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To: Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee - 22 July 2015

Subject: Action plans arising from previous Ofsted inspections: Progress Update

Classification: Unrestricted

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## Summary

This report provides Cabinet Committee 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).

## Recommendation

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

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## 1. Introduction

This is the tenth 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 April 2015, 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 this Cabinet Committee, Corporate Parenting Panel, the Children's Services Improvement Panel and are overseen by a Children's Improvement Group, which

has representatives from SCS, EH&PS and Children's Commissioning. 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', earlier in 2015 this plan was 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 sets out both the progress made since April 2015 setting out where we believe the service to be and the direction of travel for SCS and EH&PS as the divisions move through 2015, into 2016.

## **2. Key developments since April 2015**

### **2.1. Quality Assurance**

Following a Diagnostic of Children's Services in January 2015, it was recommended that quality assurance mechanisms and processes were strengthened to ensure any areas of weaker practice are captured early and supported to improve.

In the last report to this Committee, it was noted that changes had been made since January 2015 to recruit more Practice Development Officers, reporting into the Principal Social Workers (formerly Principal Practitioners); who work to support best practice and to be a voice for frontline social workers. Additional Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) are also now in post, assisting in bringing down the average caseload and ensuring the experience of Children in Care receive appropriate scrutiny. The numbers of CP Chairs have also increased. They will be expected to track cases in between CP Conferences, be available to provide a wider range of consultations to staff and Chair complex Strategy Meetings. Following a period of auditing and intensive training, Child Protection (CP) Chairs are now consistently producing SMART plans. This will continue to be closely monitored by the CP Chair manager and Head of Quality Assurance.

A refreshed 'extended Deep Dive' process has been agreed and will roll out from July 2015. The practice of holding Deep Dives is well embedded, since the 2010 Ofsted inspections- allowing senior management to meet with operational managers for an honest two-way dialogue about performance and issues. Deep Dives are held for each area of the service, including Fostering, Adoption and Care Leavers.

From July, a number of Deep Dives will be extended to include a half day district visit by a team of three senior managers. The visits will be informed by the Deep Dive theme and offer the opportunity for social workers and front line managers to talk about and evidence the work they are doing. The theme of the last quarter's Deep Dives was Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), July's theme is 'purposeful visiting'.

The district visits will include a joint, desk top review of case files, between a senior manager and the child's social worker. Some of these cases may be identified randomly and others identified by the practitioner (e.g. as an example of good practice). The aim of this change is to more directly involve front-line practitioners in the Deep Dive process, enrich and compliment the performance data and give the opportunity to showcase and explain work with families- the strengths as well as the challenges.

The current Head of Quality Assurance, Lee-Anne Farach is leaving KCC in mid-July 2015. Tom Stevenson is beginning in the role on an interim basis, from early July 2015 to allow for an effective handover.

## 2.2. Children in Need

Work to support Children in Need<sup>1</sup> (CIN) featured prominently as recommendations arising from the Safeguarding inspection at the end of 2012. One of the primary recommendations from Ofsted was to undertake an audit of CIN cases 'to ensure purposeful work is taking place and there are no unidentified risks'.

An audit of child in need assessments and plans was completed for approximately 4,000 cases by July 2013, and reported as such to the formal, independently chaired Improvement Board. In order however to assure the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance unit, senior managers and also Members of progress two years' on- a CIN audit, with a specific focus is currently taking place. Additional, external auditors have been brought in to deliver this targeted piece of work.

The current audit is looking closely at the experiences and practice with all CIN who have had a Child In Need Plan for more than 12 months without 'stepping up' (i.e. escalating to a Child Protection Plan or going into care), or 'stepping down' (to a 'Team Around the Family' and an Early Help plan). KCC's work with these children and young people is being examined to ensure purposeful work is making a positive difference, thresholds remain appropriate and children/ families are not "drifting". This is currently a work in progress. A report detailing key themes arising from this exercise should be complete in August 2015.

