

**SOCIAL WORK – WORKING FOR FAMILIES**

*To:* **Cabinet**

*Date:* **5<sup>th</sup> April 2011**

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

*Electoral division(s):* **All**

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

*Purpose:*

- **To present to Cabinet the Formal Consultation for the Social Work – Working for Families Consultation**

*Recommendation:* **Cabinet is asked to:**

- i) Note and comment on the content of the Social Work – Working for Families Formal Consultation**
- ii) Support the proposals outlined in the Social Work – Working for Families Formal Consultation**

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## **1.0 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 There is a real desire in Cambridgeshire to do the best we can for the children and families that we work with and we have made significant progress in our bid to improve practice. We have an enthusiastic and committed workforce and have developed and provided some excellent services for children and families.
- 2.1 For many years now, we have been committed to making improvements and enhancing services. However, whilst this has resulted in improvements in some areas of practice, these changes have not fully addressed some of the fundamental issues and common messages we receive from our young people, staff, Serious Case Reviews and OfSTED Inspections which include:

### **Young People**

- Too many changes of Social Workers who they don't see enough and they have to keep re-telling their stories
- They and their families are not helped enough, told the problem but not how to resolve it

### **Children's Social Work Staff**

- Geographical, threshold and cultural inconsistencies
- No shared philosophical framework
- Too much time is given to administration rather than working with families

### **Serious Case Reviews**

- Lack of significant intervention with the whole family
- Re-referrals suggesting that initial work does not always uncover the underlying difficulties

### **OfSTED Inspections**

- Child's voice is not always heard

- 1.3 In response, the Directorate Management Team looked at a range of possible options and in the discussions that followed, the 'Reclaiming Social Work' Unit Model developed by Hackney Borough Council was chosen as the preferred option for achieving significant change.
- 1.4 In November 2010 Social Work – Working for Families project was established to translate 'Reclaiming Social Work' and create Cambridgeshire's own Social Work Unit Model.
- 1.5 We believe that Cambridgeshire's Social Work – Working for Families Unit Model will build on the significant progress made as part of Cambridgeshire's ongoing commitment to transform Social Care and will enable us to provide:
- **The best possible outcomes for vulnerable children & families**  
To ensure children and families are the focus of all that we do
  - **The best possible service**  
Cambridgeshire is dedicated to becoming an outstanding local authority
  - **The best possible support to staff**  
To enable families to change and flourish

- 1.6 There is a commitment nationally to change and improve the status and quality of Social Work. We are monitoring closely the outcomes of the review of Child Protection led by Eileen Munro, and have been encouraged by the interim reports and their alignment with our proposals. We await the final report which is due to be published in April 2011 and will respond to the recommendations as part of our response to the formal consultation.

## **2.0 DEVELOPING THE SOCIAL WORK UNIT MODEL IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

- 2.1 The Social Work Unit Model promotes effective Social Work practice and puts it at the heart of the service. In doing so, it creates an environment in which it is possible for the Social Work task to thrive and encourages the best possible outcomes for children and families.
- 2.2 The following principles and priorities underpin the model and have provided the basis for developing Social Work – Working for Families in Cambridgeshire:

### **2.3 Children & Families**

An environment which enables children and families to change and flourish

- Children's needs are considered systemically
- Families are supported and challenged to care for their children safely so that children can remain with their family, where it is safe for them to do so
- Children and their families experience the fewest transitions possible once they have a Social Work Service

### **2.4 Social Work Practice**

Social Workers feel empowered and supported to carry out the complex Social Work task.

- An environment in which practitioners can share risk and spend more time with children and families
- An environment in which practitioners continue to learn, grow and develop
- A single methodology which promotes consistent practice
- Reduced processes, procedures and systems. Where they do exist, for them to be less burdensome and to support Unit practice rather than Units feeling tied down by them. In return, there will be an increased expectation that professional judgement and responsibility will govern social work practice
- Practitioners are not tied to one function but are capable of working across any of the Unit functions
- A generosity of role

### **2.5 Organisation & structure**

The structure supports the flexibility required to meet the needs of children and families in Cambridgeshire

- A Model of Social Work intervention that is able to manage risk effectively
- Authority that is devolved to ensure a timely response and efficient service

- A structure that has the capacity to support Cambridgeshire's existing Social Work need
- Allocation of Units across the county reflecting the level of need in a geographical area
- Units that will be able to move from one function to another in line with the changing profile of work
- The Units will be 'paired' to offer peer support and collaboration

## **2.6 Operational**

- Decisions that involve accommodating children and initiating legal proceedings are so life changing that these will continue to be taken by Children's Allocation Meetings, whose role and function must be enhanced
- It is accepted that small number of families will require ongoing and long term support.

2.7 It is acknowledged that Hackney and Cambridgeshire are very different places. However common to both authorities are the critical needs of the children and families that we work with and the social work task itself. We have focused heavily on the location of the units to ensure that the model could successfully be applied in Cambridgeshire.

## **3.0 THE CONSULTATION PROCESS**

3.1 The Social Work – Working for Families informal consultation provided an overview of the plans to develop a Social Work Unit Model in Cambridgeshire. It was launched on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2011 and ran until Monday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2011.

3.2 Informal consultation workshops were also held for staff and were attended by 83% of staff invited to attend the sessions. Stakeholder workshops were also held for Unions, Children's Trust representatives, County Council Members and Senior Managers from across the authority.

