

13th September 2021

Agenda Item:14

REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND SOCIAL WORK

CHANGES TO THE STAFFING ESTABLISHMENT IN THE MULTI-AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB AND THE EARLY HELP UNIT

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Committee on the levels of enquiries currently being made to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and Early Help Unit and seek approval for plans to ensure safeguarding concerns about vulnerable children continue to be effectively responded to.
2. To seek approval for the establishment of the following temporary posts for an initial period of six months, to both maintain operational stability and enable service improvement and change and the transition to new, more effective ways of working:
 - 1 FTE Children's Services Manager (Front Door Development) (Hay Band E)
 - 2 FTE Children's Social Work Team Managers (Hay Band D)
 - 6 FTE Social Workers (Hay Band B)
 - 2 FTE Advanced Practitioners (Hay Band C)
 - 3 FTE Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub Officers (NJE 4)
 - 3 FTE Early Help Officers (Hay Band A)
 - 1 FTE Project Manager (Hay Band C)
 - 1 FTE Project Officer (Hay Band A)
 - 1 FTE Business Systems Analyst (Hay Band C)
 - 1 FTE Business Intelligence Report Developer (Hay Band B).

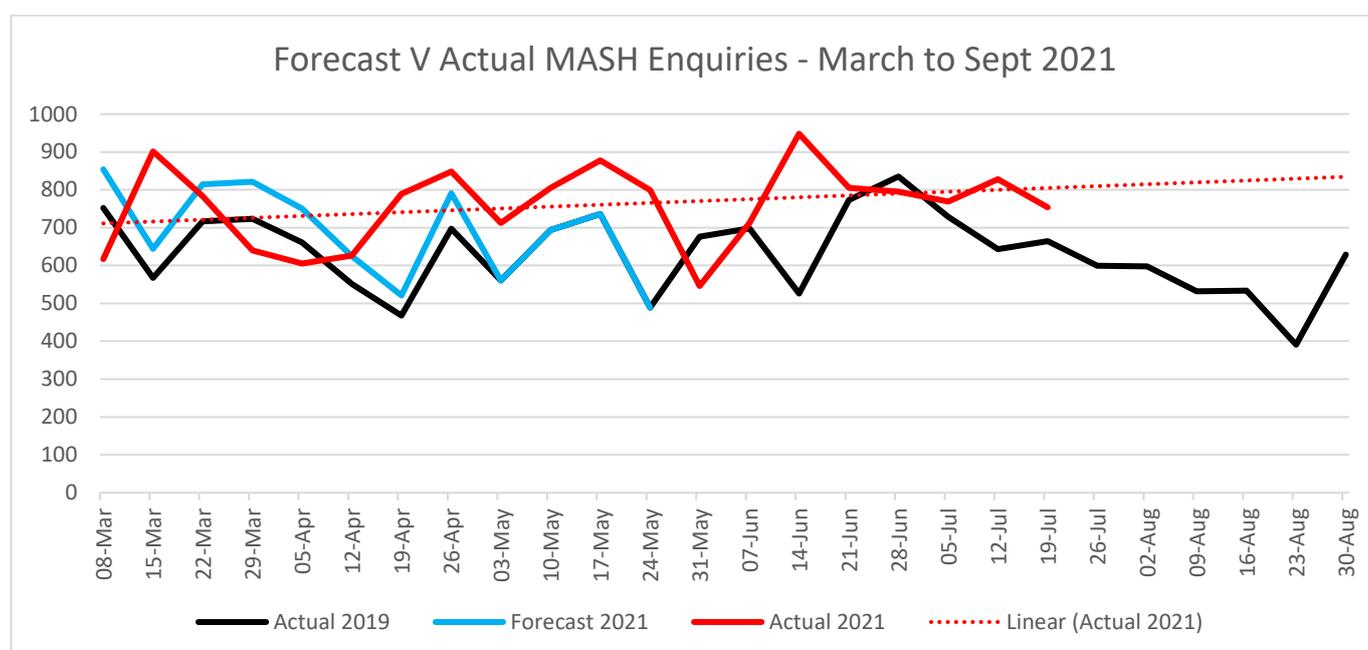
Information

Current situation within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

3. The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub was established by Nottinghamshire County Council in 2012, and acts as the front door for new safeguarding concerns about vulnerable children and adults. It brings together representatives from Children's Social Care, Adult Social Care, Police and Health, co-located in one place to receive and respond to safeguarding concerns with virtual links to other services, such as the Probation Trust and District Councils. Since the start of the pandemic the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub has

been working in a hybrid model, with some staff home based and the remainder working together from the Piazza.

