

**STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS**

**PROFORMA**

Cabinet Meeting .....1st December 2011

1. Title of Item/Report

Children's 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 those pressures and were provided with information up to the end of September 2011.

It was explained that the number of referrals had dropped from 211 in July to 154 in August and stood at 172 in September. Initial assessments and core assessments undertaken in September had been 155 and 78 respectively.

The overall number of children who were subject to a child protection plan had continued to rise and stood at 287.

The overall number of looked after children had risen to 314 in August.

It was noted that the overall staffing situation remained positive, however, a high proportion of staff remained relatively inexperienced. Clearly all cases had to be appropriately allocated to a named social worker but this needed to be balanced with the need to ensure workers had manageable caseloads which were commensurate with their ability and level of experience.

There were no allocated child protection cases but there were 2 unallocated looked after children cases and 10 unallocated children in need cases. Unallocated cases were held by the appropriate team manager.

As a result of the increasing pressures and need to ensure cases were safely allocated and progressed in a timely manner, 6 additional supernumerary agency staff had been employed within the referral and assessment and specialist social work teams as of the end of September, on a strictly time limited basis. These posts were subject to ongoing monitoring and review by Corporate Director and Head of Service.

Cabinet noted the budgetary pressures currently facing the service and particularly the projected overspends on the independent fostering agency budget, children's homes agency placement budget and staffing budgets. Such issues continued to be considered through the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Members noted that the 'Put yourself in the Picture' marketing campaign had identified 3 prospective foster carers and one prospective adopter who were currently undergoing assessment. A fuller report on this would be brought back to Cabinet in due course.

Cabinet noted that, with regard to the two proposed new children's homes, it was anticipated that the Piper Knowle home would open in December 2011 and the Redcar Road home in February 2012.

It was explained that the Efficiency Improvement and Transformation review of Children's social care was now underway and the scoping document had been agreed by the Arts, Leisure and Culture Select Committee. Given the tight timescales and wide range of services covered by the review, a number of key questions had been identified to ensure the review focused on the most important issues affecting the service in the context of the ongoing work pressures. Details of those questions were provided to Cabinet.

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 on a quarterly basis be received, in order to continue to monitor the impact of these workload pressures.
3. the proposed approach to the EIT review of children's social care be endorsed.

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 Monday 12 December 2011

Proper Officer  
06 July 2011