

**COUNCILLOR ANN HARTLEY
PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICE**

1.0 Summary

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

REPORT

2.0 CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING

2.1 Ofsted Inspections

2.1.1 Inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children

All actions that were part of the action plan produced in response to the Ofsted unannounced inspection in 2012 of local authority arrangements for the protection of children (safeguarding) have been completed. Significantly, the threshold document has now been implemented, and training across the children's workforce undertaken.

As part of the Children's Services' continuous improvement efforts additional actions have been and continue to be implemented:

- Revised operational activity at ICT (Initial contact Team) ensures contacts are now appropriately recorded as referrals.
- Further fine tuning of the practice on referrals management is being implemented as a result of the continuous monitoring of front door's performance (including re-referral rates) and audit and QA activities.
- The clarity of assessments, CPP (Child Protection Plan) documentation and evidencing decision making through recording, accessibility and reporting is further refined by all operational teams and the support services working together and reducing 'silo working' but also through a clear programme of multi agency audit that continues in Early Help and Safeguarding.
- The Shropshire Children's Safeguarding Services Audit and Quality Assurance Framework (Safeguarding Group) Programme for 2014 – 2016 -

has been revised in Jun 2014 and is being implemented contributing to greater scrutiny activity and engagement of all partner organisations in the process.

- Leaflets for parents have been produced explain S47 and Social Work assessment processes, Care Council development and the End to End Fostering Review are key areas of business for us to ensure that we are capturing the voice of the child and feedback plus ensuring all parties are informed and clear about the services/processes.

2.1.2 Children’s Centres

Only one Children’s Centre area has been inspected this year by Ofsted and was assessed as Good.

Consistently over the last 4 years with the exception of one year Children’s Centres have been assessed as ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ following Ofsted inspections.

2.1.3 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.

2.2 TRANSFORMATION ACTIVITIES IN CHILDREN’S SOCIAL CARE

The Early Help Strategy (updated in June 2014) has been re-designed to ‘think family’ and support partners in the delivery of outcomes focused Early Help Plans and identification and management of risk.

The strategy is based on a child-centred and coordinated approach to prevention and early assistance where the voice of the child is heard and their experience of life is understood by all professionals working with them. It describes principles, mechanisms and tools to coordinate a range of services that are enabling families and communities to deliver and achieve the outcomes for children and young people.

The focus of the Early Help strategy is to provide medium to long term Early Help support to children and families in step down and rehabilitation to sustain improved outcomes.

An early help comprehensive outcomes framework is being developed to be implemented during 2014/15 and monitor the impact of the re-design and all the services working together to achieve the outcomes for children and young people and their families.

On-going development of COMPASS as the single point of contact and the fact that the Early Help Partnership has become a formal sub-group of SCT (Shropshire Children’s Trust) contribute to further clarity in the implementation of the new threshold document.

Development of the Workflow framework and the new Quality Assurance (QA) framework - ensures clarity for all professional involved regarding the process. Shropshire Council has not been inspected under the new framework.

The new QA framework was agreed in June 14 and outlines a matrix of auditing activity from Chief Executive to front line managers. The new framework includes a clear mechanism for learning from practice and for the dissemination of this throughout the workforce to ensure there is a continuous learning culture.

Further developments have been made to ensure that the voice of the child is well heard and used to inform individual plans. Audit and performance monitoring tools have been developed in the case recording system Care First to improve the quality consistency and availability of management information.

A re-design of the ICT and Case Management contributes to a more timely workflow and a ‘one Social Worker – one Child’ approach, reducing the number of times a child and their family transfer from one social worker to another.

During January to March 2014 a Scrutiny Task and Finish Group looked at fostering provision, raising the opportunity for Elected Members into this work (which is part of the LAC strategy).

Shropshire Council continues to engage with the West Mercia Adoption Partnership. A phased approach has been agreed, with further scoping work to explore the feasibility of progressing the partnership to develop a single adoption agency across the four Local Authorities involved in the partnership.

The implementation of PALAC (Pathway to Accommodation into Local Authority Care) ensures that in a single place there is clear outcome of assessed need and managerial decision making with regards to children coming into care and monitoring of placement and matching finance.

A pilot activity is underway to operate Havenbrook as a residential respite provision for young people on the edge of care. It aims to manage risk by providing short breaks together with planned interventions with young people and the family over a period of time with the overall aim of keeping children with their families rather than coming into care.

3.0 EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY

3.1 Ofsted Inspections

A significant number of schools in Shropshire were inspected by Ofsted during 2013-2014 and outcomes have improved the profile of Shropshire schools significantly, particularly in primary schools. In August 2012 Shropshire had 55% of primary schools judged good or outstanding (compared with 69% nationally) and 59% children attended good or outstanding primary schools (compared with

68 % nationally). The equivalent figures for secondary schools (68% on both measures) were in line with the national comparisons.

