

1. Cabinet decisions since the last Executive Member report to the County Council

- 1.1 There will have been four Cabinet meetings (15 December 2014, 19 January 2015, 23 February 2015 and 23 March 2015) since the last Executive Report to the County Council on 25 November 2014. There were no items of business specifically attributed to this portfolio.

2. Consequences of Cabinet decisions since the last meeting of the County Council

- 2.1 Nothing to report.

3. Anticipated/ future decisions to be made by Cabinet

- 3.1 There are no anticipated Cabinet decisions required in the near future.

4. Key Partnerships

- 4.1 As the Executive Member for Children's Services, I sit on the Health and Wellbeing Board; Children and Young People's Commissioning Executive Group, and Hertfordshire's Safeguarding Children's Board.

5. Other comments**5.1 Children's centre Re-commissioning completion**

The Re-commissioning of all 82 Hertfordshire Children's Centres has concluded following a competitive procurement exercise which attracted a high number of quality bids. From 1 April 2015 when the new contracts commence, centres will be organised into 29 groups of between 2 and 4 centres managed by 17 Lead Agencies. The appointed Lead Agencies are a mix of maintained schools, academies, further education establishments and charities. The successful Lead Agencies include two new providers. The mobilisation stage is now commencing and new lead agencies are working in partnership with existing agencies to ensure continuity of service for families across Hertfordshire.

5.2 Assurance Process for CSE

Child sexual exploitation has continued to be a high profile subject in the media, with a further report being published by Louise Casey on the failings in Rotherham and another report by the Children's Commissioner about sexual exploitation within gangs in the last month. This matter has been taken very seriously by all agencies within Hertfordshire and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned a topic group to monitor and challenge how all agencies and the Children's Safeguarding Board are working together to make young people safer (held 9 March 2015). There is a detailed action plan already in place to address any areas where we feel practice is not as good as it could

be and a comprehensive plan about how we raise awareness in staff, communities and with young people themselves about how to identify and respond to this issue.

5.3 Performance related to Budget

The levels of **referrals to children's social care** continue to reduce, reflecting the shift towards accessing support through early intervention services. At the end of Quarter 3, the current rate of referrals was 266.3 per 10,000 of the population compared with 274.4 at the end of September 2014. Since April 2014, there has been an average of 537 referrals each month, compared to 664 in 2013/14.

The number of children subject to **child protection** plans continues to reduce and there were 1053 children subject to plans at the end of December compared to 1146 at the beginning of the year. Although the rate of reduction had slowed during the autumn, early indications are that increased emphasis on supporting children through children in need processes, fewer child protection enquiries and greater early help are contributing to an accelerated reduction in quarter 4.

The **number of Children Looked After (CLA)** has reduced further from 1013 in September to 1004 in December (a rate of 38.9 per 10,000 0-18 population, which is lower than Hertfordshire's statistical neighbours). In line with the objectives set out in the CLA Strategy, the proportion of CLA placed with foster carers (as a percentage of the total CLA population) continues to increase from 78.4% in Q2 to 79% in Q3 whilst Hertfordshire also has an above average proportion of children placed with in-house foster carers (the placement type with the lowest average cost). There has also been a slight reduction in the proportion of children looked after who are placed out of county. Work continues to ensure the availability of provision that most appropriately meets children's needs whilst making the most of our resources available to support our children looked after.

5.4 Pledge and the Care Leaver's Charter

All Local Authorities are required to have in place a pledge for children and young people in care, setting out what Children's Services will do for them. Hertfordshire County Council first launched the pledge in 2009. The pledge was based on what over 100 young people said was important. Regular monitoring of the pledge took place through 'viewpoint' and the statutory review process. In 2014, the Participation Team was asked to review the pledge with young people. Over 100 young people responded to a survey. They overwhelmingly endorsed all ten of the statements in the pledge, and added health, education, admission to care, and entitlements. The young people made 13 panels of art to illustrate the pledge. It was decided to have a set of headings and a strap line that could read across all our Children Looked After documents, to ensure consistency and that all our pledges and charters fit together. The strap line is 'Children's Services – Getting There Together'. The six key headings are: Explaining, Listening, Keeping you safe and settled, Being healthy, Being ambitious, Preparing for adulthood. The pledge commitments are organised

under these 6 headings.

