

From: Peter Oakford, Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services
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To: Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee - 6 September 2016

Subject: **ANNUAL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY REPORT SPECIALIST CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

Classification: Unrestricted

Previous Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: None

Electoral Division: All divisions

Summary: This report sets out a position statement for services within Specialist Children's Services regarding equality and diversity work and progress on KCC Equality objectives for 2015/2016.

Recommendation: The Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee is asked to:

- a) **CONSIDER** and **DISCUSS** current performance and proposed priorities, continue to ensure that equality governance is observed in relation to decision making;
- b) **NOTE** the proposed changes to Equality Objectives and **AGREE** to receive revised objectives in 2017; and
- c) **AGREE** to continue to receive the report annually in order to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and ensure progress against the Council's 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. Equality Objectives Review

- 2.1 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 suggest that, overall, the council is continuing to progress on the processes and procedures that are

required to ensure that Equality and Human Rights are mainstreamed into the core business of the council.

2.2 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.
- f) Understanding and responding to the impacts on People when KCC is doing its work

2.3 Directorates have been asked to provide equality information to demonstrate how they have complied with equality legislation between 1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016 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.

3 Key Achievements

3.1 Key achievements for Specialist Children's Services division in the Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Directorate include:

3.2 Children's participation

3.2.1 The Children in Care Council are thriving with three groups (the Super Council – primary age children, the Our Children and Young People's Council – secondary school-age children, and the Young Adult Council – young adults). These groups are acting as a 'test bed' for procedure and process development – acting as a critical friend. Meetings are held on a monthly basis and supported by the participation officer who is working to ensure the involvement and participation of young people with protected characteristics.

3.2.2 Young people's participation in the designing and delivery of services has improved, with more young people providing feedback on the quality of services that they receive. This has been achieved through the use of the Mind Of My Own (MoMo) for young adults. The MoMo app is being piloted in North Kent; 42 young people have chosen to use this.

3.2.3 Participation forms which capture the views of young people, including those from protected categories, have been approved and are available for wider circulation. The forms also include participation tools for children with Child Protection and Child in Need Plans. It is hoped that these feedback forms will help to elicit more information from young people in

respect of their needs and aspirations which will help shape future inclusive activities for children services.

- 3.2.4 A Missing Children Focus Group has been arranged for those young people who go missing, to share their experiences and help our service “learn lessons”. Social workers and practitioners from other service areas are now using this information to develop care and safety plans, thereby mitigating future risks of young people going missing.
- 3.2.5 Children and young people 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 (CIC) have access to participation events and online surveys to ensure their views are taken into account when services are commissioned to meet their needs.
- 3.2.6 An accredited training plan, guidance and good practice document has been set up for young people who make up our “recruit crew”. The recruit crew will participate as experts on interview panels for the recruitment of children’s Social Workers and managers.
- 3.2.7 There has been a significant uptake in participation training by staff across the county. 117 staff and foster carers have been trained to date and training has been positively received by those who attended. The skills learnt are being used to encourage children and young people to be fully involved in decisions about their care and wellbeing. Through the involvement in the Child in Care Council project initiatives, some young people have also been involved in training as facilitators, alongside professionals.

	Total Numbers	Foster carers	Social workers	FSWs / IROs
North Kent	29	16	9	4
West Kent	29	7	13	9
East Kent	30	15	9	6
South Kent	29	17	8	4
	117	55	39	23

3.3 Children in Care, Leaving Care and Disabled Children Services

- 3.3.1 The Children in Care teams have continued to provide consistent support for all children, respecting individual’s protected characteristics. The quality of care plans and children and families assessments are being completed and reviewed, with much quality focusing on the children’s individual wellbeing and safeguarding needs. Embedding of the signs of safety framework has further, through assessments, carer planning and case progression meetings, helped to improve the quality management oversight, thereby ensuring the views and needs of the children and their families are fully incorporated into the care plans.

