

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 MARCH 2016

ATTENDANCE OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Report from: Councillor Mike O'Brien – Portfolio Holder Children's Services

Summary

This report details the areas covered by the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services and covers the period from September 2014. In the case of education services, it covers the results of the school year 2014-15 and activity during that year and the first half of the current school year.

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 with disabilities
- Children's Social Care
- Early help, including Medway Action for Families
- Early years
- Educational Improvement
- Further Education
- Inclusion
- Looked After Children (including fostering, care leavers and residential care)
- Partnership Commissioning (Children)
- Primary and secondary education
- Safeguarding
- School organisation and Student Services
- School services
- Special educational needs
- Youth Services

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.

1.3 As Portfolio Holder I sit on the Community Safety Partnership (CSP), the YOT Board and Health and Wellbeing Board, as well as Chair Medway

CAN and Corporate Parenting Board. This ensures a golden thread throughout the Council.

2. Overview

2.1 Adoption

Overview

2.1.1 Medway Council has responsibility for recruiting and supporting of adoptive parents, matching of children with permanent families, and supporting children and families after adoption orders have been made.

Achievements

2.1.2 Medway like many other authorities across the country experienced a spike in adoption in the financial year 14/15 when 41 children were adopted. To date 14 children have been adopted since April with a further 4-6 expected to be adopted before the end of March.

2.1.3 Unlike other Councils, we are not experiencing any difficulty in placing sibling groups compared to a single child. This ability to recruit adopters for sibling groups is something that we should be proud of in Medway as many authorities struggle in this area.

Challenges

2.1.4 The time period between children being identified for adoption and becoming adopted still requires improvement. Officers are working with the courts to improve the speed at which these decisions are made.

2.1.5 In order to improve our overall adoption rates, officers are in discussion with other Local Authorities to develop plans for a Regional Adoption Agency.

2.2 Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

Overview

2.2.1 Medway Council commissions a range of mental health services in partnership with Medway Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The largest provider is Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust which delivers the Tier 3 service.

Achievements

2.2.2 The past twelve months have seen significant attention and focus on children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing at the national level. Medway Council responded to this through the development and adoption of a refreshed Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Strategy, in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, including children, young people and their

families. A Local Transformation Plan (LTP) has also been developed in response to the recent report of the Government's Children and Young People's Mental Health Taskforce, *Future in Mind* and in accordance with national Guidance published to CCGs in August 2015. Additional recurrent funding (£516,000 annually) has been made available to Medway CCG and partners to take forward the plans and actions within the LTP.

2.2.3 I was particularly pleased to see the LTP launched at the Medway Youth Parliament annual conference on 10 November. It was clear that many of the ideas and proposals captured the imagination of those present and the young people provided some excellent feedback and challenge to commissioners and providers.

Challenges

2.2.4 This Committee is aware of the challenges that we face in driving this service transformation, including:

- Reconfiguration and recommissioning of a comprehensive Emotional Health and Wellbeing service on a Medway footprint
- Improvements in support and provision for Looked After Children and monitoring of outcomes
- Improvements in the transition arrangements for young people from CAMHS to adult mental health services

2.2.5 There is, however, a national mandate for change and the next twelve to eighteen months provide a significant opportunity to deliver the high quality and integrated service we all aspire to. I look forward to working with commissioners, children and young people, families, schools and a range of other stakeholders to make these changes happen.

2.3 Children with Disabilities

Overview

2.3.1 Following a restructure in adult social care, the 0-25 disability team was established to provide a seamless disability service that provides continuity of support as children transition into young adults. This team is aligned with the SEN pathway and allows for a coordinated approach to education, health and social care services provision.

2.3.2 A key aim of the service is to improve the transition pathway for young people and their families by reducing the handover of cases between teams with one practitioner being able to work with a family throughout the transition phase. The team holds a case load of 550 children and young people, with 440 being aged up to 18.

Achievements

2.3.3 The new service has been focussed on improving outcomes for children and ensuring greater choice and personalisation, as well as providing independence. An "enablement pathway" has been developed to provide children and their families with a proportionate level of Social

Work intervention to their needs. Eligibility criteria for the service have been updated and protocols written allow complex cases to be managed more effectively, to ensure staff are clear about processes to follow.

2.3.4 One of my key areas of concern was to ensure that transitions for children were more coherent. A Transition pathway has been developed with Children's Social Care to ensure that the handover of cases over to the Looked After Children team is clear and that any transitions at 18 to adult services take place in a planned way. To promote joint working, the designated duty officer from the service is now located within the Children's Assessment & Duty Service (CADS) to support queries regarding new referrals and develop working relationships. Additionally, the family worker post has moved across to the Early Help service bringing this into line with other children's services.

2.3.5 An area of work that I have taken a particular interest in has been the successful commissioning of a new framework for short breaks. A key achievement has been engagement of children and parents/carers in the process. I have met with the Parents and Carers forum through the process to ensure a partnership with families. The framework will enable us to offer short breaks in line with more choice and personalisation.

Challenges

2.3.6 A challenge facing this service will be to ensure that we continue a drive towards a more personalised and child centred approach. This will be achieved through more effective use of direct payments, so that we ensure the most effective use of available resources. The 0-25 team is working closely with commissioners to manage demand and supply.

