

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7 MARCH 2019

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 2018-2019.

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 am Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board and the Medway Children and Young People's Delivery Board as well as Medway Children and Young People's Strategic Transformation Board. Additionally, I sit on the Medway Children's and Young Persons Council, Medway Safeguarding Children's Board, SEND Board, Community

Safety Partnership (CSP), Children and Adults Capital Programme Cabinet Advisory Group and Youth Justice Partnership 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

The team's remit covers young people up to the age of 25 in order to ensure a smooth transition to adult services. This year the team merged with Public Health and now report via the Director of Public Health.

2.2 Our achievements within 2018-19 can be summarised as follows although not exhaustive:

(i) Recommissioning Children's Community Health to facilitate closer integration and drive efficiency. Close joint working between commissioners from public health and partnership commissioning has seen the introduction of two contracts for children's community health services, with a shared service specification. The new contracts commenced on 1st April 2018 and 1st June 2018 respectively. As with any significant transformation, there is more to do to fully embed and stabilise service provision due to the significant cultural and operational change that the new arrangements represent. Some recent developments include:

- All children who are suspected of having an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are seen by a doctor, speech and language therapist and occupational therapist to enable accurate diagnosis in line with NICE guidance.
- All practitioners are equipped with relevant IT equipment to enable mobile working
- There is a single case management system in place that covers both universal and specialist services
- Parent coaching programme established: the summer programme included Attention and Listening, Fussy Eaters, Stammering 0-19, Hypermobility, Sleep, and Fine and Gross Motor Skills
- Children with a neurodisability have joint appointments with a consultant, nurses and therapists so that they do not have to attend multiple appointments

- (ii) For both the new Medway Community Healthcare (MCH) and North East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT) contracts there were inherited problems related to the previous provider that impacted on the backlog; these issues are still working through the system. There has been increased investment to clear the backlog in both contracts and systems put in place to improve communication between the providers and social care to improve outcomes for children.
- (iii) The Young Persons' Wellbeing Service (MYPWS) has been fully operational for almost a year. It is fully staffed and actively working with agencies and services across Medway, including schools, social care and Medway Community Healthcare (MCH). The service operates from family hubs and other community locations, in order to be as accessible as possible to young people and their families. Looked After Children are prioritised for assessment and receive additional consultations while they wait for treatment. NELFT has put in place effective integration policies with Medway Youth Offending Team (YOT), to ensure improved access and pathways of support. They will also be supporting the Youth Justice Board to deliver HM Inspectorate's recommendations in relation to addressing the mental health needs of young people in the secure estate. Waiting times remain a challenge and are too long. This is in part due to the very high volume and complexity of both existing cases and new referrals. It also reflects the national context; referrals are high everywhere, prompting a new national commitment to additional funding for mental health workers in schools and focussed effort to ensure waiting times come down. A small number of trailblazer sites are piloting approaches and there will be an opportunity to apply for future waves later this year. Commissioners will need to focus relentlessly on reducing waiting times between assessment and accessing treatment in order to bring to fruition the speedy access we all want to see.
- (iv) In November 2018, the SEN Transport service moved to sit under the School Services Department (now School Admissions and Transport), alongside the mainstream home to school transport service. This move has allowed greater opportunities to increase the synergies between the SEN and mainstream transport processes. All the processes and procedures for SEN Transport are being reviewed to increase their effectiveness and to identify greater potential efficiencies.
- (v) The staffing structure for SEN Transport has been incorporated into the School Admissions and Transport Department and a full restructure of the overall staffing for the department has taken place. This process has delivered a stronger resilience within the whole of School Admissions and Transport and has produced a saving of approximately £29k against the original SEN Transport staffing budget.
- (vi) The current transport framework for SEN Transport expires at the end of this academic year (July 2019) and a procurement process has been undertaken to simplify the framework and to increase the cost effectiveness of this provision by greater competition between providers, which enable Medway Council to obtain the best value for public funds. The new

framework comes into effect from 1 September 2019 at the start of the new academic year.

- (vii) Continuing to embed the new framework for Independent Fostering Agencies. Work is underway with providers to ensure all placements are high quality and deliver better outcomes for our young people. In addition, the Council has procured a framework to deliver residential children's homes which offer further efficiencies. Both frameworks will improve sufficiency and quality/outcomes of placements for our Looked After Children. A third significant piece of procurement work has begun for Supported and Semi-independent accommodation for young people which will be delivered early in the new financial year.

The key drivers for procuring this contract were to develop greater capacity and choice in the market both within Medway and neighbouring areas; to give the Council more control over spend through a range of more competitive prices on offer; to deliver greater choice and capacity for floating support in accordance with an outcome focused specification.

This now means that the overwhelming majority of contracts under which external placements are procured are now based on outcome focused specifications which deliver improved outcomes for young people. The Council has more robust contractual management arrangements and quality assurance indicators.

