CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
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ATTENDANCE OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER
FOR CHILDREN’S SERVICES

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Summary
This report details the areas covered by the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services. The areas within the portfolio are listed each time a Cabinet Member is invited to attend any of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to be held to account.

1. Background

1.1 The areas within the terms of reference of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee and covered by the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services Care, according to the Council’s constitution are:

- Adoption
- Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- Children and Young People’s Plan
- Children’s residential care
- Children with disabilities
- Early Years
- Fostering
- Further Education
- Home to School Transport
- Inclusion
- Integrated Children’s Team
- Leaving Care
- Looked After Children
- Primary and secondary education
- School services
- Special educational needs
- Specialist youth services
- Youth

1.2 This Portfolio Holder is the designated lead member for children’s services (LMCS) under the Children Act 2004. The Portfolio Holder is responsible for leadership, strategy and the effectiveness of education and children’s social care.
2. Overview of 2013/14

2.1 Adoption

Overview

There is a stable and experienced team in place. Two social workers undertake discrete work with children to support their adoption. A dedicated lead worker is in place to lead improvements in practice and the Adoption Improvement grant will support these developments.

Achievements

There have been a wide range of achievements this year including:

- It is projected that there will be more Adoption Orders made and adopters assessed by the end of this year than were last year
- Joint work took place with Educational Psychologists to undertake Video Interaction Guidance with up to 6 cases over the year
- Targeted recruitment plan of adopters is in place, supported by Communications
- A new assessment process for potential adopters has been implemented
- There have been no adoption breakdowns this year
- Work is underway to improve post adoption support and finding families where traditional family finding has proved ineffective

Challenges

A key challenge will be to maintain current performance in 2014/15 in the context of the need to recruit sufficient adopters for the number and needs of children requiring adoption.

2.2 Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

Overview

Medway Council commissions a range of mental health services in partnership with Medway Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). These include the Medway Council provided single point of access and Tier 2 CAMHS services, as well as Tier 3 CAMHS services provided by Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

Achievements

Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SPNFT) became the new provider of specialist community Children and Young People’s Mental Health Services in September 2012. The service inherited a waiting list of 143 Medway children and young people who were waiting up to 63 weeks for an assessment. The service target is to reduce the waiting time for emergency referrals to a maximum of 24 hours, urgent referrals to 10 days, and waiting time for routine assessments to 4-6 weeks. In November, SPNFT reported that emergency referrals are now seen within 24 hours and urgent referrals
within 10 days. The average waiting time for a routine assessment is now 7 weeks.

**Challenges**

A number of key challenges are presently being addressed:

- Under Section 136 (S136) of the Mental Health Act 1983 (as amended 2007) the Police have the power to remove a mentally disordered person from a public place to a place of safety, to allow further assessment by a section 12 Doctor (approved under the act to carry out such assessments) and an Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP). In Kent there are four designated S136 suites linked to adult based mental health facilities operated and staffed by Kent & Medway Partnership Trust (KMPT). Prior to the 1 September 2012 and a change in provider, young people requiring a Section 136 assessment were seen at one of these suites and assessed by appropriate CAMHS staff. As an interim measure only, Bethlem Hospital in Beckenham is being used. SPNFT are working with Commissioners to address this issue with the intended outcome being a local place of safety for those detained under S136.

- SPNFT have committed to developing a specific team for Children in Care that will interface with Children’s Social Care. This will seek to address concerns raised in the recent Ofsted Inspection. Commissioners are monitoring recruitment to this team and are working with Children’s Social Care to develop processes with SPNFT.

**2.3 Children and Young People’s Plan**

**Overview**

In 2010 the Government withdrew statutory guidance on Children’s Trusts (DfE 20 October 2010), including the requirement to have a Children and Young People’s Plan. This means that there is now more flexibility in how Local Authorities implement requirements to reflect and meet local needs. The legal duty in Section 10 of the Children Act (2004) is for Local Authorities to promote co-operation and improve the well-being of children.

**Achievements**

In order to ensure more effective partnership work to improve outcomes for Medway’s children and families we have:

- Established Medway Children’s Action Network (Medway CAN). This is chaired by myself
- The logo for Medway CAN was designed by young people from the Youth Parliament and Children’s Care Council. Two representatives of the Youth Parliament are members of Medway CAN
- A new Early Help Strategy is in place to ensure Medway has an effective early help system to prevent escalation of need requiring specialist services.
**Challenges**

Much work is to be done with partners to ensure a comprehensive early help system is in place. At present, access to early help is too complicated and we cannot provide evidence that it is targeted at those most in need.

