

# Health and Wellbeing Board

9 September 2016

## Children's Services update



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### Report of Margaret Whellans, Interim Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Service, Durham County Council

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#### Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Health and Wellbeing Board on the national and local developments in relation to Children's Services. In addition, this report includes information on the outcome of the Ofsted Single Inspection Framework (SIF) Inspection of Children's Services carried out between 22 February 2016 and 16 March 2016.

#### Background

- 2 A report was last presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board on 21 January 2016 providing information on the national and local developments which support early intervention and prevention for the effective and rigorous protection of children and young people.
- 3 The report provided the Health and Wellbeing Board with an overview of the Children's inspection regime and an update on the transformation journey that has been undertaken in Children's Services in Durham.

#### Ofsted Single Inspection Framework (SIF)

- 4 The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) introduced a Single Inspection Framework (SIF) for Children's Services, which covers children in need of help and protection, services for looked after children and care leavers, and the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) in late 2013.
- 5 The SIF is very different to previous Ofsted inspection frameworks; it is much broader and there is a much greater focus on frontline practice, casework and the journey and experiences of children and young people. A key change to the Inspection regime is that it now includes a review of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB). The LSCB had not been inspected in this way previously.

- 6 The SIF operates on a three-yearly cycle and 'overall effectiveness' is judged as either 'outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate', as will each of the following judgements this is derived from:
- The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection;
  - The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence, including two graded judgements:
    - Adoption
    - The experiences and progress of care leavers
  - Leadership, management and governance.
- 7 Benchmarking and learning from other Local Authorities who have been subject to inspection by Ofsted under this framework continues in the service. To date, 104 Local Authorities have been inspected and had reports published. The majority of councils inspected 77 (74%) are rated 'requires improvement' or below, 2 (2%) have received an overall effectiveness judgement of 'outstanding' and 25 (24%) have received an overall effectiveness judgement of 'good'.
- 8 With regard to reviews of the LSCBs, to date, in 104 of the LSCBs inspected under SIF, 33 (32%) have been judged to be 'good', 52 (50%) as 'requires improvement' and 19 (18%) as 'inadequate'. No LSCBs have been judged to be 'outstanding' under the SIF.
- 10 With regard to reviews of the LSCBs, to date, in 101 of the LSCBs inspected under SIF, 32 (32%) have been judged to be 'good', 50 (49%) as 'requires improvement' and 19 (19%) as 'inadequate'. No LSCBs have been judged to be 'outstanding' under the SIF.
- 11 During the period 22 February to 16 March 2016, Ofsted carried out an inspection of the Council's Children's Services and LSCB under SIF. Separate ratings of 'overall effectiveness' was given for Children's Services and the LSCB.
- 12 During the inspection, 10 inspectors undertook the following activity over a 4 week period:
- Tracked and sampled 142 cases;
  - Were provided with 535 documents, including strategic reports, minutes of meetings, performance data and case file data;
  - Met and talked with care leavers, young people from the children in care council, families, adopters and foster carers;
  - Attended 144 meetings and visits/telephone calls;
  - Met with representatives of 12 partners organisations;
  - Provided with 59 areas of best practice and improvement and 7 case study examples;
  - Provided with an LSCB Information Document highlighting the journey and strengths of the LSCB over the required year period.
- 13 The final report was published on 16th May 2016 on the Ofsted website and is available [here](#).

## Summary of Judgements

- 14 The judgements are outlined below. The service accepts Ofsted's findings and acknowledges that it is reflective of the service improvement journey.

Judgement	Rating
Overall effectiveness – Children's Services	Requires improvement
1. Children who need help and protection	Requires improvement
2. Children Looked After and achieving permanence	Requires improvement
2.1 Adoption performance	Good
2.2 Experiences and progress of care leavers	Good
3. Leadership, management and governance	Requires improvement
LSCB	Good

## Children's Services

### Summary of feedback

- 15 Whilst there are a number of positives, overall the inspection judgement is 'requires improvement' and the Service accepts Ofsted's findings and recognises that there are some areas where further improvement is needed.

### Areas of Strength

- 16 Ofsted noted that the range of early help services provided by One Point and partner agencies was 'good and, wide' and 'effective and well-established' and that multi-agency working was embedded in practice. Ofsted recognised that the number of children registered with children's centres is high and that the number of early help assessments completed is increasing.
- 17 Children and young people who are at risk or in need of social work intervention are identified and referred appropriately to the First Contact service. Where children are at risk of significant harm, immediate action is taken to reduce risks and safeguard their welfare.
- 18 Ofsted recognised that the placements for looked after children are of good or better quality and meet children's needs.
- 19 Services for children and young people with disabilities are well managed and the quality of work, including assessment planning and arrangements for the transition to adult services are good.

- 20 Ofsted judged a number of key areas of the service including those for adoption and care leavers as 'good'.
- 21 The adoption services were described as a 'strength within the authority' with work being 'child focused to ensure that a lifelong placement for children and young people is at the heart of all practice.
- 22 The positive comments regarding care leavers within the report noted: 'The majority of care leavers develop trusting and long-standing relationships with their personal advisers or their social worker. Commissioning of accommodation for care leavers is also good. The local authority provides a good range of emergency accommodation for young people who present as homeless.'
- 23 The report noted that 'political and senior leaders as corporate parents demonstrate passion and commitment to children and young people', with elected members showing a good knowledge of corporate parenting issues.
- 24 The Children's Scrutiny Committee was noted as having a passion and commitment to improve the lives of young people through its work programme.
- 25 Performance information is extensive and has resulted in some improved outcomes
- 26 Staff training and development was also described positively.
- 27 Inspectors noted clear and effective governance arrangements across strategic partnerships, and that the local authority works well with partners and has shared priorities based on a good understanding of local need.
- 28 The report noted that 'consultation with children and young people to inform service development is well embedded and effective.'
- 29 The report also indicated that the work on combatting Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) was described as good, as were services for substance misuse and partnership working.

### **Areas for Improvement**

- 30 The inspection team found specific areas as requiring improvement in order to be good overall which limited the overall judgement to 'requires improvement'. There were a total of 14 recommendations given within the report.
- 31 Ofsted noted that there have been significant changes to the service, such as a restructure, the creation of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the innovation programme, which had produced improvements in some areas, but was not evident for all due to it being too early to see longer-term impact.
- 32 In respect of case load pressures, Ofsted noted that social workers were carrying too many cases in some teams as a result of staff shortages and children and families were experiencing too many changes of social worker.

