

SOCIAL WORK- WORKING FOR FAMILIES – REQUEST TO COMMISSION AN INDEPENDENT EVALUATION

To: **Cabinet**

Date: **17th September 2012**

From: **Nicola Clemo, Service Director, Children's Social Care**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Forward Plan ref: **Not applicable** *Key decision:* **No**

Purpose: **To present Cabinet with a proposal to commission an independent evaluation of the Social Work – Working for Families Unit Model.**

Recommendation: **Cabinet is asked to:**

- a) Support the proposal to commission Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Foundation Trust (CPFT) to conduct an independent evaluation of the Social Work – Working for Families Unit Model.**
- b) Approve the procurement exemption request as detailed in paragraph 5.4 on page 8**

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In March 2011, following an extensive consultation process with staff and stakeholders, Cabinet endorsed plans to develop and implement a Social Work Unit Model in Cambridgeshire.
- 1.2 The principles and ambitions driving the transformation of Children's Social Care have been to:
 - **Provide the best possible service**
 - A Service which is configured to support the social work task
 - A Model which is able to respond to changing needs
 - A Model which promotes consistency of care
 - **Provide the best possible support to staff**
 - A Model which provides space for reflection and analysis and encourages creative problem solving
 - A Model which encourages pride in practice among staff
 - Staff feel empowered and supported to develop the skills and competencies
 - **The best possible outcomes for vulnerable children & families**
 - Support families to change and give them the best possible chance to find strategies and use them to become more effective in managing their vulnerability and risk
 - Practitioners are able to spend more time working with children, young people and families
 - Children, young people and families are supported and empowered to make positive changes and achieve better outcomes.
- 1.3 A phased roll out programme began in January 2012 with the launch of four Social Work Units. Since then, a further 20 Units have been rolled out and are now working with children and families across the county.
- 1.4 Once fully implemented, there will be a total of 44 Units working across four Social Work Functions. This includes 12 Access Units, 20 Children in Need Units, 1 Permanence Unit, 8 Looked After Children Units and 3 Disability Units.
- 1.5 Social Work – Working for Families is based on the 'Reclaiming Social Work' Unit Model developed in Hackney Borough Council in 2007. An independent evaluation of 'Reclaiming Social Work' carried out by the London School of Economics (LSE) in April 2010 found significant evidence of positive change achieved through this new model of practice. Most significantly, the evaluation found the model supported reflective learning, skill development and re-established the primary focus of Social Work on the family.

- 1.6 We have designed Social Work – Working for Families Model to suit a shire authority and meet levels of need in Cambridgeshire. In doing so however, we have remained true to the key principles and philosophy of ‘Reclaim Social Work’. We therefore expect to achieve outcomes that are the same or similar to those identified by the LSE in their evaluation of Hackney’s Unit Model.
- 1.7 In order to fully assess and evidence the impact that the transformation is having on the culture of the service, the staff, social work practice and outcomes for children and young people in Cambridgeshire, Children’s Social Care would like to commission an independent evaluation.

2. SOCIAL WORK – WORKING FOR FAMILIES EVALUATION PROPOSAL

- 2.1 It is proposed that Children’s Social Care commission Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Foundation Trust (CPFT) to carry out the evaluation of Social Work – Working for Families. If agreed by Cabinet, CPFT would act as the employing body and the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLARHC) would provide the research skills and expertise required to conduct the evaluation.
- 2.2 Established in 2008 and led by CPFT, the CLAHRC for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is a collaborative partnership between the University of Cambridge and a consortium of NHS and Social Service organisations including Cambridgeshire County Council, NHS Cambridgeshire, NHS Peterborough, Cambridgeshire Community Services, East Anglian Primary Care Research Network and Eastern Region Public Health Observatory. The University component includes the Department of Psychiatry, the Institute of Public Health, the Judge Business School and the Engineering Design Centre.
- 2.3 The aims and objectives of the evaluation and research study would be to *‘establish the acceptability, effectiveness and cost effectiveness of Social Work – Working for Families using qualitative and quantitative research methods’*. The study will test the following hypotheses:
 1. The effectiveness of the Model will be influenced by person centred factors such as acceptance of the methodology, ability to lead, values and belief that professional interventions mediate client improvement and satisfaction
 2. The Systemic methodology will give added value by improving engagement and increasing positive outcomes for families
 3. Staff trained in the systemic methodology will have greater confidence in their day to day work, morale will good and staff will feel better supported
 4. Greater cost effectiveness as a result of more impactful interventions

