

Cabinet

18 January 2017

Children's Services Update



Report of Corporate Management Team

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Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Cabinet on the local regional and national developments in relation to Children's Services. In addition, the report provides an update on progress following the outcome of the Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services in February 2016, the pressures facing the Service, workforce initiatives and strategic programmes aimed at reducing these pressures. The report also provides an update on the Stronger Families Programme, Child Sexual Exploitation and the work of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The national policy context is attached at Appendix 2.

Background

- 2 A report was last presented to Cabinet on 13 July 2016 providing information on the national and local developments which support early intervention and prevention and protection of children and young people.
- 3 The report provided Cabinet with an overview of the Children's Service's inspection regime and an update on the transformation journey that has been undertaken in Children's Services in Durham.

Local Context

Children's Services – Ofsted Single Inspection Framework (SIF)

- 4 The Ofsted improvement plan was submitted to Ofsted on 28 September 2016. The Senior Inspector and Lead Inspector were assured by the content of the plan and fed back that it is a comprehensive and focused document with clear actions and timescales.
- 5 The final Ofsted improvement plan has been made available in the Members' library.
- 6 The improvement plan is grouped into the following four themes covering the 14 recommendations:

- Strengthening management and staffing capacity;
 - Strengthening political and management oversight;
 - Improving the quality of practice; and
 - Compliance with regulations.
- 7 A Quality Improvement Board (QIB) is chaired by the Interim Corporate Director of Children and Young People’s Services and meets monthly to provide strategic oversight and lead improvements in quality. The Board oversees the implementation of the Ofsted improvement plan.
- 8 A forward plan to ensure all themes are looked at in detail each month has been agreed. To date the Board has considered three themes in detail:
- Theme 1 - strengthening management and staffing capacity;
 - Theme 2 - strengthening political and management oversight; and
 - Theme 3 - improving the quality of practice.

Improvement Plan Progress Overview

- 9 Performance summary reports on compliance to the tasks within the improvement action plan are considered on a monthly basis by the Board. There are a total of 79 actions to be taken and as at 5 December 2016, performance is as follows:

Status	Actions	%
Completed	33	42
On target	33	42
Behind target	0	0
Not started	13	16
Total	79	100

Theme 1 - strengthening management and staffing capacity

- 10 There are five key milestones in Theme 1, all of which are on target:
- M1 Resources required identified and financial management processes applied to meet demand.
 - M2 Recruitment process reviewed and monitored through key performance data.
 - M3 Evaluation of social work development programmes completed.
 - M4 Social Worker Health Check completed.
 - M5 Structure designed and implemented.
- 11 Good progress has been made in relation to Theme 1 and a number of positive outcomes have been achieved as detailed below.
- (a) Key performance data relating to human resources activity, staff turnover, agency staff usage, attendance, staff supervision and appraisal have been considered in detail. Staff sickness is now at the lowest it has been since 2014/15 with the number of days lost to sickness down to 3.31 days per Full Time Equivalent (FTE). There is

more stability in the workforce; the turnover rate is currently 6.1% which represents an improvement of 2.8% from the previous quarter and the vacancy rate is 8.87% which represents an improvement of 1.83%.