The Education Improvement Service has focussed sharply on primary schools judged to be only satisfactory, and by August 2013 the % primary schools judged good or outstanding had risen to 70% (compared to a national figure of 78%) and the % children in good and outstanding primary schools had risen to 75% (compared to a national figure of 77%). The improvement has continued with Shropshire now having 80% of primary schools judged good or outstanding, (compared to a latest national figure of 80%, in March 2014) and 81% pupils in good and outstanding schools, (compared to a latest national figure of 79%). Although some individual ratings for secondary schools have changed the overall figures have not changed significantly, with 67% secondary schools judged to be good or outstanding (against a national figure of 71%) and the % pupils in good and outstanding schools matching the national figure of 73%.

Fewer schools in Shropshire are now judged to be inadequate, with four LA maintained primary schools and no secondary schools in this category. It is important to note that when a school becomes a sponsored academy it no longer retains its previous Ofsted judgement.

A framework for the inspection of Local Authority arrangements for supporting school improvement to ensure high quality education provision and outcomes for children was introduced in May 2013. Shropshire’s Education Improvement Service has not yet been inspected, but Ofsted inspectors include a judgement on LA support and challenge to schools in inspection reports. Almost without exception the judgement on Shropshire’s school improvement service is positive.

Regional HMI have been invited to lead development sessions for Shropshire schools, and have delivered over 10 sessions during the last year.

3.2 Sustainability and efficiency of provision

In 2011 Cabinet agreed that in two locations, Shawbury and St Martins, existing schools would expand and combine onto single, more cost effective, sites. The new Shawbury St Mary’s Primary School opened at the beginning of the autumn term 2013 and the all through school in St Martins will open its primary department in September 2014.

Last year’s report summarised the work on establishing the Shropshire Learning Partnership (SLP). This emerged from consultation with primary and secondary headteacher representative groups, with draft proposals being developed by a representative group of headteachers. After two phases of consultation, schools have now had the opportunity to sign up for the partnership, with 94% doing so.

3.4 Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND)

2013/14 has seen significant development work on provision for children and young people with Special Education Needs & Disability (SEND) in line with the Children & Families Bill which comes into force in September 2014. The main focuses are on:

- movement towards a more family centred system
- close working across education, health and social care
- production of a Local Offer
- the introduction of Personal Budgets
- the establishment of Education, Health, and Care plans (EHCP)

Shropshire’s preparation is well-advanced and key partners, including schools, health and social care professionals and parent groups, have been fully involved.

Alongside this significant development work there has been a focus on establishing Shropshire’s first specialist hub which will open in January 2015 and is to be located at Lakelands Academy in Ellesmere. When fully operational it will have places for 24 secondary age children. This follows the decision made by Cabinet in February 2013 which approved the development of more localised provision for some children identified with SEN. The focus is on enabling Shropshire’s children to access their specialist education locally and to remain within their families and communities in Shropshire.

3.5 The Learning, Employment & Training Services (LETS)

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

In February 2014, Cabinet agreed to the externalisation of LETS. A soft market testing process was undertaken, resulting in an open tender process. A subsequent portfolio holder decision agreed to transfer Enable and Joint Training elements to the Adult Directorate

4.0 FAMILY SOLUTIONS

The Family Solutions Programme continued to deliver the national Troubled Families agenda across Shropshire. The front line team of intensive support workers was increased, using the attachment fees from national funding, to ensure that the project achieved its target of engaging 228 families in 2013/14. By the end of the year, 467 families, who met the Troubled Families criteria, were engaged with services; 153 families had improved outcomes in reducing anti-social behaviour / under 18 crime, or increased attendance in education, or stopped claiming out of work benefits. This enabled the Programme to claim £88,600 in Payment by Reward monies and this will be invested to continue delivery of the programme for a sustainable future.

5.0 TRANSFORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

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 and the ongoing 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.

Key priorities for 2014/15 are:-

- Corporate Parenting which needs development across the partnership to ensure we have the best possible understanding and engagement of the corporate parenting agenda of all stakeholders. This is being managed through the Corporate Parenting Strategy and the Children in Care Council's review.
- Improving our early identification, early help and family focus we will aim to reduce the number of children who become looked after by Shropshire Council by supporting and enabling 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. Alongside this we will look to manage the cost of looked after children by securing permanency plans in a timely way.
- Being inspection ready. 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, including academies, in order to address underperformance and drive up outcomes.
- The transfer of some services to Inspire 2 Learn (I2L), within IP&E. Transfer of some services will take place from early 2015 and the transition of education support service teams will continue through 2015.
- Continued implementation of the SEND reforms including personalisation
- Despite positive performance headline, review our fostering and adoption processes to improve the timeliness of recruitment of carers and to improve our aspirations for long term permanency outside of local authority care for what might be deemed hard to place children.
- Education Transport Redesign.
- Consideration of the synergies and opportunities with Adult services. Current priorities include:-

- Services for people with disabilities
 - Transition through children to adult services
 - Family focussed provision where adults and children’s services are engaged with the same family.
- Administrative review for all social work services, which will look at new and more efficient and cost effective ways of working.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Ann Hartley

Local Member

Appendices

None.