2.3.7 A further challenge will be to reduce the reliance on agency social workers. Four newly qualified social workers have successfully completed their ASYE (assisted year in social work) and two new social workers have started in the service. It has traditionally been difficult to recruit permanent social work staff but this situation has improved significantly, and it will be important to maintain this stability within the service.

2.4 Aut Even

Overview

2.4.1 Aut Even is an in-house specialised overnight short break provision that provides respite opportunities for Medway's children and young people with disabilities and their families. Many children receiving an overnight short break provision at Aut Even have complex and challenging needs. There are currently 49 children accessing the provision.

2.4.2 Short breaks are opportunities for disabled children and young people to have fun, develop new skills and have time away from their families or primary carers. They also provide parents and carers of disabled children with a necessary and valuable break from their caring responsibilities. Overnight Short Breaks are provided where it is

recognised that there is a significant impact on everyday life which requires this level of respite. A number of over high respites, particularly for children at the end of life, are provided in the home.

Achievements

- 2.4.3 Short breaks are linked to positive outcomes both for parents/carers and children and young people that go beyond merely giving families a break e.g. reducing social isolation, contributing to health and wellbeing of families, enabling parents to spend time with their other children, contributing towards reductions in challenging behaviour in children and young people. Feedback from parents/carers regarding their child's experience at Aut Even has generally been very positive, with comments "staff are very approachable" and "know my child well" being received.
- 2.4.4 During my visits to Aut Even, I have been pleased to see an increasingly stable workforce as substantive staff have been recruited to vacancies.

Challenges

- 2.4.5 A review of the building and equipment carried out in the middle of January high-lighted a number of issues, particularly in respect of bathroom and shower equipment. This equipment is essential for the safe provision of personal care to many of the children who use the facility. In addition a significant number of the bedside panels, which ensure a child does not fall from the bed were damaged. Furthermore, new hoist straps are required and damage to the sensory room means it is no longer able to be used. Clearly personal care is a necessity for children who attend the unit, so the issues with damaged equipment in the shower and bathroom needed to be dealt with urgently. Bedside panels must be in place to ensure safety for the children and young people who need them.
- 2.4.6 As Portfolio Holder, I must ensure the children who use this provision are safe. Continuing to allow children and young people to access the unit whilst these items were not functional would determine that we were not providing short breaks in an environment where health and safety is being effectively maintained. Consequently I approved a recommendation from officers to temporarily close the unit for a period of 12 weeks to allow this important refurbishment work to be carried out. Whilst the unit is closed we will also be taking the opportunity to redecorate the unit. The unit will re-open on Tuesday 3rd May in readiness for the summer period.

2.5 Children's Social Care

Overview

- 2.5.1 Medway Children's Social Care provides statutory services to children in need, children in need of protection and children in care. There is an annual budget of £33m and services are provided by circa 180 staff. Services are provided by a range of social care teams, which include fostering and adoption, residential care and services for care leavers.

Achievements

- 2.5.2 I am delighted to report that Medway achieved an improved Ofsted judgement for children's services from "inadequate" to "requires improvement". The inspectors noted positive changes in the experiences of children and young people in most of the areas that had been identified for improvement in previous inspections in 2013. In one of the areas inspected, the quality of support provided to care leavers, services were rated as good. I was pleased that Ofsted recognised that "political leaders understand well the strengths and weaknesses" as well my personal commitment to ensure that our most vulnerable children and young people have a strong voice. I would like to thank all my colleagues who are members of the Corporate Parenting Board for being such good advocates for our LAC.
- 2.5.3 The outcome of the inspection has meant that the Improvement Notice has now been lifted although Ofsted will require updates over the next twelve months on progress of the Action Plan that has been developed to address the recommendations of the inspection. I am committed that we will not take our foot off the throttle and will continue to drive improvement to Good or Outstanding by our next visit.
- 2.5.4 A further improvement that I am delighted to report on is the establishment of the joint police and social care team that has been set up to identify and work with victims of child sexual exploitation. Members will know that this issue is of great concern and attracts a lot of interest at a national level. I am confident that this new initiative will mean that Medway is continuing to improve our local arrangements to protect our children and young people from this form of abuse.
- 2.5.5 The Children's Advice and Duty Service has developed further following the work of Professor David Thorpe last year. The service offers a comprehensive, multi agency response to both service users and professionals, ensuring that no children or young people fall through gaps in provision. The service is valued by professionals and feedback over the last year from partner agencies has been very positive.

Challenges

- 2.5.6 There has been a considerable increase of work in the system, which has meant a significant challenge in terms of maintaining controllable caseloads and ensuring a good quality of practice. The number of children on child protection plans is now 515, an increase from 473 in April 2015. The number of children in care is now 439 an increase from 425 in the same period. There are also 117 cases in care proceedings. While I am confident that risk is being addressed robustly, as confirmed by the Ofsted inspection, staff are also aware that the use of thresholds must be monitored. A comprehensive analysis is currently underway to ensure consistency of practice.
- 2.5.7 Recruitment continues to be a challenge. At a national level, it has been acknowledged that there is unlikely to be a sufficient supply of permanent

social workers until 2022. Medway is continuing to try a number of strategies both to recruit and retain social workers. Particular attention is being paid to strengthening the role of managers following the feedback from the Ofsted inspection. The roles of practice supervisors are being developed to increase the oversight of practice and work is being undertaken on a bespoke development package for all frontline managers.

