



## **Update from Mrs Hohler, Cabinet member for Children, Families and Education to Cabinet 11 October 2010**

### **Improvement in children and families social care following the unannounced inspection of our Duty and Initial Assessment Teams**

An Improvement Programme is in place following the priority action and areas for development highlighted from the unannounced Ofsted inspection in August. Actions taken to date are listed below.

An Improvement Steering Group has been established, with a preliminary meeting of myself, the Managing Director and Director of Specialist Children's Services on 29 September. The first meeting of the full Improvement Steering group takes place on Thursday of this week, with councillor and service representatives. The improvement steering group will meet monthly, with fortnightly updates for myself, the Managing Director and Director of Specialist Children's Services.

On Monday 27 September, we received notice from Ofsted of a full inspection of Kent's services for safeguarding and looked after children, as part of the three year cycle of inspections of all local authorities. The two week fieldwork starts today, and involves case file audits, visits to social care teams, work with health professionals, schools and focus groups including children, parents and carers. The inspection report will be published on 19 November, and will be brought to the next appropriate meeting of Cabinet.

There will be the opportunity for discussion on safeguarding at this week's County Council when two reports are being considered: the annual report and business plan of Kent Safeguarding Children Board, and the County Council's response to the report received in April on Safeguarding Children in Kent.

#### **Action underway on the improvement plan**

##### **1. Quality assurance and monitoring**

- All 12 district management teams have submitted improvement plans to Helen Davies, Director for Specialist Children's Services by 20 September; they are now being implemented
- Baseline auditing and assessment of Duty and Initial Assessment Teams (DIATs) has been completed by the Safeguarding Unit, and an external audit plan has been agreed

- QA processes are being strengthened by each district manager randomly auditing a minimum of 5 DIAT cases per month
- Use of the duty tracking sheet is mandatory and district managers are checking its use (this will also be checked in baseline assessment of DIAT systems)

## **2. Capacity**

- Capacity issues highlighted in improvement plans have been addressed as follows:
  - Each DIAT is appointing 1 additional administrative assistant
  - Each DIAT is appointing 1 additional social work assistant
  - Each DIAT will receive 1 trainee social worker (the recruitment of trainees has been expanded from 10 to 22 posts)
  - Consideration is being given to appointing 1 additional principal social worker per DIAT and increasing the CAF coordinator post for each district to 1 FTE, subject to funding being identified
  - Funding for this is within the baseline budget for children and families social care, although the underspend in staffing has been used to compensate for overspend in care for looked after children. A report on the budget pressure and management action will be contained in the next budget monitoring report to cabinet.

## **3. Recruitment and retention**

- The Social worker recruitment campaign continues;
  - 58 newly qualified social workers have taken up their posts between July – September
  - 23 more social workers have been recruited from Europe by Jacaranda. They will start in January
  - At least 20 applicants to the rolling advertisement on KCC website will be interviewed shortly
  - The number of social work assistants to be sponsored on the Open University DipSW course has been expanded from 10 to 20
- Retention strategy – proposals for new social worker paycales are due for consultation with Unions

## **4. Managing Demand**

- An action plan for improving implementation of the Common Assessment Framework is in place, to encourage agencies to work together to coordinate support for vulnerable children and families at an earlier stage

- Work is underway with Kent Safeguarding Children Board to reduce inappropriate referrals to children and families social care
- Each of the 12 district teams has action plan for the role of the new Preventative Services Managers (PSM), to coordinate early intervention and prevent escalation of problems to social care services. The plans will work up key indicators of success, quick wins, and the role of children's centres, parent support advisers and other locally based services.

## **5. Improving systems**

- Integrated Children's System – survey of social workers is underway, and a review of the system is underway with the support of the corporate ISG team.