

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

8 MARCH 2018

ATTENDANCE OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES – LEAD MEMBER (STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITY)

Report from: Councillor Andrew Mackness – Portfolio Holder Children's Services – Lead Member

Summary

This report details the areas covered by the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services – Lead Member and covers the period from March 2017-2018.

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 – Lead Member (statutory responsibility), according to the Council's constitution are:
- Children's Partnership Commissioning (0-25)
 - Children's Provider Services (including Adoption, Fostering, Supported Accommodation and Residential Care)
 - Children's Social Care and Safeguarding Services
 - Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (including Mental Health)
 - Early Help (including Medway Action for Families, Youth Offending Team (YOT) and Youth Services)
 - Early Years
 - Inclusion
 - Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB)
- 1.2 This Portfolio Holder is the designated Lead Member for Children's Services (LMCS) under the Children Act 2004. The Lead Member 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), Children and Adults Capital Programme Cabinet Advisory Group, Youth Justice Partnership Board, Children in Care Council, Medway Safeguarding Children's Board and SEND Board. Additionally, I am

Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board and the Medway Children's Delivery Board as well as Transformation Board thus ensuring a strategic golden thread for children's services throughout the Council.

2. Children's Partnership Commissioning (0-25)

2.1 Children's Partnership Commissioning (0 – 25) is responsible for strategic and operational commissioning of services on behalf of Medway Council and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in order to ensure:

- the right level of integration to secure better outcomes
- high quality sustainable services
- reduction in health inequalities
- improved educational attainment and skills
- improved well-being of children and young people

We have changed the team's remit to cover up to the age of 25 in order to ensure a smooth transition to adult services.

2.2 Achievements within this period are detailed below:

- (i) A new Young Persons' Wellbeing Service has been jointly commissioned with the CCG at a value of £2,500,000 per annum. The transition to a new service delivery model will be completed by 1 April 2018. I am pleased that this service has been commissioned on a Medway only footprint as this will ensure that we have a complete focus on the needs of Medway children and young people with the ability to collaborate strategically with Kent, NHS England and other south-east Local Authorities on key pathways, for example crisis care and inpatient admissions. The new service has been designed to reduce access and waiting times by increasing throughput, a more flexible and needs led approach to support and improve collaborative working with the wider children's workforce. The service will be delivered through the Children and Family Hubs and Wellbeing Centres as well as schools ensuring easy access for children and families. I want to see fewer children and young people in Medway experiencing crisis with this new model.
- (ii) This year the Council has brought the key strategic and operational commissioning functions for SEN Transport back in-house from Norse. This will enable the Council to have a better grip on spend.
- (iii) The Council has recently completed a consultation on potential policy changes to enable the SEN Transport service to be delivered within the existing resources. In 2017-18, the budget for SEN transport has a significant pressure of approximately £900K. It is essential going forward that with increasing demographic pressures we are far more innovative in the provision of transport as well as ensuring that young people are equipped for adult life. I am delighted that the Council's 2018-19 budget included a significant investment in SEN Transport.

- (iv) A new and innovative framework for Independent Fostering Agencies has been commissioned. As well as enabling the Council to deliver efficiencies, the framework will improve sufficiency and quality of placements for our Looked After Children. We will be working fewer providers in order to focus on service improvement.
- (v) There continues to be improved management and cost control of all placements through the Children's Access to Resources and Joint Agency Panels, which assesses all tripartite funding arrangements. This year has seen approximately £1.6m less spent on external placements than in 2016-17. Through working in partnership with our new CAMHS provider, there has been a reduction in the number of referrals for specialist CAMHS assessment and treatment due to tighter referral protocols. No clinical referrals will be made in future without the case being discussed at Joint Agency Panel first.
- (vi) There has been significant work during 2017/18 to transform Children's Community Health Services. An integrated model between the CCG and Council, including public health, has been a key achievement. The new service goes live via two contracts, which commence on 1 April 2018 and 1 June 2018 at a value of £51,553,333 in total. From the procurement of this service, I would expect to see improved outcomes for children in Medway such as:
- 100% of our care leavers receive a final statutory health assessment and are offered a Health History.
 - 100% of children with end of life care able to receive this and die in their place of choice.
 - 100% of children and young people are able to have their health needs met whilst in an education setting.
 - 100% of LAC have a SMART Health Care Plan.
- (vii) Partnership Commissioning oversaw the opening of the new Child Development Centre, Snapdragons. The centre is now operational, and provides numerous services for children and families. In addition, the special needs nursery has moved out of unsuitable premises and is now operating from Snapdragons. The new integrated Children's Community Health Service will provide an increased range of services from the centre and other community venues.