- (viii) A significant programme of work is being led by the Deputy Director for Children's Services to overhaul the processes and procedures around placement management and cost control.
- (ix) Placements made through the Children's Access to Resources and Joint Agency Panels, as well as through the SEN education team are being reviewed to ensure all internal processes are efficient and streamlined. Review of placement activity and stepping down appropriate individuals has led to a £477,000 reduction in external placement costs as at Round 3 this financial year.
- (x) There have been and still are a number of challenges to achieving reductions in the cost of placements; the increased complexity of children coming into (and who are already in) care is creating pressure on the specialist provider market leading to a shortage of those very specialist placements that can take the children with the highest level of behavioural needs.
- (xi) Due to the significant risk some of these young people pose to others, providers are having to provide smaller units (typically 2-3 young people) with additional support packages which is causing placement costs to increase.

2.3 The key priorities for **Children's Partnership Commissioning** in 2019-20 include:

- (i) Families at risk, including neglect & child sexual exploitation
 - Ensure the newly awarded Domestic Abuse contract achieves the key outcomes for victims and perpetrators, through delivering a better integrated service
 - Develop dynamic risk register for mental health services
- (ii) Early help including prevention and self-care
 - Develop and deliver a SMART action plan to address findings of the Looked After Children sufficiency statement
 - Roll out and evaluate Positive Behaviour Support programme
 - Deliver prevention campaign around Asthma
- (iii) Improved integration of child health services
 - Improve joint working between health services and schools
 - Develop closer joint working processes to improve the development of Education, Health and Care Plans
 - Developing closer links between community and acute children's health services
- (iv) Promotion of good emotional wellbeing and mental health
 - Develop outcome focussed interventions with key partners
 - Ensure all contracts/specifications drive the promotion of good emotional wellbeing
- (v) Vulnerable children, Children in care and those leaving care
 - Improve quality assurance and relationship management of fostering providers
 - Award and mobilise the contract for supported accommodation services
 - Undertake needs analysis relating to Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) beds
- (vi) Improved transition between services and into adult services
 - Embed pathways of care into the adult community services redesign that is being undertaken by NHS Medway CCG
 - Establish a transition panel between children leaving care and adult services

- (vii) Involvement of parents and service users and renewed focus on coproduction
- Establish a young person's advisory group in relation to emotional well being
 - Continue to work in partnership with the Medway Parents and Carers Forum

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 care for up to eight young people between the ages of 12-18 displaying challenging behaviours.

3.2 We are constantly reviewing provision to ensure we have the best affordable provision.

3.3 Key achievements in 2018-19 include:

- (i) Reducing the average time between the council receiving authority to place and identifying a match for a child consistently for another year. As of the year ending September 2018, the indicator was 183 days, against a national average of 220 days. Medway approved 8 adopted households from April 2018, with a total of 18 children adopted between April 2018 and November 2018. This includes two sibling groups of 2 and two from minority ethnic groups.
- (ii) Adoption Agencies have seen a significant decrease in the numbers of families coming forward to be approved as adopters and increasing numbers of children looking for adoptive placements. As of 19/02/2019, Adoption Link Maker (online matching adoption platform) confirm a national figure of 1100 children waiting adoptive placements versus 650 approved adopters currently. This mismatch highlights the very real challenge in finding placements for children with developmental delay, complex needs and sibling groups nationally.
- (iii) The reasons for these fluctuations in numbers are difficult to identify with certainty. Anecdotally there is a view that nationally the development and implementation phase of Regional Adoption Agencies has impacted adoption recruitment in recent months.
- (iv) For Medway the last few months has shown an upward trend and increase in prospective adopters with 16 households currently in assessment.

- (v) Being awarded £850k investment, to establish a Regional Adoption Agency alongside two other Councils. Work has been scoped in a report that was presented to the three authorities involved (Medway, Bexley and Kent). This will inform discussions further and determine the benefits for each authority of joining the RAA and the potential risks involved. Feedback has been given to the Department for Education on the progress made.
- (vi) There have been differing views within the three Local Authorities on the best way forward for the Regionalised Adoption Agency, with particular regard for cost benefits, challenges and the preferred model. Kent County Council have agreed to host the RAA and decisions will be made within the next few weeks on the best model. This is likely to equate with Kent as a single LA hosting on behalf of Medway and Bexley. An advert for a Project Manager has now been placed with interviews scheduled and anticipated start date of March/April 2019. The aim of the project manager is to design, manage and implement the RAA on behalf of the 3 LA's to meet the DfE deadline of April 2020
- (vii) Transformation of the fostering service has seen a new fostering website introduced, with associated branding and materials, positive consultation with carers focusing on training and development and the implementation of a new payment structure.
- (viii) All foster carers are receiving mandatory training in therapeutic parenting, which encourages them to offer a different style of parenting to Looked After Children who have suffered trauma in their early lives. This training encourages carers to look at behaviour as the child's way of communicating their pain and hurt and respond to it differently. This contributes to more child-centred foster carers and more robust placements. Additionally the Family Support Worker provides one-to-one support to carers where placements are challenging or carers are struggling to understand why children are behaving in certain ways. This has further improved stability in placements and contributed to the wellbeing of children.
- (ix) Increasing support services to carers, with the consolidation of the work of the Family Support worker and fostering mentors.

