

# CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 OCTOBER 2016

## ANNUAL UPDATE ON CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES

Report from: Ian Sutherland, Interim Director Children and Adult Services

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### Summary

This report provides a summary update to members on progress and developments within Children's Services.

This annual update is brought to members of Overview and Scrutiny to support the committee in its role in reviewing and scrutinising performance of the Councils Children's Social Care Services.

### 1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 Medway Council was inspected by Ofsted in September 2015, and its children's services were found to be 'Requiring Improvement'. This resulted in the lifting of the Improvement Notice which had been put in place by the DFE following the inspections in 2013, which found services to be 'Inadequate'.
- 1.2 The External Improvement Board had its final meeting in January 2016, to sign off the revised strategy for action, 'Medway – Together We Can' which was submitted to Ofsted to address issues raised in the inspection report.
- 1.3 The DFE is now responsible for overseeing progress on the plan, and visits Medway three times a year to receive progress updates.
- 1.4 Internal scrutiny of progress is undertaken by the Children's Services Management Team and Internal Improvement Board which meets bi-monthly, chaired by the Chief Executive.

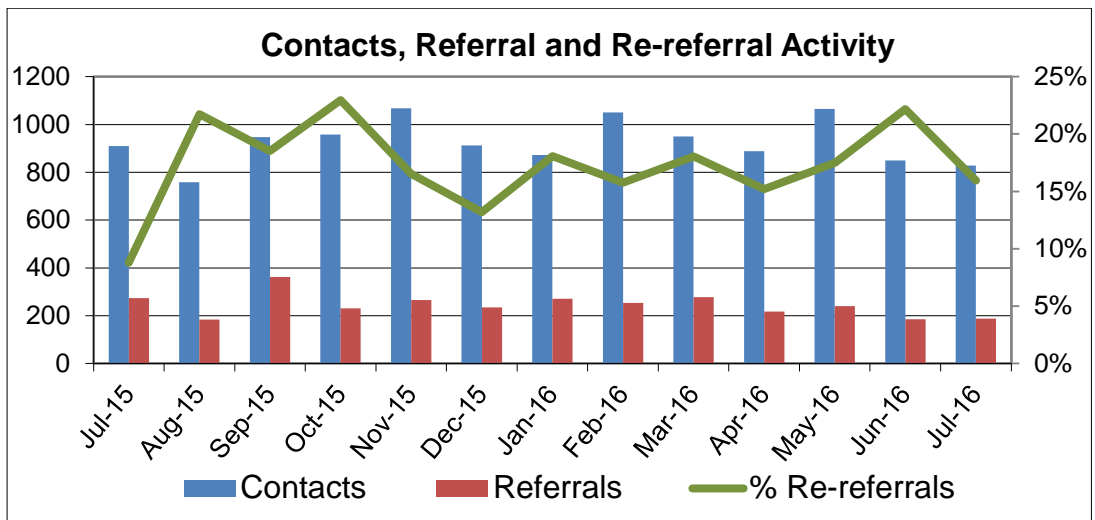
## **2. Service transformation, leadership and management oversight**

- 2.1 A new leadership team is in place, led by Ann Domeney, appointed as permanent Deputy Director. Ann is driving forward the plans to re-structure the service into locality based Area Teams comprising small pods of four social workers managed by a Practice Manager. Each pod will have a strong focus on quality of practice, underpinned by a systemic practice model of service delivery. This way of working will promote strong networks with partners and communities, and will support purposeful and focused interventions with families. Practice Managers have an explicit responsibility for overseeing and driving up quality and consistency of social work practice and thus outcomes for children. The model of area based working will minimise changes of worker for children and families.
- 2.2 The re-structure will be live from September 2016. Recruitment is underway to Area Team Manager and Practice Manager posts with some permanent appointments made and an ongoing recruitment campaign in place; current social workers have expressed preferences for areas and pods, with all permanent staff allocated their first choice.
- 2.3 A programme of workforce development is being put in place to support staff to develop skills and competencies in this model of working and to ensure our newly appointed Practice Managers and Area Team Managers are supported to be effective managers.

