



14 July 2014

Agenda Item: 12

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN’S SOCIAL CARE

CHANGES TO THE STAFFING ESTABLISHMENT IN CHILDREN’S SOCIAL CARE

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval for changes to the arrangement of staffing and associated budget in Children’s Social Care reflective of current service pressures, including the establishment of new permanent posts agreed as part of the 2014/15 budget.

Information and Advice

Background

2. The deployment of additional staffing in Children’s Social Care in 2013/14 was mainly made across the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Assessment services. These services were under the greatest pressure following the implementation of the new operating model during 2012. In September 2013 new ways of working were introduced in the MASH to re-assert thresholds which successfully reduced the amount of work being passed to the Assessment Teams.
3. In addition to the MASH and Assessment services, allocations of staffing in the District Child Protection Teams (DCPTs) were reviewed with the Gedling and Newark Teams being identified as requiring further capacity. The establishment was therefore temporarily increased in 2013/14 as follows:

Table 1: Increases in the staffing establishment 2013/14

	Team Managers (fte)	Social Workers (fte)
MASH		5
Assessment North	1	2
Assessment South	1	2
Gedling DCPT	0.5	2
Newark DCPT		1.5
Totals	2.5	12.5

4. Permanent additional budget of £581,067 has now been made available for 2014/15 which was agreed at the time for 11 social worker posts, two team managers and one children’s services manager.

Current performance and context

5. Current data shows that Nottinghamshire continues to converge towards the national rates for Looked After Children and children on Child Protection Plans, as well as those of our statistical neighbours.
6. In 2012/13 the national rate for Looked After Children was 60 children in every 10,000 of the 0-16 years population. The rate for our statistical neighbours is 60.5.
7. In May 2014 there were 846 Looked After Children in Nottinghamshire, more than a 50% increase over the last five years, bringing the rate up to 52.3 per 10,000 of the child population. To meet the national rate and that of our statistical neighbours Nottinghamshire would need to have around 970 Looked After Children. There is no aspiration to meet this figure, but convergence towards comparable rates can give confidence Nottinghamshire is taking the right numbers of children into care and not leaving them unsafe.
8. The picture is reversed for Child Protection Plans, with a reduction in numbers bringing Nottinghamshire closer to the national rate and our statistical neighbours. In May 2014 there were 588 children on Child Protection Plans, a 25.5% reduction over the last year. This gives a rate of 36.4 per 10,000, lower than the national rate of 37.9 but still above our statistical neighbour rate of 31.5.
9. Since April 2013 the amount of Child in Need work has increased by 38.6%, from 1,056 children being subject to a child in need plan in April 2013, to 1,464 in March 2014.
10. An analysis of 2013/14 volumes of enquiries and assessments has identified a disproportionate amount of work coming into the Broxtowe/Gedling/Rushcliffe (BGR) DCPTs, which is experiencing an associated increase in the overall volume of activity.
11. The remit of Court Work Team has also been extended following revision of the Public Law Outline, which underlined the expectation that all care proceedings would be completed within 26 weeks and places greater emphasis on the pre-proceedings work expected. This new timescale is challenging and our performance is currently in the top quartile at 42 weeks. A revised protocol is in place with other teams within Children's Social Care which aims to have involvement of the Court Work Team from an earlier point to ensure good quality assessments of extended family and care planning take place in the pre-proceedings phase, so ensuring cases progress in a timely way and to a good standard. In particular, the Court Work Team will take work from the Children's Disability Service, representing an increase of approximately 20 cases per year, and have involvement and responsibility for tracking all cases in the pre-proceedings process.
12. The Court Work Team social workers all currently have workload management scores of 'high' and 'demanding' with no capacity to absorb the extra work without a significant drop in quality.

Proposed changes to the staffing establishment

13. For these reasons, in addition to the posts in Table 1 above, it has been determined that the pressures in the Court Work Team require an additional 1.5 full-time equivalent (fte) social workers, bringing the establishment in that team to 16 fte social workers in total. Gedling DCPT also requires one additional social worker, bringing the establishment to 10 social workers in total.
14. Gedling DCPT also requires an additional 0.5 fte team manager post. It is proposed that this is transferred from the current MASH establishment, reducing it from 4.5 to 4 fte team managers.
15. The MASH Service Manager post also requires 0.5fte to bring it back to full capacity following the establishment of the Early Help Unit, which saw 0.5 fte transfer out of the MASH to the Early Help Unit.
16. The total increase in the establishment of the teams would be as follows:

Table 2: Permanent increases to the establishment 2014/15

	Service Manager (fte)	Team Managers (fte)	Social Workers (fte)
MASH	0.5	- 0.5	5
Assessment North		1	2
Assessment South		1	2
Gedling DCPT		0.5	3
Newark DCPT			1.5
Court Work Team			1.5
Totals	0.5	2	15
Costs	£ 27,159	£ 97,362	£ 598,592

17. Whilst the increase in team manager posts is equivalent to the increased budget, the service manager is 0.5 fte under the allocated budget and the requirement for social workers is in excess of the permanent budget by four posts.
18. The overall budget requirement for the increased establishment is £723,113. The service proposes to meet the shortfall in the permanent staffing budget in the following ways:
 - there are 1.5 fte vacancies in the Practice Consultant Team (graded at Hay Band C) equivalent to £68,070. It is proposed to dis-establish these posts.
 - following the departmental centralisation of some functions, the Service Manager post in the Practice Support Service is no longer considered viable and will be dis-established (equivalent to £54,318).

19. This re-alignment of the staffing budget breaks down as follows:

Table 3: Budget requirements for changes to the establishment 2014/15

Cost of increase in establishment	£723,113
Funded by:	
14-15 additional investment	£581,067
Decreases in establishment	£122,388
Funding gap	£ 19,658

20. The financial shortfall of £19,658 can be met from the division's central Service Director budget following a review of the funding for the trainee scheme.
21. Reviews of the establishment of Practice Consultants and the Children's Disability Service Social Work Team during 2014/15 are also expected to result in a further re-alignment of staffing capacity and budget across social work services teams.

Other Options Considered

22. In view of the ongoing pressures in Children's Social Care these permanent posts are required to maintain a safe service. The Targeted Service Review process which has been initiated for Children's Social Care will identify options for savings over the next three years in areas where there is comparative high spending.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

23. To permanently establish the posts required to maintain a safe service.

Statutory and Policy Implications

24. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, 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

25. The re-organisation of staffing is being proposed within the division's existing permanent budget.

Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults Implications

26. These proposals are aimed at ensuring there is sufficient capacity within services for vulnerable children and families.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the proposed changes to the staffing establishment and budget in Children's Social Care are approved.

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Constitutional Comments (LM 30/06/14)

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

Financial Comments (KLA 17/06/14)

28. The financial implications of the report are set out in paragraphs 18 to 20, & 25, above.

Background Papers and Published Documents

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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