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| 26 September 2013 |

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COUNCILLOR ANN HARTLEY PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

1.0 Summary

Since the last Portfolio Holder reports in September 2012 Children and Young People's Safeguarding and Education have been brought together under one Member Portfolio for Children's Services.

This report provides information on the key achievements and developments over the past year and strategic priorities for transformation.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Council note the key achievements of the Children's Services Portfolio Holder's Report and approve the contents.

REPORT

3.0 CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING

3.1 Ofsted Inspections

3.1.1 Inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children

In November 2012 there was an unannounced inspection by Ofsted of local authority arrangements for the protection of children (safeguarding). This judged the overall effectiveness of Shropshire's arrangements for the protection of children to be adequate.

The inspection format used was relatively new with only thirteen authorities having been inspected prior to this. The outcome of those inspections was that five authorities had been judged to be inadequate, seven adequate and one good.

Overall, Ofsted inspectors concluded that:

“The council and partners are working together to ensure that appropriate action is being taken to identify and protect children and young people from significant harm. Safeguarding awareness within the council and partners is strong, leading to appropriate action to protect children and families where there are significant concerns.

Leadership across the partnership, including political leadership, is ensuring that safeguarding and child protection have priority within council, police and health services. There are good examples of effective joint working with a range of independent sector organisations who also give safeguarding high priority. “

An action plan has been drawn up to address those areas identified as needing further work. Progress on this is reported regularly to the Young People’s Scrutiny committee. Key changes implemented have been:

- A review of the management structure of the Initial Contact Team (ICT) at both Service and Team Manager Level
- The development and implementation of a revised Threshold Document. The threshold framework, “Accessing the Right Services at the Right Time” is a guide for practitioners and managers who are involved with children, young people and their families. Its aim is to assist practitioners and managers in assessing and identifying a child’s level of need, what type of services / resources may meet those needs and what processes to follow in moving from an assessment to a provision of services. It describes needs in terms of ‘Tiers’ - essentially a schematic way of helping to understand children’s needs and how they could be met.
- All key partners were engaged in this to ensure this is clear and fully understood across all services and that it meets their needs and the needs of children
- A review of the decision making process of referral to Initial Assessment/Core Assessment , which together with the introduction of the SSCB Threshold Document and the provision of social work expertise at an Early Help level, have resulted in overall risk being more appropriately identified and actioned
- Education services and voluntary sector are fully and appropriately represented on the Local Safeguarding Children Board
- Separate assessments are now in place which are recorded for all children in the family and all family members
- Scrutiny to ensure that key partners are involved in strategy meeting and discussions and these are fully recorded
- Implementation of the new format for child protection plans to ensure these set clear aims and objectives which are measurable and can be understood by parents
- Development of the Early Help offer
- Development of a Multi- Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) (see 3.2)

3.1.2 Thematic Inspection – Looked After Children (LAC) Placed Out of Shropshire

In July 2013 Ofsted undertook a 2 day thematic inspection of Shropshire’s Looked After Children who are placed out of Shropshire and 20 miles from home.

The formal report is not published until the autumn but verbal feedback from the inspectors produced some very positive comments. The inspectors recognised that we understand our Looked After Children and their needs and that we plan effectively for their provision both in Shropshire and Out County. They were impressed with the way in which we look holistically at our children’s needs and that where we place outside Shropshire we know that their needs can be met.

A major area of discussion was the impact that those LAC placed in Shropshire by other LAs have on our resources, which has long been an issue for Shropshire as we have to provide universal services for these children that we are not funded for.

3.1.3 Children’s Centres

There have been six Ofsted inspections of Children’s Centres in Shropshire in the last 12 months. 5 were judged as good and 1 as satisfactory.

The Ofsted reports highlight strong partnership working, good safeguarding processes, good quality early years provision, parent consultation and recognises that the centres are reaching out to and engaging with families identified as in greatest need.

