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To: Specialist Children's Services Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 21 June 2011

Subject: **Putting Children First: Kent's Safeguarding and Looked After Children Improvement Plan**

Classification: Unrestricted

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Summary Updates Members on progress on delivering the Improvement Plan

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## Introduction

1. (1) The Improvement Plan is a standing item on the Committee's agenda. The Plan was drawn up in response to the findings of the Ofsted inspections which took place in August and October 2010. It sets out the overall strategy and detailed actions to significantly improve services to children in Kent and support for looked after children. It directly addresses the requirements set out in the Ofsted Report and subsequent Improvement Notice from government. More widely, it also seeks to enhance the quality of practice and improve the whole system through which children's needs are assessed and met via a fundamental re-shaping of Children's Services.

(2) The governance arrangements for children's social care improvement were approved by the County Council on 6 April. The Kent Improvement Board, which has an independent chair, Liz Railton (approved by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children & Families) and a membership that includes representatives from key partner agencies, meets monthly. Ms Railton's first quarterly report was sent to all Members on 1 June and subsequently went to Cabinet on 20 June.

(3) The County Council also agreed to establish a Children's Services Improvement Panel which is an informal Member group that supports this (Families & Social Care Policy Overview & Scrutiny) Committee by offering challenge and overseeing the monitoring of progress. Because this Committee meets quarterly, the minutes of the Panel will be sent to Cabinet to note, as well as this POSC, so that they are reported to Members and the public in a timely manner.

## Progress to date

2. (1) A detailed report on progress went to County Council and then Cabinet in May. Key actions to note since those reports were made are:

- On 23 May Cabinet approved the workforce strategy and “compelling offer” to improve recruitment and retention of children’s social workers.
- The Peripatetic Team is up to full strength, and has taken on 423 cases, which has had a significant impact on reducing numbers of unallocated cases.
- The Duty and Initial Assessment Team (DIAT) improvement programme has been rolled out from Swale to Thanet, Tunbridge Wells and Ashford and is having a positive impact.
- The county duty team, a small and temporary team of qualified social workers, has been recruited to work alongside the Kent Contact and Assessment Centre in order to make decisions about which cases need initial assessments and therefore should be passed through to DIATs. There have been some teething problems which are being resolved.
- The commissioning framework for early intervention and preventative services has been advertised on the SE Business Portal.

## Impact on Performance

3. (1) Between February and early May we have:

- Reduced unallocated cases from 2269 to 338 (of which only 71 have been unallocated for more than 28 days).
- Reduced outstanding initial assessments from 1926 to 665
- Reduced outstanding core assessments from 2019 to 1411

(2) To deliver the improvement notice targets on bringing down outstanding initial and core assessments (to 200 and 100 respectively by August) is still very challenging indeed and every effort is being made to achieve them.

(3) The Children’s Services Improvement Panel will be given detailed performance information for its meeting on 22 June.

## Recommendations

4. Members are asked to NOTE the progress that is being made on delivering the Improvement Plan.

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*Background documents:* None