**2.4 Children’s residential care**

**Overview**

All residential care, other than the Old Vicarage for children with the highest level of need and challenging behaviour, is commissioned by Partnership Commissioning. Only units assessed by Ofsted as good or better are used, except in an emergency where provision cannot be secured other than in a unit judged as satisfactory. Where possible, children and young people are placed in units that support their attendance at local schools and that, where it is safe to do so, maintain contact with their family and community.

**Achievements**

The Old Vicarage is now managed by Northern Care and has, within the space of 3 months, moved from a grade of inadequate to adequate.

Other achievements include:

- A weekly placements panel now takes place to ensure “right child, right service and right place” as well as managing cost
- All residential placements are reviewed quarterly to ensure that needs are being met and whether “step down” or in-house provisions would be suitable.
- A high cost placement panel meets periodically to review placements ensuring they continue to represent value for many against assessed need.
- As part of Regulatory 33 visits both the Old Vicarage and Aut Even are visited by the Portfolio Holder on a monthly basis.

**Challenges**

It remains a challenge to maintain value for money whilst ensuring the statutory review process sufficiently addresses outcomes for looked after children who are placed in residential care. There is also a need to secure sufficient alternative provision in Medway e.g. specialist in-house foster care and locally commissioned provision.

**2.5 Children with disabilities**

**Overview**

There is a social work team and a play team offering an extensive range of services locally to disabled children and their families. A large number of
effective behavioural and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) awareness-related interventions are undertaken by a team of family workers.

A statutory duty was placed on Local Authorities to provide breaks from caring to assist parents and others who provide care for disabled children to continue to do so or to do so more effectively.

**Achievements**

Preston Skreens, the overnight respite service provided by the Medway NHS Foundation Trust in Sheppey, closed on the 1st November 2013. Ahead of the closure, a successful three-month consultation was completed and all families impacted were reassessed and supported by the Children’s Social Services in their transition into alternative provision. Alternative provision for 16 and 17 year olds included the Napier Unit and Birling Avenue that gained approval from Care Quality Commission to alter the admissions criteria to include young adults aged 16+. I visited Dragon’s Retreat to assure myself that this was of high quality prior to any child being placed.

An extensive number of parents have been assisted on ASD awareness and behaviour management. Parklands continues to offer a large number of groups for disabled children that assist families to cope via provision of regular short breaks alongside other community based services.

**Challenges**

In recognition of the growing number of children and young people with a disability, a Short Breaks Strategy is presently being developed which considers the outcomes of the consultation and reviews day, evening and overnight short breaks commissioned by Medway Council and Medway CCG.

**2.6 Early Years**

**Overview**

The Local Authority has statutory responsibility to lead and coordinate services that result in good health and development of children in their first five years of life. It is measured on the “school readiness” of children at age five. This is delivered by securing nursery education for all children and through helping parents to give their children the best start in life via a network of Sure Start Children’s Centres, provided in partnership with the health services.

**Achievements**

Children starting school in Medway in 2013 did so with the highest ever recorded levels of learning and development. The proportion of children attaining a “good level of development” as assessed by the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile was 5 percentage points above the national average, placing Medway as the 23rd highest local authority in England. This success was due in part to the early help and targeted interventions provided by Sure Start Children’s Centres. Ofsted inspections in 2013 judged
an above average proportion as good or better and included the country’s first Outstanding centre under the new tougher framework.

Medway is at the forefront of innovative work in the early years, working with the Departments of Heath and Education on screening assessments of children at age two, and additionally has been shortlisted for the Big Lottery’s “Better Start” programme worth up to £50million over the next ten years.

**Challenges**

In September 2013 the entitlement to nursery education was extended to children aged two-years-old in all of the lowest income households. More than 600 additional places were successfully provided in the autumn term. Significantly, more eligible families have been identified than original government forecasts, reflecting the growing birth rate in Medway, particularly in the most disadvantaged areas. This programme will double in size during 2014.

**2.7 Fostering**

**Overview**

The Fostering Service comprises of social workers assessing and supporting foster carers, including private and short break foster carers and the Connected Persons Service. Working with Partnership Commissioning, the Service is seeking to ensure that in-house placements are utilised wherever possible and that any moves from Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) back in-house are done smoothly and in the best interest of the child.