4. Enquiries to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub have grown significantly since its establishment in 2012. In the last five years, the number of Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub enquiries relating to children has increased by an average of 15% per annum from just under 20,000 in 2015/16 to almost 35,000 in 2020/21. Had there not been a reduction in enquiries in the last 12 months due to the pandemic, the expected level would have reached 40,000.
5. Over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic, historic performance data has been used to forecast the future number of Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub enquiries to be received based on low, middle and high scenarios. Since April 2021, the easing of lockdown and children returning to school, the numbers of enquiries received relating to children has exceeded the “high” scenario, placing significant pressure on the staff within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub who are working hard to continue to respond effectively to the enquiries they receive in a timely way.



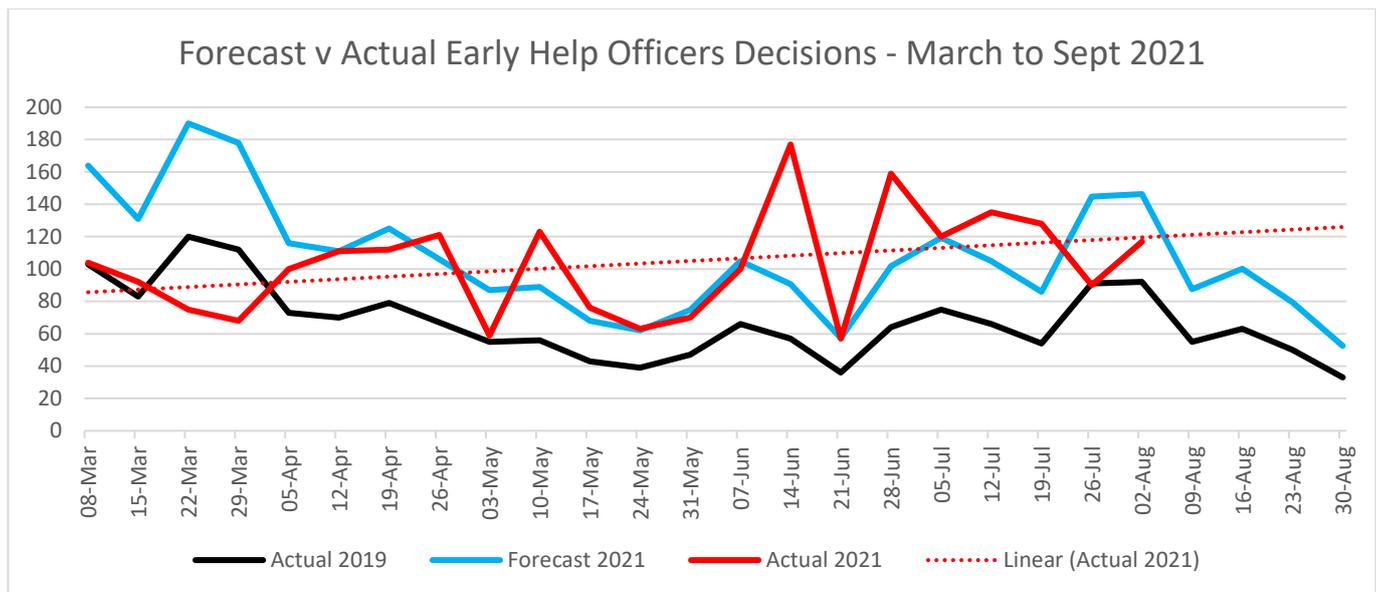
6. The staffing establishment was last increased within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub in 2018, when an additional 4 Social Workers and 4 Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub Officers were added to the then establishment of 14 Social Workers and 13 Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub Officers. At that time the average number of enquiries received per month was 2,336. In June 2021 (last full month prior to schools closing for the summer holidays), the number of enquiries received was 3,472.
7. Within this context, maintaining sufficient staffing levels in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub is a challenge, reflecting:
 - the stress of working in such an intense role where pressure does not often alleviate
 - where there is limited job satisfaction as it can be difficult to see the difference that you make

- where it is difficult to prioritise continuing professional development through training and development opportunities due to the operational pressures of the role.

Despite the challenges, staff within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub remain highly committed to their role in safeguarding vulnerable children and adults.

Current situation in the Early Help Unit

8. The Early Help Unit was also established in 2012, and acts as a 'front door' for Early Help Services at tier 2 and 3 in Nottinghamshire. Early Help Officers have several responsibilities:
 - successfully providing advice and guidance to other agencies, often preventing referrals to early help or statutory services
 - signposting referrers to other services. Advice and guidance is provided to professionals where the needs of a family would be better met by another Nottinghamshire County Council or public sector service, or by a third sector or community organisation
 - managing referrals into The Family Service (early help case management, family and parenting teams and education enforcement services), Youth Justice Service (crime prevention) and Children's Centre Services
 - responding to Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub enquiries which have been stepped down to the Early Help Unit where Pathway to Provision Tier 4 threshold is not met
 - operating a duty phone line, taking calls from members of the public (usually parent/carers) in need of Early Help Services. Often issues can be resolved on the phone with the caller receiving advice and signposting to appropriate resources that will help address their enquiry. Where the threshold is met for the Council's early help services then a self-referral will be taken over the phone and passed to the appropriate team.
9. There has been a significant, sustained increase in demand on the Early Help Unit since it was established in 2012. The increase has been more marked across 2020/2021 following schools reopening after the first Covid-19 lockdown, with an increase in referrals of above 50% since 2020/2021. Like, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, referrals to the Early Help Unit have exceeded the anticipated levels of need forecasted based on previous performance levels.



