

Wiltshire Council

**Children's Services Select Committee
23 September 2010**

Social Care Restructure update

Executive Summary

A detailed report was considered by the Children's Select Committee in August 2009. It proposed the reconfiguration of Children and Families Social Care. An annual update was requested to provide early indication of the impact of the restructure on service delivery.

Proposal

That the Select Committee:

- a) Notes the content of the report and comments on the work done to improve the service provided to children and families in Wiltshire.

Reason for Proposal

To ensure that Members have the latest information regarding the development of improved services for Children and Families Social Care.

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Social Care Restructure Update

Purpose of Report

1. To provide a progress report on the restructure of Children and Families Social Care and detail early indications of impact on improved service delivery.

Background

2. The restructure was finally implemented on 21 July 2010 following extensive consultation with staff, partners and stakeholders. The restructure was due to be implemented in the new year but there was a significant delay following consultation with the staff and Unions; an extension was negotiated to enable staff to make the necessary arrangements to alter their place of work and the structure was amended to make the duty arrangements more robust in the South and East of the County. Two duty outposts were established in Salisbury and Chippenham enabling a timely and responsive service across the County.
3. The fostering and adoption service moved into their new premises in April 2010 and the front line operational teams moved into their offices in a phased approach between June and July of this year.
4. An Ofsted unannounced inspection of the duty system occurred five weeks after implementation and Ofsted cited as a strength:

'In June 2010 following extensive analysis, the Council took effective action by restructuring its Children's Services. This includes the establishment of two new countywide initial referral and assessment teams which are beginning to enable the Council to deliver more timely and consistent services'.

5. The Fostering and Adoption Service is also subject to a full Ofsted review during the week of 23 August 2010 and a summary of the Inspection's findings will be available when the judgement is known and made public.

Main Considerations

6. Two dedicated referral and assessment teams (North and East) based in Devizes and (South and West) based in Trowbridge have been operational since June 2010. They have 'outposts' in Chippenham and Salisbury to ensure a timely and responsive service across the County. The following impact is immediate:
 - More consistent response to referrals across the County as the referral point has reduced from seven to two teams;
 - an easily identifiable referral point for new referrals; the two dedicated team managers are accessible and recognisable enabling headteachers, stakeholders and users to easily access the service;

- the service is more efficient and responsive; duty workers can be deployed on the same day, responding in a more timely manner to those requiring social work services;
 - the referral and assessment teams have increased capacity to undertake initial assessments (within 7 days) and core assessments (within 35 days) and should be able to demonstrate increased performance within 6 months;
 - the dedicated teams should produce better quality assessments and co-ordination amongst agencies once the staff are fully in place and training produced (due Autumn 2010).
7. Four Community Safeguarding Teams have been operational in the four hubs (Trowbridge, Salisbury, Devizes, Chippenham) since July 2010. Many new staff have been recruited to these teams and are arriving over the summer months as their courses near completion. Once these teams are fully established they will be able to pro-actively network and engage with families, communities, partners and stakeholders in the four hub areas. They will be 'freed up' from the daily demands of duty and can forge ahead in the four hubs. The quality of assessment, care management and planning should also improve with the increase in capacity and focus on safeguarding per se.
8. Dedicated Looked After/Through Care teams. The two teams based in Chippenham (North and East) and Salisbury (South and West) have already made improvements to service delivery they provide:
- Easy access to headteachers, partners and stakeholders for Children in Care;
 - improved knowledge and skills re Aftercare legislation;
 - the teams are now Munby judgement compliant and there is an increase in the number of young people with a pathway plan;
 - improved co-ordination and joint working with the YOS, housing department and providers to improve the range and quality of supported living for those leaving care;
 - dedicated, skilled support for unaccompanied Asylum Seekers (UASC) which is already producing efficiencies and savings re cost of accommodation and streamlining support; provision of targeted support from YOS and Connexions which will produce results re reduction of offending and improved life chances;
 - some improvements already made, more to come; improved care management and planning; some young people have been returned from out of authority placements and others have timely plans for permanence. The teams are still in transition but performance should significantly improve over time.
9. Centralised Fostering and Adoption Service at Newbury House.
Impact so far:
- Improved access to one centralised office, easily identifiable to carers, customers and partners;

