

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education & Children's Services
DATE	8 September 2016
DIRECTOR	Gayle Gorman
TITLE OF REPORT	Reclaiming Social Work: Update
REPORT NUMBER:	ECS/16/040
CHECKLIST RECEIVED	Yes

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report is an update on progress made on implementation of the Reclaiming Social Work programme.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that Committee continues to support the implementation of Reclaiming Social Work with no substantive changes to the plans originally submitted.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. Earmarked reserves of £2.93 million were approved in February 2015 at full Council. The reserve is to be drawn upon as the RSW model is implemented and staff are recruited.
- 3.2. The Reclaiming Social Work model is intended to deliver improved outcomes for children and their families. This includes a reduction in the number of children placed in high cost out of authority residential placements; increased staff retention and a reduction in staff absences.
- 3.3. A reduction in the number of external residential school places along with the development of a Public Social Partnership will deliver savings to enable the Reclaiming Social Work model to be delivered from within the budget by the end of the five year implementation programme.
- 3.4. Costs of changes to buildings and other related costs such as training and workforce development are being considered in collaboration with the relevant Council services.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

5.1. In January 2013 Committee gave agreement for scoping work on the Reclaiming Social Work model. The model proposed a whole system redesign for Children's Social Work. The model required significant investment throughout the development and implementation. Subsequently, committee agreed to:

- Aberdeen City Council's, Children's Social Work Services, implementation of the Reclaiming Social Work model.
- Establishing a Programme Board as the operational governance forum to manage the redesign of the service.
- Establishing an operational reference group.
- Presentation of a detailed implementation plan and progress report to a future committee meeting.

5.2. A proposed structure was approved by the Education and Children's Service Committee in January 2015. The proposed use of £2.93 million earmarked reserves to support the implementation of Reclaiming Social Work was subsequently approved at full Council in February 2015.

5.3. Implementation of the programme commenced on 1 June 2015. Governance is provided by a Programme Board chaired by the Director of Education and Children's Services. This Board comprises of representatives from the Children's Social Work Management Team, Human Resources and Finance as well as appropriate partners/stakeholders. The Children's Social Work Management Team acts as the Project Team.

5.4. An update report on the implementation of the Reclaiming Social Work model was provided to Committee in March 2016. Committee continued to fully support the programme and requested a further update in September 2016.

5.5. Update on Implementation

Following completion of the matching process a planned and managed roll out of the new structure has begun. Two thirds of staff are now matched into their new posts with the following changes now implemented:

- The revised structure for Family and Community Support
- The revised structure for the Alternative Family Care Service
- Establish 8 Social Work Units
- Establish a Youth Team to work with care leavers and 16-18 year olds who are in the Criminal Justice system.
- Establish the revised Children with Disability team.

5.6. Although it is still early day's direct feedback from service users has been extremely positive and encouraging. Families have spoken of feeling a difference in how social work staff are engaging with them. The Unit model is beginning to evidence that social work staff are managing risk more effectively and supporting families to identify solutions to their own difficulties. It is hoped this will lead to more children being supported to remain within their family and community and overtime contribute to a reduction in the numbers of children accommodated by the local authority.

- 5.7. Targeted recruitment for vacant posts is ongoing. In particular we have a need to recruit Consultant Social Workers to head up each Unit. These are experienced social workers with a proven ability to assess and manage risk. This is a challenging and demanding role but one which offers much job satisfaction. While we have had some success attracting new staff to these roles, internally and externally, the pace of recruitment will determine the pace at which we roll out the new service model.
- 5.8. Regular caseload audits undertaken by Service Managers continue to evidence the proposed structure has the capacity to manage existing work demands. A detailed appreciation of current work demands has been identified as critical by other authorities during implementation. These audits provide a rich vein of information to enable the identification of and planning for emerging work pressures.
- 5.9. A key emphasis of in the model is to try wherever possible to reduce the administrative and bureaucratic processes social workers have to undertake. This is to ensure the amount of time spent with children and families is maximised, where their skills and knowledge can generate the biggest impact.
- 5.10. The criticality of ensuring budgets are accurately built from the bottom up will allow managers to actively manage cost pressures and more accurately plan for budgetary pressures as they emerge. This coproduction of the budget is reported to the Programme Board.
- 5.11. Regular engagement sessions continue to be held with staff and stakeholders to update them on implementation plans. Feedback from staff that have moved into their new roles has been very positive. The “unit” model of working is already delivering some positive benefits both for service users and staff. It is acknowledged that for those staff who have yet to move to a Unit there can be feelings of “being left behind”. A further engagement event is planned for early September 2016 to respond to staff anxieties and support them to understand the next steps.
- 5.12. The Operational Reference Group continues to meet on a regular basis ensuring engagement with staff at all levels. This forum provides an opportunity to take account of how staff are feeling and listen to suggestions/feedback they have. Any issues that arise are taken to the Project Team meeting for consideration and response.
- 5.13. Blake Stevenson are undertaking an independent evaluation of how the Reclaiming Social Work model is being implemented by Aberdeen City Council. Their report on Year 2 was presented to the Programme Board in May 2016. The evaluation highlighted positively on how implementation is being managed but it also identified areas where improvement could be made. The identified improvement areas are being incorporated into the planning for Year 3.

