

PORTFOLIO: CHILDREN'S SERVICES

1. Cabinet decisions since the last meeting of County Council

- 1.1 There will have been 4 Cabinet meetings (18 December 2017, 22 January 2018, 19 February 2018 and 19 March 2018) since the last Executive Report to County Council on 21 November 2017. The following items of business were specifically attributed to this portfolio:-

Cabinet - 19 February 2019

A003/18 - Supporting Young People in Hertfordshire: Cabinet approved the proposed integrated approach by YC Hertfordshire to supporting young people in line with the Council's and Children's Services priorities.

2. Consequences of Cabinet decisions before the last meeting of the County Council on 20 February 2019.

2.1 Cabinet – 13 November 2017

A055/17 - Future of Cuffley Camp Outdoor Centre: Cabinet agreed that the County Council should withdraw from its lease at Cuffley Camp Outdoor Centre and commit to further engage with the landlord in order to promote the site's continued use as an outdoor education centre serving young people. This decision was 'Called-In' and was duly considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 29 November 2017. Following its consideration of the matter the Scrutiny Committee agreed that it had no objection to the Called-In decision being implemented.

3. Anticipated/future decisions to be made by Cabinet

Cabinet – 14 May 2018

A020/18 – Children and Young People's Plan: Following a joint meeting of the Children's Services and Education, Libraries and Localism Cabinet Panels, Cabinet will be invited to recommend to full Council approval of the updated Children and Young People's Plan.

4. Key Partnerships

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

5. Other comments

5.1 Nascot Lawn

At the time of writing, the judgement on the Judicial Review action taken by parents of children using Nascot Lawn regarding Herts Valleys

Clinical Commissioning Group's (HVCCG's) decision to withdraw £600,000 of funding from this service had just been handed down. Mr Justice Mostyn found that health services were being provided at Nascot Lawn and that any decision to withdraw funding that would lead to the closure of the only health lead respite service in Hertfordshire would amount to a substantial variation of the provision of health services in the County. In light of this Mr Justice Mostyn quashed the decision on the basis that HVCCG had failed to consult Hertfordshire County Council in accordance with Regulation 23 of the Local Authority (Public Health, Health & Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013. A full briefing on this judgement was sent to members. The Council has since received notice from HVCCG that it is seeking to consult (in accordance with the Regulations) with the Council on a proposal to withdraw £600,000 funding from Nascot Lawn. HVCCG has informed the Council that it proposes to reach a decision on the Proposal on 3 May 2018 and has requested a response from the Council by 4 April 2018. . This issue will be considered by the Council's Health Scrutiny Committee at a special meeting on 21 March 2018.

Since my last report to Council in November 2017, officers in the 0-25 Together team have continued to work with families to ensure that there are contingencies being developed should the proposed decision proceed. In January I visited The Pines and West Hyde to see first-hand the facilities that they would be able to offer to the Nascot Lawn families once the appropriate training for carers and adaptations had been carried out. I concluded that both of the short break centres were welcoming and well run.

5.2 Annual Valuing Foster Carers Dinner

During December and January the Fostering Service 'Valuing Foster Carers' Christmas dinners were held. This year 270 foster carers attended and celebrated being Hertfordshire foster carers. We hold these events to share our appreciation and to show how much we value our foster carers who give so much to our children looked after. This is an opportunity for us to say thank you for the care they give and plays an important part of our recruitment and retention strategy.

This year Graham Mc Andrew (Deputy Lead Member for Children's Services) Marion Ingram (Operations Director, Specialist Services) and I attended and gave motivational speeches in support of foster care in Hertfordshire.

The [Fostering Stocktake](#) has recently been published and raises a number of important issues/recommendations which gives a platform for further conversation;

- The quality of support is crucial for those with experience of living in foster care
- The role and status of foster carers needs greater clarification
- Supporting children and young people's needs must be central to the system

- There needs to be improvement to the commissioning of foster care placements and
- The importance of sharing best practice

It wholeheartedly concludes that Fostering is a resounding success for improving the outcomes children and young people who are looked after.

5.3 Annual Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children’s Board (HSCB) Conference – Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups

The annual Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children’s Board Conference took place on Friday 23 February. The focus of the speakers from the Hertfordshire Police, St Giles Trust and Safer London, was on gangs, knives, County Lines and the impact of gang culture.

5.4 Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) Local Offer

Hertfordshire’s special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) Local Offer continues to develop to provide customers with a one stop shop for SEND information advice and guidance (IAG).

Since the reforms of 2014 there is large demand on SEND services and the Local Offer aims to support these needs by providing clear, comprehensive, accessible and up-to-date information about available provision, how to access it and making provision more responsive to local needs. An extensive review of SEND IAG highlighted the need for the Local Offer to become the one platform through which Hertfordshire families access IAG. It is important to increase families’ confidence that they can find all the online support they need in one trusted place.

A new SEND e-Newsletter has also recently been launched to engage SEND professionals and help support joined up working.

The Local Offer is found at www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/localoffer.

5.5 Family Safeguarding Wave 2

Family Safeguarding Wave 2 projects will focus on improving the educational attainment of children in need/in need of protection at Key Stage2 and improving emotional wellbeing over a two year period. We have successfully recruited two deputy heads to lead the attainment work and it is hoped they will start after Easter and two CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services) psychologists who will start at the same time. The new team members will develop plans and interventions to support children. The work will be evaluated by a Department for Education research project, to be published in 2020, and will inform development of child protection work nationally.

5.6 Young Carers' Annual Conference – Young Carers: Not By The Book Conference

The Young Carers' Conference is an annual event for young carers under 18 in the County. It is co-produced and hosted by the Young Carers Council and coordinated by our commissioned provider Carers in Herts.

This year's conference was held on 15 February 2018 and focussed on young carers being able to tell us what support they want for themselves. A large number of young carers attended a series of theme-based workshops including dance, drama, lego-robotics, cartoonist, healthy eating and crafts; these were then showcased to professionals who joined the afternoon session of the Conference.

It was good to see young carers having fun whilst learning some new skills and sharing their learning with professionals to promote greater awareness and understanding of the needs of young carers.

A conference report will be produced by Carers in Herts which will be used to inform ongoing service development.

5.7 Performance Highlights – December 2017

- The number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan has reduced for four consecutive months and is now 601. It remains one of the lowest rates in the country at 22.5 per 10,000 (0-18 population) compared with a national rate of 43.1.
- The number of Children Looked After (CLA) in Hertfordshire has reduced to 832 plus 97 unaccompanied asylum seeking children, one of the lowest rates in the country; 34.4 per 10,000 compared with 62 nationally.
- 13% of CLA who left care in the last 12 months did so via an adoption or Special Guardianship Order (SGO); in addition 81.4% of those adopted were adopted within 12 months of the decision to adopt.
- The percentage of care leavers aged 17-21 in Education, Employment and Training (EET) was 58.3% in December; an increase on 56.2% in March 2017 and higher than our statistical neighbour average of 49%.

6. Cabinet Panels

- 6.1 Since the last Executive Report to Council, the Children's Services Cabinet Panel has met on 2 November 2017, 7 February 2018 and 8 March 2018. The matters discussed can be found in the following locations:-

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

[Children's Services Cabinet Panel - 7 February 2018](#)

[Children's Services Cabinet Panel - 8 March 2018](#)

Teresa Heritage
Executive Member for Children's Services
March 2018