

## THE RESPONSE FROM OCYPS TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS DETAILED IN THE SCUTINY COMMITTEE'S SUB GROUP DRAFT REPORT ON OUT COUNTY PLACEMENTS

The recommendations from the final report will be transposed into an action plan which will details lead officers and timescales.

Responses from officers agreed by Cabinet are detailed in bold print under each recommendation from the scrutiny committee.

### Recommendations

#### R1 Early Intervention/Preventative work

Focuses specifically on how Cambridgeshire can support the two largest groups of children, who, based on an analysis of trends, are most at risk of going out-of-county (BESD and ASD), to ensure numbers of children in these categories in out-of-county provision reduce over time. This is where the council can save in the long term – but funding will need to be invested to enable this to happen.

**We accept this recommendation and will increase internal capacity within the county, extending provision and through early intervention preventing where possible long term problems. An independent consultant has been appointed to support Social Care service reviews with the aim of increasing the capacity of in house long-term placements for children with disabilities. The pilot scheme for ASD centres attached to secondary schools will be expanded; the need for ASD provision in the early years/primary schools will be addressed through the ASD strategy that is currently being developed with parents and representatives from the National Autistic Society (NAS). There will be a countywide review of educational provision for children and young people with BESD. An invest to transform bid has been submitted which focuses on the development of early years practitioners to undertake intensive interventions for pre schoolchildren with ASD.**

#### R2 Delivers more preventative initiatives in the early years to reduce numbers of children being taken into care through stopping families ever reaching crisis point.

**This recommendation supports the work already underway increasing the teams working closely with the locality teams and Children's Centres to develop preventative services. In addition Officers have identified that there needs to be a review of the Family Service (Social Care). We will build on the success of the NAS Early Bird Course. Additionally funding for training for early years practitioners through the Early Years and Childcare Comprehensive Training Programme will be bid for through an invest to transform bid.**

#### R3 Develops a pre-placement strategy so that early assessment of children with

support needs is improved, and intervention and support for young children identified as having support is increased at the earliest stage. This should be carried through by anticipating what those children assessed will need as they grow, and working with all other relevant services to plan how to meet anticipated need.

**As the Early Support Programme becomes more established across the county it will increasingly address the issue of early identification of need and produce coordinated multi agency Family Plans. On going assessment and the development of pathways for children with disabilities will enable us to highlight in advance gaps in provision for an individual child. We now have expertise to further develop Portage due to the appointment of an early years Educational Psychologist with this particular expertise .New guidance for schools on ASD will detail the input required from schools parents and specialists. The development of new Head of Service post for Procurement in children's services in addition to the development of a Procurement Team will the enhance our capacity to forward plan for services/provision with partner agencies.**

- R4 Works with health services to ensure that professionals involved in a child's first diagnosis are trained not to perpetuate the messages that used to be given to parents about the eventual need for a child to be placed away from home.

**Officers will work with colleagues in health in particular to raise their awareness of current in county provision and that planned in the Area Brief for Special Schools. First hand familiarisation with in county provision will be encouraged for those involved in diagnosing. The Early Support Programme will ensure the delivery of consistent messages across agencies**

R5 **Procurement and Commissioning, and Contracting**

Conducts a thorough needs analysis to establish exactly what support is required for children in Cambridgeshire, to inform the procurement and commissioning processes, and enable resources to be focussed on providing the right levels of in-house residential and foster care. The council must set a clear commissioning and procurement strategy using this analysis.

**This recommendation is fully supported and work will be put in place to take this forward. The Procurement Team will have a significant role in these developments .The Job Description for the newly appointed Head of Procurement has these points as priorities for future development**

- R6 Improves the procurement, commissioning, and contracting processes within social care, building on the good work already begun to:

- Identify and prioritise the services required and plan ahead;
- Increase Cambridgeshire's ability to manage the market and influence independent providers;
- Ensure that providers comply with their contracts, meet quality

- standards and are held to account through robust contracts which specify detailed outcomes to be achieved for individual children; and
- Achieve value for money, possibly by outsourcing to not-for-profit providers.

**The development of the Procurement Team will address this recommendation. This is work in progress.**

- R7 Improves care planning, and support work to ensure contracts with independent providers are tied in to a robust care plan with clear outcomes for children

**A recent audit of 80 Care Plans will help to inform/identify the areas for development by Social Work teams. There needs to be clear objectives set for each placement so that they that can be measured against the contract. There is an existing task group which will take this forward.**

- R8 Monitors young people's outcomes and conduct exit interviews with children as they leave their placement to assess how well the placement achieved its aims.

**This recommendation is an important area of activity and will be an objective we will want to achieve for all children and young people in 08/09.**

- R9 Increases recording and dissemination of best practice.

**Members have rightly identified the benefit of sharing good practice and we will continue to build on the work we are currently undertaking in this area with our colleagues in the Eastern Region Partnership. The framework exists in county to support dissemination**

- R10a **In-county Provision**

#### Social Care

Improves range and quality of in-county options for support (and considers developing a framework of placements being a mix of local in-house placements and local third sector providers. This approach is supported in the Care Matters Green Paper and the recent Audit Commission report "Out of Authority Placements for SEN")

**In order to address this recommendation we propose to use an independent consultant to assess our own in house provision as well as that of other providers.**

- R10b Provides further support and training to in-house residential staff, so that they are enabled to have their confidence and skills raised to deliver similar solutions to those offered by market providers.