It is recognised that whilst direct work with the child is strong, further development work is still required around the aspect of CIN planning. This noted particularly around translating the assessment into a plan which effectively addresses risks and areas worrying both professionals and family members. It is accepted that once embedded, the Signs of Safety model of intervention will increase staff confidence. It will also offer the necessary tools and practice framework with which to create a shared understanding (multi-agency partners, service users and social care professionals) of the actions required to keep the child/ren safe and well.

In April 2015 a new user-friendly, 'dashboard' was launched giving operational managers in SCS a daily snapshot of relevant data about their specific team, social work case loads and actions outstanding –e.g. an overdue supervision session or visit to a child. The system is called the Team Operational Dashboard (TOD), and was co-built by Newton Europe and the in-house Management Information Unit as part of the 0-25 transformation work.

The launch of this dashboard has been overwhelmingly positive with frontline managers saying among other comments (entirely positive):

"I have worked in a number of local authorities that have been paperless and used good IT systems, TOD is the best report that I have come across"

This system was further developed in May 2015 to utilise the suite of information that the Liberi case-system can provide; TOD now allows managers to have accurate, up-to-date information on the numbers of CIN reviews overdue.

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<sup>1</sup> Tier 3-High level, complex needs, requiring a targeted, integrated response from Specialist Children's Services ([KSCB threshold criteria](#) ).

### 2.3. Care leavers

Young people leaving local authority care are encouraged to pursue education, employment and training (EET) opportunities post 18. KCC offers a range of apprentice opportunities to young people, with a number of Care Leavers taking up apprenticeship opportunities with the Virtual School Kent (VSK).

Young people in Higher Education/ Further Education continue with Personal Advisory support and receive full financial support. Young adults who are aged 21-25 who returns to the service to undertake education training are also allocated a Personal Advisor and a Pathway Plan is prepared. Financial support for equipment and travel is provided to support young people access further education. Designated staff within local colleges also work with care leavers to sustain and develop further learning opportunities.

A range of support is available and over 400 young people who have left KCC's care are successfully accessing their choice of full-time or part-time Employment, Education or Training. Through internal quality assurance mechanisms, it is recognised that the numbers of young people leaving care and entering EET are not yet in line though with the aspirations we, as Corporate Parents have for this cohort of young people. The Children's Services Development Plan has therefore been updated with an action to further develop the support available.

### 2.4. Signs of Safety

'Signs of Safety' is an evidence-based, solution-focussed systemic model of social work practice. The model of intervention is being implemented universally across SCS and EH&PS 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 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.

In the past two months, work to implement Signs of Safety has progressed at pace. A dedicated, social-work trained Project Manager has been recruited in-house to lead the implementation of Signs of Safety.

Four Signs of Safety training sessions have been delivered to front-line staff members to date, primarily in the west of the county in order to align to the 0-25 Unified Programme transformation happening within the area. It is the intention that that the majority of South Kent staff (Ashford, Dover and Shepway) will be trained by the end of July 2015.

Every team manager will become a 'Practice Leader' for Signs of Safety. This decision means that frontline managers will not just lead the changes, but be equipped with specific training and tools to effectively implement Signs of Safety in their office, undertake appreciative inquiries and supervise cases in a way which best utilises the principles of the Signs of Safety framework.

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 engagement with children and their families.

#### 2.4. Family, Drug and Alcohol Court

The FDAC National Unit has secured funding, via the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme, for the development of 4 sites in Kent and Medway, Coventry, the West Yorkshire consortia and Plymouth, Torbay and Exeter. Each Authority will match fund the monies provided via the Innovation fund. In Kent and Medway the FDAC will focus on parents with alcohol and/or substance misusing issues with the additional factor of domestic abuse. A further tranche of funding has been awarded to develop an FDAC for parents who have previously had children removed from their care. The project will initially commence on a small scale.

Working in partnership with the National FDAC unit, Kent County Council and Medway Council are currently working together to develop a local Family, Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) pilot site in the county.

This follows the strong steer from the Rt. Honourable Sir James Munby (President of the Family Division), that every Local Authority should have an FDAC. The notion builds on the success of the London FDAC pilot (2008-2012), now permanently run by a consortium of five local authorities in London. The FDAC in London is a shared enterprise between the Inner London Family Proceedings Court at Wells Street, the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust, Coram and the London boroughs of Camden, Islington, Lambeth with Westminster, Hammersmith and Fulham and Southwark.

