

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

12 JULY 2018

**REPORT OF SENIOR
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Councillor Ann McCoy – Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

CHILDREN'S SERVICES PROGRESS UPDATE: 2017/18 - YEAR END AND QUARTER 4

1. Summary

This report provides a summary of performance across Children's Services. It includes both a quarter 4 update and an annual update. 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:

1. The continued performance in respect of early years and schools.
2. The continued performance and outcomes from inspection for children's homes.
3. The outcomes from peer challenge and inspection.
4. The key priorities for 2018/19.

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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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 2017/18 priorities.
 - b. Update on other actions and progress against the wider strategy
 - c. A summary of priorities for 2018/19.

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:** Harrogate and District

Foundation Trust were appointed as the new provider of 0-19 services and completed the mobilisation period to end March 2018, with full delivery from 1 April 2018. The community outreach and volunteering contract is being delivered by Family Action. Children's Centres have been reorganised as part of this new approach, and 4 family hubs have been established, with a range of satellite delivery points. The review of staffing for the new family hubs has been completed and staff appointed. Detailed work continues to develop the detail of delivery plans for each family hub. A Members Seminar was held in March 2018 to outline the plans in more detail and all indications are that the new provider has made an excellent start, with relationships and links being reported as very strong and a significant improvement on the previous arrangements. There is a clear contract management structure in place, overseen by colleagues in Public Health. This is the biggest change in the delivery of these functions we have implemented and 2018/19 will be a critical year in establishing the new service and enhancing the role of the family hubs as community hubs.

- 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 has been undertaken. This work includes consultation with schools and other partners about the most appropriate model for delivery. Additional discussions have been held with schools around the use of early help assessments and how this can link much more closely with schools views of family vulnerability.
- c. **Redefining our role in supporting educational achievement** – a series of reports have been considered at Cabinet setting out the Council's revised role around education and proposing a new approach in some key areas, including the generation of additional income through the development of a core and traded offer for schools which is more closely aligned with our statutory duties. Take up of traded offer is on track. Summary data on outcomes and performance is attached at **Annex A**.
- 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 Mainstream Schools are currently being developed for implementation, and the associated review of staffing has been implemented. A new SEND vision, strategy and joint commissioning strategy are all being developed and will be launched in 2018/19. The SEND Commissioning strategy was agreed at Health and Wellbeing Board in June 2018.
- e. **Introducing a new edge of care approach** – the new 'Our Place' service launched on 30 January 2018. The service has already been successful in working with some young people with more complex needs and has been closely linked to the new Family Group Conferencing service which commenced in December 2017.
- 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 was put in place from 1 April 2018.
- 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. Work continues

with A Way Out to support girls who are vulnerable to exploitation – we are funding a family worker to enhance their capacity to undertake this work.

- 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 the programme. Key progress to date includes:
 - i. The development of a new vision for social work;
 - ii. The ongoing recruitment campaign;
 - iii. An increasing focus on stepping down cases from assessment and fieldwork teams to early help support to help create capacity and reduce caseloads;
 - iv. The rollout of mobile working to all teams.
- i. **Develop a new approach to support children and young people’s emotional health and wellbeing** – funding has been secured from the Future in Mind programme to develop a programme for all primary schools to develop their capacity and enable them to meet the objectives of the Green Paper (and in line with the People Select Committee’s current review) to have a designated lead role for mental health. This is based on a programme of awareness raising and training builds better links between school staff and mental health providers. The second schools survey has also been launched as part of a commitment to monitoring the key issues facing children and young people (known as the SHUE survey) and will be reported in 2018/19. The CCG are leading on a review of the current CAMHS provision as part of the Future in Mind programme. This has also involved engagement with schools on their views of access and provision.

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. Take up of the existing free entitlement to 15 hours of education is at 100%.
 - b. There has been a significant and sustained increase in the take up of the disadvantaged 2 old places, from 54% take up in 2015 to 94% take up in 2018.
 - c. 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 45% 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. For both primary and secondary schools with an Ofsted judgement as of 31 March 2018: **92% of those schools with a judgment were judged outstanding or good.**
 - b. **The % of pupils in good or outstanding schools as of March 2018 is 92.2%** (of the 74 schools with a judgement).
 - c. The Review of School Inclusion being undertaken by the Children and Young People Select Committee is nearing completion and has gained significant local profile. Outcomes will be reported to Cabinet in July 2018.
 - d. 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.

