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To: CFE: Vulnerable Children and Partnerships Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 6 November 2009

Subject: Education Attainment Results of Looked After Children

Classification: Unrestricted

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Summary: The report outlines provisional attainment results expected for 2009 in relation to children looked after by Kent County Council in relation to the National Indicators 99 to 101. The final performance results for these indicators will be published in the OC2, which is due at the end of November 2009.

The report also includes a revised action plan focussing on the key areas necessary to promote the educational attainment of Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

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## 1. Introduction

(1) The educational attainment of looked after children is one of a number of key issues that the local authority is focussing upon to promote better outcomes for this vulnerable group of children and young people. This is reflected in the emphasis that is being given to improve performance in relation to National Indicators (NIs) 99 to 101<sup>1</sup>, which includes a range of commitments made in Kent's Pledge to promote the educational attainment of children and young people in care and new measures and actions necessary to improve outcomes, which are presented in the action plan at appendix 1.

(2) The local authority has set more ambitious targets regarding our performance on these NIs for 2010. It is expected that the introduction of a Virtual School Head (VSH) for LAC and Care Leavers will result in significant improvements in outcomes for children and young people in and leaving care.

<sup>1</sup>NI 99 = the % of LAC reaching level 4 in English at Key Stage 2; NI 100 = the % of LAC reaching level 4 in mathematics at Key Stage 2; NI 101 = the % of LAC achieving 5 A\*-C (including English and Maths) at Key stage 4.

(3) Oversight of the educational attainment and attendance of looked after children and care leavers is being directed by the interim Virtual School Head (Peggy Harris), with

schools/designated teachers being supported by the LAC Education Advisor team (part of Kent's Integrated Looked After Children Service) . Work is being undertaken to finalise the structure of Kent's Virtual School Head (VSH) and virtual school for Looked After Children, alongside an evaluation of the Integrated Looked After Children Support Service (ILSS). This evaluation is expected to be completed in December 2009 and will be based upon the findings from the VSH pilots (DCSF, September 2009). The structure is also expected to include the role of Kent's Corporate Parenting Group taking on the role of the virtual school governor group for LAC/Care leavers.

(4) Education attainment results for LAC under National Indicators 99 to 101 will not be published formally until the completion of the Governments statistical return for LAC, called OC2, which is expected at the end of November 2009. The predicted outcomes for these indicators are presented in a table at the beginning of the amended action plan, along with a summary of each indicator (at Appendix 1). In addition to the predicted outcome for 2009, Kent's performance for 2008 is also shown for NIs 99 and 100 (NI 101 is a new indicator this year) as well as targets set for 2010.

(5) It is of concern that Kent's 2008 performance in relation to NIs 99 (33%) and 100 (28%) remain below the national averages for these performance indicators (NI 99 = 46%, NI 100 = 44%), as well as below the averages for the South-East (NI 99 = 44%, NI 100 = 37%). Based upon predicted performance for 2009, it is likely that Kent will continue to show performance levels for these indicators below the national averages. It is not possible to provide comparison data for NI101 since this is the first year this performance indicator has been used. However, performance in relation to the previous performance indicator of 5 A\*-C GCSEs showed Kent's performance in 2008 to be the same as the south east average (12%) and just below the national average (14%). The action plan at appendix 1, along with the formalisation of the VSH, should bring about improvements in the education of LAC and Care Leavers.

(6) Work has been undertaken by a LAC working group under the interim VSH to review Kent's existing action plan promoting the educational attainment of LAC and Care Leavers. The amended action plan is presented at Appendix 1, which is to be presented to Kent's corporate parenting groups (i.e. Children's Champion Board and Kent's Corporate Parenting Group) and the provisional Children in Care council in December 2009 for final approval. Accountability for the action plan sits with the VSH, who reports to KCPG in its role of the Virtual School Governor Group for Kent's virtual school for LAC. Ultimate accountability for the educational attainment of LAC rests with the Directors for learning and Enhanced Children's Services under CFE SMT.

(7) The action plan at Appendix 1 (page 1) outlines Kent's 2010 targets for NIs 99 to 101. The action plan outlines the key strategic objectives and resulting actions required in order to promote the educational attainment of Looked After Children/Care leavers in order to achieve these improvements in educational attainment. These objectives are prioritised in order of their importance and timescales identifying completion/review dates are provided where applicable.

(8) The action plan and ongoing targets will be reviewed annually and presented to the Corporate Parenting boards and the Children in Care Council (CICC) for approval. It is also expected that the VSH will provide end of term reports to the corporate parenting boards and CICC, outlining the progress in promoting the educational attainment of LAC/Care leavers.

## **2. Recommendation**

Members of the CFE: Vulnerable Children and Partnerships Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to:

Note and comment upon the predicted attainment results for NIs 99 to 101 and the revised action plan promoting the educational attainment of LAC and Care Leavers

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*Background Documents:* Appendix 1: Amended Action Plan promoting the educational attainment of Looked After Children.

*Other Useful Information:* None