

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 (18 July 2017, 25 September 2017, 23 October 2017 and 13 November 2017) since the last Executive Report to County Council. The item of business specifically attributed to this portfolio was:-

Cabinet 25 September 2017

Cabinet considered the outcome of consultation on proposals for the family centre services and proposed tender arrangements. Cabinet approved the proposed approach to commission a new 'Hertfordshire Family Centre Service' and agreed proposed procurement arrangements for it. (Also see paragraph 5.1 below)

2. Consequences of Cabinet decisions before the last meeting of the County Council on 18 July 2017

- 2.1 There are no consequences of Cabinet decisions taken before 18 July 2017 to report.

3. Anticipated / future decisions to be made by Cabinet

3.1 Cabinet – 13 November 2017

Forward Plan ref: A055/17. Cabinet will be invited to consider proposals relating to the future of Cuffley Camp Outdoor Centre, Northaw

3.2 2018

There will also be 2 items of business requiring decisions by Cabinet early in the New Year; one on Services for Young People and another on proposals for partnership arrangements for adoption services.

4. Key Partnerships

- 4.1 As advised in my July report to Council, I sit on the Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board and Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board.

5. Other comments

5.1 Health Visiting Service, School Nursing and Children's Centres Re-Commissioning

Over 1000 people responded to the survey about changes to the children's centre, health visiting and school nursing services, and a further 800 families were engaged through face to face discussions at summer community events. Families told us that they value the current services and could see the sense in joined-up services working together from the same local building. There was

useful feedback about the importance of ensuring disadvantaged families can easily access the services they need, and the feedback has been incorporated into a revised service specification.

All the proposals in the consultation were endorsed, and following Cabinet approval in September the tender process for the new 'Family Centre Service' was launched on Wednesday, 11 October.

5.2 Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

SEND remains an area of pressure and an area of focus within Children's Services (CS). The SEND post inspection action plan will be presented to parents at a further conference on 6 November involving Health, Education and Social Care professionals and parents will be surveyed regarding practice and communication improvements. CS will then consider its practice against the Ofsted report describing the first year of inspection findings:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-area-send-inspections-one-year-on>

The 0 – 25 Together social care service celebrated its first 'birthday' during October and families are starting to report an improved pathway into adulthood. The Service continues to work closely with Adult Care Services (ACS) in relation to practice, particularly adult safeguarding, commissioning and demand management. CS are also looking to better align activities across social care and special educational needs teams.

5.3 Nascot Lawn – An update

On 18 July 2017 Council considered a petition to 'Save Nascot Lawn' following the decision by Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group (HVCCG) to cease funding this health setting which delivers overnight short breaks to children with disabilities and complex health needs. The decision by HVCCG and the issuing of six months' notice meant that the setting would cease to be funded from October 31 2017. Council agreed that it would fund an extension to this period to allow assessments to be carried out so that the children and their families' needs could continue to be met after the funding ceased. It was agreed that the setting would be funded to remain open until 31 January 2018.

HVCCG's decision was also considered by Hertfordshire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee on 19 July 2017 and it was agreed that the decision would be reviewed more fully at a Topic Group of the Scrutiny Committee which took place on 6 September 2017. Responses to this Scrutiny have been recently received and are being checked for accuracy.

In early July two parents made an application for a Judicial Review of the HVCCG decision. Following Council and the July Scrutiny, the County Council accepted that it was an interested party to any proceedings. The case was due to be heard on 3 October, however, on 27 September, HVCCG set aside its decision to cease funding the service having accepted that the process that it had previously undertaken for ceasing to fund the Nascot Lawn service was flawed.

Since that date, HVCCG has been engaging with stakeholders in order to inform a new decision on the services at Nascot Lawn. This new decision will be taken no later than 16 November. The County Council remains concerned about the adequacy of the engagement process (it considers that a full consultation is required). The current engagement process closes on 6 November and the County Council will be responding. Parents are again in dialogue with their solicitors regarding a new application for judicial review on the basis that the engagement process by HVCCG is inadequate.

In the event that HVCCG again makes a decision to cease funding the Nascot Lawn Service it is the County Council's understanding that it will be required, under the terms of the contract with Hertfordshire Community Trust (HCT), to issue a further six months' notice; accordingly it is the County Council's understanding that funding may cease in the middle of May 2018.