- (b) A detailed analysis of workflow and caseload pressures within Children's Social Work teams has been carried and the analysis provided the rationale for the recommendation to Cabinet in December 2016 for additional resources and a growth bid. The MTFP(7) model for 2017/18 has been updated to reflect the full year impact of the budget pressures with a sum of £4.2 million included to reflect the increase in the base budget required for care placements and additional social workers.
- (c) The growth bid will be key to taking forward work to address both resource capacity and a re-profiling of the MTFP savings linked to current and projected spend relating to Looked After Children (LAC) cases.
- (d) The Council has commissioned a 'deep dive' study of the organisation that will look at cost, quality and maturity of the service provision across the Council, including Children and Young People's Services. This will inform our strategy for using digital technologies, identify opportunities for efficiencies and bring ideas and expertise from good practice across the country.
- (e) A Lean Review is to be undertaken in Children and Young People's Services. Lean is a customer-centric methodology used to continually improve any process through the elimination of waste. It is based on the ideas of 'continuous incremental improvement' and 'respect for people'.
- (f) There is a shortage of qualified and experienced social workers in the region. In response to this a number of initiatives have been implemented to recruit, develop and retain social workers and managers.
- (g) The Recruitment Strategy has been refreshed. The website has been revised and includes a recruitment brochure, revised materials and 'talking heads' which are short video clips of staff talking about their experiences in Durham. These include a talking head of the Head of Children's Services and a Team Manager as well as a Newly Qualified Social Worker and are engaging and innovative. Seventeen social workers have been recruited in 2016.
- (h) The Social Work Academy, which focuses on the nurturing and support of 12 Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWS) is now fully functioning and led by a Practice Lead. A further 24 newly qualified social workers are employed in teams. A review undertaken in November 2016, indicates the following:
 - NQSWS in the Academy are more likely to report that they have a positive learning experience than NQSWS in social work teams.

- NQSWs in the Academy feel more secure and attached to their NQSW colleagues than NQSWs placed in teams and therefore are more likely to ask questions and challenge the status quo.
- (i) The review has recommended a number of actions including implementation of a new model from Spring/Summer 2017 to ensure that all NQSWs in Durham are attached to the Academy and have a permanent contract.
 - (j) The 'Strengthening Managers' programme has been developed and the first cohort of 23 managers have started with a completion date of June. At that point, a second cohort will begin the programme. The 'Aspirant Team Managers' programme has also been recruited to and six prospective team managers are now engaged on the programme.
 - (k) A staff survey has been circulated to be used by the Principal Social Worker as part of the annual 'Health Check'. This includes seeking views on the quality of the information technology systems, workplace environment, business support and details on working hours and levels of supervision support etc. The information gathered from the survey will be used to provide senior managers with some insight into a range of issues impacting on social workers and to determine areas of future priority.
 - (l) Frontline is a two year programme for people with high level degree qualifications who want to work as social workers with children and families. Children's Services intends to host one unit of four students in 2017.
- 12 The Enterprise Act 2016 introduced apprenticeship targets for public bodies and from April 2017 the way the Government funds apprenticeships in England is changing as part of the Apprenticeship Levy. As a result of these initiatives the development of a social work apprenticeships programme is being proposed which will:
- (a) Provide an opportunity for skilled and experienced support to staff to undertake social work qualifications.
 - (b) Support the recruitment and retention of social workers and support staff.
 - (c) Utilise the apprenticeship levy.
 - (d) Increase the number of apprenticeship starts across Durham County Council.
- 13 Children's Services agreed to participate in the development of the standard. The bid to create the standard was accepted by Department for Education in December, 2016. Work is expected to commence from January 2017.
- 14 Paragraphs 71-77 outline further regional and workforce development initiatives and strategic programmes aimed at reducing workforce pressures.

Theme 2 - strengthening political and management oversight

- 15 There are four key milestones in Theme 2, all of which are on target:

