

## CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

**AGENDA ITEM  
REPORT TO CABINET  
7 MARCH 2018  
REPORT OF SENIOR  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

### **CABINET DECISION**

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

#### **CHILDREN'S SERVICES PROGRESS UPDATE: 2018/19 – QUARTER 3 (OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2018)**

1. Summary

This report provides a summary of performance across Children's Services for Quarter 3. 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. Significant progress in reducing the number of children classed as being 'in need'.
2. The current position in relation to the numbers of children in care.
3. The continued high performance around meeting statutory deadlines and timescales.

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

**Update on 2018/19 priorities**

3. An update on the key priorities for 2018/19 is provided below:
  - a. **Work to ensure all schools/academies in Stockton are good or better** – A detailed report on performance was presented to Cabinet in October. The

performance at the end of December was that for primary 93% of schools are good or outstanding, and for secondary the rate was 69% (10/13).

- b. **Develop options for alternative provision and curriculum delivery for 14-19 year olds at risk of disengagement and becoming NEET.** We are working with schools to design a new approach to supporting children at risk of exclusion and alternative provision. We aim to have the basis of this agreed by April 2019, for the start of implementation from September 2019. This proposal includes significant remodelling of the Bishopton PRU.
- c. **Refreshing our approach to social work training and skills, and the quality of supervision.** A revised workforce strategy is currently being developed and will be completed by April 2019. A review of supervision has been initiated, and a pilot scheme for educational psychology staff to provide supervision for the Permanence Teams will begin shortly.
- d. **Working to transform support for young people with emotional health and wellbeing needs.** Work continues with the CCG, and building on the people Select Committee's recent review to design a new approach to supporting children with emotional health needs. The SHUE2 survey will shortly be available for analysis.
- e. **Developing an enhanced Care Leavers offer to support independence.** The outcomes of the reporting in scrutiny review were agreed by Cabinet on 14<sup>th</sup> February.
- f. **Develop and test new approaches to increase capacity in fostering.** Options for supporting an increase in the numbers of in house foster carers, and the capacity of in house fostering are being considered as part of the wider work on children in our care and as part of collaboration work with other Tees Valley Councils.
- g. **Implement a refreshed approach to corporate parenting.** The new Corporate Parenting Board is providing additional focus on key priority areas.

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

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

4. 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 remains at 100%.
  - b. The take up of the free offer for disadvantaged 2 year olds is now at 94% - a continued and sustained improvement from 2016 when this rate was around 47%.

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

5. In terms of key performance data collected and analysed in Children's Services:
  - a. The rate of contacts to children's social care (ie into the Children's Hub) has continued to reduce compared to the same figures from 2017/18.
  - b. Encouragingly, the rate of referrals and the rate of single assessments being undertaken are all forecast to be below the rates in 2017/18.
  - c. 98% of single assessments, despite this increase in volume, continue to be undertaken within the statutory deadline of 45 days, significantly higher than the national average of 82%.
  - d. The rate at which children are classed as being 'in need' has continued to fall. The rate is now significantly below the rate in 2017/18. The rate at which children 'start an

episode of need' is also reducing. This was the subject of a recent reporting in review, considered by Cabinet on 14 February.

- e. After a significant fall in the rate of children subject to a child protection plan between 2016/17 and 2017/18 (a fall 71 to 49 per 10,000 children) the rate has risen slightly to 56, but remains below the regional average.
- f. Only 1.7% of child protection plans were in place for more than 2 years (an indicator of potential drift – this rate was 3.4% overall last year, lower than the national rate)
- g. We continue to see an increase in the percentage of children subject to a second child protection plan. This has been subject to a 'deep dive' review which has evidenced some examples of over optimistic decision making, and also of a lack of intensity in the child in need plans developed when child protection plans are discontinued.
- h. 96% of initial child protection conferences were held within 15 working days of the Section 47 enquiry, significantly higher than the national average of 77%

6. We continue to operate a rolling recruitment campaign. As at the end of December 2018 there were 8 vacancies across the teams.

7. 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 December there were 7 FTE agency workers currently in post.

8. The overall summary position is therefore that:

- a. We continue to maintain high performance around timeliness and efficiency of our processes;
- b. There is evidence that referrals are increasingly appropriate and that overall contacts, referrals and assessments rates are reducing slightly.
- c. We have made significant progress in reducing the number of children classed as being 'in need'.

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

9. There were 512 children in our care at December 2018, a rate of 116/10,000 children and young people. The rate has remained relatively stable in this quarter. Regional comparative figures are not yet available.

10. 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.

11. In terms of key performance data, for quarter 3:

- a. The proportion of children in our care with three or more placement moves is lower than the last available national average, but has increased from 6.4% in 2017/18 to 8.8% in 2018/19 so far.
- b. The percentage of looked after reviews held in timescale remains high – 97.8.
- c. The time taken from children entering care to moving in with an adoptive family has reduced to 457 days, (this is calculated as a 3 year rolling average – the previous 3 years figure was 599 days).
- d. 58% of care leavers are in employment, education or training compared to last year's rate of 40%.
- e. All residential care homes remain good or outstanding.

12. In summary:
- a. Our rate of children in care remains high, and continues to be a significant area of focus.
  - 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 improvements in our performance around adoption.

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

13. An update on progress includes:
- a. The proposals for the new Hartlepool and Stockton Safeguarding Children Partnership were endorsed at Cabinet in December 2018 and the arrangements are currently in the testing phase before go live on 1 April 2019.

### **COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS**

14. 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**

15. 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**

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

### **RISK ASSESSMENT**

17. 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**

18. 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**

19. 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**

20. 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.