

## CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**15 FEBRUARY 2018**

**REPORT OF SENIOR  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

### **CABINET DECISION**

**Cllr Ann McCoy – Cabinet Member for Children and Young People**

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES PROGRESS UPDATE: QUARTER 3 (OCTOBER – DECEMBER) – 2017/18**

1. Summary

This report provides a summary of performance across Children's Services. It is based on the Children's Strategy priorities agreed by Cabinet in June 2017.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to note the report, and in particular the achievements around:

1. the continued performance in respect of schools
2. the continued performance and outcomes from inspection for children's homes.

3. Reasons for the Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

To ensure that members are aware of progress and issues in the delivery of the Children's Services strategy 2017-20.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members) should consider whether they have a personal interest in any item, as defined in **paragraphs 9 and 11** of the Council's code of conduct and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with and/or taking account of **paragraphs 12 - 17** of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 16** of the code, in any business of the Council he/she must then, **in accordance with paragraph 18** of the code, consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest and the business:-

- affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or
- relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member or any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting upon the relevant item of business. However, a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code)

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

### **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (**paragraph 22** of the code)

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Recommendations

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1. the continued performance in respect of schools
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Reasons for the Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

To ensure that members are aware of progress and issues in the delivery of the Children's Services strategy 2017-20

**DETAIL**

1. This report summarises performance information in relation to the Children's Services Strategy 2017-20. This strategy, agreed by Cabinet in June 2017, sets out the key priorities for Children's services, and the key performance indicators associated with delivery.
2. The update report is in three parts:
  - a. Update on our 2017/18 priorities
  - b. Update on other actions and progress against the wider strategy, including key performance measures.

**Update on 2017/18 priorities**

3. An update on the key priorities for 2017/18 is provided below:
  - a. **Redesigning our approach to early years, children's centres, health visiting and school nursing as part of our early help approach:** the new provider for 0-19 services has been appointed, and the mobilisation period is underway. The review of staffing for the new family hubs has been completed and staff appointed. Detailed work continues to develop the delivery plans for each family hub, and to ensure that arrangements are in place for additional delivery points. A members seminar will be held in March to outline the plans in more detail.

- b. **Reviewing our pathways and outcomes for early help** – this programme is included as part of the range of reviews in the Smarter Working programme. A review of pathways and approaches is being undertaken to report at the end of January. This work includes consultation with schools and other partners.
- c. **Redefining our role in supporting educational achievement** – a report summarising work undertaken around our strategic education role was presented to Cabinet in October 2017. A further report will be provided in the Spring.
- d. **Implementing the review of SEND** – as part of the work to remodel our approach to supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, new arrangements for Enhanced Schools are currently being developed for implementation, and the associated review of staffing has been implemented. This not only provides a more effective early response and triage approach, but also delivers significant savings which have been factored into the work on our role as above.
- e. **Introducing a new edge of care approach** – the new ‘Our Place’ service launches on 30 January. Staff consultation has been completed and the service registered with Ofsted.
- f. **Tackling domestic abuse through a new strategy** – the new domestic abuse strategy was launched in July 2017, and includes a detailed and specific action plan for delivery. A coordinator has been appointed to provide oversight of the delivery process, working to the Domestic Abuse Steering Group. The commissioning process for domestic abuse has been completed and a new contract will be in place from 1 April.
- g. **Improving our response to supporting children and people who are subject to VEMT** – additional support has been provided in a VEMT Coordinator to oversee the process and ensure effective working. There are currently 19 Stockton children subject to detailed planning due to the risk of potential exploitation. The SWITCH team in Youth Direction are now working with young people who do not meet the threshold for VEMT interventions but where there remain concerns.
- h. **Implementing the S-WORK project as a whole systems change programme for children’s social care** – this programme is being taken forward as part of the Smarter Working review programme. The principal Child and Family Social Work Board continues to act as a reference group for this programme.
- i. **Develop a new approach to support children and young people’s emotional health and wellbeing** – the secondary schools pilot programme is currently being evaluated. Additional funding has been secured from the Future in Mind programme to develop a programme for all primary schools. This is based on a programme of awareness raising and training builds better links between school staff and all health providers and fulfils one of the key elements in the Government’s recently announced consultation.