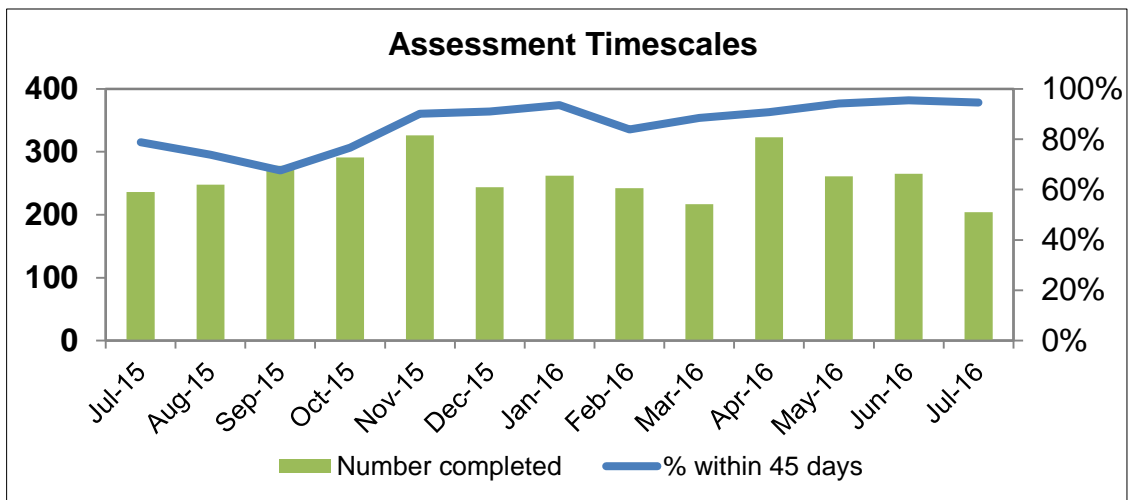
## **3. Quality of Practice – Child in Need and Child Protection**

- 3.1 Progress has continued over the last year in improving practice within Children's Services which was recognised in the September Ofsted inspection. A table of key performance indicators is provided at appendix 3 of this report to supplement the detailed reporting of our work and performance below.
- 3.2 Our front door Children's Advice and Duty Service (CADS) has recently been reviewed to ensure that we are using all our resources to best effect. As a result of this review, some changes to practice are proposed which will reinforce our thresholds with partners to ensure that Children's Services is focusing its resources on those children and families who have the most complex levels of need, and we continue to support our partners to respond appropriately to provide early help services at the earliest opportunity to prevent escalation of needs to higher levels of intervention.

3.3 Re-referral rates remain low against the national average of 24% indicating that appropriate responses are being made at point of referral – (shown in the continuous green line in the table below)



3.4 Timescales for completion of assessments within the targeted 45 day period continues to meet our target, with the overall trend remaining above the benchmark of the SE average at 72%.