- M1 Political and senior management reporting programmes set.
- M2 Opportunities to discuss success and issues are generated across the Council.
- M3 Updated electronic record management system procured and implemented.
- M4 Review existing working practices and undertake audits to determine effectiveness in key areas of service delivery.
- 16 The work of Theme 2 is linked to the Council's Transformation Programme which recognises the significant challenges that the Council faces, aims to redesign services to reduce cost, prioritise resource on the front line, manage demand by helping individuals, families and communities become more resilient, make best use of partners and empower staff. The Children and Young People's Services Transformation Programme is an intrinsic part of the Council's Transformation programme, informing the prioritisation of council-wide transformation activity and being shared by organisational wide work.
- 17 The work also links to a corporate Transformation project which aims to radically shape and streamline council-wide performance management, by shifting planning, refocusing performance management on cross council transparency, making the process more lean and improving analysis.
- 18 The Cabinet Member, Chair of Corporate Parenting (CPP) and Scrutiny Chairs have agreed a series of recommendations to refocus and better join up their respective oversight roles. A report benchmarking Durham's approach to corporate parenting with other councils was shared with the QIB in October. Further benchmarking work focusing on Regulation 44 visits and constitutional changes are nearing completion.
- 19 A Special Professional Services Provider was recruited in August 2016 to support the SSID Review and produce a clear process to deliver a new system as quickly as possible for Children's Services social care records. A detailed project plan is in place to ensure this is managed effectively. In line with the Procurement timetable, the outline business case will be considered in January 2017 and it is planned to have selected the preferred system and awarded the contract by May 2017. This is two months earlier than the original planned date. The project is on target and a range of key actions are being progressed to ensure an effective procurement. A substantial amount of user engagement sessions with front line staff, managers and finance colleagues are underway to ensure there is a firm understanding of the project from a practice perspective. Visits to other local authority sites in York City and North Yorkshire to observe the two leading Children's IT Systems in operation have been completed.
- 20 In the interim, a project has been established to implement a 'work around' electronic case file system for Children's Services. Sharepoint has been identified as the appropriate platform for this piece of work and work is progressing to agreed timescales. Engagement, demonstration and training sessions on the sharepoint platform have been carried out with the appropriate staff and personnel.

Theme 3 - improving the quality of practice- outcomes

- 21 There are seven key milestones in Theme 3, all of which are on target:
- M1 Review existing working practices in relation to assessment and undertake internal and external audits to determine effectiveness.
 - M2 Practice standards for care planning are agreed and implemented.
 - M3 Introduce family friendly care plan documentation.
 - M4 LSCB strategy meetings attendance monitored and comprehensive IRO report on quality of planning to CYPST.
 - M5 Family outcomes framework developed and evaluated to determine service improvement.
 - M6 Culture of quality instilled with the workforce.
 - M7 Comprehensive programme of internal and external audits undertaken and areas of concern acted upon.
- 22 The Service has undertaken a number of actions in relation to Theme 3 to ensure greater challenge, clearer expectations on what good quality casework entails and ensuring that learning and improvement as result of audit, are being acted upon and the feedback 'loop' is being strengthened. Some examples are listed below:
- Revised Practice Standards for Assessment and Planning;
 - A key reference tool for practitioners and managers for evaluating casework activity has been developed;
 - Training and support delivered through eight workshops on "Putting Analysis into Assessments";
 - A thematic audit of assessments has been completed;
 - Broader training on assessments for social work practitioners is planned.
- 23 There is further work to be undertaken on the improvement journey and new initiatives are being implemented such as established Quality Champions within the service.
- 24 The Family Outcomes Framework and Family Friendly Care Plan have now been developed and nine workshops are currently being delivered to support practitioners to implement the Outcome Focussed Care Plans within their casework practice.
- 25 A number of actions have been undertaken to support the Independent Reviewing Officers to challenge effectively and contribute to service improvement, including the Dispute Resolution Process (DRP) which was launched on 1 November 2016.
- 26 A full case file audit tool and accompanying auditors handbook have been developed and are being piloted with a view to full implementation in January 2017. This should lead to a comprehensive and detailed quality control process which will provide clear and accountable evidence on the quality of front line practice.
- 27 A number of actions have been taken to improve management grip of cases. Out of Parental Care clinics run in each of the three Families First localities on

a monthly basis. The intention behind these clinics is to ensure that drift and delay in care planning is minimised; that cases are worked according to appropriate procedures and regulation and that legal advisors are fully aware of the details of these cases.

- 28 The reviewing process within the Child Protection Service is primarily via the PLO panel which occurs in each locality on a monthly basis. The Public Law Outline case tracking system and process has been reviewed and revised.
- 29 Social work consultants within Families First teams have established case review clinics on a monthly basis to review all cases which have been open for more than six months. This is intended to ensure that the risk of drift and delay is minimised.

Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) - Ofsted Single Inspection Framework (SIF)

- 30 The Action Plan, resulting from the Ofsted Inspection, was approved by the LSCB Board and submitted to Ofsted on 2 August 2016. All actions have been incorporated into the LSCB Business Plan 2015-2018 which has been refreshed following the Ofsted inspection.

Children's Homes Inspection Activity

- 31 The overall position at 18 November 2016 with regard to Durham County Council (DCC) children's homes is as follows:

Name	Full inspection date	Full inspection overall judgement
West Rainton	15.12.15	Outstanding
Cedar Drive	25.10.16	Good
Park House	17.05.16	Good
Attlee Estate	31.05.16	Good
Newton Drive	07.06.16	Outstanding
Moorside	28.06.16	Requires improvement
New Lea House	12.07.16	Good
Aycliffe Secure	27.09.16	Good
High Etherley	27.09.16	Good
Blackgate East	11.10.16	Good

Care Leavers

- 32 As Corporate Parents, Durham County Council has a responsibility towards supporting young people who are leaving care and making the transition into adulthood. As part of this process, the Council must ensure that our Care Leavers are equipped with the necessary skills, confidence and experience to enable them to enter the labour market and ultimately lead happy, healthy, safe and fulfilling lives.

33 Considerable activity is now taking place across the Council to support our Care Leavers, including:

- Care Leavers Strategy 2015-2018 and associated Action Plan.
- Youth Employment Statement, which specifically targets opportunities to Care Leavers. This sets out a commitment to Care Leavers as part of an overall programme of youth employment support, delivering 64 apprenticeships and 20 traineeships for care leavers by 2020.
- Participation Plan 2015-2018 which aims to identify and co-ordinate a range of activities to increase the participation of young people in learning and to reduce the number of young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). The Plan (and separate action plan) has a specific focus on increasing the participation of Care Leavers in learning.
- A £17.04 million ESF funded Youth Employment Initiative Programme – DurhamWorks – to reduce 16-24 year old unemployment, which offers enhanced support to Care Leavers including 1:1 support from Transition Advisors and programmes of activity including support to enter and remain in employment.

Stronger Families

34 By March 2015 Durham met its full target and “turned around” 1,320 families under Phase 1 of the Stronger Families Programme.

35 As one of the Troubled Families Programme’s Phase 2 “Early Starters”, Durham will work with 4,360 families and deliver Phase 2 over a five year period. Phase 2 includes much broader eligibility criteria, enabling the majority of families worked with by a range of statutory and non-statutory services to be part of the programme and to achieve results payments.

36 At the end of September 2016, Durham had identified and claimed results for 315 families as being ‘turned around’ against the new Family Outcome Framework (FOF).

37 The programme continues to participate in the national evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme by providing bi-annual family progress data.

38 The Stronger Families Programme has informed the development of the Children’s Services Innovation Programme. This will make the 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.

39 Key challenges that must be addressed if the programme is to achieve its target of “turning around” 4,360 families by 2020 include:

- Achieving the results required to close the “claim gap” will be a priority for Children’s Services and the engagement of corporate and external partners in this will be key to accelerating the rate of claims.
- Addressing the low level of participation by partner agencies and ensuring that the programme is embedded across all agencies. The overwhelming

majority of nominations are made by Children and Young People's Services teams (approximately 83% of all nominated families to the end of September 2016).

- Should performance in terms of results payments not improve, action will be required to reconsider current budgetary plans in light of revised financial projections and budget pressures.
- Ensuring that there is accountability and monitoring of the delivery of the programme and that this is exercised through an active and robust Think Family Partnership.
- Embedding the outcomes-focussed plan development within SSID through well-managed and monitored implementation.
- Improving management oversight and quality assurance by Operational Managers across Children and Young People's Services and partners, in order that practice translates into achieving the outcomes in the Family Outcome Framework.

