

## AGENDA ITEM

### REPORT TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

14 NOVEMBER 2018

### REPORT OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

## CHILDREN'S SERVICES PROGRESS UPDATE: 2018/19 – QUARTER 1 (APRIL – JUNE 2018)

### Summary

This report provides a summary of performance across Children's Services for Quarter 1. It is based on the Children's Strategy priorities agreed by Cabinet in June 2017.

### Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the report, and in particular:

The outcomes from the Annual Conversation with Ofsted.

## 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. **Redesigning the role and focus of children's centres into multi-agency family hubs as part of a 0-19 approach.** Family Hubs have been operational since April 2018. The development of the range of functions operating out of family hubs continues to develop, and the delivery of universal services from community settings has continued.
  - b. **More integrated assessment and support in the early years.** Considerable progress has been made with the new 0-19 provider and our early years team on the development of the integrated assessment. This is a clear priority for this year and supports wider work around school readiness and vulnerability.

- c. **Work to ensure all schools/academies in Stockton are good or better** – a more detailed report elsewhere on the agenda includes information about the current position on school performance.
- d. **Develop options for alternative provision and curriculum delivery for 14-19 year olds at risk of disengagement and becoming NEET.** We are developing a range of proposals to support alternative curriculum and alternative provision, including working with Bishopton Centre to clarify roles and to modernise the facility. It is planned that this work will be undertaken by December 2018, to enable work to be completed by end of 2019.
- e. **Reshaping family support into a new Family Solutions Service and offer.** As part of early help and social care review work, we will be reviewing the role of family support functions to assess if there are alternative models of delivery which can help support the focus on reducing the need for social care intervention. This will build on the successful implementation of Family Group Conferencing.
- f. **A flexible model of working with young people and families** who need more intensive support. Alongside the development of edge of care, Safe Families for Children and Family Group Conferencing offers for families, we are also working on a range of additional proposals to work with young people and families with very young children.
- g. **Continuing to develop a ‘secondary prevention’ approach to reduce risk in target communities.** The development of an approach to identify vulnerability is being taken forward as part of the work on early help, and will include a specific focus on the targeted action areas of Stockton Town centre and the Mandale and Victoria area of Thornaby as part of the wider proposals agreed by Cabinet.
- h. **Refreshing our approach to social work training and skills, and the quality of supervision.** A revised workforce strategy is currently being developed to support an approach to practice. This is a key element in our improvement plans. We are currently working with a major provider of research, Community Care Inform, to assess views of children’s social care staff on how they access research and evidence in their work; their views on self-directed support (ie individuals taking responsibility for some of their own development) and how we can support this through an online resource such as Community care Inform.
- i. **Tackling key thematic priorities, with an emphasis on domestic abuse, neglect and repeat removals.** Work continues on the delivery of the domestic abuse strategy and action plan. A new social care link post has been created to work directly with social care teams as a means of providing faster support and guidance. Similar proposals are being developed around emotional health and wellbeing and therapeutic advice and support. Design work on repeated removals of children and the various options is being undertaken.
- j. **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, including work on a proposal for trailblazer status. Over 30 primary schools are engaged on this work which has been developed through the Future in Mind project.
- k. **Redesigning our support for children with complex needs and disabilities.** This work is being taken forward as a review, working to smarter working principles, and will include consideration of the role of existing services, and the extent to which they help to support families and prepare for independence.
- l. **Implement a major change programme for social care focusing on capacity, practice, systems, partnership working and models for delivery (S-WORK).** Work has continued to assess a range of options for how we work, against the ‘Ss’ of

- the framework (staffing and recruitment; skills and practice; services and partners; systems, structures, spaces). Initial work will be completed by December 2018.
- m. **Developing an enhanced Care Leavers offer to support independence.** This is the subject of a reporting in scrutiny review for 2018/19
  - n. **Creative ways of engaging and working with children in care,** working with the Let's Take Action Group. The 'More Stuff Like This Please!' project, working with ARC and Blue Cabin continues, and runs until November 2019.
  - o. **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
  - p. **Implement a refreshed approach to corporate parenting.** The new Corporate Parenting Board meets for the first time in October. A new giving scheme – helping hands' will be launched in the Autumn.

## **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. 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.

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

- 5. Key areas of update for this priority include:
  - a. A report elsewhere on the agenda outlines the key educational performance measures.
  - b. The Review of School Inclusion being undertaken by the Children and Young People Select Committee has been completed, and an action plan reported to the Committee at its meeting on
  - 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. There will be no further rounds of the National Strategic Schools Improvement Fund programme. However, the programme for the delivery of the Combined Authority 'Educational Collaboration and Improvement Fund' remains under development and will be launched in 2018/19.
  - e. A review of High Needs Funding spend is underway to ensure best value for money whilst also meeting the specific needs of the child
  - f. Key performance indicators for EHCP completion timescales have been significantly improved to 100% of EHCP's (excluding exceptions) being issued in 20 weeks compared to 66.9% nationally.
  - g. Requests for statutory assessment has continued to rise: we had the second highest number of applications and completed the most EHCPs in the North East.
  - h. The Enhanced Mainstream school (EMS) programme continues to develop with the addition this academic year of 2 Physical Medical Primary EMS provisions and a Social Emotional and Mental Health EMS for children with Mental Health Difficulties.

