

Report to: Children and Young People's Services Panel **Cabinet**

Date: 6 November 2008 **13 November 2008**

Subject: De-registration of the Gerard Unit as a Pupil Referral Unit

Report of: Executive Director Children and Young People's Services

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Purpose / summary: That we de-register the Gerard Unit (pregnant schoolgirls and young mums) as a Pupil Referral Unit.

Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended: The alternative option was to maintain the status of the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). The accompanying paper outlines the reasons why this is not the preferred option of CYPS.

Recommendation / decision: Cabinet is requested to approve that from January 2009 the Gerard Unit as a Pupil Referral Unit with the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) is de-registered.

Key Decision: This report does not involve a key decision. The decision made as a result of this report will be published within **48 hours** and cannot be actioned until **seven working days** have elapsed, i.e. before 25 November 2008

Risks / Implications: There are no risks that we can foresee.

Financial: Within existing budget
Staffing: Existing staffing can be maintained
Policy: Existing policies will still be in place following de-registration

Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted? A Diversity Impact assessment has been undertaken and this proposal does not affect the equal opportunities of any group.

Wards affected: All wards. However the service and provision pupils receive will remain the same.

Property Implications – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council’s asset base or its occupation?

No

If yes, have the property implications been agreed with the Corporate Property Officer?

Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population?

Equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure?

This proposal does not involve any new policies. All existing policies and procedures will remain relevant.

Has the Service Director - Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council’s Constitution? **Yes**

Has the Service Director - Corporate Services confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council’s budget? **Yes**

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? **No**

* delete which applicable

For Cabinet reports only :

Categorisation of the report:	x
Discussion leading to a decision	x
Monitoring	
Sharing for corporate understanding	

	x
Discussion	
Decision	
Information	

Tracking/Process:

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
06.11.08		13.11.08	

The Background Papers for this report contain Exempt Information under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Proper Officer



Date

21st October 2008

1.0 Background:

1.1 Present situation

The Gerard Unit Pupil Referral Unit (DCSF No. 3591102) is a provision for pregnant school girls and young mums which currently operates as a discrete unit within the Pupil Referral Service. The Centre was registered as a PRU in September 2003.

2.0 Gerard Unit Pupils

2.1 Pupils who attend the Gerard Unit have many issues which challenge them and the current provision arrangements. Pregnancy can often be incidental to the other problems that pupils may have. Only 20% of pregnant schoolgirls/schoolgirl mothers in Wigan access the provision at the Unit. These are the pupils with the most complex and severe difficulties. The rest remain in school. There are many reasons other than pregnancy for referral to the Unit. Although not true for every pupil the unit supports, on the whole these pupils have low self esteem, have often experienced behavioural problems at school and come with entrenched poor patterns of attendance. During the academic year 2007/8, 50% of the girls referred to the Gerard Unit had been in at least two previous high schools. Some were moved because of their behaviour, others because they felt bullied/unhappy in their original school. Despite this fact, the young women who benefit from the excellent teaching and support offered in the unit achieved a significant number of GCSE passes. The Ofsted criteria for success as a PRU however entails an attendance rate of 80%. Given the difficulties these young girls experience as outlined above, this is extremely difficult to achieve.

2.2 This background combined with the medical appointments the girls need to keep for themselves and their babies, the childcare arrangements and the often chaotic nature of their lives means that Ofsted requirements particularly with regard to attendance can be extremely difficult to fulfil. The unit's current access to limited staffing and the isolation geographically of the provision further compounds this situation.

2.3 The pupils could be better supported through the creation of a more flexible approach to their education in order to re-engage and motivate them. The de-regulation of the PRU would allow us to do this. It is very important that we do what we can to encourage young mums to remain engaged with education so that they can benefit from increased participation in the future.

Proposal:

3.0 The proposal is therefore to de-register the Gerard Unit as soon as appropriate consultation has taken place and if possible by January 2009 with the aim of bringing it once more under the umbrella of services provided by ACE (Alternative and Complementary Education) but still operating within the PRS (Pupil Referral Service).

Alternative options considered and reason for the recommended option:

- 4.0** The alternative option was to maintain the status of the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU).

Conclusions:

5.0 Benefits to the pupils

Bringing the unit under the ACE umbrella and operating in close partnership with the Children and Young People with Medical Needs Team, a service which is not registered as a PRU will have many benefits for both services. These benefits are captured below:-

The de-regulation of the provision as a PRU should increase our capacity to meet the personal, social and academic needs of these pupils through:-

- Access to a greater pool of specialist teachers (e.g. those currently working for the service of Children with Medical Needs and with Wigan On Line Learning).
- Increased flexibility within pupil groupings (e.g. separate classes for KS3 and KS4). This could be achieved by combining pupils accessing provision from different sections of the service (e.g. teaching some young mums alongside pupils with medical needs).
- Increased flexibility for personalising the curriculum (e.g. access to social work courses, work experience through ACE, Wigan On Line Learning).
- Increased access to targeted support (e.g. anger management via ACE social work team).
- Other sections of the service will gain from access to the specialist teachers and support staff currently based solely at The Gerard Unit.

6.0 Benefits to CYPS

The onerous nature of Ofsted inspection as a PRU would be avoided. (As an outcome of the EBSD review we will have an increased number of PRU's. Therefore 5 units on 6 bases will need to be inspected in terms of Ofsted requirements from September 2008).

7.0 Recommendation

Cabinet is requested to approve the de-registration of the Gerard Unit as a Pupil Referral Unit from January 2009.

Diversity Impact Assessment form

Section: Children & Young People's Services

Policy/Service Area: Pupil Referral Service

Person Completing Form: Pauline Robinson

Date:16/10/08

Do any of the below groups suffer specific disadvantage (please indicate)

	Yes	No		Yes	No
Race		✓	Disability		✓
Ethnicity		✓	Gender		✓
Age		✓	Religion		✓
Class		✓	Sexual Orientation		✓

Is there evidence of disadvantage or associated problems?

None

How was the information collected and/or who have you consulted with?

I have consulted with staff within the PRS, The PRU Management Committee, and Wigan CYPS SMT. All of whom agree with the proposal.

Action Plan – *What specific actions are planned to tackle any disadvantage identified?*

N/A

Is the policy in line with current equality legislation and relevant codes of practice?

Yes

Timescale	To implement if agreed by January 2009
Responsibility	Pauline Robinson to contact DCSF to action
Comments	

Are the actions specified included in any other documents/plans?

Departmental Service Plan	No
Section/Team Plan	No
Other (Specify)	

Date for further review: If the proposal is implemented as outlined then it will be subject to annual review as to its continuing suitability.