

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET - 18th MARCH 2010

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

SUPPORTING HOMELESS YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY AND ICS TRAINING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report recommends continuing a pilot initiative in 2010-11 to support young homeless people helping them to return to parents or family, or to live independently. The service costs £87,000 pa. In addition £30,000 is required for additional training and support for the Integrated Children's System (ICS). Both of these proposals contribute to key indicators and will be funded from reprofiled Care Matters Area Based Grant in 2009-10.

1.0 Background

Local Authorities have statutory duties to meet the needs of young people who present as homeless, clarified by the Southwark Judgement in the House of Lords. The ruling confirmed the Government's view that local children's services authorities should presume that any lone, homeless child should be provided with accommodation under section 20(1) of the Children Act 1989 unless the child is not in the local authorities judgement (based on an initial screening assessment), a child "in need". For those young people who meet the criteria of section 20(1) but who do not wish to be accommodated by foster carers or residential homes, supported housing or independent accommodation may be most appropriate. There will need to be adequate emergency accommodation and housing departments and children's services will need to work together to ensure provision of these services locally in order to avoid the use of bed and breakfast and other unsuitable emergency accommodation.

This report supports the continuation of a pilot project to meet the needs of young homeless people who do not wish to be accommodated or where a judgement has been made that provision of accommodation under section 20(1) is not required because the criteria had not been met. The continuation of this project will enable the impact of the Southwark Judgement to be evaluated.

2.0 Stop Gap

2.1 Stop Gap is a pilot initiative to provide accommodation for young homeless people. It has been developed by Response and funded by grant from the Council's Supporting People budget, until 31st March 2010. The project has responded to referrals of young people aged 16 and 17 who are homeless. The project is targeted towards young people who do not cope on their own and those who are excluded because of their behaviour from provision such as Forum Housing.

2.2 The development of the project followed a comprehensive mapping exercise of housing options for vulnerable young people. The pilot provided six units of emergency short term accommodation for up to six months. This allowed the support worker to carry out an assessment of the young person's needs, or arrange an external assessment by professionals to determine an appropriate placement. The project provides mediation with the young person's family. Longer term supported

living options are secured by developing the young persons' skills and resources to live independently. The support workers also support young people in securing or maintaining their education, employment or training. Intensive wrap around support can include daily support (including weekends and evenings), life coaching and emergency lodgings. The outcomes of a cohort of 30 young people have all been positive. Young people have been supported to return to parents, remain with family or live independently.

2.3 The proposal is to provide support for up to 50 young people in 2010-11 at a cost of £87,000. The costs can be further broken down as follows:

| | |
|-------------------|---------|
| 2 Support Workers | £69,700 |
| Project costs | £12,400 |
| Support costs | £4,900 |

The average costs per young person are therefore £1,740 which is significantly less than other care options. This project should reduce pressure on Looked After Children resources within the department and will be reviewed in 12 months with a view to securing longer term funding – Invest to Save/Efficiency Fund.

3.0 Integrated Children's Systems (ICS)

ICS provides a framework to support practitioners and managers to undertake the key tasks of assessment, planning, and review of children's needs. Training is provided within the department for social care staff together with targeted follow up support and a helpdesk. It is proposed that capacity is temporarily enhanced by external support in 2010-11 in order that further progress can be made. Projections indicate that 30 days of external training would significantly impact on staff across all teams who consistently use ICS. At a training cost of approximately £1,000 per day the total cost is £30,000. This will help improve the Departments compliance with timely assessments, which is a key indicator.

4.0 Financial and Staffing Implications

The financial implications are described in the report. In 2010-11 the expenditure will be funded by reprofiling and carrying forward Care Matters Area Based Grant totalling £117,000

5.0 Equal Opportunities Implications/Health Impact Assessment

The project helps improve the outcomes for young people in the community.

6.0 Community Safety Implications

There are non directly arising from this report.

7.0 Local Agenda 21 Implications

There are non directly arising from this report.

8.0 Planning Implications

There are non directly arising from this report.

9.0 Anti-poverty Implications

There are non directly arising from this report.

10.0 Social Inclusion Implications

The project supports social inclusion.

11.0 Local Member Support Implications

Children presenting as homeless may be from all wards.

12.0 Background Papers

There are none.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the pilot Stop Gap initiative is extended for a further year, at a cost of £87,000 and additional ICS training is undertaken at a cost of £30,000. These are funded from reprofiled Care Matters Area Based Grant in 2009-10.

Howard Cooper
Director of Children's Services