

15 June 2015

Agenda Item: 12

## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE**

### **ESTABLISHMENT OF CHILDREN MISSING OFFICER POST AND JOINT FUNDING FOR SPECIALIST POLICE OFFICER POST**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek Committee approval to establish the following post:
  - Children Missing Officer post (1 full-time equivalent at Scale 5) to sit within the Safeguarding and Independent Review Service Area.
2. The report also seeks Committee approval to jointly fund with Nottinghamshire Police the following post established within Nottinghamshire Police:
  - Specialist Police Officer role for Looked after Children and Child Sexual Exploitation (1 full-time equivalent).

#### **Information and Advice**

##### **Children Missing Officer (CMO) post**

3. There are two distinct elements to the work of the CMO; the first being children who go missing from care and home and the second those who are missing from education. Both of these areas of work are high profile and will be subject to scrutiny by Ofsted. They are also governed by national statutory guidance.
4. The CMO is the central point of contact for all notifications in relation to children missing from home and care. The CMO receives daily notifications from the police which amounted to 1,845 during 2014/15. The CMO processes these notifications identifying which ones need a return interview or a multi-agency meeting in line with the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB) protocol governing this work. The CMO then monitors and tracks the compliance with these requests which provides an element of quality assurance.
5. The CMO is also instrumental in arranging monthly multi-agency meetings to discuss children who are high profile or prolifically missing and contributes to the development of the missing from home and care response including through delivering training.
6. The second element of the work is in relation to children missing from education. During 2014/15 437 referrals were received from Nottinghamshire schools and other local

authorities in addition to a significant number of enquiries from schools. The referrals and enquiries predominantly relate to situations where the whereabouts of children, and hence where they are being schooled, becomes unknown.

7. The CMO has also been heavily involved in developing this service and promoting good practice by agencies.
8. Both areas of work require a significant level of engagement with other agencies.
9. There is a capacity issue with regard to exercising the functions of the CMO given the increased volume of work. The post was originally solely a children missing education role but was significantly expanded to include children missing from home and care. This work has also increased as the volume of missing notifications has increased following revisions to the statutory guidance.
10. The singleton nature of the post can leave the service vulnerable during times of leave as there is no capacity to cover the work. Attempts to provide cover through business support services have not to date been successful due to changes of staff and the different skill set required.

### **Specialist Police Officer role for Looked after Children (LAC) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**

11. Nottinghamshire Police has proposed that Nottinghamshire County Council Children's Social Care jointly fund a specialist Police Officer post. There is a similar role in Nottingham City which has been widely praised by Ofsted and other agencies.
12. It is proposed that a Police Officer will be based within Children's Social Care (CSC) Looked After Children team and jointly supervised by the Police and CSC.
13. The priorities for the post holder will be jointly agreed between the Police and CSC but the initial priorities will generally and specifically include:
  - Support effective liaison between the Police and CSC
  - Contribute to audit and development work as agreed

#### **CSE**

- Contribute to developing a 'concerns network' intelligence sharing model
- Support awareness raising with local businesses and communities
- Contribute to managing risk and disruption work for individual looked after children

#### ***Missing from Care***

- Support the work of the Multiple Missings and Hotspots meeting
- Link closely with NCC residential homes and block purchase contract
- Link to other private providers and Independent Fostering Agencies via events
- Promote positive relationships between the Police, looked after children and local communities.

## **Other Options Considered**

14. With regard to the CMO role there are no other options or capacity for cover within the service area. Efforts to provide some limited cover through business support have not proved successful.
15. The Police Officer role is a specialist Police role and therefore there are no options available within the Local Authority except for not supporting the request. The Police have requested funding to jointly establish this role.

## **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

16. All aspects of the CMO role are covered by statutory guidance and are high profile safeguarding areas of work. There is insufficient capacity within the service area to support the full scope of work.
17. The Police Officer role will improve communication, joint working and development work.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

18. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Financial Implications**

19. The Children Missing Officer role is a Grade 5 post and with on-costs is £30,794.
20. Nottinghamshire's contribution to the joint funding for the Police Officer post is £20,000.
21. The funding for the posts will be found from within the Children, Families and Cultural Services budget.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

That:

- 1) the establishment of a 1 fte Children Missing officer post (Scale 5) be approved
- 2) joint funding with Nottinghamshire Police of a 1 fte Specialist Police Officer role for Looked after Children and Child Sexual Exploitation, established within Nottinghamshire Police, be approved.

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**Constitutional Comments (LM 27/05/15)**

22. The Children and Young People's Committee has delegated authority within the Constitution to approve the recommendations in the report.

**Financial Comments (SS 01/06/15)**

23. The financial implications of this report are contained within paragraphs 19 to 21.

**Background Papers and Published Documents**

None.

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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