- 33 Ofsted felt that reports provided to senior politicians and managers did not assist them in scrutinising front line services and that case file auditing needed to be more robust.
- 34 Case file recording, social work assessment and analysis and care planning were found to require improvement. Inspectors found drift and delay in some children's cases.
- 35 Inspectors found that many children's plans are not sufficiently outcome focussed, do not have clear timescales for actions to be completed and do not assist in improving outcomes for children.
- 36 Information sharing on referrals is not always detailed enough to progress concerns about children and young people and there are delays when workers have to obtain additional information and consents from parents.
- 37 Recording of management oversight on children's files is not always present and lacks sufficient detail to demonstrate the reasons for decisions or to progress planning.
- 38 Ofsted cited in their report that the local authority's response to the needs of privately fostered children and young people requires improvement.
- 39 More work is needed to use the analysis from return home interviews to further strengthen practice.
- 40 Ofsted noted that the take-up of the independent visitor service has been very low and the eligibility criteria for the service is narrower than the requirements set out in statutory guidance.
- 41 Ofsted cited in their report that the numbers of young people in 'staying put' arrangements with previous foster carers, is relatively low in Durham.
- 42 Further work is also needed to ensure the recruitment of adopters is informed by a clear analysis of need.
- 43 Inspectors felt that decisions within the assessments undertaken by the local authority when children are placed with parents under care orders are not consistently of a good enough quality.
- 44 All of the recommendations, contained in the report, are shown below:

<b>Recommendations</b>	
1	Continue with existing plans to ensure that there is sufficient capacity and stability in social work teams so that caseloads are manageable and workers are able to fully support children and young people.
2	Review existing arrangements to ensure that political and senior leaders have access to improved quantitative and qualitative performance information that enables them to have an accurate picture of the current practice delivered to children, so that they can develop strategies to maintain and improve the quality of frontline practice.

3	Continue with the plan to review existing recording systems to ensure that children's case records are organised in such a way that they present a coherent, accurate and easily accessible picture of child's journey.
4	Improve the quality of social work assessments for all children, young people and care leavers by ensuring that they consistently contain comprehensive and rigorous analysis of all relevant information.
5	Improve the quality of planning for all children, young people and care leavers so that plans are clear about intended outcomes and timescales, and about who is responsible for actions. Ensure that families receive a copy of their plan. Ensure that key agencies participate in strategy discussions and meetings, or provide information to them, to comply with statutory guidance.
6	Ensure that consent is sought from parents when enquiries are undertaken for all cases of children and young people in need.
7	Improve private fostering arrangements to comply with statutory guidance through effective awareness raising, visits to children and completion of assessments.
8	Improve case file auditing to ensure robust and independent evaluation of the quality of practice to promote learning and improvement.
9	Improve the oversight of casework where children are in voluntary care arrangements, including those under the PLO process, so that plans for these children progress without delay and within timescales.
10	For children moving to live with parents under care orders, review practice in respect of reports prepared under 'The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010' to make sure that these cover all relevant information and are signed off at a suitably senior level.
11	Review of use of, and eligibility criteria for, the independent visitor scheme so that the full range of children who would benefit from the scheme are able to do so.
12	Ensure that all care leavers in foster care are aware, of the opportunity to 'stay put' in their placements after the age of 18 years, should they wish to do so.
13	Ensure that adoption recruitment strategy is based on the analysis of data, so that there is a targeted approach to ensure that sufficient carers are recruited to meet the needs of children in Durham
14	Improve how information from return home interviews is used to support risk assessments for children who go missing and/or are at risk of CSE.

### Next Steps

- 45 A significant amount of work is already underway to make the improvements necessary to bring the areas requiring improvement up to the 'good' standard.
- 46 The action plan includes four themes for improvement:
- Strengthening management and staffing capacity;
  - Strengthening political and management oversight;
  - Improving the quality of practice;
  - Compliance with regulations.

- 47 A number of issues for improvement had been recognised by the service prior to the Ofsted SIF inspection and an action plan was in place to improve quality, as well as the creation of a Quality Improvement Board (QIB) to oversee strategic developments in quality.
- 48 The action plan focused on improvements in the following areas:
- Case file audits
  - Supervision arrangements
  - Quality of casework in respect of:
    - Ensuring all staff know what 'good' case work looks like
    - Improving quality and timeliness of assessments
    - Improving quality of direct work with children
    - Improving quality of plans
    - Improving case recording
    - Carrying out statutory visits in line with requirements
    - Improving the use of chronologies on case files.
- 49 The service have prepared and published a written statement of the action it intends to take – an 'improvement plan' in response to the report. The draft of this plan is available upon request. An improvement seminar has been organised between Ofsted and the Local Authority was held on 16 August 2016 to consider the draft improvement plan.
- 50 The QIB is chaired by the Interim Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Service, and has representation from Children's Services, Planning and Service Strategy, the Assistant Chief Executive's Office and the Local Government Association in the form of the Children's Services Improvement Advisor for the North East (Ann Baxter).
- 51 The function of the QIB is to provide strategic oversight of quality assurance and improvement including process, procedures and standards; performance and quality assurance and improvement within Children's Services, including monitoring of the SIF Inspection Improvement Plan. The Board ensures developments are taken forward in a timely manner that leads to improvement across a range of areas such as workforce development, quality assurance frameworks, best practice and structural design. The QIB does not replicate any existing management meetings or quality and performance oversight mechanisms.

## **LSCB**

### **Summary of Feedback**

- 52 The rating given to the Board was 'good'. The Chair of the Board and Board members consider that the rating of 'good' appropriately represents the progress that has been made within the Board.

- 53 Ofsted reports that the Durham LSCB is an ambitious and reflective Board whose effectiveness and functioning has significantly improved since the peer review of November 2014. There is clear multi-agency ownership of Board activity, which is sighted on key issues with focused priorities. The voice and experience of children and young people are at the heart of the Board's work. There is a culture of openness and challenge and the chair of the Board has been instrumental in leading and facilitating the developments.
- 54 The LSCB has clear governance arrangements with other strategic partnership Boards, with whom there are aligned priorities. These successfully support senior management coordination and oversight of strategic safeguarding work.
- 55 An appropriately resourced and well-managed business unit provides good support to the Board. Efficient processes underpinning Board activity have been developed, ensuring that work is coordinated, timely and in line with Board priorities.
- 56 A timely and thorough Section 11 (S11) audit and challenge process ensures that safeguarding is a priority for partner agencies in Durham and that identified improvements are implemented. S11 of the Children Act 2004 places duties on a range of organisations and individuals to ensure their functions, and any services that they contract out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- 57 The LSCB leads on aspects of key strategic work, including early help and neglect and responses to CSE and missing children. The early help offer is well resourced and embedded, with clear strategic direction. Responses to CSE are well coordinated at both a strategic and operational level.
- 58 Effective processes are in place for reviewing and disseminating learning from serious, child death and other case reviews. Learning events have been particularly well received and future evaluation will be required to assess whether there have been embedded practice improvements.
- 59 Quality assurance processes have improved significantly over the last year and give oversight for the Board to challenge and assure itself of the quality of work, but in some areas, the reporting and oversight is not yet sufficiently developed.
- 60 The Board has effective systems for the planning, monitoring and oversight of training activity, clearly linked to Board priorities, and training requirements arising from serious case reviews. The Board delivers a well-regarded programme of training and e-learning opportunities.

## **Recommendations**

- 61 The following recommendations were made by Ofsted:
- Ensure that quality assurance and performance management processes are further developed to offer a detailed and comprehensive picture of the quality and impact of frontline practice in all service areas to underpin strategic understanding, challenge and development.



- Ensure that quality assurance and audit work contributes to understanding the impact of training and the embedding of lessons learned from case reviews.
- Develop more effective feedback processes from children, young people and families who have received child protection services to support ongoing service improvement.
- Ensure that the annual report provides a rigorous assessment of the performance and effectiveness of local services.

## **Next Steps**

62 An action plan has been developed and shared with the Board for comments. All actions are planned to be completed by March 2017. The actions have been incorporated into the Business Plan 2015-2018 which has been refreshed following the Ofsted inspection. Actions include further work to engage with children and young people in the child protection process, a review of the Child Protection procedures and review of the scorecard and performance process.

