

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7 April 2016

PRESENT – Councillor Lister (in the Chair); Councillors Crudass, Crumbie, Curry, L. Hughes, KE Kelly, Storr, C. Taylor, Tostevin and Wright. (10)

APOLOGIES – Councillor Mills; Ms. Regan, Mrs. Harrison and Ms Woodcock; David Mason, Head of Looked After Children, Youth Offending and Edge of Care Services; and Yvonne Coates, Head of First Contact and Locality Services.

ABSENT – Mr. Frank, Mr. Rickeard, Mr. Fisher and Ms Miah. (4)

STATUTORY CO-OPTees – None. (0)

NON-STATUTORY CO-OPTees – None. (0)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor H Scott; Samantha Bissell and Nicola Noble, Members of the Public; and Hilary Morrison on behalf of the Darlington Parent Carers Forum.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Suzanne Joyner, Director of Children and Adults Services; Alison Murphy, Interim Director – Children’s Services; Brian Boggon, Assistant Director, Regeneration Projects; Hillary Tillotson, Family Placement Service Manager; Elizabeth Davison, Assistant Director Finance and Human Resources; Brett Neilson, Finance Manager, People and Neighbourhood Services; Anna Willey, Anti-Social Behaviour Manager; Neil Holden, Interim Head of Service, Safeguarding; and Allison Hill, Democratic Support.

CYP38. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

CYP39. MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2016/17 TO 2019/20 – The Scrutiny Committee met to discuss those proposals contained in phase 2 of the next round of spending reductions as contained within the Medium Term Financial Plan 2016/17 to 2019/20, which were specifically under its remit.

The Assistant Director, Finance and Human Resources gave a brief presentation on the details within phase 2 of the Medium Term Financial plan 2016/17 to 2019/20, which was currently out to consultation.

The Scrutiny Committee considered the following proposals in relation to the Core Offer and the Impact Assessment Forms :-

Children's Services Budget Rationale - The Director of Children and Adults Services gave an overview of the services provided with Children's Services, together with the rationale and vision behind the proposed future budget over the next four years.

Information was provided on how it is intended to achieve the proposed savings across the service and continue to give young people in Darlington the best start in life through access to high quality early years provision, high performing schools, excellent health care and leisure opportunities; how the Early Help offer will be delivered; following the Ofsted Inspection the improvements that have been implemented through training, development and better management oversight and an increase in the number of social work posts; and the development of a new operating model across Children's Services for early help services.

CYP1 – Social Work and Independent Review - Detailed information on the services which the Council was legally required to provide and how those services were currently provided and resourced were contained in the core offer.

It was reported that the core offer allows the Local Authority to carry out a range of statutory duties under the Children Act 1989 for the protection of children in their area and to provide services for children in need of protection which is subject to external scrutiny by the Independent Review Service was contained in the report.

The report also outlined how the core offer provides the necessary staffing structure to meet the statutory requirements to provide services for children in need of protection; statutory services as set out in the Independent Reviewing Service Handbook to appoint an Independent Reviewing Officer for all children looked after; funding for a project jointly resourced by Barnardos and Darlington Borough Council with input from the Police and Crime Commissioner to work directly with children and young people affected by Child Sexual Exploitation and to raise awareness of CSE with partner agencies; the Multi Agency Risk Assessment conference (MARAC) which provides a consistent approach across agencies to risk assessment which identifies those victims who are at most risk of serious harm of domestic abuse; and Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) in partnership with the Police, Probation and Prison Service.

It was highlighted that the proposal to increase the number of social work posts would ensure that caseloads remain at an acceptable level to deliver the service. The increase in resource was based on current and most recent demand for the service.

Discussion ensued on the number of children subject to child protection plans and the numbers of those children categorised as children in need; and the importance of the targeted families programmes, such as the Troubled Families working together with other social care teams.

Members questioned the budget figure relating to overheads, which they felt was high in comparison to other services and the Finance Manager, People and

Neighbourhood Services explained how the figure for support services is based on services allocated in the current financial year and for social work and independent review, legal services support may be higher than other areas.

With regard to the number of active cases reported, a Member asked how this compared with other authorities and was advised that the number of child protection cases was comparable to other authorities; however with regard to children in need, 80 assessments are undertaken each month, although this authority has not been identified as being particularly high regarding children in need.

A Member raised a question regarding the additional resources allocated for the increase in social workers and the Interim Director, Children's Services advised Members that there was a short-term agreement in place for additional support to address the high caseloads so the increase in resource had already been made following the recommendations of the Ofsted report.

CYP4 – Early Help Model - Detailed information on the services which the Council was legally required to provide and how those services were currently provided and resourced were contained in the core offer and also details of how the core offer meets the Council's obligations.

It was reported that there was a proposal to realign all the Early Help Services into a single service under a single management structure to ensure efficiency of services and that families are offered support at the right time in their lives and from the most appropriate professional.

The new Early Help Service will consolidate the two current services to develop a single co-ordinated Early Help Service to target the most vulnerable children on the Early Help Service to the 0-19 age group and their families.

The proposed operating model is to offer Children Centre delivery in Darlington by way of a 'hub and spoke model' with a centrally based Children Centre which will deliver activities and programmes to enhance the life chances of under 5 year olds. The model will also provide services in the community for those hard to reach families through four or five 'spokes' or delivery sites.

The focus will be on most vulnerable families but a whole range of services will continue to be offered including speech language, parental programmes, behaviour management and transition to school.

