

## **CABINET MEMBER (CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE)**

12<sup>th</sup> March, 2013

Cabinet Member

Present: Councillor O'Boyle

Other Members

Present: Councillor M. Mutton – Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Board

Employees Present:

C. Green (Director of Children, Learning and Young People)  
N. Hart (Chief Executive's Directorate)  
I. Merrifield (Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate)  
U. Patel (Customer and Workforce Services Directorate)  
H. Sohal (Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate)

Apologies: -

Councillor Lepoidevin (Shadow Cabinet Member)

### **Public Business**

#### **30. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **31. Minutes**

(a) The minutes of the meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2013, were signed as a true record.

(b) There were no matters arising.

#### **32. Report on Coventry, Warwickshire and Solihull Adoption Conference on 21 January 2013**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children, Learning and Young People which reported on the joint conference on adoption held by Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire on 21 January 2013.

The purpose of the conference was to raise the profile of adoption as offering one of the best means to achieve a permanent, safe and loving family life for children in the care of the three Councils. The conference keynote speaker was Sir Martin Narey, the Government's adoption advisor. He outlined the reasons for the development of the Government's programme to reform adoption services, what has been done already and what further reforms were planned. The Government's aim was to increase the number of children adopted from care.

The Conference was attended by about 90 staff from across the three local authorities and provided them with an opportunity to hear about the Government's programme and consider how adoption could be improved across the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire sub-

region.

**RESOLVED that after due consideration of the report and the matters raised at the meeting, the Cabinet Member (Children and Young People): -**

- 1. Noted the benefits of holding this conference.**
- 2. Recognised the good work being done by the Coventry Adoption service.**
- 3. Agreed that a further sub-regional conference should be held in 2014 to continue to promote adoption.**
- 4. Requested officers to work with their colleagues in Solihull and Warwickshire on how the recruitment and assessment of adopters could be improved through working more closely together.**
- 5. Requested officers to write to the Minister and Shadow Minister for Children and Families inviting them to be key note speakers at the conference next year.**

### **33. Implementation of Multi-Systemic Therapy and the KEEP Programme**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children, Learning and Young People which provided a summary of the progress made since November 2011 to implement two evidence based programmes:

- (a) Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) – for children and young people aged 11-17 at the risk of entering care or custody and
- (b) KEEP – an intensive parenting programme for Foster Carers and Connected Persons (Kinship Carers) with children aged 5-12 within their placement, at risk of breakdown or disruption.

The MST and KEEP evidenced based programmes were amongst the range of provision in place to support Coventry's continuum of support for early intervention and prevention services. MST and KEEP had successfully been implemented in Coventry, with both teams operational and working with children, young people and their families. KEEP had been running for 16 weeks and currently mid-way through delivering its first group to 8 carers, whilst the MST programme has been established for 10 weeks and currently working with 13 families, with an average of 4 cases per therapist.

A range of performance measures had been designed and agreed, which would monitor the true effectiveness and impact of both programmes. Both teams were required to provide monthly updates on set criteria used to measure performance and the information would also be used to calculate the cost effectiveness of both programmes.

It was noted that this report was due to be considered by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Board on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2013. Practitioners and service users would be invited to attend the meeting for the consideration of this item.

**RESOLVED that after due consideration of the report and the matters raised at the meeting, the Cabinet Member (Children and Young People): -**

1. **Supported the steps undertaken since November 2011, to successfully implement the MST and KEEP programme in Coventry.**
  2. **Acknowledged the financial changes from the national government in the final year (2014/15) funding for both programmes.**
  3. **Agreed to receive updates every 6 months on performance and outcomes of both the MST and KEEP programme.**
  4. **Referred the report to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Board for information and consideration as part of their consideration of foster carers and edge of care services.**
34. **Update on the progress on the implementation of the Fundamental Service Review within the Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children, Learning and Young People which provided information on the wide ranging Fundamental Service Review (FSR) which was undertaken during 2011 and 2012. The review covered early intervention services for children and families and associated work with partner agencies, children's centres, fostering and adoption services and services for children in care. The aims of the review were to reduce costs by reducing the overall numbers of children and young people entering the care system and to thereby reduce overall costs to the Council.

The Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate (CLYP) was overspent by £4.2m in 2010/11. The main driver for the overspend was the number of looked after children and the costs of their care and related support costs such as transport, social work staffing and legal fees. The purpose of the FSR was to find a way to address the underlying cause of the overspend by reducing the numbers of children and young people in Council's care and providing lower cost care packages where possible. Coventry had for many years had a higher number of children in care than comparator authorities.

The original target cost reductions had not been met and the expected cost had therefore been recast and reprofiled. Consequently, the impact of the changes had yet to be seen. It was reported that since the report was drafted, an evaluation was requested to identify why the impact of the changes made had not yet materialised.

**RESOLVED that after due consideration of the report and the matters raised at the meeting, the Cabinet Member (Children and Young People): -**

1. **Noted the progress made with the implementation of the fundamental service review and that implementation is now largely complete.**
2. **Noted the outcomes achieved to date.**
3. **Noted that this impact of some changes were still to be felt and requested a further update report after a further six months.**

### 35. **Outstanding Issues Report**

There were no outstanding issues.

### 36. **Any Other Business**

#### **1. The Adoption and Fostering Service/Family Placement Service**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Scrutiny Co-ordinator which informed of the outcome of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Board's consideration of the Adoption and Fostering Service/Family Placement Service at their meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2013.

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Board considered a report on recent developments in the City Council's Adoption and Fostering Service/Family placements team. The Board recognised that the service had undergone a number of changes recently and there had been an increase in the number of foster carers recruited.

Furthermore there were plans to introduce a range of new support mechanisms to help foster carers and improve retention. Although the Board welcomed this, it was felt that respite care for foster carers was an omission in this support package and had asked the Cabinet Member to explore options for its introduction in exceptional circumstances, with the aim that it could prevent some placements breaking down and aid the retention of foster carers.

**RESOLVED that after due consideration of the briefing note and the matters raised at the meeting, the Cabinet Member (Children and Young People) approved that consideration be given to the reintroduction of respite for foster carers in exceptional circumstances where it could prevent the breakdown of a placement and aid the retention of experienced foster carers.**

(Note: This item was considered as urgent business, the reason for urgency being the need for the Cabinet Member to consider the recommendation from the Children and Young People Scrutiny Board before the end of the current Municipal Year.)

(The meeting closed at 2.45 p.m.)