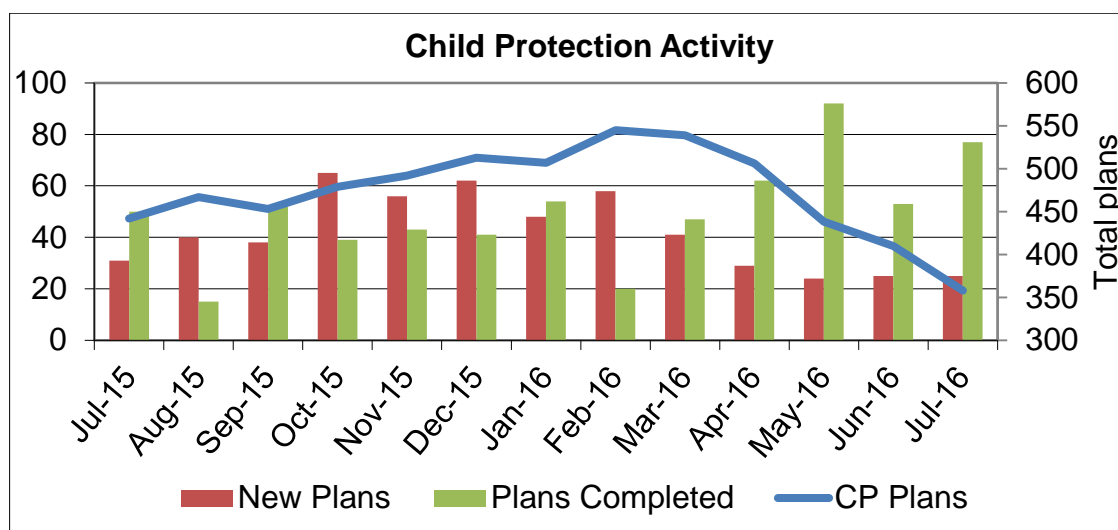
3.5 The Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS) is co-located at MHS Broadside, and works closely with Children’s Services to support plans and offer clear ‘step-down’ and ‘step-up’ options.

3.6 The Child in Need process has been reviewed to strengthen the management and oversight of Child in Need plans. Two staff have been trained in use of the Graded Care Profile<sup>1</sup> and Medway will roll out use of this tool which is

<sup>1</sup> Graded Care Profile is an evidence based tool developed through the NSPCC to assess the impact of neglect on children and the quality of care they are receiving

supported on a multi agency basis by the Medway Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB).

- 3.7 The numbers of children subject to Child Protection Plans has begun to reduce in recent months following a peak in February 2016 when numbers reached 547. In July 2016, the number at 358 was at a 12 month low.



- 3.8 Medway continues to have a higher rate per 10,000 (57 per 10,000 on the 31st July 2016) than our statistical neighbours (43 on the 31 March 2016) or England average (43 on the 31 March 2015). Work continues to robustly review cases and ensure plans are progressed appropriately with children stepped down to CIN plans where safe to do so. There has been a focus on adolescents, and the IRO service has reviewed all young people aged 15+ which has resulted in step downs to less intensive levels of interventions with a renewed focus on recognising the individual needs and risks to each child in a family. Our new area based model of working will strengthen our Child in Need processes and ensure this is a safe and robust option for working with families with complex needs.

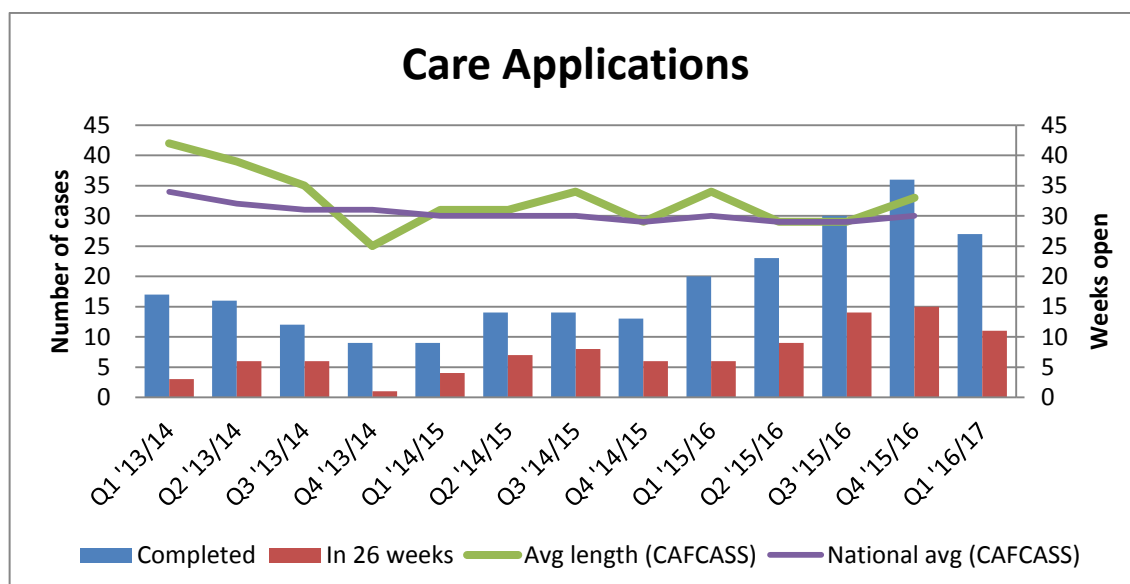
- 3.9 Children’s Services continue to work closely with the police to ensure a co-ordinated response to children and young people at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). This has included co-locating social work staff with police colleagues in a specialist co-located CSE Investigation Unit across Medway and Kent, and implementing a Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) Panel to identify individual children and ensure responses are meeting their needs.

