

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET - 15th April

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

FURTHER DEVELOPING FOSTER CARE PROVISION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines a proposal to further develop the continuum of Fostering provision provided by the Authority to better meet the placement needs of children/young people. Specifically the development of a Foster Care scheme that would enable young people who have successfully completed a Treatment Foster care programme with Fostering Futures to move to a long term family placement with designated support allowing a continuation of the treatment approach but in a less structured environment. The report identifies potential funding for the development of the programme from the CAMH's Area Based Grant

1. Background

- 1.1 Wirral has over the past 10 years been to the fore, locally and nationally, with the development of a Treatment Foster Care programme providing structured care placements for young people age 8-16 yrs who present with complex and challenging behaviours and who would otherwise be placed in Residential care environments. This has been developed in partnership with Wirral PCT and the Cheshire & Wirral NHS Foundation Trust as part of the strategy aimed at maintaining children and young people locally and in placements that best meet their needs and improve their outcomes.
- 1.2 The Treatment Foster Care programme, Fostering Futures, currently provides 14 placements for young people who have a history of challenging behaviours and placement disruptions. Fostering Futures develops individual placement plans and behavioural targets for young people in placement to address both the immediate and most concerning behaviours the young person presents. This is alongside treatment approaches aimed at addressing the underlying reasons for their behavioural presentation - usually related to the neglect, abuse and rejection they have experienced and the influence that has had on their capacity to accept and trust adults, their poor self image, low self esteem and poor social skills. Young people are placed in individual placements to allow carers time to carry out the intensive support, monitoring and nurturing that they require and to ensure young people have an adult who is available to them and with whom they can start to develop a trusting relationship.
- 1.3 Fostering Futures provides a team of professionals who work with carers to support and deliver the treatment plans developed for the young people. The professional team provide support in relation to care, behavioural, mental health, educational and family issues with the aim of a delivering a holistic programme of care and treatment that is consistent across all the areas of the young person's life – placement, school, family contact, peer relationships and time spent in the community – with a focus on changing behaviour and developing skills. Young people experience adults being concerned about their behaviour in all settings, being consistent about their management and to have a focus on recognising the positive aspects of their behaviour and building on these strengths and their potential.

- 1.4 Over recent years the Treatment Fostering programme has worked with 28 young people all referred as they had a history of placement disruption and for whom Fostering placements were not available from the Fostering Service due to the level of their behavioural challenge. The majority of these young people have been successful in the programme and the programme has a disruption rate, placements ending in an unplanned way, of 23%. The disruption rate is lower than other programmes offering foster care provision for these young people which vary from 34 – 80%.
- 1.5 The cost of providing a Fostering Futures placement is approximately £1,200 per week which compares favourably with a residential placement which can cost from £2,000 per week.
- 1.6 Young people who are placed with Fostering Futures are monitored in relation to improvements in their behaviour. They show an improvement in the number of days attendance at school, a reduction in periods of exclusions and assessments of their mental health state conducted with teachers and carers show a reduction in areas for concern. They also maintain a placement in a family setting. Young people have been asked about their views on the programme and 75% of the young people report that they were being listened to, found it easy to talk to team members, were well treated, their views and worries were taken seriously, were well treated and felt helped.
- 1.7 A challenge for Treatment Foster care is whether it is a short to medium term intervention focussed on achieving behavioural change and some stability around behaviours to enable young people to fit with a long term family who will continue to support their progress and development or whether it is a long term placement. Fostering Futures believes that in relation to the intensity of the programme and the requirement to focus on specific changes that with most young people the programme should last between 18-24 months. Fostering Futures would then work with the follow on placement about the transitional issues, support and ongoing therapeutic support required by the young person but is not able to provide that long term.
- 1.8 With continuing pressures on the Fostering Service for placements planning move on placements for young people who could potentially move on from Fostering Futures has been difficult. The consequence of this is that Fostering Futures has young people who no longer require the high intensity of input it is set up to deliver and young people who require a placement are not offered one as there isn't a vacancy.
- 1.9 To remedy this situation it is proposed that aligned to the Fostering Futures programme a Move-On scheme is developed to provide supported and protected placements where young people can be assisted to continue the progress they have made. It is proposed that 5 Foster Carer households are recruited and these foster carers would be able to offer to a maximum of 2 placements at any one time. Placements would, however, be strictly managed and matched to ensure that the needs of the 1st young person in placement were not adversely affected by the introduction of a second placement. To ensure clear structures, plans and strategy are in place and carers receive an appropriate level of support it is proposed to recruit a 0.5 Clinical Psychologist and full time Support Worker who would provide support the carers and young people.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 To recruit Foster Carers for this type of programme and provide an income for the carer while having a single placement the proposal would be that carers would be paid a fee of £276.08 for the 1st young person placed plus the Fostering Allowance for the age of the child. If a 2nd young person is placed they would be paid an additional fee of £138.04 plus the Fostering Allowance for the child. The fee is based on the current Band 3 Foster Carer rate - doubled for the 1st placement.
- 2.2 The recruitment of a 0.5 Clinical Psychologist and full time Support Worker will be arranged with the Cheshire and Wirral NHS Foundation Trust. The cost of a 0.5 Psychologist would be £27,000 per annum and Support Worker £26,000 per annum.
- 2.3 Additional capacity would be required within the Fostering Service initially to carry out the marketing, recruitment and assessment of Foster Carers for the Move-On programme. It is planned that this would be a one off cost of approximately £30,000 in the 1st year.
- 2.4 Finance has been identified that could support this development from the increase in CAMH's budget in 2009-10 and 2010-11 of £63,000 in total. It is also proposed that a CAMH's underspend from 2009-10 is carried forward to cover set up costs.

3. Staffing Implications

- 3.1 The 0.5 Clinical Psychologist full time Support Worker required to provide support directly to the carers and the young people would be employed by the Cheshire & Wirral NHS Foundation Trust. They currently employ some of the staff who deliver the Fostering Futures programme.

4. Equal Opportunities Implications/Health Impact Assessment

- 4.1 Foster carers can be recruited from all parts of the Wirral. The Move-On scheme is being developed to provide opportunities for vulnerable young people to have the opportunity of a family life and remain within their community.

5. Community Safety Implications

- 5.1 The proposed scheme is being developed to ensure young people can live safely with carers who will encourage young people to behave in pro-social ways.

6. Local Agenda 21 Implications

- 6.1 There are none arising directly from this report

7. Planning Implications

- 7.1 There are none arising directly from this report

8. Anti-poverty Implications

- 8.1 The scheme is aimed at improving the life chances of Looked After Children which will hopefully contribute to their ability to be self supporting and successful adults.

9. Social Inclusion Implications

9.1 The scheme will enable young people to remain living in their community and maintain attendance at their school. Young people placed on the scheme will be encouraged to take part in positive activities within the community

10. Local Member Support Implications

10.1 There are none arising directly from this report

11. Background Papers

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

- (1) Agree the proposal to develop a Move-On Scheme aligned to Fostering Futures funded from the CAMHs budget.
- (2) Agree the reserve from the 2009-10 CAMHs budget is used to cover set up costs in 2010-11.

Howard Cooper
Director of Children's Services