

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW
AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

11 JUNE 2012

DE-COMMISSIONING OF FAMILY ACTION SERVICES

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG
PEOPLE'S SERVICE**

Purpose of report

1. To consider consultation responses to the proposed de-commissioning of Family Action services: Two Halves One Whole and Valuing Families from the Early Intervention Grant held by Children and Young People's Services (CYPS), which will be considered by the Cabinet on 12 June 2012.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The paper on the Funding proposals relating to the Voluntary and Community Sector organisations from the Chief Executive's Department and Children and Young People's Service budgets which laid out the process for the de-commissioning of services with the voluntary and community sector, was considered by the Cabinet on 14 December 2010.
3. A review of the commissioned services delivered by Family Action (a charity that provides services to disadvantaged and socially isolated families) took place during 2011. This resulted in a recommendation to consult on whether the two services of Two Halves One Whole and Valuing Families should be de-commissioned and for the continuation of two further services currently being delivered by Family Action, which represents a significant proportion of the total funding (£328,225) received by Family Action from Leicestershire County Council.
4. The Cabinet considered a report on the impact of grant reductions 2011/12 on 5 April 2011 and approved the associated actions within the Children and Young People's Service to achieve the necessary savings and the allocation of the 2011/12 Early Intervention Grant.

Background

5. Proposals on the de-commissioning of the services have been subject to a 12-week period of consultation with the affected organisation and service users following the Council's Compact Policy (nationally agreed protocol for consultation within the sector). The consultation invited affected organisations to comment on the proposals and submit supporting information including an assessment of the impact on their organisation and service users and a business plan to take account of future savings proposals. Support from County Council commissioning and from Voluntary Action Leicestershire was offered to organisations as part of the process. The consultation closed in May 2012.

Family Action commissioned projects

Two Halves One Whole

6. The project is commissioned by Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City Council to work with dual heritage children aged 5 to 16 years and their families, as an early intervention service to promote positive identity, self esteem and positive wellbeing during group sessions. It is proposed to withdraw all Leicestershire County Council funding for this project (£29,711). Leicester City Council is currently reviewing all their children's services, which includes Two Halves One Whole.

Valuing Families

7. The project supports parents/carers with a learning disability (the criteria does not exclude parents who do not have a formal diagnosis of a learning disability). Annual monitoring information available for the review (2009/2010) recorded that the service worked with thirteen families, working to meet their individual needs, e.g. strategies for managing child behaviour and introduce families to other appropriate services. The intention of the service is to offer early intervention but in some cases the children and young people may be on a child protection plan. It is proposed to withdraw all funding for this project (£76,000).

Other services delivered by Family Action

8. CYPS will continue to work with Family Action through the remaining two projects of Therapeutic Social Care and Post Sex Abuse, delivering statutory functions.

Consultation

9. Consultation on proposals to de-commission the two services commenced in February 2012 and was carried out in accordance with the provisions of commissioning agreements and the Leicestershire Compact.

10. Consultation responses include feedback from user groups and individuals which highlight the value of services provided and opposition to funding proposals. Details of the consultation responses are contained in Appendix A 'Service user consultation responses' and Appendix B 'Stakeholder Questionnaire results' to this report.
11. Consultation on the effect of the proposal on Family Action reported a reduction in staff currently employed within the two projects and a re-organisation of local administrative and management structures. Family Action would still be able to deliver on the two projects commissioned through CYPS. The de-commissioning of the two projects does not affect County Council staff. Family Action would still be able to deliver on the remaining two projects commissioned through CYPS.
12. Through the analysis of the monitoring information provided for the review, it was noted that there was a decrease in the number of service users to the two projects. Public sector services, through the completion of Equality Impact Assessments and monitoring information on service users, have continued to develop their expertise and increase skills to meet the needs of a wider range of service users, particularly for the nine protected characteristics. Together with the exercise to re-prioritise services in line with the reduction in grant funding, the proposal to de-commission Two Halves One Whole and Valuing Families continues to be the recommendation.

Background papers

13. Funding proposals relating to Voluntary and Community Sector organisations from the Chief Executive's Department and Children and Young People's Services budgets – Cabinet report presented on 14th December 2010.
14. Compact Leicestershire – June 2011
15. Consultation responses from organisations are available for Member's inspection at the Members' Secretariat office.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

16. The report to Cabinet will be circulated to all members via the Members' Information Service.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Service user consultation responses

Appendix B: Stakeholder Questionnaire results

Equal Opportunities Implications

17. The Public Sector Duty requires public bodies (local authorities included) to have regard to the following three aims that make up the General Equality Duty:
 - eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
18. Leicestershire County Council has adopted the equality impact assessment approach in discharging the public sector duty, ensuring impact on the protected characteristics have been appropriately assessed.
19. Equalities assessments have been carried out on funding proposals. A review of current provision identified services accessible for current service users of the two projects. Training and development of skills and knowledge has taken place to embed best working practice to support the needs of dual heritage children and young people and parents with learning disabilities into mainstream practice.

People Implications

20. Information received from Family Action regarding the impact of the proposal to de-commission Two Halves One Whole and Valuing Families states that this proposal will have a direct impact on the operational staff employed within the projects and have an impact on the management and administrative structure within Family Action.

Resource Implications.

21. The decommissioning of the service will deliver £105,700 in savings which will enable CYPS to meet the £4.2m savings requirement within the Early Intervention Grant agreed within the 2011/12 Medium Term Financial Strategy.
22. The Director of Corporate Resources has been consulted on this report.

