

From: Peter Oakford, Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services
Andrew Ireland, Corporate Director - Social Care, Health and Wellbeing

To: Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee –
8 September 2015

Subject: **ANNUAL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY REPORT 2014-15**

Classification: Unrestricted

Past pathway: **Specialist Children's Services Divisional Management Team**
Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Directorate Management Team

Future pathway: **Governance and Audit Committee**

Electoral Division: All

Summary: This report sets out a position statement for Specialist Children's Services regarding equality and diversity work and progress on KCC Equality objectives for 2014/2015.

Recommendations: Members of the Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee are asked to:

- a) **NOTE** current performance
- b) **ENSURE** that equality governance is observed in relation to decision making
- c) **AGREE** to receive revised objectives in 2016
- d) **AGREE** to receive the report annually in order to comply with Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and ensure progress against County Council objectives.

1. Introduction

1.1 Publication of equality information is compulsory in England for all public authorities. Proactive publication of equality information ensures not only compliance with the legal requirements, but also greater understanding by the public of the difficult decisions an authority faces, and why it takes those decisions. Gathering equality information and using it to inform decision-making can also enable authorities to achieve greater value for money in the services they deliver through better targeting of services.

2. Financial Implications

2.1 There are no financial implications in producing an annual report.

3 Equality Objectives Annual Review

- 3.1 The council published the following equality objectives in 2011/12 and performance against these objectives has been reported to Directorate Management Teams (DMT). Evidence submitted suggests that overall the Council has made progress on the processes and procedures that are needed to mainstream equality into core business and highlighting future action. The Equality Objectives are:
- a. Working with all our partners to define and jointly address areas of inequality;
 - b. Promoting fair employment practices and creating an organisation that is aware of and committed to equality and diversity and delivers its Public Sector Equality Duty;
 - c. Improving the way KCC listens to and engages with its employees, communities and partners to develop, implement and review policy and to inform the commissioning of services;
 - d. Improving the quality, collection, monitoring and use of equality data as part of the evidence base to inform service design delivery and policy decisions;
 - e. Providing inclusive and responsive customer services through;
 - f. Understanding and responding to the impacts on People when KCC is doing its work;
- 3.2 Directorates have been asked to provide equality information to demonstrate how they have complied with equality legislation between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2015 and what performance measures and internal controls they have in place to achieve KCC's Equality Objectives to ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

4 Key Achievements for Specialist Children's Services

Children in Care service, Leaving care and unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)

- 4.1. On 1 December 2014 the Children in Care Service, Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children Service (SUASC) and the 16+ service saw significant structural changes. Following significant consultation, the 16+ service (previously provided by Catch 22) was brought in house. Former Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (i.e. aged 18 and above) who had previously been supported by the UASC service were also transferred to the new Integrated Care Leavers Service.
- 4.2. The integration of the formerly separate UASC service into the existing Children in Care (CIC) Service also meant that CIC social workers now held mixed caseloads of both citizen CIC and UASC CIC aged 17 and under. The reconfiguration of the service for children and young people under 18 has already brought more rigour and attention to the quality of the work with this group of children in care. It also ensures young people aged 16 and 17 in care are equally provided with the full suite of support and access to CIC support services.

- 4.3. The new, integrated 18+ Care Leavers' service focuses on supporting young people in their transition to adulthood, enabling and assisting them to gain the life skills and opportunities required to reach their full potential. Bringing together the previously separate leaving care services has led to a greater level of consistency and equity in service delivery, provision and the application of statutory guidance.
- 4.2 The Care Leavers Support Policy ('Care Leaver Offer') was developed following an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA). The EqIA was part of the report and appendices presented to the Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee in January 2015. As a result of this policy now being in place, care leavers of all backgrounds and characteristics can have a clear understanding of the help that is available to them and their entitlements to support for which they can hold the County Council to account.

Our Children and Young People's Council (OCYPC) and the Virtual School Kent

- 4.4. Through the Children in Care Council (OCYPC) children and young people have been encouraged to contribute to the design and development of services by strengthening the Council's ability to represent the views and interests of Children in Care and Care Leavers. The OCYPC also works to include the views and opinions of disabled and Black Minority Ethnic (BME) children. Young people within OCYPC were consulted on the revised fostering guides being produced for children in care, the revised Kent Pledge and the updated [Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2015-2016](#).
- 4.5. VSK organised 13 participation activity days from September 2013 to July 2014 run during the summer, October, February and Easter school holidays for Kent Children in Care. 297 have attended at least one activity day with 55 children attending two or more activities. The age range of young people attending has been aged between 3 – 17 years. The activities have been organised and run by VSK's Apprentice Participation Workers and team. The participation days have covered a wide range of activities including sports, outdoor pursuits, music and dance and arts and crafts. Six participation days took place over the summer 2014 school holidays.
- 4.6. The children and young people of the OCYPC, including the Participation Apprentices have contributed to the design and development of services for them by strengthening Kent's Children in Care Council's ability to represent their views and interests, including the views and opinions of disabled children and minority groups. All children in care have access to participation events, however it is recognised that more could be done to be wholly inclusive and accessible to Children in Care with profound and acute disabilities.
- 4.7. In line with the Council's aspirations for young people in care and those leaving care as they move towards adulthood, the integrated Children in Care teams and 18+ services also ensure more robust oversight and equitable access to educational opportunities. The role of Virtual School Kent has been

extended to cover young people in acer aged 16 and 17 and also offer increased support to those children and young people for whom English is not their primary language.

Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) and the Kent Pledge

- 4.8. The IRO service has put in place online and paper surveys of children and young people, parents and carers for them to feedback on the quality of the service being provided to children and young people and how this can be improved. The IRO service also run surveys of young people leaving care (Exit interview) as they value the views of children about their experiences of being in care and the services they receive. The report of the findings is completed and analysed every quarter for the attention of assistant directors and service managers, for their consideration with regards to practice improvement of IRO and social worker performance.
- 4.9. 100% of children in care have access to information about Kent's Pledge. The Independent Review Officers (IRO) regularly check with children and young people about their understanding of Kent Pledge and whether all the Pledge commitments are being provided by operational teams. This has formed part of IRO quality assurance and case oversight monitoring. All inadequate ratings in this area are followed up with social workers and managers by the relevant IROs.

Data collection and understanding of demographic needs

- 4.10. Within Specialist Children's Services data gathering in relation to protected characteristics is incorporated into all scheduled reporting where possible. This information is published in the SCS Quarterly Report. The reported information is used at a local level within operational practice. Any localised themes are identified and factored in to service delivery accordingly.
- 4.11. Parents and children have the opportunity to complete a feedback form following every case conference. This form has been revised following consultation with parents to make it easier to use. The implementation of Signs of Safety and its' gradual application to each areas' Child Protection Conferences will assist in making these meetings more understandable to all attendees. Feedback from Child Protection Conferences undertaken in Kent using the Signs of Safety of principles has been positive.
- 4.12. Children and parents/carers have also had the opportunity to provide feedback on service delivery and outcomes following child protection case conferences, family group conferences and children in care reviews. The consultation form has been revised following research with parents to make it easier to use. As a result, work is underway in conjunction with KSCB and VSK to involve children and young people to devise a child friendly way of capturing their views in the conference process- i.e. revision of the information on conferences and a consultation leaflet to capture the views of under 11's and over 11's.

5. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

- 5.1. There has been a significant increase in numbers of UASC becoming formally looked after in the last three months. Specialist Children's Services has seen a 52% increase in the total numbers of UASC in the Council's care since June 2015¹. Young people seeking asylum in the United Kingdom (UK) have the protected characteristics of race and religion/ belief. Despite the significant increase in asylum-seeking children and young people entering the UK and becoming looked after, every effort has been made to ensure these vulnerable children's individual identities and needs are respected e.g. additional prayer mats have been made available and additional interpreters have been secured. Every effort has also been made to ensure children and young people from the same country are placed together, to minimise language barriers and increase the mutual support that can be offered within supported accommodation.
- 5.2. Although the formerly separate UASC service was integrated into the Children in Care service and 18+ service in December 2014, recent surges in the numbers of UASC has meant additional staffing resources have been urgently required in order to ensure the needs of children and young people are met. A new, temporary UASC Service Manager joined the Council 11th August 2015, to offer support and assist in overseeing the additional UASC social workers and team management. A decision was taken corporately in August 2015 that all UASC who have become looked after since June 2015 will become the responsibility of the new Central UASC team (under the management of Sarah Hammond, Assistant Director for West Kent and UASC strategic lead).
- 5.3. This decision was taken to ensure that newly looked after unaccompanied minors are fully supported and secondly, so as not to overwhelm the existing CIC teams. If the numbers of UASC becoming looked after had continued to transfer into the CIC teams, each team's caseload would have significantly increased. This would have negatively impacted on the care and support individually given to children and young people already looked after. UASC already allocated to a CIC social worker will not transfer or face any disruption as a result of this decision.

6. Due Regard

- 6.1 The County Council continues to use Equality Impact Assessments to capture and evidence our analysis on the impact of our decisions and policies on the People of Kent. The Equality Act abolished the need for EqlAs but is clear on the need to undertake equality analysis in order to demonstrate that due regard has been paid to our Equality duties and the County Council evidences this by way of an EqlA. Decisions taken without full equality analysis leaves the authority open to potential Judicial Review.

7 Future reporting

¹ At the start of June 2015 there were 417 UASC in Kent's care; by mid-August 2015 there were 638 unaccompanied children looked after by the Council.

7.1 Kent County Council's equality objectives are currently being reviewed; as the current objectives are due to expire in 2016. Successive annual reports demonstrate that KCC has and continues to make good progress against them. As such last year's report proposed that the authority further embeds equality objectives and outcomes within the new Strategic Statement and the Commissioning Framework. This will allow the organisation to develop equality objectives that are embedded in core children's services work and wider organisational and SCS work streams such as Prevent (safeguarding children at risk of being drawn into terrorism) Child Sexual Exploitation in 2015/16.

8 Legal implications and Risk Management

8.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) requires the Council to publish its Equality Annual Report each year.

9 Equality Impact Assessment

9.1 There is no requirement to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment because this paper reports performance monitoring on the previous year's work and internal governance arrangements.

10. Conclusion

The annual report has been able to identify progress. The Directorate can demonstrate that it provides accessible and usable services but it needs to continue to improve its governance arrangements and review how it demonstrates the impact of service outcomes in relation to protected characteristics.

11. Recommendations:

Members of the Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee are asked to:

- a) **NOTE** current performance
- b) **ENSURE** that equality governance is observed in relation to decision making
- c) **AGREE** to receive revised objectives in 2016
- d) **AGREE** to receive the report annually in order to comply with Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and ensure progress against County Council objectives

12. Background Documents

Kent County Council equality objectives:

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/corporate-policies/equality-and-diversity/equality-and-diversity-objectives>

13. Contact details

Report author: Nicki Shaw, Practice Development Officer- SCS Safeguarding Unit

☎ 03000 412820 ✉ Nicki.Shaw@kent.gov.uk

Relevant Director: Philip Segurola, Director of SCS

☎ 03000 413120 ✉ Philip.Segurola@kent.gov.uk