

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee held in the Darent Room - Sessions House on Thursday, 10 November 2016.

PRESENT: Mrs J Whittle (Chairman), Mrs A D Allen, MBE (Vice-Chairman), Mrs P Brivio, Mrs P T Cole, Mrs M E Crabtree, Mrs V J Dagger, Mrs M Elenor, Mr M Heale (Substitute for Mr B Neaves), Mrs S Howes, Mr G Lymer, Mr C P Smith, Mr M J Vye and Mrs Z Wiltshire

ALSO PRESENT: Mr G K Gibbens and Mr P J Oakford

IN ATTENDANCE: Dr A Duggal (Deputy Director of Public Health), Ms N Khosla (Acting Assistant Director for West Kent), Mr A Scott-Clark (Director of Public Health), Mr P Segurola (Director of Specialist Children's Services), Miss T A Grayell (Democratic Services Officer) and Ms Jemma West (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

172. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item A2)

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Neaves and Mr Heale attended the meeting as a substitute in his place.

173. Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda

(Item A3)

There were no declarations of interest.

174. Minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2016

(Item A4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on 6 September 2016 are correctly recorded and they be signed by the Chairman. There were no matters arising.

175. Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 20 July and 23 September 2016

(Item A5)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 20 July and 23 September 2016 be noted.

176. Verbal Updates

(Item A6)

1. Mr P J Oakford, Cabinet Member for Specialist Children’s Services, gave a verbal update on the following issues:

Virtual School Kent awards day – 11 September – several Members had attended the event, which had been a fabulous day.

Tour of Immigration Services – Port of Dover –He had attended for a tour of the facility and to find out about the work they did. He and Mr Segurola would be going back, to explore opportunities for joint working with the Immigration Service.

Children in Care Adult Council – On 6 October he and Mr Carter had attended a meeting, and spoke with the young people about the challenges they faced when leaving care. Mr Segurola and his team would follow up on the issues raised.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) – Other authorities placing in Kent was an ongoing problem. He had been made aware that week of another authority who had received two new UASC through the dispersal programme, and had placed them back in to Kent. A letter setting out the challenges and pressures placed on Kent through local authority placements had been sent to the Children’s Commissioner, signed by the Chief Constable, Police, and Crime Commissioner, Leader of the Council and himself.

However, he reported a decline in overall numbers of UASC. There were still 1326 in Kent, of which 723 were under 18 and 603 were over 18. There had been only three arrivals in the past month, with a dramatic decline in arrivals figures, compared with 2015. He gave the following statistics.

	July	August	September	October	November
2015	179	128	98	212	51
2016	47	42	42	20	1 *

* at the time of reporting

So far, 115 young people had been dispersed via the National Dispersal programme.

UASC summit – On 13 October, he, Mr Ireland, and Ms Hammond had met with the Immigration Minister to discuss pressures placed on Kent, and the impact of the Dubs amendment and the Calais jungle being dismantled. All children brought in following the Calais jungle closing had so far gone to the dispersal centre in Croydon and been dispersed around the country, not in Kent. Mr Segurola had a team in France continuing to work with the Immigration Service on assessments, prior to dispersal.

In response to a question, Mr Oakford added that although the Dubs amendment would have an impact on arrivals, the reduction in overall numbers was a result of young people getting older and leaving the service.

2. Mr A Ireland, Corporate Director of Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, then gave a verbal update on the following issues:

UASC – with regard to children leaving care, KCC took almost 1,000 young people into care in 2015, many of whom would soon turn 18, but would have been in the care system for more than 13 weeks, so were entitled to care leaving services. There were around 30 young people each month turning 18, so the balance was shifting. A significant proportion of the young people had an official birthday of 1 January, so it was likely that the balance would tip in 2017 where there were more over 18 year olds. The current agreement with the Home Office covered costs for those under 18, but did not meet costs of over 18s. At 21, many care leavers were no longer entitled to a care leavers allowance, although some remained entitled until the age of 25.

