

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 (10 April 2017, 23 May 2017, 26 June 2017 and 10 July 2017) since the last Executive Report to County Council. There will have been one item attributable to this portfolio during this period, set out a paragraph 3 below.

2. Consequences of Cabinet decisions before the last meeting of the County Council on 23 May 2017

- 2.1 Nothing to report.

3. Anticipated / future decisions to be made by Cabinet**3.1 Cabinet – 10 July 2017**

Children's Centre, Health Visiting and School Nursing Services Commissioning – Models for Consultation. Cabinet will be invited to consider a joint report between the Director of Public Health and the Director of Children's Services and agree an approach to the future commissioning of these services and to commence public consultations on the Family Service Centres, Family Support and Public Health Nursing.

- 3.2 There are currently no other anticipated Cabinet decisions required in the near future.

4. Key Partnerships

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

5. Other comments**5.1 Health Visiting Service, School Nursing and Children's Centres Re-Commissioning**

The Council's contracts for the Health Visiting service, the School Nursing service (Public Health Nursing Service) and Children's Centre programme, currently expire on 30th September 2018 and need to be re-procured. Lead commissioners from both Children's Services and Public Health have been exploring opportunities for the services to be more aligned in their delivery to support our ambition to enable every child to have the best possible start in life, giving them the best opportunities throughout their education and working lives. Children's Services and Public Health have undertaken considerable preparatory work to transform and align these services so that the Council can meet its statutory and mandated duties to support babies, children, young people and their families, and to address wider issues in the education, health and social care system. To support this it is proposed that the new services be delivered under one overarching offer: Hertfordshire Family Centre Service.

Subject to Cabinet approval at its meeting on 10 July, as part of the proposed approach, we will be beginning a formal consultation period to inform families, providers and professionals of the intentions for the Family Centre Service and this will be the opportunity for them to respond to those intentions. The consultation will take place between July and September 2017 with officers from both Children's Services and Public Health promoting the consultation throughout the summer.

5.2 Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

We continue to respond to the findings of the Ofsted/CQC area inspection of support for those with special educational needs (SEND) in Hertfordshire, improving information advice and guidance (IAG) and ongoing dialogue with parents. A conference for parent carers of children, young people and young adults with an SEND was held in May. This was the second conference that has taken place since the inspection and families were invited back to learn about what work we have done since the initial feedback and explore ways to keep moving forward. 37 parent carers attended and 93% of these felt that the event overall was Excellent or Good, an improvement of 3 percentage points since the first conference.

The new SEND Local Offer website <http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/localoffer> was launched in January 2017. This was the result of consultation with parents and carers during 2016 and co-produced with stakeholders.

5.3 Nascot Lawn – Decision by Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group

We have been working with providers across the county to ensure the best provision of Short Breaks services for children across Hertfordshire. It was previously agreed with Herts Valleys CCG and East & North Herts CCG that we would work together on reviewing Overnight Short Breaks services across the county with a view to developing integrated health/social care provision which would help combine the CCGs responsibility for health and the County Council's for social care. We are disappointed that Herts Valleys CCG has since decided to cease their funding contribution to short breaks services and we will be working closely with partners, staff and parents to minimise the impact of this decision. The Council with Herts Valleys CCG and East & North Herts CCG will carry out an assessment of children currently attending Nascot Lawn to understand whether new or additional health and social care support is required. In the short term we will recruit additional staff to help carry out these assessments.

5.4 Youth Justice Services Thematic Inspection

In May, Hertfordshire Youth Justice participated in a Youth Public Protection inspection involving 6 local authorities which was conducted by HM Inspectorate of Probation. The report will be published in September 2017 but a letter following the Hertfordshire element of the inspection has highlighted that all public protection issues are being well managed and there are strong processes for managing risk. In addition a lot of evidence of creative practice was seen, along with effective join up and links across Children's Services.

5.5 Virtual School Annual Report

The progress and attainment of children looked after in education is a high priority for the Council. The successful re-structure of the Hertfordshire Virtual School has

enabled a closer working relationship with partners in schools enabling colleagues in social care and fostering to benefit from improved partnership arrangements and communication. Successful meetings managed by the Virtual School and the Senior Regional Ofsted Inspector and schools have evidenced the impact of this new relationship. New work with colleges of further and higher education and employers contracted with the Local Authority has also produced a greater number of opportunities for care leavers.