- 3.10 The rise in numbers of cases subject to legal proceedings over the past year has been a challenge to services across the Council including our colleagues in the Legal Team. Measures have been put in place to ensure only those cases which require legal intervention are progressed to court, including a

Legal Gateway Panel which meets weekly. The Panel is now co-chaired by an Operations Manager from the Service and our Legal Adviser. This has resulted in a reduction in numbers of applications to court, and a clear expectation that we will focus our practice interventions on supporting families, but be able to take timely and effective legal action when required to protect and safeguard children.

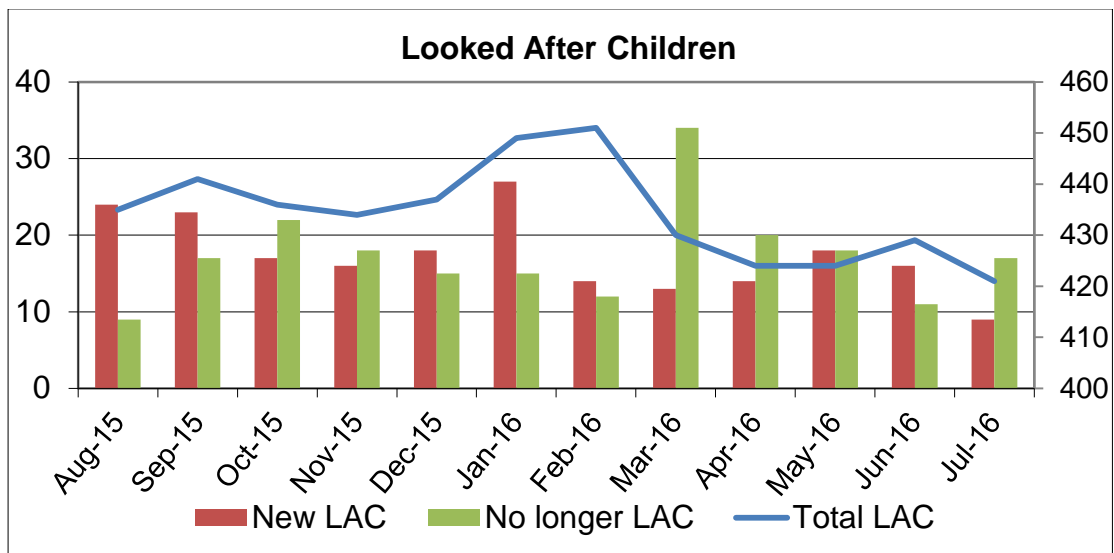
Despite the volume of work, the timeliness of court proceedings remains in line with national indicators as show in the graph below.

- 3.10 The below graph analyses court proceedings data for each quarter and shows the number of completed cases and the number completed within 26 week government target. Data from CAFCASS on the average length of care applications is also shown and identifies that Medway is just above the national average.