**Achievements**

There have been a number of achievements this year including:

- Placement stability is good and the level of placement breakdowns is minimal
- There has been a successful recruitment campaign for foster carers. The new Sufficiency Strategy will enable more targeted recruitment to meet the needs of our looked after children
- There is a rolling programme of 4-6 weekly Skills to Foster Training Programmes throughout the year. Carers’ Annual Reviews are now more robust and more carers are undertaking their Children’s Workforce Development Council Portfolio. Support packages are now developed to support carers who have challenging placements, including placement support meetings to sustain placements or learn lessons, including from the young person, about why it broke down.
- Increased numbers of Connected Carers are attending training
- The Fostering Duty System has transitioned to an electronic system
- All viability and full assessments for Connected Carers are now completed by the Fostering Service to ensure consistency of approach and assessment
- Long-term foster carers are being recruited where this is in an agreed care plan
• Robust supervision of foster carers is in place, with an emphasis on
listening to children.

**Challenges**

The recruitment and retention of foster carers continues to be a challenge in
an increasingly competitive IFA market and a limited supply of suitable carers.
A review of private fostering and the Connected Carers Services, as well as
resources to secure long-term foster carers, needs to take place to ensure we
have sufficient numbers to meet demand and need.

**2.8 Further Education**

**Overview**

The new 14-25 team is now up to full strength and is working proactively with
key partners and stakeholders to roll out the Raising Participation Age (RPA)
agenda in a strategic and joined up way. Following consultation with
providers, partners and young people, a new 14-25 strategy is being rolled
out.

**Achievements**

Your Choice in Medway has become self-sustaining; it now uses various
media and incorporates all key stakeholders. Provision and progression
maps have been introduced to enable gaps/surpluses in local provision to be
identified and addressed. RPA key data measures have been identified and
systems put in place to access the data through a central hub.

**Challenges**

There are a number of challenges for 2014-15 including:

• Creating a range of sustainable opportunities for all SEN post-16 learners
  in Medway
• Securing a breadth of local opportunities to cater for the increase in
demand from 2015 onwards
• Ensuring strategic plans successfully impact on post-16 outcomes
• Developing greater collaboration with providers who are competing for
learners.

**2.9 Home to School Transport**

**Overview**

The Council is required to offer free home to school transport assistance to
families who meet the eligibility criteria defined by the Department for
Education. Families that do not meet the eligibility criteria have the right to
appeal the decision to a committee of Members. This gives them the
opportunity to challenge the decision and present more detailed information
regarding their personal circumstances.
Achievements

The pre-assessments of all children in Year 6 for their transfer to Year 7 (secondary education) to enable families to access home to school assistance were completed on time. This year for the first time, parents/carers had the opportunity to request information on their nearest appropriate schools for transport purposes and receive their response electronically. All parents received their response in time to assist their decision in naming schools on their applications.

Challenges

The high volume of applications to be assessed for free home to school transport, as well as an increasing number of applications for the Medway Youth Pass, remains a challenge to meet timescales.

2.10 Inclusion

Overview

Medway Council is committed to ensuring that all children are able to access high quality, full time education that is suited to their needs, interests and abilities. It is recognised that sometimes a placement in a particular school or Academy can go wrong. When pupils are permanently excluded (or are at risk of so being), the Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure that their education is continued and we do this through a number of mechanisms, such as managed transfers to other schools or through placement in another suitable provision such as a Pupil Referral Unit or Alternative Provision provider. The Medway Inclusion team is responsible for the management of the Authority’s duties towards excluded pupils. It is also where the Home Education Advisor is located. The team works closely with the Attendance Advisory Service to Schools and Academies.

Achievements

The Onside Therapy Team is now well established in primary schools where they work to overcome the emotional aspects which can be involved in behavioural issues which lead to exclusions.

Between September 2012 and March 2013, Medway’s Action for Families (MAF) and partners influenced positive change in 127 families, which is over 60% of Medway’s year one target. In comparison the national average is 10-15%.

Managed moves continue to provide fresh starts for pupils where a school placement has broken down. The SEND Pathfinder work has its basis in strong inclusive practice.

1 As at 13/12/13
Challenges

The increase in permanent exclusions in Medway schools is a significant challenge, as is the managed transfer process.

2.11 Integrated Children’s Team

Overview

Medway Children’s Social Care is a service of circa 180 staff and an annual budget of £30m. It provides statutory social work services to children in need, children subject to a Child Protection Plan and children in care. It also provides fostering and adoption services, support packages to children with disabilities and their families, a parenting assessment and contact service, and residential care. Medway Council received 2 Ofsted inspections during 2013-14 of its safeguarding and looked after children’s services in January and July 2013 respectively, both judged ‘inadequate’. In the latter inspection, however, the ‘capacity to improve’ was rated ‘adequate’, a reflection of progress made since the first inspection. A recent letter from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families welcomed ‘the strong political and corporate support which continues to be given in driving improvement’.