Local Government Association (LGA) Children & Young People Now 2016 Awards

40 The Children & Young People Now Awards 2016 recognises initiatives from the public, private and voluntary sector that work with children and young people from birth to adolescence as well as their families. The Awards Ceremony took place on 24 November 2016 and the Council was successful in the following categories:

- **Winner of the Public Sector Children's Team Award – West Rainton Children's Home**
The home is a unique therapeutic setting for younger children with a dedicated staff team skilled at helping prepare children for living within a family setting. The project enables children to achieve stability within placement. The team strive to ensure that the home creates an environment that allows the children to achieve. Ofsted have recognised this good practice leading to an Outstanding rating, and the home has been asked to share their approach with other local authorities.
- **Young Carers Award – Supporting Young People with a Cancer Caring Role (in partnership with The Bridge Young Carers Project) – Highly Commended**
The project improves the lives of young people affected by cancer. It is the only young carers' service in the country that Macmillan is working directly with. On completion of the pilot, it is hoped to work with Macmillan to roll the pilot out to other organisations across the country.

Children's Social Care Innovation Programme – April 2016 to March 2020

41 As part of the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme April 2016 to March 2020 Durham County Council submitted a bid for £6 million around wider transformation for the continuation and expansion of this work. The

Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) also submitted a bid for £80,000 to increase the Voice of the Child, especially in relation to hard to reach groups.

- 42 On 2 November 2016 we were notified by the Department for Education (DfE) that both of these projects were unsuccessful. Of the 300 Expressions of Interest to the DfE, only 20 were selected and all projects selected were new projects.

0-19 Health Services Commissioned by Public Health

- 43 A new branding for the 0-19 health services '*Growing Healthy 0-19 County Durham*', has been developed. The school nursing service (5-19) has also been relaunched to promote and encourage young people to access support and advice about their health needs. A promotional bus will travel across all locations in County Durham from October 2016 – March 2017 visiting a variety of venues to raise the visibility of the school nursing service.
- 44 Five Emotional Resilience Nurses have been recruited as part of the 5-19 Healthy Child Team. These mental health trained nurses will provide direct support to school nurses and the pastoral staff in schools, building capacity within the Team to provide early support to young people on issues relating to their mental health and wellbeing. The staff will also be trained to deliver Youth Awareness Mental health (YAM) which will be rolled out in secondary school year 9 pupils.
- 45 There are many families who require additional support with risk factors such as substance misuse, domestic abuse and known mental health concerns. A new vulnerable parent pathway has been developed to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive approach in relation to the support offered to vulnerable families and to ensure this is integrated with partner agencies/services.

Youth Offending Service (YOS)

- 46 Charlie Taylor's Review of the Youth Justice System in England and Wales was published on 12 December 2016. It outlines the considerable achievements of the youth justice system, recognising the impact of the YOTs: '*There is no doubt that a key strength of the youth justice system has been the delivery through YOTs of locally based, multi-disciplinary services for children who offend*'.
- 47 The Review makes a compelling case for change, especially in relation to the secure estate (putting education at the heart of detention and creation of secure schools). It also recommends changes to the sentencing framework (including the introduction of Children's Panels and restricting the availability of short custodial sentences); a more devolved youth justice system; changes to the inspection framework of YOTs (Ofsted rather than HMIP), and greater involvement of health.
- 48 Other recommendations include: devolution of the budget and commissioning responsibility for youth custody; reducing the criminalisation of children who are looked after; and review of LAC status for young people who are remanded to youth detention accommodation.

- 49 The Government's response to the Review, also published on 12 December, outlines the Government's commitment to work with partners and stakeholders to implement key recommendations, by putting education at the heart of youth custody and improving the provision of health care to tackle the factors that increase the risk of offending. The Government's response focuses on three main areas:
- The right framework for improvement
 - Tackling offending
 - Improving youth custody
- 50 The Youth Justice Board welcomes the publication of the report and the Government's response. Some recommendations in the Taylor Review require further work and consultation. The Government and YJB will consult with youth offending services, Management Boards, stakeholders and partners.
- 51 A summary report of key issues/recommendations will be available early in the New Year.
- 52 The Government has committed to continue to ring-fence grants for the provision of youth justice services within local authority areas (the Youth Justice grant). Their decision to ring-fence the Youth Justice grant is contrary to a central recommendation of the Taylor review.
- 53 It is pleasing to see, following Charlie Taylor's visit to Durham earlier this year, that CDYOS is highlighted in the Taylor Review: *'Some local authorities such as County Durham and Cornwall have retained a YOT model closer to its original form but co-located it with their children's services to achieve a more integrated response to vulnerable and offending children'*.

