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To: Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee

Subject: Action plans arising from previous Ofsted inspections
Progress Update- 21 April 2015

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary

This report provides Cabinet with an update on progress regarding the 'improvement journey' of Kent's services for children and young people, encompassing the collective efforts of both Specialist Children's Services (SCS), and Early Help and Preventative Services (EH&PS).

Members are also asked to **NOTE** the progress that has been made since the last report.

1. Introduction

This is the ninth regular report to 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 December 2014, and outlined progress to that date.

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

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

Action plans were put in place to respond to each of the priorities recommended by Ofsted for further development, after each inspection.

In order to robustly monitor and quality assure the improvements being made against these actions, regular updates on service development have been submitted to the Corporate Parenting Panel, the Children's Services Improvement Panel and SCS and EH&PS joint Divisional Management meetings. 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.

Formerly referred to as the 'Children's Services Improvement Plan', over recent months this plan has been condensed and refocused to form the Children and Young People's Services' Development Plan'. The term 'Development' reflects the clear direction of travel for SCS and EH&PS: away from remedial improvement action and towards longer term development of a high quality, sustainable and efficient service.

This report acts as a broad position statement - setting out where we believe the service to be, the progress made since December 2014, and the direction of travel for SCS and EH&PS as the divisions move through 2015.

2. Key developments since December 2014

2.1. Independent Diagnostic of Children's Services

In January 2015, a Diagnostic of Children's Services was undertaken. This was carried out by an independent consultant, Malcolm Newsam. Malcolm was supported in this Diagnostic by three, experienced Kent County Council managers from SCS and EH&PS. The purpose of the diagnostic was to test the quality of children's social care services against the criteria set within the current Ofsted Single Inspection Framework.

The Diagnostic team conducted a three day on-site review of over 32 cases. The evaluation also included interviews with senior managers, assessments of the contact and referral mechanisms for children's social care and visits to eight fieldwork teams in two Districts.

The Diagnostic served as a useful opportunity for practitioners to discuss their work with individual children and families and receive face-to-face feedback and practice challenge from colleagues unconnected to the case. It was also a valuable exercise to hone processes for inspection readiness; importantly providing independent validation of the 'evidence of significant improvements' since 2010-11. It was agreed that the authority's children and young peoples' services are on an upward trajectory.

Diagnostic findings were presented to senior managers and the Leader, Councillor Paul Carter. Feedback similarly mirrored the findings of Ofsted's CSE thematic inspection, noting practice challenges with achieving a consistently high quality of assessment and challenge within professional supervision across the whole county. Positively, Kent's practitioners and managers alike were noted as being very confident, committed and highly competent.

It was recommended that quality assurance mechanisms and processes were strengthened to ensure any areas of weaker practice were captured early and supported to change. Since January, there have been changes to the SCS Safeguarding and Quality Unit, in order to strengthen the embedding of high quality practice across the county. Additional Practice Development Officers have been recruited, reporting into the two Principal Practitioners who work to support best practice and to be a voice for frontline social workers. Each Practice Development Officer will have a lead area of expertise e.g. child sexual exploitation. These changes are currently in the process of being implemented.

Quality assurance within social care has been further developed by Child Protection Conference Chairs now having benchmarked caseloads. This ensures Child Protection Chairs have more manageable workloads, and allows the function of providing a consultation service to practitioners. Additional Independent Reviewing

Officers (IROs) are also in the process of being recruited. An increase in IRO capacity will lead to a reduction in children in care cases which may otherwise have 'drifted'; ensuring appropriate practice challenge is given to the quality and timeliness of planning and interventions with children in local authority care.

The quality of practice supervision continues to be a robust area of focus for managers at all tiers. District workshops continue to be rolled out, alongside implementation of a supervision template, supporting practice guidance and supervision workbook. All actions arising from this Diagnostic have been incorporated into the Children's Services' Development Plan.

2.2. Kent's response to actions arising from Ofsted's Thematic Inspection of CSE

Between September and October 2014, Ofsted conducted eight thematic inspections of how Local Authorities are tackling Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). Rotherham, Rochdale, Bristol, Luton, Oldham, Camden and Brent as well as Kent, were all inspected. Kent's CSE thematic inspection took place 13th -17th October.

This was a targeted one week inspection, and not the full four week inspection under the Single Inspection Framework. As a result, there was not a Kent-specific inspection report published. Instead, anonymised evidence collected from all eight thematic inspections were collated into a single report "The sexual exploitation of children: it couldn't happen here, could it?"

Actions arising from the thematic inspection were incorporated into the Children's Services Development Plan. Since October 2014, significant work has been undertaken by Children's Social Care and the Kent Safeguarding Children Board (KSCB) to raise awareness of CSE warning signs among partners, providers and front-line staff. This has been further supported by measures to evaluate the quality and responsiveness of interventions; ensuring vulnerable children and young people are appropriately safeguarded and receive the required help and support in a timely way.

- An audit was undertaken of all children and young people identified as being at risk of sexual exploitation. This was completed firstly by the child/ young person's social worker and their team manager and then assessed by a member of the Children's Safeguarding and Quality Assurance team. The overarching audit report was compiled and evaluated by an independent auditor. To facilitate professional development, in the coming weeks, key learning points from this exercise will be shared with staff working with vulnerable children and young people.
- Communications and presentations to SCS and EH&PS front-line staff have resulted in increased numbers of front-line staff attending or being booked to attend KSCB multi-agency CSE training sessions and training on conducting return interviews (for children who have been missing). Senior managers in KCC have affirmed their commitment that this training is mandatory for all children's services front-line staff. There are high levels of demand for these training sessions from all agencies in Kent; there are over 1000 members of staff across SCS and EH&PS working directly with children and young people. As an interim measure therefore, localised district workshops have been rolled out and staff have been encouraged to undertake the KSCB e-learning "Safeguarding Children from Abuse by Sexual Exploitation".