3.4 Key priorities in 2018-19 include:

- (i) Recruitment of foster carers remains a top priority including recruitment of Community Foster care hub carers and Short Break carers
- (ii) Develop the Short Breaks Service to be meeting the needs of disabled children and young people
- (iii) The newly refurbished Parklands site is awaiting Fire Safety certification and registration with Ofsted, which may affect the anticipated opening of April 2019. There has been significant challenge with this project being completed on time and the Head of Children and Adult's Transformation

will assume the project management transformation lead from 1st March 2019.

- (iv) In preparation for the transition from Aut Even to Parklands, children, young people and staff can avail of tea time or weekend visits as a way to familiarise themselves with the facilities and environment.
- (v) Invites to elected members who form part of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee have been issued with two dates scheduled for March and April, in addition to an extended invite to the Medway Parent and Carer Forum.
- (vi) Health partners undertook a Quality Site visit in February and highlighted areas for improvement to enhance the quality of the provision. This is currently being addressed.
- (vii) In addition a paper is being presented by Health Programme Lead to the Joint Commissioning Management Group in March 2019 to enhance the health service provision at Parklands by widening access to children and young people with life limiting conditions. This will have implications for the existing cohort of children and young people, staffing establishment along with potential design challenges.
- (viii) Increase carer voice and representation across the Fostering Service, including in training, support groups and service development
- (ix) Develop services and support available to birth children and fostering families
- (x) Families who foster encompasses and impacts the whole family unit. Birth children within fostering are identified as a group who would benefit from additional support; as they often experience the complex and challenging behaviours shown by Looked After Children who have suffered trauma. In order to provide them with appropriate support and the opportunity to meet with other children in fostering families, a support group specifically for birth children is being devised.
- (xi) The Family Support Worker and Fostering Mentors have been an innovative addition to the support offered to fostering families locally and the service is considering ways in which it can extend this service further.
- (xii) Continue work to form a Regional Adoption Agency with Kent County Council and London Borough of Bexley
- (xiii) Kent County Council have agreed to host the new Regionalised Adoption Agency (RAA) and decisions on the preferred model will soon be made. Currently detailed work is being undertaken on the financial model which will decide funding for the RAA and workstreams on practice, HR, and IT will follow.

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. This encompasses children in need; children in need of protection and children looked after under the Children Act 1989. Children's needs are assessed through First Response based in Broadside.

4.2 The first 6 months of the financial year have seen several challenges. The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) launched in April 2018 and was followed by the Joint Targeted Area Inspection in June 2018 after which there was increase in the number of contacts and many unallocated assessments led to caseload pressures in planning for children.

4.3 However, in the second half of the year we are now seeing an improving picture in performance with there being no unallocated work. There are reduced caseloads and improved timeliness in decision making and assessment. Audits are also showing more good assessments and less inadequate.

4.4 We are pleased with the progress made with the development of the MASH and arrangements at the front door. Further details about this will follow once the report of the Ofsted focussed visit into the front door is published on 28 February 2019.

4.5 The number of children subject to Child Protection Plans has increased gradually from 345 in December 2017 to 370 in December 2018. Our current rate of 58 plans per 10,000 children is just above our statistical neighbours' average rate of 54.69 plans per 10,000. Our children in care population has also increased slightly from 413 in December 2017 to 425 December 2018. This is an increase to 67 per 10,000 and remains below our statistical neighbours at 72.80 per 10,000. In July 2018, a comprehensive thematic audit on children subject to Child Protection Planning took place. In December 2018, a child protection surgery was held to reduce the number of children on a Child Protection Plan. Due to the success of the surgery there are further ones planned for next week. In Quarter 3 our children in care population has remained stable at approximately 425, however over the summer period a number of new born children were accommodated due to concerns regarding their safety and well-being so has impacted on the increase on the number of children in care.

4.6 Key achievements in 2018-19 include:

(i) Strengthening our 'front door' to Children's Services by increasing partner representation in First Response. An Early Help social worker and 0-25 SEND social worker are now based in the Single Point of Access and MASH has welcomed representatives from Education, Probation, Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) and Early Help. The impact is

being seen in the stronger performance in decision making, timeliness and application of threshold. An Ofsted two day focused visit from 4-6 February to the Children's Services front door has noted marked improvements in particular substantial progress in practice in the MASH and the Single Point of Access. Inspectors made a point of stating that the culture in Medway Children's Services is oiling the wheels of improvement. The full letter documenting the progress will be published on 28 February 2019.