- 2.5.8 As portfolio holder, I recognise that a significant challenge for the service has been providing services within available resources. The combination of the need to employ some agency staff, together with the increase of work in the system in the last year has led to pressure on associated budgets. Managers are putting a range of strategies in place to control expenditure while continuing to meet our statutory responsibilities and improve practice. This work is a key priority for the coming year.

2.6 Early Help, including Medway Action for Families

Overview

- 2.6.1 I have continued to chair our multi-agency partnership, Medway Children's Action Network (CAN) for the last year. Its key priority is to develop our early help offer as a partnership endeavour and I am pleased by the range of services actively participating in some way. In the next 12 months we need to continue to deepen this involvement. An early help strategy and needs analysis have been agreed by Medway CAN. Strategic outcomes have been agreed that will require effective partnership working.
- 2.6.2 Ofsted felt that the arrangements we have put in place are good and that we now need to concentrate on consistency, coordination and quality of interventions.

Achievements

- 2.6.3 Four Early Help coordinators are now in post to ensure the right people and services are supporting families, with the right plan. An early help steering group has been set up so that all partners can monitor performance and make adjustments to their service models where necessary. A shorter, simpler and more effective assessment tool will support the outcome focused family friendly way of working we know works and want to embed. Regular bulletins are going to all in the early help workforce to keep them informed.

Challenges

- 2.6.4 Maintaining awareness and developing consistent practice across such a large section of the workforce is challenging, but officers are looking at joint training and development sessions for managers, to build networks and consistency of practice – and also to develop solutions to specific issues.

2.7 Early Years and Sure Start Children's Centres

Overview

- 2.7.1 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. We are 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

- 2.7.2 I am delighted to report to this Committee that children starting school in Medway in September 2015 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 increased from 64% to 71%, which is 5 percentage points above the national average, placing Medway in the top quintile of all local authorities in England.
- 2.7.3 This success reflects the early help and targeted interventions provided by Medway's Sure Start Children's Centres, alongside improved early years education in schools and nurseries. Attendances at Medway's children's centres have stabilised, totalling 278,000 in the 12 months of 2015. Ofsted inspections grades of the 100 private and independent pre-schools and nurseries continue to improve from a relatively low baseline and 88% are now judged as good or better.
- 2.7.4 97% of children in Medway access a free nursery place at the age of three. In 2013 an entitlement to free nursery education for younger children was introduced for low income households. More than 1000 Medway children are now benefiting from free nursery places at the age of two, which will further help to improve their readiness for school.
- 2.7.5 The new Ofsted framework means that schools receive a separate graded judgement for their early years provision within their inspection report. There is an increased focus on school readiness and pupil progress in the early years, and the quality of teaching and learning within school nursery and reception classes. Generally, the early years foundation stage is a strength of Medway's primary schools.

Challenges

- 2.7.6 A key challenge is to ensure that the improved start to children's learning in the very earliest years provides a strong foundation for when they start school, as assessed by Ofsted. A further challenge is to continue to secure sufficient good quality free nursery places for the large number of two year-olds who live in Chatham, and to prepare for the Government's intended expansion of childcare for working families in 2017.

- 2.7.7 The reduction in grants to local government means that we face a significant challenge in delivering savings whilst maximising frontline support to the most vulnerable families.

2.8 Educational Improvement

Overview

- 2.8.1 There are 102 schools in Medway with a total of 43,919 pupils. 49 of these schools, 16 of which are secondary, have academy status. Performance is improving at Foundation stage and Key Stage One and is above the national average at GCSE. However, Key Stage Two results overall were very disappointing.

Achievements

- 2.8.2 Our continuing success at Foundation Stage is outlined above at 2.7.2. At Year 1, Medway has continued to improve its Phonic outcomes with 75% achieving the check in 2015, closing the gap with national from 11% in 2012 to 2% in 2015.
- 2.8.3 In Key Stage One, results at the national expectation of 2B+ have continued the previous years' trend of improvement. The gap with national in all subjects has continued to close.
- 2.8.4 On the key measure of 5 A* - C GCSEs including English and mathematics, schools continue to perform above the national average placing Medway above national for the fourth consecutive year.
- 2.8.5 Since the Local Authority inspection in March 2015 to end of January 2016, 25 schools have been inspected. Of these, 1 secondary sponsored Academy was judged as Requires Improvement (RI) and one Secondary LA pupil referral unit was judged outstanding. There have been 19 inspections of LA primary schools, of these 2 were judged outstanding, 13 as good, and 4 were judged RI. 4 primary academies have been inspected, of which 1 was judged outstanding (a converter academy), 1 was good, 1 requires improvement and 1 in special measures. All of these are sponsor led academies. I have visited a number of schools to congratulate them on their good or outstanding judgements. My most recent was a fantastic visit to Hoo St Werburgh Primary and Marlborough Centre.

