

Education, Children & Young People Scrutiny Panel Review into the Protection of Vulnerable Children

Action Plan in response to the Scrutiny Panel Recommendations – Response from Director of Children’s Services

Recommendation	Response	Action	Timescale
1. That the First Option programme continues to be supported and extended.	The First Option service is a key element of the Looked After Children Placement Strategy that has been approved by Cabinet. This recommendation will be responded to in line with the placement strategy.	The placement strategy and accompanying project plan has four distinct workstreams and development of First Options is incorporated within the workstream that focuses on prevention and children on the edge of care.	Target implementation March 2011
2. That guidance on safeguarding children in education emphasise the need for prompt reporting of incidents and avoid automatically referring incidents to Social Care.	<p>The LSCB has written guidance in place for all agencies on the need to make prompt referrals and the circumstances in which this should be made to children’s social care.</p> <p>The Prevention & Early Intervention Strategy promotes early intervention via the use of Common Assessment Framework and lead professional arrangements should additional needs be identified.</p> <p>There is ongoing multi-agency training delivered through the Children’s Trust that addresses this recommendation.</p>	LSCB procedures are being updated in line with statutory guidance within ‘Working Together 2010’. The delivery of the Prevention and Early intervention strategy continues to be promoted with the roll out of CAF/lead professional arrangements and is overseen by the Children’s Trust.	<p>Procedure refresh December 2010</p> <p>PEIS strategy Ongoing</p>
3. That procedures and guidance on reporting are reviewed so that more children and young people are helped at the Universal and Targeted stages. For	<p>The LSCB has written guidance in place for all agencies on the need to make prompt referrals and the circumstances in which this should be made to children’s social care.</p> <p>The Prevention & Early Intervention Strategy</p>	<p>LSCB procedures are being updated in line with statutory guidance within ‘Working Together 2010’.</p> <p>The delivery of the</p>	<p>Procedure refresh December 2010</p> <p>PEIS strategy Ongoing</p>

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<p>example, that there is more public awareness of information and help for appropriate action to take over concerns about a child and to avoid automatically referring incidents to Social Care.</p>	<p>promotes early intervention via the use of Common Assessment Framework and lead professional arrangements should additional needs be identified. Publicity has been developed to promote these arrangements.</p> <p>There is ongoing multi-agency training delivered through the Children's Trust that addresses this recommendation.</p>	<p>Prevention and Early intervention strategy continues to be promoted with the roll out of CAF/lead professional arrangements and is overseen by the Children's Trust.</p>	
<p>4. That resources are made available to provide all social work students with suitable placements.</p>	<p>Social work placements are recognised as a valuable means of recruiting into the service. However they are only one of a number of ways in which the service can be developed and this recommendation will be taken forward in line with a strategic approach to the whole children's social care workforce.</p>	<p>A Recruitment and Retention Strategy for children's social care has been drafted and is due to go to the executive member for decision at his meeting in September 2010. Subject to approval, this recommendation will be progressed in line with that strategy.</p>	<p>September 2010/ Ongoing</p>
<p>5. That resources are made available to backfill empty social worker posts.</p>	<p>Considerable investment has been made to cover social work vacancies in the case holding teams with temporary staff whilst concentrated efforts are being made to recruit to those posts. This recommendation will be addressed within the Recruitment & Retention Strategy.</p>	<p>This will be taken forward in line with the Recruitment and Retention Strategy referred to above.</p>	<p>September 2010/ Ongoing</p>
<p>6. That the graduate trainee scheme for social workers has an annual core group of trainees.</p>	<p>The graduate trainee scheme has proved a valuable, if resource intensive and longer term, approach to filling social work vacancies. Following the in-year reduction in the 'area based grant', the scheme has been suspended in Children's Services. There currently is no shortage of social work students. The Recruitment and Retention Strategy is looking at</p>	<p>This recommendation will be progressed in line with review of the scheme & other initiatives within the Recruitment and Retention strategy referred to above</p>	<p>September 2010/ Ongoing</p>

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	how to attract the best students to Portsmouth with the limited resources available.		
7. That an extra full-time member of staff is recruited to work on early intervention with children with sexually problematic behaviour.	It is recognised that there is a need for specialist intervention in this area of work.	The CAMHS Strategy Group is currently reviewing the priorities within the current financial situation. The services for children and young people with sexually inappropriate behaviour will be considered in line with this review.	March 2011
8. That the practice of kinship care continues to be supported and extended and that greater use made of significant figures in a child's life to help detect and monitor potential neglect.	Kinship care (whereby a child lives with a close relative by mutual agreement with the child and the birth parent(s)) is a valuable option when planning for children who cannot live with their birth parents. Likewise the role that other adults with particular knowledge of the child and family can play is supporting the child can be significant in terms of a child being able to remain within the birth family.	This recommendation will be taken forward in the context of the Looked After Children Placement Strategy referred to above. It is relevant to two of the four workstreams (and accompanying action plans) in particular: Prevention & Children on the Edge of Care and Foster Carers	Ongoing 2010/11
9. That children on the S2S Lost Pupils database continue to be recorded once they reach school leaving age, and perhaps transferred to the missing persons register.	The 'Children Missing Education' database conforms to Government guidance. A separate data base for young people Not in Education Employment and Training picks up those missing education, as does the Children Social Care data base where there are concerns in relation to children's welfare, including those who are 'missing'.	Following the new Government's decision to cancel Contact Point, the Council is investing in new software to enable databases on vulnerable children to share data.	March 2011
10. That in view of the fact that it is harder to compel teenagers to do something against their wishes,	Engagement and participation of young people is critical in order to address needs, multi agency co-ordination of existing services is essential to meet need to address issues of neglect.	The Children's Trust is undertaking a review of Youth Provision which will address this	March 2011

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explore and promote more ways of engaging with them in relation to neglect issues.		recommendation.	
11. That means of communication with schools is improved, for instance, the development and installation of a secure email system.	Following the cancellation of the Building Schools for the Future Programme, which was to provide a strategic IT solution for Schools in the City, alternative programmes are under review.	Schools will need to agree too, and fund a programme.	No agreed timescale at present.
12. That sources of help on money advice, financial inclusion and benefit entitlement are made publicly and freely available to help reduce cases of neglect caused through poverty.	The Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy and the ongoing development of the 'CAFÉ' service and customer interface points e.g. Family Information Service is aimed promoting better signposting to services that will in turn address neglect. A cross cutting Poverty Strategy is in place, which is currently being refreshed.	Ongoing development of the Prevention & early intervention Strategy, CAF & lead professional arrangements aligned to the Children's Trust. The current strategy was approved by Cabinet.	March 2011
13. That sources of support to help parents with parenting skills are made publicly and freely available to prevent neglect, including before the child is born.	PCC has an established parenting strategy in place delivering a variety of programmes based on need overseen by a dedicated parenting co-coordinator. The strategy is meeting its milestones in the delivery of support, publicity materials are in place and services provided are readily accessible.	Ongoing development of parenting support services within the parenting strategy.	Parenting Strategy is due for review in March 2011
14. That Portsmouth City Council petitions for national pay scales for social workers to help with recruitment and retention.	Approach Cabinet member for Children's Services.	Immediate	Within existing staff and resources