#### 4 Quality of Practice - Looked After Children

- 4.1 Numbers of children looked after has reduced over the last 12 months, and was 421 at the end of July 2016. Numbers per 10,000 children is higher than our Statistical Neighbours at a rate of 67.3 children per 10,000 compared to a mean statistical neighbour rate of 54.0 (end of March 2016). However, 73% of the variance in looked after children numbers in the South East can be attributed to the level of deprivation (IDACI score) in each authority. Applying Medway's IDACI score, gives an expected rate of 80.5 children looked after per 10,000.



- 4.2 Matching placements to need continue to challenge the service. However in the last year, Internal Fostering Placements have risen from 182 (July '15) to 197 (July '16), whilst the use of Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements has fallen from 106 to 103. The Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 25 August 2016, commented about costs relating to IFAs. The minutes state that “in terms of external placements, a Member queried whether a national trend for fostering agencies to recruit foster carers from Councils by offering higher payments had been seen in Medway. If so, it was suggested that this might be an issue the Children and Young People’s O&S Committee may want to look at”. In response to this, there is no evidence to suggest that this is the case in Medway to date. Those carers who did go to IFAs and returned to Medway have clearly stated that they did not leave Medway’s fostering service because of financial incentives.
- 4.3 More robust processes for identifying placements and monitoring commitment of resources are now in place through the Access to Resources Panel, supported by an Access to Resources Team. The Team is based within Partnership Commissioning which promotes planning for sufficiency of placements, cost effective provision, and facilitates robust review of use of external placements.
- 4.4 Stability of placements is good with over 72.7% of children who have been in care for more than 2.5 years in the same placement for more than 2 years.
- 4.5 The Virtual School Head reports to each Corporate Parenting Board on educational progress made by children in care across their current key stage. Analysis shows that over the last 2 years performance in key stage 1 has increased by an average of 15 percentage points per subject against a national increase of 2 points. In key stage 2, performance has been mixed, with Medway continuing to be below average. At key stage 4, Medway is well

above average, with 28.6% achieving 5+ GCSE A\*-C inc, English and Mathematics against an national average of 13.8%.

- 4.6 As well as analysing the progress of year groups and key stages, the progress of individual children is tracked, and additional support is provided for individuals to secure accelerated progress when this is necessary utilising Pupil Premium.
- 4.7 Using the latest nationally published data, from the academic year 2014/15 the average attendance of Medway LAC was 96.1% compared with a southeast average of 95.5% and a national average of 96.0%
- 4.8 The percentage of LAC who had their Initial Health Assessment within timescales in May 2016 was 69%, which is an improvement on previous years but remains below our target of 85%. There are continued efforts to ensure that this is a continued and improving performance
- 4.9 Whilst the average number of days between Placement Order and matching children with adoptive carers remains higher than the national target, and is kept under review by the service, there are a of number positives underlying this overall timeliness which indicates that this is in order to achieve the right and successful outcome for children.
- 4.10 Medway: Number of children adopted over the last 4 years

2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
24	48	43	26

The numbers of children being adopted has reduced back to our long term average after two years of high demand. The service remains highly ambitious to continue to address overall timescales for adoption and with this in mind, continues to work closely with consortium partners Bexley and Kent. We are in discussions to enter into a partnership with Kent and Bexley in line with DfE's 'regionalising adoption' agenda which will further enhance our ability to place children more quickly in loving adoptive families.

