

1. Cabinet decisions since the last Executive Report to the County Council

- 1.1 There will have been three Cabinet meetings (21 September 2015, 12 October 2015 and 2 November 2015) since the last Executive Report to County Council. There were no items of business specifically attributed to the Children's Services portfolio.

2. Consequences of Cabinet decisions before the last meeting of the County Council on 21 July 2015

- 2.1 On 13 July 2015, Cabinet made the decision not to retender the home visiting service. Discretionary funding of £200,000 will be provided to Home Start to ensure families currently within the programme can receive the balance of their nine months support and ensure that Home Start is financially aided through the transition. The decision of Cabinet was endorsed by County Council on 21 July 2015.

The contracts with Home Start for the home visiting service came to an end on 30 September 2015. Some of the transitional funding has been allocated to the schemes to complete the support for around 60 families currently on the case load of Home Start schemes. Families have also been able to access a range of services from local Children's Centres. Officers are working with Home Start trustees and managers to complete the business case for the allocation of further transitional funding to enable schemes to remain sustainable through restructuring the model.

3. Anticipated/ future decisions to be made by Cabinet

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

4. Key Partnerships

- 4.1 The Executive Member sits on the Health and Wellbeing Board, Children and Young People's Commissioning Executive Group and Hertfordshire's Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB).

5. Other comments**5.1 Early Childhood**

Early childhood support services continue to work closely with the Public Health team to maximise opportunities to encourage partnership working particularly with children's centres and health services.

Increasing the take up of the free two year old child care places for eligible families is a priority for the Council. In the Summer term, Hertfordshire had a take-up rate of 60% of eligible children compared to 63% nationally and 65% in the Eastern Region. Hertfordshire's take-up rate increased to 70% in October

2015 as a result of officers directly brokering access to a place with the family. Enabling vulnerable families to access their full entitlement to a high quality early education place is important and has been proven to improve educational attainment through to Key Stage 3.

5.2 Youth Connexions and National Citizen Service update

The National Citizen Service (NCS) gives 16 and 17 year olds the chance to take part in activities helping develop important skills to prepare them for adulthood and family life. It is important this intervention is accessible to all young people, in particular the more vulnerable. In 2015 Youth Connexions continued to target key populations such as those in receipt of free school meals, Children Looked After (CLA) and those known to Thriving Families and Targeted Youth Support teams.

Youth Connexions supported 408 young people to take part in NCS projects this summer and raised over £4,500 so far for worthy causes, with more money still coming in. The estimated economic value of the hours volunteered in Hertfordshire during Summer 2015 is £92,779.20.

Moving forward into the new contractual arrangement with INGEUS there will be a commitment that all CLA and care leavers are encouraged to take part in the National Citizen Service. Feedback received from the 37 CLA and care leavers who completed NCS so far in 2015 is as follows:

- 75% indicated their communication skills improved as a result of taking part;
- 56% stated their wellbeing and self-esteem had improved over the course of the programme and they felt they had made a difference by being involved; and
- 50% of young people said they were clearer regarding their education, work and/or training.

5.3 Care Leavers

It is a priority for Council to improve the outcomes for Children Looked After (CLA) and Care Leavers. A key part of our strategy is to reduce the number of care leavers who are not in education, training or employment (NEET). At the time of preparing this report, the percentage of care leavers who are NEET aged 16-18 has reduced from 23.6% in June 2015 to 20.6% in September 2015, with the biggest reduction being for those aged 16 reducing from 24% to 5.9%.

The percentage of care leavers aged 19-21 who are NEET has also reduced from 41.9% in June 2015 to 36.1% in September 2015. A variety of initiatives continue to support care leavers in finding suitable education, employment and training. This includes the joint working protocol with Job Centre Plus to support care leavers in Hertfordshire, work by the Care Leavers Hubs and an increasing number of care leavers entering higher education, including 23 new starters in July 2015, taking the total care leavers enrolled on university courses up to 60.

5.5 Children in Care Council presentation

The CHICC (Children in Care Council) is for all young people in Hertfordshire's care and listens to the views of young people aiming to bring about improvements in services. Every year, young people from the CHICC present a report to full Council to promote awareness of being in care and to inform the Council as corporate parents of the current picture. Young people are attending this meeting to talk about recent achievements and areas they would like to see improved over the next year.

6. Cabinet Panels

- 6.1 Since the last Executive Report to Council, the Children's Services Cabinet Panel has met on 9 September 2015. The matters discussed can be found at the following locations

Children's Services Cabinet Panel
9 September 2015

<https://cmis.hertsdirect.org/hertfordshire/Calendarofcouncilmeetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/368/Committee/19/Default.aspx>

Richard Roberts
Executive Member for Children's Services
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