

Bath & North East Somerset Council

DECISION MAKER:	Cllr Chris Watt, Cabinet Member for Children	
DECISION DATE:	On or after 6 th Nov 2010	PAPER NUMBER 1
TITLE:	Care Matters implementation plan year 3	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE: E 2071
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1 Care Matters implementation plan year 3		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 Third year of local plans to implement the Care Matters agenda to improve outcomes for children and young people in and moving on from care and those on the edge of care.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet member is asked to:

2.1 Note progress to date on implementing the Care Matters agenda in Bath and North East Somerset

2.2 Agree the Care Matters implementation plan year 3 (attached at appendix 1)

2.3 Instruct the Care and Young People Service Manager to report on progress on the implementation plan, performance and proposals for future corporate parenting strategy as set out in the report.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The implementation plan set out in Appendix 1 contains planned expenditure of £163,000 per annum from April 2010. This is within this year's budget allocation for Care Matters implementation. The local budget for Care Matters implementation is made up of the Care Matters Grant, which is part of the Area Based Grant from central government, and a local budget allocation. The Care Matters Grant element of the budget has been reduced by £23,000 as a consequence of the in-year reduction in Area Based Grant for 20010/11 and thereafter. The implementation plan gives detail of the areas of work impacted by this action. We await details of what if any further cuts may be made to the Area Based Grant for future years and will make further plans accordingly.

4 CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- *Improving life chances of disadvantaged teenagers and young people*

5 THE REPORT

5.1 The Council has duties under the Children Act 1989 to provide services to children in need, including those in need of protection, and to children and young people in care and moving on from care. The number of children in care in Bath and North East Somerset increased significantly during the year 2009/10. This is in line with a national trend for an increasing number of children in care which has been attributed to the Every Child Matters agenda leading to identification of more children in need, publicity around the baby Peter case and a Law Lords judgement in May 2009 clarifying that homeless young people aged 16-17 should be offered accommodation under the Children Act 1989, becoming children in care. Further work is required both nationally and locally to analyse the increases that have taken place to date and project future numbers.

5.2 The number of children in care in Bath and North East Somerset was around 120-125 for a number of years, although it fell as low as 110 during the year 2008/9. By March 2010 it had increased to around 140 and has increased further in 2010/11 to 153 at the end of September 2010. There are also around 50 young people aged 18 to 21 at any one time to whom the Council has duties under the Children (Leaving Care Act) 2000 to support them as they move on to adult life although this number is likely to increase over the next few years.

5.3 Nationally children in care experience significantly worse outcomes than their peers in the wider population. Care Matters sets out an ambitious agenda to achieve step change in outcomes for children and young people in care, young people moving on from care and those on the edge of care to bring their outcomes in line with those experienced by most children and young people.

5.4 While our services for children in care perform very well on most measures compared to other local authorities' performance for this group of children, in terms of educational achievements and participation in education, employment and training (EET) on leaving care there is still a significant gap to make up between young people in and moving on from care and their peers in the local population. Care Matters provides an opportunity for us in Bath and North East Somerset to build on our strong position to close the outcomes gap for our children and young people in care. The Virtual School for children in care has

been established in the course of 2009/10 to promote step change in educational achievements. Significant improvement has been achieved in EET participation during 2009/10, however there is further to go and we have signed up to the Care to Work initiative to seek improvement on this measure. Both of these initiatives are key parts of the Care Matters plan this year.

- 5.5 The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 gives legislative effect to key measures within Care Matters. Detailed revised regulations and guidance were published earlier this year under this legislation covering Care Planning, Placement and Review for children in care. This provides a comprehensive updated framework of guidance for the first time since the early 1990's, which incorporates improvements arising from the Quality Protects programme of the early 2000's as well as Care Matters. This will require complete revision of our local policies and procedures for work with children and young people in and moving on from care, and provides an opportunity to promote and embed the best practice across our services. This will be a key part of the Care Matters plan this year.
- 5.6 In September 2007 Bath and North East Somerset Council's Corporate Parenting strategy was adopted at a full Council meeting. This strategy was incorporated into the Care Matters implementation plans approved by the Cabinet Member for Children in 2008 and 2009. Progress on these plans was reported to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel in November 2008 and 2009. The third Care Matters implementation plan continues the work set out in the previous plans.
- 5.7 In May 2008 Bath and North East Somerset Children's Services were subject to a Joint Area Review (JAR). The actions arising from the JAR for children and young people in and moving on from care were incorporated into the Care Matters plan, and work on these issues is continued within this year's plan. Our services for safeguarding and for children in care are due to be inspected again by OFSTED in 2011 and implementation of Care Matters will contribute to achieving high standards and good outcomes for children and young people which are ultimately what will be judged in these inspections.
- 5.8 Care Matters is a three year programme, which comes to an end in March 2011. It is proposed that a final report on progress of this plan and the performance and outcomes achieved should be accompanied by consideration of challenging targets for our future Corporate Parenting strategy from April 2011. A paper on these issues will be presented to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel in November 2010, followed by presentation of a fresh Corporate Parenting Strategy to the Cabinet Member for Children early in 2011.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 The report author and Cabinet member have fully reviewed the risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

- 7.1 An equality impact assessment has been carried out in accordance with the Council's framework. There are higher numbers of disabled children and black and minority children in care both locally and nationally than in the general

population. Children in care generally are amongst the most vulnerable children in our society. The Care Matters programme seeks to improve outcomes for all children in care through a range of measures. To the extent that this is successful we will improve equality for children in care including the most disadvantaged groups of children in care.

8 RATIONALE

8.1 The Council has statutory duties to children and young people in care including those moving on from care and on the edge of care. The Care Matters implementation plan responds to the Government's Care Matters agenda and is intended to improve outcomes for this most vulnerable group of children.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 The Government's Care Matters agenda applies to all Local Authorities with responsibility for children and young people in care. It is an extensive agenda and the local implementation plan sets out actions which can or must be taken forward now. To do less at this stage would risk failing in our statutory duties and/or miss opportunities to improve outcomes for children in care.

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 *Overview & Scrutiny Panel; Section 151 Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer*

10.2 A review of progress for children and young people in care in Bath and North East Somerset was taken to Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Panel in November 2009. This review outlined next steps which form the basis of this plan for year three of Care Matters.

11 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

11.1 *Social Inclusion; Customer Focus; Young People; Human Rights;*

12 ADVICE SOUGHT

12.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Council Solicitor) and Section 151 Officer (Strategic Director - Support Services) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

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Background papers	<i>Children and young people in care – progress report 2009 – Children and Young people Overview and Scrutiny Panel, 23/11/09 Bath and North East Somerset Care Matters Implementation Plan year two (Single Member Decision Register 24/4/09)</i>
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