## 5 Quality of Practice - Leaving Care

- 5.1 The Leaving Care Team was graded 'Good' in the Ofsted inspection which recognised the positive work it was doing in providing Personal Adviser (PA) services to looked after children at 17+. The service has plans to extend this to 16+ from 2017.
- 5.2 Ensuring care leavers have access to opportunities for employment and education remains challenging, but Medway remains above the 15/16 outturn, and in line with national data

Care Leavers in employment education or training on 17 <sup>th</sup> to 21 <sup>st</sup> birthday (Rolling 12 months for YTD figures)	Medway 13/14	Medway 14/15	Medway 15/16	Medway YTD	Medway target 16/17
	44%	48%	50%	51%	60%

- 5.3 The Leaving care Nurse special for care leavers is in post and has a key role in supporting health needs of care leavers.
- 5.4 Care leavers now have direct access to Oakfield's Psychological services and have availed themselves of individual and group work support.
- 5.5 A Facebook page has been launched to keep in touch with care leavers and alert them to what support/services available to them
- 5.6 Funding has been secured from the AA for two young people to have 40 hours of driving lessons.
- 5.7 Work continues with Job Centre Plus (JCP) where there is a dedicated worker/ contact point who supports care leavers accessing work. JCP have this month trialled a work programme dedicated to supporting care leavers preparing for the world of work.
- 5.8 In respect to Care Leavers accessing suitable accommodation, performance is above target.

Care Leavers in suitable accommodation on 17 <sup>th</sup> to 21 <sup>st</sup> birthday (Rolling 12months for year YTD figures)	Medway 13/14	Medway 14/15	Medway 15/16	Medway YTD	Medway target 16/17
	78%	89%	92%	91%	85%

- 5.9 The Leaving Care Team has worked closely with the Joint Commissioning Team, and partners, to review accommodation provision for this group of young people and develop a commissioning strategy. A tendering process has been undertaken to ensure a sufficiency and quality of supported accommodation for this cohort.

## 6. Workforce

- 6.1 Recruitment and retention of permanent staff continues to be a priority. Recruitment activity has focused on the new structure with a targeted campaign to attract permanent staff into the new roles. The benefits of working in small pods, with lower caseloads and focused practice and management support are clear and have been used to attract staff
- 6.2 The geographical location of Medway continues to challenge, sandwiched between Kent and London boroughs all of which are able to offer higher



salaries. Medway is not in a position to compete with the same salary levels but wants to ensure that other benefits such as workforce development, manageable workloads and a clear delivery model are recognised.

- 6.3 Despite considerable emphasis on active recruitment and retention, the use of agency staff is still higher than desired, representing 37% of social work staff and 50% of managers.
- 6.4 However, many agency staff and managers have been in post for more than six months, and initiatives to transfer agency staff into permanent positions in the new structure have been successful.
- 6.5 Stability in our permanent workforce is good and sickness levels are low.
- 6.6 The Social Work Academy is fully operational with Newly Qualified Social Workers progressing through programme. Medway has a strong history of providing student placements and has a programme of support for Newly Qualified Social Workers through our Social Work Academy's Assisted and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE). There has been evidence of staff staying on after completion of their ASYE. Each pod in the new structure will have one NQSW as part of its workforce. A full workforce development programme is being put in place to support the new structure and ensure all staff maintain a focus on practice and positive interventions with children and families.
- 6.7 Social worker caseloads are monitored and have been reducing, although not yet at the target level, as a result of the continued high volume of cases in proceedings being worked through the system.

## **7. Partnership working**

- 7.1 The Early Help Co-ordinators are area based, co-terminus with the new social work teams, and are building relationships with universal services to support use of the Early Help Assessment and the Team around the Family approach. Early Help Assessments (previously CAFs) are co-ordinated by the team, and where a family's needs require a more co-ordinated response, plans are developed through area based panels.
- 7.2 The Medway's Troubled Families programme, Medway Action for Families (MAfF), has been successful in achieving Phase 2 Payment by Results DCLG funding, building on their successes and national recognition at Phase 1.
- 7.3 The MSCB has taken on a challenge and oversight role in relation to the safeguarding element of the Together We Can plan and will receive regular reports on progress.