5.5 Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Innovation Bid

The Safeguarding Children arrangements in Hertfordshire will undergo significant change from the 1 April 2015, when they will be strengthened by a truly multi-agency approach. We will be establishing a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to share information and decision making amongst Police, Probation, Health and Social Work professionals. Together, they will decide which referrals to Children's Services can be safely worked with by universal services such as schools/health/children's centres, targeted services such as Thriving Families and Targeted Youth Support and which are the highest risk cases that need to be worked with by Children's Social Care teams. The MASH represents an increased investment by partner agencies, ensuring that vulnerable children and families get the right level of support to address their difficulties.

Later in April, following Hertfordshire's successful bid to the Department for Education Innovations Programme to develop a new model for delivering child protection services, the Locality Safeguarding teams will be transformed into multi agency Family Safeguarding teams. Adult mental health, drug and alcohol misuse and domestic abuse specialists will join our child protection social work teams. The teams will also be supported by clinical psychologists. While adults' specialists resolve the parenting issues that leave children at risk, social workers will strengthen family bonds and help children develop greater resilience at home and school. This is an exciting whole system change that will be evaluated by Universities of Oxford and Bedfordshire, and may form the basis for a new model for other authorities across England. This is another great example of Hertfordshire County Council working with Health, Police, Bench and Probation, across professional boundaries, to strengthen the protection of vulnerable families in ways that have not been tried anywhere else and receiving substantial government investment to do so.

5.6 Herts UK Youth Parliament event

On Saturday 28th February, I was honoured yet again to be invited by Youth Connexions to attend the annual Herts UK Youth Parliament event at County Hall, together with twenty six young people and their family and friends. The event initially celebrates the achievements of the previous year's group and it is fair to say that our young parliamentarians have not only shown great commitment to their role but have also had many opportunities open to them to represent the County locally, regionally and nationally. For this I thank them.

Following the celebration, it was my pleasure to announce the results of the Herts UKYP 2015 election and the newly elected members of Herts UKYP for each of the ten Hertfordshire districts. Successful or not, congratulations to all the young people who stood in their district. I am delighted that so many stepped up to make a difference in their community and wish to bring real influence to help shape the future of Hertfordshire and, in particular, the services for young people.

Through the work of young people who are members of Herts UKYP, the countywide group Herts1125 and its resulting Manifesto, the local youth councils and forums, and various consultations across the County, it is being heard louder than ever before.

5.7 Shaping the Future Programme

'Shaping The Future' is a significant programme of change within Children's Services to ensure we focus our energy and resource effectively to achieve our priorities and deliver outcomes over the next three years. The Programme incorporates three main work streams namely '0-25 Integration Of Services For Children and Young People With Additional Needs'; 'Early Help' and 'Family Safeguarding' underpinned by a number of enabling services. Whilst each work stream has a particular focus, all have consistent themes in relation to the involvement of parents, carers, children and young people and multi-agency partners; a focus on efficient use of resources to secure the best outcomes for families; and joined up service delivery. By bringing this work together, we will ensure effective join-up between the work streams and that proposed changes will make a coherent contribution to the achievement of Children's Services strategic priorities overall.

5.8 Family eCAF

The Family eCAF is the key tool for providing coordinated multi agency early help support for children with multiple needs. Hertfordshire implemented an electronic version of the common assessment framework and updated it to include all family members in early 2014.

In January 2014, there were only **678** active individual CAFs for children in early help services in Hertfordshire. By the end of January 2015 there are **1819** Family eCAF's, supporting **4006** children and young people.

6. Cabinet Panels

- 6.1 Since the last Executive Member report to Council, the Children's Services Cabinet Panel has met on 29 January 2015 and 11 March 2015. The matters discussed can be found at the following locations:

29 January 2015 - http://www.hertsdirect.org/your-council/civic_calendar/childservcp/18319819/

11 March 2015 - http://www.hertsdirect.org/your-council/civic_calendar/childservcp/18319827/

Richard Roberts
Executive Member for Children's Services
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