- (ii) Officers have experienced challenges in securing participation of health partners and consistent availability of police in strategy meetings to ensure the availability of timely and full information. Senior leaders have intensified their focus in these areas to ensure that practice improves and risks to children are comprehensively considered.
- (iii) A concerted effort has been made to use the Public Law Outline to ensure that we carry out our assessments prior to making an application to the Courts. This means that we can look at alternatives to making an application to the Courts, or if an application is required then the length of the proceedings can be reduced by the fact the assessments have already taken place and this has been done with the agreement of the family and their legal representative..
- (iv) We are also closely tracking all our pre-proceedings cases and applications before the courts to ensure that the cases are progressing promptly and in line with the needs of the children and young people.
- (v) Investing in our Virtual School capacity, with a deputy Head teacher joining in January 2019 and placement stability remaining good and better than similar authorities, at 70% compared to 62% in our statistical neighbours.
- (vi) Continuing to welcome Step Up to Social Work students with 4 students about to complete and become permanent staff
- (vii) Successfully recruiting all Practice Managers in First Response with permanent appointments. This is an important step forward in supporting our staff and achieving outcomes for children.
- (viii) Four Practice Managers successfully completing the Firstline Leadership development programme supported by DfE. We plan to send a further four in 2019.
- (ix) Successful appointment to 33 posts (22 case holding social workers and 11 Practice Managers across Safeguarding and First Response). This is a significant increase from the previous year when a total of 18 appointments were made.
- (x) The vacancies across Safeguarding and First Response have reduced from 40 fte (35%) as at 31 March 2018 to 28 fte (25%) as at March 2019

4.7 Key priorities in 2019-20 include:

- (i) Keeping our critical focus on the recruitment and retention of skilled social work staff in Medway to ensure improved outcomes for children and families.
- (ii) Continue to use social media and other advertising campaigns to promote Medway's recognised journey of improvement.
- (iii) Continue promoting Medway as an employer of choice through hosting recruitment stands at key social work recruitment events e.g. Community Care Live and Compass.
- (iv) Explore using a retention tool to fully understand our areas of strength and areas which require further focus, in order to minimise turnover across the service.
- (v) We have invested over £300,000 in mobile technology to aid our social workers and managers in developing prompt and better outcomes for children. Social Workers are able to access their technology in family homes, meetings on other sites and have full information in front of them so that the meetings can be more productive. It also enables social work staff to record contemporaneously, saving time from having to take notes and then record at a later time. Workers can also access their work at other sites such as Gun Wharf. Most importantly they are able to utilise the Early Help Hubs more efficiently to carry out their work rather than having to return to Broadside after visits. This is obviously beneficial in cutting down the time and cost of travelling but also has the added advantage of developing good working relationships with the Early Help Staff in the Hubs.
- (vi) The increased use of mobile technology has also been an important part of our recruitment and retention package. The use of the new technology has been welcomed by staff and admired by colleagues from other authorities at job fairs etc.
- (vii) Improve the quality of social care work to ensure that planning is robust and SMART and achieves the best outcomes for children.
- (viii) Embed Strengthening Families as the chosen approach which governs social work practice in Medway. This will be evident in the consistent use of evidenced based tools by staff in assessment and direct work with children. The Workforce Development Strategy and Plan will ensure that staff are supported in developing their skills and are equipped to deliver outstanding practice.
- (ix) Continue the improving picture of performance, including data, quality of work and workforce stability, and our determination and relentless attention in working for children will ultimately strengthen our outcomes with external regulators.

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 team is also 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 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 was 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 has been a key priority for the Council, Clinical Commissioning Group and education providers. There have been regular improvement monitoring meetings with NHS England and DfE.
- The quality of EHCPs issued by the Council has been a key priority. Training for other agencies who contribute to the EHCP has taken place and a new quality audit tool and EHCP template has been co-produced with parents and young people.

5.4 Key achievements in 2018-2019 include:

- (i) The number of Educational, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and Statements maintained by Medway as at January 2019 was 2334, an increase from 2034 in January 2018.
- (ii) Completing the conversions of all statements of special educational needs to the new Education, Health and Care Plans by 31 March 2018.
- (iii) A programme of multi-agency audits has been established using an audit tool to assess what a "good" plan is. This takes place by monthly and a report on the findings and key learning points for improvement is produced and reported to the SEND Improvement Board. Each agency represented on the audit group – health, schools, social care and education is tasked with implementing improvements within their own organisations and

reporting back. Providers are expected to have their own internal quality assurance processes in place to ensure compliance with the requirements. This audit process is starting to show improvements.