- 7.4 Partners have been actively engaged with Children's Services in the development and launch of the Together We Can plan, and further events are taking place to promote area based working, and clarify thresholds for Children's Services.
- 7.5 The model of area based working is intended to support networking and development of stronger working relationship with provider services in each area. Specific links will be established with Children's Centres and schools, and the option of linking designated social worker posts with school clusters is being explored.

## **8. Quality Assurance and Performance Monitoring**

- 8.1 Performance information is now routinely used by managers across the service and weekly data reports are available which managers can utilise on an individual and team level.
- 8.2 Monthly Performance and Quality Review meetings take place, chaired by the Deputy Director, which bring together information from a range of sources, including performance information, complaints, IRO service and HR, which support analytical use and ownership of data.
- 8.3 A tracking system to monitor progress of cases in legal processes is in place and Legal Gateway Panel meets weekly. The Access to Resources Panel also meets weekly to ensure children coming into care can access appropriate placements and other support services.
- 8.4 A Permanence Panel has been established which oversees and tracks progress on children's plans for permanence which should be in place by their first LAC review.
- 8.5 The Quality Assurance Framework is being reviewed and updated. Case file learning audits are undertaken monthly by managers in the service, and the QA service also do themed audits linked to specific areas of practice.
- 8.6 Supervision continues to be a priority and is supported by training for managers.
- 8.7 The IRO service continues to exercise its scrutiny and challenge function and has recently reviewed and updated its Dispute Resolution Process. There has been a reduction in cases which are escalated to the Deputy Director.
- 8.8 External scrutiny is planned over the coming year through a 'deep dive' review of permanence planning by the Chair of the External Improvement Board, and a Peer Challenge of Children in Need organised through the South East Region Sector Learning and Improve Programme.

## **9 Governance**

- 9.1 The Councils strong leadership and political commitment to the improvement agenda across children's services was recognised in the Ofsted Inspection report.
- 9.2 The MSCB was inspected as part of the Single Inspection process and was graded Requires Improvement. The Chair of MSCB, John Drew, continues to actively engage partners in the work of the Board, and the recommendations from the inspection report have been incorporated into the Business Plan.
- 9.3 Regular reports on progress are made to Health and Wellbeing Board and Medway Children's Action Network.

## **10 Next steps and priorities going forward**

- 10.1 Progress continues against all the actions outlined in the strategy for action, Medway Together We Can.
- 10.2 The service is now focusing on 'getting to good', in keeping with its overall vision to be a 'good to outstanding service' by 2017.
- 10.3 This means embedding and sustaining progress on improving quality of practice and monitoring impact on children and families.
- 10.4 Further work will be ongoing to introduce and embed an area based service delivery model which promotes positive interventions to support families to continue to care for their children where safe to do so, with an overall aim to improve outcomes for children and families.
- 10.5 The focus will be on ensuring Social Workers assess comprehensively, develop SMART and focused plans which support positive change, and include the views of children and young people with evidence of good direct work. Practice Managers will support their Social Workers through regular, good quality supervision and case discussions to improve outcomes.

## **11 Advice and Analysis**

- 11.1 The purpose of this report is to ask the Overview and Scrutiny Committee members to read, note and discuss the progress update in relation to Children's Services.
- 11.2 This annual update is brought to members of Overview and Scrutiny to support the committee in its role in reviewing and scrutinising performance of the Councils Children's Social Care Services

11.3 There are no policy or structure implications.

## **12 Risk Management**

12.1 Failure to make continued and required progress in relation to the Improvement Plan presents a risk to the Council in relation to future Ofsted inspection grading.

## **13 Financial and legal implications**

13.1 There are no financial or legal implications in relation to this paper other than ongoing support of the improvement journey.

13.2 However, with continued pressure on local government funding streams expected to continue into the medium term, the Council's capacity for new investment will be limited to addressing statutory needs. It is therefore more important than ever to seek value for money and efficient use of resources.

## **14 Recommendations**

14.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the progress made and the continued implementation of the Improvement Plan.

