

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5 MARCH 2020

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

Report from: Councillor Mrs Josie Iles – Portfolio Holder for Children's Services – Lead Member

Summary

This annual report provides an account of the role of the Lead Member for Children's Services as identified in the Department for Education Statutory Guidance on the Roles and Responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services (DCS) and the Lead Member for Children's Services (LMCS) (DfE 2012). This report details the areas covered by the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services – Lead Member and covers the period from May 2019 – March 2020.

1. Policy Context

- 1.1 The Statutory Guidance was originally published in 2005, reviewed in 2009 and again in 2012. This report reflects the most recent guidance of 2013.
- 1.2 The Statutory Guidance was published under sections 18(7) (Director Children's Services) and 19(2) (Lead Member for Children's Services) of the Children Act 2004. This means that local authorities must have regard to it and, if they decide to depart from it, they will need to have clear reasons for doing so.
- 1.3 The Children Act 2004 requires every upper tier local authority to designate a Lead Member for Children's Services. The Lead Member is responsible for leadership, strategy and the effectiveness of education and children's social care. 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 including Safeguarding Board
- Early Help (including Medway Action for Families, Youth Offending Team (YOT) and Youth Services)
- Inclusion
- SEND
- SEND Transport

2. Background

- 2.1 On 27 August 2019, Ofsted published the findings of their inspection of our Children's Services, carried out in July 2019. Although the inspectors recognized a number of improvements since the last Ofsted Inspection in 2015, we received an overall ranking of inadequate.
- 2.2 The Department for Education appointed a Commissioner to identify improvements and oversee our improvement process, as well as review evidence that we have the capacity and capability to make those improvements. The Commissioner submitted her report to DfE in December 2019.
- 2.3 We fully accepted the Commissioner's report and are grateful for the support and guidance we have received from her during our improvement journey, and that the Minister has agreed with her recommendation. Our main focus is ensuring sustainable improvements are made quickly so Medway's children in need of our help and protection receive the service they deserve.
- 2.4 We have submitted our improvement action plan to Ofsted to set out the steps we are taking to transform our social care for children, young people and their families. We recognise the importance of having a clear delivery strategy setting out priorities and direction through which we can achieve positive changes in the lives of Medway's vulnerable children and young people.
- 2.5 We are committed to making immediate changes and have already taken a number of urgent steps to improve the service we deliver, including recruiting additional social workers to help reduce caseloads and provide more efficient support to young people. To improve the leadership of our Children's Services, we have successfully recruited a new permanent Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Heads of Service. We have established an Improvement Board, which has an independent chair, and is helping to ensure there is a clear plan to support change and that we remain clearly focused on the recommendations set out by the Commissioner and Ofsted. Colleagues from our leading partner agencies, including education, health and police, are central to the effectiveness of the board and this is helping us all to work better together for Medway's children. Internally, we have created a Staff Reference Group to give colleagues working in

Children's Services the opportunity to have their input to our improvement journey, and this group, which is also represented on the Improvement Board, is working well.

- 2.6 We welcome the recommendation to work with a leadership improvement partner and already have a strong partnership in place with another local authority, who is our Partner in Practice supporting us to adopt best practice and strengthen the quality of our services.
- 2.7 Our priority remains to ensure all of Medway's children thrive, remain healthy and learn well and although there is still much to be done, we will make sure our Children's Services are transformed appropriately to ensure children and young people are safe and looked after. What's important now is that we work at pace to implement these steps and make the necessary improvements, whilst minimising the disruption caused to children and families.
- 2.8 Key developments since the Ofsted inspection in July 2019 include:
 - 2.8.1 Bringing the management of the Early Help service and our front door MASH and assessment service under the management of one Head of Service, which supports improved joint working and step up/step down processes for families. Our Partner in Practice, Essex County Council, working with us to review our early help delivery model and the changes that have already been made in the service to reduce waiting times and streamline our assessment and intervention, has been welcomed by our staff.
 - 2.8.2 Increasing the establishment of social workers in the assessment service as a priority immediately following the inspection. This reduced average caseloads from 32.5 at the time of the inspection to an average of 18 at the end of January 2020 and has enabled social workers to make more timely visits to families where there is identified risk.
 - 2.8.3 Increased focus on tracking cases subject to Public Law Outline and court proceedings to avoid drift and delay.
 - 2.8.4 Improved arrangements for securing permanence plans for children in care.
 - 2.8.5 The introduction of a social work practice model, 'Signs of Safety, which will be supported by a comprehensive programme of training which started in February 2020.
 - 2.8.6 Our Leaving Care service has relocated to the Elaine Centre, which has better facilities for young people to meet their Personal Advisers and engage in preparation for independence work. The realignment of the service creates a team of social workers

specifically to work with 16-18-year olds which will further support improved transition for young people into adulthood.