10. Several short-term measures have been employed to manage the increase in demand, which was initially considered a temporary spike. This has included the redeployment of staff as per the Covid-19 contingency plans – staff who could not undertake their day job because of Public Health advice were available for redeployment to essential desk-based roles for example. This temporary opportunity is not a long-term solution.

Wider context

11. There are a range of factors contributing to the increase in enquiries to both the Early Help Unit and Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub including:
- an increase in need, with the challenges that some families are experiencing exacerbated by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and
 - a culture amongst some referring agencies of making safeguarding referrals to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub rather than considering the Pathway to Provision and determining which agency is best placed to provide advice, support and guidance.
12. In addition, over time the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub in particular has developed complex processes in order to manage the volume of enquiries. These processes are no longer fit for purpose, and result in an over bureaucratic system that is inconsistent with the strengths-based approach to practice that the Council aspires to consistently provide. As part of the Council’s Improving Residents Access programme there is an intention to explore moving towards a multi-disciplinary, multi-agency needs-led “front door” model which enables families to access the help and support at the right time, enabling the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub to move away from being a recipient for all concerns about children and families and allow it to refocus around children at risk of significant harm. This shift in approach will enable more children and young people’s needs to be met at the earliest possible opportunity by the most appropriate support service, reducing the need for statutory social work intervention.

Proposal

13. It is proposed that in order to enable the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and Early Help Unit to manage the increase in demand, the following additional operational capacity is required, initially for a six month period, with a potential need to extend for a further six months:

- 1 FTE Children's Social Work Team Manager (Hay Band D)
- 6 FTE Social Workers (Hay Band B)
- 2 FTE Advanced Practitioners (Hay Band C)
- 3 FTE Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub Officers (NJE 4)
- 3 FTE Early Help Officers (Hay Band A).

| Post | Pay Band | Budget Requirement NCC | Potential Agency top up | FTE | 2021/22 Costs (6months) | 2022/23 Costs (Possible 6 month extension) |
|-----------------------|----------|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|--|
| Team Manager | D | £56,417 | £13,365 | 1.00 | £34,891 | £34,891 |
| Social Worker | B | £46,228 | £19,690 | 6.00 | £197,755 | £197,755 |
| Advanced Practitioner | C | £52,591 | £19,690 | 2.00 | £72,281 | £72,281 |
| MASH Officer | 4 | £28,467 | 0 | 3.00 | £42,701 | £42,701 |
| EHO's | A | £40,212 | 0 | 3.00 | £60,318 | £60,318 |
| Total | | | | 15.00 | £407,946 | £407,946 |
| Running Costs | | | | | £10,000 | £10,000 |
| TOTAL COSTS | | | | | £417,946 | £417,946 |

14. In addition, it is recommended that the following developmental capacity is developed, again for an initial period of six months, with a potential need to extend for a further six months, in order to support the service to develop and transform:

- 1 FTE Children's Services Manager (Front Door Development) (Hay Band E)
- 1 FTE Team Manager (Front Door Development) (Hay Band D)
- 1 FTE Project Manager (Hay Band C)
- 1 FTE Project Officer (Hay Band A)
- 1 FTE Business Systems Analyst (Hay Band C)
- 1 FTE Business Intelligence Report Developer (Hay Band B)

| Post | Pay Band | Budget Requirement NCC | Potential Agency top up | FTE | 2021/22 Costs (6months) | 2022/23 Costs (Possible 6 month extension) |
|----------------------------|----------|------------------------|-------------------------|------|-------------------------|--|
| Children's Service Manager | E | £62,802 | 0 | 1.00 | £31,401 | £31,401 |
| Team Manager | D | £56,417 | £13,365 | 1.00 | £34,891 | £34,891 |
| Project Manager | C | £52,591 | 0 | 1.00 | £26,296 | £26,296 |

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---------|---|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Project Officer | A | £40,212 | 0 | 1.00 | £20,106 | £20,106 |
| Business Systems Analyst | C | £52,591 | 0 | 1.00 | £26,296 | £26,296 |
| BI Report Developer | B | £46,228 | 0 | 1.00 | £23,114 | £23,114 |
| Total | | | | 6.00 | £162,103 | £162,103 |
| Running Costs | | | | | £10,000 | £10,000 |
| TOTAL COSTS | | | | | £172,103 | £172,103 |