- 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, as the details of the careers and the education improvement priorities are finalised.
- f. The School Improvement Board for the Tees Valley has now been established and Tees Valley was successful in a number of proposals to the second round, including a project led by the Council, one of the few nationally to be led by a local authority.
- g. A project is being developed to work with Thornaby Academy on improving its perception in the local community. This is being delivered as part of the Talent Network

Delivering effective early help

6. Additional activity to report on includes:

- a. The work to refine early help approaches continues. Work is underway to develop a different approach to working with schools which places less emphasis on the use of Early Help Assessment forms and process, and focuses more on the sharing of information on vulnerability. This will be developed further in 2018/19.
- b. Following a review of the management of Children's Services, which commenced in March 2018 and concluded in May 2018, a single Early Help Manager was appointed to lead the next stages of review.
- c. The work of the 'Problem Solving Panel' continues to develop with the group increasingly being used to identify additional support for young people where there are additional complex issues and where new thinking is needed to consider different support or to support a different approach.
- d. A peer mentoring project for young people, to be delivered by Children North East, has been commissioned. This project works with students from local colleges to provide mentors for young people.
- e. Work has commenced on the development of a 'maturity matrix' as developed by the Early Intervention Foundation. This enables us to map our strategic responses to early help and intervention and develop future plans. We will complete this in 2018/19.

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. In 2018/19 we are reviewing our approach as, although an effective tool to support practice, we want to ensure that we retain a focus on the quality of practice rather than the application of the tool.
- 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 March.

8. In terms of key performance data collected and analysed in Children's Services:

- a. The rate of contacts into the hub increased slightly but not significantly.
- b. The rate of referrals has reduced by 7.8% in 2017/18, though we remain above our regional and statistical neighbours.
- c. 88% of referrals resulted in a single assessment – an indication that the right decisions are being made by the Children's Hub.
- d. There has been a slight reduction in the rate of assessments completed, from 713/10,000 children to 621/10,000 children.
- e. 98.7% of assessments were completed in 45 days (the statutory deadline).

- f. The rate of children in need remains significantly higher than the national, regional and statistical neighbour rates – and the rate increased from 480/10,000 children to 509/10,000 children.
 - g. There has been an increase in the rate of Section 47 investigations undertaken, from 214/10,000 children to 234/10,000 children.
 - h. 94% of child protection conferences were held within 15 days of the Section 47 inquiry, consistently higher performance than locally, regionally and against statistical neighbours.
 - i. The rate of children on child protection plans has reduced significantly from 71.7/10,000 children to 50.9/10,000 children.
 - j. Percentage of child protection plans (which ended) which lasted more than 2 years dropped from 3.4 to 3.1% - evidence of good performance in reducing the number of long term CP plans.
 - k. The percentage of child protection plans reviewed in timescales 98.9%.
 - l. Percentage of children with a second or subsequent child protection plan – this figure has increased from 19% in 2016/17 to 28% in 2017/18, and is the subject of a deep dive analysis.
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. The latest audits indicate a continuing positive trend.
10. We have recruited 32 social workers so far this calendar year, 23 of whom were experienced (our key target market).
11. As at the end of March 2018 there were 7 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.
12. Agency Social Workers are covering maternity leave, sickness, secondments and vacancies until the pending starters commence/the remaining vacancies are recruited to. As at the end of March there were 20 FTE agency workers currently in post.
13. The regional Memorandum of Understanding to cap agency pay rates was launched on 1 September 2017. To date this has had little impact in terms of recruitment, as it only applies to new agency contracts. The full transfer of all agency contracts onto the new terms will begin from 1 July 2018.
14. The overall summary position is therefore that:
- a. We continue to maintain high performance around timeliness and efficiency of our processes;
 - b. The reductions in levels of referrals, and assessments is evidence that the rising levels of demand we have experienced in the past 2 years may be slowing down;
 - c. We have been successful in reducing the numbers of children on child protection plans, but we need to be monitoring the rate at which children require additional child protection plans – as this can be evidence of over optimistic decision making;
 - d. We continue to have high rates of children in need – we are working to step down cases to early help wherever possible.

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

15. There were 474 children in our care at 31 March 2018, a rate of 109/10,000 children and young people. In 2017/18 we experienced a rise of 7.8% in this rate, compared to a rise of 17% in 2016/17 (reliable regional and national data is not yet available).