2.3 The key priorities for Children's Partnership Commissioning in 2018-19 include:

- (i) Ensure the new Medway Young Person's Wellbeing Service is fully embedded and tailored, where possible, to the wider children's service transformation programme.
- (ii) Following Cabinet consideration of the proposed amendments to the SEN Home to School Transport Policy and the outcome of the consultation, implement any agreed policy changes.

- (iii) Commence and complete procurement for Family Group Conferencing, ensuring a renewed focus on early help and intervention.
- (iv) Work with Kent County Council and the national team to agree a sustainable and effective ongoing business model for a Family Drug and Alcohol Court in Kent and Medway.
- (v) Mobilise the new Children's Community Health service contract to ensure that services are effectively and safely established, and to develop a system of integrated contract management between the Council and CCG, and a system of clinical audit by Medway CCG.
- (vi) Following a public consultation we will be reprovisioning short breaks from Aut Even to Parklands. Parklands will provide a significantly improved facility for overnight respite. The Council has put in significant capital investment to ensure an improved and expanded service for children and their families.
- (vii) A key priority for me is to improve sufficiency of supported accommodation in Medway. I have asked officers to develop proposals for the Aut Even site to support young people with low levels of support needs with supported accommodation. Cabinet has agreed for a full business case to be developed.
- (viii) There is currently an inequality in social care and health contributions to placements for children with special educational needs and disabilities. I have asked officers to review the health and care needs of all children in placements in order to address this with health.

3. Children's Provider Services (including Adoption, Fostering, Supported Accommodation and Residential Care)

- 3.1 Medway Council Adoption Team has responsibility for recruiting, training and assessing prospective adoptive parents, matching of children with permanent families, and providing ongoing support to adopters, Special Guardians, and their families. The Fostering Service recruits, assesses, trains and supports Medway Foster Carers as well as assesses Connected Carer applicants and prospective Special Guardianship Carers, Private Foster carers and Supported Lodgings providers. The Council also runs its own Children's Residential Home, the Old Vicarage. The home provides carer for up to eight young people between the ages of 12-18 displaying challenging behaviours.
- 3.2 These services are increasingly working together to ensure that children continue to be cared for in the best provision for them and the placements are well supported to minimise breakdowns and placement moves.

3.3 Key achievements in 2017-18 include:

- (i) Medway approved 15 adoptive households, 13 of whom have had a child placed with them. This includes one fostering household who adopted a child with complex medical and developmental needs. Although the total number of approvals has decreased from the previous year, this reflects the national picture of adopter recruitment, which is currently challenging. In order to address this we are seeking to employ a Marketing and Recruitment Officer who will work across adults as well as fostering and adoption.
- (ii) I am pleased to report that a total of 40 Medway LAC were adopted in 2017, some from traditionally 'hard to place' groups including a sibling group of 4, a sibling group of 3 and 12 over the age of 5 when they were placed. The average time between a child entering care and moving in with their prospective adoptive family has decreased from 610 days to 503 days, which is lower than the national average; and the average time between the Court giving authority to place and moving in with their family has reduced to 200 days, again lower than the national average.
- (iii) The Fostering Team is now fully staffed by permanent staff and this has resulted in carers feeling more settled, and able to accept support and challenge. Available placements for Medway children have increased by 26, and the team has worked hard to ensure that all current carers are more widely skilled and able to provide excellent quality care.
- (iv) Family Support Workers and Youth Workers have provided additional support to placements at risk of breaking down in order to increase placement stability. These workers have also supported adoption placements of challenging teenagers where there has been a risk of breakdown and return to care.
- (v) In December, a celebration event was held in the Corn Exchange to thank foster carers for the essential and challenging work they do. This successful event was well attended by carers, children, Councillors and staff.
- (vi) The Old Vicarage was visited by Ofsted in March 2017 and received an "Outstanding" judgement. The home continues to provide excellent care to a group of teenagers with very complex needs and challenging behaviours. Ofsted recognised that the young people are making good progress within their placements in terms of educational attainment, increased and meaningful contact and developing socially acceptable behaviours. A homework club was started at the home and this has shown improved basic numeracy and literacy skills in the young people since this began. One of the young people has learned to tell the time, one young person has shown improvement in reading skills, and a further young person has constructively used the time to revise for exams.