## **Children's Services: National Context**

### **Reporting and acting on Child Abuse and Neglect – July 2016**

63 On 21 July 2016, the Home Office and Department for Education published a consultation which sets out the government's wide-ranging programme of reform to provide better outcomes for vulnerable children. The consultation seeks views on the possible introduction of one of two additional statutory measures:

- a mandatory reporting duty, which would require certain practitioners or organisations to report child abuse or neglect if they knew or had reasonable cause to suspect it was taking place.
- a duty to act, which would require certain practitioners or organisations to take appropriate action in relation to child abuse or neglect if they knew or had reasonable cause to suspect it was taking place.

64 The consultation responds to the aims set out in the Serious Crime Act 2015 and Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Report, published in March 2015.

65 The consultation is due to close on 13th October 2016 and the Government will consider all responses to the consultation carefully before deciding on next steps.

### **Keep on caring: supporting young people from care to independence – July 2016**

66 On 7 July 2016, the Government set out their vision for the further reform of support for care leavers based on innovation, system reform, and the embedding of corporate parenting responsibility across society.

- 65 The strategy makes a commitment that the Government will use the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme to rethink transitions to adulthood for young people in the children's social care system, with a focus on developing new ways to provide care leavers with the personal support networks they need to thrive. The document identifies and describes how the Government will support care leavers to achieve five key outcomes:
- Better prepared and supported to live independently
  - Improved access to education, training and employment
  - Experiencing stability and feeling safe and secure
  - Improved Access to Health Support
  - Achieving Financial Stability
- 66 The strategy also highlights the Government's role in driving reform and improvement. This will involve promoting and sharing best practice, through the creation of the new Children's Social Care 'What Works' Centre, as well as work with the 'Partners in Practice' group of local authorities. The Government will also continue to support and challenge local authorities and intervene where failure is found and services are judged to be inadequate.

### **Putting children first: our vision for children's social care – July 2016**

- 67 On 4 July 2016 the Department for Education published 'Putting children first: our vision for children's social care' which sets out the government's reform programme for children's social care in England over the next 5 years. The Government's strategy involves a fundamental reform of each of the three pillars on which the children's social care system stands:
- 1) **People and leadership** – bringing the best into the profession and giving them the right knowledge and skills for the challenging but hugely rewarding work ahead, and developing leaders equipped to nurture practice excellence.
  - 2) **Practice and systems** – creating the right environment for excellent practice and innovation to flourish, learning from the very best practice, and learning from when things go wrong.
  - 3) **Governance and accountability** – making sure that what is being done is working, and developing innovative new organisational models with the potential to radically improve services.
- 68 By 2020, the Government wants to ensure that every local children's social care service across the country has a workforce, at all levels equipped with the knowledge and skills, verified through robust assessment and accreditation. The Chief Social Worker is leading on this development.
- 69 To support this innovation and drive for excellence, by 2020 the Government want to see a more diverse range of children's social care organisations, operating over new geographical areas, supported by meaningful data and an inspection regime that supports high-quality evidence-based front line practice, with local arrangements that best support coordination across agencies. The performance of these new organisations must be driven by challenging, sharp and practice-focused accountability. The Government believes 150 children's services organisations is not sustainable.

- 70 The paper builds on the paper 'Adoption: a vision for change' which set out the government's vision for a reformed adoption system by 2020. It also responds to the important recent reviews by Sir Martin Narey and Alan Wood CBE, on residential care and multi-agency arrangements for safeguarding children respectively and on a previous policy paper 'Children's social care reform: a vision for change.

### **Residential Care in England: Report of Sir Martin Narey's independent review of children's residential care – July 2016**

- 71 On 28 October 2015 the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Education asked Sir Martin Narey to lead an independent review of residential care. The review looked at the role of children's homes within the care system, exploring when, and for which children, homes should be used, what works within residential care, and how to improve outcomes for the young people who live in them, and what improvements could be made to the way that residential care homes are commissioned, delivered, regulated and inspected.
- 72 The Independent Review, published by the Department for Education (DfE) on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2016, makes 34 recommendations which, Sir Martin Narey believes, will deliver significant improvement in the care of the challenging, troubled, harmed, often damaged, yet frequently inspiring children who live in them. The recommendations include:
- The DfE to facilitate the improvement of local and regional commissioning skills.
  - A priority for the DfE should be a fundamental review of fostering.
  - Ofsted are urged to introduce arrangements which will mean that, save in exceptional circumstances, homes achieving a good or outstanding rating will be inspected only once a year.
  - Ofsted should no longer encourage authorities only to place children in good or outstanding homes.
  - The priority should be to recruit staff with the right qualities, temperament and resilience and then help them to develop.
  - The Government is urged to commit to introducing Staying Close which would guarantee support for three years for children leaving residential homes.
  - Establishment of a Residential Care Leadership Board which should report to the Minister for Children.

### **Future of social care inspection – June 2016**

- 73 On 28 June 2016, Ofsted published a consultation seeking views on proposed changes across Ofsted's inspections of children's social care in four key areas:
- 1 The principles of social care inspection  
Ofsted propose that social care inspections should be governed under three principles:
    - Focus on the things that matter most to children's lives
    - Be consistent in their expectations of providers
    - Focus on services that are less than good

- 2 Inspections of local authority children's services  
The consultation sets out Ofsted's proposals for the overall approach to inspections of local authority children's services. The inspection framework will be based on the response to these proposals. Ofsted will start a targeted consultation with local authorities and other key stakeholders on the detail of the inspection framework later in 2016.
- 3 A social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) for all establishments, agencies, boarding schools and residential special schools and residential provision in further education colleges. The framework will mean that same judgement structure will apply in each of these settings, Ofsted will evaluate and report on a set of common issues in every inspection, their methodology will be underpinned by the same key principles and Ofsted will ensure that there is consistency in what 'good' looks like for children and other users.
- 4 Specific changes to Ofsted's inspections of independent fostering agencies (IFAs), including a proportionate response to agencies judged as good or outstanding.

74 Ofsted expect to start the new inspections of local authorities in 2018, after they complete the single inspection programme. The SCCIF will be implemented from April 2017, including any agreed changes to the arrangements for the inspections of independent fostering agencies.

### **The Queen's Speech – May 2016**

75 On 18 May 2016, the Queen delivered a speech at the State Opening of Parliament, which outlined the Government's legislative programme for the next 12 months. Twenty one bills and a number of other measures will be brought forward, the following are of particular relevance: Children and Social Work Bill (England), Counter-Extremism and Safeguarding Bill (England and Wales), Life Chances Strategy and Soft Drinks Industry.

76 The Children and Social Work Bill (England) aims to accelerate adoption procedure and reinforces the Government's commitment to the 4 year strategy 'Adoption: a vision for change' which is outlined in paragraphs 83 - 89.

77 The Bill will also put a requirement on all councils to inform children leaving care what services they are entitled to and grant all care leavers up to the age of 25 a right to a personal adviser to ensure they receive the support when transitioning to adulthood. The Government will further introduce a new social work regulator which will focus on training and professional standards as well as a duty for councils and schools to promote educational achievement for adopted children.