There are a total of 58 young people at University and a further 21 preparing to attend in the autumn 2017. The full annual report on the Virtual School is available [here](#).

5.6 Families First Update

Families First, Hertfordshire's brand for early help services in Hertfordshire, continues to be successfully rolled out across the county. The multi-agency IT system to support the use of consistent whole family assessments and co-ordinated support planning and working, went live in Autumn 2017 and since then 1186 practitioners (as of 12th June 2017) have been trained to use it. Triage panels are established across the county; feedback from the Taking Stock exercise with partners in the pathfinder areas (Watford and Three Rivers, Stevenage and Broxbourne) in Spring 2017 indicated that partners are valuing these new meetings to help families access the most appropriate support in a timely manner.

The Department for Communities and Local Government visited the team in April 2017 and met with internal and external partners to help understand the journey Hertfordshire is embarking on to transform early help services and discuss ideas to increase the number of Troubled Families programme outcomes.

5.7 Children Looked After

The Children Looked After Service have introduced the '[Achieving the Best for Our Children: CLA Work Programme](#)'. Whilst working alongside Hertfordshire's Social Work Procedures and Guidance for Children Looked After, this programme aims to empower children and young people in our care using motivational interviewing; to support children and young people to understand their history, drive their care planning, and work towards their aspiration as they become adults.

In recognition that children who are looked after are statistically more likely than children in the general population to experience mental health issues, every child looked after over the age of 4 is the subject of a **Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)**. This is an initial assessment tool which measures emotional wellbeing. The completion of this in Hertfordshire has been reviewed to ensure that SDQ scores are not only collected from the parent / carer, but also from the young person themselves and the designated teacher within the child's education setting. This newly triangulated process ensures that all children looked after who are identified as needing a therapeutic input are offered the right support in a timely way. This also ensures that an accurate up to date measurement of emotional and behavioural health is considered when care planning and when making decisions in respect of the child's health; education and placement.

5.8 Family Safeguarding Update

In February 2017, the Department for Education (DfE) announced it would be making a grant of £11.6m to Hertfordshire and four other local authorities to test whether they could achieve similar outcomes by adopting our transformed model of child protection, as well as to expand the County Council's teams to include a focus on emotional wellbeing of children and virtual school support to improve their attainment at KS2. A project team from Children's Services, HR, Finance and Performance, supported by IT, Legal Services, Data Protection and Communications are working with Luton, Peterborough, Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire to support their implementation of Family Safeguarding. Their authorities, partners and staff have received our team with great excitement and enthusiasm.

Two different delegations from the DfE as well as other local authorities are visiting the service during June to learn from front line staff what their work now involves and the initiative was shortlisted for a major national award organized by the Municipal Journal, for which we were highly commended.

5.9 Key Performance – March 2017

- The number of children subject to a child protection plan has reduced to 520, a 29% reduction on March 2016 and Hertfordshire now has one of the lowest rates in the country.
- The number of children looked after in Hertfordshire has reduced to 840 plus 78 unaccompanied asylum seeking children (the lowest overall number since 2009) and one of the lowest rates in the country.
- In 2016/17, 22.7% of children looked after who left care did so via an adoption or special guardianship order compared with 13.9% in 2015/16. 89 children were adopted during the year, a 37% increase on 2015/16.
- The percentage of Care Leavers aged 17-21 who are in Education, Employment and Training (EET) was 56.2% in March, an increase on 51% in March 2016 and higher than our statistical neighbour average of 51%.

6. Cabinet Panels

- 6.1 Since the last Executive Report to Council, the Children's Services Cabinet Panel has met on 28 June 2017. The matters discussed can be found at the following location:

[Children's Services Cabinet Panel - 28 June 2017](#)

- 6.2 A joint meeting of the Children's Services Cabinet Panel and the Public Health, Prevention and Performance Cabinet Panel was also held on the 28 June 2017. The matter discussed can be found at the following location:

[Joint Meeting of the Children's Services Cabinet Panel and the Public Health, Prevention & Performance Cabinet Panel - 28 June 2017](#)

Teresa Heritage
Executive Member for Children's Services
July 2017