

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

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

- 1.1 There have been 4 Cabinet meetings (14 December 2015, 18 January 2016, 22 February 2016 and 14 March 2016) since the last Executive Report to County Council. The items of business specifically attributed to this portfolio were:
- 1.2 The Ofsted Inspection Improvement Plan was noted, discussed and approved by Cabinet on 22 February 2016. Cabinet will be updated in respect to progress made.

2. Consequences of Cabinet decisions before the last meeting of the County Council on 22 February 2016

- 2.1 Ongoing work will be undertaken within the service in respect to meeting the targets detailed in the Ofsted Inspection Improvement Plan. Cabinet will be updated in respect to progress made.

3. Anticipated / future decisions to be made by Cabinet

- 3.1 Currently no anticipated Cabinet decisions are 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 Ofsted Single Inspection Framework

The report on the 'Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers' was published on 27 November 2015. Hertfordshire was judged to be good. The report stated "Hertfordshire County Council is led by competent leaders and managers and is now delivering a good service overall to children and their families". The service was also rated good for 'Children Looked After and Achieving Permanence', 'Adoption Performance', 'Experiences and Progress of Care Leavers' and 'Leadership, Management and Governance'. 'Children who need Help and Protection' was rated as Requires Improvement. The same inspection reviewed the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Board, which was also judged to be good.

Some of the strengths highlighted included:

- Timely and coordinated early help services;
- Good social care assessments that address need, risk and consider child and parent views;

- Identification of children at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and plans to reduce risk;
- Children looked after receive a good service and the vast majority have better outcomes as a result;
- Families are secured with a sense of urgency for children with a plan for adoption;
- Care leavers say they receive a good service and most are in touch with the local authority;
- Effective partnership working; and
- Performance management and quality assurance arrangements are strong.

A post inspection action plan has been produced to address findings including any areas for improvement from the inspection report. The full inspection report is available here: <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/local-authorities/hertfordshire>.

5.2 **The PEEL Police Effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability) Report** was published in December 2015. There were several observations/recommendations made around safeguarding some of which echoed recommendations in the Ofsted report.

5.3 **'#eyesopen' Child Sexual Exploitation Prevention Campaign**

The **#eyesopen** campaign was launched in February with a group of over 40 young people learning about the signs of sexual abuse and posting support online using **#eyesopen** on social media platforms.

The campaign carried out in partnership between the County Council and Hertfordshire Police is aimed at secondary school aged children and young people using social media to highlight the signs of child sexual exploitation and posing questions that could help a young person to recognise if it is happening to them. Further details are available here:

<http://www.youthconnexions-hertfordshire.org/about-youth-connexions/news/>

5.4 **Young Carers Conference**

This year's annual conference (planned and led by Young Carers up to 18 years old) was held on 18 February 2016 at Watford Football Club and attended by 50 young carers and 49 professionals from across the county. Some of the key areas of work identified by young carers included more support in schools and the need for wider understanding of who young carers are and what they do to support their families etc.

5.5 **Pilot for 30 Hours Free Childcare from September 2016**

The County Council is delighted to have been successful in being chosen as one of only eight local authorities to work with the Department for Education (DfE) to pilot 30 hours free childcare from September 2016. This will be a year before the national roll out in September 2017. Details are still being finalised but it is likely that we will receive funding for approximately 400 three and four years olds whose parents meet a national and local criteria still to be finalised. The pilot will

be focused on four small areas within Hertfordshire and will be a geographical and socio economic mix of the county.

5.6 **Young Commissioners**

During November and December 2015, as part of an innovative joint project between the County Council, North Hertfordshire College and Oakland's College, 16 young people with additional needs undertook a 6-week course to understand commissioning and how they can be part of decision making around services which affect them. A joint celebration event was held on 24 February 2016 at North Hertfordshire College and a work programme for the students is being developed in conjunction with strategic partners such as the Clinical Commissioning Groups.

5.7 **Hertfordshire Interview with BBC Look East Regarding Family Safeguarding**

On 22 February 2016 Cllr Richard Roberts, Lead Member for Children's Services and Sue Williams, Director of Family Safeguarding were interviewed by BBC Look East about how Hertfordshire is using innovation funding from the Government to revolutionise children's social care.

Cllr Roberts and Sue Williams explained during the interview the changes that have been made to the way we work, including the establishment of multi-disciplinary teams of domestic abuse, substance misuse, mental health and social workers to work with the whole family. The entire service has been trained in motivational interviewing to improve practice and help us better engage parents to make changes to improve the care and protection of their children. One of the key messages of the interview was also around how we are working to reduce paperwork and recording so staff have more time to focus on working with families, making Hertfordshire a great place to work in safeguarding.

5.8 **Performance Highlights December 2015**

5.8.1 **Referrals to children's social care** continue to be lower than previous years as more families are supported through early help.

5.8.2 **Numbers of children subject to child protection plans** continue to reduce and remain one of the lowest in the country.

5.8.3 There has been an increase in **the number of children looked after** between September and December 2015, while the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children has remained static. However Hertfordshire still has one of the lowest rates per 10,000 in England for children looked after at 39.8 compared with 60 nationally and 43 for our statistical neighbours.

5.8.4 The Executive Member and Children's Services Cabinet Panel have asked the Director to carry out a full review into **improving the stability of placements** when in care. There is recognition that this is an area for improvement.

6. Cabinet Panels

- 6.1 Since the last Executive Report to Council, the Children's Services Cabinet Panel has met on 28 January 2016 and 3 March 2016. The matters discussed can be found at the following locations:

[28 January 2016](#)

[3 March 2016](#)

Richard Roberts
Executive Member for Children's Services
March 2016