- streamlined contacts,
 - quicker response to enquiries and applications and a more co-ordinated oversight of 'front door' activity;
 - centralised co-ordinated data-base of carers across the county and more efficient oversight of performance e.g. assessment and timescale going to panel;
 - evidence of CRB checks and co-ordinated training and support;
 - an increase in recruitment of foster carers in house, a reduction of out of authority placements and a reduction in out of authority spend;
 - an increase in local placements for Wiltshire children;
 - close collaboration with the Looked After Children teams, joint service developing its business plan, vision and priorities overseen by the Head of Children in Care. This should in time improve the quality of care management and planning and reduce the number of disruptions experienced by Children in Care.
10. The Children and Families Social Care restructure was only finalised in July 2010, a month or so ago. Early indications are that the service is improving but it will take at least 6-12 months to evidence significant change.
 11. Twenty social workers have been appointed over the summer months following a highly successful recruitment campaign but the majority of these are newly qualified and will require additional support and training. Newly qualified social workers are not allowed to carry child protection cases so the more experienced staff will have to cover until the newly qualified staff complete their probationary year. Some agency staff are providing experienced cover in the interim.
 12. Recruitment to some key managerial posts has been problematic. Whilst the majority of management posts have been filled the Head of Service Community Safeguarding (South and West) remains unfilled, as does the Fostering Service Manager post. These posts will be re-advertised once the market has refreshed.
 13. There are currently ten vacant social work posts across the County but the Service Director is confident that these will be filled as early indications are that there is a lot of interest in Wiltshire posts. The Hidden Gems campaign, lovely place to live and work, has resonated with the universities and colleges and has attracted high calibre recruits.
 14. Retaining the momentum of the improvement journey is crucial to our success. There is a clarity of vision, purpose and priorities. The staff are highly motivated and a good senior management team is working with partners and stakeholders to improve outcomes for children and families in Wiltshire.

Environmental Impact of the Proposal

15. The reduction in office sites, centralisation of some functions and co-location of others has produced efficiencies, economies of scale and reduced the

carbon footprint and is in accord with the aims and objectives of the Council Workplace Transformation project.

Equality and Diversity Impact of the Proposal

16. Those who are most vulnerable to exclusion, social isolation and disadvantage will benefit from the re-focussed functionally specific teams. All social care teams work within an anti-discriminatory framework. Assessments must take account of the wishes and views of the child together with their ethnicity, culture, religion and sexuality which will inform the planning process and placement needs. The Adoption and Fostering Service will actively target the recruitment of BME carers and the restructure should enable the teams to establish linkages with the local communities they serve.

Risk Assessment

17. The current risks are:

- getting the right people into the right job;
- recruiting to vacant posts;
- managing transitions between teams and ensuring protocols are in place;
- getting sufficient accommodation in the four hubs;
- managing in forthcoming 'austere times'

These risks will be mitigated by:

- pro-active recruitment campaign;
- retention of staff by provision of good support and training;
- office accommodation planned in consultation with and led by workplace transformation programme; financial and performance management overseen by the Corporate Director and Cabinet Member.

Financial Implications

18. Lean principles were used to design the restructure and the delayering of some managerial layers provided additional capacity for front line staff. The Council also contributed £300,000 to the cost of the new structure in recognition of increasing demands on safeguarding children's services in the wake of the death of Baby P. Historical reductions had also denuded some services so they were no longer legally compliant. The additional capacity rectified this deficit.
19. Some additional cost pressures have been incurred as the service has been strengthened and made more robust. The unannounced Inspection concluded that Administrative support was insufficient and had to be enhanced. This has been immediately actioned and the Inspectors concluded that:

'The referral and assessment service is sufficiently resourced to meet incoming demand and social work/caseloads are manageable'.

20. The financial challenge for the future is to continue to deliver frontline services in the context of reducing resources.

Legal Implications

21. There are no legal implications arising from this progress report but Legal Services will be consulted in respect of any specific legal issues which may arise.

Conclusion

22. The reconfigured service into functionally specific teams will improve performance, service delivery and outcomes for Children and Families in Wiltshire. This is the beginning of an Improvement Journey.

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Background Papers

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

1. Original Structure Report: Select Committee August 2009
2. Vacancy Report: Select Committee September 2010
3. Revised Structure Chart: August 2010