

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Scrutiny Committee
Date: 09.03.16
Report for: Discussion/Decision
Report of: Corporate Director CFW

Report Title

Call-In Response - Review of in-house Children's Homes E/22.02.16/6

Summary

This report provides a response to the Call-In on the above Executive Decision.

It pulls out the key issues raised and provides a response and more information against each area. The detail is outlined in Section 1.0 Background.

Recommendation(s)

That the information provided in the attached report provides assurance for Scrutiny that the Executive Decision made on the Review of Children's Homes, specifically the closure of Fairview, on 22.02.16 be accepted.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Cathy Rooney
Extension: 5167

Background Papers:

Background Information

Implications:

Relationship to Policy Framework/Corporate Priorities	Value for Money Council Budget proposals 2016/17
Financial	The proposal achieves revenue saving of £565k. It will also release two sites for potential capital receipts.
Legal Implications:	Capacity is retained within the system to meet the Council's statutory duties.
Equality/Diversity Implications	The equality and diversity implications been taken into account.
Sustainability Implications	Not applicable
Resource Implications e.g. Staffing / ICT / Assets	There will be staffing implications which will be managed through existing Council procedures and processes.
Risk Management Implications	Not applicable
Health & Wellbeing Implications	The needs of the 2 outgoing residents at Fairview have been fully taken into account in this proposal. Planned moves are in place for both residents.
Health and Safety Implications	Not applicable

1.0 Background

Review of in-house Children's Homes E/22.02.16/6

Reasons for call-in:

The report to the Executive on 22nd February was insufficient in detail to allow the decision to be made.

1. Testing the external market.

Within the report there was reference to the practice of other authorities and their reliance on the external market. However there was no evidence put forward as to the robustness of the external market as applicable to Trafford (other than reference below to an ongoing piece of market testing). No assurance was given that there was sufficient capacity within the Trafford authority area, nearby or far away, and therefore no risk assessment of such distances. The line quoted below did not give anything like the robustness or level of detail we would have expected.

"We are also undertaking a substantial piece of work with the external market to ensure ongoing sufficiency of placements for young people with similar needs."

Response

The report to the Executive explains that there is currently spare capacity in the system to offer in-house residential options, fostering and aftercare as appropriate. On page 2 of the report to Executive it is stated that the private market for children in care provision has been through significant development and re-shaping over the last few years.

To provide further detail; a panel meeting to discuss Placements is held every Monday morning and current capacity within our in-house foster carers and children's homes are reported. We also have the facility to draw from the private market for Foster Placements and Residential Homes if required through the Greater Manchester Residential Framework.

The GM Residential Framework was set up in 2014 and was designed to ensure sufficient capacity of children's home placements within each authority and across the region.

There are 52 different children's homes on R1 Standard Residential Lot, offering 207 beds in total. 31 of the 52 homes are within one of the 10 Greater Manchester authorities. 52% of these GM homes are in a neighbouring borough to Trafford i.e. Salford, Stockport or Manchester.

If a standard residential placement in a children's home is required from the external market, these providers are contacted to see who has capacity and who can best meet the needs of the young person. Should these children's homes be unable to offer support, we can access a database of 'off framework' providers maintained by Placements North West (PNW), who run checks on these homes to ensure compliance.

PNW has recently released its annual census of placement activity and commissioning practice in the North West. The census indicates that the number of residential placements in children's homes purchased remains stable across the region. There is evidence from Placements North West of sufficient capacity across the region to place all residential placements within children's homes in GM (number of beds to number of placements ratio is 693:493).

2. Evidence of demand

Information was given as to the current take-up of places, but we would have expected to see figures showing take-up over a longer period. The position in December 2014 was that Trafford considered that the capacity was needed. Officers have not put forward any data suggesting demand has gone down but have highlighted that there is currently unused capacity. Is this typical, and has it been factored into the business case? At what point in terms of take-up does it become financially prudent to provide our own accommodation. We have not seen evidence of this analysis.

Response

The report to the executive (in 2.2) outlines the unit costs that apply to running Fairview; £5,299 per week. The report also explains that OldHall Road has weekly unit costs of £2,181 and Kingsway Park has a weekly unit cost of £1,786, assuming maximum occupancy. The report also explains that the average unit cost of a similar placement provided by the external market is £3,048.

The information provided in the report addresses the question 'At what point in terms of take-up does it become financially prudent to provide our own accommodation' as it is clear

that the larger the unit the more financially viable it is to run, and that would be the same for any provider. The unit costs associated with a very small unit like Fairview, however, do not make it prudent to provide such expensive accommodation ourselves, particularly when the cost of an unoccupied placement runs to £7,000 per week.