78 In order to restrict extremist activity, the Government will introduce the Counter-Extremism and Safeguarding Bill (England) which will grant new powers to tackle radicalisation of children in "unregulated education settings". As part of preventing online radicalisation activities, Ofcom will be granted powers to

regulate internet-streamed material from outside the European Union. The Government have also stated that they would step in where councils failed to tackle extremism.

- 79 The forthcoming Life Chances Strategy, due to be published following the Parliamentary summer recess, will set out the Government's new approach to tackling poverty and transforming the life chances of the most disadvantaged children and families. The Strategy will also include a set of measures on the root causes of poverty.
- 80 In order to tackle child obesity the Government will introduce the Soft Drinks Industry Levy on producers of drinks with added sugar content which will come into force in April 2018. This measure will be included in the 2017 Finance Bill and money raised through it will be used to increase funding for school sports, after-school activities and breakfast clubs.

### **Children's Social Care Innovation Programme: April 2016 – March 2020**

- 81 On 3 April 2016 the Education Secretary announced a new £200 million fund, as part of the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme, over the next four years to encourage novel practice and approaches to children's services.
- 82 The funding is available for new innovation projects and for scaling up or spreading existing innovations. New innovation projects can focus upon two priority themes "rethinking social care" or "supporting adolescents in transitioning to adulthood" or, if an idea is particularly promising and innovative, it may sit outside of those themes. Projects interested in taking an existing idea with strong indications of impact from initial evaluation may also apply for funding to help spread their idea to more young people or work in a greater number of areas. See paragraphs 121– 122 for further details.

### **Adoption - A vision for change**

- 83 On 27 March 2016 the Education Secretary unveiled a new 4 year strategy 'Adoption: a vision for change', which sets out how the Government plans to address challenges in the adoption system over the next four years.
- 84 The strategy details how, by 2020, the Government will deliver a system where all children are matched with adoptive parents without delay and includes a new drive to boost the educational success of adopted children. For the first time, every child adopted will have a designated teacher and 'virtual school head' who will provide tailored support to help children overcome trauma and give these young people the best possible education, as do looked after children currently.
- 85 To end delay in adoption for vulnerable children, larger local pools of approved adopters will be developed by making sure every single council is part of a regional adoption agency by 2020. To support the transition to regional adoption agencies, the Government will provide up to £14 million across 2016-18 to local authorities and voluntary adoption agencies to develop and implement regional agencies.

- 86 The strategy also sets out how the Government will provide vital therapeutic services to all adopted young people up to the age of 21, as well as family and friends who care for them, backed by a new commitment totaling over £49 million.
- 87 The Government will make sure that social workers have the skills to make the right decisions for adoptive families by clearly setting out how social workers must prioritise adoption where it is in the best interest of the child.
- 88 Scorecards will be introduced which will be used to hold councils and regional adoption agencies to account for delays between a child entering care and moving in with their new family.
- 89 To support the spreading and development of excellent practice in regional adoption agencies and on a national scale, the Government will introduce two new funding streams totaling up to £16 million over 2016-18:
- A practice and innovation fund will be set up to support regional adoption agency projects, individual voluntary adoption agencies and voluntary organisations to develop and deliver new ways of working, or to expand the reach of existing effective practice.
  - A voluntary adoption agency capacity building fund will also be established to support the voluntary sector to strengthen its position as key players in regional adoption agencies.

### **Inquiry 2016: Children's Social Care**

- 90 In February 2016, the All Party Parliamentary Group for Children (APPGC) launched an inquiry to address local arrangements for the delivery of children's social care in light of changes in resources and demand, a new inspection framework and diversity in performance and outcomes.
- 91 The aim of the inquiry is to:
- Bring together evidence about the current resourcing of children's social care services and changes in the nature and level of demand;
  - Explore the (potential) impact of these changes on the delivery of children's social care services and on children and young people;
  - Build a picture of the key elements of a successful children's services department and the challenge facing areas that are struggling to improve, and share examples of good practice;
  - Assess whether changes are needed to policy and legislation in order to improve the delivery of children's social care services and in turn outcomes for children.

- 92 The findings from the inquiry will be published by early 2017.

### **Failing Children's Services in local authorities**

- 93 In December 2015, the Prime Minister announced reforms which will mean that poorly performing children's services will be subject to new arrangements if they do not improve.

94 In a formalised academy-style system, sharper triggers will be put in place so that an emergency Ofsted inspection can be ordered where there are concerns about an authority's performance. If a local authority's children's service fails to improve within six months of their Ofsted inspection, a new service leader (commissioner) will be put in place. High-performing local authorities, experts in child protection and charities will be brought in to turn the children's service around.

### **Review of Local Safeguarding Children Boards' role and functions**

95 The Prime Minister announced on 14 December 2015 that ministers had asked former Association of Directors of Children Services President, Alan Wood CBE, to undertake a fundamental review of the Role and Functions of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) within the context of local strategic multi-agency working. This included consideration of the child death review process, and how the intended centralisation of serious case reviews would work effectively at a local level.

96 The Department for Education (DfE) has published the 'Wood Review of the Role and Functions of Local Safeguarding Children Boards', together with the Government's response.

97 The main recommendations agreed by the Government are the following:

- Simplify and strengthen the existing statutory framework around multi-agency working to ensure engagement of the key partners is a better coordinated, more consistent framework for protecting children and that these arrangements are multi-agency in their approach.
- Replace the current system of Serious Case Review (SCRs) and miscellaneous local reviews with a system of national and local reviews.
- Put in place arrangements to transfer national oversight of Child Death Overview Panels (CDOPs) from the DfE to the Department of Health.

98 Although there are potential implications to consider from both reports, LSCB's are advised to wait for further guidance from the DfE on the implementation of these recommendations.

### **Youth Justice**

99 The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice announced the national review of the Youth Justice System on 11 September 2015.

100 Led by Charlie Taylor, the former Chief Executive of the National College of Teaching and Leadership, the review is of the whole Youth Justice System, including the secure estate, courts and sentencing. The Review is looking at evidence, current practice and governance arrangements in preventing youth crime and rehabilitating young people who offend and exploring how the Youth Justice System can most effectively interact with wider partner services for children and young people.

101 An interim report of emerging findings was published in February 2016 and the full review is due to be published after the Parliamentary summer recess.

## **Regional Context**

### **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**

- 102 The region continues its commitment to addressing CSE and has established a North East Tackling Exploitation Board which includes senior representatives from local authorities, the three police forces in the region, NHS England and a local academic. The aim of the Board is to provide strategic leadership to make the most of collective resources and expertise to tackle the issues surrounding the sexual exploitation of children in the North East.
- 103 The Board will develop and support a long-term sustainable approach to tackling exploitation, support vulnerable children, disrupt perpetrators and raise awareness and vigilance across our communities.
- 104 An Independent Panel Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse led by Professor Alexis Jay was launched at the beginning of July 2015 and is expected to take up to five years to complete. The Inquiry will consider whether, and the extent to which, public bodies and other important institutions have taken seriously their duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse. Children's Services is involved in the Notification Pilot through Aycliffe Secure Children's Home and Hassockfield Secure Training Centre.

### **Regional Adoption agencies**

- 105 As described in paragraphs 83-89, there are plans for the reform of adoption including creation of regional adoption agencies.
- 106 The Regional Adoption Board, chaired by the Stockton Director of Children's Services, is leading this work. Two sub-regional adoption agencies are currently under development.