Since the first decision to cease funding, CS staff have been working with both Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and with families to carry out an up to date assessment of the children's needs. Although the original HVCCG decision has been set aside this work is continuing as a contingency should the same decision be made again. All assessments of children who have overnight stays at Nascot Lawn have been completed and workers are now meeting with families to discuss alternative packages of care. CS is in close liaison with the providers of the three settings that are funded by the County Council and all three are looking to extend their service. There are a small number of families who are happy to accept an alternative support package, including one child who is being introduced to a shared carer and several families who are comfortable with their child moving to another short breaks service.

As a result of the original decision taken by HVCCG, HCT staff were issued with notice some months ago and a significant number have found alternative employment. As a result this has had an impact on HCT as, although the original decision has been set aside, HCT is finding it difficult to recruit due to the uncertainty of the situation. HCT has notified parents that the service will be reduced by approximately 50% from the beginning of November. Staffing levels are under review by the CCGs.

The majority of families using Nascot Lawn want the service to remain open. HVCCG is engaging on four options, including an option that the County Council makes an offer to deliver a joint service at Nascot Lawn. The County Council is not able to commission a health service and the funding arrangement currently being suggested by HVCCG appears unsustainable. The County Council maintains its position that it would like to work with the CCG's to deliver an integrated service across three sites.

Work is also underway to consider whether the Nascot Lawn building is more or less suited than the West Hyde building for the delivery of an overnight short breaks service. This work is being done in partnership with parents.

5.4 Children Looked After (CLA)

The outcomes for children and young people in the Virtual School at the end of the academic year 2016-17 are showing signs of improvement in key areas. However, it is not possible to compare the outcomes at key stage 2 and 4 to last

year because of the assessment framework changes and the changes to the curriculum; there are several examples of individual children who have exceeded expected outcomes at the end of key stage 4.

Of particular note is the phonics screening text, where children looked after outcomes exceeded those for all children in Hertfordshire. (90% of CLA met the expected standard (70% last year); the overall figure for Hertfordshire was 83 %). There has been comprehensive training for carers on this work with materials and activities for home use provided to support learning at home.

The end of key stage results at key stage 1 and 2 indicate that where children achieved they have made accelerated progress and achieved at greater depth levels. 12% of key stage 4 CLA pupils achieved 4+ in both English and Mathematics. The percentage of care leavers going to and completing further education courses continues to rise and the number at University is the highest ever. There were 3 First Class Honours degrees within the 14 graduates in 2017.

National attainment data for children looked after will be available in March 2018.

5.5 Family Safeguarding Update

Over the summer Hertfordshire staff presented The Hertfordshire Safeguarding Project and its outcomes at four national learning events organised by the Department for Education (DfE) and also at the National Children and Adult Services Conference in October 2017. We have been approached by 10 other local authorities with a serious interest in adopting our model and we are helping them explore finance options to enable them to do so.

The service has been shortlisted for a further two national awards which will be judged in November - The Guardian Public Services awards and the National Social Work awards.

The project to introduce family safeguarding in Luton, Peterborough, Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire are progressing well with all four authorities planning to launch the new ways of working before Christmas.

5.6 Key Performance – September 2017

- The number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan has increased to 637, however it still remains one of the lowest rates in the country at 23.9 per 10,000 (0-18 population) compared with a national rate of 43.1.
- The number of children looked after in Hertfordshire is currently 849 plus 90 unaccompanied asylum seeking children, this is an increase on March 2017 but still one of the lowest rates in the country at 35.2 per 10,000.
- 17.7% of children looked after who left care in the last 12 months did so via an adoption or special guardianship order (SGO); in addition 72.2% of those adopted were adopted within 12 months of the decision to adopt. The percentage of Care Leavers aged 17-21 who are in Education, Employment and Training (EET) was 58.2% in September, an increase on 56.2% in March 2017 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 21 September and 2 November 2017. The matters discussed can be found at the following locations:

[Children's Services Cabinet Panel - 21 September 2017](#)

[Children's Services Cabinet Panel - 2 November 2017](#)

- 6.2 A Joint Meeting of the Children's Service's Cabinet Panel & the Public Health, Prevention & Performance Cabinet Panel was also held on the 21 September 2017. The matters 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 - 21 September 2017](#)

Teresa Heritage
Executive Member for Children's Services
November 2017