Speech Language and Communication Needs Strategy (SLCN)

- 54 CDYOS Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) Strategy is evidencing extensive unmet needs among young people in the youth justice system in County Durham. The strategy is receiving considerable national recognition; receiving a Butler Trust Award 2015/16 (one of only 10 in the UK) and a visit from Lord McNally, Chair of the Youth Justice Board, and Colin Allars, Chief Executive of the Youth Justice Board on 23 September 2016.
- 55 ClearCut Communication (communication friendly resources for young people in the youth justice system) developed by CDYOS and copyrighted to the Council, are being used nationally by other youth offending teams/services, and training to other YOTs regionally has been provided. The latest resource 'Thinking about Victims' was launched at the YJB Convention in late November 2016 and CDYOS have also held a seminar on SLCN work.

Local Safeguarding Children Board Update

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

56 Durham Constabulary have submitted a report to the LSCB on CSE Profile Key Findings 2016 (September 2015-March 2016) for Durham and Darlington. In summary the analysis found that:

- In the Durham area 283 individuals were at risk of CSE which includes all initial referrals and repeat referrals relating to the same case. This compares to 230 individuals at risk of CSE in 2015. Of these, 18 were high risk compared with 17 cases in the 2015 period. Initial referrals are categorised into low, medium and high risk and proportionate service support is provided in line with this assessment.
- The majority of sexual offences recorded are against children under 18, accounting for 63% of all sexual offences. 24% of all sexual offences recorded against children were CSE offences, as opposed to sexual abuse.
- Online CSE is one of the largest threats, accounting for 71% of all CSE crimes. Victims are younger, with a common age of 12. Certain groups are vulnerable to online harm, particularly those with learning difficulties, mental health or who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGB&T). In 30% of online CSE incidents the offender has made an attempt to meet the victim. 87% of online incidents were reported by someone else and not the victim.
- Females are most at risk of CSE with the common age of 13-16 years of age, although online CSE victims were younger. Males accounted for 19% of CSE reports. In 40% of reports, victims had more than one vulnerability, for example, missing from home, drug and/or alcohol abuse, domestic abuse, mental health, learning difficulties, chaotic backgrounds, criminality, LGB&T communities, not in education etc.
- During the profiling period, in total 183 offenders/possible suspects have been identified with 97% male and 3% females. The majority of offending (29%) was perpetrated by young people from mid-teens to early 20s. Most were lone offenders, although some offenders are repeat offenders with multiple victims linked to them.
- Inappropriate relationships accounted for 18% of reports. Late teens/early 20s and older perpetrators are targeting those in their mid-teens. Boys were identified at risk of higher victimisation in this category.
- In relation to location, the analysis found that 7% of CSE occurred in public areas.

57 Durham County Council's Action Plan, setting out the actions the Council needs to take in response to CSE, is complete. Actions include further training for Members with the roll out of e-learning in 2017 and raising awareness of CSE amongst Area Action Partnerships.