- (iv) The format of the Education Health and Care Plan has been revised and a new one is now in use. Other associated documentation such as requests for reports have also been revised. This has been done in partnership with parents/carers and children and young people. Guidance for parents is also being produced to support them in the process.
- (v) A new timeline for the 20 week assessment process has been produced and ensures that a co-production meeting with parents/carers takes place to jointly develop the EHC Plan.
- (vi) Training for staff in Health providers has taken place on the requirements for writing EHCP advice and reports. This will improve the quality of advice received for EHCPs.
- (vii) Training for SEN case officers is ongoing in terms of writing high quality EHCPs as well as in managing co-production meetings.
- (viii) A feedback form is included with every EHCP issued asking parents/carers for the views about the EHC assessment process and also about the Plan itself. This feedback informs service improvements.
- (ix) Successfully introducing 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.
- (x) Ensuring that all children of secondary school age with profound and severe hearing impairment are able to remain in Medway and attend a designated specialist resourced provision based at Thomas Aveling School.
- (xi) Ensuring that Medway pupils with high level mental health needs who are discharged from hospital, are supported through the Medway Hospital Provision provided by Rivermead School in a local bespoke educational provision so as to prevent out of area placement away from family and home.
- (xii) Provision of 10 supported internship places through Bemix for young people with EHCPs. This provision has proved very successful with young people with special educational needs being offered employment after the internship. Places will be increased in September 2019.
- (xiii) Developing 8 Supported Internships for young people who have EHCP's. In August 2018, 6 of these young people were in paid employment. There are currently 12 young people on this programme and we will increase this to 40 places for 2019-20.

- (xiv) Opening a new SEND school provision this year including a resourced provision for secondary pupils who are deaf or have a hearing impairment and a hospital school funded provision at Rivermead Trust to provide education for young people who have been inpatients in mental health hospitals or who are risk of being admitted. This new provision will avoid additional costs of approximately £400,000 as a pressure to the DSG.
- (xv) The Council has recently undertaken a needs analysis which identifies the pressure of places for young people with SEND needs over the next few years. The Council has a number of options under way including bidding for a new SEND Free School and the proposed build of a new SEN school at a cost of approximately £25m.
- (xvi) The Alternative Provision review has also reported and includes 18 recommendations which are being implemented and overseen by a steering group which includes Head Teachers. Work is also being developed around extending existing provision to provide a wider range of activities such as a Forest School.
- (xvii) The Council works closely with The Rowans as the PRU trust within Medway and have supported a successful DfE bid to extend existing provision with a capital bid.

5.5 Key priorities in 2019-20 include:

- (i) Continuing to work on the SEND Local Area improvement action plan and prepare for a revisit from Ofsted and CQC.
- (ii) Develop and publish a SEND Place Commissioning Strategy from analysis of the numbers and needs of children and young people who require an EHCP completed by officers
- (iii) Continuing to work with mainstream schools to ensure that more children who have SEND are included in mainstream education.
- (iv) Publish a SEND Strategy that details the Council and CCG's priorities for children and young people who have SEND.

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

- 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. The Children and Family Hubs, wellbeing centres and outreach points continue to be the footprint in how Medway works in partnership delivering the right support, at the right time, to families needing the support.

6.2 Key achievements in 2018-19 include:

- (i) The YOT continuing to provide a consistently strong service to children with safeguarding concerns and those who are living with domestic abuse. A stable and experienced workforce supports this with good access to appropriate training.
- (ii) Following the JTAI the capacity for children to receive focussed help has been increased with the appointment of new part time Domestic Abuse Worker post within MASH. The intention is to strengthen this resource to full time capacity and further discussions are taking place with community Domestic Abuse provider.
- (iii) The YOT being praised for the introduction of a new and more child-centred planning process is an example of such good practice, by a Joint Inspection of Ofsted, CQC and HMIP
- (iv) The Youth Offending Team has received attention from the Youth Justice Board and the National Convention on Youth Justice Practice regarding our model and its implementation on 'desistance'.
- (v) Continuing work to reduce the rate of young people that are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). The destination unknown rate is currently 4.8% and NEET is 2.7%. The combined figure is 7.5%.
- (vi) Creating the Skills and Employability Strategy as part of the Medway Skills Board.
- (vii) Early Help Assessment completion rates continue to be positive in relation to Schools/ Academies and the Children and Family Hubs
- (viii) Medway Youth Service launched its first ever Children and Young People's awards held at Gillingham Football Club. The night was a wonderful success seeing the celebration of young people form part of a gala night.
- (ix) Medway Youth Council increased their level of engagement through Medway Mark. Make Your Mark gives young people across the country a say on what is to be debated on the green benches of the House of Commons by Members of Youth Parliament.
- (x) Continuing to achieve all targets set for 2018/19 through the government's Troubled Families programme to support families with multiple/complex needs, turn them around and achieve significant and sustained improvements.

