

# PEOPLE (CHILDREN) SCRUTINY PANEL

29<sup>th</sup> November 2012

## SAFEGUARDING ADOLESCENTS TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Report of the Strategic Director for People

STRATEGIC AIM:	<b>Creating a Brighter Future for All</b>
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### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report sets out the background to the Safeguarding Adolescents Task and Finish Group and contains some proposals for the terms of reference for this group.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That Scrutiny Panel agrees the terms of reference for the Task and Finish group.**
- 2.2 **That Scrutiny Panel nominates members for this group**

### 3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The last Scrutiny Panel, held on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2012, agreed to commence a new Task and Finish Group on Safeguarding Adolescents, commencing in March 2013.
- 3.2 As reported to the previous meeting, there has been a rise in Rutland's adolescent workload. Whilst the number of referrals has not increased, there has been a large increase in the number of adolescents subject to child protection plans (from 1 this time last year to 6 currently).
- 3.3 In addition, high numbers of adolescents are assessed as being children in need and some are looked after children. There are currently a number of young people known to multiple services, involved in offending behaviour and on the cusp of becoming looked after.
- 3.4 The behaviour of adolescents can be challenging for parents, schools and the community. More effective packages of support are required, focusing on early intervention, and in the context of "Think Family" to prevent homelessness, school exclusion, lack of training/employment, mental ill-health, substance misuse, anti-social behaviour, offending, teenage pregnancy and other negative outcomes for this group of people and for those upon whom their behaviour impacts. The impact of the increase in the education participation age also needs to be taken into account in this work.

- 3.5** There are a number of risk factors which increase the risk of adolescents becoming known to children's services, other agencies and ultimately becoming accommodated, including:
- a) Domestic violence within the home
  - b) Drugs and alcohol (both parental and young people)
  - c) Mental health
  - d) Behaviour (sexually active, beyond parental control) and family relationships
  - e) Antisocial behaviour particularly adolescent males
  - f) Influence of class upon expectations of young people leading to parental rejection.
  - g) Pressure from agencies to accommodate rather than have robust multi-agency interventions to manage the risks.
- 3.6** Nationally, statistics show that the impact on these adolescents as they move into adult life, if they are not enabled to lead healthy and productive lives, is dramatic and costly.
- 3.7** For example, youth unemployment costs the country £155m per week and youth imprisonment costs £23m per week. This is in addition to the social impact, including upon the next generation when these young people become parents and the cycle continues.
- 3.8** Local authorities have a statutory duty to "safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need" at all ages up to 18 years old. A report was published by the House of Commons Education Committee on the 7<sup>th</sup> November 2012. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmeduc/137/137.pdf>
- 3.9** This report titled "*Children first: the child protection system in England*" indicated that the child protection system is not meeting the needs of older children (aged 14-18).
- 3.10** The inquiry has revealed a worrying picture with regard to the protection and support of this group. This is characterised by a lack of services for adolescents, a failure to look beyond behavioural problems, a lack of recognition of the signs of neglect and abuse in teenagers, and a lack of understanding about the long-term impact of these factors on them.
- 3.11** The report makes it clear that the system as a whole is still failing this particular group in key ways and recommends to Government that they urgently review the support offered by the child protection system to older children and consult on proposals for re-shaping services to meet the needs of this very vulnerable group.
- 3.12** The proposal laid out in this Scrutiny paper is therefore timely and places Rutland at the forefront of development in this area.
- 3.13** An officers' Adolescent Focus Group is currently undertaking some work to map the processes in relation to a number of young people who are assessed as Vulnerable Children.

- 3.14** Although this work is at an early stage, there are already indications of a number of factors which, had they been addressed earlier with families and young people, may have changed some of the outcomes.
- 3.15** It is hoped that this work will help to identify the service gaps and provide a steer to the Adolescents Task and Finish Group to improve the outcomes for adolescents, including a strong focus on early intervention, prior to adolescence.

#### **4 TERM OF REFERENCE FOR THE OFFICER ADOLESCENT FOCUS GROUP**

##### **4.1 The purpose of the Adolescent Focus Group:**

- a) To review the needs of the adolescents known to RCC, identify whether these children and their families could have benefitted from earlier intervention.
- b) Identify service gaps.
- c) Make recommendations to improve outcomes for young people to the Safeguarding Adolescent Strategy Task and Finish Group.
- d) Consult with children, young people and their parents/carers.

##### **4.2 Membership**

Head of Service Vulnerable Children- Chair  
Team Manager- Intensive Family Support  
Team Manager – Team 11  
Team Manager – Team 2 – Stronger Communities  
Head Teacher representing Academies  
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

##### **4.3 Frequency of Meetings**

This group meets for 2 hours monthly. Commitment of members to attend or to send a fully briefed substitute is required.

#### **5 PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE TASK AND FINISH SAFEGUARDING ADOLESCENTS GROUP**

##### **5.1 Purpose of the Safeguarding Adolescent Task and Finish Group**

1. To consider proposals from the officer Adolescent Focus Group to address gaps in provision and improve outcomes for adolescents.
2. To identify local strategic priorities and commissioning opportunities relevant to the development of adolescent related support services and future strategy development.
3. To promote and ensure engagement, involvement and empowerment of adolescents and their families.
4. To aim to resolve differences between partners which are barriers to progress and cannot be resolved elsewhere.
5. To focus on evidence-based approaches and aim to reach the most vulnerable, especially the 10-15 age group.

6. To demonstrate leadership by senior officials and their commitment to early intervention and prevention.
7. To ensure the views of young people and their parents/carers are heard.

## 5.2 Membership

- a) 6 Elected Members from the People (Children) Scrutiny Panel on a proportional basis (4 Cons, 1 RAC, 1 Others).
- b) All non councillor members of the People (Children) Scrutiny Panel
- c) Outside agencies, for example, the Princes' Trust, to be agreed

The Task and Finish Group will be supported by:

- a) Wendy Poynton - Assistant Director
- b) Head of Service Vulnerable Children

## 5.3 Frequency of Meetings

This group will meet approximately monthly and a programme for the meetings will be agreed at the first meeting. Meetings will be either during the day or in the evening but this will be determined by the members themselves.

## 6. RISK MANAGEMENT

RISK	IMPACT	COMMENTS
Time	Medium	There are no particular time pressures associated with the proposal, but it is important that the work is progressed to ensure our young people are safe.
Viability	Low	One senior officer will be allocated from the directorate to support the group.
Finance	Low	Can be undertaken within existing resources
Profile	High	This proposal is a topic of both local and national interest and there would be high level media interest in the event of a significant safeguarding incident.
Equality & Diversity	High	This work is designed to benefit a particularly vulnerable section of the community.

**Background Papers**  
None

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