5.14. **Next Steps**

Planning for the next phase of the implementation is complete. From September 2016 the following changes will occur:

- A further 5 Social Work Units will go live.
- The Reception Team will be established.

5.15. In addition it is the intention to move to a “hybrid structure” while efforts to recruit additional Consultant Social Workers continue. The hybrid structure will see staff who have yet to move to a Unit move to a team directly aligned to the area of work they have been matched to. In addition cases will also move to the appropriate teams. This change is seen to have a number of benefits including:

- A minimisation of change for service users.
- Clear line management structures.
- Staff begin to practice in the area of service delivery that they have been matched to
- Enabling a smoother transition to future Units

5.16. As noted earlier the development of a Public Social Partnership along with a managed reduction in the numbers of children placed in out of authority placements will allow for the Reclaiming Social Work Model, at the end of the five year implementation programme, to be delivered from within budget. A separate report on the development of the Public Social Partnership is before Committee today and a report on Out of Authority placements is to come before committee in November 2016.

5.17. The March 2016 Committee asked the Service to provide information on the use of agency social work staff. The overall spend on agency staff during the last financial year was £620,000. Even with this spend the budget for staffing in Children’s Social Work was underspent by £1.1 million.

5.18. The job matching process associated with Reclaiming Social Work, precluded the recruitment of staff on permanent contracts between June 2015-March 2016. While we were able to attract some staff on temporary contracts these were predominantly newly qualified staff who were unable to carry complex child protection cases. In order to ensure the Council was able to deliver on its statutory duties and ensure the delivery of safe services to children, particularly those where care and protection concerns existed, agency staff were required to fill critical front line vacancies. The use of agency staff will need to continue on a managed basis during the implementation of Reclaiming Social Work.

6. IMPACT

6.1. Children’s social work services work with those families who are among the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in the city. The vast majority of these children and families are required to work with us on a compulsory basis. Relevant parts of the SOA that the reclaiming Social Work programme impact on are:

- Reduced inequalities in healthy life expectancy and improved physical and mental health through increased physical activity
- Every child and young person in Aberdeen enjoys being young and at the same time feels safe, nurtured, healthy, active, included, respected and responsible
- People feel safe throughout Aberdeen’s communities
- Effective lifelong learning through vocational and academic training from secondary school
- Priority families

6.2. Implementation of the Reclaiming Social Work model will significantly contribute to Children’s Social Works continuing efforts to improve the services

delivered to and the outcomes of the most vulnerable children and young people in Aberdeen.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

A risk register has been maintained by the programme board and is monitored 6 weekly. The risks have changed over time and now that the programme has been implemented, one of the two major risks of staff motivation has reduced. The other risks such as not being able to recruit enough staff for new posts is being managed by scoping training for internal staff to be able to access new opportunities and planning external events that will share information on opportunities within the council externally. The challenge of recruiting staff to critical posts is adversely impacting on the Services ability to reduce the number of children placed in out of authority placements. A report on how the service will manage this will be presented to Committee in November 2016.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Social Care and Wellbeing Committee Report - September 2013.
Education & Children's Services Committee Report - January 2015.
Council Report - February 2015.
Reclaiming Social Work Update Report – March 2016

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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