

CABINET PORTFOLIO SUMMARY REPORT

REPORT OF	Councillor Tony Smith
CABINET PORTFOLIO FOR	Children and Family Services
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is an update from the Cabinet Portfolio Holder to Members of the Council on matters relevant to his portfolio.

1. VULNERABLE CHILDREN ACHIEVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

Work is underway to support the safe reduction of the numbers of children in care who are subject to care orders and placed at home with their parents, or who are currently in care and will be supported to become permanently attached to their carers through them obtaining Special Guardianship Orders. Additional capacity to undertake this work has been secured through the Councils transformation fund, and work is being progressed through the Family Courts.

Wirral has joined with other councils in the Liverpool City Region to submit a successful bid to progress consideration of a city region adoption agency. The focus of regionalising adoption services is to increase efficiencies, improve matching opportunities for children, and recruitment of a wider pool of adopters within which to place children; and also provide adoption support across a larger footprint. Meetings have now taken place with the Government advisor and regional partners, and work is now starting to scope out what the adoption service of the future could look like, ready for submission by March 2016.

The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is being strengthened, and a new data dashboard is supporting much clearer analysis of the needs of children and families referred into children's services; who they are referred by, and the individual journey of each child. A new referral form is being developed to make it simpler to get support for children and families when they need it, and a review of threshold criteria is soon to be undertaken with partners to ensure everyone is clear about when to refer concerns about children into the safeguarding hub. This work is being led by a steering group which reports into the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

2. CHILDREN ARE READY FOR SCHOOL

The redesigned service for our youngest children is now progressing following Cabinet's decision on 27th July. Formal consultation with staff commenced on 22 October, and will be concluded prior to Christmas. The new hub and satellite model will be implemented in the New Year. We are now focusing on what services will look like in 2020, and how we align all partner spend to commission services together in future to support young children and families more effectively and efficiently. There is a strong focus on improving information sharing between partners to identify vulnerable children and families at the earliest opportunity, and opportunities to integrate services are being explored, alongside how we use our buildings to maximum effect.

3. YOUNG PEOPLE ARE READY FOR WORK AND ADULTHOOD

Supporting young people to develop into resilient adults is critically important; some of the activities engaging young people recently include:

- Preparing for the next United Kingdom Youth Parliament elections, which will be held in February 2016. We are working with all secondary schools to actively support young people in this national democratic process;
- Supporting young people to express their views on what needs to be done to improve safety for young people through the Youth Voice Conference, delivered by young people in October. Workshops were held on exploitation, being streetwise, media pressure, mate crime, bullying, gang culture / peer pressure and internet safety. The Conference concluded with young people posing key questions to a panel of multiagency partners on matters which most concerned them.
- The annual Youth Parliament which was held on 10 November 2015, when many of the issues discussed at the Youth Voice Conference were vigorously debated in the Council Chamber.
- National Care leavers' week, which was held at the end of October was celebrated by the Children in Care Council along with corporate parents. This involved a week of activities, which included fifteen adults, who work with care leavers, living on the equivalent of care leavers financial allowance for food for a week.

Edsential

The new School Shared Service Company with Cheshire West and Chester went live on 1st December. This has involved a lot of hard work over a considerable period of time for people from both authorities. There is a strong business model and we expect business to grow and help deliver improvements to outcomes for children in the future. An early focus has been on school catering, with modernised kitchen practices being implemented in schools buying back this service, improved menus and more efficient planning and ordering of produce. The quality of food has risen, with many compliments being received.

4. INTERVENING EARLY TO SUPPORT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The new Family Intervention Service, which started in October brings together the existing Intensive Family Intervention Programme (Troubled Families) and Family Support Service into a single service. Through combining two service areas, this review is realising £1.06m savings; and will deliver a targeted offer, based on what we know works. The overarching aims of the service will be to:

- (i) Reduce demand on Specialist Services by meeting needs through lower levels of intervention
- (ii) Improve Health and Wellbeing outcomes for children and families
- (iii) Reduce the cost to the public purse by families experiencing multiple and complex issues
- (iv) Improve aspirations and economic outcomes for Wirral families