3.1.4 Children’s Residential Homes.

Our three children’s homes have all had a primary Ofsted inspection during the past eighteen months and received either outstanding or good (with outstanding aspects) ratings.

3.2 Assessment and Early Help Service

There has been a significant increase in the number of referrals to social care, with the weekly average rising from 23 in January – July 2012 to 43 in January – July 2013.

Discussions continue with Police and Health towards developing a collective vision for a Mini MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub). These agencies currently attend the Initial Contact Team (ICT) two mornings per week which provides an opportunity to review re-referrals and missing episode incidents.

Other developments include Multi-Agency auditing of decision making at ICT which now routinely occurs as part of the Early Help Evaluation framework and the introduction of regular Service Manager auditing at ICT,

including a multi-agency audit programme of decisions where “no further action” is the outcome and re-referrals to social care.

Over the last year the Early Help team have worked with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in developing the vision for a Single Point of Access for Children’s services, including referrals for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Tier 2 and 3. This aims to reduce the number of entry points into children’s services and provide quicker and more appropriate advice, guidance and support. This work is on-going. Mental Health is a key priority of the Shropshire Childrens Trust and the Heath and WellBeing Board.

The Shropshire Children’s Trust has supported these developments by agreeing the Early Help Evaluation and Outcomes Framework.

Early Help has been embedded in practical terms through the training of practitioners in analysis and decision making, through Early Help consultations provided by Early Help Advisers (who are senior social workers), and by referrals through the Early Help & Resource Panel.

3.3 Independent Review Unit.

The independent reviewing service for the Council has been strengthened by the recruitment of an additional Independent Reviewing Officer to meet statutory requirements and increase the quality assurance in relation to care planning for our LAC and children subject to safeguarding plans. Arrangements for managing allegations against staff who work with children has also been strengthened by the recent appointment of a dedicated Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

4.0 CORPORATE PARENTING

- 4.1 A particular challenge for Shropshire is the number of looked after young people placed with independent care providers within the county by other local authorities. This averages around 350 at any one time. Whilst the main placing authorities tend to be relatively close, i.e. from the Midlands area, others place their children a long way from home. The Director of Children’s Services, Police and Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board have established a Private Providers Forum (which now meets quarterly) for discussion, challenge and seeking and agreeing solutions. A key outcome from this forum was the development of a notification system for the independent care providers to use to advise Shropshire Council when a LAC is being placed within Shropshire, in order for local services to better manage the risk to young people placed in Shropshire.

4.2 Shropshire Children Placement Service and the Joint Adoption Service.

4.2.1 Fostering and Residential

Shropshire's services will be featuring in a Government report on commissioning residential care services when it is released in October. Two highlights will be mentions of our assessment facility (Havenbrook) and block contract with Keys (which incorporates a unique 'no exclusion' clause). Demand for places remains high due to increasing LAC numbers.

4.2.2 Adoption

Over the past year (2012/13) the Joint Adoption Service has:

- Increased the number of adoption order granted from 14 in 2011/12 to 16.
- Decreased the average length of time a child waits (in days) from entering care to being adopted, this fell from 437 to 417
- Approved 33 adopter households (up by 10% on the previous year)

The development of a single West Mercia Adoption Service across Worcestershire, Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and Herefordshire is being explored, with particular emphasis on improving the outcomes for children, developing a service based on best practice, particularly improving the timeliness of placing children and young people for adoption, the range of available placements and the experience of the adopter, whilst securing financial efficiencies. Options for further exploration/development were presented to a recent Portfolio Holder decision approval meeting.

Revised adoption regulations took effect on July 1st this year. This change involves dramatically speeding up the recruitment process for adopters.

4.3 Education and Health Outcomes for LAC.

The Looked After Children's Education Team continues to provide a good level of support to some of our most vulnerable children and young people. Its contribution was particularly noted in the recent thematic OFSTED inspection (see 3.1.2)

The figures shown below are for the 2011-12 cohort as at the end of the academic year.