Kent was the first point for arrivals and as a reception block, played a key part in the national process. Reception centres were not able to take children under the age of 16, or girls.

Mr Ireland stated that he felt the disruption of the Calais camp might lead to clandestine arrivals, but this had not happened. Those held in Calais were now in reception centres across France. Social Workers from three local authorities, including Kent were doing best interest and age assessments to find those that met the criteria for the Dubs amendment. He was sceptical that this work would be completed within two weeks.

UASC Placements were country wide, but he had been made aware of cases where the young person had relatives living in Kent and had been placed in Kent to be reunited with their families.

In response to questions, Mr Ireland and Mr Oakford made points including the following:

- Few authorities met the 0.07% threshold, and Kent certainly had more. Authorities with airport connections or where lorries stopped tended to have a higher number. Only 11 out of 101 authorities had more than the 0.07% threshold.
- The Leader of Medway Council had recently appeared on the Politics Show, and had explained that Medway only had three UASC, but it was fair to say that Kent had placed a number in Medway, and so this number was disproportionate.

Mr Ireland then went on to give the following additional updates:

VSK awards – the day had been followed up with an awards evening for those aged 16 plus. It had been a really good event, and encouraging to see a mixture of young people receiving awards and recognition for academic success.

Children and Social Care Bill – This was presently going through Parliament but one of its clauses had been defeated in the House of Lords that week. The Government had not commented on the next steps, but the final outcome would have important implications for Kent.

National Children's Services Conference – Mr Segurola had attended the previous week. Government Ministers including the Immigration Minister had attended on the Thursday. There had been consultation and dialogue regarding the new Ofsted Inspection pilot. Kent could not volunteer as they had not yet received the Single Inspection Framework inspection.

3. Mr G K Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, gave a verbal update on the following:

Smoke free school gates – He had attended the Annual Public Health England conference on 13 September and met the Director of Public Health in Coventry who had spoken about Smoke Free school gates in Coventry. Mr Gibbens stated that following the success of smoke free play areas, he intended to promote smoke free gates too. He advised he was happy to provide further information to Members.

Community Pharmacies – The Adult Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee had written to Jeremy Hunt to express concern about proposed changes to funding.

Childrens and Adults Conference – He had been pleased to see Edward Timpson and Justine Greening in attendance at the conference, and impressed with their support of the work of social workers.

4. Mr Scott-Clark, Director of Public Health, then gave a verbal update on the following:

Dr Allison Duggal – He welcomed Dr Duggal to the meeting.

Publication of Health Profiles – Outcomes had been published at both county and district levels on 16 September 2016.

He then responded to comments and questions from Members, as follows:

- There had been lots of work on Health Needs Assessments, which would influence what the Department for Health did. This had also been shared with Croydon, to give them an idea of what they could expect, and what UASC's health needs were. This had been published on the website.
- In terms of mental health, there had not been as many referrals as anticipated. However, there could be pressure for the Adult Service, as post-traumatic stress tended to affect people some time after the event.

RESOLVED that the verbal updates be noted.

177. School Public Health Services - Contract awards (16/00038a) (Item B1)

1. The Chairman asked Members of the Committee if, in discussing the report, they wished to make reference to the information set out in the exempt appendix to it,

which was included at the end of the agenda at item F1. Some Members confirmed that they wished to ask questions about some of the information in the appendix.

2. Accordingly, it was RESOLVED that discussion of this item take place in closed session at the end of the meeting. It is recorded below, in Minute 186.