Challenges

- 2.8.6 I am fully aware of the challenges that Medway faces to improve performance at Key Stage 2. Our accelerated learning programme is key to improving the effectiveness of our schools. We have commissioned Beanstalk to provide trained volunteer readers in many of our primary schools and we have headteachers from London with National Leader in Education status helping local primaries on their improvement journey.

- 2.8.7 We also have the challenge of recruiting sufficient teachers at a time when there is a real shortage of teachers in the south of England. We have a dedicated resource to ensure that we position Medway well in this highly competitive market. I not only want to recruit outstanding teachers, but also allow our already good teachers and leaders to access advice and gain tips from the best.
- 2.8.8 The Assistant Director for School Effectiveness and Inclusion (Interim) is presenting a detailed report to this meeting of the Committee on school performance, which will allow a full debate to take place on this important issue.

2.9 Further Education

Overview

- 2.9.1 We continue to work closely with our partners at mid Kent College, including enhancing provision for young people with special needs. The new principal of the college is in regular discussion with secondary headteachers, officers and Medway Youth Trust to support the strategic planning of the offer made to our young people.

Achievements

- 2.9.2 The college decided to cease offering A levels for new students from September 2015. The way in which the college, schools and Medway Youth Trust worked collaboratively together to support young people to enable them to access appropriate courses was a significant achievement and has embedded a greater spirit of cooperation which will stand us in good stead to deliver the 16-19 strategy.
- 2.9.3 I have been pleased to be part of the work which we have commissioned from Medway Youth Trust to draft a 16-19 strategy in partnership with all our stakeholders. As well as its aim to reduce NEETs, it will also set the framework for a whole community approach to supporting our young people to employment.
- 2.9.4 I have been delighted to visit the UTC and to see the superb facilities and construction and engineering opportunities available. I have continued to talk with young people at schools and youth centres about career aspirations.

Challenges

- 2.9.5 The main challenge for all authorities is the diverse nature of post 16 provision and the many stakeholders who influence academic and vocational achievement and access to employment. Therefore I see the 16-19 strategy work is vital to embrace as many partners as possible in the development of a cohesive approach to championing our young people and giving them the opportunities which they deserve.

2.10 Inclusion

Overview

- 2.10.1 The Inclusion team deals with both permanent and fixed term exclusions in schools, ensuring legal procedures are followed. Support is offered to schools to ensure children are kept on roll wherever possible. The team actively works across other services to offer schools a coordinated response and well-regarded support, often signposting schools to quality outreach teams of specialists. The team also supports families who choose to withdraw their children from school and educate them at home (Elective Home Education).
- 2.10.2 In 2014/2015 0.19% (85) of Medway pupils had been issued with a permanent exclusion. The number of permanent exclusions can change due to the fact that there are appeals awaiting an outcome.
- 2.10.3 At the end of the academic year 2014/15, 3.5% (269,480) of the national population of pupils in state-funded primary, secondary and special schools had received fixed period exclusions. In the same academic year, 6.0% (2634) of Medway pupils in these schools received fixed period exclusions.

Achievements

- 2.10.4 The Inclusion team has supported the establishment of and has regular input to a weekly Schools Support Group (SSG). Schools are able to bring cases of young people at risk of exclusion and the panel offers guidance and support. Although it is too soon to evaluate its success, early indications show that schools value this support and several exclusions have been successfully avoided.
- 2.10.5 The team also advises schools about their policies and legal duties ensuring exclusion procedures are applied fairly and reasonably. This includes training for governors. Parents are advised of their rights and responsibilities within the exclusion process. Exclusion avoidance mechanisms, such as managed transfer of pupils between schools, are used.
- 2.10.6 A small scale pilot project has started in two schools with high levels of exclusions. This involves joint working between the inclusion, educational psychology and school improvement services, who together will work directly with the schools to develop effective exclusion avoidance strategies.

Challenges

- 2.10.7 As the data above shows, Medway has a high level of both fixed period and permanent exclusions. Some schools have difficulty in balancing the overall needs of the school community and the needs of individual pupils who may be exhibiting extreme social, mental health and behavioural issues. They often state a lack of CAMHS involvement and long waiting lists.

- 2.10.8 One of the challenges we face is our limited powers of intervention when a school becomes an Academy.
- 2.10.9 The high number of permanent exclusions puts pressure on the Authority to provide 6th day alternative provision. We also have the highest level of fixed period exclusions in our primary schools. Many schools report that their relentless focus on raising standards leads them to be less tolerant of challenging behaviour.
- 2.10.10 More parents are withdrawing their children from Medway schools to educate their children at home. In some cases, this may be due to the lack of a suitable school place, to avoid a permanent exclusion or in some cases, to avoid a fine or other legal measure, when their child is persistently absent from school.

