

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting2nd September 2010

1. Title of Item/Report

Children's Social Care Workload Pressures

2. Record of the Decision

Cabinet considered a further report relating to workload pressures within Children's Social Care. Members were updated on these pressures and were provided with information to the end of June 2010.

It was explained that the number of referrals had declined from 249 in March to 197 at the end of June. However, the number of initial assessments remained high and the number of core assessments had risen sharply, which likely reflected the extremely high numbers of initial assessments in March 2010.

The combined volume of work meant that the service remained under extreme pressure, which continued to have a significant impact on key performance indicators relating to initial and core assessments.

The overall number of children who were subject to a child protection plan had reduced slightly from the peak of 282 in February to 263 in June.

The number of section 47 investigations remained high as did the numbers of child protection conferences and children becoming subject to a child protection plan.

The 'conversion rate' ie the percentage of referrals that subsequently led to a child protection plan for April to June was 3.3% compared with 5.8% between January and March.

Reference was made to staffing issues and it was noted that the situation in terms of vacant social work posts had improved slightly from 7.5 posts being vacant at the end of March to 2 posts at the end of June.

Members noted that as at the end of June there were 2 child protection and 5 looked after children cases unallocated. All children in need cases had been allocated.

It was explained that a workload pressures action plan had been drawn up covering a range of issues relating to staffing and allocations, and monthly meetings were taking place involving the Corporate Director, Head of Service and Service Managers in order to review and update this on a regular basis.

The pressures continued to have an impact on key areas of the Council's Budget. This was being considered as part of the overall Medium Term Financial Plan. Details of budget overspend was provided.

Cabinet noted that work had been undertaken by the Vulnerable Children's Safeguarding Network (VCSN) to collate information relating to workloads and staffing across the region. Details of the information collated was provided to members. This information confirmed that pressures were being experienced across the region. It was explained that work was being undertaken by Stockton Local Safeguarding Children Board to develop a continuum of need and response. The purpose of this would be to clarify and agree thresholds across all agencies working in Stockton, which would ensure that there was a consistent and safe level of response to all referrals for social care intervention.

RESOLVED that:-

1. the continued workload pressures within the social care system and the associated impact this was having on caseloads, performance and budget be noted.

2. further update reports be received, on a quarterly basis, in order to continue to monitor the impact of these workload pressures.

3. Reasons for the Decision

There was 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

Midnight on Friday 10th September 2010

Proper Officer
06 July 2010