

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 21st April 2015
Report of: Tony Crane, Director of Children's Services
Subject/Title: Children's Social Care Innovation Programme: Project Crewe
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Rachel Bailey, Safeguarding Children and Adults

1 Report Summary

- 1.1 Cheshire East Council, working closely with Catch 22, a national voluntary organisation, has been successful in securing approximately £1.9m for Innovation from the Department for Education.
- 1.2 The Council is one of only a small number across the country to secure DfE Innovation Fund monies with the express intention of concentrating resources on prevention rather than cure. This raises both the Council's profile on the national stage and puts outcomes for residents at the vanguard of innovation by working closely with families to co-design effective and accessible services.
- 1.3 Evaluation and learning from the 'Cheshire East Way' could well be rolled out across the country.
- 1.4 This report outlines the proposed investment, why it is innovative and the outcomes it will deliver. In addition, the report will seek the formal approvals to reflect the financial approvals necessary to make the programme a reality.

The Children's Social Care Innovation Programme supports the development, testing and sharing of more effective ways of supporting children and families who need help from children's social care services. It has two main focus areas:-

- Focussing on prevention rather than cure.
 - Rethinking children's social work – improving the quality and impact of children's social work;
 - Rethinking support for adolescents in or on the edge of care.
- 1.5 It is extremely positive that Cheshire East Council has been awarded this grant; many councils applied and were unsuccessful. The project has the potential to really strengthen and enhance the service we offer to the most vulnerable children and their families in Cheshire East.
 - 1.6 Cheshire East is an improving Council in respect of our social care function, verified recently by Ofsted in our progress inspection. Over the last 18 months we have transformed our social care workforce and improved the quality of our front line practice, particularly to strengthen the "front door" arrangement and the quality and impact of our child protection service. We believe that to

make the progress for our children in need we need a different approach. The potential therefore, that the innovation project offers us is not just to meet some of our current challenges, it will test the contribution that a more innovative approach can make in taking the Authority to where it aspires to be, which is good or outstanding.”

- 1.7 The intended outcomes of the project (currently known as project Crewe), are
- To test the validity of statutory guidance and to demonstrate the benefits of Local Authorities working with non-statutory social businesses in this area of work.
 - Reduce social care team caseloads, by eliminating unnecessary cycle of risk and need within Children in need, and reducing unnecessary escalations to Child Protection status, which in turn will reduce staff turnover and improve the quality of practice.
 - Realise significant financial savings to the local authority by reducing reliance on agency social workers; and increasing the cost-benefit of interventions.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To authorise the Council to act as accountable body for the DfE Section 31 Grant funded Innovation Programme.
- 2.2 To approve a supplementary revenue estimate for 2015/16 of £998k.
- 2.3 To note that a further revenue estimate of £899k will be required as part of budget setting for the 2016/17 budget.

3 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 Cheshire East Council was approached by Catch 22 a reputable national voluntary organisation with a proven track record of working in partnership with the council to apply for DfE funding to deliver services to children in need in the Crewe area in an innovative new way. Catch 22 are fully aware of the challenges in delivering services in Crewe and the challenges in recruiting social workers in this area. Innovations in the service will include:
- 3.2 Greater use of **Non-social work qualified Family Practitioners** and **use of ‘Community Capital’** to increase resources available to children’s social care and challenge current statutory guidance whilst ensuring that professional oversight is maintained on all cases.
- 3.3 In practice this means that those Children in Need who are not on the cusp of Child Protection or edge of care but do need prolonged intervention to maintain them safely within their family, improve their outcomes and life opportunities, will be provided with intensive and sustained interventions via Catch 22 with oversight from social work consultants.

- 3.4 This approach should also ensure that those children who require a social work intervention as they are in need of protection will also receive an improved service from social workers with manageable caseloads.
- 3.5 The draft award agreement with DfE specifies a number of commitments from the Council as the accountable body; others flow from the original bid document. The most significant of these are listed below:
- Funding is made under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. In summary that means that:
 - the amount of a grant under this section, the manner of its payment and any conditions attached are for the person paying it to determine.
 - Funding is only provided for the financial year in which it has been allocated.
 - Payments are linked to milestones.
 - Provide matched funding for at least £377k over the life of the project. In addition, the Council will be required to provide £82k of in-kind funding through a contribution towards corporate overheads (e.g. IT, Office accommodation etc.).

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The expected funding flows for the Innovation Grant monies are firstly an upfront amount prior to commencement of the project (which has been received, as outlined above) and then quarterly grant instalments over the next 12 months.
- 4.2 The vast majority of the costs for the project are staffing. Catch 22 will recruit and manage the staff and therefore monies will be transferred to Catch 22 on a quarterly basis in advance to meet staffing costs.
- 4.3 The Chief Operating Officer and the Executive Director of Strategic Commissioning will explore options to meet the Council's £377k share of these costs.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 This request for an urgent decision follows the process described in the Council Constitution Appendix 4: Urgent Decisions: Cabinet / Executive matters.
- 5.2 The Council's authority to act is derived from the general power of competence under the Localism Act 2011.

6 Governance Arrangements

- 6.1 Governance is via an Implementation Board, comprising of key *Executive Sponsors* who will provide oversight, assurance and guidance and will submit regular reports to the LSCB to ensure the pilot achieves its stated objectives. The Implementation Board will become the Delivery Board following

successful implementation, and will continue to monitor and assure delivery during the pilot period and the project will report regularly to The Local Safeguarding Children' Board.

7 Risk Management

- 7.1 As part of the development of this project a comprehensive risk log was developed and is on page 27 of Appendix 1(Catch 22 – CSCIP proposal)
- 7.2 Having considered the options and risks set out in this report the Council agrees to be the accountable body for the Innovation Fund on the basis that:
- The funding is split across 2015/16 - £998k and 2016/7 - £899k;
 - The risks have been identified, considered and can be mitigated;
 - Each participating organisation will provide a letter of support outlining their commitment to the project and their obligations

8 Conclusions

- 8.1 Having considered the options and risks set out in this report the Council agrees to be the accountable body for the Innovation Fund on the basis that:
- The funding is split across 2015/16 - £998k and 2016/7 - £899k;
 - The risks have been identified, considered and can be mitigated;
 - Each participating organisation will provide a letter of support outlining their commitment to the project and their obligations

9 Background papers

- 9.1 The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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