3.4 Key priorities in 2018-19 include:

- (i) I want officers to explore alternatives to residential care where possible so that we place more of our LAC in Medway with skilled foster carers and in-house rather than in expensive external placements ensuring support is available to all our carers.
- (ii) Recruit suitable adoptive families, particularly those willing to take children born suffering from the effects of alcohol and drugs during pregnancy.
- (iii) Increase the use of fostering for adoption regulations to allow children to be placed with their potential permanent family at the earliest opportunity.
- (iv) Implement plans to form a Regional Adoption Agency with Kent County Council and London Borough of Bexley. We have jointly bid for a £850K investment from the DfE across the three authorities.
- (v) Recruit more foster carers and continue to develop current carers to offer therapeutic care to more Medway children. The Joint Children's and Adults Marketing and Recruitment Officer function will support this. In addition, much work has gone into updating the fostering website to attract more carers and to enable a fast and professional response to anyone expressing an interest in fostering. I was delighted to see one of our foster carers have their hard work recognised at the Make A Difference Awards when they won Employee of the Year.
- (vi) Develop a community foster care model to support children and young people with very challenging behaviours to remain with their Medway carers.

4. **Children's Social Care and Safeguarding Services**

4.1 Children's Safeguarding Services provide the statutory social work services to children between the ages of 0-18 and the Leaving Care provision. This encompasses children in need; children in need of protection and children looked after under the Children Act 1989. There is an annual budget of £21.5M. Children's needs are assessed through the Children's Advice and Duty Service based in Broadside.

4.2 This year the service has moved to an area based model delivered through social work pods i.e. small teams. Four areas have been established with a balanced level of demand. Aligning the social work pods to areas has enabled better joint working with partners responsible for the safeguarding of Medway's children. The changes in service structure are intended to provide consistency of social work throughout the intervention with the family. The changes have increased the numbers of first line managers (Practice Managers) and decreased the ratio of manager to practitioner in order to improve the quality of practice with children. The service has also commenced an ambitious training

plan with the Institute of Family Therapy to support quality interventions with families and retain valuable staff. We have launched a new competitive range of salaries for social workers, which also included retention packages for social workers e.g. sabbaticals and financial rewards.

4.3 The number of children subject to Child Protection Plans has increased gradually from 319 in December 2016 to 345 in December 2017. Our current rate of 54 plans per 10,000 children is in line with our statistical neighbours' average rate of 56 plans per 10,000. Our children in care population has also increased slightly from 396 in December 2016 to 413 December 2017. This is in line with our statistical neighbours and overall throughout the past year variation in numbers has not been a concern.

4.4 Key achievements in 2017-18 include:

(i) I am very proud that three of our care leavers graduated university in the summer of 2017 with Honours degrees, one First Class and two 2:1. Six commenced university in the autumn of 2017 giving a total of 16 care leavers currently at university. This success illustrates the achievements of our young people who, despite the adverse experiences in their lives, have built on their strengths with the support of carers and professionals to succeed in tertiary education.

(ii) The 'front door' to Children's Services was re-structured to develop a Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub within the new structure. The Education Safeguarding Officer from MSCB now works alongside social workers delivering a much improved interface with schools. The new name for the service is First Response, thus placing emphasis on providing the initial response to concerns about the welfare of children in Medway.

(iii) The Service has achieved significant success in the partnership with the Centre for Systemic Social Work (CSSW). This is one of the DfE Partners in Practice initiatives designed to promote sector led improvement in Social Work practice. The partnership was approved by the DfE Board in December 2017 following a thorough assessment of the suitability of the service to benefit from such substantial investment. The CSSW will provide a comprehensive programme of training and development to support whole system change in Children's Services. We need to do more to ensure schools are fully aware of this service improvement and change.

(iv) The Service has welcomed the first Step Up to Social Work cohort of trainees following the successful bid for this specialist route of social work training in 2016. The five social work trainees follow an intensive programme leading to their qualification in 18 months rather than the standard two year programme.