- 3.3.2 Consistency and equity of service to young people within the Leaving Care Services has consistently improved, with a regular review of pathway plans as well as close partnership with their Personal Advisors (PA). The young people are being supported fully to discuss their future aspirations during transition to adulthood and the opportunities they can access, including employment and further educational support during this crucial stage in their lives.
- 3.3.3 Both Children in Care and Leaving Care teams support young people to develop an awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) through direct work and using the grooming/boyfriend model to inform their intervention. The Kent Safeguarding Children's Board has rolled out CSE training for practitioners, in which they have been trained in using the CSE tool kit as well as CSE identification and awareness raising in communities.
- 3.3.4 CSE champions have been trained cross the county and are tasked with cascading lessons learnt from serious case reviews and CSE Deep Dives to service areas. CSE cases are being monitored by practitioners through assessments. All identified CSE cases are provided with support and are directed to appropriate services, including the Parents against Child Exploitation (PACE). Where cases have identified victims with protected characteristics, measures have been taken to ensure that any additional needs, including language support, community networks and specialist support are employed to support the young person.
- 3.3.5 CIC going missing remains a priority, as this can be also be an indicator for serious concerns, including abuse, neglect, challenging relationships amongst family members, CSE, Gang Involvement or trafficking. A larger proportion of children who go missing for a longer period of time are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). Practice Development Officers (PDO) complete weekly audits to ensure that the right procedures are used to track and collate intelligence to share with the police and other partners in order to know the whereabouts of and safeguard those who frequently go missing.
- 3.3.6 Short Break commissioning meetings have continued with input from parents and parent-led charities to set priorities and changes to commissioned services for disabled services provisions.
- 3.3.7 Young people's views have been reported to the commissioning team by short break providers to guide future commissioning priorities. The commissioning team will review the uptake of specialist holiday clubs to ensure demand and supply match, and will alter contracts if necessary.
- 3.3.8 Teams continue to use iPads with appropriate apps to obtain feedback and views, wishes and feelings of disabled children and young people. Social Workers and Social Work Assistants have become increasingly confident about using I-pads in understanding individual Life Stories and work with children and young people and the Signs of Safety framework to gain their views.

- 3.3.9 UASC with leave to remain continue to make good improvements in their education, employment and integration into British society. They are supported through the Virtual School Kent (VSK) by the Post 16 UASC Support Officers who work closely with a number of different organisations including KCC Social Work teams, Employability and Skills, local youth hubs and external providers such as Gillingham Football Trust, Kent Refugee Action Network, Walk Tall and Asphaleia. The UASC post 16 Support Workers also collaborate very closely with the Reception Centres in Ashford and Cranbrook to ensure a smooth transition for the young people from the centres and out into the community.
- 3.3.10 The Service for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (SUASC) now consists of five teams ensuring 'business as usual' standards are maintained for UASC who become Looked After by Kent. Every effort has 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. Children and young people's individual identities are also respected via access to prayer mats and copies of their chosen religious text when they first come into care.
- 3.3.11 Numbers of unaccompanied children and young people identified by Home Office officials at the port of Dover, or intercepted by the Police elsewhere in Kent, has seen a significant decrease since the latter half of 2015. To date in 2016, though, Kent has still had over 270 referrals for unaccompanied children. The Government's [Interim National Transfer Protocol for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children 2016-17](#) (NTS) became operational on 1 July 2016. The announcement and launch of the NTS was welcomed by KCC as having an equitable process for permanently allocating children to Other Local Authorities, and will assist with ensuring children receive the most responsive service possible, tailored to their individual needs and often highly traumatic experiences. The NTS forms ensure a clear focus on protecting children's identities during their transfer to a receiving Local Authority highlighting where a child may adhere to a specific diet (e.g. Halal) and gives space to note whether a child is exercising their right to Freedom of Religion.
- 3.3.12 For unaccompanied children and young people (including 18+ Care Leavers) remaining in Kent's care, significant work is undertaken by social workers, social work assistants and personal advisors to help children and young people integrate into the local community. This is done via access to educational provision, local sports clubs or initiatives such as the National Citizenship Service (NCS) for 15-17 year olds. These endeavours are showing signs of success, as two unaccompanied young people enjoyed their experiences with the NCS so much, they are sharing their stories with Kent Radio. Young people resident in the reception centres also organised and hosted an enjoyable evening for the adults supporting them (staff members and local volunteers). The children cooked food from their home countries for everyone to share.

3.4 Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) and the Kent Pledge

- 3.4.1 Our IRO service continues to make significant progress in ensuring consultative processes are fully accessible to disabled children and those children in care who are non-English speakers. For example, consultation booklets (views and comment form) are completed by children and young people (with the support of their social workers) prior to their CIC review. The booklets have been translated into 5 major languages spoken by children and young people where English is not their first language.
- 3.4.2 Additionally, the consultation booklet for disabled children is now embedded in the CIC reviewing process. Children and Young people are encouraged to attend and actively participate at their reviews. IRO contact cards have been developed to invite children and young people to their reviews. The contact card also allows children and young people to know who their IRO is and how to contact them.