6.3 Key priorities in 2019-20 include:

- (i) The Youth Justice Partnership and the YOT preparing to be inspected by HMIP, alongside our partners in Health, Probation and the Police.

- (ii) Launch the Early Help Strategy and continue to link outcomes framework to Troubled Families.
- (iii) Increase partners completing the Early Help Assessment (EHA) to support and identify the needs of families much earlier.
- (iv) Create new pathways improving allocations and timeliness of assessment and intervention.
- (v) Develop closer working with Mid Kent College and other providers to support young people NEET.
- (vi) Increase focused work on young people who are LAC, SEN and YOT.
- (vii) Improve digital platform and create one stop shop at the Pentagon/ Employ Medway.

7. Early Years

7.1 Since the start of 2018 and the transformation of the Children's Centres into Children and Family Hubs and Wellbeing Centres, Early Years services now sit under Early Help and Targeted Services, Education Services, and Integrated 0-25 Disability Services.

7.2 Key achievements in 2018-19 include:

- (i) The proportion of children attaining a "good level of development" as assessed by the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile is in line with national average.
- (ii) The introduction of the Government funded 30 hours of childcare in Sept 2017 for 3-and-4-year olds meeting eligibility also has a strong focus of children being ready for school. The Programme Lead for Early Years Sufficiency secured a DFE bid of £72,000 in 2018 to support the uptake and engagement of parents using the 30 hours funded childcare and to encourage more providers to offer the 30 hours places and childminders. As a result of this, in Medway we currently have 135 Private/Voluntary and Independent settings (PVI) delivering the 30 hours and 107 Childminders.
- (iii) The number of children taking a 30-hour place has almost doubled between Autumn 2017 and the Summer term of 2018 with over 1500 children taking a place in the summer term. The Programme Lead has ensured the team now has an Outreach Officer to give sustained support to both providers and parents in engaging with Government Funded childcare and education.
- (iv) Since January 2018 we have worked very hard to engage parents in using their entitlements for funded early years childcare and education and this has resulted having 855 children in Medway receiving a 2-year funded childcare place in the Summer Term and this has risen to 896 for the autumn term 2018.

7.3 Key priorities in 2019-20 include:

- (i) Continue to work with Health visitors ensuring we support families needing support much earlier.

8. Inclusion

8.1 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 LA area, whether they are on the roll of a school and whatever type of school they attend.

8.2 Key achievements in 2018-19 include:

- (i) An improvement of 27 places in the ranks of LA performance, moving from being ranked 136th to 109th, in respect of permanent exclusions, Medway has shown a 22% improvement against a national increase of 25%. Medway's gap behind national continues to narrow and is currently 40% which is a significant improvement on the previous level of 125%.
- (ii) Within Secondary schools, Medway has shown a 24% improvement against national's 18% increase. Medway's gap behind national is narrowing and is now 60% where previously it was 110%. This has led to an improvement of 27 places in the ranking of all LA's. Medway is now ranked 109th as opposed to 136th. If both the Medway rate and national rate continue this trend, Medway will be in line with national by 2019. Despite the improvement compared with the previous year, Medway's 5-year performance has worsened by 78% compared to national's 67% deterioration.
- (iii) Medway's only maintained Secondary school has shown notable improvement. As the data is redacted for those with 2 or fewer exclusions, we know the rate of permanent exclusions is between 0.12-0.24 previously obtaining a rate of 1.09.
- (iv) Medway has maintained zero exclusions within Special schools for over 5 years.
- (v) Medway's rate of Fixed-term Exclusions (FTE) has seen an improvement of 11% compared to a national decline of 11%. As a result, Medway has almost halved the gap with national, from 72% to 38%, improving 13 places from 144th to 131st in the process. Medway has also out performed National over the last 5 years, with an FTE rate increase of 15% compared to national's 35% increase. Whilst Medway's rate is still increasing, the rate of increase nationally has slowed down, suggesting that we are continuing to make ongoing improvements towards closing the large gap with national.

8.3 Our key priority in 2019-20 is to ensure that we both maintain and improve the current performance. We have established a working group of key

partners to oversee continue improvement. In addition, relationships with school leaders are much better.

- 8.4 Whilst performance across our Education landscape is improving significantly from previous years, there are some schools which continue to cause concern. These schools are being supported including working with the RSC and allocating funded NLE support.

9. Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB)

- 9.1 The independently chaired Medway Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) is set up under the Children Act 2004 and is the multi-agency partnership 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

The MSCB Independent Chair publishes an annual report describing how agencies in Medway have worked together through the year and how effective the area's arrangements are to keep children and young people safe from harm, abuse or neglect. The 2017-18 report was published in September 2018 and summarises the good progress that was made during the year and the plans to develop this further. The Annual Report was presented to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Health and Wellbeing Board and Community Safety Partnership.