15. Six of the posts to be established have been filled in advance of Committee approval using the 12 week delegated powers to Chief Officers (two filled by Council staff and four by agency staff). This therefore means that some of the financial implications of this report are already factored into budget forecasts. Additionally, there is a possibility that not all posts will be able to be filled by Council staff due to the short timeframe, therefore some allowance for agency recruitment has been factored into the financial implications.
16. The Project Manager and Project Officer posts will be established as part of the corporate Transformation Delivery Team, and the Business Intelligence Report Developer post within the corporate Business Intelligence Unit.
17. This operational capacity identified above has been modelled based on actual and anticipated levels of demand. Given the potential impact of the pandemic meaning that a greater number of families may require support, it is likely that some or all of the additional capacity will be required for a greater period of time. The rationale for establishing this capacity on a fixed term basis is to enable development work to take place so that the MASH is able to operate more efficiently and effectively. This will in turn determine the longer-term capacity requirements. As such, a future report will be brought before Committee once the discovery phase of the development work is complete in six months' time. This will determine future resourcing requirements and any longer term investment required through an Improvement Plan.

Other Options Considered

18. The only other option available is to continue to meet increasing demand and effect change from existing resources, which is not considered to be sustainable or achievable.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

19. For the Committee to understand and agree the investment needed to meet increased demand and develop a more sustainable front door operating model.

Statutory and Policy Implications

20. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance 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, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Data Protection and Information Governance

21. The General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) require the Council to put in place appropriate technical and organisational measures to ensure that data protection principles and individual's information rights are built into everything the Council does. Legal Services and Information Governance colleagues within the Council will provide guidance on how to progress any new initiatives described to ensure Council obligations are met.

Financial Implications

22. The total cost of addressing the current demand in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub for 2021/22 is £417,946 and this will be fully met through the Covid reserve grant. Of this, £166,728 is already included in period 4 budget monitoring reports, the remaining costs of £251,218 will be included in period 5. The cost of possibly extending this capacity for a further six months into 2022/23 will be £417,946. However, a further update on these costs and their funding will be included in the follow up report to Children and Young People's Committee in six months' time.
23. The total cost of developing and transforming the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub will be a maximum of £172,103, assuming all posts are recruited to by October 2021. These costs will be met through Covid grant /contingency. A further update on any additional transformational costs and their funding will be included in the follow up report to Children and Young People's Committee in six months' time.

Human Resources Implications

24. Recruitment to posts will be undertaken in line with the Council's Human Resources procedures and with engagement as appropriate from trade unions. Due to the short time contract duration of some posts to be established there may be a need to recruit agency staff to ensure that all necessary posts are filled.

Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Implications

25. The proposals contained within this report will further strengthen the Council's ability to safeguard vulnerable children by ensuring that the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub is able to operate effectively within the context of increasing need.

Implications for Service Users

26. The proposals contained within this report will improve the quality of service received by vulnerable children and families, and referring professionals.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That Committee:

- 1) approves the establishment of the following posts in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and Early Help Unit on an initial six months, fixed term basis:

- 1 FTE Children’s Services Manager (Front Door Development) (Hay Band E)
 - 2 FTE Children’s Social Work Team Managers (Hay Band D)
 - 6 FTE Social Workers (Hay Band B)
 - 2 FTE Advanced Practitioners (Hay Band C)
 - 3 FTE Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub Officers (NJE 4)
 - 3 FTE Early Help Officers (Hay Band C)
 - 1 FTE Project Manager (Hay Band C)
 - 1 FTE Project Officer (Hay Band A)
 - 1 FTE Business Systems Analyst (Hay Band C)
 - 1 FTE Business Intelligence Report Developer (Hay Band B).
- 2) receives a further report in six months’ time, outlining progress made and future resourcing requirements for the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and Early Help Unit.

Steve Edwards
Service Director, Youth, Families and Social Work

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Lucy Peel
 Group Manager, Service Improvement
 T: 0115 9773139
 E: lucy.peel@nottsc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments (ELP 02/09/21)

27. The recommendations fall within the delegation to Children and Young People’s Committee by virtue of its frame of reference.

Financial Comments (LCD 02/09/21)

28. The financial implications as set out in the report with the additional short term operational and transformation costs to be funded from Covid reserves and/ or contingency. The update report to Committee will set out the improvement plan and any additional short term or permanent resource requirements for the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and Early Help Unit. Any future financial implications will be taken into account in constructing the budget for 2022/23 and beyond.

HR Comments (BC 31/08/21)

29. The staffing implications are contained within the body of the report. Recruitment will occur in line with the Council’s vacancy control and recruitment procedures.

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.

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C1507