### **Lead officer contact**

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### **Background papers**

None

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 Medway Together We Can Plan Summary (Plan on a Page)
- Appendix 2 Structure chart with new area based arrangements

## Medway – Together We Can

*Make a Difference for Children and Families*

# A Strategy for Action 2016 - 2018

### Our priorities and ambitions

- ✧ Safe, high quality services that are provided for children, young people and families at the right time, so that sustained improvements are achieved
- ✧ An inspirational and confident management team who are visible, accountable and committed to joined up service delivery.
- ✧ A stable workforce of confident and capable professionals, proud of their work and proud of Medway Council, who are trained and supported
- ✧ An organisational culture of learning, development and evidence based practice
- ✧ Partner agencies who are actively engaged and support implementation, using all resources to best effect

Theme	What we want to achieve	Our priorities for 2015-16
1. Service transformation, leadership and governance	<p>Managers who have a clear vision, are ambitious, confident and supportive of practice improvements, able to use performance information and quality assurance systems</p> <p>Partners are actively engaged, and there are clear mechanisms for oversight and challenge</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Strengthen effective locality based service delivery</li> <li>✧ Embed the Quality Assurance Framework</li> <li>✧ Support managers to be competent in all aspects of their work</li> <li>✧ Continue a programme of internal and external challenge to promote ongoing practice improvements and a culture of learning</li> </ul>
2. Quality and Effectiveness of practice	<p>Children are safe, protected, risks are identified and they are provided with appropriate help at the right time.</p> <p>All children and families in receipt of a service understand the plan and achieve sustainable improvements as a result of the service they receive.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ All plans, including Early Help, Child in Need, Child Protection and Care plans, are outcome focused, identify what needs to change and who will do what; plans build on strengths and develop resilience</li> <li>✧ Put in place more robust processes for supporting children and families through Child in Need plans where safe and appropriate to do so</li> <li>✧ Ensure clear processes are in place to achieve permanence for children</li> <li>✧ Improve availability and choice of placements for looked after children</li> </ul>
3. Workforce and Capability	<p>All staff are competent, trained, supported, and the quality of their practice improves the lives of children and families.</p> <p>The working environment supports good social work practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Continue to develop and enhance the Social Work Academy</li> <li>✧ Target recruitment on first line managers</li> <li>✧ Create opportunities for moving into management roles</li> <li>✧ Review management competencies and deliver bespoke training</li> <li>✧ Promote staff retention through supervision and career development</li> </ul>
4. Partnership Working	<p>There is a good understanding of the needs of children and families in Medway and of shared priorities, and the local authority works effectively with partners to address and resource these.</p> <p>Professional relationships are strong and communication is effective.</p> <p>Children and families are able to access a range of interventions which respond appropriately to their needs and prevent the need for more intensive support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Work with partners to ensure resources are focussed to best effect</li> <li>✧ Strengthen local networks and embed approach to Early Help</li> <li>✧ Re-commission services to address identified risk factors</li> <li>✧ Work with the re-commissioned health visiting and school nursing service</li> <li>✧ Further develop multiagency response to CSE</li> <li>✧ Work with MSCB to effectively transfer responsibility for oversight and challenge, in relation to safeguarding and early help</li> </ul>



# Medway Children's Services Social Work Structure Changes

## CADS

### Area 1 - Gillingham and Twydall

Gillingham North

Gillingham South

Twydall



### Area 3 – Strood, Peninsula and Rochester West

Peninsula

Strood North

Strood Rural

Cuxton and Halling

Strood South

Rochester West



### Area 2 – Luton and Rainham

Rainham North

Lordswood and Capstone

Luton and Wayfield

Rainham Central

Rainham South

Watling

Hempstead and Wigmore

Princes Park



### Area 4 – Rochester East, Chatham and Walderslade

River

Rochester South and Horsted

Rochester East

Chatham Central

Walderslade