2.11 Looked After Children (including fostering, care leavers and residential care)

Overview

- 2.11.1 Medway Council's services for LAC include:
- Social workers who are responsible for supporting children in their placements, developing and overseeing their Care Plans and helping them to achieve their full potential
 - The Leaving Care service who provide support for young people moving into independence or adult services, including supporting access to employment, education or training, accommodation and appropriate health services
 - The Fostering Service comprising social workers who assess and support Medway foster carers, including private and short break foster carers and the Connected Persons Assessment Service
 - The Independent Reviewing Officer team who chair reviews for looked after children and have a support and challenge role to make sure the children's interests are fully addressed
- 2.11.2 In addition Medway has one residential home The Old Vicarage, which is home to six children. The Old Vicarage which is currently managed by Hexagon on behalf of Medway Council, is transferring back to the council in April 2016, at the end of that contract.

Achievements

- 2.11.3 There have been a number of achievements in the Looked After Children service:

- I am very pleased to report that 97% of children this financial year have participated in their reviews, and that over 83% have an up to date care plan.
- The Children in Care Council (CICC) which I attend by invitation is very active and representatives attend Corporate Parenting Board meetings. The Children in Care Council contributes to the development and training of social workers in the looked after children services, particularly around pathway plans for 16 plus. Members of the Children in Care Council also take part in an annual Take over Day when they shadow managers and social workers and feedback their findings.
- The fostering service, working in close collaboration with our engagement service, has redeveloped our children's guide to fostering together with looked after children, foster carers and social workers to ensure the guide is developed by children for children. The guide will go to print in March 2016.
- The Leaving Care service continues to go from strength to strength. I was delighted that this work has been recognised with the recent Ofsted Inspection grading them as good. Recently they have worked with the Prince's Trust and identified a premises to support care leavers, providing a hub to address their needs. Meetings there take place each Monday. Partner agencies attend to provide advice and information and in development is a group for young mothers.
- As a regular visitor to The Old Vicarage I have seen the improvements to the décor. The refurbishment works have expanded provision and the home now has two new supported living accommodation beds for older young people in care and care leavers.
- I am pleased to report that all 17 year olds in care have a personal advisor and, in line with the Mumby report, Medway is allocating a personal advisor to all 16 year olds in local authority care.
- The timeliness of cases where children are subject to proceedings has improved to 30 weeks in line with the national average.

Challenges

- 2.11.4 Finding the right placement at the right time for children in care continues to challenge. There is an increasingly competitive market for the recruitment of foster carers, and a limited supply in Medway in particular, given our vicinity to Kent. We are looking at creative approaches to work with the market.
- 2.11.5 The number of cases in proceedings is currently 117 which is an all time high. A further 10 families have been identified for issuing proceedings on in the month of February 2016. While I am pleased that plans are being progressed for children, I recognise that the number and scale of

cases in proceedings is placing a lot of pressure on the service in terms of assuring the quality of all statements and meeting court deadlines.

- 2.11.6 I remain concerned about the low numbers of our care leavers in education, employment or training. This currently stands at 43%, a reduction from the April figure of 48%. The Looked after children service is working in partnership with the youth service to address this issue and a role has been developed for a youth worker to support those young people out of education. The target group is three days a week specific support for 16 year olds and two days a week specific support for 18 year olds.

2.12 Partnership Commissioning (Children)

Overview

- 2.12.1 The Partnership Commissioning team is jointly funded between the Council and NHS Medway Clinical Commissioning Group. It was established in April 2013 and enables the joint commissioning of services across health and social care.

Achievements

- 2.12.1 The service has had a number of achievements this year:
- I was pleased to see the engagement of so many children and young people in the development of Local Transformation Plan for Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services. This has resulted in a significant amount of additional funding for CAMHS in Medway from NHS England. This has boosted an increase in funding we received from the CCG to improve services.
 - The team undertook an in-depth review of the Paediatrics Outpatients service delivered at Medway Hospital, and revised all of the service specifications. An Improvement Action Plan is in place and is being implemented by the Hospital.
 - The team has worked with MFT to implement the findings of the maternity review and the maternity risk tariff.
 - Another success was the engagement of young people in the commissioning of supported accommodation. Young people were involved in visiting all the short listed providers.
 - Another key area of work has been the commissioning of the short breaks framework which is outlined in Section 2.3 of this report.

Challenges

- 2.12.3 Commissioners continue to face the challenge of ensuring that services meet the needs of our Medway Children and young people and provide

value for money. The transformation of our local CAMHS will be a key priority in the next 12 months.

2.13 Primary and secondary education

Overview

2.13.1 Section 2.8 of this report outlines key achievements and challenges in the work to improve educational standards.

2.13.2 As Portfolio Holder I have ensured that I have been proactive in visiting both Local Authority Maintained Schools and Academies to continue to develop our partnership arrangements and to promote standards.

Achievements

2.13.3 I have had many highlights in the last 12 months and below are just a few:-

- At the end of January I had a great day visiting the staff and pupils of the King's School Rochester as the last visit in my tour of Medway schools to present them with their copy of the history of the Lord Lieutenant of Kent, 'Inaugural'.
- July saw a visit to Fairview Community Primary School to congratulate staff, governors and pupils in a Good Ofsted report.
- That month I joined pupils, staff and parents at The Rowans Summer Fun Day. I even tried my luck (badly!) at the coconut shy. The pupils presented me with some super paintings.
- I particularly enjoyed going back to my teaching roots when I was asked to deliver a lesson to Year 12s at Rainham Mark Grammar School on moral dilemmas.
- A highlight for me is attending events that celebrate the achievements of our fantastic children and young people. These include the brilliant Try Angle and Time to Shine Awards. I never cease to be amazed and proud of our children and young people.