2.8.7 Our Quality Assurance framework has been revised and our approach to auditing of cases reviewed and amended. There is now a programme of bi-monthly 'Learning and Reflection' audits undertaken by the auditor sitting alongside the social worker, and themed audits on areas of practice requiring more in-depth scrutiny.

2.8.8 The realigned structure for the service means recruiting to additional permanent posts and there continues to be a focus on permanent recruitment in order to reduce the proportion of agency staff within the service. The offer, which is now available to our social workers should improve recruitment – we are able to say with confidence that caseloads will be lower, the specialist teams will be an incentive, and we will have a strong learning and development offer to support career progression.

2.8.9 We have continued to recruit to permanent roles and have successfully appointed to three Head of Service posts and have made offers to ten overseas social workers.

2.8.10 A Staff Reference Group has been established which is supporting improved communication between front line staff, leaders and the Improvement Board.

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

Early Help

3.1 Early Help in Medway offer support to families via individual or targeted group work. Early Help in Medway receive referrals from social care, partners and self-referrals, and support to develop sustainable change for families who are in need. Early Help have a positive relationship with key partners including schools, health, social care and departments within the police. In addition, Early Help have strong relationships with wider partner agencies including Youth Service, DWP, voluntary services, local churches, food banks and support services. Early Help work in partnership with families and professionals, to undertake assessments and develop manageable plans with families to support and guide change. Early Help work across Levels 2 and 3, therefore utilise partners in the community to be the lead professionals where appropriate, ensuring Early Help Coordinators and Partnership officers are available for guidance and advice.

3.2 Early Help in Medway is supported through 4 Children and Families hubs across Medway, as well as 10 smaller satellite provisions spread across Medway ensuring broader accessibility. The provisions offer a range of targeted groups and also support partners e.g. NELFT, public

health, health and SEN in offering group work and support to children and families in the community. The Hubs are a great location to support positive working relationships with partners, support training sessions, area meetings and also support services, which may be in need of a safe space for children and their families.

- 3.3 Early Help continue to improve service delivery and have recently worked with Essex as our Partner in Practice. Essex have completed a diagnostic assessment which will contribute to the improvement plan and positive direction of support for families. Early Help have a permanent management structure including Head of Service, Area Manager, 4 x Hub Managers and a Practice Manager; there is a continued focus on recruitment and retention to support with consistency in the service and for the families. There is ongoing support for staff through training and development and positive integration across Medway Children's Services.

Troubled Families

- 3.4 The Troubled Families Programme (2015 – 2020) is working to achieve significant and sustained progress nationally supporting up to 400,000 families with multiple, high-cost problems by 2020. This is backed by £920m of government investment. This programme is run from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and managed by upper tier local authorities in England and their partners. The programme is delivered by local early help teams and is branded differently across the country.
- 3.5 The programme is geared toward reducing the demand and dependency of these complex families on costly reactive public services and delivering better value for the taxpayer. A keyworker or lead worker considers the problems of a family as a whole. They organise services to grip the family's problems and work with the family in a persistent and assertive way towards an agreed improvement plan.
- 3.6 The troubled families programme has seen significant improvement this year. The programme has currently achieved 82% of the overall target to turn the lives around of 2060 families against 6 key areas, as well as seeing an increase in relation to payment by results:
- School attendance and exclusions
 - Crime and antisocial behaviour
 - Children in need of help
 - Domestic abuse
 - Health outcomes
 - Unemployment
- 3.7 Medway will move into phase 3 of the programme next year (2020/21) and will be gaining a greater understanding around the expectation on the framework later this year. Priorities for the coming year will be:
- To create and update the outcomes framework and enhance the maturity model

- To achieve 100% significant and sustained progress with up to 2060 families
- Improve the outcomes and life chances of families, whilst reducing the need for statutory service involvement
- To transform the way that public services work with families with multiple problems to take an integrated 'whole family approach'
- To help reduce demand for reactive services