### **Workforce Development and Strategic Programmes**

- 107 Durham County Council was one of a small number of social work employers to participate in a national 'proof of concept phase' for the assessment and accreditation of child and family social workers. There were 60 participants from Children and Adults Services in the project. Statistical feedback was received on 12 May 2016. This showed that the average score of social workers in the Service was close to the average score across all employers participating in the proof of concept. Individual participants received feedback during the week commencing 16 May 2016. Public consultation is anticipated in summer 2016. The Department for Education initially intended to roll out the programme progressively commencing with partners in practice local authorities and graduates on the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment from September 2016, however has since invited all organisations which participated in the proof of concept to opt in. Children's Services have chosen to take part in the full phase 1 rollout.



- 108 The expansion of the teaching partnerships programme was announced on 11 April 2016. Applications for funding were invited covering a 2 year period (30 May 2016 - 30 March 2018). An application was submitted on 23 May 2016. Durham County Council agreed to act as lead local authority for the application. If the application is successful the role of lead local authority will include holding and distributing funding on behalf of the North East partnership, and hosting associated staff. The application was supported by all 12 local authorities in the North East region, and 5 of the universities offering pre-qualifying social work education. Durham University was unable to gain institutional clearance in time, but may join the partnership at a later date. The outcome of the application is expected shortly.
- 109 Step Up to Social Work is a 14 month programme for people who want to work as social workers with children and families. The programme combines teaching and placements. At the end of the programme successful participants are awarded a Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work and are able to register as social workers with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). Durham County Council supported a regional bid for funding for a North East programme. The programme commenced in January 2016. Durham County Council supports 5 of the 39 candidates across the region. It is anticipated that the application process for the next cohort will take place in spring 2017, and training will begin in 2018. Regional planning for the next cohort has commenced, and Children's Services has indicated that it will support 8 candidates. A programme of information and support is to be developed to give experienced staff without social work qualifications the best chance of succeeding in the application process.
- 110 FrontLine is a 2 year programme for people who want to work as social workers with children and families. In year 1 participants attend a 5 week residential programme, and then work in a unit of 4 participants supported by a highly skilled and experienced social worker and tailored training. At the end of the year successful participants are awarded a Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work and are able to register as social workers with the HCPC. In year 2 participants are employed by a supporting local authority and complete the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment alongside a masters degree in social work. Durham County Council expects to support participants on the programme from Autumn 2017.
- 111 FirstLine is a leadership development programme which develops good social work managers into high performing, considered and influential leaders who will set high practice standards, focus on developing and improving social workers and contribute to the creation of high-functioning, outcome-focussed, practice systems. The programme is designed for those who manage social workers who work directly with children and families in a statutory setting. Durham County Council expects to be able to access the programme by 2017-2018 at the latest.
- 112 A development programme for existing managers in Children's Services is being finalised. The programme clearly outlines the mandatory training required by Durham County Council, Children and Young People's Services and the Local Safeguarding Children Board. It also includes a range of core development opportunities, from short workshops run by members of the Senior Management team, to access to the 'Strengthening Managers'

programme, and opportunities for one-to-one coaching support and to join a peer support network. Optional development opportunities in the programme include access to an award in coaching at level 3, and diplomas in management at levels 5 and 7.

- 113 Work is underway to create a development programme for aspiring managers, which will provide a clear route from experienced social worker to social work manager. Three focus groups with potential candidates were held in July 2016. Further consultation with existing team managers and operations managers is planned in August/September 2016 to inform the proposed programme.

## **Local Context**

### **Children's Social Care Innovation Programme**

- 114 Durham was successful in two bids to the Children's Social Care Innovation Fund for a therapeutic support programme at Aycliffe Secure Centre and to deliver on a large scale new approach to social work and to work with families.
- 115 In relation to the therapeutic support programme at Aycliffe Secure Centre for children that have been sexually exploited the overall delivery of the project has been a success and an inspection by Ofsted on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2015 rated the Centre as 'good'.
- 116 The project has started to achieve improved outcomes:
- Transition support has stabilised community placement through intensive work with family and carers, young people and social workers;
  - Attitudes to teachers and the learning environment have improved in a number of young women;
  - All young people have a safety plan prior to leaving, which is helping to reduce risk taking behaviour.
- 117 The training and subsequent reflective practice sessions have been the real successes of the project and are being adopted by other areas within the Aycliffe Secure Centre. This has generated a culture change and transformation in the use of language which helps staff deal with and articulate the challenges of working with highly traumatised young women.
- 118 The Evaluation Report on Aycliffe CSE Innovation Project was published by the Department of Education on 4 July 2016. The report looked at how the specialist unit's programme can improve the mental health and well-being of sexually exploited young people and also highlighted the project's achievements as well as an ongoing need for further integration of Young People secure placements into Local Authorities' long – term individual care plans for victims of CSE. The 'Key Findings' section of the report provides an insight to the challenges to and successes of the project, i.e. capacity pressures due to a wide geographical range of referral sources, lack of placements providing long-term care in the transition process, difficulties in joint initiatives as well as the crucial role of the committed and experienced staff, good partnership work and the project's contribution to the wider vision for Aycliffe in a cultural shift context.

- 119 Progress on the main innovative elements of Durham's programme to deliver on a large scale new approach to social work and to work with families includes:
- (a) **Families First Teams** – three Families First Teams went live July 2015 and the remaining seven teams went live in February 2016 meaning families that need help receive it when and how they need it across the whole County. The Families First Teams, led by social workers, include family support workers and other specialist staff who will work together from community hubs which also accommodate the One Point Service. This will mean that workers are based in the community and will have more time to build strong, professional relationships with children, young people and families. They will also have the knowledge of local organisations that may be able to provide additional help and support if needed.
  - (b) **Third sector alliances have been strengthened** with positive regional interest in Durham's developments. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) has been finalised, which underpins the voluntary community sector (VCS) Alliance Model, which provides long-term and sustainable help and support for children, young people and families.
  - (c) **An intensive workforce development programme has commenced** - all staff across the service have received induction training. Workforce development activity will continue to support transformation.
  - (d) **Enhanced service user engagement** is a key feature of the Innovation Programme. Launch events for all three areas have been held and were well attended by partners from a range of agencies.
- 120 The evaluation of the programme is ongoing and it has been agreed with the Department for Education that the timeline be extended from March 2016 to November 2016 in recognition of implementation timescales across the national programme.
- 121 As part of the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme April 2016 – March 2020, on 7 July 2016 Durham submitted a bid for £6 million around wider transformation for the continuation and expansion of this work.
- 122 The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has also submitted a bid for £80,000 to increase the Voice of the Child, especially in relation to hard to reach groups.

### **Workforce Pressures**

- 123 As reported within the previous report to the Health and Wellbeing Board, there have been challenges within Children's Services in relation to workforce pressures and maintaining appropriate caseload sizes for social workers. Action is being taken by the service to ensure that manageable caseloads can be achieved including participating in strategic workforce development programmes such as those outlined in paragraphs 107 - 113 and changes to workflow.

