

Re-Set of Childrens Services Priorities post COVID-19 Lock down

Report of the Head of Commissioning Childrens Services

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. International data has shown that lock down, as a response to CV 19, has a significant and harmful impact on the most vulnerable children. Children who already live with parental domestic abuse, drug and alcohol harm and mental ill health will be worst affected, with the most life-threatening risk for Infants.
- 1.2. In the UK, reports by Unicef UK, SCIE, Child-Line and the NSPCC already indicate this impact with both Child-Line and the NSPCC reporting a demand in their services since the beginning of the lock-down period. Ofsted have reported a 50% rise in reporting of Serious Incident Notifications (SIN) for infants under 12 months. In Devon we had two SIN for infants in May (these were non-fatal serious injuries and have been discussed with CSOG). Letter to DCS's (22nd May) from Ministers signify the importance of Safeguarding Partners working effectively to identify and respond to multiple vulnerability. These reports alongside the Government summit on Hidden Harm on the 21st May substantiate that we need to be prepared for a wave of demand into social care.
- 1.3. The impact of lock down may also take time to reveal itself and only when schools fully re-open will children be in a position to disclose. With this now delayed until September or beyond, this could cause suspended recognition over the summer. Harm for adolescents is often acted out in self harm, vulnerability to exploitation or anti-social behaviour. Current data for both domestic abuse impact in families and childrens mental health are both showing an increase in the level of harm and injury.
- 1.4. Positively we have also heard that for some children lock down was an opportunity to build stronger relationships with care givers and to reduce the stress and anxiety caused by many transitions in a day between home and school and allowing children to opt out of anti-social behaviour and negative influences on their lives.

2. Listen Hear and Understand

- 2.1. With significantly lower rates of infection and severe illness from the virus rare among children and young people, lockdown was a huge sacrifice on their part for the health and wellbeing of the rest of the population. Almost overnight, their education was disrupted, they were cut off from their support networks and isolated from their friends.
- 2.2. With restrictions easing and life reopening we are seeing the profound effect the lockdown has had on all our children and young people, particularly on the most vulnerable. While the nature of the pandemic and lockdown has meant that some families have been affected more than others, every child and young person in Devon has felt the impact on their lives in one way or another.
- 2.3. While additional services will be targeted at those who need it most, a firm foundation in universal support for all young people will be crucial for the recovery of local communities, Devon and the UK, building back better for the future.
- 2.4. To hear directly from children, young people, families and the community the Devon Children and Families Partnership facilitated three conversations where partners listened directly to the experiences of children and families to then shape our actions for the next phase:

1. Hearing from Young People and Parents (18th June)

The Aim with young people and parents reflect on lived experience and from this inform future purpose.

2. Focus on Hidden Harm and the most vulnerable (with community reps, 2nd July)

The Aim to bring together partnership to focus on the impact of Hidden Harm on children and learning from response to plan for future action. In addition assessing the impact of CV19 on the economy and therefore the context for children living in poverty and life chances for all children in the coming years.

3. Re-shape Children Young Peoples Plan (16th July)

The Aim to reflect on the change in **purpose** in light of CV 19, agree priorities for the year ahead and in light of learning how we will work together.

- 2.5. As a result of the conversations, the re-set has been drafted. This is not to replace the existing Children and Young Peoples Plan but to re-state our commitment to our vision and purpose and then to focus on priorities for the next phase of response and to set the direction for our move towards recovery. This is detailed in the attached draft slides at Appendix A.

3. Next Steps

3.1. We are still in conversation with the draft included here being commented on by children and families through August ensuring that we have represented their voices appropriately. Children will also be asked to design how they would like the plan to be communicated with them. This will then be designed alongside the website content in September.

3.2. We are further developing the delivery of the plan in line with our continued partnership response to the pandemic. We will have in place a dashboard to monitor impact of the actions taken and to assess the impact of CV-19 on all children but with a focus on the most vulnerable.

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Children Services and Schools: Councillor James McInnes

Chief Officer for Childrens Services: Jo Olsson

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Contact for Enquiries: Fiona Fleming Head of Commissioning Childrens Services

<u>BACKGROUND PAPER</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>FILE REFERENCE</u>
Nil		