3.5 Fostering and Adoption Services

- 3.5.1 Kent Fostering and Adoption services continue to advertise widely to recruit carers from a variety of backgrounds, including those potential carers who are single, in a civil partnership and from black and minority ethnic communities. Equal opportunities for all, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, age, religious beliefs and disability is promoted throughout; this is evidenced in the recent recruitment materials including the updated website, social media (twitter) and live web chats to target carers from protected groups. This practice is embedded in the commissioning process and it is a monitoring requirement on all returns.
- 3.5.2 Information evenings increased in areas targeting carers from protected groups (Deal, Dartford, Swanley and Gravesend). Male carers and same gender couples have been invited to talk at these events. A good number of responses were received and enquiries made by potential Foster carers. The fostering service is currently being supported by the charity group Penny Appeal, with the target of recruitment of more Muslim families in Kent. Penny Appeal is also providing support with a mapping exercise and helping with access to community groups, particularly in north and west Kent. The first meeting has been held with actions identified, particularly in accessing hard to reach community groups through their leaders within the mosques.

3.6 Data collection and understanding of demographic needs

- 3.6.1 Within Specialist Children's Services (SCS), 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; for example, the number of UASC children who go missing.
- 3.6.2 The Management Information Unit (MIU) continues to collate all demographic and service delivery information regarding protected groups. Feedback forms are provided to parents and children following every case

conference. The information is collated and analysed and has been used in the transformation of our Child Protection (CP) Conference methodology, which is now fully delivered through the Signs of Safety framework. The feedback from parents using this new way of convening the CP conference has been positive.

- 3.6.3 Children and parents/carers have also had the opportunity to provide feedback on service delivery and outcomes following CP Case Conferences, Family Group Conferences and CIC reviews. The consultation form has been revised following research with parents to make it easier to use.

4. Key priorities for future development and reporting

- 4.1 The priorities set out below are underpinned by the need to ensure that best practice is achieved while working with children and families, particularly those with protected characteristics. Although there has been an improvement in identifying equality issues and number of initiatives developed as highlighted, there remains an urgent need for the mainstreaming of equality and diversity legislation and practice in our everyday work.
- 4.2 Ensure that data relating to all protected characteristics is collected for all service areas, fully analysed and used in both service provision and decision making. It would appear from the available data that information on some protected characteristics is not frequently or consistently collected. For example, those on religion and sexuality were not available for analysis.
- 4.3. Identifying and investigating disproportionality in complaints is a pivotal way of identifying services that are not accessible and/or responsive to the needs and aspirations of specific groups who share a protected characteristic. The current complaint process does not fully collect and analyse complaints from some protected characteristics. This area must be prioritised to ensure we fully meet our duty under the Equality Act 2010.
- 4.4. Increase understanding of equality and diversity, and compliance with relevant processes, by staff at all levels. Although there are various opportunities for staff to update their knowledge on equality issues, including basic online induction training, evidence from the training and development team suggests there is poor uptake of these opportunities.
- 4.5 Increase understanding of safeguarding children issues in new and emerging communities. Kent is seeing increasing numbers of children in need and child protection cases from some newer communities and growing ethnic/European communities. This includes issues or concerns around physical chastisement, female genital mutilation and breast ironing as well as child sexual exploitation and trafficking among the UASC child population. There is an urgent need to ensure that our practitioners are inter-culturally trained and competent to meet the needs of the children in these communities.

4.6. Recruit an increasing number of carers from BME and Gay/Lesbian/ Transgender communities into the fostering and adoption services to meet the growing needs of our diverse children.

4.7. Continue to improve our interpreting services to ensure that children whose first language is not English are provided with or have access to a professional service when required, to ensure that they are fully consulted and are able to effectively contribute to the development and review of their care plans.

5. **Due Regard**

5.1 KCC continues to use Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) to capture and evidence the impact of our decisions and policies on the People of Kent. The Equality Act abolished the need for EqIAs 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 KCC evidences this by way of an EqIA. Decisions taken without full equality analysis leaves the authority open to potential Judicial Review.

6. **Future reporting**

6.1 Equality Objectives are now being reviewed as existing objectives are due to expire in 2016. Successive annual reports demonstrate that KCC has and continues to make good progress against them.

6.2 The new Equality Objectives will be specific and measurable, with a greater emphasis on accountability across the authority.

7. **Conclusion**

7.1 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.

8. **Recommendation(s)**

8.1 Recommendation: The Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee is asked to:

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b) **NOTE** the proposed changes to Equality Objectives and **AGREE** to receive revised objectives in 2017; and

c) **AGREE** to continue to receive the report annually in order to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and ensure progress against the Council's objectives.

9. Background Documents

- 9.2 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>

10. Contact details

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