

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee/Panel:	Children & Families Advisory Panel
Date:	7 June 2016
Title:	National Secure Welfare Coordination Unit
Reference:	7514
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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1. Summary

1.1. The purpose of this paper is to inform Members of the newly formed National Secure Welfare Coordination Unit in Hampshire which is grant funded for a 12 month pilot by the Department for Education (DfE). The new unit will receive and co-ordinate all referrals for secure welfare placements across England. A period of testing commenced on 3 May 2016 with formal launch of the service from 16 May 2016.

2. Contextual information

2.1. Secure Children's Homes provide vital support for many of the country's most vulnerable children. They provide placements to children through criminal proceedings and through welfare orders. Over the years, demand for secure places through criminal proceedings have decreased which caused a number of local authorities to close their Secure Children Homes, more recently demand has shifted from criminal placements to secure welfare placements and problems in accessing welfare placements has now grown.

2.1 Following initial work by the DfE to assess the source of the problems affecting the system, in March 2015 Ministers agreed there was a case for a better planned and co-ordinated approach to the commissioning of secure welfare places. The Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) and the Local Government Association (LGA) reviewed the operation of the secure welfare estate last year. The recommendation from this was for a centralised co-ordination unit to be established. The use of this unit by Local Authorities is voluntary however there will be strong encouragement from the DfE to utilise the unit to support the national future development of secure welfare provision.

The unit is designed to serve two purposes:

- To provide one clear point of contact, source of information and help for local authorities seeking to place a child into a secure home;
 - To provide a mechanism for collecting more systematic data on national demand for places, both to support local authority providers in their planning and to inform Ministerial decisions later this year on commissioning arrangements for Secure Children's Homes over the longer term.
- 2.2 Hampshire County Council was successful in its grant bid to run the unit and a grant has been awarded for the period to 31 March 2017 (with the option of both parties, of an extension for a further six months).
- 2.3 The Unit is positioned within the Integrated Placements Service having a natural affinity with the Placement Commissioning Team who receive and source all specialist non-schools placements for children in Hampshire. The primary governance will be provided through a monthly (reducing to bi-monthly after three to six months) Secure Welfare Board whose members include representatives from Youth Justice Board (YJB), Secure Accommodation Network (SAN), Secure Children's Homes, local authorities, NHS England and DfE. Quarterly progress reports and grant review meetings will be held and a seminar with all stakeholders is being planned to review progress in December 2016.
- 2.4 The Unit consists of a full-time Team Manager and two full-time Placement Officers, operating office hours Monday to Thursday, extended hours until 7pm on a Friday (in accordance with demand statistics) and an on-call service.
- 2.5 Vacancy management processes are being managed jointly with the YJB and SAN with joint communications agreed between the three bodies to encourage use of the Unit. The benefits of the Unit have been addressed through briefings and Frequently Asked Questions and through face to face meetings being set up between all Secure Children's Homes and the Team Manager to foster good working relationships and extensive knowledge of the resources available which will support better matching processes.
- 2.6 Initial data collation and data storage processes were established by Hampshire Data and Information Team (DaIT) and Hampshire IT to enable the Unit to function and meet the requirements of the DfE and the key performance indicators. A medium-long term solution is being developed by Hampshire IT to support the Unit more effectively. This work is also being supported by a Data Analyst from the DfE.
- 2.7 A good initial response was received from other local authorities during the testing period with 11 local authorities coming forwards to support the pilot. Communications to all the local authorities have been supported by the ADCS.
- 2.8 A Memorandum of Understanding and confidentiality statement have been produced to assure Secure Children's Homes of the integrity of their data and that the security of their commercial pricing will be kept confidential. In acknowledgement of one of the Secure Children's Homes being owned by Hampshire County Council, clarity has also been given to this relationship and

the expectations that the Unit will operate independently of the line management of this service.

3. Finance

3.1. A grant has been awarded by the DfE of £186,423 to 31/03/2017.

4. Performance

4.1. The key performance indicators on which the Unit's success will be measured by the DfE are:

- The Unit is taking referrals and helping local authorities place children by 16 May 2016;
- All SCHs and LAs have been engaged and encouraged to use the unit's services by 1 June;
- 85% of LAs signed up to using the unit's services by 1 November 2016.
- LA and SCH satisfaction with the service provided surveyed at 85% satisfied or very satisfied;
- 85% of complete referrals from LAs provided with a list of potential placements within two hours;
- Data reports issued to DfE by the 10th working day of the month following that to which the data refers;
- Volume and trend data is in place by June 2016.

5. Conclusion

This is an excellent opportunity for Hampshire to use its experience and expertise to influence national practice and developments in the provision of specialist secure accommodation. The work of the pilot will assist Ministers with the future direction of secure welfare placements, ensuring that the sector is able to develop and provide sustainability for the current and future needs of young people.

6. Recommendation

That the Children & Families Advisory Panel note the creation of the Secure Welfare Coordination Unit.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

NB: If the 'Other significant links' section below is not applicable, please delete it.

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Date</u>
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives		
<u>Title</u>		<u>Date</u>
The Children (Secure Accommodation) Regulations		1991
Children Act 1989		1989

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equality Duty

1.1. The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- a) The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- c) Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

1.2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

Children in care are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. Children's early experiences can have long-term impacts on their emotional and physical health, social development, education and future employment. Most children are taken into care because of abuse or neglect. Children entering the care system are likely to have complex needs and those who are subject to Section 25 Children Act 1989, likely to have the most complex and challenging needs.

The work of the unit will serve to support the equality of access to secure welfare placements for all young people in England. There is little or no adverse impact anticipated from this project.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1. The project may indirectly have a positive impact on crime and disorder through ensuring young people receive appropriate and timely intervention that supports them to keep themselves and others safe.

3. Climate Change:

- a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?
- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

No impact on climate change identified.