The FDAC model looks to keep families together, helping families to either be safely reunited with their children, or for their children to remain at home. Not all parents who misuse substances (drugs or alcohol) will require the support or intervention of social care, particularly for intermittent use. For those with a dependency however, who are unable to control their usage, this can lead to children and young people being provided with inconsistent-sometimes neglectful- practical or emotional care.

Additionally, parental substance misuse and domestic abuse are significantly linked problems, leading to many children being at risk of harm and/or entering care. This is key factor in over 50% of care cases in the area, and is the root cause of a high proportion of care proceedings.

The FDAC model utilises a combination of multi-disciplinary support mechanisms, including fast access to substance misuse services, help with housing, domestic violence, financial hardship or concerns. Parents also see the same judge throughout the proceedings and can access a team of volunteer parent mentors who have been through and overcome their own problems. Where plans to assist parents make changes are agreed to be no longer viable, the FDAC is able to utilise the evidence base to swiftly make decisions which secure an alternate, permanent home for the child (e.g. adoption).

Local Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNA) for both local authorities identify that approximately 274 adults in Medway<sup>2</sup> are receiving support for drug or substance misuse, are either pregnant or have a child; and 1570 drug users in Kent

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<sup>2</sup> [Medway JSNA](#); [Kent JSNA](#);

receiving treatment, live with children. These figures are not inclusive of those who may also be experiencing problems with alcohol consumption and/ or domestic abuse.

Implementation of an FDAC for Kent and Medway assists both local authorities to achieve their strategic objective of 'Children and young people have the best start in life'.

## 2.5. Transformation of Children's Services

Services for children and young people are collectively '[Facing the Challenge: Delivering better outcomes](#)' to achieve whole council transformation, through the 0-25 Unified Programme. The programme is part of the overarching 0-25 transformation, change portfolio.

SCS and EH&PS are now firmly into the 'implementation phase' of the transformation process, in partnership with our efficiency partner, Newton Europe. Work is due to conclude in the West of the county -Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Malling (the Weald) and Maidstone- in summer, before moving to the South of the county.

'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. The 0-25 Unified Programme 'Implementation' involves projects to:

- Merge the functions of the Assessment and Intervention Teams and Family Support Teams to ensure continuity of support for families. This is reflective of Eileen Munro's doctrine 'to improve transparency and rigour'. The resulting locality children's social work teams will cover the full breadth of interventions with families (both short term and longer term Children In Need and Child Protection work), whilst maintaining the separate Children in Care teams and structures.
- Provide helpful, new operational dashboards of case information- like the TOD system (2.2.) This hones and tailors the large amount of data available into what is most useful for individual teams.
- Ensuring managers get protected time to manage the casework of their teams.
- Strengthening and developing a universal 'edge of care' model to give timely and intensive support to adolescents and families in crisis; decreasing the chances of a young person becoming homeless and/ or coming into local authority care.
- Alignment of the Early Help Triage to the Central Referral Unit in order to ensure support is co-ordinated around the needs of families not teams; whilst embedding a focus on early intervention to better manage future demand.
- Development of 'Early Help Units' which enable joint working between a range of Early Help and Preventative Services disciplines, such as Youth Offending, Adolescent Support, Early Years, Attendance and Inclusion.
- Provide a clear threshold and universal process for appropriately stepping down cases.

- Care leavers' pathway: in line with priority 4 of KCC's [LAC and Care Leaver Strategy 2015-2016](#), provide increased placement choice, stability and support for young people leaving care and transitioning to living independently.

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 'Implementation' will eventually be rolled out to every team across the county by the end of 2015.

### 3. Children's Services Development Plan

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, attached as an appendix to this report.

This plan ensures cross-directorate priority actions are collated into a single plan which is overseen by the Children's Improvement Group, co-Chaired by Philip Segurola, Director of SCS and Florence Kroll, Director of EH&PS.

### 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 the projects detailed within the 0-25 Programme 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 also asked to **NOTE** the progress that has been made since the last report.

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### 9. Background Documents

Appendix 1- SCS and EH&PS Development Plan