Challenges

2.13.4 The challenges we face to raise standards at Key Stage 2 will be discussed as part of the Assistant Director's report. As more schools become academies, and join different academy chains and Trusts, it could become more difficult to maintain contact with those schools. I and officers have worked hard to have good relationships with academies and their sponsors, and I expect to continue that approach in the coming year.

2.14 Safeguarding

Overview

- 2.14.1 Safeguarding and Quality Assurance sit under the auspices of the Portfolio Holder for Adult Services and a full account of the activity was presented by my colleague to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 January 2016. The teams within the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance team consist of the IRO service, LADO; Quality Assurance and the MSCB business unit. However it is within my remit to report on the activity of Medway Safeguarding Children's Board.
- 2.14.2 The Medway Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) is set up under the Children Act 2004 and is the multi-agency partnership of agencies working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Medway. The MSCB has the following objectives:
- To coordinate what is done by each agency represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in Medway
 - To ensure the effectiveness of what is done by those agencies for that purpose
- 2.14.3 I have been delighted with the high quality and commitment of our current and previous MSCB Chairs. The MSCB appointed a new Independent Chair in December 2014. John Drew C.B.E. took over from the previous Independent Chair Eleanor Brazil. Eleanor Brazil had been the Chair since May 2013. I am sure this committee will join me in thanking Eleanor for all her hard work.
- 2.14.4 The MSCB Independent Chair publishes an annual report describing how agencies in Medway have worked together through the year and how effective the arrangements are in Medway to keep children and young people safe from harm, abuse or neglect. The 2014-15 report was published in October 2015 and summarises the good progress that was made during the year and the plans to develop this further.

Achievements

- 2.14.5 As a member of the Medway Safeguarding Children's Board, I am fully aware of the achievements and challenges faced by the Medway Safeguarding Children's Board.
- 2.14.6 In February 2015 the MSCB took part in a Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review. The purpose of the Peer Review was to provide an objective and external perspective on the effectiveness and impact of the MSCB on safeguarding and protecting children in order to identify areas requiring improvement. This described good progress, while also identifying things that needed further attention which have been incorporated into the MSCB Business Plan.
- 2.14.7 Following the Ofsted inspection of Children's Social Care and the MSCB, the overall judgement was that the MSCB requires improvement to be

good and the review identifies four recommendations for the MSCB to develop further.

2.14.8 The review found that the MSCB had made significant progress during the previous six months, benefited from strong independent leadership and had effectively overseen the co-ordination of support to vulnerable groups of children. The report said the MSCB had responded positively to learning from inspections, national and local reviews and commissioned audits to improve the function and purpose of the Board. It also found that engagement and commitment by all partner agencies to the MSCB is strong, with attendance by representatives at the right level from all partner agencies.

2.14.9 Over the last year, the following progress has been made:

- A Challenge log was introduced to evidence how the Board challenges partners on their responsibilities.
- Regular reporting arrangements were set up from the Children's Social Care Improvement Board to the MSCB.
- The Board approved the MSCB Quality Assurance Framework in September 2015 addressing the ways in which the MSCB ensures effectiveness using an outcomes based accountability approach which includes agency annual reports to the Board, Case Reviews and a multi agency dataset.
- A multi-agency data set has been developed to monitor how well agencies are working together.
- A review of the MSCB structure was undertaken in 2015.
- A programme of multi agency themed audits has been developed which are being undertaken by the Case File Audit Group (CFAG)
- A Young Person's Safeguarding Panel was set up in 2015 to enable young people to have a platform where they can raise issues and concerns around safeguarding in a way that enables them to have a direct link to MSCB.
- Over 1000 professionals attended MSCB training events during 2014-15 and delegates attending reported that as a result they were better able to support families and had a better knowledge around accessing services.

Challenges

2.14.10 There will be further challenges facing the MSCB to ensure it continues on an improvement journey to good and beyond, but I am confident that the improvements made over the last 12 months have strengthened the Board to deliver further change of the transition of the activity of the External Improvement Board to MSCB. The key areas are:-

- Further strengthen engagement with health partners
- Improve the MSCB database to provide a non comprehensive picture that represents a multi-agency approach.
- There will need to be a need to further progress the MSCB challenge and scrutiny of the plans in relation to the cost, and prevent agendas.
- A key challenge will be the transition of the activity undertaken by the External Children's Improvement Board, chaired by Jane Held, will now become central to the business of the MSCB.
- There is a need to further progress the MSCB challenge and scrutiny function of the plan in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation and Prevent
- Whilst the Ofsted Inspection commented favourably on the positive partnership working within the MSCB, there is further scope for strengthening those arrangements particularly in relation to work with health partners.
- We need to further develop the MSCB database and strengthen the analysis to evidence the improved outcomes delivered through strengthened multi-agency working.

