

**COUNCIL: 26 JANUARY 2017**

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## **EARLY YEARS, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

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### **Children's Services**

I want to take this opportunity to update members on developments in Children's Services since my last statement to Council. Progress with implementation of Signs of Safety Project Plan continues:

- training is ongoing;
- engagement with Team Managers and Principal Social Workers has been concluded; and
- engagement sessions with staff to commence in Quarter 4.

The Signs of Safety Communications Strategy has been completed and disseminated across Children's Services and partnerships following Children's Management Team approval. The first Signs of Safety Newsletter has been sent to all staff and further newsletters will continue to be produced at regular intervals.

### **Mobile Working**

To date, we have mobilised approximately 550 Social Services staff. The teams mobilised include Intake & Assessment, Children in Need, Looked After Children, Safeguarding Service, Youth Offending Service, Fostering Service, Family Intervention Support Service, Emergency Duty Team (EDT) and the Personal Adviser Service.

In addition to reducing the amount of building space we need to occupy and improving information management, staff also benefit by removing unproductive and time consuming activities such as travelling to the office, printing and the duplicate transcribing of notes on the system. Being able to work from home more effectively and manage time more flexibly also supports a better work-life balance. Positive feedback from a staff survey included: *"More time to complete recordings and paperwork = less stress"* and *"This has definitely had an effect on people's health and wellbeing which in turn increases productivity and performance"*.

I want to reassure you that staff will continue to have access to office and team environments. The ability to work flexibly will enhance what we have now.

### **MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub)**

The MASH approach is one that has been implemented in other Local Authority areas and early evidence shows improvements in multi-agency working, joint ownership of referrals, partner communications and sharing of information resulting in:

- more informed decision making;
- more children receiving appropriate help following referral;
- a reduction of inappropriate referrals and re-referrals;
- a reduction in turnaround times of referrals to decisions.

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub was implemented during the year to improve our initial response for protecting children. Early indications are that our response to safeguarding children and adults is improving – e.g. multi agency strategy discussions are taking place immediately thereby improving timeliness of response. Threshold meetings with all partners take place weekly and are chaired by the Assistant Director for Children’s Services. The meetings quality assure a sample of cases and confirm that the multi-agency response to safeguarding concerns remains robust.

### **Edge of Care initiatives**

Where safe to do so, we continue to prioritise children remaining at home or with extended family members. Between March and December 2016, 47 families have been supported through our Rapid Response team and family breakdown has been prevented for 93 children by the Safe Families for Children initiative. This is a new prevention service that works with Children’s Services to link families in need with local volunteers who can offer them help and support through a crisis.

Between April and December 2016, 57 children from 26 families have received services from the preventative Family Group Conferences initiative. Accommodation as a result of family breakdown has been avoided for 9 of these children with an estimated cost saving of £72k. Family Group Conferencing utilises the strengths of family/friends to make their own plan to support and safeguard the children.

### **Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy**

The Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Strategy has enabled significant progress to be achieved in ensuring that children and young people are protected from CSE. The strategy has:

- drawn all key partners together with a common objective and action plan;
- enabled an audit and analysis of service effectiveness;
- drawn more effectively on the voices of children and their families; and
- promoted city wide awareness raising in the night economy.

### **Disability Futures Programme**

A successful £2.54 million Intermediate Care Fund (ICF) bid is now supporting the new “Disability Futures Programme” to transform services for disabled children and learning disabled adults with complex needs. This has included the creation of two transition worker posts in the Adult Learning Disabilities team to work within the complex needs service supporting young adults from the age of 16.

**Councillor Sue Lent**

**Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children & Families**

26 January 2017