

EXECUTIVE PORTFOLIO: CHILDREN'S SERVICES**1. Cabinet decisions since the last Executive Report to the County Council**

- 1.1 There will have been 4 Cabinet meetings (12 December 2016, 23 January 2017, 20 February 2017 and 13 March 2017) since the last Executive Report to County Council in November 2016. There were no items of business specifically attributed to this portfolio.

2. Consequences of Cabinet decisions before the last meeting of the County Council on 15 November 2016

- 2.1 No decisions have been made.

3. Anticipated/ future decisions to be made by Cabinet

- 3.1 There are no anticipated future decisions.

4. Key Partnerships

- 4.1 I sit on the Hertfordshire Health & Wellbeing Board and Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board.

5. Other comments**5.1 Progress on the Outcomes from Family Safeguarding**

A Partnership event was held in December 2016 to share outcomes and new ways of working with the multi-disciplinary safeguarding teams supporting families and protecting children.

The event was attended by Isabelle Trowler the national Chief Social Worker for Children and Families. Isabelle stated *"The Impact of this overarching care framework in child protection might have on the national system could be quite profound."*

The evaluation of the Family Safeguarding approach has shown that school attendance of children supported by Family Safeguarding teams has increased by 36%. Incidents of repeat domestic abuse call-outs by the police have reduced by 67%. Furthermore the number of children coming into care has reduced by 10%.

We are currently awaiting feedback on a Department for Education Innovations Fund bid to increase the range of professionals in Hertfordshire Family Safeguarding to include child and adolescent mental health (CAMHS) therapeutic support to children in need of protection, and for Hertfordshire to work with four other local authorities to implement Family Safeguarding in their areas. There is also significant interest by other Authorities wanting to learn from Hertfordshire Family Safeguarding.

5.2 Annual Report from the Virtual School for Children Looked After

The progress and attainment of children looked after in school is a high priority for the Council.

In the academic year 2015-2016, the structure and operational practice of the Hertfordshire Virtual School was transformed to work more effectively with partners in schools, social care and in fostering to improve the educational attainment, progress and life chances of children looked after and care leavers.

This development takes account of the most recent research and changes to the assessment system in schools. The Virtual School continues to closely track the progress of young people in care and care leavers, offering additional support and intervention to target resources effectively. Academic progress has improved overall this year throughout the key stages and outcomes for students in Further Education and University continue to move forward with 14 university graduates in 2016, of which 4 achieved First Class honours.

The full annual report on the Virtual School is [available here](#).

5.3 Celebrating Foster Carers in Hertfordshire

The Fostering Service team hosted new year celebration events to say thank you to foster carers who have inspired and helped to change the lives of Hertfordshire's children and young people looked after.

It is also important for carers to be part of a valued community and these events enable the County Council to thank all our carers whilst strengthening both formal and informal networks. I, together with Marion Ingram, Operations Director, joined with the service to praise the work of our foster carers.

The Fostering Service is currently projecting a gain of around 20 new approved foster carers by the end of March 2017, offering approximately 40 extra placements for children looked after. Details of how to become a foster carer can be found at: <https://beta.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/childrens-social-care/fostering-and-adoption/fostering/fostering.aspx>

5.4 Performance Highlights

- The number of children looked after continues to reduce; in December there were 874 young people looked after compared with 960 in March 2016. (These figures do not include unaccompanied asylum seeking children).
- Independent placement costs are now monitored on a weekly basis. The current reduction since this was introduced (in October) is £23K per week, which equates to an annualised saving of some £1.2m
- There are 87 unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children looked after

- The percentage of children looked after who have had three or more placements in the last 12 months has reduced from 12.7% in April 2016 to 11.4% in December 2016
- The percentage of children leaving care through adoptions or Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) has increased considerably to 21.8% from 13.9% June 2016.

6. Cabinet Panels

- 6.1 Since the last Executive Report to Council, the Children's Services Cabinet Panel has met on 29 November 2016, 31 January 2017 and 6 March 2017. The matters discussed can be found at the following locations:

[29 November 2016](#)

[31 January 2017](#)

[6 March 2017](#)

Richard Roberts
Executive Member for Children's Services
March 2017