

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE

ABERDEEN, 2nd February, 2010. - Minute of Meeting of the CHILDREN'S SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE. Present: Councillor Leslie, Convener; and Councillors Cormack, Donnelly, Laing, Penny, Kirsty West and Young.

ANNOUNCEMENT

1. The Convener on behalf of the Sub-Committee wished to congratulate Susan Devlin on her recent appointment as Head of Children's Services, Social Care and Wellbeing. He intimated that he would look forward to working with Ms. Devlin and wished her every success in the future.

The Sub-Committee resolved:-

to concur with the remarks of the Convener.

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

2. The Sub-Committee had before it the minute of their previous meeting of 1st October 2009.

The Sub-Committee resolved:-

to approve the minute.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES PRACTICE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME – SCW/10/030

3. The Sub-Committee had before it a report by the Director of Social Care and Wellbeing, which outlined the development and implementation of a Practice Improvement Programme for staff working in Children's Services.

The report (a) made reference to the HMle and Social Work Inspectorate Agency inspections, which highlighted a number of areas for improvement in services delivering social work interventions with children and families; (b) outlined areas for improvement, including the need to improve the quality and consistency of services, staff morale, confidence and leadership and the appropriate use of legislation for looked after and accommodated children and young people; (c) made reference to the formation of the Social Care and Wellbeing Service and Children's Services led by a Head of Service with a service redesign proposed, agreed and in the implementation stages; (d) explained that it was a priority for action to improve practice, service delivery and subsequently improve outcomes for children and young people; (e) indicated that since June 2009, monthly practice improvement sessions had taken place with 3rd and 4th tier managers; (f) advised that in order to ensure sustainable improvements, all staff in Children's Services require to participate in a Practice Improvement Programme; (g) stated that the programme started with an action learning day workshop held on 26th January, 2010 with the

focus on the day being service redesign, following which, further sessions would take place on a bi-monthly basis and would address different priority areas.

The report recommended:-

that the Sub-Committee -

- (a) note the establishment of the Practice Improvement Programme, and
- (b) request a report on progress made and “distance travelled” in 12 months.

The Sub-Committee resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

LOOKED AFTER YOUNG PEOPLE’S LEADERSHIP ACADEMY - SCW/10/032

4. The Sub-Committee had before it a report by the Director of Social Care and Wellbeing which provided details of the successful Fairer Scotland Fund joint bid by Children’s and Community Safety Services.

The report (a) advised that the bid of £28,000 was to fund a Leadership Academy delivered by Columba 1400 for looked after young people; (b) indicated that the Columba 1400 Young People’s Leadership Academy was the core programme operated by Columba 1400, which brings together up to 12 young people and 3 support staff into one leadership development experience; (c) stated that the focus of the work was to create self sustaining cycles of transformation for individuals from tough realities (poverty, exclusion, addictions and care leavers), organisations and systems; (d) explained that the Young People’s Leadership Academy was an intensive programme of individual and community change with young people and support staff participating in the programme and working together to create a new quality of relationship based on mutual trust and respect; (e) outlined the objectives of the academy, listing what the participants could expect by the end of the residential component of the programme; (f) made reference to the 2007 evaluation of the Columba 1400 Careleaver Programme undertaken by York Consulting Limited on behalf of the Scottish Executive Social Research, which revealed that by conservative estimates, at least 60% of the care leaver group who had participated in the academy have gone onto or sustained transitions to employment, education or training; and (g) advised that the cost/benefit analysis showed that Columba 1400 was a cost-effective intervention.

The report recommended:-

that the Sub-Committee:-

- (a) notes the successful bid; and
- (b) requests a further report in 12 months outlining the progress of the participants in the programme

The Sub-Committee resolved:-

- (i) to approve the recommendations; and
- (ii) to receive a progress report following the Leadership Academy to be held in Easter.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES - SCW/10/031

5. The Sub-Committee had before it a report by the Director of Social Care and Wellbeing which provided information in relation to the development of the Family and Community Support Service in Children's Services by refocusing existing resources to improve effectiveness of services to children aged 0 - 18 years and their families.