- 124 There is no set recommended caseload level for children's social workers, although a recent ADCS survey has suggested that 20-25 is the general benchmark nationally, although a number of authorities aspire to caseloads of 16-18.
- 125 In 2014, when new structures were implemented, most teams maintained workloads within this region, although some pressures were evident in the Assessment and Intervention teams. Since Autumn 2015, however, caseload pressures have grown in two of the three Child Protection Teams due to staff absences and the lack of available agency staff to cover. The teams struggled to cope with the volume and complexity of the work, which involves the majority of Family Court Proceedings.
- 126 By January, it was necessary to take action to mitigate the risks associated with this situation. New work was not transferred into these teams from January. In February, in order to avoid the risk of child protection cases not being worked, (known as "stacking"), it was necessary to reallocate work from these teams across all social work teams.
- 127 As a result of this action, caseloads rose across the service to unacceptable levels. Management action was taken to ensure risks within caseloads were assessed so that high priority cases received attention throughout.
- 128 At the time of the Ofsted SIF inspection, several teams had average caseloads approaching 40 and two Families First teams had some unallocated work. Ofsted criticised the situation in Durham and have referred to the impact of high caseloads on quality within the report.
- 129 There are a number of causes for such significant pressures including structural design of the service creating bottlenecks, changes to court expectations around proceedings timescales and positive changes to working practices which have led to cases being open for longer.
- 130 Continuing actions to address the pressures include the following short and medium term actions:
- Rolling recruitment of social workers;
  - Recruitment of agency social workers when available;
  - Reallocation of cases across the service to manage demand;
  - The creation of an Assisted Year in Employment (ASYE) Academy to support the recruitment, retention and development of 12 high calibre Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWS). See paragraph 107 for further details. The annual net cost of this initiative will be £376, 000 and will lead to future cost savings and efficiencies after 12 months by a reduction in spend on agency staff and the filling of any social worker vacancies within the service. The budget for this will be met from the cash limit and will run for one year pending review;
  - Supporting and developing staff, managers and aspiring managers within the service through a range of strategic and innovative programmes such as Step up to Social Work, Frontline, Firstline, Teaching Partnerships and Development Programmes (see paragraphs 108-113);

- Piloting the national accreditation of social workers (see paragraph 107);
- Introduction of the new role of 'social work consultant' to ensure high quality supervision and reflective practice is embedded within social work teams;
- Undertaking a workflow modelling project to identify bottlenecks and blockages in the current structure which will inform the development of a revised structure and streamlined process;
- Redesigning the Families First and Child Protection teams in order to: improve resilience; reduce the number of social worker changes for children and families; broaden social workers professional experience and improve the quality of social work practice;
- The creation of a new team in the East of the County which will allow the current pressure to be managed while the workflow analysis is completed. The net cost of this initiative for 16/17 will be £327,000 and will be met from the cash limit for one year;
- A fundamental review is presently being carried out into future resource requirements which will also take into account the transformation reviews within Children's Social Care. The findings of this review will detail if additional resource is required in 2017/18 which would need to be built into Medium Term Financial Plan planning and the options available to reduce costs in future years to support the MTFP.

### **Social Work Academy**

- 131 A new model of support for newly qualified social workers is being piloted in Durham. The social work academy initiative has been designed to increase the availability of good quality, experienced social workers. The practice lead for the academy was appointed on 20 May 2016. There were 127 applications received for the 12 newly qualified social worker posts, and 12 have been appointed. The successful candidates will benefit from high levels of mentoring, support and extensive learning and development opportunities throughout their first year in practice.
- 132 In 2016/17 the forecast cost in this regard is £371,000 with the costs to be covered from the Cash Limit Reserve. The plan is to review the success of this strategy during the summer of 2017. If the strategy is proving successful and meeting the set objectives, a request for budget growth in 2018/19 would be submitted as part of MTFP planning offset against current un budgeted spend on agency staff. In the meantime Cash Limit Reserves would be required again in 2017/18 up to a maximum of £371,000. The maximum total draw on Cash Limit Reserves would be £742,000.

### **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**

- 133 The Durham Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has prioritised work on CSE since 2011. CSE was identified as a strategic policing requirement in March 2015. CSE is also a community safety priority as outlined in Louise Casey's inspection report of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council.
- 134 The LSCB Missing and Exploited Sub-Group (MEG) carried out an analysis of CSE in County Durham in 2014 and this has recently been updated to cover the period April 2014 to March 2015. The analysis found that:

- Online CSE continues as the most common model of sexual exploitation. The prevalence of this has increased from 25% to 37%.
  - There were 230 young people identified as at risk of CSE.
  - Little community intelligence is being gathered or submitted.
  - Most victims are female with the most common age being between 13-16 years.
  - Most common nationality of perpetrators is British, people from the Middle East make up only 3%.
  - Perpetrators of online CSE can reside anywhere in the world and can be difficult to identify and convict. Online vigilantes are an emerging trend identified in the data.
- 135 Seen in historical operations into CSE, 'Position of Trust' is a newly considered model which was not presented in previous profiles. This involves a perpetrator employed or volunteering in a position where the young person would be expected to trust that person who then goes on to sexually exploit the victim.
- 136 There are strong links between sexual exploitation and those young people who are reported missing from home. LSCB audits for both CSE and missing children incidents have highlighted a range of risks associated with those young people who go missing, including sexual exploitation, mental health, alcohol or drugs. The offender profile is one of 'street grooming' and use of social media to exploit children.
- 137 The LSCB Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy and action plan 2014-2017 outlines the key actions to be progressed to achieve the strategic aims of:
- Prevent – making it more difficult to exploit children
  - Protect – identifying and safeguarding children who are at risk
  - Pursue – the offenders, disrupt and where possible prosecute their activity
- 138 Progress against actions over the last six months includes:
- 'Intervene to Protect a Child' (IPC) training - a new and proactive training tactic to identify and disrupt offenders. Further training was undertaken in April and June 2016. Over 1,000 police officers and other agency staff such as children and adult services, housing, neighbourhood wardens and probation officers have been trained in this innovative technique.
  - Developing stronger relationships with communities through the Area Action Partnerships (AAP), raising awareness of CSE and how to report concerns or intelligence of CSE. The AAP's have, to date, promoted ERASE and the website. A CSE presentation is being delivered to all AAP Board Meetings from March through to November 2016. To date five presentations have been undertaken.
  - Working with primary and secondary schools to advise on internet eSafety, utilising Sexual Relationships Education (SRE) to deliver messages on consent and healthy relationships and through the ChildLine Schools Service, using workshops and assemblies delivered by specialist trained volunteers to educate primary school children aged

nine to 11 years old to understand abuse and help them stay safe.