- 9.2 Key achievements in 2018-19 include:

- (i) The MSCB published a new Threshold criteria document for children in need in April 2018. This was published alongside the development of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and new referral form. To support the introduction of the new threshold document, the MSCB has been holding multi-agency training sessions on 'Making referrals, understanding and applying thresholds in Medway' which were attended by 218 professionals in 2018.
- (ii) The MSCB has published regular bulletins to ensure professionals are kept up to date with relevant policy, news and training events alongside its fact sheets and Serious Case Review (SCR) briefings to share learning from reviews and to support professionals to reflect on their own practice.
- (iii) 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. These have included half and full day training courses as well as shorter specialist workshops and online training. Between April 2017 and March 2018, the

MSCB delivered 33 sessions, attended by 725 delegates. An additional 529 delegates completed online training.

- (iv) During 2018-19, the MSCB undertook four Serious Case Reviews (SCRs). In March 2018, a SCR in relation to the sad death of Dawn aged 17 was published. In January 2018 the MSCB published the SCR in response to the identification of abuse of children by staff at Medway Secure Training Centre (STC). In January 2019, there are two ongoing SCRs.
- (v) Following the publication of Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018), Medway Council, Kent Police and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) have been meeting to develop proposals for the new safeguarding partnership arrangements for children in Medway to replace the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The new arrangements will be published in May 2019.

9.3 Key priorities for 2019-20 include:

- (i) Ensure that there are effective strategic arrangements in place to safeguard children and there is a seamless transition from the Medway Safeguarding Children Board to the new safeguarding partnership arrangements in 2019.
- (ii) Continue to develop links with educational establishments and to ensure these links are maintained in the new safeguarding partnership arrangements
- (iii) Ensure learning from SCRs, learning lessons reviews and case audits impacts on front line practice to protect children.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Statutory Duties:

The Lead Member and Portfolio Holder for Children's Services has an extensive range of statutory duties, which are delivered alongside the Director of Children's Services. Appendix 1 includes a list of these duties.

Background Papers

Statutory Guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services (DCS) and the Lead Member for Children's Services (LMCS) (April 2013)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/271429/directors_of_child_services_-_stat_guidance.pdf

APPENDIX 1

Roles and Responsibilities of the DCS and LMCS

Taken from Statutory Guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services (DCS) and the Lead Member for Children's Services (LMCS) (April 2013)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/271429/directors_of_child_services_-_stat_guidance.pdf

Local authorities are bound by some 200 statutory duties covering education and children's social care. The way in which the roles and responsibilities of the DCS and LMCS are fulfilled will vary between different places and change over time. This guidance does not attempt to cover all these duties in detail but the key aspects of those roles are outlined below.

Leadership and partnership

The DCS and LMCS work together to provide strong, strategic local leadership and development of an increasingly autonomous and diverse education and children's services sector. Working with headteachers, school governors and academy sponsors and principals, the DCS and LMCS should support the drive for high educational standards for all children and young people, paying particular attention to the most disadvantaged groups. They should also ensure that children's services are integrated across the council, for example to support a smooth transition from children's to adults' services. The DCS and LMCS should involve and listen to parents, carers, children and young people. The DCS and LMCS have a key role in ensuring that the local voluntary and community sector, charities, social enterprises, the private sector and children and young people themselves are included in the scope of local authority planning, commissioning and delivery of children's services where appropriate.

Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 places a duty on local authorities and certain named partners (including health) to co-operate to improve children's well-being. The DCS and LMCS must lead, promote and create opportunities for co-operation with local partners (for example, health, police, schools, housing services, early years, youth justice, probation, higher and further education, and employers) to improve the well-being of children and young people. Local authorities must also (by virtue of the Child Poverty Act 2010) establish local co-operation arrangements to reduce child poverty, prepare and publish a local child poverty needs assessment, and prepare a local child poverty strategy.

As a statutory member of local health and wellbeing boards, the DCS will have a clear role in driving the development of the local Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and joint health and wellbeing strategy. The DCS will promote the interests of children, young people and their families. The DCS

will also help join up local commissioning plans for clinical and public health services with children's social care and education, where appropriate, to address the identified local needs through the JSNA and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The DCS will make a key contribution to ensuring effective working relationships between the health and wellbeing board and the LSCB. The DCS is responsible for any agreements made under section 75 of the National Health Service (NHS) Act 2006 between the local authority and NHS relating to children and young people – for example, pooled budgets for commissioning and/or delivering integrated services covering children's health, social care and education.

Local authorities must comply with the duties set out in the Equality Act 2010, which means that, as well as ensuring that they do not discriminate unlawfully, DCSs LMCSs must take into account the likely impact of their policies and decisions on specified groups. In doing so, particular consideration should be given to Article 2 of the UNCRC. Local authorities should also maintain an audit trail to demonstrate how equalities matters were considered as part of the decision-making process.

