

HEREFORDSHIRE CHILD CONCERN MODEL

PROGRAMME AREA RESPONSIBILITY: SOCIAL CARE AND STRATEGIC HOUSING

CABINET

4TH DECEMBER, 2003

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To support this fundamental approach to protecting vulnerable children in Herefordshire.

Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision

Recommendations

- That
- (a) the outlined Child Concern Model (Appendix 1) be approved;
 - (b) Cabinet makes any comments regarding the Model and approach to vulnerable children in Herefordshire;
 - (c) appropriate Councillors and officers be signatories to the Model with other significant agencies in the area of protecting vulnerable children;
 - (d) the Model be endorsed by the Council from its implementation date in April 2004; and
 - (e) the frequency of reporting on the Child Concern Model from the Chair of the Area Child Protection Committee (or proposed Local Safeguarding Board) be agreed. This report to be at least annually or deferred by any proposed legislation.

Reasons

The Child Concern Model is an important aspect of responding to the Victoria Climbié report (Laming) and the Green Paper, "Every Child Matters".

Considerations

1. The Child Concern Model is an approach developed by the Herefordshire Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) to help develop an appropriate response to vulnerable children.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Henry Lewis, Head of Social Care (Children) on 01432 261605

2. This model evolved from discussions in December 2002 between agencies (voluntary, police, education, social services, NSPCC, health, school representatives, Women's Aid). A draft document was produced in July which following widespread consultation was approved in October 2003 by the Area Child Protection Committee. Henry Lewis, Head of Social Care (Children) chairs ACPC.
3. The model is part of Herefordshire's Multi-agency response both to the report on the death of Victoria Climbié (Laming Report) and the Green Paper "Every Child Matters" with particular emphasis on the area of 'Effective Protection'.
4. The Model's emphasis on shared views across the agencies (voluntary sector and private sector) on what a child's needs are (level of vulnerability); a common language of need across the agencies the development of a common assessment and capturing information about vulnerable children earlier. The object of this is to improve forward planning of services in Herefordshire.
5. The agencies' aim to develop such an approach across Herefordshire is ambitious. Continuity, shared definitions and approaches across the statutory and voluntary sector will take some time to achieve. From implementation this will be a two year programme which will be evaluated to help refinement and development.
6. The Model has already been seen by Herefordshire Council's Social Services Inspectorate link business manager. It was positively approved as contributing to the Council's response to the Joint Review of the Authority in June 2003.
7. The Laming Report made it clear that accountability for Child Protection was from 'the top to the bottom' and any changes to approach should be properly scrutinised and endorsed by the major agencies. All should be informed of progress and concerns in child protection and issues associated with vulnerable children. The Chair of the ACPC is presenting the Model for initial endorsement to Herefordshire Council (Cabinet, December 2003) and Herefordshire Primary Care Trust (December 2003). He will also be presenting the Model at a primary and secondary head teacher meeting in early 2004, executive committees/boards of Probation service and voluntary sector (HCCA).
8. The Model will be implemented in April 2004. There is a period of briefings in January – March 2004, groups include childminders/playgroups to social workers, community based health staff and police officers. The process is being co-ordinated by the ACPC using a project manager based in the children's division of Social Care and Strategic Housing.
9. It is important that the Model is endorsed by Herefordshire Council, Herefordshire Primary Care Trust and West Mercia Police.
10. The progress of the Model should be reported at executive level. The possible changes in the way children's services are organised over the next two years should not make any essential difference to the Model which is practice focused.

Alternative Options

There are no alternative options

Risk Management

None identified in financial terms.

Consultees

Constituent agencies/voluntary sector as reflected in Herefordshire Area Child Protection Committee.

Background Papers

None identified