- Widening our CSE training, awareness and intelligence gathering to non-traditional safeguarding services including hotels, take away outlets, off-licence trade and internally staff such as Neighbourhood Wardens, Anti-social Behaviour and Recycle Teams.
  - CSE awareness sessions for childcare and out of school sectors were undertaken in April 2016.
- 139 Over (1,000) 50% of a total of 1757 taxi drivers licensed by Durham County Council have received CSE awareness training on a voluntary basis. The sessions have been delivered by police and LSCB trainers with a CSE expert on hand at each session. The sessions have also enabled the police to gain intelligence from taxi drivers prompted by the training received.
- 140 At the County Council meeting held on 13 April, 2016 the Council agreed to review the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy and require all taxi drivers and applicants to undergo CSE awareness training; all applicants prior to being first licensed and existing drivers by no later than 1 September 2016. The knowledge tests for new applicants will also be amended to include questions around CSE awareness.
- 141 'ERASE' (Educate and Raise Awareness of Sexual Exploitation) is well established offering parents and carers advice on how to communicate with their children about who they speak to on-line and off-line.
- 142 The ERASE Team and the LSCB hosted two ERASE Problem Solving and Referral Pathways events on 26 April 2016. The sessions included risk indicators and risk matrix guidance, problem solving and interventions to reduce risk of missing from home and child sexual and how intelligence is used in the fight against CSE.
- 143 The ERASE website was launched in January 2016. The front page has links for younger children, older children, parents/carers and professionals and also links to the LSCB website.
- 144 An ERASE Young People's Conference was delivered on 22 June 2016 involving 12 Year 9 pupils from seven schools, in workshop sessions, based on understanding CSE, appropriate relationships, grooming and online safety, Following the Conference the young people will plan actions to provide feedback and advice to their individual schools.
- 145 A 'Together, we can tackle child abuse' campaign has been launched by the Department for Education with the support of local authorities and other partners, including Durham County Council and Durham Local Safeguarding Children Board. The aim of the campaign is to encourage members of the public to report instances of child abuse and neglect and overcome the barriers that stop people reporting.
- 146 Durham County Council has undertaken and completed an internal review of CSE to provide assurance on the activity and governance in place, the findings of which were considered by Corporate Management Team on 14 October 2015.

## **Serious Case Reviews**

- 147 Regulation 5 of the Local Safeguarding Children Board Regulations (LSCB) 2006 requires Local Safeguarding Children Boards to undertake a Serious Case Review in accordance with the criteria and procedures that are set out in chapter four of *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015)*.
- 148 The LSCB should always undertake a Serious Case Review (SCR) when a child dies or has been seriously harmed and abuse or neglect is either known or is suspected *and* there is cause for concern as to the way in which the authority, their Board partners or other relevant persons have worked together to safeguard the child. The purpose of the review is to identify improvements which are needed and to consolidate good practice.
- 149 Two serious case reviews have reached a conclusion; one review has been published and another is due to be published in the forthcoming months. A further two cases have been considered for a serious case review.
- 150 The Learning and Improvement Sub-Group of the LSCB are responsible for monitoring progress on action plans and challenging agencies to ensure relevant outcomes.
- 151 A series of Learning Lessons Events, attended by 750 staff, have also been completed to help raise awareness of the key messages and lessons learned from Serious Case Reviews and other reviews undertaken by Durham LSCB.

## **Integrated Transitions Team for Disabled Children**

- 152 Services for disabled children have been restructured and an Integrated Transitions Team for Disabled Children has been created, merging staff from Adult Services and Children's Services. The new team is designed to achieve better transition from children's to adult services and works with children from 14 years old onwards.

## **0-19 Services Contract**

- 153 A contract for the provision of children's health services 0-19 has been commissioned by Public Health. This delivers the Health Visiting services and School Nursing service for the County, including support for vulnerable families. The contract was awarded to Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust and, under Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE) employees have transferred from the previous provider, County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust to deliver the new contract. Staff will be co-located in children's centres and One Point hubs with council staff in order to deliver more integrated services for children and families.

## **Stronger Families**

- 154 By March 2015 Durham met its full target and 'turned around' 1,320 families under Phase 1 of the Stronger Families Programme.



- 155 As one of the Troubled Families Programme's Early Starters, Durham will work with 4,330 families and deliver Phase 2 over a 5 year period. Phase 2 includes much broader eligibility criteria, enabling the majority of families worked with by social care services to be part of the programme and to achieve results payments.
- 156 Up to 31 July 2016, Durham has identified 247 families as being 'turned around' against the new Family Outcomes Framework (FOF).
- 157 The key actions for phase 2 include:
- Embedding the use of the FOF and development of outcome-focused care plans;
  - Coordination of workforce development with the Service Transformation and Innovation Programme and LSCB;
  - A range of ICT developments to help manage the information requirements of the expanded programme, including Family Progress Data and outcomes evidence collection for payment-by-results;
  - Revise the payment-by-result methodology and grant terms of reference with our Internal Audit service;
  - Carry out a 'refresh' of the cost saving calculator data once data is available and investigate the cases where there is a particular increase in the costs associated with fostering and residential care.
- 158 The programme continues to participate in the national evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme by providing bi-annual family progress data. Information provided will be made available to Durham through the new Troubled Families (TF) Information System, which was launched in March 2016. This system will provide data and cost benefit analysis information to demonstrate the impact on the programme against a wide range of indicators (e.g. police calls, convictions, benefit claims), as well as providing benchmarks against national and statistical neighbours.
- 159 The Stronger Families programme has informed the development of the Children's Services Innovation programme. Stronger Families will cease to be identifiable as a separate programme, and will become the core of new Families First Teams. This will make best use of the learning and expertise built during the programme, but also the resources generated through the programme, in order to achieve improved outcomes for all vulnerable families in County Durham.

### **Youth Offending Service (YOS)**

- 160 There continues to be uncertainty about Youth Justice Board (YJB) budgets.
- 161 County Durham's YJB grant for 2016/17 has been reduced by 12%. On 11 April 2016 the County Durham Youth Offending Service was informed that the Remand Grant 2016/17 (from the YJB) has been reduced by 87%, from £45k in 2015/16 to £6k in 2016/17. The YJB is also vulnerable to reductions in partner funding.
- 162 Secure Children's Homes in England and Wales have 254 licensed places available for young people who are placed by the courts on youth justice and

welfare grounds. Aycliffe Secure Centre has historically had a contract with the Youth Justice Board for 24 places and 8 places have been made available for local authorities to commission for young people on welfare grounds. There has been a sustained increase in the number of referrals from local authorities for welfare places for young people who are placing themselves at significant risk in the community. There have been insufficient numbers of places available for these young people which has caused problems for Children's Services nationally. The YJB, the DfE and local authorities have jointly worked on this issue and the YJB has decommissioned 20 youth justice places which have subsequently been made available to local authorities from April 2016. The YJB now contracts for 18 beds at Aycliffe, with the remaining 14 beds available to local authorities for welfare placements. There continues to be high occupancy across the Secure Children's Homes of 90% - 95% and this is reflected at Aycliffe, where high levels of occupancy and demand continue.

### **Social Worker Health Check**

- 163 There is a requirement to complete an annual survey of social workers in the authority. The survey for 2015 reported high levels of staff satisfaction including staff feeling confident in their ability to do their job and getting a sense of personal achievement from their work. A high percentage of staff also reported that their work gave them a feeling of personal achievement and that families they work with value their support. Staff reported positively about being able to access the expertise of others to support their work and that they had time to reflect on their work with other experienced colleagues, including good management support and supervision which enables them to do their job well or better.
- 164 While staff are generally positive about their role and the difference they can make, results of the survey also pointed to a need to free up staff from administrative tasks and to reduce caseloads. Amongst generally positive results, the responses on the appropriateness of IT systems/software and the physical environment staff work in were less positive.
- 165 Addressing concerns with these practical elements, and reducing the time burden on staff, may help to alleviate issues around stress at work. An action plan has been developed to address the issues raised by staff. The survey was completed prior to the recent caseload pressures, and so morale must be kept under review.