16. Safely reducing the number of children that 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. We have commenced work with Dartington Design Lab, as part of a group of authorities working with them to understand trends and patterns in how we work as there is significant variation in rates of children in care between authorities, some of which can be explained by local factors such as culture, decision making and attitudes to risk.
17. We are working with ARC and a social enterprise, Blue Cabin, on a range of proposals to develop cultural and creative opportunities for children in our care. This resulted in a successful bid to the North East Culture Bridge fund for a 2 year programme of work. An event was held in March 2018 to help design this programme, and a range of activities is currently being planned. This includes training for artists, foster carers, and residential care workers to help ensure this has sustainability.
18. Adoption Tees Valley was established on 1 May 2018, based at the former CLC centre adjacent to Grangefield Academy. 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 also been completed.
19. In terms of key performance data, 2017-18:
 - a. Percentage of looked after reviews held in timescale – 95.3%;
 - b. Percentage of children in care with 3 or more placements – 6.4%;
 - c. Percentage of children in the same placement for more than 2 years – 74%;
 - d. 94% of care leavers are in suitable accommodation;
 - e. 51.6% of care leavers are in employment, education or training compared to last year's rate of 44%;
 - f. An increase in the rate of children leaving care under Special Guardianship Orders to 16.5% up from 13% to 16.5%;
 - g. An increase in the rate of children leaving care due to adoption, from 8% to 12%;
 - h. All residential care homes remain good or outstanding.
20. In summary:
 - a. Our rate of children in care remains high, and is a key area of focus. Our rate of increase has reduced, but we are still higher than regional, national and statistical neighbours.
 - b. We remain efficient in terms of timeliness.
 - c. Despite the high rate of children in our care, we remain high performing around placement stability.
 - d. There are signs that the rate at which we are bringing children into care is slowing, and is now below regional average. However, the rate at which children leave care remains lower than our comparators, and will continue to be a focus, especially with the introduction of a 'Going Home' framework, using an approach developed by the NSPCC.

Leadership, management and governance

21. An update on progress includes:
 - a. A refresh of the Members training on safeguarding has been developed and 4 sessions were delivered in the year. Further sessions will be delivered in 2018/19.

- 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, and also took part in the first 'Directors Challenge'. These form part of the Memorandum of Understanding which has been agreed by all 12 authorities resulting in the formation of a Regional Improvement Alliance.
- c. Previous reports to Cabinet outlined the action plan developed in response to the Joint Targeted Area Inspection in 2017.
- d. A focused visit under the new inspection regime, also took place in April 2018. Although technically outside of the year-end review period for this report, the letter received is attached as **Annex 1**. The visit was very positive in many respects, and highlighted the progress made in a number of areas. There are a number of areas where further improvements could be made, especially around the quality of our legal framework, and the opportunity for the scrutiny panel to work differently and be engaged earlier. These have been included in a new service plan for the Children's Social Care Service.
- e. 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 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 in shadow form in September 2018.

A look ahead to 2018/19

22. The key priorities in the strategy to be taken forward in 2018/19 are:

- a. Redesigning the role and focus of children's centres into multi-agency family hubs as part of a 0-19 approach.
- b. More integrated assessment and support in the early years.
- c. Work to ensure all schools/academies in Stockton are good or better through a model for supporting school improvement which focus on school led provision, and a refocused role for the Council, in the context of the Tees Valley Combined Authority.
- d. Develop options for alternative provision and curriculum delivery for 14-19 year olds as risk of disengagement and becoming NEET.
- e. Reshaping family support into a new Family Solutions Service and offer.
- f. A flexible model of working with young people and families who need more intensive support.
- g. Continuing to develop a 'secondary prevention' approach to reduce risk in target communities.
- h. Refreshing our approach to social work training and skills, and the quality of supervision.
- i. Tackling key thematic priorities, with an emphasis on domestic abuse, neglect and repeat removals.
- j. Working to transform support for young people with emotional health and wellbeing needs.
- k. Redesigning our support for children with complex needs and disabilities.
- l. Implement a major change programme for social care focusing on capacity, practice, systems, partnership working and models for delivery (S-WORK).
- m. Developing an enhanced Care Leavers offer to support independence.
- n. Creative ways of engaging and working with children in care, working with the Let's Take Action Group.
- o. Develop and test new approaches to increase capacity in fostering.
- p. Implement a refreshed approach to corporate parenting.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

23. There are no specific community impact implications arising from this report. Implications were considered in the Cabinet report to agree the strategy in June 2017. However, the focus in the strategy on ensuring the best start in life, the focus on tackling disadvantage and the emphasis on supporting children in our care and care leavers are all associated with the approach of prioritising the needs of more vulnerable groups.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

24. 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

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

RISK ASSESSMENT

26. 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

27. 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 a key role in the identification and assessment of the needs of children, young people and families.
- 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

28. 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

29. 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.