- 2.4 If agreed, the evaluation will be conducted over a three year period at a cost of £113,988 per annum funded by a Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) grant. Children's Social Care was awarded £466k of Social Work Improvement Fund (SWIF) funding. The programme was established by CWDC to support local authorities to build capacity for reform and improvement in social work with families and children to meet local and national priorities. Children's Social Care has used part of the grant to fund a programme of systemic training for practitioners working in the model. This has released £150k of Social Work Unit Model implementation funding which had been set aside to commission a systemic training programme. The remainder of the funding will come directly from the CWDC SWIF grant.
- 2.5 It is recognised that the spend of £342k on this work is far more than local authorities normally spend on research and evaluation. However, Children's Social Care has undergone fundamental change and has a budget of £35.4m. The units are responsible for circa £2.5 m of this budget and at any one time are working with 2,500 children at risk and 476 children in care. This research will play a key role in ensuring that this budget is spent to greatest effect. The research has the potential to be groundbreaking as there have been very few studies carried out in the UK which have evaluated social work interventions.

3. BENEFITS

- 3.1 Children's Social Care is a member of CLAHRC and is currently working with the collaboration on the theme of children and adolescents mental health needs. The research is focused on investigating transitional care in two groups of vulnerable young people:
- The transition of young people from the care of the local authority to independent living
 - Child and adolescent mental health service users facing either discharge or transition to the adult Mental Health service
- 3.2 Through this joint work, the Service has established positive partnerships and good working relationships with members of the collaboration. The collaboration has a good collective understanding of the Children's Social Care Service and the Social Work Unit Model. All of its members are local organisations who are either delivering health and Social Care services or working with local health and Social Care providers to improve their services.
- 3.3 CPFT has been an integral part of the Project Team responsible for developing the Social Work Unit Model in Cambridgeshire. As a result of which, we have entered into a partnership with CPFT to employ the Specialist Clinicians working in the Units. Historically Children & Young People's Services and CPFT have been very successful at combining the skills, knowledge and expertise of both organisations. This is evidenced by the quality of services provided by Multi Systemic Therapy Service and Looked after Children Psychology Service.

- 3.4 Commissioning CLAHRC to conduct the evaluation would enable us to build on and consolidate local partnership arrangements and enable us to work alongside organisations that have a good understanding of the health and social care needs of Cambridgeshire.
- 3.5 The University of Cambridge is synonymous with being a leading centre for research, teaching and practice. The Social Work – Working for Families evaluation and research project would benefit from the academic rigour, experience, excellence and expertise that would be provided by a number of highly regarded Departments of the University.
- In the most recent UK Government Research Assessment Exercise (2008) the Departments of Psychiatry, Engineering and Public health and primary care achieved the highest quality ratings (5 stars) for the strength of their in-depth research
 - Fellowship opportunities may be available which would help to establish the Council as a learning organisation and attract professionals to the authority
- 3.6 In June 2010 the Secretary of State for Education asked Professor Eileen Munro to conduct a review of child protection which was focused on strengthening the social work profession. A key recommendation of the final report published in May 2011 was that:
- ‘Local authorities and their partners should start an ongoing process to review and redesign the ways in which child and family social work is delivered, drawing on evidence of effectiveness of helping methods where appropriate and supporting practice that can implement evidence based ways of working with children and families’*
- 3.7 Since CLAHRC was established in 2008, its focus has been on applied research and testing new ways of working to establish their effectiveness and appropriateness. Where potential improvements have been identified, the collaboration has helped to incorporate them into everyday working practices, so that service users across the setting receive a better standard of care.
- 3.8 CLAHRC would use this experience of testing new ways of working and apply a similar methodology to research and evaluate Social Work – Working for Families. In doing so, CLAHRC will assess the effectiveness of the Units interventions with families at each stage of the research process and identify the most impactful and constructive interventions. This will create a feedback loop and inform practice across the Model. The benefit of which will be to:
- Improve outcomes for children and young people
 - Enable practitioners to implement evidence-based interventions
 - Support reflective learning and skill development
 - Growth of a learning culture within Children’s Social Care
 - Empowered and confident workforce
- 3.9 Once the research methodology is established and embedded, it will be possible to continue to use the methodology ourselves so that we can

continue to review and evaluate practice. The Service will therefore continue to reap the benefits of the investment long after the contract has ended.