178. Review of means testing for Special Guardianship Orders and Adoption Allowances (16/00087)

(Item B2)

Ms S Hamilton, Team Leader of the Children's Allowance Team, was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Segurola and Ms Hamilton introduced the report and responded to comments and questions from members, including the following:

- (a) SGOs awarded prior to February 2016 would not be affected by these changes.
- (b) The consultation response had been low. There had only been two phone calls relating to the consultation, and these people had been easily placated. One of the respondents had been given a trial of the changes, and did not notice any difference. People would not be left with less than 125% of the Income Support levels.
- (c) The volume of SGOs was increasing due to case law changes where the payments system was regularised in 2014, and there had been a drop in the numbers of children being put for adoption. However, there was still a new financial burden for KCC.
- (d) Assessments were carried out three months after the order was first acquired, and annually thereafter, on the anniversary. Evidence of the person's financial situation was requested, and the person was duty bound to advise KCC of any changes, and if they did not, any overpayment could be recovered.
- (e) It was anticipated that the number of SGOs would increase, but there were a number where there was no requirement on KCC to pay an allowance. If all of the proposed changes were implemented, there could be over £1 million of savings.
- (f) Adoption Allowances were calculated using the same method as SGOs.
- (g) A large number of people receiving SGOs were working people rather than pensioners.
- (h) Options considered included deducting Child Benefit for those in receipt of an income of more than £50k, but consultation had not shown any clear leads.
- (i) This was an area for challenge, but it would be benchmarked against good practice, and was designed to ensure it was robust against challenge.

2. RESOLVED that the decision proposed to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services to review the means testing for Special Guardianship Order Allowances, Adoption Allowances and other related Allowances, and to delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, or other nominated officer to undertake the necessary actions to implement the decision, be endorsed.

179. The Shared Accommodation Service for Children in Care and Care Leavers (16/00079)

(Item B3)

Ms K Sharp, Head of Public Health Commissioning and Ms K Mills, Commissioning Manager (Children's Centres), were in attendance for this item.

1. Ms Sharp and Ms Mills introduced the report, advising that the recommendation needed to be amended, extending the contract by 12 months to 28 February 2018, instead of 6 months, 31 August 2017. They responded to comments and questions from the Committee, as follows:

- (a) Accommodation providers worked closely with KCC's 18+ service. Consultation regarding location appropriateness was carried out with the Police and Districts. The properties tended to be two or three bedroom houses, providing accommodation for a small number of young people in each location.
- (b) They were working closely with the Property team, as they had a better understanding of the property available. The extension of existing contracts would allow more time to fully consider short and long term needs.
- (c) All care leavers received financial support and bursaries, but did not receive support with University course fees, and would be required to use student loans the same as other young people. The issue of supporting vulnerable people's ambitions was something for the Corporate Parenting Panel to consider.
- (d) This time next year, there would be over 1,000 care leavers, but the Property Team were assuring that there are enough properties available to fulfil needs. KCC had a responsibility to ensure all children were placed.
- (e) Each child in care had a care plan which was reviewed regularly. A pathway plan was then devised when the child was approaching 16, taking into consideration education or employment needs and family connections. KCC had a duty to ensure care was focused on individual needs.
- (f) There were a high number of care leavers across the county, which would bring issues, no matter how effective the service was.

2. RESOLVED that the decision proposed to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services to re-award short-term interim contracts to deliver a Shared Accommodation Service for Children in Care and Care Leavers aged 16-21 from 1 March 2017 to 28 February 2018, and to delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, or other nominated officer to implement the decision, be endorsed.

180. Working Together to Improve Outcomes: Kent Children and Young People's Framework 2016 - 2019 (16/00116)
(Item B4)

Mr T Wilson, Programme Director and Ms K Sharp, Head of Public Health Commissioning were in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Wilson introduced the report. Ms K Sharp then responded to comments and questions from the Committee, as follows:

- (a) Each Local Children's Partnership Group (LCPG) had selected their priorities from a set of 17 indicators.

- (b) Small pots of grant funding were available to be allocated through Local Children's Partnership Board, and the grant process had now opened, with a decision due early in 2017.
- (c) It was recognised that there were wider funding disparities between areas, and the government was looking at reshaping the Free School Meals scheme.
- (d) LCPGs had been set up in a way to focus partnership working in districts, preventing them from becoming 'talking shops'. The use of the dashboard and prioritisation was designed to track process, encouraging a link with and feedback from the groups. Partnership working was tricky, but the LCTPs seemed to be going in the right direction. Priorities varied between the different partners which was a fundamental issue.
- (e) There were 12 LCPGs across the county, and each one was different.
- (f) Members played an important role on the LCPG as they had a good understanding of the issues affecting local people.