- A training workshop is being jointly hosted by Kent County Council (KCC) and Kent Police in April 2015 for KCC foster carers. The workshop will share Kent's policy for missing children; alongside vulnerability factors and risks associated with children going missing (i.e. CSE) and good practice planning. The workshop has been designed to increase the confidence of foster carers managing children who go missing from their placement.
- Training and awareness-raising is widespread within Kent, with KCC Education, Admissions and School Placement Officers attending training on CSE and associated trauma in April 2015. Professional knowledge of CSE vulnerability factors across all agencies will help ensure that information and intelligence is shared proactively across the partnership to improve the protection of vulnerable children.
- Children's Commissioning have been working with supported lodgings providers-who deliver accommodation and support to over 130 young people leaving care-to ensure staff within these services are aware of the Kent CSE risk-assessment toolkit, and access relevant training.
- The KSCB have completed a CSE work-plan detailing the necessary actions the professional agencies within Kent must undertake in order to robustly tackle and prevent sexual exploitation. This work will be led by the Chair of the Trafficking and CSE sub-group of the KSCB: Patricia Denney, Assistant Director of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance (SCS).
- Following a direct recommendation from Ofsted, a CSE Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) chapter has been produced by Public Health as part of the wider Children's JSNA. The chapter will inform commissioning and safeguarding priorities moving forwards. The assessment details the current mechanisms used to train, raise awareness and prevent CSE in Kent. Kent is in the early stages of being able to fully assess the likely prevalence of CSE within the county. CSE is often a hidden problem; not easily spotted by health professionals, families and carers. It is also often not readily reported by victims themselves, some of whom may not see the abuse for what it is.

2.3. Signs of Safety

'Signs of Safety' is an evidence-based systemic model of social work practice which has been successfully implemented across Australia, Europe, the USA and in a number of UK local authorities such as (among others) Suffolk, West Sussex, Southwark and Reading. This framework has been positively received by Ofsted, noting in Milton Keynes that as a result of this solution-focussed model, professionals were better able to identify strengths as well as risks within a family.

The model of intervention is being implemented universally across SCS and EH&PS and will support a shared, whole system approach to managing risk and working with children from Early Help through to Children in Care. Full implementation of this new way of working will take 2-5 years. 'Signs of Safety' is integral to the transformation agenda of 0-25 services; all training and changes to assessment templates are therefore aligned to the implementation of the 0-25 Unified Programme, in partnership with Newton Europe.

Implementation of Signs of Safety will assist the services' aim of improving the consistency of high quality interventions across the county, as well as the quality of planning and direct work with children and their families. The roll out of the Signs of Safety training began in March 2015. Implementation of this framework will continue until 2017.

2.4. Transformation of Children's Services

After careful evaluation and deliberation, SCS has now begun to proceed with the 'implementation phase' of the transformation process, in partnership with our efficiency partner, Newton Europe. This phase of the programme has seen the changes refined in the experimental 'Sandbox' pilot areas, applied to teams, processes and working practices across the Weald (Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Malling). Implementation will eventually be rolled out to every team across the county by the end of 2015.

'Implementation' for Kent is about building on the best of our existing structures and processes whilst thinking differently about the way we do things and changing the practices and cultures which stand in the way of our ambitious, long term goals for Kent's children.

Practitioners and managers alike working in the Weald district have been mostly positive about the benefits of the changes we have made. Staff are now able to take responsibility for 'end-to-end' ownership of their casework and the consistency of the services provided to children and families during this time. Staff have reported the changes have led to increased job satisfaction and support of their personal and professional development.

The partnership between SCS, Early Help and Newton Europe is central to the success of this programme. As such senior social care managers have received additional management support and training, in order to successfully deliver these changes. It is expected these changes, alongside the roll out of the Signs of Safety Framework, will actively support practitioners to deliver consistently high quality practice to our service users.

3. Children's Services Development Plan

Outstanding recommendations from all five Ofsted inspections, the Independent Diagnostic and learning from our own quality assurance processes have been collated into a single Children's Services Development Plan. This plan ensures cross-directorate priorities are collated into a single plan which is overseen by the Children's Practice Development Group, co-Chaired by Philip Segurola, Director of SCS and Florence Kroll, Director of EH&PS.

In line with both the immediate and forward-looking aims of Children's Social Care collectively, in order to improve long-term outcomes for children and young people, the Development Plan prioritises making further measurable improvement to the quality and consistency of practice for all thresholds of need. It also focusses on providing appropriate help and interventions at the earliest opportunity in order to prevent needs escalating.

4. Conclusion

The majority of the targets and performance indicators as agreed by Cabinet are being met. There continue to be some areas where progress is proving to be more challenging and identified shortfalls are being urgently addressed. Continued implementation of current measures such as the Children's Development Plan, 'Signs of Safety' and service transformation programmes will help address areas recognised as requiring improvement.

In line with Ofsted's view, any practice falling short of 'good' should be viewed as 'requiring improvement'. We therefore continue to develop a culture of aspiration that is intolerant of poor practice and entirely focused on the consistent attainment of good practice standards.

5. Recommendations

Members are asked to **NOTE** this report.

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9. Background Documents

Appendix 1- SCS and EH&PS Development Plan