

18th March 2019**Agenda Item: 6****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND SOCIAL
WORK****RESPONSE TO HISTORICAL CHILD ABUSE – RESOURCES****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval of further resources for 2019-2020 to support the Council's response to historical child abuse and gives approval for a request to be made to the Finance and Major Contracts Management Committee for an allocation from contingency of £155,187 to fund the cost of the team in 2019-2020.

Information**Background**

2. Following a report to the Children and Young People's Committee in September 2015, funding was approved from corporate contingencies to meet staffing requirements for a historical abuse unit. Subsequent approval for continued funding was given following further reports to the Children and Young People's Committee in November 2016 and the Policy Committee in December 2017.
3. The establishment of a dedicated resource reflected the commitment of the Council to provide a robust response to allegations of child abuse by individuals previously in the care of the Local Authority via criminal and/or civil litigation processes.
4. The funding provided additional resources across children's social care, Human Resources and business support; this included a small team of managers and social workers who have worked alongside the officers of Nottinghamshire police's Operation Equinox based at Mansfield police station.
5. The work of that team has consisted of having direct contact with victims and survivors, locating relevant information from Local Authority records governed by the Council relating to individuals and institutions, disclosing information to the police and/or the Council's solicitors involved in the civil litigation, analysing social care information and signposting individuals to relevant support networks. Working cross-authority boundaries with operational colleagues in Nottingham City Council has also continued to be a feature of the work.

6. The additional funding has also been 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.
7. Members of staff working within the historical abuse unit have also been instrumental in collating and analysing information and/or writing submissions on behalf of the County Council to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) in preparation for the public hearings which were held during October 2018.
8. The provision of support services to victims has been considered under the auspices of the multi-agency Strategic Management Group which has oversight of the historical abuse investigations being undertaken by the police's Operation Equinox. This has resulted in some dedicated support services being made available although work will be further developed as a result of continued learning to ensure that a range of appropriate services is available for individuals who experienced abuse whilst in public care. The Strategic Management Group is attended by the Council's Corporate Director for Children's Services, Service Director for Adult Social Care, Group Manager with a lead on historical abuse and a Senior Communications Business Partner.

Current situation

9. The projected expenditure for the unit for the year 2018-19 as at the end of March 2019 is £338,960. This is less than that identified within the last report to Policy Committee given some reduction in the staffing requirements during the year.
10. The development of support services for victims and survivors noted above has reduced the need for this support to be provided by social workers within the historical abuse team, although managers from the unit are currently involved in meeting with a number of individuals at their request following the IICSA hearing. There has been a reduction in the number of individual strategy meetings needing to be convened to consider new allegations of abuse against identified alleged perpetrators and this has therefore reduced the need for a dedicated independent Chair and minute-taker resource.
11. The social worker resource within the team has incrementally reduced over the year as a result of the seconded postholders successfully seeking appointments to other posts.
12. However, whilst the workload related to responding to historical child abuse has changed and evolved, it is still the case that historical abuse continues to be a high profile issue both nationally and locally and there remains a need for dedicated resources to enable the Council to meet its responsibilities in this respect. Civil claims regarding childhood abuse in Council establishments and foster placements continue to be received – and those involving foster placements have increased following the Supreme Court judgement that Council's should be deemed to be vicariously liable for abuse committed by their foster carers. The nature of the work is complex and specialist and the professionals involved have developed expertise which needs to be retained. An important element of the work requires liaison and negotiation with senior managers from a range of service areas within the County Council and across the multi-agency partnership in response to both operational issues and strategic developments.

13. Consideration is being given to additional areas of work, such as supporting those seeking access to their historical child care records, being undertaken by the dedicated resource. Additionally members of the unit will also be involved in the implementation of actions arising from the Council's consideration of findings from IICSA and issues arising from the IICSA report into the Nottinghamshire councils expected in summer 2019. The publication of this report might also impact on the demand on the service should it give rise to further individuals making allegations of abuse relating to their time in care. Consideration is also being given to extending the remit of the unit arrangements to respond to allegations of historical abuse against those in positions of trust by individuals who were not previously looked after children.
14. Further consideration is being given to the model for future arrangements, including the connectivity between the response to contemporaneous allegations against those who work with children and historical abuse allegations, and how this work can be embedded in a sustainable way within the Council. It is expected that such arrangements will be in place by the end of the 2019-20 financial year. In the meantime, it is proposed that funding should be approved for the following posts:
- 0.6 fte Group Manager (Band F)
 - 1fte Team Manager (Band D)
 - 1 fte Social Worker (Band B)
 - 0.5 fte Local Authority Designated Officer (Band C)
 - 0.5 fte HR Officer (Grade 5)
 - 0.5 fte Independent Chair/ Child Protection Co-ordinator (Band D)
 - 0.5 fte Minute taker (Grade 3)
 - 0.5 fte Business support (Grade 3)
15. This would total, with on costs, £232,187 for the full financial year 2019-20. An additional amount relating to running expenses and ongoing individual support needs of £16,000 would increase this to a projected total cost for the financial year of £248,187.

Other Options Considered

16. The Council has considered using only existing staffing resources, however, this is currently not sufficient to meet the volume of work and would impact on other areas of service delivery, including the protection of children currently in the Council's care. However, this will continue to be reassessed during the financial year and adjustments made wherever possible as previously has happened.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

17. It remains an imperative that the Council continues to meet its responsibilities to respond appropriately to victims and survivors and provide support to the ongoing police and civil investigations.

Statutory and Policy Implications

18. 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.

Financial Implications

19. There is a projected underspend of £93,000 as at the end of the current financial year which could be utilised to part fund the historical abuse unit after April 2019. On the basis of projected expenditure outlined above, additional funding of £155,187 would be required to enable the unit to continue until March 2020. This cost will be met by a request from contingency to Finance and Major Contracts Management Committee.

Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Implications

20. Consideration of allegations of historical abuse includes assessment of any current safeguarding risks to children and is undertaken under the auspices of interagency child protection procedures. The potential vulnerability of adult victims and survivors is also considered in each case and appropriate support services sought. The IICSA report is expected in summer 2019 and will include findings regarding the Council's protection of children in its care and its response to allegations.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the Committee:

- 1) approves further resources for 2019-2020 to support the Council's response to historical child abuse.
- 2) gives approval for a request to be made to the Finance and Major Contracts Management Committee for an allocation from contingency of £155,187 to fund the cost of the team in 2019-2020.

Steve Edwards
Service Director, Youth, Families and Social Work

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Pam Rosseter
Group Manager, Youth, Families and Social Work
T: 0115 9773921
E: pam.rosseter@nottsc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments (EP 21/02/19)

21. The recommendation falls within the remit of the Children and Young People's Committee by virtue of its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (SAS 07/03/19)

22. The financial implications of the report are contained within paragraph 19 above.

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

Historical Abuse Unit: report to Children and Young People's Committee on 21 November 2016

Response to Historical Child Abuse – Resources: report to Policy Committee on 20 December 2017

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C1227