

Respite Care update

Reference Number: PAF/11/20

Report title: Respite Care in Essex - update	
Report to: People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
Report author: Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer	
Date: 18 June 2020	For: Consideration and identifying any follow-up scrutiny actions
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County Divisions affected: Not applicable	

1. Introduction

This item is to be updated on follow-up/action points agreed as a result of a discussion on respite care on 10 October 2019.

2. Action required

The Committee is asked to consider:

- (i) **the attached latest update (Appendix 2).**
- (ii) **To consider any follow-up work and how it wishes to continue to monitor the service review underway.**

3. Background

- 3.1 This item is a follow up on previous discussions on respite care held on 27 June 2019 and 10 October 2019. The first discussion had initially been prompted by issues raised in a petition received on the services provided at Lavender and Maples facilities and was expanded to include broader discussion about respite care in Essex.
- 3.2 A link to the meeting papers for the above meeting in June is here - [PAF 27 June 2019 meeting papers](#).

In particular, at the 27 June 2019 meeting the Committee recommended that the Cabinet Member:

- (i) Undertake a review of the respite care assessment process to address issues raised in the meeting specifically around the transparency of the process and the eligibility criteria thresholds and to consider service user representation on the assessment panel;
- (ii) Review procedures to improve communications with families and carers particularly around the assessment process, appeals process;

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- (iii) Investigate and check that social workers are providing all necessary advice on options and process to escalate dissatisfaction with assessment outcomes, including the formal complaints procedure;
 - (iv) To report back on the review being undertaken to investigate further empowering some families through the Direct payments Scheme.
 - (v) Provide further information on historical trends for overnight respite care demand with particular reference to the type of service provided at Lavender and Maples.
- 3.3 On 10 October 2019 the Committee received an update on planned actions as a result of the discussion in June. A link to the meeting papers for that meeting is here – [PAF agenda papers - 10 October 2019](#) . An extract of the minutes of that discussion is attached as **Appendix 1** to this report.
- 3.4 For this update the Cabinet Member and officers have been asked to respond to and provide the following:
- Update on the workshop held before the lockdown and next steps
 - To include how the service review and future working with service users may need to be reframed if current pandemic restrictions continue for a significant period of time and how much can be progressed remotely.
 - To include some comment on how the pandemic has impacted on this client group (families retrenched, shielding, schooling etc) and how that may impact on future service provision particularly around addressing anxieties and managing expectations.
 - To include some comment on developing flexibility in the service offer and direct payments provision.
 - Opportunity to highlight some of the specific ECC actions taken and provision during the pandemic for vulnerable groups – link with Essex Welfare Service etc.

4. Update and Next Steps

The update is attached as Appendix 2(i) and 2(ii). County Councillor Louise McKinlay, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, and Russel Breyer, Director of Local Delivery (South), Essex County Council will attend to present the update. Next steps are as proposed under Action Required.

5 List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – extract minutes from 10 October 2019.

Appendix 2 – update from Cabinet Member and senior officer

Extract of the minutes of a meeting of the People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee held on 10 October 2019

Minute 4.

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The Committee considered report PAF/23/19 which specifically addressed action points arising from the June 2019 meeting of the Committee. The following joined the meeting to introduce the update and support the discussion.

Councillor Louise McKinlay, Cabinet Member – Children and Families,
Christina Pace, Head of Strategic Commissioning and Policy, Essex County Council,
Russell Breyer, Director Local Delivery (Children and Families).

During discussion the following was highlighted and/or noted:

- A review had been undertaken to determine the focus of future work as part of developing a three year strategy. The focus would go beyond just residential care and include other options such as foster care, direct payments.
- The Cabinet Member confirmed that the Maples and Lavender facilities would not close during the three year strategy review period.
- The service would also look to increase fostering numbers.
- Families had indicated that they wanted more opportunity to highlight their own profile, circumstances and challenges during the assessment process. The service had recruited a development officer whose priority would be to further develop that assessment process. The appointee was a full-time senior social worker who would not be distracted by case work.
- The volume of cases for the assessment panel was high with only a 10-15 minute timeslot available for each case. The family social worker represented families at the hearing.
- Through engagement with families the service would scope out how to improve communication and feedback on the assessment process.
- In the end a professional decision would be made on assessing need. However, the families' social worker had an ongoing relationship with families and would review arrangements if they were visibly not working for them.
- The service was looking to find better ways to communicate with families and involve them more in developing future service design.
- Families would be invited to join workshops being held to help shape future service design. The service was also exploring how to include families that were using foster carers in those discussions.

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- The managers of the Lavender and Maples short break homes would also help shape the offer for those being considered for respite care.
- A late appendix report had been tabled at the meeting. Members queried whether data was available on the number of applications and referrals made. Whilst contributors did not have precise figures to hand they did stress that the complexity of cases was increasing and that they were increasingly having to respond to that challenge often with further resource. There had been some disruption to services and in some cases officers had worked through other options with families and in most cases they had been able to meet needs within a reasonable timeframe.

Conclusion:

The Chairman thanked the contributors for their update. The Committee were encouraged by the work now being planned to include families in future service design. It was agreed that a further update would be provided in Spring 2020 once the workshops had been held and further work on preparing a draft strategy undertaken