It was also proposed to reduce the Family Information Service to two staff members from four staff members;

It was highlighted that the Early Help Service will perform a critical role in providing support and help to children and families early to reduce the risk of increased demand for specialist services and achieve better outcomes for the most vulnerable.

Detailed plans for the Early Help model will be developed in consultation with staff, partner agencies and service users over the coming months.

Discussion ensued on how officers intended to engage the parents from the disadvantaged areas when the Children's Centres are removed and centrally located and the Interim Director, Children's Services reassured Members that the service will not cease but there will be a change to service delivery and confirmed that there will still be opportunities for services to be taken into the community for hard to reach families. It was highlighted that the changes to the way the service would be delivered in the future will allow for the most efficient, flexible and cost effective service delivery within a reduced level of resources.

With regard to the remodelling of the service, Members discussed how officers envisaged this will happen and the Interim Director Children's Services advised Members that initially the emphasis will be on targeted services for the most vulnerable and outlined that some services may need to cease or be delivered by others. It was highlighted that the full details are still being worked on and Members expressed the view that the model does need to be designed swiftly so that the location of the Hub and spokes would be clear.

Members further discussed the redesign and expressed their collective concerns that there was a lot of detail in the redesign that was currently unknown and that there was no confirmation of partner working at this stage to deliver the proposed Early Help Path which is intended to offer services by the local authority and other agencies and partners, including statutory and voluntary agencies.

Members were also concerned that the closure of the children's centres may have a knock on effect and cost the authority more in the long term. Members felt that they were not in a position to make any formal decision on the re-design of the Early Help Model without further information.

The Director of Children and Adults Services reassured Members that she understood the Scrutiny Members concerns on the re-model of services but confirmed that to maintain the Early Help function there was a need to redesign and agreed that this would be done through consultation with this Scrutiny Committee.

CYP8 – Safeguarding – Detailed information on the services which the Council was legally required to provide in relation to safeguarding for children and young people through the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and safeguarding adults through the Safeguarding Adults Board.

It was reported that the safeguarding services in place enables the council to meet its obligations to safeguard children and vulnerable adults as per the standards as set out in statute, particularly in Working Together 2015 and the Care Act 2014 and there was no proposal to change the current service provided.

Discussion ensued on the allocation of overheads; safeguarding training for children and adults; and the delivery of volunteer services following the reduction of staff in the Family Information Service.

Hu1 – Children’s Centres, Early Help and Specialist Family Support –

Reference was made to the Impact Assessment in relation to Children’s Centres and the proposal to change the operating model to a hub and Spoke model with a centralised children centre and provide outreach services to five locations in the borough with reduced delivery to a maximum of one full day per week using community buildings to support delivery.

It was anticipated that by 2020/21 there will be a net budget reduction of £1,579,317.

Regarding the proposal for the reduction of 35 posts, a Member questioned whether 35 posts will be lost if the spending in the future is reduced. The Interim Director, Children’s Services advised Members that the figures are an estimate and that the high percentage of costs are staffing costs and that there is to be a complete service re-design of services in line with the authorities partners and there will be some opportunities for transferring of skills and opportunities within other organisations.

Hu4 – Children’s Legal Fees – Reference was made to the Impact Assessment in relation to the reduction of legal fees required for external professional advice regarding Child Protection cases which it was anticipated will provide a net budget reduction of £30,949 by 2020/21.

CYP2 – Looked After Children - Detailed information on the services which the Council was legally required to provide in relation to Looked After Children and how those services were currently provided and resourced were contained in the core offer and also details of how the core offer meets the Council’s obligations.

It was reported that the model is similar to the current service however further work will be undertaken to review effectiveness of in house children’s homes as part of the placement strategy.

Discussion ensued on the budget costs for the three In-house children’s homes, offering nine places, which appeared to be a high cost , however it was highlighted that the cost of external provision can be between £3,000 and £5,000 so by comparison the internal provision was a cheaper option.

The reduced grant for Staying Put was also acknowledged as a future budget pressure for the Leaving Care Services.

CYP5 – Youth Offending – Detailed information on why the Council has to provide this service under the Crime and Disorder Act to prevent children and young people from offending and how the service is currently provided and resourced were contained in the core offer and how the core offer meets the Council’s obligations.

It was reported that there will be a significant reduction to the Anti-Social Behaviour Services and the Youth Offending Service will pick up the additional anti-social behaviour responsibilities which will have an impact on the delivery of preventative programmes in education settings, pre-court restorative justice, bail to court schemes and non-statutory reparation work with the Anti-Social Behaviour team.

Discussion ensued on the potential impact of ceasing the youth work and the effect it may have; and the impact of the reduction of police support.

Hu3 – Looked After Children – Reference was made to the Impact Assessment in relation to the reduction of contact services by £30,000.

Hu2 – Youth Offending ASB – Reference was made to the Impact Assessment in relation to reduction in the anti-social behaviour services and the impact on the youth offending services from the removal of early intervention services and non-statutory work that will no longer be covered.

It was anticipated that by 2020/21, there would be a net budget reduction of £237,268.

CYP9 – Performance and Project Management – Detailed information on why the Council has to provide performance management support to and managing the change projects within Adults and Children's services.

It was reported that the core offer contains the Performance/Project Management Team as is currently resourced. The project management element of the function provides both resource and rigour to ensure that the change programme projects are delivered to time, quality and cost.

Members commented that the budget costs were relatively low compared to the number of staff; and questioned whether consultants would be used for the remodelling of services.

RESOLVED – That the information provided at this stage be noted.