2.15 School Organisation and Student Services

Overview

- 2.15.1 Student Services are responsible for the administration and co-ordination of school admissions, including delivery of the Medway Test. The team also administer applications for free home to school transport and free school meals.
- 2.15.2 The School Organisation team plans school places, leads on school capital projects and coordinates school conversions to academy status.

Achievements

- 2.15.3 3,126 pupils were offered secondary school places and 3,466 pupils were offered primary school places to start in September 2015. I am delighted to report that 95% of Medway resident applicants for secondary and 96.5% of Medway resident applicants for primary school places were offered one of their preferences. Over 89% of all applications for places were made online.
- 2.15.4 I have continued to chair the Children and Adults Capital Programme Cabinet Advisory Group, which has driven forward a number of projects to provide additional capacity to meet increases in the demand for school places. A project at Brompton Westbrook Primary School is now

complete, and work is underway on a project at Cuxton Infant and Junior Schools. Designs are being developed for expansions at Saxon Way Primary, Bligh Infant and Junior Schools and the Hundred of Hoo Academy. When these are complete an additional 2300 primary school places will have been provided in Medway since 2013.

- 2.15.5 With the Cabinet Advisory Group I am also overseeing plans to develop additional specialist places for pupils with special educational needs and projects are now underway at both Abbey Court and Danecourt Special Schools.

Challenges

- 2.15.6 Forecasts of the future demand for pupil places indicate that additional capacity will be required over and above the places already planned both in primary and secondary education phases.

2.16 School Services

Overview

- 2.16.1 The School Services Team coordinates all services traded with schools by Medway Council. The team also commissions and quality assures a number of specific services on behalf of schools, for example catering cleaning, waste, and broadband services.

Achievements

- 2.16.2 The School Services Commissioning Team coordinates trading of 26 services with schools and academies. I am delighted that we are forecasting a 13% increase on income through the SLA Online purchasing system in 2015/16 when compared with income gained in 2014/15.
- 2.16.3 Dynamics, the Medway Music Education Hub continues to be rated at the lowest risk rating by Arts Council England. I sit on the Medway Music Education Hub Board and have been delighted to attend many events including the superb launch of the Medway Youth Orchestra and the Medway Youth Choir. Both these ensembles are supported by Dynamics partner the Medway Music Association and run in conjunction with Harry Christopher's The Sixteen.
- 2.16.4 I had the privilege of attending the Music Summer School in August. Some 100 children and young people from Medway Schools practised over four days for a concert for families and friends on the last day.
- 2.16.5 The project to improve broadband access to Peninsula sites is nearing completion, with just one remaining site to connect. In total there are presently five schools and six corporate sites including libraries, community and leisure centres using the service. Each site is receiving 10MB uncontended bandwidth. This is a marked improvement on the previous service.

Challenges

- 2.16.6 The key challenge for the service is to continue to ensure that services offered are viable and that these services meet the needs of schools and academies. As the educational landscape changes Medway Council needs to ensure that services offered are high quality when compared to the rest of the market.

2.17 Special Educational Needs

Overview

- 2.17.1 The SEN team is responsible for conducting and overseeing the statutory assessment process according to legal requirements and ensuring special educational provision is in place to meet pupils' needs. Educational and child psychologists also have a statutory role in relation to those with pupils with SEN.
- 2.17.2 As at December 2015, Medway maintained 1608 Statements and Education, Health and Care Plans. Of these 57 are for children looked after to other local authorities. Medway also has responsibility for funding educational provision for 41 children (in addition to the 1608) who are looked after to Medway Council, but placed out of borough.
- 2.17.3 The number of Statements/EHCPs has risen by just over 100 since December 2014. However, this is to be expected as Local Authorities now have a duty to maintain Statements/EHCPs for young people with assessed SEN to at least the age of 18, and for those that require additional time to develop the skills to enable independent living and opportunities for employment, to the age of 25.

Achievements

- 2.17.4 A new booklet, providing advice and guidance to both schools and parents was launched in June 2015.
- 2.17.5 85.3% (excl. exceptions) and 72% (incl. exceptions) of new assessments are completed within the 20 week timescale. Whilst we are not complacent and aim for 100%, this compares very well with our statistical neighbours.
- 2.17.6 The Positive Parenting Programme has been successfully transferred from the SEND team to the Early Help team.
- 2.17.7 'Way forward' meetings have been introduced as an intervention to reduce the number of tribunal appeals. They appear to be having some success in offering agreed actions to support parents and schools planning effectively for pupils with SEN.
- 2.17.8 I am able to report excellent progress towards transferring statements of SEN to EHC plans. Parental satisfaction can be judged in that no appeals to the First Tier Tribunal have been lodged as a result of the

conversions so far, and that there has only been one parental challenge to the new advice included in the new EHCP.

- 2.17.9 As at February 2016, only 2 children with SSENs/EHCPs were without educational placements/provision. Both had moved to Medway in the last week of January, and SEN is expecting educational provision to be secured by the half term holiday.
- 2.17.10 Medway SEN and the educational psychology service have produced expectation guidance for children with SEND to define the graduated approach to SEN using Band levels of SEN and the expectations of support and intervention required. The guidance is used to determine “top up” funding for children with SEN.