## **Update on other actions and progress**

### ***Giving children the best start in life***

- 4. In addition to the commissioning process for 0-19 services, there are a number of other outcomes and updates to report on:
  - a. In relation to the roll out of the 30 hours of support overall, the Council remains on track to deliver the required numbers of places, and to support a gradual increase in uptake. There are currently around 40% of parents registered from those eligible. Current provision includes capacity for around 1600 places, and demand is forecast to rise further. This will be monitored on a regular basis to ensure a supply of places.

## ***Focusing on schools and learning outcomes***

5. Key areas of update for this priority include:
- a. The latest data on Ofsted rankings as at end December.

### Primary

- % pupils attending a school with Good or Outstanding: 94.2%
- % schools with Good or Outstanding: 94.9%

### Secondary

- % pupils attending a school with Good or Outstanding: 92.5%
  - % schools with Good or Outstanding: 92.3%
- b. The Review of school inclusion being undertaken by the Children and Young People Select Committee has commenced. Evidence will be taken in January – March from key schools, and input from Ofsted and the Regional Schools Commissioner is also planned.
  - c. Officers have commenced new termly meetings with the Regional Schools Commissioner on the progress and issues across Stockton-on-Tees. These are designed to enhance the process for any schools causing concern.
  - d. A presentation was made to the Secondary Heads and Principals Group on the development of a new 'careers offer' for Stockton young people. This work is being taken forward as part of the project led by the Assistant Cabinet Members for Children and Young People and Regeneration and Transport
  - e. Officers are working with the Tees Valley Combined Authority to ensure Stockton issues are considered as part of the Education, Employment and Skills strategy for the Tees Valley.
  - f. The School Improvement Board for the Tees Valley has now been established and is steering the process of proposals for the second round of bids. The Council worked with other partners across Tees Valley to submit a range of proposal to the Government's Strategic Schools Improvement Fund.
  - g. A report elsewhere the agenda outlines the produce of work to develop a guide for the early years foundation stage, which could have wider opportunities for income generation.

## ***Delivering effective early help***

6. Additional activity to report on includes:
- a. The work to refine early help approaches will be refined and launched alongside the new 0-19 arrangements in April 2018. Discussions are taking place with the Children's Hub on better links to early help as part of this review process.
  - b. We are continuing to prioritise Graded Care Profile 2 as a tool to assess and identify neglect, working with the NSPCC, and this has been recognised nationally by NSPCC as an example of good practice. We are now working with NSPCC to further enhance and develop the tool.
  - c. Officers are currently concluding the commissioning of a peer mentoring project for young people, to be delivered by Children North East.

## ***Safeguarding and protecting vulnerable children and young people, backed by outstanding social work practice***

7. Key highlights include:

- a. The continuing successful rollout of Signs of Safety approaches to create better support plans, with greater family engagement.
  - b. The number of children on child protection plans has continued to remain at a much lower level than in March 2017, down from 307 to 240 at the end of December.
  - c. The recent Joint Targeted Area Inspection process has identified a number of areas of specific focus:
    - i. Quality of plans and supervision
    - ii. The production of chronologies, and in particular multi-agency chronologies when working with children and young people experiencing neglect. More details are included in para xx.
    - iii. Capacity issues in the Children's hub, especially for Cleveland Police and North Tees and Hartlepool Foundation Trust.
8. In terms of key performance data collected and analysed in Children's Services:
- a. Children in child protection plans now steady at 236
  - b. 98.9% of single assessments completed in timescales;
  - c. Percentage of child protection (which ended) which lasted more than 2 years has risen slightly to 3.9%. This reflects work to tackle longer term child protection plans.
  - d. The percentage of child protection plans reviewed in timescales 98.9%
  - e. Percentage of Initial Child protection Plans held in timescales 97.2%
  - f. Percentage of children with a second or subsequent child protection plan – reduced slightly to 17.9%
9. Case file audits continue to be a key element of the overall quality assurance framework to monitor the quality of social work practice, and a regular programme is undertaken on a monthly basis.
10. The latest audits indicate a continuing positive trend. A more detailed report will be provided in quarter 4.
11. We have recruited 17 social workers so far this calendar year, 15 of whom were experienced (our key target market).
12. As at the end of December there were 5 vacancies across the teams. The vacancies that we have had have been the result of a number of different reasons – internal promotion, movement into specialist teams or as a result of a completely different chosen career path.
13. Agency Social Workers: These are covering maternity leave, sickness, secondments and vacancies until the pending starters commence/the remaining vacancies are recruited to. As at the end of December there were 14 FTE agency workers currently in post