Achievements

A fully endorsed single Improvement Plan to support the progress is in place. It was launched to staff and partners at an event in October 2013. Progress against the plan is reported to a monthly externally chaired Children’s Improvement Board (CIB).

An independent review of the MSCB has been undertaken and an extensive action plan developed to significantly improve its function and impact on safeguarding activity across the partnership.

Children’s Social Care has established a Triage Service to provide strength in decision-making and improved relationships at its front door.

A re-organisation of Children’s Social Care has been undertaken to optimise accountability and workflow through the system and is supported by an additional investment in 2014-15 to ensure sufficiency of social workers and a reduction in caseloads to improvement in the quality of work.

Recent ‘deep dive’ visits in September and December by the CIB chair and meetings with the DfE Improvement Team has acknowledged an improvement in morale, processes and quality of work.

A number of permanent service managers have now been recruited and retention rate of team managers and frontline staff has now markedly improved.
Challenges

Recruitment of permanent staff of good quality at all levels remains a significant challenge, as it does nationally, although headline sponsorship at recent national recruitment fairs and the appointment of newly qualified social workers and some experienced practitioners from abroad is starting to see a gradual improvement in this area. A key focus is maintaining continual improvement whilst permanent staffing levels are lower than desired.

2.12 Leaving Care

Overview

Medway has now established a new Leaving Care Team for young people 18+ who have left the care system. This team of Personal Advisors advise, assist and befriend care leavers which, in addition to the current Staying Put Policy, will support the intended extension of Local Authorities’ duties to provide placements to looked after young people to the age of 21. The Leaving Care Team is currently in discussion with the Medway Youth Trust to identify co-located premises with other agencies supporting care leavers to provide a hub to address their needs.

Achievements

There have been a number of achievements in 2013-14, including:

- There is a good range of suitable accommodation for care leavers and priority is given for supported accommodation options
- A set of outcome-focused priorities has been developed for care leavers to meet the diverse needs of young people and equip and support them for independent living
- A good range of education and training provision is available at post 16, including a wide range of vocational options
- The quality of transition plans are good and care leavers report that they had made a contribution
- There is good engagement with the Youth Employment Service.

Challenges

Medway’s performance for care leavers in employment, education and training remains below that of comparators, although the Council has recently taken positive action, supported by the Medway Youth Trust and wider partners, and has established an Educational Attainment sub-group to the Corporate Parenting Board to improve this situation. There is an important role for the Virtual School to provide the necessary focus on attainment, inclusion and aspiration for looked after children to equip them post 16 and into adulthood.
2.13 Looked After Children

**Overview**

The Restructuring in Children’s Social Care is underway, including the creation of three LAC teams. This will be completed by April 2014. Two of the three new Team Managers are in place following a successful recruitment campaign.

**Achievements**

There has been a wide range of achievements this year, including:

- All cases are allocated to a named Social Worker
- There is greater co-ordination of services that support NEET issues
- There has been increased support to LAC undertaking Key Stage assessments, including 1:1 tuition and mentoring
- A joint plan with the LAC health team is in place. A health sub-group of the Corporate Parenting Board, chaired by the LAC Nurse, has been established
- A new Permanence Panel has been established
- There was a ‘Commissioner’s Take Over Day’ where a group of Looked After Children reviewed aspects of the fostering service and fed back recommendations for change to Senior Management and myself
- A Time to Shine event celebrated the achievements of our Looked After Children
- A Charity Match was organised between Children in Care and Medway staff with our Chief Executive playing his part in goal!
- Medway’s Corporate Parenting Board was reviewed and revised under my Chairmanship. This has seen the frequency of meetings increase from 2 a year to quarterly and the establishment of sub-groups e.g. health and education to drive forward improvements. I am delighted that young people from the Children in Care Council will be routinely attending and contributing to the Board from January.

**Challenges**

A number of challenges remain for the service including:

- Maintaining focus on the timely production of high quality care and pathway plans
- Ensuring the voice of the child is evidence on all cases recording and in all Care and pathway plans
- Ensuring all supervision is recorded within 48 hours and is SMART and supports the progress of plans for each young person
- Reducing the NEET figures over the coming year and securing at least a 20% improvement on current performance.
2.14 Primary and secondary education

Overview

The Council continues to work to support effective practice in pre-school, primary and secondary schools. Our statutory responsibility is for all pupils’ achievement, regardless of whether they attend an academy or a LA School.

