

11 March 2013**Agenda Item: 10****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE****ESTABLISHMENT OF POSTS IN CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval to establish a number of additional permanent posts in the Children's Social Care division to ensure key services have the capacity to meet current and predicted demand and additional responsibilities that have arisen out of the future direction of services for children in care.

Information and Advice

2. An investment plan for Children's Social Care was considered by Corporate Leadership Team at the beginning of February 2013, and was the basis for additional funding agreed at the County Council meeting on 28 February 2013.
3. From June 2010 to December 2012 there was an overall activity increase of 8% across reception and assessment child numbers and a 44% increase in looked after children numbers. There has also been a clear rise over the 3 year period in Child Protection work. The combined increase in case activity for these two areas over the period is 539 child cases. This has put significant pressure on frontline staff managing child protection cases, children in care and staff in the Fostering and Adoption Services teams.
4. Social work capacity in Nottinghamshire has been analysed using the national workforce needs analysis model developed by the Centre for Workforce Intelligence (CfWi). In July 2012, additional research was gathered from social work professionals in Nottinghamshire to validate the model against local experiences and to better understand time taken in carrying out social work activity, as part of day to day case load management.
5. This approach has identified that there is a requirement for the additional posts identified below and these are shown in the structure chart at **Appendix A**.

Social Workers – Social Work Services (additional 20 FTE)

6. To provide the additional social work capacity required to meet demand in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, the Assessment Teams (North and South), the Looked After Children Team (Through Care Service) and District Child Protection Teams (Newark).

Team Managers – Social Work Services (additional 2 FTE)

7. The increase in the establishment of social workers requires an increase in team managers to maintain appropriate spans of control and create capacity for manageable supervision workloads.

Independent Review Officers (additional 3 FTE)

8. The significant increase in the number of Looked after Children requires an increase in independent reviewing officer capacity to ensure individual care plans are developed and reviewed within statutory timescales.

Support Workers (additional 4 FTE)

9. These posts will focus on prevention from entering the care system, rehabilitation, home placement stability and placements with family and friends. This will support the stabilisation of numbers of Looked After Children safely going forward.

Supervising Social Workers (additional 5 FTE in 2013/14, increasing to 10 in 2014/15)

10. As part of the investment plan, a strategy has been agreed that seeks to increase internal capacity within the Fostering service in order to reduce unit costs of external foster care and reduce the number of young people in residential care. These posts will focus on the recruitment, assessment and support of additional foster carer households.

Reconfiguration of existing posts in Fostering & Adoption (not part of new investment for 2013/14 – funded from existing resources)

11. The staffing establishment in the Fostering and Adoption service is also being reconfigured (within existing budgets) to meet current demand and future responsibilities.

Panel Manager – Fostering and Adoption (additional 0.5 FTE)

12. This post will enable an effective response to the Government's adoption reforms, focusing on quality assurance of children's plans and the provision of agency advice to both of Nottinghamshire's adoption panels.

Panel Manager – Fostering (additional 1 FTE)

13. This is a new post which will provide our foster panels with training and advice. The current arrangements have proved to be less and less satisfactory over time as the pressure on this service has grown with record numbers of children and young people now in public care.
14. This new post also offers the opportunity for joint recruitment activity and training where appropriate. In addition, the post will develop the 'fostering to adoption' initiative which central Government is keen for agencies to take forward. The Panel Managers for Fostering and Adoption will be co-located to ensure that there are efficiencies in ways of working and cover arrangements.

Social Worker - Support After Adoption (additional 1 FTE)

15. The Support After Adoption team in Nottinghamshire has a good reputation and is a very important factor for adopters when they chose which agency to apply to have children from. Support After Adoption social workers meet the Council's statutory duty to provide a range of support for children who have been adopted, families who have adopted children, adults who were adopted as children, and for birth families whose children have been adopted into other families. There has been a marked increase in work in the Support After Adoption team.

Social Worker – County Adoption Team (additional 1 FTE)

16. The number of applications to the Adoption service for people to become adopters continues to increase. In a competitive market and with the number of children we have to place for adoption, it is crucial that we provide a prompt and professional response. The service is set to approve 48 adoptive households in 2012-2013 (in each of the previous 2 years we approved 31 adoptive households). Pressure will increase in 2013 as the time allowable for adopter preparation will reduce. Currently two part-time agency workers are employed to carry out work which cannot be managed as part of the permanent team's workload. This additional social worker post would avoid this need and be a more appropriate way of providing the resource.