3.10 The cost benefits associated with the evaluation are as follows:

- The Development of Social Work practice. The evaluation is not intended to simply review what has been done. Staff will work with researchers to review and improve their practice as the evaluation work is undertaken. The learning from the evaluation and research project will mean that practitioners are able to implement evidence-based interventions and work towards ensuring that all of our interventions with families are of a consistently high standard, impactful and of a good quality.
- Added value: CPFT and the Collaboration will both contribute a significant amount of their time, expertise, experience, infrastructure and management support/capacity which is not reflected in the contract price
- Savings: It is anticipated that there will be a cost benefit associated with applying evidence based practice, e.g. if more families can be successfully supported to stay together safely, this will reduce placement and Looked After Children (LAC) costs.
- Value for money: The project has a strand that will assess cost effectiveness. This will produce key data to help evaluate value for money by comparing the cost of interventions with outcomes for children and families.
- Potential income: The intellectual property rights will be shared between Cambridgeshire County Council and CPFT. If any of the findings from the study are proven to have a market value, the income generated will be shared equally between both organisations. The data generated will be owned by Cambridgeshire County Council.

4. ALIGNMENT WITH PRIORITIES AND WAYS OF WORKING

4.1 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people when they need it most

Learning from the CLARHC evaluation will mean that it will be possible to work towards ensuring that all of our interventions with families are of a consistently high standard, impactful and of a good quality.

4.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives in their communities

Our guiding principle is underpinned by the knowledge that children do best in their own homes, families and communities. We also know that their outcomes are greatly enhanced by maintaining children in their own family of origin where it is safe to do so. Learning from the evaluation will mean that families will better supported to care for their children safely so that children can remain with their family, where it is safe for them to do so.

4.3 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

There are no significant implications for this priority.

4.4 Ways of Working

The following bullet points set out implications identified by officers for ways of working:

Being a genuinely local Council

- Demonstrate a commitment to investing in local partnerships

Making sure the right services are provided in the right way

- Learning from the evaluation and research project will mean that practitioners are able to implement evidence-based interventions

Working together

- Opportunity to share learning across the organisation and more widely. This will help to enhance the reputation of the Council and Children's Services nationally
- Opportunity to nurture an established partnership with members of CLARHC

5. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Resource and Performance Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

5.2 Finance

Sections 2.4, 2.5 and 3.10 set out details of the finance implications identified by officers.

5.3 Performance

Research measures for the project will include monitoring and assessing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) such as child death rates, school attendance and numbers of LAC

5.4 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

Public procurement law regulates how we as a council spend our money. The regulations divide services into 'Part A' and 'Part B', with 'Part A' requiring the full application of the regulations and 'Part B' to a lesser extent, but operating with the same principles of openness and fairness.

Part A services are regarded as services that could be provided by any party in the EU (for example purchase of computers or some consultancy services). Part B services are those regarded by the EU as something to only be of interest to the country of origin.

Ordinarily research would be regarded as a Part A service and would therefore not qualify for an exemption. However Regulation 6(2)(k) of the Public Contract Regulations 2006 states if services will accrue benefits for bodies other than the Council or that the services are not to be wholly paid for by the Council; Public Contract Regulations do not apply to these services. This would then enable us to seek an exemption from Cabinet (Clause 3.7 of the Council's Contract Regulations).

Prior to making the request to Informal Cabinet, we consulted Karen White (Council's Lawyer) who reviewed the information and concluded that it would be possible to seek an exemption on the basis that:

- 'the Council will not be the only body to obtain benefits from the services or be used exclusively in the conduct of the Council's own affairs'
- 'Whilst these benefits to other bodies are to some extent speculative on balance they are probably sufficient to demonstrate that the benefits of the services will not accrue exclusively to the council'.

5.5 Equality and Diversity Implications

Learning from the CLARHC evaluation will mean that it will be possible to identify the most impactful and constructive interventions for children and families across cultural, ethnic and community systems.

5.6 Engagement and Consultation

CLAHRC's evaluation of Social Work – Working for Families will gather qualitative and quantitative research through interviews and surveys with staff and service users.

5.7 Public Health Implications

None.

Source Documents	Location
None	