

Report of Chief Officer Children's Social Work Service

Report to Director of Children's services

Date: 28th June 2014

Subject: Expansion of the Child minding service and Support care scheme



Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. The priority within the CYPP and the council is to reduce the need for children to become looked after. One particular problem is with very young children in Leeds needing to be taken into care. A small scale pilot ran from July – December 2013 to offer child-minding provision to families at risk of children becoming looked after. This was piloted working alongside the support care scheme in the fostering team in the west of the city.
2. The support care scheme provides short breaks for children who live with their families in the community and aims to prevent children entering care. This is a very small scheme and the outcomes for children has been extremely positive, enabling children to remain within their birth families and preventing children from entering care.

Recommendations

The Director of Children's Services is recommended to agree the following:

- To continue the work developed during the child-minding pilot and expand and mainstream the service across the city.
- To expand the work of the support care fostering scheme and to expand this together with the child minding scheme across the city.

- The Fostering Service will provide governance for the service, with a multi-agency steering group to be established to review progress, monitor outputs and prepare reports.
- To increase staffing in the fostering service with one supervising social work post and one Advanced practitioner post to support the expansion of the support care and child-minding project across the city.
- Additional child-minders and foster carers to be recruited to form a city-wide provision of child minders and support care foster carers.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To seek ratification for the LAC Task and Finish group recommendations (19.12.13 & 27.6.14) that the Child-minding pilot (June 2013 – December 2013) and the Support care fostering scheme be expanded into mainstream delivery.

2 Background information

- 2.1 Childminding: A pilot project ran July – December 2013 as a collaborative pilot between the Children's Social Work Service, Fostering & Adoption, Early Help Childcare Consultants and the Early Help Family Support and Parenting Team. 11 families (13 children) were offered child-minding provision during the pilot. The purpose was to provide some respite day care and occasional overnight support to families of children aged 0-3. The families had child protection concerns or were at risk of children coming into care.
- 2.2 The pilot was a small scale service which helped the majority of families who have used it. In particular, it has helped those families who are not able to fund their own childcare because of the age of their child or their willingness to access a children's centre or private nursery setting.
- 2.3 Based on the evaluations of this pilot, which were brought to the LAC Task and Finish meeting of the 19th December 2013 the recommendation was that the child-minding service should continue as part of the support care fostering scheme and become a mainstreamed service across the city.
- 2.4 Support care: the support care scheme has twenty registered foster carers providing day and overnight care to support children remaining at home between the ages of 0-16 years. They work closely with children's social workers and birth parents and also support kinship arrangements at risk of disruption.
- 2.5 In 2012/13 the service offered support to 70 children and young people of which only 6 were eventually received into local authority care. 64 successfully remained at home or within a kinship arrangement. 22 children and young people referred to the scheme were on child protection plans and 27 were on children in need plans (see support care scheme annual report 2012-13 attached at Appendix B for more details).

3 Main issues

- 3.1 Within Leeds, typically 50%+ of children entering care are aged between 0 and 4 years old and by the end of March 2014, circa 140 babies were taken into care this financial year (2013/14) The new proposed child minding service will offer 15 hours childcare per week, 50 weeks a year for up to 30 children across the city to improve life chances and support the reduction of children becoming Looked After.
- 3.2 To ensure that support for the durability of the scheme is available, and that the child-minders receive the specific support they need to understand the risks and provide a child centred service, a dedicated social worker will need to be appointed to the service. Initially it was expected that the support to the service

would be administrative, but the pilot has highlighted the need for a skilled social worker to be able to provide the support which the child-minders and families found invaluable during the pilot. This was crucial around the issues of matching a child-minder with families and helping child-minder's effectively manage risk and deal with situations they were unsure of.

- 3.3 In order to develop city wide preventative services it is proposed that both the child minding scheme and the Support Care Scheme be developed and expanded together to provide a more creative and flexible approach to meeting the needs of families in need.
- 3.4 By recruiting a further 45 respite foster carers, the Support Care Service it is estimated that the Support Care Service will be able to reach a further 258 children per annum and make a significant contribution to the delivery of the Directorate's Budget Plus Obsession for Children Looked After.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 Birth parents and children who have used the service are extremely positive about the scheme that enables children to remain with their birth families.
- 4.1.2 Social workers have identified the need for the expansion of the service.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 Equality screening has taken place (attached at Appendix C) and there are no specific issues raised that requires a full equality impact assessment.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

- 4.3.1 The priority within the Children and Young People's Plan and the council is to reduce the need for children to become looked after. One particular problem is with very young children in Leeds needing to be taken into care. A small scale pilot ran from July – December 2013 to offer child-minding provision to families at risk of children becoming looked after. This was piloted working alongside the support care scheme in the fostering team in the west of the city.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 It is estimated that proposed expansion of the Support Care scheme will increase the direct cost of respite foster care provision by approximately £446k (full year) – see Appendix A. The part year effect this year is estimated at circa £180k allowing for a realistic lead in period for recruiting new carers.
- 4.4.2 The proposed expansion should enable the Support Care Service to reach a further 250+ children. If the service helps 10% of these children remain with their birth families then over £0.5m in care costs will have successfully been avoided.

- 4.4.3 The cost of creating 30 x 15 hour child-minding places for 50 weeks per year, is estimated at £112,500 (full year). The part year effect this year is estimated at £50k again allowing for a realistic lead in time to recruit new child-minders to the scheme. If 5 children are prevented from becoming looked after, the full cost of the 30 places would therefore be recouped.
- 4.4.4 The total direct cost of the proposed expansion is therefore £558K (full year) and £230k in the current financial year.
- 4.4.5 The proposed expansion plans will also have staffing implications. One social worker is currently responsible for the Support Care scheme and to effectively expand the service across the city it is proposed to create 2 further posts (1 x Social Worker Post and 1 x Advanced Practitioner Post)
- 4.4.6 The Advanced Practitioner post will provide oversight, development and co-ordination of the Child-minding and Support Care scheme across the city and ensure that management information and annual reporting is completed to a high standard and the post will also ensure that the service is adequately developed.
- 4.4.7 It is proposed that the Advanced Practitioner report to the Fostering Team manager in the west of the city, who already manages 11 social workers and is unable to take on the city wide responsibility for the co-ordination and development role.
- 4.4.8 The 2 additional posts will cost circa £86k in total (for a full year).

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 There are no specific issues and this report is not subject to Call in.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 The proposed expansion should enable the Support Care Service to reach 250+ children. If the service helps 10% of these children remain with their birth families then over £0.5m in care costs will have successfully been avoided.
- 4.6.2 There is a small risk that the numbers reached are not as far reaching as stated and the savings made not as substantial as envisaged.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The support care and child minding scheme provides short breaks for children who live with their families in the community and aims to prevent children entering care. The outcomes for children have been extremely positive, enabling children to remain within their birth families and preventing children from entering care.

6 Recommendations

- 6.2 The Director of Children's Services is recommended to agree the following:

- To continue the work developed during the child-minding pilot and expand and mainstream the service across the city.
- To expand the work of the support care fostering scheme and to run this together with the child minding scheme.
- To continue to work in the West and to expand to the East and the South areas of the city where there is greatest need.
- The Fostering Service will provide governance for the service, with a multi-agency steering group to be established to review progress, monitor outputs and prepare reports.
- To increase the staffing by one supervising social worker and one advanced practitioner to be made available to support the expansion of the support care and child-minding project.
- Additional child-minders and foster carers to be recruited to form a city-wide provision of child minders and support care foster carers.

7 Background documents¹

7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.