Achievements

This year has seen the best results for Medway. The new early years foundation stage measure placed Medway in the top quintile. The Year 1 phonics result improved by 15% and Medway is no longer the lowest performing authority.

Key Stage 1 improved on all measures.

Key Stage 2 Level 4+ for reading, writing and mathematics increased by 3% to 71%, showing we are narrowing the gap with the national average. Furthermore, Medway is no longer the lowest performing authority.

The percentage of primary schools judged to have good or better leadership and management increased to 73% by the end of October – a 17% rise from 56% at the end of August 2012.

In secondary, the percentage of students gaining 5+ A*-C GCSE’s including English and Mathematics was maintained at the national average. A Level results remain good.

There is a rich mixture of school establishments within Medway and I am pleased to report that there is significant work underway to establish strong partnership with our academies.

I am working closely with the School’s Forum who have enabled DSG reserves to contribute to school improvement, teacher recruitment and SEN capital.

I am also delighted to report that I have achieved my promise to visit every school in Medway, to meet the Head Teachers, and to see for myself the standard of education throughout the Authority. I am now in the process of revisiting the schools and meeting with the School Councils.

Challenges

The challenges for the Local Authority in 2014-15 are:

- The floor threshold for primary end of KS2 is rising to 65% from 2014
- Closing the gap between the achievement of FSM (Free School Meal) and non FSM
- The recruitment and retention of good teachers
- Increasing the percentage of pupils attending good or better schools.
2.15 School services

Overview

The Council is responsible for the administration and co-ordination of all point of entry school admissions (entry to primary, infant, junior and secondary school). These processes are undertaken as part of the co-ordinated admission schemes for entry in the following academic year. An integral part of the secondary admission processes is the delivery of the Medway Test for entry to the Medway grammar schools. The Council is also responsible for the in-year admissions processes for all community and voluntary controlled schools as well as those own admissions authority schools (academies etc) that have opted to continue utilising a centralised process through the Council.

Achievements

This year nearly 2,400 children sat the Medway Test, an increase of 300 on last year.

Following changes to the requirements of the School Admissions Code, amended processes for in-year admissions in September 2013 have been implemented. A large majority of Medway own admissions authority schools have opted to continue with in-year admissions being administered centrally by Student Services. This enables families to have a consistent approach and a single point of contact for the majority of Medway Schools.

A significantly high percentage of primary admissions appeals have been successfully defended resulting in schools not being put under additional pressure of admitting above their admission number (only 8 of 179 appeals were upheld).

The Council successfully traded the Free School Meals eligibility assessment processes with a number of academies.

Challenges

It remains a challenge where our admission authority schools have opted to administer their own in-year admissions as this has led to some confusion for families.

The level of school admissions appeals continues to increase which has a significant impact on the capacity of Student Services.

The increase in pupils taking the Medway Test continues to present a challenge both in terms of planning and budgeting.

2.16 Special educational needs

Overview

The SEN team is responsible for conducting and overseeing the statutory assessment process according to legal requirements and ensuring provision in Statements of Special Educational Needs is put in place and meeting the
pupils’ needs. Educational and child psychologists, specialist teachers, parenting practitioners and functional family therapists offer targeted work to support children and families. Educational and child psychologists also have a statutory role in relation to those with SEN.

There are major changes in the legislation governing all work with children and young people with SEN and Medway, as a Pathfinder LA, is already in the process of implementing some of these.

**Achievements**

The rate of tribunals has remained low due to the effective collaborative working between SEN, Educational Psychology and Legal Services.

The secondary transfer process is traditionally is a trigger point for increases in the number placed in specialist provision, often leading to a number of pupils moving into independent specialist provision directed by tribunals. Only 5 Medway pupils, however, were placed in independent specialist provision out of the 112 with Statements who transferred (2% less from the previous year). In 2013, Medway had no tribunal appeals at secondary transfer indicating parental satisfaction with the process.

An increased number of post-16 students moved from independent to maintained Medway provision facilitated in particular by the Rivermead-Mid-Kent College Partnership, which was set up in collaboration with the LA, and which has proved very popular with young people.

Medway has developed and implemented new statutory assessment processes ahead of changes in the law next year. These continue to be refined.

So far 110 families have been signed up and 50 Education, Health and Care Plans (the replacement for Statements) are in place, some with personal budgets.