As stated in the report to the Executive, over the last few years there has been a national trend for Local Authorities to reduce dependency on in-house Children's Homes. For example, Manchester Council, who have a very significant population of looked after children, made a decision 2 years ago to reduce the number of in-house Children's Homes in favour of the use of Foster placements for children. The move away from LA's providing Children's Homes themselves is due to two core reasons; the acceptance that family based provision is better for children than institutional care and the growth in the private market's ability to provide placement choices.

Greater Manchester Authorities are currently working together to develop several options to both reduce the Children in Care population and increase commissioning approaches to providing a wider range and extent of placement options. These options will be presented to the Department of Education in April and include developing a Greater Manchester sufficiency strategy to generate capacity in the right areas of demand, for example, placements for adolescents with challenging behaviour.

Additionally, Page 2 of the report to Executive states that Trafford's policy position is to focus on family based provision wherever possible. The intention remains to use Residential Care, in-house or external, as a last resort. By retaining two larger children's home units in-house and the growth in the private market there is confidence that there is sufficient capacity to meet the demand when residential options are required.

3. Alternative use of Fairview for Respite 'Edge of Care' Support

At 3.1 'The Steering Group for Keeping Families Together have identified the value of having a respite offer but are proposing to use the Specialist in-house Fostering Provision known as Me2 for this provision.' There is no explanation offered for this proposal or context to the consideration. We are not given any information in the report as to capacity.

Response

Me2 is a well-established approach to supportive fostering that has been in place in Trafford for several years. The report to the Executive explains that we will use this established model as the favoured approach for respite because it fits with the Trafford approach to offering family based placement solutions wherever possible.

We are currently developing a new approach focusing on preventing children coming into care called 'Keeping Families Together' (KFT). This model will include a number of approaches including the use of highly supported Me2 fostering provision to deliver respite care to children where their family is in crisis or the child would benefit from 'time-out from the home environment. The ability to offer single child placement options in a family setting is a much preferred option to using institutional settings to meeting children's respite needs.

Keeping Families Together (KFT):

There are currently a range of services available that can be accessed by a social worker to support a family they are working with. The Services operate separately and have separate referral processes and eligibility criteria. These services will be reviewed to unify and reconfigure them into a single delivery model known as 'Keeping Families Together' (KFT).

Key outcomes to be achieved via this model will be:

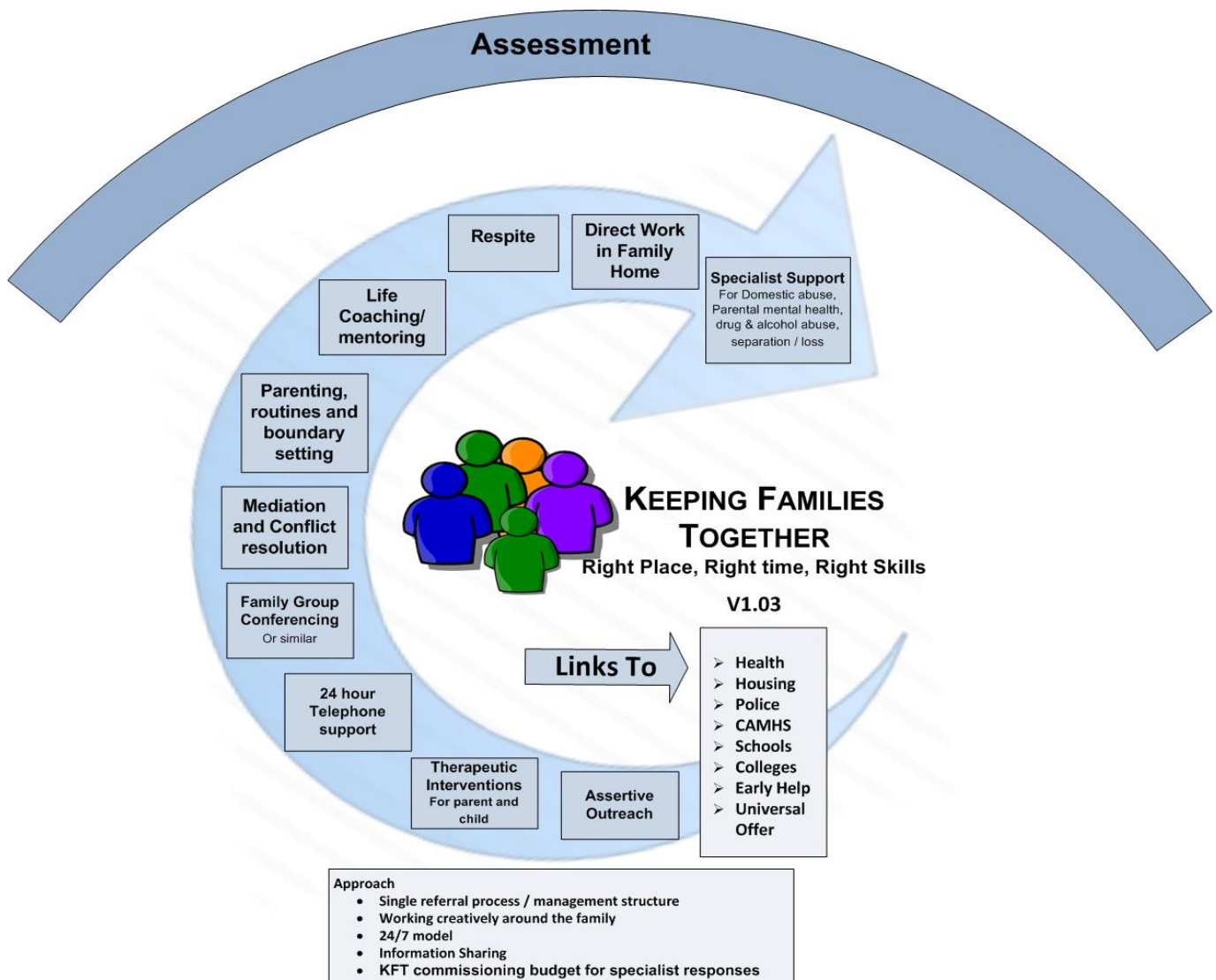
- Reduce the number of children coming into the care system where it is avoidable.
- Reduce the length of time children are in care
- Reduce the number of families that are re-referred for support, ensuring that the support offered achieves sustainable change
- Supporting children and young people to stay in family units, whether this is their own family or in a foster carer setting.
- Reduce the number of children having changes in placements or their needs escalating to a point where they are placed in Out of Borough (OOB) residential placements

