

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting9th July 2009

1. Title of Item/Report

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE WORKLOAD PRESSURES

2. Record of the Decision

It was explained that following the death of Baby Peter in Haringey and the subsequent progress report by Lord Laming, many Local Authorities across the country have reported an upsurge in the numbers of social care referrals being received.

In addition the current economic climate had, at least been partially responsible for this rise, as financial hardship puts families under increased pressure and stress.

This trend had been mirrored locally with a marked rise in the number of referrals. Members were provided with figures demonstrating this and it was noted that this rise had translated into significant workload pressures throughout the social care system.

Members considered a report that provided a brief overview of pressures, as of 31 May 2009. Updates would be provided to Cabinet on a bi monthly basis.

Members were informed of issues surrounding staffing and allocations and noted the national shortage of qualified and experienced social workers. Most local authorities had reported difficulty in recruitment and retention and Stockton was no different, both at social work practitioner and management levels.

In an effort to address the need for social workers Stockton had introduced a cadetship scheme, which aimed at attracting young people to social work, as a profession, and provided support in developing their skills. Also, to attract suitable applicants to certain posts, the Council had introduced 'golden hellos' which were paid to post holders on a staggered basis.

It was noted that the general recruitment issues and increasing pressures described in the report caused difficulties in terms of allocation

of workloads. Members were provided with brief details of how workload pressures were currently being managed. In addition details of the potential budgetary impact the increased referrals would have were provided.

Recognising the importance of the issues described in the report Cabinet asked that it be specifically highlighted and circulated to all Members of the Council. Cabinet Members also asked for further information about the Cadetship scheme in terms of numbers involved and its structure. Additionally, it was requested that officers look into the possibility of producing quarterly information, on a ward basis, for circulation to ward Councillors, briefly detailing referral trends and any positive results coming from interventions/work undertaken by social care workers. Members were keen that this information should only be collated if easily available and should not place a burden on the teams directly associated with the issues described in the report.

RESOLVED that:-

1. the increase in social care referrals, children subject to a child protection plan, looked after children and the associated impact this is having on workload and budget be noted.
2. further update reports be received on a bi monthly basis in order to monitor the current rise in workload pressures.

3. Reasons for the Decision

There is a significant and continuing rise in social care workload which could potentially impact on the Council's ability to effectively safeguard children, fulfil statutory duties and remain within allocated budget.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

By midnight Friday, 17 July 2009

Proper Officer
14 July 2009