

CABINET MEMBER DECISION REPORT FORM

1. Decision made

To cease funding County Community Projects for the provision of family mediation services for young people
To cease funding County Community Projects for the provision of family mediation services for young people. This funding was for approximately £13 000 year, financed out of the Community and Local Government's (CLG) Homelessness Prevention Fund

2. Identity of the Decision Maker

CMHS
Housing and Communities Manager

3. Date of Decision

8 Aug 2013

4. Reasons for Decision

CCP's family mediation service was set up on 1st October 2011, following funding of £13k/year from the Council.

The service provides early intervention homelessness prevention for young people aged 11-19 years of age through mediation between the young person and other family members. The aim of the service is for households to be better able to address areas of concern or conflict, thereby reducing the likelihood of issues escalating in the future, with the result that young people will be less likely to present as homeless.

2. Review of the Service 2 years on

2.1 Referrals into the Service

Despite significant efforts by CCP to promote this service across organisations, referrals into the service have been lower than anticipated. CCP's position is that there is nothing more that they could reasonably have done to promote this service, and I agree with them (we have met on a quarterly basis to discuss progress on this matter).

The conclusion is there is little demand for this service. This may be in part due to services provided by the County's Youth Support Team, which offers targeted support for vulnerable young people aged 11-19 and which seeks to address any unmet needs identified through the county-wide Common Assessment Framework.

In addition, anecdotal evidence is that young people do not like the formality and rigidity associated with mediation services. Our original thinking was that if this service were to be delivered by an organisation such as CCP (who have significant experience of working with young people) those barriers which other mediation services experience might be overcome. Unfortunately this has proved not to be the case.

2.2 Outcomes

For the small number of cases proceeding to full mediation, the outcomes are very successful, with positive relationships still being reported 3 months

after the conclusion of the mediation work.

However, the number of cases resulting in successful outcomes is low. There were only 5 cases in the last 12 months. This equates to a cost in excess of £2,600 per case. By comparison, the cost associated with preventing a family from becoming homeless by re-housing them in the private rented sector is approximately £200 per case (through the Deposit Loan Scheme 2012/13 figures).

In the current climate, these comparisons make it very difficult to justify the continued funding of this service, especially given that there are other demands on the Homelessness Prevention Funding. By ceasing this funding, the Council will be able to invest more in improving access into the private rented sector, and in particular, invest in the development of its Spa Lettings Service, which was recently approved by Cabinet, and which will be managed by Cheltenham Borough Homes following the transfer of the Housing Options Service in December 2013. This should lead to more positive outcomes for homeless families and better value for money for the Council.

3. Next steps

CCP have been advised that the Council is now minded to decommission this service on the basis that it does not provide value for money.

CCP have accepted this and understand our reasons. However they advise that given there are only a very small number of cases involved, they are willing to keep the service going and report outcomes to the Council as 'added value' to the Advice and Inclusion Service which the Council currently contracts out to them.

5. Consultation undertaken

Housing Options staff have provided anecdotal evidence around the unpopularity of the service

6. Results of Consultation

Housing options staff

7. Alternative options considered and rejected

Continued funding of the service-rejected because it is not delivering value for money.

8. Background documents

9. Conflict of Interests declared

10. Dispensation

Was a dispensation given by the Standards Committee in respect of any declaration of interest listed at 9.?

Date of dispensation