The skill range within KFT will be:

- Parenting support
- Youth work skills
- Whole family approach links to adult services of Mental Health, domestic abuse, drug and alcohol services
- Developing resilience around emotional health and wellbeing
- ASB / Criminal justice
- Mediation / negotiation / coaching
- Engaging families who may have a history on non-engagement
- Risk Management Skills (knowing when to escalate) etc.

The team will be able to access other skills and services that will support both child and family. These services will include:

- Direct work with the child
- Direct work within the family home
- Mediation and conflict resolution
- Respite foster placements
- Assertive outreach, establishing routines and boundaries
- Specialist support (Domestic Violence, Parental drug or alcohol abuse , mental health)
- Family Group conferencing (or similar)
- Therapeutic interventions (Parent or child)
- Life coaching/ mentoring
- 24 hours support where appropriate



4. Savings

The savings quoted of £551,140 per annum are based on the running cost of Fairview but assume that there will not be costs from external providers with the loss of this capacity.

Response

The report to Executive explains that there is sufficient capacity in our one of our other children's homes for the existing residents to be moved so such a move would not incur an increased cost to the service.

The budget to run Children's Homes and the budget to pay for external placements are kept separate, on that basis that decisions for the best placement for a child should not be influenced by any existing budget considerations relating to the cost of our own provision. It has already been agreed through the 2016/17 budget setting, approved by Council in February, that the Placements Budget will be remodelled to allow for demographic changes and predicted future demand, and a significant increase in demographic funding in 2016/17 has been allocated to pay for external placements. Therefore there is confidence that any

costs required to pay for placements can be met and the savings achieved will support the Council to achieve its wider budget saving target whilst also developing the Edge of Care model drawing on the evidence of what has worked well.

5. Impact on staff

There is a lack detail in the information relating to staff. The report does not actually say how many staff are affected.

Response

The report to the Executive confirms that a formal HR consultation process would be undertaken. It also states that we would aspire to be able to manage the proposed reduction in staffing through redeployment and "natural wastage". It explains that there are vacancies and a number of posts in the Directorate for which the skill set of staff at Fairview would be applicable.

To provide further detail, the specific staff affected are:

Registered Manager (currently vacant)	This post would no longer be required
Senior Assistant (1 fte)	A similar vacancy exists in another children's home so there may be a redeployment option.
Five fte Residential Child Care Officers (of which 1 fte currently vacant) and two half-time RCCOs.	3 fte RCCO posts are currently vacant in the other Children's Homes. Redeployment would be utilised.
3 part-time Waking Night RCCO (1.93 fte)	Other vacancies within the Directorate will also be considered.

Since informing the staff at Fairview of the recommendation to close Fairview, two existing members of staff have expressed an interest in VR/VER; this further supports the aspiration that we will be able to manage the staffing reductions positively and protect the ongoing employment of displaced staff wherever possible.