Youth Offending Team

- 3.8 The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires Local Authorities to have a Youth Justice Plan which is annually updated to set out how youth justice will be delivered locally within available resources. Our plan will be refreshed each year, reflecting any changes to the national and local youth justice landscape which impact on the strategic priorities and the way in which the whole youth justice partnership deliver a range of services designed to reduce youth offending within Medway.
- 3.9 The strategic priorities, which will underpin our action planning cycle over the 3-year period, are congruent with the principal aims of the youth justice system. They are:
- Prevent Youth Crime
 - Reduce Re-offending
 - Safeguard young people from harm
 - Protect the public from harm
- 3.10 Throughout the period the YOT have continued to be praised for the introduction of the child-centred planning process. 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'. They are now working with a university regarding national implementation.
- 3.11 They have had a successful bid to the home office and awarded (with North Kent) £1.5 million pounds to address serious youth violence in North Kent and Medway during 2020 and 2022.
- 3.12 This period has also seen the roll out of Restorative Justice training for senior leaders and we will be looking to roll out this programme across foster carers and schools. As well as improvements in relation to those on intensive surveillance programmes ensuring they all have access to 25 hours of support.
- 3.13 Key priorities in 2020-2021 include:
- Update the strategy and plan with a renewed focus for 2020 – 2023.
 - The Youth Justice Partnership and the YOT are to undergo a HMIP inspection on 24 – 28 February 2020. The outcome of this inspection will be published in a report on 1 June 2020.

- Improve data analysis and performance in relation to key themes identified in the strategic plan.
- Reoffending will be our key focus specifically in relation to serious youth violence and violence reduction. Our work with Medway Task Force, Violence Reduction and Serious Youth Violence teams will be key.

Youth Services

- 3.14 Medway Youth Service works with young people 8–19 years old (25 for young people with additional needs) offering somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to in their leisure time. It delivers a range of social, sports, creative and fun activities, supporting young people to learn new skills and socialise in a safe, positive way.
- 3.15 The service is committed to young people's participation and achieved Flag Ship status last year using the NYA's 'Hear by Right' accreditation. Activities are planned with young people and they are supported to develop projects tackling issues that concern them. The service aims to reduce barriers that might prevent young people in engaging and is also committed to being inclusive.
- 3.16 The service provides:
- Inspiring activities each session, including sports, arts and personal development.
 - Events where young people meet, compete and collaborate with each other
 - Trips and residential activities to boost confidence and broaden horizons
 - Targeted programmes for young people at risk or with additional needs (for example young people in care, young people with special educational needs and disabilities, those at risk of exploitation, young people who go missing.)
 - Information, advice and guidance to NEET young people.

4. Children's Social Care and Safeguarding Services including Safeguarding Board

- 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 Children's Services were inspected by Ofsted under the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services Framework (ILACS) in July 2019 and were judged 'Inadequate'. An inadequate judgement means the authority will remain under intervention from Ofsted and inspectors will undertake Monitoring Visits every three months to review progress against an

improvement plan. The first monitoring visit will take place on 18th and 19th March 2020.

- 4.3 The concerns were that the ability and capacity of the service to respond to risk was not good enough. Although staff were dedicated and committed, caseloads were too high to create conditions for good social work practice. Senior leaders had not recognised the serious and widespread concerns and had not prioritised improvements.
- 4.4 In response to the report, the Council has established an Improvement Board which is externally chaired. An Improvement Plan has been submitted to Ofsted. Progress against this will be overseen and challenged by the Improvement Board and scrutinised in the Ofsted Monitoring Visits.
- 4.5 An Interim Assistant Director, experienced in improvement work, was appointed in October and has introduced more robust scrutiny of performance and quality of practice, which is shared with the Lead Member at regular intervals.
- 4.6 As this is the second inadequate judgement within a period of five years, the Department for Education also appointed a Commissioner, Eleanor Brazil, to report on whether the Council has the capacity and capability to make and sustain improvements to its children's services. The Commissioner submitted her report to Department of Education in December 2019 and her recommendations were that she continues to work with Medway for a further period of a year have been accepted.
- 4.7 The commissioner will submit a further report Medway's capacity and capability to sustain improvements to Department of Education in June.
- 4.8 Most recently a realignment of the service has been proposed and the required financial support accepted by the Council. This has established specialist teams for children in need of support and protection, children in care and vulnerable adolescents. This structure will reduce caseloads to more manageable levels and will enable practitioners to focus on interventions which achieve positive change.
- 4.9 The demand on the service has continued to rise with an increase in the number of children subject to Child Protection Plans from 370 in December 2018 to 438 at end of January 2020. Our current rate of 69 plans per 10,000 children is above our statistical neighbours' average rate of 51 and the national rate of 44 plans per 10,000. Our children in care population has remained stable and is 434 in January 2020, compared to 425 December 2018. This is 68 per 10,000 which is lower than our statistical neighbours at 73 per 10,000 and compatible with national figures of 64.

