

From: Peter Oakford, Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services

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To: Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee – 2 December 2015

Subject: **Action Plans Arising from and in Preparation for Ofsted Inspections**

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: None

Electoral Division: All

Summary: This report provides the Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee with an update on progress regarding the continued journey of Kent's services for children and young people; the current position and the aspirational plans moving forward.

This report is representative of the collective efforts of both Specialist Children's Services (SCS), and Early Help and Preventative Services (EHPS).

Recommendation(s): The Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee is asked to **NOTE** the progress which has been made since the last report.

1. Introduction

1.1 This is the eleventh regular report to the Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee on progress made in improving practice and developing services provided to children and young people in Kent. The last report of this nature, was July 2015, and outlined progress to that date.

1.2 Since 2012, KCC Specialist Children's Services have undergone five Ofsted inspections:

- Fostering Services – published report 31 July 2012 (*adequate*)
- Children in need of help and protection (Safeguarding) – published report 15 January 2013 (*adequate*)
- Adoption support services – published report 18 June 2013 (*adequate*)
- Children in Care / Care Leavers – published report 23 August 2013 (*adequate*)
- Thematic inspection of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) – joint national report on the findings of eight thematic inspections, published November 2014.

- 1.3 Actions arising from inspections and Peer Reviews alike are overseen and monitored alongside actions self-identified by the Local Authority as areas requiring further scrutiny and development.
- 1.4 In order to robustly monitor and quality assure the improvements being made against these actions, regular updates on service development have been submitted to this Committee, Corporate Parenting Panel, the Children's Services Improvement Panel and are overseen by the joint Early Help and Preventative (EHPS) Services and Specialist Children's Services (SCS) joint Divisional Management Team (DivMT).
- 1.5 This report sets out both the progress made since July 2015 in continuing to develop the Council's practice with and services for children, young people, their families and carers.

2. Key developments since July 2015

2.1. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

- 2.1.1 This Committee has received a separate report (item C2) detailing the current challenges in relation to the extremely high numbers of asylum-seeking children and young people entering Kent's care. As the dramatic increase in numbers of children has had such a significant effect on the capacity of local services and its' resources however, it is undoubtedly a key development since July 2015.
- 2.1.2 The current crisis is having unavoidable consequences, which are steadily affecting every aspect of children's service delivery: training and equipment required, staff guidance required, and senior management time- among others. This is in addition to more direct pressures: the availability of foster placements or accommodation within the County (for both UASC and citizen children entering care or requiring an alternate placement), the availability of education/ learning opportunities and health services, and the capacity of the Central Referral Unit, Out of Hours teams, UASC teams and 18+ leaving care service.

2.2 Recruitment and retention of qualified social workers

- 2.2.1 Alongside longstanding recruitment challenges driven by proximity to competition of other local authority borders, and the size of the county; there is an urgent need for additional, experienced social workers in Kent in order to support the high number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children entering the United Kingdom via the Dover port and tunnel.
- 2.2.2. Campaigns which ran over summer and early autumn have successfully resulted in the recruitment of forty one Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWS) who will be joining the council in the coming months. This is extremely positive for the council and indicative of the hard work of staff and senior officers to create an environment which offers the support, leadership and resources for social workers to flourish and have practice to be proud of.
- 2.2.3 Vacancies for experienced social workers are currently being advertised on Kent.gov.uk and Google ad-words. By utilising a social media package, the

Council is able to promote itself as a preferred employer for Children's social workers. The channels being utilised include LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Google+.

2.2.4 Kent County Council also sponsored a stand at the Compass Jobs Fair in London on 30 November 2015 and used this as a forum to discuss employment opportunities with interested social workers. Specialist Children's Services also sponsored the 'Team Leader of the Year - Social Services' award at the annual Social Worker of the Year awards. Andrew Ireland, Corporate Director for Social Care, Health and Wellbeing presented the award to the winner.