Safeguarding

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 requires local authorities and other named statutory partners to make arrangements to ensure that their functions are discharged with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. There is a similar requirement imposed on schools. This should ensure that safeguarding is integral to all that local authorities, schools and other named partners do. The DCS and LMCS should ensure that there are clear and effective arrangements to protect children and young people from harm (including those attending independent schools). Local authorities are also required to set up a LSCB to coordinate the effectiveness of arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in that area.

The DCS has the responsibility within the local authority for improving outcomes for children and young people, children's social care functions and local cooperation arrangements for children's services. The DCS should always be a member of the LSCB. However, it is the responsibility of the Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) to appoint or remove the LSCB chair, with an appointment panel involving Board members and lay members. The Chief Executive, drawing on other Board partners and, where appropriate, the Lead Member will hold the Chair to account for the effective working of the LSCB and will be held to account for the effective working of the LSCB.

The LMCS should be a "participating observer" of the LSCB; they may engage in discussions but not be part of the decision-making process in order to

provide the LMCS with the independence to challenge the DCS (and others) when necessary. The DCS also has a crucial role in ensuring collaboration and dialogue with the family courts so that high quality local authority assessments and other evidence contribute to effective and timely court processes for children.

Vetting and barring scheme

DCSs and LMCSs will not be in regulated activity in relation to children just by virtue of undertaking those posts. The Government will publish detailed information about workplace safeguarding in good time for commencement of the new Vetting and Barring Scheme arrangements.

Vulnerable children and young people

Local authorities should work with partners to promote prevention and early intervention and offer early help so that emerging problems are dealt with before they become more serious. This will help to improve educational attainment, narrow the gaps for the most disadvantaged and promote the wider well-being of children and young people, including at key transition points.

More specifically, the DCS and LMCS in their respective roles:

- have a shared responsibility with all officers and members of the local authority to act as effective and caring corporate parents for looked after children, with key roles in improving their educational attainment, providing stable and high-quality placements and proper planning for when they leave care;
- must ensure that disabled children and those with special educational needs (SEN) can access high quality provision that meets their needs and fund provision for children with statements of SEN;
- must ensure arrangements are in place for alternative provision for children outside mainstream education or missing education (e.g. due to permanent exclusion or illness) to receive suitable full-time education;
- should ensure there is coherent planning between all agencies providing services for children involved in the youth justice system (including those leaving custody), secure the provision of education for young people in custody and ensure that safeguarding responsibilities are effectively carried out; and
- should understand local need and secure provision of services taking account of the benefits of prevention and early intervention and the importance of co- operating with other agencies to offer early help to children, young people and families.

Fair access to services

Local authorities should promote the interests of children, young people, parents and families and work with local communities to stimulate and support a diversity of school, early years and 16-19 provision that meets local needs. More specifically, the DCS and LMCS in their respective roles:

- must ensure fair access to all schools for every child in accordance with the statutory School Admissions and School Admissions Appeal Codes and ensure appropriate information is provided to parents;
- must ensure provision for suitable home to school transport arrangements;
- should actively promote a diverse supply of strong schools, including by encouraging good schools to expand and, where there is a need for a new school, seeking proposals for an Academy or Free School;
- should promote high quality early years provision, including helping to develop the market, securing free early education for all three- and four-year olds and for all disadvantaged two year olds, providing information, advice and assistance to parents and prospective parents, and ensuring there are sufficient Sure Start children's centre services to meet local need and sufficient childcare for working parents;
- must secure access for young people to sufficient educational and recreational leisure-time activities and facilities for the improvement of their well-being and personal and social development;
- should promote children's and young people's participation in public decision- making so they can influence local commissioners; and
- should promote participation in education or training of young people, including by securing provision for young people aged 16-19 (or 25 for those with learning difficulties/disabilities).

Educational excellence

Working with headteachers, school governors and academy sponsors and principals, local authorities should promote educational excellence for all children and young people and be ambitious in tackling underperformance. More specifically, the DCS and LMCS should in their respective roles:

- take rapid and decisive action in relation to poorly performing schools, including using their intervention powers with regard to maintained schools and considering alternative structural and operational solutions;

- develop robust school improvement strategies, including choosing whether to offer such services in a competitive and open school improvement market, working beyond local authority boundaries;
- promote high standards in education by supporting effective school to school collaboration and providing local leadership for tackling issues needing attention which cut across more than one school, such as poor performance in a particular subject area across a cluster of schools;
- support maintained schools in delivering an appropriate National Curriculum and early years providers in meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (as outlined in the EYFS Statutory Framework);
- establish a schools forum for their area, maintain a scheme for financing maintained schools and provide financial information; and
- undertake specified responsibilities in relation to staffing and governance of maintained schools.