Neglect

- 58 Child poverty in County Durham is higher than the England average, with 20,875 equating to 23.9% of children under 16 years living in poverty. Growing up in poverty has a significant impact on the development of children and young people both during their childhood and beyond. Work is being undertaken to address child poverty through a Poverty Action Group chaired by Durham County Council. A report, to be presented to Cabinet on the 18 January 2017, provides an update on the welfare reform programme and the wider issues of poverty and the council's response so far through its poverty action plan.
- 59 The Early Help and Neglect Strategy 2015-17 outlines our partnership commitment to deliver early timely help to children, young people and their families in County Durham and links to a suite of practice tools including:
- A Home Environment Assessment Tool which aims to identify early the indicators of neglect or poor home conditions and the adverse impact these may have on outcomes for children and young people. It will be used by health visitors, midwives, housing officers and social care staff.
 - Single Assessment Procedures help practitioners and professionals working with children and young people to undertake assessments by bringing together a range of expertise, knowledge and skill to meet needs at the earliest possible opportunity to keep children and young people safe from the risk of adverse outcomes.
 - Neglect Practice Guidance assists practitioners across services to identify early signs of neglect and develop more responsive and timely interventions to address concerns about neglect.
 - Durham Continuum of Need threshold document supports professional decision making to ensure needs are identified and appropriate support provided.

Serious Case Reviews

- 60 The Local Safeguarding Children Board Regulations (LSCB) 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).
- 61 Two serious case reviews have reached a conclusion, since the last report to Cabinet in July 2016, and have been published. Three new serious case reviews have commenced and will be published in due course.
- 62 The Learning and Improvement Sub-Group of the LSCB are responsible for monitoring progress on action plans and challenging agencies to ensure relevant outcomes.

- 63 Further Learning Lessons Events, to help raise awareness of the key messages and lessons learned from Serious Case Reviews and other reviews were undertaken by Durham LSCB in October and November 2016.

Performance

- 64 The culture that needs to develop and become embedded within Children's Services is described in the Quality Improvement Framework. The challenge lies with ensuring that all staff embrace and have a commitment to developing a high quality, consistent and professional service, at every level. The required culture will:
- recognise the need to raise and meet practice standards;
 - gain a common and confident understanding of 'what good looks like';
 - provide and welcome high expectations, high challenge and high support;
 - stop the line and address work which falls below a good standard;
 - have a strong sense of professional pride and accountability;
 - understand that in delivering services to children and families only good or above is good enough.
- 65 Audits form part of the improvement cycle that includes quality improvement activities prior to and post the audit activity itself. The audit in itself provides insight into the quality of practice. Following audits it is essential that the learning from these insights takes place, it leads to action planning and further quality improvement activities. It is essential that the focus on the required improvement actions identified from the audit are followed through if audits are to play their part in improving the quality of practice.
- 66 The outcome of recent audits provide some evidence of improvement that auditors understanding of 'what good looks like' is becoming more accurate and clear, an important first step towards improving practice. The audits, however, show limited improvement in the quality of frontline practice, at this stage. Improvement activities in teams and on the frontline require a robust and rapid focus to support the pace of change, which is urgent.
- 67 At Cabinet in December 2016 key performance messages for Children's Services from data released in the second quarter of 2016/17 were presented:

Regional Context

Regional Adoption Agencies

- 68 There are plans for the reform of adoption including creation of regional adoption agencies by 2020. The Regional Adoption Board, chaired by the Stockton Director of Children's Services, is leading on this work. Two sub-regional adoption agencies have been developed. Proposals for Durham County Council's involvement in these arrangements will be put forward in the near future.

Sector Led Improvement

- 69 Sector Led Improvement Board arrangements for the North East have been in place for over four years as the region has continued to amend its model for children's sector led improvements (SLI) based upon a balance between national and local priorities. Directors have taken stock of the current Board arrangements and their suitability to take the region forward and work is ongoing to understand in detail what a new model will look like, although some outline principles have been agreed.
- 70 The new model will include:
- A focus upon self-assessment and director challenge sessions.
 - A greater emphasis upon understanding the detail behind regional performance data.
 - Greater sharing of peer review findings and a commitment to continue a regional programme.
 - The SLI programme to be project focused based upon themes where local authorities agree a joint approach would be beneficial.
 - A commitment for interested local authorities to join resources for a case file audit review programme. Durham will participate in this.