4.10 Key priorities in 2020-21 include:

- 4.10.1 Fully supporting the implementation of the Improvement plan
 - 4.10.2 Keeping our critical focus on the recruitment and retention of skilled social work staff in Medway to ensure improved outcomes for children and families and support the full implementation of our realigned service.
 - 4.10.3 Introduce our practice model Signs of Safety, and support staff to provide positive intervention to families which achieve change, embed implementation through training, systems and processes, and strong supervision.
 - 4.10.4 Improve the quality of our assessment intervention to avoid repeat referrals, and enable assessment workers to undertake brief interventions to support families to make required changes or step down to early help support.
 - 4.10.5 Implement our upgraded recording system, Mosaic, which will promote better information exchanges between early help and statutory social work services.
 - 4.10.6 Stronger political and corporate leadership which has a clear scrutiny and oversight focus as well as supporting practice improvement through creating the right conditions for social work to flourish.
 - 4.10.7 Better engagement with staff, partners and children and their families.
 - 4.10.8 Continue to focus on quality assurance, including positive use of data, audit and attention to quality of practice as well as compliance with performance indicators.
- 4.11 This year saw the final year of operation of the Medway Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB), bringing a close to more than a decade of work. This has now been replaced by the new, more streamlined Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership. I would like to thank John Drew, our former Independent Chair for his work with us as part of the board's governance and the MSCB officials hosted by the Council for their work in this area. These officers will continue as part of the new arrangements.
- 4.12 Further information about the work of the MSCB in this period is available in the Annual Report presented recently to the Health and Wellbeing Board, Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Community Safety Partnership. I am pleased that the new safeguarding partnership arrangements are in motion and that there

is a continued focus on working as a whole system to safeguard the needs of vulnerable children.

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

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 Agreement has been reached to establish a Regional Adoption Agency in partnership with Bexley and Kent and this arrangement will go live in October 2020.
- 5.3 Key achievements in 2018-19 include:
 - 5.3.1 Maintaining 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 December 2019, the indicator was 184 days, against a national average of 220 days.
 - 5.3.2 Medway approved 16 adopter households between January and December 2019, and a total of 17 children were adopted in this period. There continues to be a challenge nationally and in Medway in finding placements for children with developmental delay, complex needs and sibling groups.
 - 5.3.3 There are currently 9 prospective adopters in assessment.
- 5.4 **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. We are constantly reviewing provision to ensure we have the best affordable choice of placements for our children in care. The fostering service has continued to focus on ensuring Standards of Care are met and supporting carers to take part in training and development.
- 5.5 Performance data shows that stability of placements for our children in care is good but we know we need to improve placement choice, particularly for children with complex needs.
- 5.6 The fostering service will be working with Essex as our Partner in Practice to review and revise our strategy for the service moving forward as part of our improvement work.
- 5.7 Nine fostering households were approved between January and December 2019, with a further 5 in assessment.

5.8 Key priorities in 2019-20 include:

- 5.8.1 Recruitment of foster carers including recruitment of Community Foster care hub carers and Short Break carers
- 5.8.2 Develop the training offer to include therapeutic support for carers to meet the more complex needs of children
- 5.8.3 Improved engagement with all foster carers to ensure their voice is heard, and they are committed to work with the service to meet Standards of Care

5.9 Medway's **residential** short break provision for disabled children is currently based at Aut Even but is scheduled to relocate to the Parklands site.

5.10 The Council has agreed a recommendation to close the Old Vicarage, a residential provision which cared for up to eight young people between the ages of 12-18 displaying challenging behaviours.

6. Special Educational Needs and Disability 0-25

6.1 The Integrated 0-25 Disability Team provides a statutory service and support in regard of the Children Act 1989, section 17 for children with a permanent or long-lasting severe disability, 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.

6.2 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.

6.3 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. A Written Statement of Action outlining the areas of weakness was developed jointly between Medway Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Medway Council and formed the basis of a plan to address these weaknesses and the actions to be taken to improve the 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.