3.3 In summary, both staff and stakeholders were extremely positive about plans to develop a Unit Model in Cambridgeshire. The feedback we have received has focused on the following strengths and benefits of the Model:

- Empowering children and families
- Improving practice
- Sharing responsibility and risk
- Giving social work back to social workers
- Creating a learning environment

3.4 The key challenges and risks highlighted include the following:

- Cambridgeshire is very different to Hackney in terms of its geography
- A huge cultural shift will be required to adapt to the proposed change
- Ensuring that the workforce is equipped to work effectively in the new Model

3.5 Key challenges and risks identified included statements such as:

- Cambridgeshire is very different to Hackney in terms of its geography

- A huge cultural shift will be required to adapt to the proposed change
- Ensuring that the workforce is equipped to work effectively in the new Model

3.6 This feedback has helped to shape proposals for Cambridgeshire's Social Work – Working for Families Unit Model outlined in the Formal Consultation. The Formal Consultation was launched on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2011 and will close on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2011.

3.7 Cabinet are asked to comment on the proposals described in the Formal Consultation [which will be made available on the second dispatch] and support plans for Cambridgeshire's Social Work – Working for Families Unit Model.

#### **4.0 ALIGNMENT WITH PRIORITIES AND WAYS OF WORKING**

##### **4.1 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people when they need it most**

The report above points out implications identified by officers for this priority

##### **4.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives in their communities**

The report above points out implications identified by officers for this priority

##### **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 report above points out implications identified by officers for 'Making sure the right services are provided in the right way'

#### **5.0 SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

##### **5.1 RESOURCES & PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS**

###### **5.1.1 Human Resources**

This is a large scale Directorate review that will have implications for staff working across the Children's Social Care Service.

The principles underpinning the proposals include:

- Establishing a qualified Social Care Service workforce  
Heads of Service, Group Managers, Consultant Social Workers and Social Workers will all be social work degree qualified. Child Practitioners/Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWS) will be degree qualified.
- Continued investment in professional development for non qualified staff appointed to the Units.
- We will seek to protect our existing workforce and mitigate the impact of proposals on staff wherever possible. Appointments will be restricted to internal candidates in the first instance before advertising jobs externally.
- The implementation process will take up to 18 months. We believe that this will create further opportunities for individuals whose posts are considered 'at risk'.

In summary, we expect the proposed structure to have the following impact on managerial, operations and business support staff:

<b>Post Type</b>	<b>Proposed reduction</b>	<b>Proposed new posts</b>	<b>Overall increase (reduction)</b>
Head of Service	1	3	2
Management Band	76.05	56	(20.05)
LGE	206.47	185.5	(20.97)

### **5.1.2 Finance**

The decision to develop a Social Work Model in Cambridgeshire has not been driven by costs savings but by a desire to improve practice.

The Social Work Model in Cambridgeshire will be funded from the current social care budget, this includes investments in future years to complete implementation.

### **5.1.3 Performance**

The 'Reclaiming Social Work Model' is associated with strong comparative outcome measures as defined by the National Indicator Set; this includes a fall in the numbers of looked after children, strong placement stability and a low number of children in residential care.

We have recently established an evaluation workstream as part of the project with the purpose of collating a range of existing performance data such as feedback from service users, complaints, court feedback, PIs and reviews. This information will benchmark current performance and provide a framework for us to monitor and evaluate progress throughout development of the Unit Model.

We will also commission an independent evaluation of the Unit Model in Cambridgeshire.

### **5.1.4 Property & facilities management**

The Units will initially be based within existing accommodation. Any changes to accommodation requirements in the future will continue to be managed by the CYPS Accommodation Group in the same way they are at present.

## **5.2 STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

5.2.1 We expect the Social Work – Working for Families Unit Model to have a positive impact on our work with partners. We believe that it will allow us to build on our existing partnerships and enable us to continue to work together effectively to support and protect children and families in Cambridgeshire.

5.2.2 The Unit Model promotes the value of consultation and reflection. It values thoughtful and informed conversations about, and with families.

- 5.2.3 Existing multi agency meetings including CiN and Core Group will continue and will continue to provide a forum for information sharing and partnership working.
- 5.2.4 We have applied balance to the tensions between function and geography and the Units, CiN in particular, are expected to develop close working relationship with Locality teams and Children's Centres.

### **5.3 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

Children's Social Care will continue to provide a critical needs service to the most vulnerable children and families in Cambridgeshire.

It is not considered that these changes will negatively affect groups with the following protected characteristics: Age, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Disability, Ethnicity, race, culture, Sexual orientation, Religion, Pregnancy and maternity, Rural isolation and Deprivation.

### **5.4 ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION**

- 5.4.1 The Informal Consultation was circulated to all Social Care Service staff, Children's Leadership Team, Corporate Leadership Team, Members, Unions and the Children's Trust. It was also featured in schools, Locality Team and Manager's Briefings.
- 5.4.2 Informal Consultation workshops were also held for staff. A stakeholder workshop was also held for Children's Trust representatives, County Council Members, Unions and Senior Managers from across the authority. Briefings were also given at key meetings and included in Locality, CYP Senior Managers and Schools newsletters.
- 5.4.3 The Formal consultation will be widely distributed to staff and stakeholders and further workshops will be held.

### **6.0 NEXT STEPS**

The table below highlights the next stages of the process:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting / Event</b>	<b>Additional Information</b>
Formal Consultation launched	28 <sup>th</sup> March 2011	
Response to Formal Consultation published	29 <sup>th</sup> July 2011	
Selection Interviews	Sept – Dec 2011	
Roll out of Units	Feb 2012 – Mar 2013	
Consultation for 'at risk staff'	Feb 12, July 12 and Feb 13	
Three phase period for possible redundancy notices	Apr 12, Oct 12 and Apr 13	

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**BACKGROUND  
DOCUMENTS NONE**