2. Members agreed that it could be useful to have a local members' briefing where good examples of the LCPG, such as Canterbury and Tunbridge Wells, could be shared.

3. RESOLVED that the decision proposed to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services to adopt "Working Together to Improve Outcomes: Kent Children and Young People's Framework 2016-2019", as Kent's partnership strategy for children and young people, be endorsed.

181. Early Help and Preventative Services

(Item C1)

Mr N Baker, Head of Service, 0-25 (East Kent) was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Baker introduced the report and responded to comments and questions from the Committee, as follows:

- (a) It was likely that the changes to the Benefit Cap would have an impact on the number of referrals.
- (b) It had taken a while for the Early Help process to imbed and gain traction. The quality of work had steadily improved.
- (c) Targets set by the Government with regard to the Troubled Families Programme had vastly accelerated. Parameters had been extended, and it is anticipated that a high proportion of families supported through the Service would meet the parameters to count as a troubled family. The target was achievable, although very ambitious.

RESOLVED that the information set out in the report, and given in response to comments and questions be noted.

182. Action plans arising from Ofsted inspections

(Item C2)

Mr T Stevenson, Acting Head of Quality Assurance, was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Stevenson introduced the report and responded to comments and questions from Committee Members, as follows:

- (a) Newly qualified Social Workers were perhaps more likely to know how to set out a chronology. Some were still locked into doing the chronology in the way that they always had done. It was understood that if any case file did not have a chronology, it would not achieve a rating of good or above. There was a programme of work, which was regularly picked up by an auditor and subject to regular review.
- (b) In terms of the Domestic Abuse tender, the breadth of the new Strategy would provide a comprehensive service. If the Single Inspection Framework inspection were to take place in November, an OFSTED inspector was likely to be reassured by recognition of improvements needed, and the swift response to highlighted issues.
- (c) There had been cases where authorities felt they had not been treated fairly in that OFSTED hadn't taken into account the pressures on them. OFSTED were aware of the issues affecting Kent, such as the number of UASC but it was difficult in that it was down to the individual Inspector's perception.

2. RESOLVED that the progress against action plans arising from OFSTED inspections be noted.

183. Specialist Children's Services Performance Dashboard *(Item D1)*

Mrs M Robinson, Management Information Unit Manager, was in attendance for this item.

In response to a question from a Member, Mr Segurola advised that it could be beneficial for placement stability to include those children moving from home into a care environment while assessments were undertaken, and placed permanently within a 12 month period. However, there was some churn around adolescents, particularly around UASC, and it was a concern that resilience to hold placements was not being managed. Underlying factors were being looked at, to see what measures could be taken to improve this indicator.

RESOLVED that the information set out in the report, and given in response to questions, be noted.

184. Work Programme 2016/17 *(Item D2)*

RESOLVED that the Committee's work programme for 2016/17 be noted.

Motion to exclude the press and public

The Committee resolved that, under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

EXEMPT ITEM (Open Access to Minutes)

185. School Public Health Services - Contract awards - (16/00038a) exempt appendix to Item B1
(Item E1)

Ms K Sharp, Head of Public Health Commissioning, and Ms S Bennett, Consultant in Public Health, was in attendance for this item.

Ms Sharp introduced the item and invited comments from Members.

In debate, Members expressed concern at the recent track record of one of the bidders listed. Ms Sharp advised the committee that the procurement process included robust checks of bidders' financial stability and past performance, including case studies, and there was nothing at the time of submitting bids which would have precluded that company from taking part. As they had submitted a bid, the Council was legally obliged to consider their bid as part of the procurement process.

RESOLVED that the decision proposed to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health to award contracts to the successful bidder(s) from those listed in the exempt appendix to the report, be endorsed.