

From: Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education
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To: Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee – 8 March 2018

Subject: **Annual Monitoring Review of Kent's Vulnerable Learners Strategy 2017-2020**

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: 0-25 Change Portfolio Board and the Education Services Stakeholder and Commissioning Board.

Future Pathway of Paper: Cabinet Member decision

Electoral Division: All Divisions

Summary: This report sets out what the refreshed Vulnerable Learners Strategy 2017-2020 has achieved since its publication in April 2016. It identifies the priorities and actions to help disadvantaged vulnerable learners overcome their barriers to learning. Examples of good practice in the use of the Pupil Premium and details about the most effective strategies that are having some impact in narrowing achievement gaps and promoting greater social mobility are also highlighted.

Recommendation: The Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to note and comment upon what works for vulnerable learners in terms of narrowing the attainment gap and consider the progress made in achieving the priorities detailed in the refreshed Vulnerable Learners Strategy 2017-2020 to date, **(attached as an Appendix to this report)**.

1. Introduction

1.1 CYPE's Vision and Priorities for Improvement 2018-2021, considered by this Committee at its meeting on 22 November 2017, sets out our vision for children, young people and their families in Kent, incorporating a reference to vulnerable learners:

'We want to ensure that vulnerable children and families have their needs met early so that they do not experience the level of challenge and difficulty in their lives that require statutory interventions. They should have the same opportunities as all other children and families to flourish, to stay safe and well and succeed in the education system.'

1.2 Kent's refreshed Strategy for Vulnerable Learners 2017-2020 brings together all the actions we are taking across the Children, Young People and Education Directorate, in partnership with schools, to improve outcomes for vulnerable learners. These are the children and young people who are vulnerable

to poorer outcomes because of the barriers presented by disadvantage, poverty, family breakdown, learning difficulties and the social and emotional difficulties they have faced in their childhood and adolescence. Our education and children's services have a responsibility to ensure they achieve more success and experience the positive outcomes we want for all children and young people, irrespective of background.

2. Kent's refreshed Vulnerable Learners Strategy 2017-2020

2.1 Kent's Strategy for Vulnerable Learners (attached), has been updated and revised since its publication in April 2016, detailing actions and activities which seek to redress the educational inequalities experienced by vulnerable learners. The document sets out 19 priorities which when acted upon will help to raise the attainment of the vulnerable groups in Kent. Progress to date is evaluated, informed by the latest knowledge of what is working to support the most disadvantaged children overcome their barriers to learning and narrow the achievement gaps to promote greater social mobility.

2.2 Child poverty is on the increase and many working families do not earn enough to take them above the current poverty thresholds. Schools, early years settings and KCC services are experiencing increased demands related to children's learning, social and emotional needs, including services that are there to respond to children's neglect, mental health and behaviour, which all impact on their ability to make progress at school. This Strategy is designed to ensure we work in the most effective joined up ways, and use our resources effectively, to support these children and young people to achieve more success.

2.3 Across the country and in Kent, schools have improved, and standards have risen and the professions have started to recognise the benefits of being open to a far wider pool of talent than previously. In Kent the actual attainment outcomes for pupils supported by the Pupil Premium have improved for the last three years, although the achievement gaps remain very wide. This is very encouraging. However, the overall picture is far from positive.

2.4 The Social Mobility Index published by the Social Mobility Commission in November 2017 showed that the chances of a child from a disadvantaged background succeeding in life depends on where he or she lives. It also ranks local authority areas in terms of their social mobility.

2.5 Kent is ranked among the 20% best performing authorities for the Early Years but poorly in terms of school rankings for free school meal pupil achievement, where we are in the lower half of performance for local authority areas. In Primary schools in Kent 12.1% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. However good and outstanding schools have only 10.8% of pupils with free school meals while the figure for schools that require improvement is 20.3% of their pupils. In Kent Secondary schools 10.3% of pupils are eligible for free school meals overall, while schools that require improvement have 18.3% of their pupils with free school meals. The percentage of pupils with free school meals in selective schools is 3%.

2.6 Our top priority, therefore, is to continue to ensure that every child and young person in Kent goes to a good school and makes good progress. The biggest challenges for the education system and for children's services in Kent are

to improve social mobility by radically improving outcomes for disadvantaged vulnerable learners and thereby improving their life chances.

3. Narrowing the Attainment Gap

3.1 Across Kent, there are significant gaps between the attainment of the majority of children and young people and those from particular groups that are vulnerable to underachievement and these gaps remain persistently wide. These poorer outcomes are unacceptable.

