

Central Bedfordshire Council

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

5 March 2018

Report regarding Walking Alongside You (WAY) project

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Purpose of this report

1. To update the Corporate Parenting Panel on the Walking Alongside You (WAY) project in addition to the presentation at the Panel in January 2018

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to:

1. Note the content of the report
2. Comment on the report

Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

1. This item is not planned to go to Overview and Scrutiny as the report is for the Corporate Parenting Panel only

Issues

1. A study (Broadhurst et al 2014) identified that nationally, at least **one in four women**, who had a child previously removed, will return to the family court for proceedings and further children will be removed from their care.
2. This estimate increases to almost one in every three for women aged between sixteen and nineteen years old
3. Even if this group is well known to support services, very little work is being done to specifically address the trauma or challenges brought about by the repeat removal of their children or the underpinning circumstances causing removal to occur
4. Over a seven-year period the study has covered, this group of women are involved in 29% of all care applications in the UK. The total number of children involved is **23,000**.
5. Although nationally, 50% of mothers having children removed are aged between 14 and 24 at first application, which ought to give mothers significant time to mature, the national pattern is of a 'decreasing opportunity' for change once a mother is "caught" in this cycle
6. A longitudinal study completed between 2014 and 2017 identified an increased in the population affected

Financial implications

7. Based on national figures, the total average cost of a set of legal proceedings is £70,000 per child
8. The most likely outcome for children in repeat proceedings is adoption. In ensuring good outcome for a child who is adopted, the cost to the Local Authority is an average one-off cost of £33,000, with ongoing average costs of over £7,000 a year

9. In respect of the children who are cared for by Foster Carers (around one in five of those in repeat proceedings) the annual average is £32,000
10. The total cost for a child (0 – 16 years old) who achieve permanency through adoption is over £200k
11. For a child cared for by Foster Carers, the cost is just under £600k by the time they reach their 16th birthday

CBC Context

12. The initial scoping of the issue in Central Bedfordshire was done by analysing the current caseload in Court and Permanency Teams. At the beginning of November 2017, there were 17 children, some unborn, who had an allocated Social Worker and whose mothers had one or more children previously removed from their care by the Local Authority. (In total, more than 30 children)
13. Children's Services' Resource Panel sees almost on weekly basis requests to convene Legal Planning Meetings or to issue legal proceedings for children who had siblings previously removed
14. A national trend we also see in CBC is that where a negative cycle of recurrent care proceedings remains unchecked prognosis for recovering parenting capacity is poor and the intervals between LA care applications are typically short.
15. Having reviewed different projects which aim at addressing this issue, Central Bedfordshire Children Services alongside Public Health have developed a proposed project to support the women in this cohort break the cycle which lead to children being removed from their care.
16. This cohort will be supported by dedicated WAY workers who will have the role of supporting, encouraging and befriending them to reach a point where they are ready to receive support. This will include practical support and advice.
17. The project is based on promoting pre-established pathways in various existing services.
18. The women in this cohort will be referred to the relevant services (to be decided case by case) by their WAY worker and they will be

considered high risk/high priority in receiving the right services and support at the right time

19. It is planned that the initial cohort will be of 20 women who had children removed from their care, supported by 2 WAY workers. The total cost of the team will be £70k/year. Funding is equally split between Children's Services and Public Health.

20. It is planned that the intervention will last up to 18 months

Council Priorities

21. Protecting the Vulnerable; Improving Wellbeing, A More Efficient and Responsive Council

Corporate Implications

22. None

Legal Implications

23. None

Financial and Risk Implications

24. The WAY project is jointly funded by Children's Services and Public Health. The total cost of the service will be £70k/year.

25. The project is reliant on voluntary engagement and the success of WAY workers to engage with women and influence change

26. Size of the cohort may fluctuate depending on the number of referrals and consent

Equalities Implications

27. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. WAY project will promote equality and diversity

28. The WAY project in CBC will follow the same path as the national PAUSE project and the contraception will be mandatory for the women in this cohort

Implications for Work Programming

29. Progress report to be presented at the Corporate Parenting Panel at one year after implementation – *May/June 2019*

Conclusion and next Steps

30. A working group is being established to develop an implementation plan for the WAY project

31. It is proposed that the project will be managed via Children's Services Early Help Service with Public Health Support

32. The implementation it is aimed to start in May 2018. 5 women have already been identified and they agreed to take part in the project. The identification of the next 15 will continue during March and April 2018

33. A report will be presented at the CP Panel at the one year review point

Proposed outcome/impact

34. Various projects addressing this issue are showing a very high rate of success. For instance, in Suffolk project (Positive Choices) none of the mothers involved in the project had an unplanned pregnancy over a period of 2 years.

35. Other projects show a similar rate of success.

36. Based on these findings in the first year of the project in CBC we recommend that the target should be of 50% success rate (10 of the women part of the project will not have an unplanned pregnancy over the first 12 months of the project) increasing to 75% in the year after, once the project is embedded.

37. It is planned that the initial cohort will be of 20 women who had children removed from their care, supported by 2 WAY workers

Appendices

Appendix A - Proposed WAY business process

Background Papers

38. Presentation for Corporate Parenting Panel, January 18 ([LINK](#))
39. Connecting Events in Time to Identify a Hidden Population: Birth Mothers and Their Children in Recurrent Care Proceedings in England ([Link](#))
40. Vulnerable Birth Mothers and Recurrent Care Proceedings ([LINK](#))
41. Pause Project evaluation ([LINK](#))