- No LAC was permanently excluded from school. There has only been one permanent exclusion of a Shropshire LAC in the last 11 years.
- 87 % of Primary aged LAC achieved attendance levels of 95% or above.
- 84% of Secondary aged LAC achieved attendance levels of 92% or above.

- Only 7 out of 98 (7%) LAC missed more than 25 days in education;
- 89% of Health Reviews completed in time or under time scales with 90% of immunisations up to date.
- LAC Education and Health Team ran a very well received multi-agency training day on attachment in conjunction with Clark Baim and the Geese Theatre Company.

5.0 YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE

2012-13 has seen the operationalisation of the West Mercia Youth Offending Service (Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Telford & Wrekin).

First Time Entrants to the Youth Justice system have continued to fall with a reduction of 29.4% to the year ending March 2013. The local team have now moved into Prospect House in Shrewsbury.

6.0 EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY

6.1 School Organisation

Time has been focussed on implementing the decisions made by Cabinet in May 2011 regarding the organisation of schools in Shropshire. The proposals consisted of two key strategies, the first being the closure of non-viable schools and the second to encourage schools to work collaboratively together through federation. Funding allocations for the schools that have closed have been redistributed within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and have increased the resources available for teaching and learning across all Shropshire pupils.

The implementation of the last of the closure proposals was completed at the end of August.

The Council was committed to securing a future for the Wakeman building for educational purposes and it opened at the beginning of September as Wakeman Hall, a site of the Shrewsbury Sixth Form College.

In 2011 Cabinet agreed that in two locations, Shawbury and St Martins, existing schools would expand and combine onto a single site. The new Shawbury St Mary's Primary School is due to open at the beginning of the autumn term 2013. Capital works on the new all through school in St Martins commenced this summer on the former Rhyn Park Secondary School site and is progressing well – the new all-through school will open in the autumn term 2014.

Significant development work in respect of collaboration and federation has taken place, with a focus on ensuring high quality education provision as well as cost effective and sustainable schools. Three primary school federations are established and more are in discussion. Similar partnerships are being established through the local multi-academy trust sponsorship arrangements supporting under-performing schools.

Development work on the future provision of education and education services in Shropshire has continued throughout 2012/13. Consultation with primary and secondary headteacher groups, and with headteachers and governors of all schools, has supported proposals for a Shropshire Learning Partnership (SLP). Draft proposals have been developed by a representative group of headteachers and are currently being considered by the schools community. Responses will steer the next stages of development work, with the intention that the Shropshire Learning partnership will be fully established by March 2014.

6.2 Academies

Since September 2012 eight Shropshire schools have converted to academy status – two primary schools and six secondary schools. There are now nine academies in Shropshire (noting that three former maintained schools make up the single Shrewsbury Academy Trust). Shropshire Council continues to maintain an on-going positive relationship with all of these schools.

The Secretary of State has approved a further three schools to convert to academy status before the end of the 2013-14 financial year – a primary school, secondary school and special school. The primary school will become a sponsored academy with the Diocese of Hereford Educational Trust. Shropshire Council is not aware at the time of writing of any further academy conversion applications submitted to the DfE by Shropshire schools.

6.3 School Funding

The Government’s school funding reforms were implemented in April 2013 following extensive work through Shropshire’s Schools Forum. While the funding for schools through the Dedicated Schools Grant has remained at the same per pupil level as the financial year 2012-13, the reforms have resulted in a major redistribution of resources among schools. There has been protection for the schools through the continued application of the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) which ensures that any year on year reduction in funding does not exceed 1.5% per pupil. However, it is important to note that 93 (62%) of Shropshire schools are subject to MFG protection in 2013-14, highlighting the continued funding pressures on Shropshire schools which cannot be solely attributed to reforms in the funding formula. It is essential that the Council and the schools community continue to lobby for an improved education funding settlement for Shropshire schools.