Regional Workforce Development and Strategic Programmes

- 71 A regional website has been developed to bring together all the new workforce initiatives within the region including participation in Frontline, Step Up to Social Work, Think Ahead and to promote a regional masterclass programme.
- 72 A North East Aspirant Director Programme has been delivered by the Staff College, supported by regional sector-led improvement funding. A total of 25 colleagues from across the region (children and adults services) participated in the programme in 2015/16. Evaluations to date have shown this is a valuable programme for participants.
- 73 Guided by the Knowledge and Skills Statement for practice leaders, a Practice Leader Development Programme was launched by the Secretary of State for Education in November 2016. The programme is designed to prepare participants to undertake a practice leader role in children's social care, equivalent to Head of Service.
- 74 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. The Department for Education has 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 during 2017.
- 75 Ministers approved an application from the North East to participate in the expansion of the Teaching Partnerships programme on 3 November 2016. Durham County Council will act as lead local authority with responsibility for 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 six universities offering pre-qualifying social work education and is designed to give local authorities more influence over the content of social work training.

- 76 The first cohort of Step Up to Social Work in the North East commenced in January 2016. Durham County Council has supported five of the 39 candidates across the region. All five are expected to qualify in Spring 2017. A regional bid to participate in the next cohort of the programme is being developed. Children's Services plans support eight candidates if the bid is successful.
- 77 FirstLine is a leadership development programme which develops good social work managers into high performing, influential leaders who will set high practice standards, and contribute to the creation of high-functioning services. Durham County Council expects to be able to access the programme in 2017-18.

Recommendations

- 78 Cabinet is recommended to:
- (a) note the contents of this report;
 - (b) agree to receive further updates in relation to Children and Young People's Services on a six monthly basis.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – Substantial efficiencies have already been delivered in Children’s Services as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan. Investment has been made into the Service to support increased resourcing for staff to reduce caseload and improve quality.

Staffing – Workforce development will benefit staff and will help to challenge thinking and introduce new ways of working into practice. A series of programmes of activity and work associated with the resourcing, recruitment and retention of the workforce are being undertaken.

Risk – Children’s Services deliver a number of the Council’s statutory responsibilities and failure in the service carries risk for children and reputation.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – The needs of vulnerable children and families will be better met through implementation of the improvement plan.

Accommodation – None.

Crime and Disorder – The Taylor Review has implications for delivery of youth offending services.

Human Rights – None.

Consultation – Members and Senior members of Corporate Management Team have been consulted and engaged in the development of the improvement plan.

Procurement – To be managed within existing working arrangements.

Disability Issues – None.

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.

Appendix 2: Children's Services - National Context

Reporting and Acting on Child Abuse and Neglect (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.

Durham County Council, Children and Young People's Services and the Durham LSCB submitted a response to this consultation which closed on 13 October 2016. The Government will consider all responses before deciding on the next steps.

Keep on caring: supporting young people from care to independence (July 2016) sets out the Government's vision for the further reform of support for care leavers based on innovation, system reform, and the embedding of corporate parenting responsibility across society. The Strategy 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.

Putting children first: our vision for children's social care (July 2016) sets out fundamental reform of each of the three pillars on which the children's social care system stands; people and leadership, practice and systems, governance and accountability. 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 ambition is that, by 2020, over a third of all current local authorities will either be delivering their children's services through a new model or be actively working towards a different model.

Residential Care in England: Report of Sir Martin Narey's Independent Review of Children's Residential Care (July 2016) makes 34 recommendations to deliver significant improvement in the care of children who live in children's residential homes including:

- 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 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)

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
2. Inspections of local authority children's services
3. A social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) for all
4. Specific changes to Ofsted's inspections of independent fostering agencies (IFAs)

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.

Children and Social Work Bill 2016-17 (May 2016) aims to accelerate adoption procedures, puts 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, and introduces 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.

Review of the Youth Justice System in England and Wales by Charlie Taylor (December 2016)

The Taylor Review makes recommendations for extensive reform of the youth justice system covering devolution, courts, sentencing and custody. The government's response supports many of the principles of The Taylor Review and sets out the intention to review the governance of the system, to improve the way youth offending is tackled and to put education and health at the heart of youth custody.