

DEVELOPING A JOINT APPROACH FOR PREVENTING AND ADDRESSING ADOLESCENT RISK

To: **Children and Young People Committee**

Meeting Date: **16 December 2019**

From: **Wendi Ogle-Welbourn, Executive Director, People and Communities**

Electoral division(s): **All**

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

Purpose: **To consider a Transformation Fund bid to develop a joint approach for preventing and addressing adolescent risk.**

Recommendation: **The Children and Young People Committee is recommended to endorse a Transformation Bid proposal up to £50K to the General Purposes Committee, contingent on other partners (Police and Crime Commissioner, Clinical Commissioning Group and Police) also contributing financially and in kind to the project.**

<i>Officer contact:</i>	<i>Member contacts:</i>
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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 A significant change programme has been underway in Cambridgeshire for the last three years in relation to Children's Services as a clear understanding developed that our services were not necessarily structured in the most effective ways to support the best outcomes for children and their families moving into the 2020s. Demographic and cultural changes meant that we needed to redesign provision to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in the County, and to ensure that we continued to be regional and national leaders in our practice. We have successfully aligned Early Help and Safeguarding Services; been awarded national trailblazer status for the implementation of the Child Protection Family Safeguarding model in February 2020; and most recently co-created the place based Best Start in Life model for children pre-birth to 5 with Peterborough City Council, Health, Education and voluntary sector partners. This joint funded system wide approach will be launched in April 2020, and has attracted considerable interest from other areas already. There is good evidence to suggest that all of these initiatives will increase family and community resilience; reduce escalation into statutory services and reliance on professionals; and ultimately significantly improve outcomes for younger children.
- 1.2 However, we are acutely aware that we have yet to make the same innovative leap for older children and adolescents. Across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, our vulnerable teenagers are experiencing the same challenges as nationally in relation to emotional and mental health concerns; child sexual exploitation; problematic drug and alcohol use; going missing; exclusion from school and civic society; and criminal exploitation through County Lines. We also now have examples of serious youth violence and mental health crises leading to suicide in the County. There are some excellent services across the partnership that commit significant amounts of resource, both financial and in staff time, to addressing these very serious situations once they occur, but this is often too late for the young people, their families and the communities in which they live. It is of real concern that there are teenagers in our County who find themselves in such desperate situations and if we want to change this, we need to recognise that the current offer is not joined up across the partnership or targeted sufficiently to meet either the required preventative or acute need effectively at present.
- 1.3 We know that many of the vulnerabilities that lead to adolescents being at risk start in older childhood and are the result of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), such as neglectful parenting or exposure to domestic abuse. Neglect in childhood impacts on brain development as well as a child's ability to form meaningful relationships with significant others, and the combination of these factors make them more vulnerable to exploitation and more extreme risk taking than their more secure peers. Problems develop in school, behavioural issues surface, low level criminal activity begins and mental health difficulties start to become apparent. Societal changes in relation to County Lines also means that we are seeing younger teenagers (some only 10 or 11) becoming involved in serious crime at a much earlier point, and increasing numbers of primary aged children reporting episodes of

low mood and even self-harm. Conversely, the latest research has also helped us to understand that adolescence is a physiological stage that does not really resolve until we are 25, and, as with our children and young people with additional needs, the transition to adult services and adulthood is also a key point of vulnerability. Many of our young adults will also start having children at around this time, and we want to have made sure they are supported effectively into positive parenthood as well as adulthood.

- 1.4 Whilst the breadth and severity of these concerns may seem daunting, the clarity and urgency of the situation also presents the whole system with a real opportunity to reshape the focus of our current offer and develop additional specialist provision where necessary to address the needs of this wide ranging group. This paper asks for Children and Young People Committee's support in achieving this through the proposed work with ISOS and partners in order to create a unique and innovative model that supports our most vulnerable children and young people with the intention of dramatically improving their life chances.

2. MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 This proposal is a request for up to £50K to develop the model described above with partners and ISOS, a research and advisory company with a track record in developing policy, improving delivery and building capacity within the public sector. ISOS are uniquely positioned to help us with this work due to their recent collaboration with the Local Government Association around a number of pertinent areas, especially a national Early Help review and most recently an analysis of adolescent mental health services across the country. They have spent some time previously in Cambridgeshire County Council in connection with our excellent prevention of exclusion service, and are keen to support us in integrating activity such as this with other areas of success across the partnership in order to build the new model. They are a pragmatic and outcome focussed organisation who understand that we want to develop a practical and useful system that will support all of our staff in delivering high quality services as soon as possible. We specifically seek permission to procure ISOS to deliver this part of the provision, due to their skill set and the short timescale involved.
- 2.2 The commitment of the wider partnership also bodes well for the success of this project. Peterborough City Council, Health and Police colleagues have all been involved in the discussions about the plans and agree that we need to realign services across the system to meet these new challenges for our young people. Public Health are in the process of completing needs analyses for the project around both vulnerable adolescents and specifically mental health needs in order to provide us with more detailed information; the Police are contributing a bespoke Child Exploitation Problem Profile; and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) have agreed that the new Children's Mental Health strategy should sit within this programme.
- 2.3 In respect of funding this initiative, whilst the Council is being asked to contribute transformation funding in this paper, we have also had very positive initial discussions with

the CCG and Police about them offering some funding to the project as well. The Police and Crime Commissioner has also been asked to contribute financially to the project by the Executive Director, and is considering this positively.

- 2.4 We anticipate launching the consultation and design phase in January 2020 if we are supported by the Committee. The approach to the Best Start in Life programme was highly successful in bringing partners together, identifying local need and agreeing a set of common goals, and we plan to build on the learning from this approach as we will be working with the same set of stakeholders. One of our key learning points, however, was that we did not focus enough on seeking the views and input of children and young people themselves at an early enough stage. We plan to work with young people right from the start of this programme as it is critical that they feel that the services we develop will meet their needs. We will also include extremely important partners such as the Districts who already hold significant responsibility for areas such as community safety and housing. They have real expertise in these areas, understand their local communities well, and bring a wealth of resource to the table. Importantly, our staff will also form part of the design of the new services, bringing their existing high quality practice and skill in relationship based work to new research informed interventions that we believe will deliver more reliable outcomes for children and young people.
- 2.5 From our own previous experience and knowledge of what works in other areas, we know that it is possible to tackle these really challenging areas of need in pockets and focusing on one set of problems at a time. Other areas have demonstrated some real success with initiatives around criminal exploitation recently, and whilst we would wish to learn from their example, it is also clear that there is not a model yet that has fully embraced all the aspects of vulnerability for young people, or at a young enough stage to really impact on prevention. This proposal has the potential to create real wrap around provision across all key agencies that will be truly innovative, use our limited resources wisely, and create a momentum to support all our vulnerable children, young people and families. If we can get this right, we will have created a comprehensive universal offer for all our citizens through our place based Think Communities approach that is then enhanced seamlessly to meet the needs of our more vulnerable children and families from pre-birth to 25 through the targeted offers of Best Start in Life or support to vulnerable older children and at risk adolescents as appropriate. It is a genuinely exciting opportunity to champion a new vision for the Council and way of working with children, young people and their families. It will provide a dynamic start to the new decade for the whole system, and most importantly for the children and young people that we all want to be happy, fulfilled and thriving in our County.

3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 A good quality of life for everyone

The approach outlined in Section 2 has significant implications for keeping vulnerable people safe in a way that draws on their own strengths and those of their communities.

3.2 Thriving places for people to live

The approach outlined in Section 2 has significant implications for working with Public Sector Partners and community organisations to provide local services which build supportive, resilient communities and great places to live.

3.3 The best start for Cambridgeshire's children

The approach outlined in Section 2 has significant implications for intervening early and effectively to support and safeguard vulnerable children, young people and their families.

4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Resource Implications

A key goal of the approach outlined in Section 2 is to effectively use our own and partners' data, evidence and best practice to design a delivery model that improves outcomes for children and young people, maximising the use of scarce resources.

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

Procurement advice has been sought, with the following response provided: "Ok with this paper, recognising that there is a direct purchase for ISOS at a value of £50K which should have gone to competition but did not due to the short time scales and limited market."

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.7 Public Health Implications

Improving Outcomes for Children and Young People using a preventative, whole-system, evidence-based approach is a key public health priority. Public health staff are fully engaged in the work outlined to develop system plans to address adolescent risk.

Significant Implications	Officer Clearance
Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?	Yes Name of Financial Officer: Clare Andrews
Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement?	Yes Name of Officer: Gus De Silva
Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or LGSS Law?	Yes Name of Legal Officer: Fiona McMillan
Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?	Yes Name of Officer: Wendi Ogle-Welbourn
Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?	Yes Name of Officer: Jo Dickson
Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact?	Yes Name of Officer: Wendi Ogle-Welbourn
Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health	Yes Name of Officer: Raj Lakshman

Source Documents	Location
N/A	