Appendix A: Service user consultation responses¹ Valuing Families

How do you feel about the Valuing Families project closing?

- Disappointed to be losing support.
- Worried about loss of support and help and how it will affect people's ability to get out of hard situations.
- There's no other support available for us, even through the CAF
- It's a shame if it does end. We got support when we needed it. Where will other families go?
- There will be no way to help families out.
- Bad – it should help families like us.
- Quite angry about it.
- Bad that it is closing. A lot of people need the support and there is no resources. I'm a single mum with special needs and Bi-polar disorder. I don't want to end up back in hospital.

How have things changed for you since you worked with the Valuing Families project?

- I have developed independence.
- Help in getting out and about.
- Able to spend 1-1 time with children through support of the family support worker.
- Feel like I have more freedom to be a parent.
- We have a better family structure now. He knows we're the parents and we're in charge and our relationship is better because of it.
- More confidence.
- We got practical and emotional support which helped me get the confidence and ability to parent well.
- Things are a lot better, lot more support since they've been involved. Instead of worrying we can find the support we need. Better than good.
- Without Family Action my kids would be in care and I would be in a mental institution!
- Got better understanding and support.
- Feels like we're able to have a fresh start and make changes stick this time.
- I have had 3 workers from Family Action. One of the support workers and the student SW were good and help me make changes but I didn't get on with the other one.
- There have been ups and downs but it feels like things are getting easier.
- Got support with my children and family support worker helped us to realise the importance of talking to each other and doing things together.
- My hair is growing back. I don't feel like I need to pull it out anymore!
- Learnt to do more things with the children like take them swimming and play with them.
- I have put boundaries in place and have more control.
- Things have been good.
- I feel good now that my family support worker is back working with me. If it wasn't for her I would be in a bad place now.

How have things changed for your children since working with the Valuing Families project?

- His school said that he is behaving a lot better for longer.
- He's going to more after school activities. Our support worker helped find something appropriate for him as he has ADHD and struggles to make friends.

¹ There were 16 service users consulted as part of the consultation process, which equates to 55% of the overall referrals received in 2011/2012

- I know how important it is to have some 1-1 time. Our support worker helped us to make time for it.
- I've only just started working with my family support worker but I feel positive about making change with support.
- He was missing a lot of school but that has improved now because we have attended medical appointments and got the right medication for his epilepsy.
- They're not so boisterous and happier to play together.
- Put things in place which are easy for them to understand.
- Learnt to be more respectable of games and are more playful. They tidy away.
- They have been the same.
- Things were going well but I missed the support when my family support worker pulled out and things started to dip. Things are getting better again because I feel I can talk opening to her. Social services are involved now and they don't understand my sons emotional feelings after being moved from school to school because of his behaviour.

If there was no Valuing Families Project where would you go for support?

- Don't know of any other support available.
- Homestart – but I know they won't be able to help me as much because they only work with up to 5 year olds. I have 6 boys aged 8 months up to 12yrs.
- Might go to family but we don't have much in the area.

Any other comments

- We found it easier to trust our family support worker because she wasn't from Social Services.
- I didn't want anyone coming into my house but now I feel like I can trust other services because I got on well with my support worker from Family Action.
- Good that family support worker works with the whole family as 3 generations in one house - all have needed some support.
- Good service for families in need.
- It's good that you get to see the same worker every week. Usually, you get a 'keyworker' and then it's someone new the next week. Or you can't get hold of the person you want on the phone.
- Doesn't make sense to cut services that are helping people because it will be more expensive if they get into a crisis.
- Don't close it down – give more money.
- Feel like we've been passed from 'pillar to post' but Family Action helped us get out of the rut we were in.
- It's unfair. People with special needs need this support. Without it the children in the family would be vulnerable.
- I can't go anywhere else for support because my son is 13 now.
- I am very pleased with the service I got because my daughter got a place at Brownies. My family support worker helped out with activities for her. I got help with getting appointments and I had somebody supporting me when I went to hospital.
- Working with Family Action helped me to realise I have a voice.
- People need help and there is nothing else out there. If the service goes then more children will probably end up in care.
- It's good to know that Family Action support ids there and are easy to speak to.
- I don't want social services involved.

Two Halves One Whole

There were no consultation responses in relation to the project Two Halves One Whole.

Appendix B: Stakeholder Questionnaire results

Table 1: Stakeholders Respondents by job role.

Job Role	Number
Child's social worker	0
Health professional	1
Education worker	8
CAF Worker	2
Probation Worker	1
Home Start Worker	1
Sure Start Worker	1

Table 2: Stakeholder responses to consultation questions.

	Positive	Negative	Neutral or Don't know	No change
Question 1: Please comment on the nature and quality of the intervention offered by the service following referral	6	2	5	1
Question 2: Please comment on the effectiveness of the service when working as part of a multi disciplinary team supporting children and their families with learning disabilities/difficulties.	8	0	5	1
Question 3: Please comment on the impact on children and families with learning difficulties/disabilities you work with, if the recommendation to de commission the service is accepted.	0	12	3	0

Table 3: Stakeholder further comments.

Positive Comments	Number of responses
Holistic approach	5
Contribution to multi agency team	6
Bespoke intervention	3
Flexible approach	2
Good communication and planning	4

Negative Comments	Number of responses
Referral criteria is too narrow	3
Unaware of service prior to consultation	3