## ***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 is now taking on responsibility for refreshing the early help offer, including consideration of closer working with schools, the role of a coordination hub, and the further evolution of Family Hubs.

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

7. Key highlights include:
  - a. The successful development of the in-house Family Group Conferencing service, which is well regarded by social care teams and has seen some success in enabling young people to stay safely at home.
  - b. Performance of the hub continues to be strong and well regarded by professionals.
8. In terms of key performance data collected and analysed in Children's Services:
  - a. The rate of contacts to children's social; care has reduced significantly from the corresponding quarter in 2017/18 – by 13.6%. This is encouraging and could suggest that there is better grip in early help services.
  - b. However, the rate of referrals to social care, and the rate of single assessments completed are both up on 2017/18 indicating that referrals in the main are appropriate, and warrant assessment.
  - c. The rate of children in need has reduced from the corresponding period last year, largely as a result of an increase in the rate of children ceasing to be a child in need. This is evidence of the impact of cases being stepped down to early help.
  - d. The rate of children subject to a child protection plan has continued to fall, down from a rate of 64.2 per 10,000 children in quarter 1 2017/18 to 57.8 in this quarter.
  - e. 98.6% of single assessments were completed in 45 days in this quarter (the statutory deadline).
  - f. The percentage of child protection plans lasting more than 2 years was at 1.7% compared to 2% at the equivalent quarter last year (and 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.
  - h. 100% of initial child protection conferences were held within 15 working days of the Section 47 enquiry
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 continue to operate a rolling recruitment campaign. As at the end of June 2018 there were 6 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.

11. 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 June there were 16 FTE agency workers currently in post.
12. The regional Memorandum of Understanding to cap agency pay rates was launched on 1 September 2017. The full transfer of all agency contracts onto the new terms will began from 1 July 2018. There is increasing evidence of a shortage of agency workers across the region (and nationally), which continues to be a priority for the regional ADCS branch, and a number of options are being considered including the potential to recruit from other countries.
13. 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 continue to monitor the rate at which children require additional child protection plans

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

14. There were 501 children in our care at June 2018, a rate of 113/10,000 children and young people. The first quarter of the year has continued to see a rise in the numbers of children in care. This trend is also being experienced across the region. Regional comparative figures are not yet available, but will be assessed shortly.
15. 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 continue to 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.
16. We continue to work with ARC and a social enterprise, Blue Cabin, on a range of proposals to develop cultural and creative opportunities for children in our care. A programme of activity has already bene developed including creative sessions and well attended visits to the theatre.
17. Adoption Tees Valley was established on 1 May 2018, based at the former CLC centre adjacent to Grangefield Academy. The main target for 2018/19 is for the service to be established and to sustain currently activity rates.
18. In terms of key performance data, for quarter 1:
  - a. The rate of children in care continues to rise. Whilst there has been a slight increase in children 'becoming' a child in our care, there has also been a significant reduction in children ceasing to be a child in our care, and therefore overall rates have risen.
  - b. The proportion of children in our care with three or more placement moves has continued to reduce, although fewer children have been living in the same placement for at least two years, down from 77.6% in quarter 1 last year to 66.3% in quarter 1 this year.
  - c. Percentage of looked after reviews held in timescale – 97.8;
  - d. 97.2% of care leavers are in suitable accommodation;

- e. 58.3% of care leavers are in employment, education or training compared to last year's rate of 51.3%;
- f. All residential care homes remain good or outstanding.

19. 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 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***

20. An update on progress includes:

- a. Further sessions on safeguarding and corporate parenting for members will be delivered this year.
- b. In line with the agreed regional approach and the formation of the regional Improvement Alliance, the Council will undertake a self-assessment across Children's services which will be peer challenged and reviewed by two other Councils before being considered as part of a regional improvement plan. Both the LGA and the Department for Education are also involved in this work.
- c. As part of the new Ofsted ILACS framework (Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services) we received an annual conversation with Ofsted. The outcomes of which are attached as Annex 1.
- d. 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 December 2018, with a view to going live from 1 April 2019, well in advance of the deadline of 1 September 2019..

### **COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS**

21. 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**

22. 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**

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

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

24. 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**

25. 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**

26. 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**

27. 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.