

**21 November 2016****Agenda Item: 08****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE****HISTORICAL ABUSE UNIT****Purpose of the Report**

1. This report seeks approval for continued funding until March 2018 of the historical abuse unit posts established to promote a robust response to referrals regarding historical child abuse in relation to individuals who were children looked after by the Local Authority at the time of the abuse.
2. The report also seeks approval to bring further review reports to the Committee in April and September 2017.

**Information and Advice**

3. A report was considered by the Corporate Leadership Team in June 2015 and subsequently by the Children and Young People's Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2015, which outlined the staffing requirements for a historical abuse unit. Total funding of £1.094 million from corporate contingencies was approved for the unit to cover the two year period until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017.
4. The establishment of a dedicated historical abuse unit reflects the commitment of the County Council to provide a robust response to allegations made by individuals previously in the care of the Local Authority via criminal and/or civil processes, including support to victims and survivors.
5. Recruitment to the identified posts took place during 2015/16 and the work of the unit was progressed. However, there was some slippage in costs and at the beginning of this financial year, an amount of £756,000 was allocated, including underspend of £209,000 from the previous year, to meet the ongoing staffing costs and associated expenses.
6. In addition, the budget is being utilised to meet the needs of a small number of victims and survivors where it has been identified that support needs could not be met elsewhere. This has included provision of counselling, literacy and numeracy support.
7. It has also been necessary to meet legal costs, shared with the City Council, in relation to provision of information to the police as directed by the Civil Court in relation to civil claims.

8. The projected expenditure for the unit as at the end of March 2017 is £462,000, of which £370,000 relates to staff salaries, leaving unallocated budget of £294,000.
9. Staff posts currently funded from the historical abuse unit budget are:
- Historical Child Abuse Group Manager 0.5 FTE (Band F)
  - Social Care Team Manager 1.0 FTE (Band D)
  - Social Workers 3.0 FTE (Band B)
  - Local Authority Designated Officer 0.5 FTE (Band C)
  - HR Officer 1.0 FTE (Grade 5)
  - Child Protection Coordinator 1.0 FTE (Band D)
  - Business Support Officer 0.5 FTE (Grade 3)
  - Business Support Minute Taker 1.0 FTE (Grade 3)
10. The historical abuse team of social workers and manager work alongside the officers of Nottinghamshire police Operation Equinox (previously Operation Daybreak and Operation Xeres), based now at Holmes House, Mansfield.
11. Their work consists of having direct contact with victims and survivors (where accepted), locating information from Local Authority records governed by the County Council regarding victims and survivors, suspects, witnesses and residential establishments, sharing information with the police and/or the Council's solicitors involved in the civil litigation, providing chronologies relating to an individual's time in the care of the Local Authority, signposting individuals to relevant support networks and working together with colleagues in the City Council.
12. Historical abuse strategy meetings held in the County in accordance with interagency child protection procedures are chaired by Child Protection Coordinators and one FTE post is funded from the historical abuse budget to support the chairing of these meetings.
13. A substantial amount of employment information is requested to support the criminal and civil processes and an identified post within Human Resources has been established to promote access to and sharing of this information.
14. A Group Manager oversees the work of the historical abuse unit and half the cost of this post is now coming from the historical abuse budget. A 0.5 FTE Local Authority Designated Officer focusing specifically on historical abuse is in post, whose work follows the principles associated with allegations against professionals or carers currently working with children. Assistance to the work of the unit is provided from discrete business support colleagues.
15. Allegations from individuals who were in the care of the Local Authority continue to be received - either by allegations made to Nottinghamshire police and/or via civil claims. The investigation of historical abuse allegations is complex and there is as yet no timeline for the police investigation to be concluded.
16. The focus on Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City as part of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse has generated a significant amount of work during the past ten months in collating information to respond to the Inquiry's requests for information. It has

been made clear that the Inquiry's work will be continuing and the Council has recently received a further request seeking information on a number of areas.

### **Other Options Considered**

17. If funding could not be found to extend the current historical abuse team, the work could not be absorbed within existing children's social care teams.

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

18. Historical abuse continues to be a high profile issue, both nationally and locally. The inclusion of Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City as a focus for the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse has strengthened this further.
19. It remains essential that the Council meets its responsibility to respond appropriately to victims and survivors and provide support to the ongoing police and civil investigations.
20. Historical abuse allegations have been responded to in the past within current resources available at the time; however, the size of the current operation is unprecedented and the current increase in capacity needs to continue to enable the Council to provide the support needed.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

21. 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 services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, 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**

22. There is a projected underspend of £294,000 which could be utilised to part fund the historical abuse unit after April 2017. On the basis of projected expenditure being at the same level as the current year for both staffing and associated costs, additional funding of £168,000 would be required to enable the historical abuse unit as currently constituted to continue until March 2018. This will be funded from corporate contingencies.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

That:

- 1) approval is given to the continuation of the historical abuse unit as currently constituted by approving additional funding until March 2018.
- 2) review reports are provided for the Committee in April 2017 and in September 2017 to consider the circumstances at those times, whether any changes to current funding arrangements could be considered and whether any further extension may be needed.

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**Constitutional Comments (LM 08/11/16)**

23. The recommendations in the report fall within the Terms of Reference of the Children and Young People's Committee.

**Financial Comments (TMR 10/11/16)**

24. The financial implications are set out in paragraph 22 of the report.

**Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Establishment of a Historical Child Abuse Unit - report to Children and Young People's Committee on 21 September 2015

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

All.

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