All schools have been trained on the new funding arrangements and the new annual person-centred review processes.

The Medway Local Offer has been started in conjunction with other agencies and services across Medway.

**Challenges**

There continues to be a high and increasing number of children moving into Medway requiring specialist provision.

There has been a significant increase in parental requests for statutory assessment this year, (131% on last year). The majority of these are not supported by the school. 95% of these are turned down as inappropriate. Overall there has been a 54% increase in requests for statutory assessment.
2.17 Specialist youth services

(a) Youth Offending Team

**Overview**

Medway Youth Offending Team continues to deliver high quality services to vulnerable young people who are referred to the service by the courts or through a new triage programme run in partnership with Medway Police. The YOT budget has reduced by 31% over the last four years, mainly due to external funding reductions, but innovative partnerships and partnership funding support has compensated for these reductions.

Out of a 10 to 17 year old population in Medway of 28,500, at anyone time the Youth Offending Team is working with around 130 young people both on statutory orders or through other prevention programmes. This YOT is performing well against its statistical neighbours.

The Council is developing a protocol across agencies in Kent and Medway to both reduce the criminalisation of LAC and work towards a target of no LAC entering the criminal justice system as a first time entrant. This will involve working closely and supporting through restorative justice processes, foster carers and staff in children`s homes wherever our young people are placed.

**Achievements**

All YOT performance targets will be achieved by the end of 2013-14. The YOT Cookham Wood outreach team and the YOT Resettlement team contributed to a four star rating by HMIP for Cookham Wood’s resettlement programme in a recent inspection.

**Challenges**

Future challenges include:

- Identifying alternative disposals to secure remand now that funding responsibility lies with the Local Authority
- Continuing to improve YOT practice

(b) Youth and Employment Services (YES) – Medway Youth Trust (MYT)

**Overview**

The main focus of the YES contract for 2013-17 is:

- Supporting Medway’s strategy for achieving the Raising Participation Age
- Projecting young people furthest from retention and engagement in learning. The service will incorporate some universal work with young people 13-19 years although the focus is on support for vulnerable groups of young people, specifically, Children Looked After, young people with special education needs, young offenders and young people who are at a high risk of becoming NEET.
**Achievements**

MYT, who deliver the YES/Connexions contract, have successfully kept NEET and Unknown levels below the contract target and have seen an increase in work with more vulnerable groups of young people.

**Challenges**

The service is changing from a universal information and advice service to one that is more targeted and works primarily with vulnerable groups. Keeping NEET levels below the 5% target and achieving Raising Participation Age aspirations will be a challenge. A challenge for us all is to ensure that our care leavers are in education, employment or training.

2.18 Youth

**Overview**

Medway Youth Service continues to deliver personal development programmes to young people 11-19 years and up to 25 with special needs. These programmes are delivered through seven Youth Centres, detached work teams and targeted activities focused on more vulnerable young people. The Medway Duke of Edinburgh Award programme is also under the management of the Youth Service and is one of the highest performing DofE programmes in the southeast region.

In 2013-14 the service has maintained its reach (contact with 7000 young people) and the positive activity outcomes (650 accredited outcomes) to both mainstream and targeted groups of young people.

**Achievements**

In 2012-13 the Medway Youth Service was successful in securing 1 million Euros from the European Interreg fund. This project is a result of several European partners who have joined together to develop a cyber youth concept, which will encourage cross channel communication, sharing of ideas and information, language skills and European social mobility. The main aims will be to develop joint projects to include mechanics, cookery and music, performing arts and media. Medway is the lead partner in the project and recipient of the highest funding (£770,310, based on a standard exchange rate) over three years. As a result of this European initiative Medway Youth Service was shortlisted for a Partnership award with Children and Young People Now in November 2013.

**Challenges**

The challenge for the service in 2013-14 is to continue to integrate further with the YOT to establish a single adolescent team.
Finally, I would like to take this opportunity of thanking Head Teachers, Principals, Teaching and Non Teaching Staff and all of our Officers in both Education and Children’s Social Care who have all stepped up to the plate, and are continuing to do so, to ensure that every child in Medway has the best start in life and that we provide the very best Education system to enable them to progress to the next stages in their lives.

Finally, my sincere thank to all off our Medway Young People for giving me such a warm welcome wherever I have met them. I never cease to be amazed at their resilience, cheerfulness and the positive contribution that they all make to our community. They continue to be a source of pride to Medway in general and their families and themselves in particular.

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Background Papers:
Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee 26 March 2013
Portfolio Holder report: