

HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 4TH DECEMBER 2012

SUBJECT: IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TEAM PILOT - UPDATE REPORT

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Health Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee with a report outlining the activity and performance of the Immediate Response Team to date.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 A report to Cabinet on 2nd August 2011 highlighted the need to develop a responsive service to families during times of immediate and urgent need and where there is a likelihood that a child or young person may become looked after by the authority. There was an agreement to develop a new team as part of a pilot to address this area of need and the Immediate Response Team was created and became operational in October 2011. The purpose of the team was to provide intensive support to families during critical periods where it has been known that children and young people can become looked after by the authority on an unplanned basis.
- 2.2 The aim of the Immediate Response Team is to provide an intensive service to families at a critical time with the intention of reducing the numbers of children and young people becoming looked after. Skilled and timely intervention is known to enhance parents and carers ability to cope during stressful periods, increase the capacity for parents and carers to manage challenging behaviour and increase resilience in families to understand and manage difficult and sometimes complex family relationships.
- 2.3 A progress report was presented to Health Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on 27th of March 2012, which provided members with a further update report on the achievements of the team and of the outcomes for service users from involvement with the service.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Children Act 1989 and 2004
- 3.2 The Children and Young Peoples Plan
- 3.3 The Assessment and Care Planning Strategy
- 3.4 The Children's Services Family Support Strategy

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The Team staffing establishment consists of a Team Manager and five Child Care Support Workers. Team members have a range of experience and skills including Youth Offending Service, Education, Health Promotion, Youth Service, Children with Disabilities Service and Family support. All team members are committed and responsive, providing a creative service to children and their families. The annual budget for the team is £195,000.
- 4.2 From the outset the Manager and the team have become an integral part of Children's Services Teams and have received referrals from all areas of the borough. Over the period October 2011 to October 2012 the team have worked with 89 children and young people with 68 cases being completed. The outcomes for the families who have received a service have been positive with a significant number of admissions to care being avoided.
- 4.3 Whilst the Team are involved with a family, initial contact can be daily including weekends with the intervention lasting for up to eight weeks. Contact is gradually reduced, working in partnership with the family and other agencies involved in supporting the family. Intervention can extend beyond eight weeks where essential. All children referred to the Immediate Response Team are either already looked after or at high risk of becoming looked after.
- 4.4 The Team have also made excellent links with colleagues across the Children and Young Peoples Partnership who offer a range of family support services to ensure that when the Immediate Response Team are ready to end their involvement other services can provide a less intensive but equally as effective service to families building upon any developed skills and resilience.
- 4.5 The intervention with each family has been individual and bespoke dependent on the identified strengths and difficulties. The team aim to respond as quickly as possible with many families being visited the same day, the quickest response was within an hour of referral.
- 4.6 From the outset it was imperative that the service was evaluated and with this in mind thought was given to the process for gathering feedback from children and young people, their parents and carers and the referring Social Worker. The Team Manager consulted with the Planning Manager in Children's Services in the design of the evaluation process.
- 4.7 At the beginning of the intervention the outcomes the family would like to achieve are recorded. This is reviewed mid way through the intervention and again at the end. Those involved are encouraged to include comments about the service and any suggestions for improvement.
- 4.8 Evaluations to date have been very positive. All service users expressed that they found the service beneficial to their family circumstances and achieved most of the outcomes they had desired at the outset. A sample of comments from parents are attached as **appendix A**.
- 4.9 Feedback from young people has also been positive with each one feeling they had been treated with respect and that the intervention was about right in terms of length of contact and frequency. A sample of comments from young people are attached as **appendix B**.
- 4.10 Young people's social workers have provided feedback that has also been positive. A sample of comments from case accountable Social Workers are attached as **appendix C**.
- 4.11 The team have also had positive comments about their work from professionals in the Court arena with one children's Guardian recognising this formally in a report to the Court. The work of the team also featured in the DVD produced alongside the Annual Directors report on the effectiveness of Social Services 2011-2012.
- 4.12 The Manager and team report they have been able to deliver a high quality standard of service involving an intensive and responsive support to families at the point of need, often on

the same day of referral. This is evidenced and reflected in the evaluation feedback. This standard of service requires careful caseload management to allow both the level of intensity and frequency of contacts during the initial intervention and then to manage the gradual scale back of the service and transition to other support networks.

- 4.13 Of the cohort of 89 children and young people who received a service from the Immediate Response Team, 8 became looked after, 6 of those placements were planned moves and the Immediate Response Team assisted young people considerably in the transition process, 1 young person was accommodated due to their carers ill health and 1 young person was prevented from returning to family due to criminal proceedings against them.
- 4.14 Following the completion of the Immediate Response Team involvement a further 2 young people were accommodated, both were on a planned basis, one of these has now returned home.
- 4.15 Feedback from families, young people receiving intervention and professionals strongly indicate that the Immediate Response Team had a positive impact upon supporting young people to remain living within their families and thus prevent them from becoming looked after.
- 4.16 As a means of identifying costs that have been avoided and assessing the impact the Immediate Response Team has upon supporting families and avoiding costs associated in children becoming looked after, the following indicative costs are provided below:
- Average cost of a looked after child in a local authority foster placement - £280
 - Average weekly cost of a looked after a child in an Independent placement - £800
 - Average weekly cost of a looked after child in a residential placement - £2,500

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This report is for information purposes, so the Council's Equalities process does not need to be applied.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This pilot is funded via a Welsh Government Grant until end of March 2014.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Given the identified end date of grant funding there will be personnel implications if the service is not funded beyond that date.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 The views of those consulted have been incorporated into the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That members note the progress and development of the Immediate Response Team to date.

10. STATUTORY POWER

- 10.1 Local Government Act 1972
10.2 The Children Act 1989 & 2004

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Cllr Robin Woodyatt, Cabinet Member, Social Services
Children's Services Divisional Management Team
Immediate Response Team Manager and staff

Appendices:

Appendix A Responses from Parents and Carers Questionnaires
Appendix B Comments from Children and Young People
Appendix C Comments from Case Holders