The biggest impact on schools from the funding reforms has been in three particular areas, namely: primary school meals, ICT network provision (ie Broadband) and the number of pupils with low level, high incidence SEN (ie SEN statement bands 2 to 4). Effective partnership working between the local authority and the schools community has resulted in the continued provision of a hot meal service in all primary schools in 2013-14, and Shropshire Council has supported the maintenance on an affordable schools’ ICT network. The level of funding for high needs SEN has

remained the same and the prescriptive reforms allow little scope for Schools Forum to target funding to schools based on band 2-4 pupils and so this remains an issue for a minority of schools.

A number of minor reforms are being proposed for the financial year 2014-15. Schools Forum is currently appraising these further changes, seeking to ensure that any turbulence in the local formula and impact on schools' budgets is minimised. Schools Forum will consult with schools on these changes in the early autumn. It is anticipated that the DfE will be initiating consultation later in the year on the transition to a national school funding formula from April 2015. It is unclear at this stage how this will impact on funding for Shropshire schools.

6.4 Performance.

Schools in Shropshire continue to achieve good outcomes for children overall. 2012 outcomes remain the most recent validated data.

There continues to be an issue for Shropshire in relation to the outcomes for disadvantaged children. Although the majority of children do well, pupils entitled to Free School Meals (FSM) do less well in Shropshire than they do nationally and there are bigger gaps between their outcomes and the outcomes of their peers in Shropshire. This has been a major focus of a Scrutiny Task and Finish Group which made a number of recommendations for the improvement of access and uptake of the Pupil Premium.

6.4.2 Early Years.

Attainment for the youngest children in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) has improved significantly over time, placing the LA above national averages on all indicators. Approaches to assessment in the EYFS changed significantly in 2013 and it is not possible to compare provisional data with previous years' outcomes. No national comparisons are currently available.

6.4.3 Primary (Key Stages 1 and 2).

A Phonics Screening Check for pupils aged 6 was introduced in 2012 and 61% of children in Shropshire met the expectation, which was higher than the national average (58%). Provisional data for 2013 suggests that there has been a significant improvement in Shropshire (to 73%), which is expected to place the LA above or well above the national average.

Outcomes for Key Stage 1 (for children aged 7) in 2012 remained above average for reading, writing and mathematics at Level 2+, 2B+ and 3+. Provisional data for 2013 suggests no dip in any area and improvements of between 2% and 4% on the range of indicators. Again this should place Shropshire above the national average.

Validated data for 2012 confirmed that for at the end of the primary phase (Key Stage 2, at age 11) performance was above the national average on all key measures. Shropshire was the highest performing LA within the Statistical Neighbour (SN) group on a third of the 12 reported key

indicators, and in the top third of the rankings on all other reported indicators, including those related to higher than average attainment (level 5) and to progress measures. Assessment in writing changed in 2013 with the introduction of the new Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation test, making comparisons difficult. Initial data suggests results have dropped slightly from last year's record levels, especially in reading for higher than average attainment (level 5).

6.4.4 Secondary (Key Stage 4)

Shropshire's outcomes at Key Stage 4 (GCSE, at age 16) have been positive over time, placing the LA towards the top of the comparable group on most indicators. In 2012 results dipped and placed the LA in line with national averages and mid table or slightly above in comparison with our statistical neighbours on most indicators. The national issue in relation to GCSE English had a greater impact in Shropshire than nationally because of syllabus choices and lower uptake of early entry. Appeals and remarks improved results but are not reflected in published figures for Shropshire. Overall the provisional data for 2013 indicates improved outcomes on the key measure of the percentage of students gaining 5+A*-C, including in English and mathematics. There are national reports of a drop, so Shropshire's outcomes are likely to have improved to be above the national average.

6.5 Post 16 Education

A merger between Ludlow College and Herefordshire College of Technology has ensured continued post 16 provision in Ludlow and surrounding area. The new college became effective from August 1st 2013. Shropshire Council played a key role in securing on-going provision for South Shropshire.