Home Finding Social Worker (additional 1 FTE)

17. The introduction of the first of these posts in 2011 has been highly successful, measured by
- reduced time children spend waiting for a family
 - reduced time children spend looked after
 - increase in children matched
 - increase in inter-agency matches.
18. The additional home finding post would add to this effectiveness and would also take on the responsibility of negotiating inter-agency packages for children that Nottinghamshire place with other agencies, which has increased greatly as we place more children.

Recruitment and Publicity Officer (additional 0.5 FTE)

19. Additional capacity is needed in this role which is responsible for featuring children in relevant publications and responding to enquiries. This is a crucial role for the featuring of particular children and complements the role of the Council's Communications Team, which concentrates on the promotion of the service as a whole, particularly to prospective adopters.

Adoption Placement Worker (previously Family Support Worker - additional 1 FTE)

20. This additional post will support children pre-placement, and adopters and children post-placement. There is currently a waiting list for this service, which is considered crucial and highly valued by adopters and social workers. The post will enable the service to

continue to provide this particular input to adopter's preparation. This post is regarded as an essential to our low disruption rate which has been only 2% in the last three years.

Adoption Grant

21. Central Government has placed Adoption high on the agenda and has recently awarded Council's a one off grant to support the recruitment of adopters and to reduce timescales for placing children for adoption. Work is under way to consider how best this grant can be used; it is likely that some additional temporary posts will be proposed to support meeting this challenging agenda. A further report will be prepared to outline the proposals over the next 4 weeks.

Other Options Considered

22. Not increasing the staffing establishment in Children's Social Care services to have the capacity to meet current and future demand is not considered an option due to the safeguarding implications. Nottinghamshire also needs to be attractive to adopters so that more children can leave the care system, reducing the financial burden on the County Council and achieving better outcomes for children and families. Central Government is also placing a great deal of focus and scrutiny on the adoption performance of local authorities.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

23. The proposals to increase the staffing establishment as set out in this report will create a stable workforce to meet the Council's statutory responsibilities, reduce spend on expensive agency staff and better place the Fostering and Adoption services to continue to deliver highly valued services within the context of increased demand being created by the number of Looked After Children.

Statutory and Policy Implications

24. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service 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

25. The additional costs of the posts to be funded from the increased budget in Children's Social Care in 2013/14 are as shown overleaf. Funding for the further 5 supervising social worker posts (paragraph 10) in 2014-15 has also been included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy of the County Council.

Post	Band/Grade	Full Time Equivalent	Cost £
Team Managers	D	2	94,844
Social Workers	B	20	777,737
Supervising Social Workers	B	5	194,434
Independent Reviewing Officers	B	3	116,661
Support Workers	5	4	111,552
Associated staff costs	-	34	133,572
Total		34	1,428,800

26. The cost of the additional posts in the reconfiguration of Fostering and Adoption services can be met from previously identified permanent under-spends within the Access to Resources group, which in the past have been used to offset over-spends in the group:

Post	Band/Grade	Full Time Equivalent	Cost £
Panel Manager	C	1.5	66,327
Social Worker	B	3	116,661
Adoption Placement Worker	5	1	27,888
Recruitment & Publicity Officer	4	0.5	11,821
Associated staff costs	-	-	3,970
Total		6	226,667

Human Resources Implications

27. The recruitment to the identified posts will be in accordance with Nottinghamshire County Council's recruitment policy. Additional work on improving the attraction of suitably qualified candidates has already begun and will continue to be developed over the coming months with some dedicated HR support to assist with this key task. In addition, the Service Director, Children's Social Care, has met with the recognised trade unions on a regular basis as part of on-going consultation and information sharing on the transformation programme for Children's Social Care.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the establishment of the posts in Children's Social Care as detailed in the report be approved.

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Constitutional Comments (KK 27/02/13)

28. The proposal in this report is within the remit of the Children and Young People's Committee.

Financial Comments (KLA 28/02/13)

29. The financial implications of the report are set out in paragraphs 25 & 26 above.

Background Papers

Children's Social Care Investment Plan 2013-18

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.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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