Challenges

- 2.17.11 The number of requests for new assessments has increased in the 18 months since September 2014. This reflects a national trend. Officers are working with schools, seeking ways to reduce this number, for example, by helping them develop support packages which do not require statutory assessment. There are still a significant number of initial requests made by parents.
- 2.17.12 Working effectively with schools to support them in meeting their duties for children with SEN remains a challenge. There is a varying attitude and approach across Medway state-funded schools to the graduated approach using the SEN notional budget allocated to all schools. Consequently, although some schools manage the needs of children with SEN on their roll well, others do not. This is reflected in the number of requests for EHC (formerly statutory) assessment received, particularly from parents.
- 2.17.13 The process for transition of students post 16 who have EHC plans is being considered to improve coordination and planning.
- 2.17.14 National statistics (January 2015) indicate that overall Medway schools continue to identify a high proportion of children and young people as having SEN, but without statements or EHCPs than other Local Authorities. 17% were identified as having SEN. This figure is between 2% to 9% higher than Medway’s statistical neighbours.

2.18 Youth Services

(a) Youth Offending Team

Overview

- 2.18.1 This has been a difficult year for the Medway Youth Offending Team (YOT). Central government cuts to the Youth Justice Board Grant have reduced resources available to the team. Despite this challenge, the service offered to young people has been of a high quality and a growing partnership between the YOT and the Youth Service is reaping mutual

rewards. In July 2016, the YOT took on a new responsibility in preventing radicalism.

Achievements

- 2.18.2 The YOT Cookham Apprentice programme was shortlisted for a national Children and Young People Award in 2015-16 and I was delighted to attend the prestigious award ceremony with some of the apprentices.
- 2.18.3 The YOT has changed to Career Vision Management Information System Youth Justice Solution. This now puts all IYSS services on the same management information system. Medway YOT will be implementing the new Asset Plus assessment tool in April 2016.
- 2.18.4 The Intensive Support and Surveillance programme is now delivered in house and supported by both YOT and Youth Service staff. This will reduce the use of custody and custodial remands.
- 2.18.5 The Junior Attendance Centre will move to Strood YC in April 2016 and be staffed by YOT and Youth Service workers. Additional finance from the Youth Justice Board supports this work.
- 2.18.6 YOT Performance is rated green in First Time Entrants, young people sentenced to custody, suitable accommodation, reoffending and the percentage of Children Looked After within the YOT cohort.
- 2.18.7 Medway took part in a Gang and Youth Violence peer review in January 2016 conducted by the Home Office.

Challenges

- 2.18.8 Meeting all the Youth Justice statutory requirements in times of reduced resources will be a challenge. The service is working with the Youth Service to develop creative and flexible service delivery models.

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

Overview

- 2.18.9 The Youth and Employment Service (YES) is in its final year of contract delivery. The service provides unbiased information, advice and guidance to a range of vulnerable groups of young people, supporting them into education, employment or training (EET) opportunities.
- 2.18.10 Medway Youth Trust, the provider of the YES contract has been commissioned to develop a 16-19 Strategy for Medway. This strategy will be drafted by March 2016 and will be the catalyst for a whole Council approach to young people's participation in EET.

Achievements

- 2.18.11 MYT has had a number of notable achievements this year:

- In November I attended the brilliant 16-19 summit they hosted. Over 65 partners attended
- I was delighted by the news that they have been named Medway Messenger Charity of the year 2016
- In November 2014 it became the ninth organisation in Britain to achieve the Gold Hear by Right Award
- MYT is working closely with our SEND teams to improve EET figures
- The number of 'not knowns' of 16-18 years olds has reduced significantly this year

Challenges

- 2.18.12 A challenge remains to deliver services with reductions in grants to local government.
- 2.18.13 MYT is focusing on reducing the high levels of 18 year olds who are NEET. **These figures were** identified as a concern in the School Improvement Ofsted Inspection.

(c) Medway Youth Service

Overview

- 2.18.14 Medway Youth Service continues to provide universal open access to young people aged 10-19 and up to 25 years for young people with special needs. The service is developing a closer working relationship with the YOT. Work has been carried out with youth centre voluntary management committee members to regularise the relationship between the management committees and the Council.

Achievements

- 2.18.15 The Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) Award programme moved to new base at the Strand. I was privileged to attend the second Duke of Edinburgh (Medway) Awards event at Rochester Cathedral in April. There was a record number of Medway young people achieving awards (620).
- 2.18.16 The Youth Service continues to support the YOT to deliver work with their clients and develop more seamless services to young people.
- 2.18.17 Work on drafting agreements with Youth Centre voluntary management committees is nearly completed and agreements will run to 31 December 2016.
- 2.18.18 February 2015 saw the culmination of the fantastic Cyber Youth Project. I was lucky enough to attend the dinner attended by over 150 young people from France, Suffolk and Medway. I made a key note speech and even dusted off my French!

Challenges

2.18.19 Key challenges include the ability to deliver alternative curriculum work commissioned by Schools due to other priorities. The service is also identifying how to maintain the range of programme offers that were provided in previous years through the European Cyber Youth Connection funding.

Appendices

None

Background Papers:

None