There are four FE colleges within the county, one out of the four has an Ofsted grade of good, the remaining three colleges have an Ofsted grade of satisfactory/requires improvement. School Ofsted grades no longer distinguish between the main school and the sixth form.

Post 16 attainment for Shropshire schools showed a slight decline in overall performance in 2012, although this mirrored the national picture. The national figure for average points score per student in 2012 was 714.3, in Shropshire this was 715.8, compared to 2011 figures of 728.3 nationally and 743 for Shropshire. The average point score per examination entry for 2012 was in line with national average of 209.2, a slight reduction from last year (212.2).

6.6 Ofsted Inspections

A significant number of schools in Shropshire have been inspected by Ofsted during 2012-2013. The LA began the year with a lower than national number of primary schools judged to be good or outstanding and a

lower than expected number of pupils attending good or outstanding primary schools. The equivalent figures for secondary schools were in line with the national expectation.

Shropshire Council has focussed sharply on primary schools judged to be only satisfactory, and inspection outcomes have improved significantly over the year. Shropshire now has 70% of primary schools judged to be good or better, (compared to 55% in August 2012), and 73% of pupils in good or outstanding primary schools (compared to 59% in August 2102). Although some individual ratings for secondary schools have changed the overall figures have not changed significantly.

Local Authorities will be subject to a new OFSTED inspection of LAs capacity and capability to ensure high quality education provision and outcomes for children.

6.7 School Attendance.

Whilst overall school attendance is 0.4% down on last year, at 94.9% it continues to be good in Shropshire. All schools that have converted to Academy status have bought into the local authority's Education Welfare Officer services and the new arrangements are working well. An emerging picture of services indicates that provision will be determined by local decisions rather than through targeting services based on need across the county.

6.7.1 Holidays in term time.

A review of absence due to holidays during the school term indicates that over the past three years, in both the primary and secondary sectors, there has been an increase in the number of holidays not authorised by school and a decrease in the number of holidays authorised. The combined figure indicates that there has been a decrease in the number of holidays requested by parents/carers, suggesting that the strategy to reduce holidays in term time is starting to impact. In view of the new legislation that comes into place in September that removes the right of headteachers to allow absence of leave for the purpose of a family holiday, Shropshire's practice over the past 5 years will have prepared schools and parents/carers for this change.

6.8 The Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) service.

This service is trading with schools and colleges as well as private providers and care homes. The statutory duty for careers education, information and advice now rests with schools and colleges, therefore the amount of 'buy back' for the IAG service has been very encouraging.

6.8.1 The Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) figures for the county remain relatively low, and compare favourably with our statistical neighbours. Overall the NEET target of 5.4% for the year has been achieved (current figure for July is 4.4%). Of the 16 LAC leavers last year, 15 were in training, further education or employment Participation rates in education or training beyond the age of 16 are above the national average.

6.8.2 The participation age increased this year.

6.9 The Learning, Employment & Training Services (LETS)

LETS has continued to provide a wide range of successful services over the last year.

Learning and employability services such as Foundation Learning, Apprenticeships and other vocational and employability programmes are delivered from training centres in Shrewsbury, Whitchurch, Oswestry, Ludlow, Telford, Market Drayton and Hereford. They are delivered through the branded services of County Training and Adult & Community Learning.

During the past year County Training have engaged with nearly 5,000 unemployed people in Shropshire and provided a range of employability support, work experience placements, vocational training and community projects aimed at improving the employment opportunities for disadvantaged people.

The County Training Apprenticeship programme was highly successful in the academic year 2012/13 and Apprentice achievement rates were substantially above the national average. At level 2 the overall achievement rate was 84.15% compared with the national rate of 72.6% and for level 3 it was 82.78% compared with the national rate of 76.5%.

In collaboration with Telford & Wrekin Council, Hereford and Worcester Council and the Shropshire Council Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) Team LETS has been successful in a joint bid to support disaffected 14-16 year olds in school. This project commences in September 2013 over a two year period.