(v) Four Practice Managers have been successful in their application to the Firstline Leadership development programme supported by the DfE.

This venture will enable our most promising managers of frontline social work to develop their leadership of practice abilities thereby improving outcomes for children.

4.5 Key priorities in 2018-19 include:

- (i) The recruitment and retention of skilled social work staff in Medway is critical to improving outcomes for children and families. A new Social Work Career Grade scheme was approved in December 2017 to enable Medway to be an employer of choice in the competitive market for social work professionals. I am committed to increasing our establishment of safeguarding social workers from the current 80 to 90.
- (ii) Ensure we reduce caseloads so that we can deliver a high quality service and improve the recruitment and retention of social workers. We will also be exploring innovative solutions to improve work practices e.g. mobile working, improving work access across Medway, introducing electric cars.
- (iii) Develop the use of Evidenced Based practice approaches such as the Graded Care Profile, Family Strengths and Risk Assessment; Systemic practice and Strengthening Families.
- (iv) Introduce Systemic Therapists to Children's Safeguarding to embed systemic practice with families in order to reduce the numbers of children in care.
- (v) Ensure that Medway is 'Ofsted ready' for the new framework for Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services. We are anticipating an inspection in 2018 and to support our preparations we have commissioned a peer inspection for March.

5. Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (including Mental Health)

5.1 The Integrated 0-25 Disability Team provides a statutory service and support in regard of the Children Act 1989, section 17, and for children who have a permanent or long lasting severe disability diagnosed by a doctor or consultant, and their families. Transition to adult services and support is provided to young people with a diagnosed disability aged from 18-25 who meet assessment eligibility criteria in relation to the 2014 Care Act to receive statutory support as an adult. The team was formed in January 2018 by integrating the 0-25 social work and SEN teams.

5.2 The SEN team is responsible for conducting and overseeing the statutory assessment process, meeting legal requirements and ensuring special educational provision is in place to meet pupils' needs. Educational psychologists also have a statutory role in relation to those pupils with SEN.

5.3 Key achievements in 2017-2018 include:

- (i) It was important for me, as Lead Member for Children's Services, to be assured following the SEND inspection that children and young people "felt safe and well cared for in the settings they attend".
- (ii) The number of Educational, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and Statements maintained by Medway as at January 2018 was 1954, an increase from 1857 in January 2017. At 16 February 2018, Medway was on track to complete the conversions of all statements of special educational needs to the new Education, Health and Care Plans by 31 March 2018.
- (iii) The Council has successfully introduced top-up funding to assist mainstream schools to better meet the special educational needs of children who do not have Education, Health and Care Plans. There are 379 children in mainstream schools in receipt of top up funding to meet their special educational needs.
- (iv) The Council now has robust plans in place to ensure that young people with special educational needs are able to attend mainstream colleges with support funded through top up funding. There are 106 young people with "high needs" (i.e. Education, Health and Care Plans) in receipt of additional funding in local mainstream colleges.
- (v) From April 2017, funding to support children in state-funded and independent nursery provisions was revised so that nurseries themselves are able to apply for funding to support pre school children with special educational needs. All state-funded and independent nurseries in Medway received training in the application and provision map process with the result that there are now 96 pre school children receiving additional funding to support their needs in their local mainstream nursery.

5.4 Key priorities in 2018-19 include:

- (i) A priority remains understanding the numbers and needs of the children and young people who will require an EHCP and using this information to commission the right number and type of SEN placement.
- (ii) To date there has been a focus on completing and converting EHCPs. Next year I want to see a greater drive on improving the quality of plans.
- (iii) Ofsted and CQC completed a local area SEND Inspection in December 2017. This inspection looked at how effectively health, education providers and the local authority had introduced the 2014 SEND reforms. An action plan is being developed to improve services for children and their families including:
 - Ensuring joint health and Council oversight of work
 - Improving the quality of EHCPs

- Ensuring better co-production at a strategic and individual level

Delivery of this action plan will be a key priority for the Council, Clinical Commissioning Group and education providers. I am personally committed to ensuring that there are improvements across the whole system for children, young people and their families.