The report (a) advised that Social Care and Wellbeing Children's Service has a key role to provide a range of services for children, particularly those with the highest level of need; (b) made reference to the Social Care and Wellbeing Eligibility Criteria for Children's Services, which described 5 levels of intervention, with Level 1 being Universal Needs and Level 2 being Support Needs; (c) indicated that families with support needs were able to access support with minimal intervention, which was in keeping with the "No Order" principle in Section 16(3) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, which states that any intervention by a public authority must be justified; (d) explained that the Family and Community Support Service would work with children and families who have been assessed as having significant need at levels 3, 4 and 5 using the Children's Services Eligibility Criteria agreed by the Social Care and Wellbeing Committee in October 2009; (e) indicated that the service would provide a range of flexible, tailored services to support children and young people and their families within their local communities; (f) stated that the service would operate fifty two weeks a year with some services offered over seven days; (g) advised that each child and young person would have an individual care plan that would be monitored, reviewed and evaluated on a three monthly basis; (h) outlined the service elements which were early intervention, family support, young people community support, intensive support and learning and contact service; and (i) explained that the structure offered opportunities to engage with children and families to prevent escalation of difficulties that could lead to children being removed from their families and communities.

The report recommended:-

that the Sub-Committee –

- (a) notes the content of the report; and
- (b) requests a further report in 12 months to outline the progress and development of the service.

The Sub-Committee resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

RESIDENTIAL AND SECURE ACCOMMODATION – SCW/10/033

6. The Sub-Committee had before it a report by the Director of Social Care and Wellbeing which outlined Aberdeen City Council's use of residential and secure accommodation outwith the city and the measures taken to reduce the number of placements.

The report (a) explained that residential schools and secure accommodation has a significant cost implication ranging from £160,000 to £520,000 per annum and it was imperative that credible, effective community based services were developed as alternatives to placements outwith the city, with an emphasis on improving

outcomes for children and young people; (b) indicated that the Council has a legal duty to implement a supervision order made by a children's hearing, which may require a child to be placed in a residential school contrary to the social worker's assessment and recommendation; (c) made reference to the SWIA and HMIe inspections in 2008 which highlighted that Aberdeen City Council had twice the number of children and young people accommodated in residential care outwith the authority per head of population than any other local authority in Scotland; (d) revealed that Aberdeen City Council funds residential placements through an aligned budget between Social Care & Wellbeing and Education, Culture & Sport Services, which reflects the needs of the group of children and young people in residential accommodation; (e) advised that some young people currently accommodated could have remained in the city in their local communities with their families if an effective package of community support had been available; (f) indicated that Aberdeen City Council had agreed that a joint Intensive Community Support and Learning Service be established to provide an effective, credible community alternative to accommodating young people; (g) stated that in June 2009, there were 28 young people in residential schools, 5 young people in other specialist intensive placements and 6 young people in secure accommodation; (h) revealed that in January 2010, there were 25 young people in residential school, 6 young people in other specialist intensive placements and 0 young people in secure accommodation; (i) explained that the reduction in numbers was achieved by rigorously reviewing all cases of young people in residential and secure accommodation and focusing on providing an intensive service (including partner agencies) to maintain children and young people within their home environment and local community; (j) advised that the proposed budget for 2010/11 equated to full year costs for 16 young people; (k) outlined the criteria for accessing secure and residential accommodation and specialist intensive placements; and (l) outlined the plans to redress the balance of care, working towards having more children and young people cared for at home or within the local community with the subsequent increase in positive outcomes.

The report recommended:-

that the Sub-Committee –

- (a) notes the progress to date; and
- (b) requests a further report outlining progress in 12 months.

The Sub-Committee resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

SUB-COMMITTEE BUSINESS STATEMENT

7. The Sub-Committee had before it for consideration, a statement of Sub-Committee Business prepared by the interim Head of Democratic Services.

The Sub-Committee resolved:-

- (i) to remove item 1 (Secure Accommodation and Capital Investment Programme), referred to at Article 6 of this Minute;
- (ii) to note that in terms of item 2 (Unallocated Cases and Pre-referral Screening) that a report would be submitted to the Social Care and Wellbeing Committee at its meeting on 3rd June, 2010 as part of the ongoing Children's Services redesign;

- (iii) to note that in terms of item 3 (New Residential Children's Unit), a report would be submitted to the Sub-Committee at its meeting on 16th September, 2010;
- (iv) that in terms of item 4 (HMle Action Plan and Review) to note that the information required would be contained in an overarching performance report to be submitted to the Social Care and Wellbeing Committee;
- (v) that in terms of item 5 (Children's Services – The Future and Challenges), (1) to delete (i) as a report on eligibility criteria was agreed by the Social Care and Wellbeing Committee on 29th October, 2009, (2) to note that reports on adoption support and kinship care would be submitted to the Social Care and Wellbeing Committee at its meeting on 22nd April, 2010 and (3) that the Head of Children's Services would endeavour to produce a list of vital reading items for Sub-Committee members, with accompanying documentation; and
- (vi) to otherwise note the dates on which a number of reports were expected and updates received by officers to date.

- COUNCILLOR GORDON LESLIE, Convener.