### **Performance**

- 166 Improvement in performance is shown across a range of key indicators. As at the end of December 2015 (March 2016, CIN 304.2 per 100,000, CPP 35.1 per 10,000), reductions and favorable benchmarking comparisons are shown in the number and rate of children in need (333.4 per 10,000) and the number and rate of children whose needs are met through a Child Protection Plan (34.7 per 10,000).
- 167 The rate of children in need re-referrals is also reducing, with 21.2% (21.1%) referred again within 12 months of a previous referral, and with 8.5% (4.3%) of children requiring a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time within 2 years of the last one (April – December 2015). (April – Mar 16).

- 168 As at the end of December 2015 (March 2016), a high proportion of our looked after children are in foster care, 81.9% (79.3%), with only 7.6% (7.6%) in residential care. Provisional data as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 shows that 90.6% of our children are placed within 20 miles of home; 78.6% within the boundaries of County Durham, a much better rate than national levels.
- 169 There has been improvement in the timescales for the average number of days between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family (for those who have been adopted) from 533 days in 2013/14 to 449 days for 2014/15 (420 for y/end 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016). 100% of children are placed for adoption in 9 months, compared to the national average of 17 months.

## **Inspection Activity**

### **Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI)**

- 170 From February 2016, under the Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI), Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission as well as Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation are jointly responsible for assessing how local authorities, the police, health, probation and youth offending services are working together in an area to identify, support and protect vulnerable children and young people.
- 171 The new short inspections allow inspectorates to be more responsive, targeting specific areas of interest and concern and also identify areas for improvement and highlight good practice from which others can learn.
- 172 JTAI inspections include a 'deep dive element', the theme for February 2016 to August 2016 was CSE and children missing from home, care or education.
- 173 Five LA's have been inspected under the new JTAI framework – South Tyneside, Oxfordshire, Central Bedfordshire, Croydon and Liverpool. With the exception of Liverpool all local authorities have had their inspection letters published.
- 174 No rating is given but a summary of strengths and weaknesses is provided. The inspection covered the overarching theme of abuse and neglect which includes deep dive investigation themes of the response to CSE and those missing from home, care or education.
- 175 The Association of Directors of Children's Services advised in a Bulletin on 15 July 2016 that the deep dive themes will change after every 6 inspections and the next 3 themes will be:
- Children living with domestic abuse
  - Children subject to neglect
  - Children at risk of, and subject to, sexual abuse in the family.

## Local Authority Targeted Inspection

- 176 From February 2016, under the Local Authority Targeted Inspections (LATI), Ofsted will use a modified version of the JTAI which focusses on the local authority and the effectiveness of the LSCB in relation to the authority. The inspection includes an evaluation of the 'front door' for child protection, where children at risk of harm first become known to the local authority.
- 177 The inspection includes a 'deep dive' element as outlined in paragraph 172. While the Single Inspection Framework (SIF) is operating targeted inspections will not have a specific programme and the number of inspections undertaken each year will not be predetermined. Ofsted will use this framework where it has concerns about a local authority but where using the SIF would be a disproportionate response.
- 178 No LA's have been inspected under the LATI framework to date.

## Local Inspection Activity

- 179 The overall position at 27 July 2016 with regard to Durham County Council (DCC) children's homes is as follows:

Name	Full inspection date	Full inspection overall judgement	Interim inspection date	Interim inspection overall outcome
High Etherley	21.07.15	Outstanding	16.02.16	Declined effectiveness
New Lea House	08.09.15	Good	10.02.16	Improved effectiveness
Aycliffe Secure	13.10.15	Good	15.03.16	Improved effectiveness
Blackgate East	15.12.15	Good	11.03.16	Improved effectiveness
West Rainton	15.12.15	Outstanding	04.08.15	Improved effectiveness
Cedar Drive	15.12.15	Good	24.02.16	Improved effectiveness
Park House	17.05.16	Good	02.02.16	Sustained effectiveness
Attlee Estate	31.05.16	Good	22.02.16	Improved effectiveness
Newton Drive	07.06.16	Outstanding	17.02.16	Improved effectiveness
Moorside	29.06.16	Requires improvement (verbal)	16.02.16	Sustained effectiveness

- 180 The action plan for High Etherley's interim outcome of 'Declined effectiveness' was completed by the end of March 2016. A full inspection is expected to be undertaken later the year in line with the Children's Homes framework.

## **Children's Centre Inspections**

- 181 Local authorities were informed in October 2015, that the Department for Education (DfE) had delayed the launch of a consultation on the Sure Start children's centre programme which will include considerations for a new inspection framework for Children's centres.
- 182 As a result inspections of Children's centres have been suspended pending the outcome of the consultation.
- 183 In January 2016, the DfE announced the release of the consultation has been further delayed; no revised timescale for release or reason has been given.
- 184 Any Children's centre inspections due in the 2015/2016 academic year as prescribed by the Children's Centre (Inspections) Regulations 2010 will not now take place until after the consultation.
- 184 Children's centres are expected to continue their work as usual during this pause, including collecting and monitoring of data in preparation for inspection. Ofsted will continue inspection of early years provision on the site of children's centres as part of the new common inspection framework implemented from September 2015. Ofsted will also continue to respond swiftly to any complaints or safeguarding concerns in Children's centres.

## **Ofsted to directly manage Early Years Inspections**

- 185 On 1 March 2016 Ofsted announced that early years inspections and regulatory work will be managed directly from April 2017, when the current contracts end. At present, two companies, Tribal and Prospects, undertake early years inspections on Ofsted's behalf and these contracts run until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. Bringing early years inspection under direct management means that Ofsted will have full control over the selection, training and management of inspectors, and complete oversight of the quality of inspection.

## **Recommendations**

- 186 The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

- Note the contents of this report.
- Agree to receive further updates in relation to the transformation of Children's Services on a six monthly basis.

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## Appendix 1: Implications

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**Finance** – Substantial efficiencies have already been delivered through this approach as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan. Further efficiencies are planned. The successful bid to the Children’s Innovation Fund will result in funding of £3.26m coming in to the authority to be used to develop new approaches to children’s social care. As part of the Children’s Innovation Fund an additional £496,000 bid was successful for a therapeutic support programme at Aycliffe secure centre for children that have been sexually exploited. Plans are in place for the ending of this additional support. There will be additional costs resulting from the creation of the ASYE Academy and the additional social work team funded from Cash Limit during 2016/17 (£0.698million) and 2017/18 (£0.371million). Additional expenditure is unavoidable in creating the required capacity to bring the pressures under control in the short term.

**Staffing** – Workforce development will benefit staff and will help to challenge thinking and introduce new ways of working into practice. Roles and responsibilities are being amended in line with revised requirements. Embedding culture change is dependent on staff working effectively and understanding service aims, supported by managers.

**Risk** – Changes need to be carefully managed to ensure that the protection of children remains robust and the system is not de-stabilised during transition. Risk to the safety of children and young people of failure to prevent CSE. Major reputational risk to the council of failure to prevent and address CSE.

**Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty** – The needs of vulnerable children and families will be better met through implementation of these changes.

**Accommodation** – The Innovation programme will require relocation and co-location of staff teams across the county, which will be managed within existing resources.

**Crime and Disorder** – Effective partnership working through the Safe Durham Partnership.

**Human Rights** - None

**Consultation** – Any changes to workforce will be subject to consultation with affected staff.

**Procurement** – None at this stage

**Disability Issues** – None at this stage

**Legal Implications** – There are a number of key policy developments / initiatives that have led the way and contributed to the Children’s Services Transformation agenda in County Durham. All changes must be compliant with legal requirements