6.4 Key achievements in 2019-2020 include:

- 6.4.1 The number of Educational, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and Statements maintained by Medway as at January 2020 was 2356.
- 6.4.2 A programme of multi-agency EHCP audits has been established using an audit tool to assess what a “good” plan is. This takes place bi-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 that the quality of the EHCPs being issued is improving.
- 6.4.3 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.
- 6.4.4 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. We are now issuing 88% of EHCPs within the statutory 20 weeks. The national average is 65%.
- 6.4.5 Close working with the CCG Designated Clinical Officer has continued resulting in better partnership working with health services.
- 6.4.6 Continued 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.
- 6.4.7 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. Currently 80% of parents say the EHCP process is helpful and that they were involved in the production of their child’s EHCP

- 6.5 Increasing the number of Supported Internship Providers in Medway to 3, offering over 40 Supported Internship places through to 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 again in September 2020. This is being facilitated by a Supported Internship Network.
- 6.6 We have introduced a regular SEND Newsletter to inform schools, parents and partners about developments within SEND.
- 6.7 We have redesigned and re-launched the Local Offer and continue to work on this to ensure it is updated and becomes a useful source of information and advice for parents and young people.
- 6.8 Our co-production practice with parents and young people in Medway has developed further. Medway parents now have a voice on most strategic boards and the Young Person Disability Group is actively influencing commissioning and service development decisions.
- 6.9 Under the scrutiny of the SEND Improvement Board, we have made some significant and lasting improvements to SEND in Medway; improving the quality of the EHCP, closer co-production with parents and young people better informed Strategic Leaders ensuring high level of scrutiny, the development of data dashboard to monitor improvements and the development of a Joint Local Area SEND Strategy
- 6.10 Key priorities in 2020-21 include:
 - 6.10.1 Implementing the Joint SEND Strategy.
 - 6.10.2 Implement the DSG Deficit recovery plan aiming to reduce the overspend on the high need budget whilst ensuring **we** are meeting the needs of children and young people who have special educational needs and disabilities.
 - 6.10.3 Establish clear SEND Preparing for Adulthood Strategy which ensures that all partners work together with young people to assist them to plan for and achieve an individual and inclusive adult life.
 - 6.10.4 Develop and publish a SEND Place Commissioning Strategy which addresses the growing needs for SEN Places in Medway.
 - 6.10.5 Continuing to work with mainstream schools to ensure that more children who have SEND are included in mainstream education.
 - 6.10.6 Continue to work at pace to further implement and develop the SEND Reforms taking note and guidance from the SEND Revisit Inspection in December 2019.
 - 6.10.7 Full Council has recently approved a capital allocation of £2.5m to fund an increase in resource provision within school

settings. This is to facilitate our improving journey of inclusion within schools. Individual projects are currently being developed.

7 SEND Transport

- 7.1 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 have been reviewed to increase their effectiveness and to identify greater potential efficiencies.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 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 has enabled Medway Council to obtain the best value for public funds. The new framework came into effect from 1 September 2019 at the start of the new academic year and has delivered efficiencies in journey times and also financial savings

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 2017-18 include:
 - 8.2.1 6% fewer permanent exclusions compared to 2016-17. This has led 7% improvement in the rate of permanent exclusions against a static national performance. The continued improvement in the rate of permanent exclusions means the gap between Medway's and the national rate has reduced by a quarter in the last 12 months.
 - 8.2.2 The rate of permanent exclusions in secondary schools has improved by 9%. This is in contrast to the national rate staying the same. Again this continued improvement has narrowed the gap between Medway's rate and the national rate by a quarter.

- 8.2.3 There has been a 12% decrease in the overall rate of fixed term exclusions issued by Medway state funded schools. This compares to the national increase of 7%. Whilst this is an improvement, the focus remains on this priority as historically this has been an area for development.
- 8.2.4 The gap between Medway's rate of Fixed Term Exclusions and the national rate has narrowed in the last 12 months and is now over 2.5 times smaller.
- 8.3 Whilst performance across our education landscape is improving significantly from previous years, there are some schools which continue to cause concern regarding inclusion and their capacity to respond to the challenges that some pupils pose. In primary, 20 of those schools embarked upon a major professional development programme from the summer term 2018. There has been a significant reduction in the number of exclusions and the impact of the primary inclusion programme is published separately. A similar initiative would be appropriate for the secondary schools who are on an inclusion improvement journey and the need for this was discussed during the recent SEND inspection with HMI.