- (iv) Using the Hospital Funding devolved to the Council to provide education for pupils who are too ill to attend school, we have created a dedicated provision for 8 pupils with diagnosed mental health difficulties. These children would previously have required time as in-patients at specialist facilities, often a long way from Medway. The provision will come under the umbrella of Rivermead School (which is commissioned by the Council to provide education through the Hospital Funding), and will be situated in the former Abbey Court provision in Rainham. The provision will be known as Triple R (Rivermead Route into Reintegration) and will offer short to medium term education and support with a view to gradual reintegration to school as the mental health pupils improves. A priority for me will be to see this facility operating at full capacity and ensuring Medway children are supported close to their homes. As well as ensuring our children receive services close to home, this provision will also reduce the amount of money we spend on expensive out of area placements.

6. Early Help (including Medway Action for Families, Youth Offending Team (YOT) and Youth Services) and Early Years

- 6.1 Medway Council continues to lead and develop multi-agency strategies for families with multiple and complex needs in order to identify problems early and to ensure effective intervention can take place. A new pathway into Early Help provision is ensuring that families that need support get a timely response, to ensure families get the right support at the right time.
- 6.2 A new recording system (Synergy) has been developed to enable the Council to monitor and report against the impact Early Help services and this will be expanded to other partners. A training programme is in place for the next 3 months.
- 6.3 Key achievements in 2017-18 include:
- (i) Early Help Assessment completion rates continue to be positive. The service continues to step many families down from Children In Need plans/ intervention. Between April 2017 and January 2018, 278 cases have been stepped down from Children's Social Care to Early Help.
- (ii) Early Help provision has been successfully integrated into the area-hub model. Two areas have gone live with the remaining areas moving into these new arrangements in April. We are already seeing the impact of a more integrated, multi-agency approach to children and their families. Families are now able to attend the relevant Hub in their area to access services that are available to them. The Centres have been successfully

launched and given a new brand to provide a Medway identity for families.

- (iii) The proportion of children attaining a “good level of development” as assessed by the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile has continued to increase. In 2017, Medway outperformed the national attainment level by 3.5pp (5%).
- (iv) Young people, whose destination (in relation to Employment, Training or Education) is not known has reduced. The rate of young people for whom their activity is not known was 3.7% in 2017, this represents 261 young people. In December 2016 it was 6.1%, representing 429 young people.
- (v) Medway piloted the new HMIP inspection in January 2018, which recognised the significant work that has been undertaken this year. They commented that the case work was amongst the best they had seen and that with the right partnership engagement the YOT could realise its ambition to be outstanding by 2020.

6.4 Key priorities in 2018-19 include:

- (i) Embed the implementation of Synergy and complete the training programme with partners.
- (ii) Revise the 16-19 Strategy.
- (iii) Deliver the remaining Children and Family hub roll out programme.
- (iv) The new Early Years National Funding Formula brings additional money to nursery settings, but a consequent reduction in grants to Local Government means that we must look at how services can better target the most vulnerable children and families. The programme of transformation of early help undertaken in the last year has enabled us to continue to deliver services within a reduced financial envelope.
- (v) Implement the recommendations following the HMIP pilot inspection, in particular:
 - (vi)
 - Ensuring that the police are co-located in the YOT.
 - Improve pathways to health services so young people get the right support in a timely manner.
 - Develop out of court (prevention) work to engage with young people most at risk of entering the criminal justice system.

7. Inclusion

7.1 Medway Council is responsible for arranging suitable full-time education for permanently excluded pupils and for other pupils who, because of illness or other reasons, would not receive suitable education without such provision. This applies to all children of compulsory school age

resident in the Local Authority area, whether or not they are on the roll of a school, and whatever type of school they attend.

7.2 Inclusion levels within Medway still need considerable improvement as rates for fixed term exclusions still sit above national levels. However, Medway is no longer at the bottom of the league table for exclusions where it has been for a number of years. There is no room for complacency, however, and significant improvements are needed. Exclusion levels are unacceptable and we are challenging schools and working closely with the Regional Schools Commissioner to realise improvements across both primary and secondary. I also want to see young people placed in alternative provision being encouraged and supported to return to mainstream education and that they are equipped for life and work after school. We will be revisiting the DfE agreement to set up a Primary Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), as well as the range of alternative provision in Medway, with a view to finding solutions to keep more children in mainstream schools.