3.2 To begin to tackle the challenge of the attainment gap, we need to understand the scale and nature of the gap, as well as the factors most likely to help close it. The Strategy highlights and summarises what we believe to be the key issues and how our analysis of them informs the work of the Directorate and teachers and senior leaders in schools.

3.3 Educational outcomes across Kent typically improve year on year at every key stage, so in order to narrow the achievement gaps for vulnerable children and young people, their outcomes must improve at an accelerated pace. The Strategy sets out activities and actions to address these gaps in outcomes. The size of this challenge is clear:

- In 2017 25.7% of children did not achieve a Good Level of Development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, the Free School Meals (FSM) gap narrowed from 20% in 2016 to 10.1% which is good news.
- At Key Stage 1, the gaps in achievement for free school meals pupils range from 19% to 21% in reading writing and mathematics. Standards of attainment improved compared to 2016, but the gaps remain wider than the national gaps.
- At Key Stage 2, attainment outcomes for free school meal pupils improved in 2017 across all measures compared to 2016 but gaps remain wide. The proportion of FSM pupils who achieved the 'expected standard' in Reading, Writing and Mathematics combined was 42.3%, which is a 6% improvement compared to 2016. There remains, however, an attainment gap of 26%, which is similar to the 2016 gap.
- At Key Stage 4, 33% of learners who were in receipt of free school meals obtained good GCSE grades in English and mathematics, and the attainment gap with other pupils remains wide at 34%, and wider than the national gap.
- Learners in receipt of free school meals are three times as likely to be permanently excluded as those who are not.
- 34% of the NEET cohort in January 2017 were vulnerable learners
- 16% of FSM learners in school gained entry to the top third Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) compared to 28% of non-FSM.

3.4 The stark contrast in learner outcomes for children in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM), Children in Care and for pupils with Special Educational Needs, requires an urgent prioritisation of the support for vulnerable learners in Kent in order to ensure better outcomes are achieved.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 Significant resources are allocated to support vulnerable learners across the County. In 2017, £222 million was allocated directly to schools and colleges and a further £39.8 million used to deliver early interventions and specialist support

services. This is a significant resource and underpinning the refreshed Vulnerable Learners Strategy is the ambition of achieving greater impact by challenging the way resources are used in schools, collaborations and partnerships, to achieve more.

4.2 A key national policy has been the introduction of the Pupil Premium, (worth over £58 million in Kent overall to schools and other settings) with the expectation that this funding will be used effectively to raise attainment for pupils who are eligible for free school meals and thereby close achievement gaps between these pupils and their peers. The Social Mobility Commission recommends that Pupil Premium funds should be invested in evidenced based practice, and this focus is a significant part of the Vulnerable Learners Strategy.

5. Kent Policy Framework

5.1 A new Control Framework for strategies and policies was launched in September 2017. It sets out some simple principles for the management of our strategies and high-level policies. One of the principles of the Control Framework is that we will have a Strategy and Policy Register that lists all of our strategies and high-level policies. The refreshed Vulnerable Learners Strategy 2017 -2020 will form part of this Register.

6. Equalities Implications

6.1 In accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010, to protect individuals from discrimination against people on the basis of their protected characteristics, an Equality Impact Assessment Screening of the of the Vulnerable Learners Strategy 2017-2020 has been undertaken.

7. Conclusions

7.1 The Social Mobility Commission recommends that every local authority should have an integrated strategy for improving disadvantaged children's outcomes. Kent's Vulnerable Learners Strategy sets out our integrated approach.

7.2 The DfE's Plan for Improving Social Mobility through Education was published in December 2017 and its ambitions helpfully reflect the priorities in our Vulnerable Learners Strategy, which focuses on increasing the take up of free childcare for eligible two year olds and increasing the engagement of vulnerable families with Children's Centres and with other services in Early Help; closing achievement gaps in schools; and delivering our NEET Strategy to ensure as many young people as possible engage positively in education, training and employment to age 18 and beyond.

7.3 There has been progress in all these areas of our work but there is more to do. By revising and updating this Strategy we are continuing to focus on this challenge and to find out more about, and disseminate, what works in making a difference. The refreshed Vulnerable Learners Strategy is our attempt to move this agenda forward in Kent in a more significant and joined up way.

8. Recommendation

Recommendation: The Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to note and comment upon what works for vulnerable learners in terms of narrowing the attainment gap and progress made in achieving the priorities detailed in the refreshed Vulnerable Learners Strategy 2017-2020.

9. Background Documents

Kent's Vulnerable Learners Strategy 2016-2019

<http://knet/directorate/EYPS-document-library/Documents/CYPE%20Kents%20Strategy%20for%20Vulnerable%20Learners.pdf>

10. Contact details

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APPENDIX

Kent's Vulnerable Learners Strategy 2017-2020