The Joint Training Service has provided training for 7837 people from the care and health sector in 2012-13. Training covers a wide variety of areas of learning, including Adult Learning Disability, Older People and People with Disabilities, Adult Mental Health, Safeguarding, Health and Safety and Management. Internal training in Adult Safeguarding has also been provided to a total of 3190 staff from a variety of settings.

The Professional Development Unit provides training for Adult Social care through Social Work training and short courses for the public and independent sector. Over the past three years this unit has contributed to the recruitment of over 45 newly qualified Social Workers across the Council over the past three years through the provision of quality practice placements for student social workers, and in this academic year has supported 36 students through their training. This unit will transfer to Adult Social Care in October 2013.

7.0 FAMILY SOLUTIONS

The Family Solutions Team has been up and running since January 2013, working intensively with high- need families with complex and multiple problems. There are currently 11 Solutions Workers, seconded from across the authority and partners, who have been trained and encouraged in a new way of operating.

The team have a number of partners and internal services who also work with the troubled families, for example; TEFL, STAR housing, Home Start, Education Welfare, Job Centre Plus and Local Commissioning.

Work done since August 2012 on measurement of outcomes for anti-social behaviour and education with the "prototype" family has shown that the interventions for the high need families are a long term investment.

To date the Solutions team has worked with 56 families. Successful employment outcomes have been achieved, with 5 people being supported into employment. The partners have worked with 90 families and supported 12 people into employment.

The reduction in the costs of the families to the partnership is currently being evidenced through hard data captures with all families and a cost benefit analysis exercise which the Family Solutions team are undertaking, using local unit costs and working closely with partners to unit cost their interventions.

One example is a family which in the year prior to the intervention of the Family Solutions team is estimated to have cost the public sector £82,571. Since the intervention, costs have reduced significantly and have shifted from reactive to preventative. The family has met all of the national outcomes and have shown a significant reduction in the cost to the partnership. This has included finding two young people within the family who were NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) education and employment, the youngest child now attends nursery, reduction in cost to the Registered Social Landlord (RSL), reduction in hospital visits and the end of a Child in Need plan.

8.0 Conclusion

The scale and pace of change in both Children's Social Care and Education has escalated during the last twelve months, and is set to continue during 2013/14. Add to this the financial imperatives of Shropshire Council, and the need for change is great.

The key priority during this period will be to redesign services so that they achieve good outcomes for our children and young people in a more cost effective way.

Detailed work is underway to redesign services, with early focus on the prevention agenda, early identification of signs of vulnerability (not only of children but also of their families) and early intervention in order to prevent problems escalating. We aim to develop a single point of access for referrals for support with a focus on prevention. Our partners both in the voluntary and statutory sectors play a key role and we will continue to develop our services collaboratively.

In improving our early identification, early help and family focus we aim to reduce the number of children who become looked after by Shropshire Council. We will explore opportunities to support and enable families and children to better cope within the family home, as well as looking at ensuring better, more local provision for those for whom this is not possible.

The safeguarding of children remains a key outcome for Shropshire Council and its partners. New legislation relating to the process for the care and adoption of children will be implemented.

New inspection regimes have been introduced for both Children's Social Care, including Safeguarding, Looked After Children and the Adoption process, and Education. For the first time, the capacity and capability of Local Authorities to ensure high quality education and outcomes for its children will be undertaken. It is crucial that an emphasis is placed on being fully prepared for these inspections.

The performance of our schools and the outcomes for children, especially those who are disadvantaged, will remain a focus of our work. We will continue to both support and challenge schools in order to address underperformance and drive up outcomes. Shropshire Council will continue to adapt to the changing educational context, and to its new role, as champion for learners. The school community has made it clear that it wishes Shropshire Council to take a strategic lead in ensuring that education provision is robust and sustainable, and continues to work together. We will seek to consolidate support services for schools across Shropshire and manage the transition of these services, whilst retaining a strategic influence.
