

21 September 2015**Agenda Item: 05****REPORT OF THE ACTING CORPORATE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN, FAMILIES
AND CULTURAL SERVICES****ESTABLISHMENT OF A HISTORICAL CHILD ABUSE UNIT****Purpose of the Report**

1. This report seeks approval to establish a Historical Child Abuse Unit to handle referrals to social care concerning historical child abuse where children have been looked after by Nottinghamshire County Council and to work jointly with the Police to support ongoing investigations into historical child abuse across the County.
2. The report also proposes that the resource requirements of the Historical Child Abuse Unit be reviewed in December 2016 to ensure adequate capacity beyond April 2017.

Background

3. A number of civil claims for compensation have been made against the County Council relating to historical abuse whilst the claimants were in the care of the Council.
4. Two Police investigations are currently considering allegations of historical abuse in Nottinghamshire:
 - Operation Daybreak was launched in August 2010 and concerns criminal allegations made in relation to children's homes in Nottingham and southern Nottinghamshire;
 - Operation Xeres was launched early in 2015 and concerns criminal allegations that relate to homes in central and Northern Nottinghamshire.
5. It is anticipated that both investigations will remain active for a number of years.
6. The number and nature of the allegations has highlighted the need to support survivors of abuse and ensure that their needs are effectively supported by the County Council, the Police and Health partners.
7. The volume of allegations has also placed growing requirements on a range of County Council officers to retrieve both social care and other records and information for alleged perpetrators and witnesses.

Historical Child Abuse Team

8. In order to support survivors of historical abuse and to work jointly with the Police, a defined group of social workers in Children's Social Care began to hold cases relating to historical abuse, starting in January 2015.

9. These social workers assist the Police with their investigations by locating and supplying relevant information upon request which can be challenging given that some allegations date as far back as the 1940s and 1950s.
10. Social workers also undertake joint work with the Police to support survivors, prepare and undertake Strategy Meetings and investigate any current concerns relating to risk to children.
11. Social workers also receive and respond to referrals that relate to historical abuse allegations from people who were looked after by Nottinghamshire when they were children in foster care and other settings.
12. In order to effectively deal with the rising number of referrals and growing demand from Police investigations, it is proposed to formally establish a Historical Child Abuse Unit which would include:
 - a) 1 FTE Social Care Team Manager (Band D)
 - responsible for managing and coordinating the work of the unit
 - b) 3 FTE Social Workers (Band B)
 - handle information requests from Police investigations and provide appropriate support to alleged victims of historical abuse
 - c) 1 FTE Child Protection Coordinator (Band D)
 - responsible for arranging strategy meetings in relation to historical abuse referrals
 - d) 0.5 FTE Local Area Designated Officer (Band D)
 - where allegations specifically relate to someone who worked, or works, with children the LADO will be notified to investigate
 - e) 0.5 FTE Business Support Officer (Band 3)
 - responsible for supporting the day to day operations of the unit
 - f) 1 FTE Business Support Minute Taker (Band 3)
 - responsible for minuting strategy meetings
13. In addition to the unit above, it is proposed to establish a further post for two years which is:
 - a) 0.5 Historical Child Abuse Manager (Band F)
 - this post will provide strategic oversight of all activities in relation to Historical Child Abuse for the Council. This includes joint work with the City and Police, civil claims against the County Council, communications activity, and support for local and national reviews/enquiries.
14. The proposed structure of the Historical Child Abuse Unit is shown in **Appendix 1**.
15. It is proposed to establish the posts on a temporary basis at a cost of £614,000 over two years. However, given that it is difficult to recruit to many social work posts there are potential additional agency staffing costs. These posts require experienced social workers as the work of the unit is complex and challenging. This

makes recruiting staff harder, especially given the urgency with which these roles are required. Given the availability of suitable candidates, every effort will be made to directly recruit staff to posts to minimise agency use.

Other Options Considered

16. To absorb the work into existing capacity could potentially put children at risk. This was considered to be unacceptable and so an increase in capacity is required.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

17. Historical child abuse is a high profile issue. It is the subject of national scrutiny and only recently the Council, along with many other public bodies received a letter from the Chair of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse highlighting the seriousness with which historical child abuse is being treated. The letter is attached as **Appendix 3**. When the national Independent Enquiry is launched later this year it is likely to result in a significant increase in historical abuse cases both locally and nationally.
18. The Council has a responsibility to ensure that it responds appropriately to these allegations by offering the right support to victims and providing appropriate assistance to the ongoing police investigations.
19. The total number of allegations since Operations Daybreak and Xeres were established is unprecedented and requires a significant increase in capacity to ensure the Council is providing adequate support.
20. It is important to note that referrals relating to historical child abuse may continue and so a review is required to determine what resource is required beyond April 2017.

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. The total funding provisionally approved from contingencies is £614,000 plus additional agency costs, which will be minimised, to fund the Historical Child Abuse Unit in the period to April 2017.
23. The posts proposed to be funded from contingencies include:
 - a) 1 FTE Social Care Team Manager
 - b) 3 FTE Social Workers
 - c) 1 FTE Child Protection Coordinator
 - d) 0.5 FTE Local Area Designated Officer
 - e) 0.5 FTE Business Support Officer
 - f) 1 FTE Business Support Minute Taker

g) 0.5 FTE Historical Child Abuse Manager

24. The total cost of the team over two years would be £614,000 plus the extra cost of agency staff if required and is shown in **Appendix 2**.
25. A report will be considered at Finance and Property Committee on 14 September 2015 seeking agreement in principle to fund the Historical Child Abuse Unit through corporate contingencies on a temporary basis to April 2017. Beyond April 2017 the Historical Child Abuse Unit would be subject to review.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That:

- 1) the temporary establishment of a Historical Child Abuse Unit to April 2017 be approved.
- 2) the resource requirements of the Historical Child Abuse Unit be reviewed in December 2016 to ensure adequate capacity beyond April 2017.

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Constitutional Comments (LM 07/09/15)

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

Financial Comments (LCD 07/09/15)

27. The financial implications are outlined in paragraph 22 to 25.
28. The total requirement from the contingency is £1,077,846.

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.

Financial Monitoring Report: Period 4 2015/16 - report to Finance and Property Committee on 14 September 2015.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.
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