

**OVERVIEW REPORT: SOCIAL WORK - WORKING FOR FAMILIES (SWWFF)**

**To:** Cabinet

**Date:** 6<sup>th</sup> September 2011

**From:** Children & Young People (CYP) Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC)

**Electoral division(s):** All

**Forward Plan ref:** Not applicable      **Key decision:** N/A

**Purpose:** To present the findings of an Overview Task & Finish Group of the CYP Overview & Scrutiny Committee

**Recommendation:**

1. That Cabinet consider in particular the potential risks to service quality / continuity whilst changes to social care are implemented.
2. That Cabinet request regular updates on the work of the SW-WFF Project Board.
3. There should be continuing high quality communication with staff and families.
4. The co-location of locality teams and children's social care area teams, in particular, should be endorsed by Cabinet

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## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1. The meeting was held to provide CYP OSC with an overview of the proposed new arrangements for the delivery of children's social care, otherwise known as the Unit Model of Delivery.
- 1.2 We took as the basis for our discussion the recent Internal Audit embedded assurance report and the issues raised in it, namely:
  - benefits realisation
  - provision for redundancy payments
  - review of the project Risk Log at Project Team meetings; and
  - risks to service delivery during transition

## **2. KEY FINDINGS**

- 2.1 In terms of benefits realisation, the Munro report into children's social care has endorsed the model being proposed by Cambridgeshire. The new model would ensure that case workers spent the majority of their time with families, not with their computer. The Service Director for Children's Social Care advised that it was hoped that the number of redundancies would be minimal; reductions in staffing would be achieved through natural wastage and through promotions in other parts of children's services. We were advised that staff were not leaving in high numbers and those staff who were leaving, were being successful in finding jobs within locality teams and that this was seen as a positive sign that staff welcomed the new structure. Recruitment and retention was not currently an issue.
- 2.2 The new structure would reduce management posts by 24 and increase the number of front line staff. The introduction of Consultant Social Workers meant that work would be much more transparent as case discussions would require input from different professionals and one view would not be able to dominate. In addition, 5 senior social workers would be piloted in locality teams. Co-location of locality teams and the new unit model was seen as positive, but there were issues over accommodation. The Service Director for Children's Social Care was reminded that the Member Led Review of the effectiveness of children's services in new communities had recommended that locality teams be co-located alongside children's social care.
- 2.3 A fortnightly newsletter to staff ensured communications were maintained.
- 2.4 Risks around the transition period were acknowledged, hence the importance of embedding internal audit in the process. The social care performance board and SW-WFF Project Board would act as temperature gauges and ensure management action taken where needed. In addition the partnership with Coram and the Independent Reviewing Officers would ensure continued performance monitoring.
- 2.5 The Service Director for Children's Social Care acknowledged that the biggest risk is that a family might slip through the net during the transition phase. However, she believed that sufficient safeguards were in place.

- 2.6 The other risk mentioned was that during the autumn as the recruitment process continued, unsuccessful team managers would leave the organisation.
- 2.7 We asked about the role of partners, particularly the integration of medical posts within the new structure. We were reassured that although line management would be by the head of social care, clinical supervision would still take place through health.
- 2.8 We were also told about the new Multi Agency Referral Unit (MARU), headed up by the police, who provided a rent-free building to the Integrated Access Team in Godmanchester.
- 2.9 Financial savings would be achieved by having fewer children in care. Currently there are 476 Children Looked After, of whom 35% were out of county. The new structure would improve the management of risk and provide a supportive learning environment for less experienced staff. There was also a comprehensive training and staff development plan to train staff in more effective interventions.
- 2.10 In summary, we were advised that the new model would mean that Cambridgeshire would:
- provide better support to children and families
  - a more professional trained service
  - improved quality
  - better decision making; and
  - better risk management processes

Source Documents	Location
None	