financial information, where children in care are placed and performance information.

- Part 2 covers the commissioning priorities. Each commissioning priority covers what we want to achieve, key messages from the consultation, current position and achievements to date, priorities for action and key performance indicators which will be monitored by the Children in Care Commissioning Group.

#### 4.3 Commissioning priorities

The strategy outlines 6 commissioning priorities. The commissioning priorities and what we want to achieve under each priority are summarised below.

- Involving children and young people.

We want to maximise opportunities for children and young people in care to:

- Take part in shaping and developing services.

- Give feedback on existing services they are receiving. This is also about ensuring children and young people in care are (and feel) listened to, for example in reviews, and that their views are acted upon and help to shape their care plans.

- Good outcomes for children in care including safeguarding.

We want to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people by providing high quality services which focus on children's and young people's needs so that:

- Children and young people in care, on the edge of care and leaving care are comprehensively safeguarded.
- Assessments and care plans are comprehensive and focus on outcomes.
- Reviews continue to happen on time.
- Criminal records for looked after young people continue to decrease in number.
- All looked after children and young people receive a consistently high quality service from all social care teams including leaving care services.
- All looked after children and young people are supported towards a healthy future lifestyle.
- Looked after children and young people are supported to give them the best chance of achieving good educational attainment outcomes and leading successful and fulfilling lives.

- Accessing and managing resources.

We want to develop efficient and responsive processes which:

- Enable children and young people to quickly access the services required.
- Monitor the quality and effectiveness of these services in achieving change and positive outcomes.
- Are multi-agency to ensure a team around the child approach.

- Edge of care.

We want to achieve a good range of cost effective 'edge of care' services which promote good outcomes by enabling children and young people to remain living safely with their families, where appropriate. These services:

- Assist families and extended families to better care for and support children and young people.
- Where children do return home after a period of care, the risks are assessed, support is in place if required and plans are clear.
- Provide direct support to children and young people increasing self esteem and promoting resilience.

- Placements.

We want to achieve a good range of placements within a purchasing framework focussing on:

- Choice.
- Quality (both of placement and of relationship with carer).
- Cost effectiveness.
- Meeting an individual's needs, as close to home as possible (providing that is compatible with the care plan) and close to the education setting.
- Flexibility.
- Short-term crisis provision when needed.

We also want to achieve the following:

- More timely adoptions.
- A decrease in the number of moves a looked after young person has to make.
- Improved longer-term stability of placements.
- More young people placed with family members and good support given to wider family to help this happen.
- Young people who are happy in their placements.
- To find young people a permanent family where possible.
- Foster carers have all relevant, up to date information to assist them with providing good quality safe care personal to the child or young person's needs.

- Leaving care.

We want to support care leavers to identify and achieve positive goals focussing on:

- Promoting good outcomes for care leavers, including effective preparation for independent living.
- Preventing homelessness.
- Ensuring a good range of accommodation for 16 to 24 year olds who are vulnerable and have specific housing needs

### **Environmental and climate change considerations**

5. Any environmental considerations will be incorporated into contracts involving residential care so that providers reduce the carbon footprint of these buildings.

### **Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

6. We have considered any adverse or positive impact from an equalities perspective and have incorporated the identified issues in the strategy. The action plan will be a live working document and this will provide an opportunity to review progress from an equalities perspective.

Commissioning strategies promote equality of opportunity by specifying and securing services which meet the diverse needs of children, young

people and families in Wiltshire.

As commissioning is a constructive activity which helps to foster good, long-term relationships between services, this strategy will have a positive impact in relationships between stakeholders.

A full Equality Impact Analysis will be completed and regularly updated.

### **Risk Assessment**

7. A Risk Assessment has been undertaken and implementation of the Strategy will reduce risk for children and young people, and financial risk for the Council.

### **Financial Implications**

8. The 2012/13 net Local Authority budget for children in care services is £18,349,100. This does not include expenditure on children in care from Council budgets for the following:
  - Referral and assessment team
  - Safeguarding teams
  - Disabilities teams
  - Business support
  - Independent Reviewing Officers
9. Further work will take place on apportioning expenditure on children in care from these budgets. Work is also taking place on calculating expenditure on looked after children from health budgets.
10. The Council's intentions regarding savings and investments are set out in the Council's financial plan for 2011-15. The Council has prioritised services for vulnerable children and young people within its business plan and has invested in supporting services for children and young people in care, and children and young people on the edge of care, in 2011/12 and 2012/13. Savings have also been achieved through more effective procurement of placements for looked after children and young people.

The implementation of the strategy will support continued improvement in value for money for services for children and young people in care and will inform the financial planning process for 2013/14 and beyond.

### **Legal Implications**

11. There are no direct legal implications in the proposed strategic approach to the commissioning of services for children in care. Legal implications will be taken into account when considering specific proposals.

### **Options Considered**

12. Options and suggestions were considered following the period of consultation and noted in the revised commissioning strategy.

## **Conclusions**

13. The Ofsted report noted that the draft Children in Care Commissioning Strategy is clear in its priorities for ongoing service development. The Strategy clearly identifies the direction of travel and is underpinned by a specific needs assessment as part of Wiltshire's overall strategic needs assessment. Looked after children and young people have made a positive contribution to the formation of the strategy.

**Carolyn Godfrey**  
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## **Background Papers**

The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report:

- None.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 Children in Care Commissioning Strategy 2012-2015

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