2.3 Early Help and Preventative Services (EHPS)

2.3.1 One of the key actions for 2015 concerned the implementation of a new Early Help management system. For many years, Early Help services have used the Secure Kent Workforce Online (SKWO) system. Between November and December 2015, there will be a phased roll out of a new Early Help module. The Early Help module will provide a full case management system integrated to the SCS system provided by Liquid Logic-Liberi. This module will be fully live and operational across the county by December 2015.

2.3.2 The phased roll out commenced on 2 November 2015 when South Area Early Help went live. This was followed by West Area Early Help on 11 November; East Area Early Help on 19 November; and North Area Early Help on 2 December 2015.

2.3.3 The implementation of this piece of technology creates a shared system between SCS and EHPS. It will enable improved communication between teams when 'stepping up' and 'stepping down' the amount of help and support a child, young person or their family require. The 'step up/ step down' process transfers a child or young person between the thresholds a Child In Need (open to SCS with a social worker) and being open to EHPS, receiving dedicated support from an Early Help practitioner. Having shared access to a case management system will also enable greater ease of access for performance reporting across the [tiers of interventions](#), particularly in relation to case notes for children who have been or currently are missing.

2.3.4 A new EHPS Quality Assurance Framework has also been drawn up. Improvement Managers, supported by Improvement Officers from within the EHPS Information and Intelligence service will project manage the EHPS Quality Assurance Framework by enabling and supporting strategic and operational managers to ensure its effective implementation.

2.3.5 The framework includes an intensive audit plan, not just of case work, but also of data quality, advice/ practice guidance and the quality of return interviews. A series of EHPS six-monthly deep dives will also focus on specific themes and areas of service delivery and joint-working.

2.4 Principal Social Workers and the Practice Development team

- 2.4.1 Kent County Council has two Principal Social Workers. An embedded part of SCS's Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit, the role has been in existence in Kent since 2013. It was developed as a result of Eileen Munro's 2011 report, recommending there be a conduit for feedback between operational social care staff and quality assurance staff, to senior managers and the Lead Member for Children's Services.
- 2.4.2 Kent's Principal Social Workers are both highly experienced qualified social workers. An Expert Practitioner group of staff from across Children's Services continues to meet monthly. This forum is an effective mechanism to both share positive experiences as well current challenges/ escalate specific issues.
- 2.4.3 The Principal Social Workers are responsible for the service's Practice Development Officers. A team of team-manager level, experienced social workers either have specific practice leads (e.g. Transformation, child sexual exploitation, Children in Care/ Care Leavers, missing children etc.) or are attached to specific areas of the county, with one each for North, East, South and West.
- 2.4.4 During 2015, the Practice Development team have undertaken targeted auditing work and workshops led by the demands of the service and areas identified as either requiring further training or attention. The team's workshops have focused on a range of practice issues, including-but not limited to- the participation of children, parents and carers (these have included representatives from across the service including the Virtual School Kent and Kent's apprentices), chronologies and the use of family history, purposeful visiting and effective planning, permanence, missing children and child sexual exploitation.

2.5 Signs of Safety

- 2.5.1 'Signs of Safety' is a systemic, theoretical framework for social work practice; based on identifying strengths as well as risks. The model of intervention is being implemented universally across SCS and EHPS and will support a shared, whole system approach to managing risk when working with children from Early Help through to Children in Care. The roll out of the Signs of Safety training began in March 2015. Full implementation of this new way of working will take two to five years.
- 2.5.2 Since July 2015, the demand for courses remains high, with an unprecedented level of attendance and minimal cancellation or non-attendance. The feedback from the training is very positive, both anecdotally and formally. Staff are enthusiastic about the model and there is positive evidence of them beginning to implement their learning in practice. There has been a clearly enhanced focus on the issues within the family and thus greater clarity as to the defined "Danger Statement and Safety Goal".
- 2.5.3 There is increasing evidence of the children/young people's participation, particularly notable in the numbers of children and young people attending their Child Protection (CP) conferences. A 'Signs of Safety' approach has not just aided the inclusion of children and young people in the work of the Council's services (particularly CP conferences). There is improved inclusion

of parents, carers and/ or other key family members, who-among other positive comments- pleasingly noted:

“I like the idea of the new approach to the way the conference is presented, having written on the board 'What is going well' and 'What are you worried about' is less intimidating”

2.5.4 Within SCS, all permanent Team Managers will be practice leaders, alongside half of the EHPS Unit Leaders. The training for practice leaders includes regular additional workshops and a further five day course. The practice leader role is critical for embedding the Signs of Safety model into practice.