7.3 Key achievements in 2017-18 include:

- (i) The Schools' Support Group continued to provide schools with a multi-agency forum to talk through the challenges they are facing, to identify needs, risk and vulnerability and agree the right support/provision they need to manage difficulties. Relationships with schools and academies are very positive with Council officers offering advice, guidance and support, but also challenge. The group has had a total of 125 referrals from schools that they have reviewed this academic year.
- (ii) A year 6 transition programme has been established this year. This is expanding in 2018. We want to address the fact that exchange of pupil information and intelligence necessary for assembling appropriate provision in the Autumn Term is currently insufficient. The programme will be looking to reduce the high levels of anxiety about transition to secondary provision and the subsequent hindered ability to form relationships.
- (iii) We have successfully appealed to the ESFA to refund to us the cost of vacant SEN placements which are no longer required.

7.4 Key priorities for 2018-19 include:

- (i) Implement an independent review of inclusions and Alternative Provision in Medway and the subsequent change programme.
- (ii) Support school leaders in developing a system for effective inclusion based upon research, a clear rationale and evidence based approaches.
- (iii) Launch a new Inclusion strategy with key stakeholders and providers.

8. Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB)

8.1 The independently chaired 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

8.2 Key achievements in 2017-18 include:

- (i) In February 2017, the roll out of the Graded Care Profile (GCP2) began in Medway. This is a practical tool to support our practitioners in measuring the quality of care delivered to an individual child from an individual carer or carers over a short window of time. MSCB officers have held 'train the trainer' sessions throughout the period with approximately 60 professionals trained as trainers and becoming fully licenced.
- (ii) In March 2017, agencies such as Kent Police, Medway Council and health partners, as part of Operation Willow, supported National CSE Awareness Day.
- (iii) The MSCB has set up a Champions model, in which partner agencies including ourselves, as the Council, have nominated representatives to act as CSE champions and be a point of contact for CSE concerns within their agency to provide advice to colleagues.
- (iv) One of the most immediate ways in which the MSCB influences the effectiveness of safeguarding in Medway is through running a range of multi agency safeguarding training sessions for professionals including courses on basic and intermediate child protection, child sexual exploitation, domestic abuse and Prevent. Between April 2016 and March 2017, the MSCB delivered 44 training sessions, attended by over 1100 delegates.
- (v) During 2017-18, the MSCB undertook five Serious Case Reviews (SCRs). The first of these SCRs, called Ellie, was published in January 2018. The Board is also undertaking a SCR in relation to the abuse of children at Medway Secure Training Centre (STC) which was first aired in the BBC panorama programme. The SCR is expected to be completed in May 2018.
- (vi) We need to implement the recommendations of the Wood Review of the role and functions of the Local Safeguarding Children's Boards. I welcome the proposals to improve these partnership arrangements.

8.3 Key priorities in 2018-19 include:

- (i) Implement the revised statutory guidance for Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015).
- (ii) Review and improve links with schools.
- (iii) Ensure effective strategic arrangements are in place to safeguard children.
- (iv) Ensure multi and single agency learning and development opportunities exist and that these are monitored and evaluated for effectiveness.

9. Conclusion

9.1 In summary, I would like to highlight the following key achievements in the last twelve months:

- (i) The transformation of Early Help services, which has enabled us to deliver more joined up services around the whole family.
- (ii) The improved financial grip on Children's Services, particularly in the area of external placements.
- (iii) The improvements in our in-house fostering service, which has resulted in an increase in 26 placements for our Looked After Children.
- (iv) The quality of our Care Leavers' Services, as recognised by Ofsted, which has supported 16 young people, who currently study at university. I am particularly proud of our 3 who graduated this year.
- (v) The strengthened relationships we have developed this year with our key strategic partners, which will support the further transformation of Children's Services and our multi-agency arrangements for child protection.

9.2 The key challenges in 2018-19 are:

- (i) The recruitment and retention of social workers.
- (ii) To achieve the standard required for the new ILACS (Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services) framework.
- (iii) To improve the strategic leadership for SEND across the Local Authority, CCG and education leaders and implement the recommendations of the recent inspection.
- (iv) To reduce, through our work with key partners such as the Regional Schools Commissioner, the number of children and young people excluded from schools and academies.

(v) To continue to deliver high quality services with reduced budgets.

Appendices

None.

Background Papers

None.