**Whilst it is appreciated that members have noted concerns regarding the skills of and the training for staff, Children's Services do not view this as**

**a priority as there is a programme of training established as well as support from the Looked After Children Psychology Service. However we will investigate joint training for education and social care residential staff.**

- R10c Continues and expands on its efforts to improve recruitment and retention of social workers.

**Currently it would appear that strategies to improve recruitment and retention have been successful and that we now have a net gain of social workers across the county. This activity, however, will remain a high priority**

- R10d Continues its efforts to raise the standards of performance within social care, as from a client's point perspective it is the quality of social care interaction that matters most.

**This is challenging as expectation may not match capacity but officers fully support the identification of this issue as a recommendation. They will continue to consult with clients about the service they have receive as well as expected with the aim of closing any perceived gaps between the two**

- R10e Provides a forum for debate between Education, Health and Social Care regarding the role of Lead Professionals to ensure this concept can be taken forward productively.

**This is currently underway with a recommended approach on identifying a lead professional being consulted upon with officers in OCPYS and partner agencies.**

- R11 Community Support

Improves levels of community support for families, and recruits and trains more people to be community support workers.

**Work is underway to ensure a more equitable eligibility criteria for CSS. However, we would suggest in addition to further address this recommendation, the reviewing of low level allocations of support, e.g. 1-2hrs per week. The aim would be to assess the effectiveness of the support and to investigate if improved outcomes could be achieved using different but existing resources/provision in a more creative way. It may be worth noting that any increase in the requirement for CSS or other service would require additional funding.**

- R12 Respite

Increases the capacity of respite care to enable more families to access this.

**As previously noted, we propose the commissioning of an Independent consultant who will include as part of their remit the capacity / requirement in county for respite services. We are anticipating the**

**availability of government funds for additional respite services in the near future.**

R13a Foster Care

Continues its work to increase numbers of foster carers on a sustainable basis, through putting into practice proven methods from other authorities, which have succeeded in this area.

**Pleasing results from the activity already undertaken in this are being achieved and therefore existing strategy is considered to be successful. We will continue to promote and support this strategy**

R13b Improves incentives for people to become 'expert' foster carers to care for those children with very high levels of need.

**There is now remuneration/incentives available for foster carers at Level 6 skills level, which competes with what is provided to independent carers.**

R14 Match children to foster care placements appropriately, using psychological assessment of both the child and foster carers to achieve this.

**The newly developed Procurement Team is working on improving the match for short-term placements using improved descriptions of children's needs .It is expected that this together with a better understanding of available provision will show positive outcomes. For permanent placements there is already a matching process overseen by panels and an agency decision maker within social care.**

R15a Management Information

Improves data and management information systems, and considers putting a skilled management information officer into each of the major service areas to drive improvements forward.

**The Planning and Performance Managers in each of the Areas will have the capability to support this recommendation. In addition support and expertise from central MI officers can also be utilised. One Vision will enable OCYPS to have a consistent approach to data / information**

R15b Education

Increases resources for special schools to match the changing profile of students. This should include providing special schools with more space and facilities, and increasing the skills of staff to enable them to manage the increasing number of children with ASD and challenging behaviour confidently.

**The SEN strategy has identified the areas for development. However, we need to prioritise the funds available for these developments .The special school facilities will be addressed through the BSF programme**

**and we will use the facilities in the two new area special schools as the blueprint for the rest of the county .The two ASD centre pilots in secondary schools are now operational and the aim is to include plans for a centre through BSF in Fenland and to bid for funds to set up a centre in Huntingdon next year. ASD accredited training for staff in special schools has continued in association with the Faculty of Education at Cambridge University and there are plans for further intensive training in TEACCH. Officers will be developing the working relationships with CAMH and this is beginning with a seminar in November to consider how to support special schools with the increasing levels of challenging behaviour**

- R16a Improves the marketing of Cambridgeshire's special schools, to enable this form of in-county educational provision to become a more attractive option for parents.

**Officers will focus on improving the knowledge of our in house schools for those professionals those working with parents of children with disabilities. We need to raise the confidence of parents in our ability to meet complex needs in county. This is fundamental to the vision for our special schools set out in the Area Special Schools Brief.**

- R16b Tribunal Process

Lobbies for changes to the tribunal process, to enable the local authority to communicate with parents more easily prior to the tribunal itself, and to have the same number of witnesses as parents.

**This is an important area for the authority to raise with government not only for the reasons above but also because the system is unfair and inaccessible to those parents who are less articulate or who feel less confident with complex bureaucratic processes.**

- R16c Considers inputting further resources to increase capacity within the Assessment and Resources Service to deal with tribunals.

Ensures that preparation of cases for tribunal, and preparation of packages of provision, is given greater priority, encouraging all professionals involved to focus on the child's needs and corporately own the process.

**These two recommendations can be addressed together. Officers have recently begun to consider with colleagues from the legal service how best to utilise current staffing and expertise in relation to Tribunal in order to ensure a robust and thorough response to appeals whilst taking in to account that we will have pooled budgets in the future. The provision of additional staff would require funding which currently needs to be prioritised in other more essential areas.**