2.5.5 Multi-agency briefings hosted by KSCB were held on 25 and 27 November.

2.6 Transformation of Children's Services

2.6.1 Services for children and young people are collectively '[Facing the Challenge: Delivering better outcomes](#)' to achieve whole council transformation, through the 0-25 Programme. The programme is part of the overarching 0-25 transformation, change portfolio and is being undertaken in partnership with the Council's efficiency partner: Newton Europe.

2.6.2 The 0-25 programme started with the 'design' phase in mid-2014. The knowledge learned from this then informed the 'sandbox' phase, which began in autumn 2014. The 'sandbox' phase began in Tunbridge Wells for EHPS and the Weald (Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells) for SCS. The 'sandbox' system involved trialling and testing theories and business processes in a controlled environment, in order to determine which had the most positive impact on timeliness, effectiveness and outcome focus.

2.6.3 The 'implementation' phase began in April 2015, permanently implementing the most beneficial aspects evidenced from the 'sandbox' experience. The transformation process is robustly supported by a dedicated Practice Development Officer for SCS, who works not just to embed change into day to day practice, but also ensure all proposed changes have good, research-informed social work practice at their heart.

2.6.4 The change process has now completed in West Kent and South Kent; with East Kent having gone live earlier in October 2015. North Kent will see the 'implementation' process commence before the end of 2015. There are increasing visible signs of the benefits of this transformation programme, with more manageable caseloads and renewed focus in practice as a result of Signs of Safety and case progression meetings. Adolescent Support Teams are in place in three of the four areas and will be wholly operational by the end of the calendar year.

2.7 Step-down Panels

2.7.1. Step-down panels are now fully implemented across all districts and working successfully. Representatives from both SCS and EHPS meet weekly to:

- Determine appropriate step down pathway for cases closing to SCS ensuring that rationale is clear and the decision appropriate

- Plan and structure handover to ensure that families receive a seamless service
- For EHPS to monitor the progress of cases that have previously stepped down until confident that family has engaged, outcomes are on track and it is safe to close to panel
- Review complex cases
- Ensure management dialogue to improve practice

3. Children's Services Development Plan

- 3.1 Outstanding recommendations from all five Ofsted inspections, the Independent Diagnostic in January and learning from our own quality assurance processes have been collated into a single Children's Services Development Plan.
- 3.2 This plan ensures cross-directorate priority actions are collated into a single plan which is overseen by the joint Divisional Management Team meetings, co-Chaired by Philip Segurola, Director of SCS and Florence Kroll, Director of EHPS.
- 3.3 The plan is due for revision in light of the activity in 2015. This will ensure it is fully reflective of the pace of change within the Council and is re-focused on the 'must do' actions for 2016.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The majority of the targets and performance indicators as agreed by Cabinet are being met or there is encouraging progress towards them. Most positively, the September 2015 monthly performance scorecard for SCS evidenced that for the first time, over 50% of case file audits were rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding'. This demonstrates that casework at a county level is at a qualitative level and continues to improve each month.
- 4.2 The Council's Strategic Statement 2015-2020, Outcome 1 (of 3) is: "Children and Young People in Kent get the best start in life". Both EHPS and SCS continue to work together to ensure children (including pre-birth), young people and their families will receive the services and support they need in a timely and responsive way, so that they are safeguarded, their educational, social and emotional needs are met and positive outcomes are achieved.
- 4.3 There continue to be some areas where progress is proving to be more challenging, this is further impacted by the high numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children currently requiring support and protection. Any identified shortfalls within the service are being urgently addressed. Continued implementation of current measures such as Signs of Safety and the projects detailed within the 0-25 Programme will help address areas recognised as requiring improvement.

<p>5. Recommendations: The Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee is asked to NOTE the content of the report.</p>
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6. Background Documents

None

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