***A consistent and relentless focus on better outcomes for children in our care and care leavers***

14. There were 455 children in our care at the end of December. This number remains high though has been relatively stable from March 2017. There has been considerable national media reporting of the increases in children in care nationally, and the impact of this on Council budgets.
15. In summary, our rate of children looked after has increased in year by 17%, compared to a regional increase of 15% and a national increase of 3%.
16. Safely reducing the number of children need to be in care is one of the key priorities in the Children's Services Strategy, and as part of the financial sustainability element. A specific programme of work has been established to identify and prioritise solutions. This project is exploring prevention; decision making; sufficiency of placements; opportunities to expand our approach to reunification; and a review of out of borough placements.

17. Proposals are being developed to work with ARC on a set of creative engagement opportunities for children in our care. This resulted in the submission of a proposal to the North East Culture Bridge fund for a 2 year programme of work.
18. The business case for Adoption Tees Valley has been finalised (and was agreed at Cabinet on 12 October). The new service will be located in Stockton and will go live from 1 April 2018. Detailed planning on staffing and transition has been undertaken in this period and will continue as part of the implementation plan. Staffing reviews associated with the transfer of staff to the new organisation, and the consequent impact on the remaining team, the current Child Placement Team have now been launched.
19. In terms of key performance data:
  - a. Percentage of looked after reviews held in timescale – 95.3%
  - b. Percentage of children in care with 3 or more placements – 4.4%
  - c. Percentage of children in the same placement for more than 2 years – 74%
  - d. 94% of care leavers are in suitable accommodation;
  - e. 55% of care leavers are in employment, education or training at the end of this period – an increase since the last quarter when the figure was 41%
  - f. All residential care homes remain good or outstanding.

### **Leadership, management and governance**

20. An update on progress includes:
  - a. A refresh of the corporate training on safeguarding has been developed and three sessions were delivered in this quarter. Further sessions will be delivered in January and then in the new municipal year from May 2018.
  - b. The Council took a lead in hosting the first regional peer challenge as part of a new regional sector led improvement programme for Children's services. The theme of the peer challenge was around progress made on implementing recommendations relating to our support for children in care, post the Ofsted Single Inspection Framework inspection in May 2016.
  - c. The key themes from the peer challenge were:

#### **Headline strengths**

- We saw and heard senior leaders and politicians who are committed to, and engaged in the children's agenda.
  - There is mature partnership working, with long-standing relationships where respectful challenge and support is evident. As an example of partnership and inclusivity, school colleagues spoke highly of the School Safeguarding Forum as an effective means of schools feeling part of the LAC agenda
- 'We feel listened to'*
- There is a passion across the system for better outcomes for children. All that we spoke to – across partnerships and at all levels in organisations, showed passion and commitment. 'Passion' was frequently a chosen descriptor when people were asked to characterise the children's workforce in Stockton.
  - There is an acceptance of, and an appetite for, the need to change, evidenced not least by your enthusiasm for this peer challenge.
  - You have high ambitions for change – you clearly want to continuously improve.

