

COMMUNITY SERVICE VOLUNTEERS (CSV):
VOLUNTEERS IN CHILD PROTECTION

To: **Cabinet**

Date: **Tuesday 10th July**

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

Electoral division(s): **All**

Forward Plan ref: **n/a** *Key decision:* **No**

Purpose: **Cabinet is asked to support the plan to pilot the Volunteers in Child protection (ViCP) scheme in Cambridgeshire.**

Recommendation: **To approve a contract exemption for the appointment of Community Service Volunteers (CSV) to operate a Volunteers in Child Protection (ViCP) scheme.**

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Volunteers in Child Protection is a ground breaking project that matches volunteers to families with children who are at risk of significant harm. The volunteers provide support and encouragement to help these families address the many problems they face and ultimately assist them in caring for their children safely and without the need for social care intervention.
- 1.2 The concept was established by the national volunteering charity, Community Service Volunteers (CSV) in response to Lord Laming's enquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié. The Report's findings concluded that
 - Early intervention helps families to deal with potential crises and can avert more serious intervention in the future.
 - The community has a role in safeguarding the lives of children.
- 1.3 In 2003 CSV launched pilot projects in Bromley and Sunderland. The pilots sought to demonstrate the beneficial role that community volunteers could play in offering day to day support to families whose children were subject to a child protection plan. The support was seen as integral in reducing the level of identified risk and enabling the families to be de-registered. External and independent evaluation by Jane Tunstall, Kings College, London noted a high level of satisfaction with the volunteers from the families and Social Workers' perspective in particular their ability to deliver a highly personalized support service which actually impacted on the families' day to day functioning.
- 1.4 The Project was subsequently expanded to include Lewisham, Islington, Southend and Coventry. Further external evaluation has concurred with the earlier work of Tunstall regarding the schemes overall effectiveness and indeed concluded. 'The ViCP scheme is good value for money and CSV as an organization are extremely effective in managing volunteers' (Akister 2011).
- 1.5 The model has received further endorsement from subsequent reports including the Allen Report regarding early intervention and from the government's Review of Child Protection written by Eileen Munro. CSV are the only organisation with a proven track record in providing this type of resource

2. MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 In order to implement this scheme in Cambridgeshire we would look to develop a Contractual partnership with Community Service Volunteers. As the only current provider of ViCP schemes, Community Service Volunteers are unique in that they have the infrastructure, experience and risk management expertise with vulnerable families. They have a successful proven track record in this very specialized area.
- 2.2 As these children and young people are subject to a Child Protection Plan, it is not possible for us to test out the scheme with other Providers due to the high risk nature of the work. We acknowledge that other providers might in theory be able to develop the skills and capabilities over time but this would not be immediately achievable, and it would require extensive resources from Children's Social Care and Strategy and Commissioning to develop the local market of potential providers. At present no alternative provider has been identified.

- 2.3 The programme would be on a two year fixed term contract and include a Project Manager who would lead on the recruitment and support of 25 to 30 volunteers in the first year, with a view to maintaining a permanent pool of 15 to 20 volunteers. The volunteers in turn would provide a service to 15 to 20 families. The programme would initially be based in Fenland and if deemed successful via the external evaluation process would potentially become a countywide service. This service would be commissioned.
- 2.4 We would expect to see a similar pattern of success as the other local authorities have experienced including a reduced length of time a child is subject to a child protection plan. The programme will be subject to an external evaluation.
- 2.6 The programme will cost £135k over the two year period, of which £10k is reserved for evaluation. The project will be based at Churchill Road, Wisbech and will share offices with the social work child in need units.
- 2.7 The funding has been identified through the Placements Strategy as an invest to save project to help maintain children at home with their families and communities.
- 2.8 A contract exemption is requested on the grounds of the immediate lack of other potential providers of this service. CSV launched this scheme and have a strong track record of providing successful support to families. The service is a Part B (Residual) service for the purposes of EU procurement regulations and therefore does not require the application of formal EU procurement procedures.

3. ALIGNMENT WITH PRIORITIES AND WAYS OF WORKING

- 3.1 The programme is compatible with the County Council's and Children and Young People's Services objectives for the next five years. It provides an accessible and high quality service that will enable children/young people to keep safe, support change and enhance their overall life chances in particular those associated with health and education. The programme was developed via the CYPS Placement Strategy for looked after children. The programme will also support and protect vulnerable families, enhance the social capital of the Fenland area and represent a new and different way of working.

4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The programme is both innovative and cost effective. It provides a community based model of service delivery to some of our most vulnerable young people.
- 4.2 The programme will be funded from existing budgets. It is anticipated that over time the programme will reduce the escalation of need within families and therefore avoid future cost increases.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 Cabinet is asked to approve a contract exemption for the appointment of Community Service Volunteers (CSV) to operate a Volunteers in Child Protection (ViCP) scheme.

Source Documents	Location
None	