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

- 9.1 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. In 2018 the team merged with Public Health and now report via the Director of Public Health.

- 9.2 Our achievements within 2019-20 can be summarised as follows although not exhaustive:
- 9.2.1 Positive feedback for services and partnership commissioning following the SEND revisit by Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC). CQC inspector found commissioners to be ambitious for children and families and, referring to the new 0-19 integrated children's health contract, stated that they had commissioned innovative services to better meet need.

- 9.2.2 We have seen a significant reduction in waiting times for services delivered by both MCH and NELFT. Whilst waiting times to access Neurodevelopmental services for children aged 11 and over are still too long, they have halved since the service was re-commissioned and work continues to bring these back into line with national levels.
- 9.2.3 As a result of the new NICE compliant Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) pathways we have begun to see a reduction in medication prescribing.
- 9.2.4 We have worked closely with providers and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Team to improve the health input into Educational, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). The Clinical Commissioning Group will also be investing in additional capacity to work alongside the Council SEND teams to help interpret the health data and co-ordinate the health response.
- 9.2.5 SnapDragons the child development centre was officially launched in September 2019. At the same time MCH also launched their new core standards offer to schools. This helps schools to provide appropriate early interventions for children and young people with additional needs and has been supported with training which has been delivered to nearly all primary schools in Medway.
- 9.2.6 We have commissioned a new service to support childcare settings and childminders within Medway. This service specification aims to ensure that statutory responsibilities associated with providing information, advice and training to childcare providers is fully met and will help to ensure we have an equitable and consistent offer for early year settings.
- 9.2.7 The Medway Young Persons' Wellbeing Service (MYPWS) has been working to improve communication with wider stakeholders having introduced a professional's advice line that is clinically staffed to provide schools, GPs and others with advice around potential referrals or any concerns they may have for a child.
- 9.2.8 Commissioners have been working to improve joint working across NELFT and MCH and have begun to see an improvement with multi-agency discussions taking place around cases and better management of transition.
- 9.2.9 Looked After Children are prioritised for assessment by both MCH and NELFT and receive additional consultations while they wait for CAMHS 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.
- 9.2.10 A review of placements teams has led to internal integration of teams and the move of the external placements team down to Broadside where there can be better joint working between social

care and placement finding. Further findings from the review such as edge of care support and reunification of children placed in care will be developed in 2020.

9.2.11 Placements made through the Joint Agency Panels have been 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.

9.2.12 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.

9.2.13 The new Domestic Abuse service commenced on 1 April 2019 and now delivers support to both medium and high-risk victims (previously only high risk victims). The service has worked hard to integrate with key partners and is embedded into the children's social care single point of access supporting referrals received from police, as well as working closely with housing teams and schools.

9.2.14 Commissioners have established regular meetings with Medway Parent and Carers forum. This has helped to develop a strong working partnership with the forum who have helped develop and co-produce several areas of work including the ADHD and sleep pathways.

9.3 The key priorities for **Children's Partnership Commissioning** in 2020-21 include:

9.3.1 Early help and children's social care

- Develop and deliver a SMART action plan to address findings of the Looked After Children sufficiency statement and the review of placements teams.
- Develop a range of early help services to meet identified needs.
- Roll out and evaluate Positive Behaviour Support programme
- Develop pathways for children with long term conditions such as epilepsy, diabetes and asthma.
- Promote Trauma informed practice across the Youth Offending Team, children's services and foster care.
- Develop a Medway Parenting Strategy and associated implementation plan.

9.3.2 Improved integration of child health services

- Improve joint working between health services and schools
- Continue to develop closer joint working processes to improve the quality and effectiveness of Education, Health and Care Plans
- Develop more accessible services for families by delivering the outpatient transformation project for children's health services

9.3.3 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
- Develop link programme with Schools
- Bid for mental health in schools trail blazer opportunity

9.3.4 Vulnerable children, Children in care and those leaving care

- Consult and develop a five-year sufficiency strategy
- Continue to develop quality assurance and relationship management of all providers
- Undertaken specific commissioning projects such as Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) beds provision, crisis accommodation, vulnerable mother accommodation and contact service provision
- Develop our knowledge base and provision for children with disabilities as well as those with very complex needs
- Continue to improve provision of Rights, Responsibilities and Advocacy
- Co-produce and deliver a programme of work to improve the health of young people leaving care.

9.3.5 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
- Embed the transition panel between children leaving care and adult services

9.3.6 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

Background Papers

None

Appendices

None