### Headline areas for consideration

- Build high ambition for LAC across the system. Whilst we noted, consistently, within and beyond the Council, an ambition for better outcomes for all children, this was not always translated to ambitions specifically for LAC.
  - We agree with your own analysis – the connection between strategy/vision and practice is not as strong as it might be. You should define and communicate a small number of key strategic priorities for LAC, and ensure that initiatives and activity are connected with each other and your strategic intent.
  - Ensure the right structures and systems are in place in order for the Council to demonstrate best practice as an effective corporate parent. We think that you could broaden engagement and ownership in corporate parenting by reflecting on some of your structures – in particular the Corporate Parenting Panel. You might also want to consider developing broader councillor awareness, knowledge and skills in relation to their corporate parenting responsibilities. This might also lead to broader corporate ownership of this agenda – with different departments within the council playing their full role in supporting the Council's role and duties.
  - Develop a strategy which responds to the needs of Stockton's teenage children (and, perhaps those on the edge of teenage years). You recognise the particular challenges of your teenage LAC population, but some of the solutions to anticipating and meeting their needs might sit in a broader strategy for all Stockton's teenage children.
- d. These themes are being addressed through the Children's Services Strategy. The opportunity to refocus and raise the profile of work on corporate parenting has already been taken forward and will include further training for members in February 2018.
- e. The Council and its partners were inspected by Ofsted, HM Inspectorate of probation, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services and the Care Quality Commission. The report was published on 15 January and will be the subject of a detailed action plan report to march cabinet. The summary in the report is:
- The local partnership of agencies has a strong shared commitment to tackling neglect. This commitment is within a wider context of increasingly effective multi-agency arrangements to address abuse and to enhance the welfare of children. This is exemplified by the developing children's hub, which acts as the 'front door' for referrals for children who may be in need or at risk of significant harm, and by a comprehensive early help offer for children and families. Partners have a keen awareness, not only of what they are doing well but also of those services which need further development. Against this background of shared commitment, action by partner agencies to tackle neglect is a work in progress. Measures such as the ongoing roll-out of a nationally respected, child-centred and outcome-focused model of working with children and families and a well-regarded evidence-based tool for identifying neglect are making a positive difference, but not currently at the level to which local agencies aspire. However, with these initiatives and other measures, such as a well-considered LSCB 'statement of intent' to tackle neglect, the partnership has put in place many of the key building blocks necessary to support further progress.*
- f. The Council is leading on the discussions to consider and develop new safeguarding arrangements as required by the Children and Social Work Act 2017. This Act provides for the abolition of LSCBs by March 2019 and their replacement with new locally developed arrangements. Initial proposals are being considered to



explore closer working with Hartlepool Borough Council on a new safeguarding partnership. The proposal is that this will be launched for September 2018.

### **A look ahead**

21. Quarter 4 will see:
- The completion of the mobilisation period for the new 0-19 services and family hubs
  - The completion of the first stages of the early help review
  - The development of a detailed multi agency response to the findings of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection
  - Further evidence gathering around the review of inclusion
  - A further report on the reshaping of the Council's education role

### **COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS**

22. There are no specific community impact implications arising from this report.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

23. There are no specific financial implications. The management of budgets has been included in the Children's Services Strategy as a key priority and is therefore subject to the oversight process for the strategy as a whole. The key financial implication arising from the costs associated with out of borough placements, and this is subject to additional oversight through the Children's Multi Agency Panel process. Overall demand pressures in Children's Services continue.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

24. There are no specific legal implications arising from this update report.

### **RISK ASSESSMENT**

25. There are no specific risk implications from this report. Key risks remain the extent to which the Council can continue to meet the demand for placements for children in care.

### **COUNCIL PLAN POLICY PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES**

26. The issues and updates provided in this report have specific relevant to all of the Policy principles:

#### **Policy Principles:**

- Protecting the vulnerable through targeted intervention – Children's services plays key role in the identification and assessment of the needs of children, young people and families and
- Promoting equality of opportunity through targeted intervention – Children's Services works proactively through early help to support families who may be in need of specific, and often time-limited support to be able to access the same opportunities as others.
- Developing strong and healthy communities – Children's Services works with a range of partners to support healthy choices, and promoting wellbeing. A specific focus is on the emotional health and wellbeing of children, through work in schools and in partnership around the delivery of services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health services.
- Creating economic prosperity – Children's services working in partnership with schools supports young people in benefitting from a high quality education, and in receiving support to enter the labour market and live independently.

## **CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS**

27. The specific actions in the strategy around children in our care and care leavers are focused on the delivery of corporate parenting and help to fulfil the priority in the Children's Services strategy of a relentless focus on better outcomes for children in our care and care leavers

## **CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS**

28. The Cabinet member for Children and Young People has been consulted.

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Education related? Yes

Background Papers – Children's Services Strategy 2017-2020

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors: None specific

Property: No specific implications for assets and property.