

17 March 2014

Agenda Item: 5

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN STRATEGY UPDATE

Purpose of the Report

1. To update the Sub-Committee on the progress of the action plan for the Looked After Children Strategy.

Information and Advice

2. It was identified that our approach to Looked After Children would benefit from the development of an over-arching strategy which outlines the commitment of the Council and our partner agencies to supporting children in care. The strategy has been developed based on what young people have told us is important to them in The Pledge for Looked After Children, published in October 2010.
3. Nottinghamshire's commitments to Looked After Children, as set out in The Pledge, underpin our Looked After Children Strategy which was published in August 2012. This strategy identifies the Council's ambition for its Looked After Children and young people, ensuring that they receive placements that meet their needs, have access to high quality education and enjoy positive activities that support them to achieve their full potential. For those children who require permanent alternative families it means ensuring that effective plans are made so that they achieve permanence as quickly as possible.
4. The LAC Strategy action plan, attached as **Appendix 1**, had a number of work streams which included piloting new panel arrangements for entry to care, reviewing the support in place for kinship care and care leavers, and the wider range of options for permanency available to children and young people in the care system.
5. Key actions in all priority areas have been completed which include:
 - a review of The Pledge for Looked After Children to ensure it continues to reflect the priorities of children in care in Nottinghamshire
 - the establishment of a Permanence Panel to ensure greater scrutiny of permanent placements and ensure robust support arrangements are in place
 - production of a new review booklet to ensure young people's voices are heard and that they shape their own care plans
 - a new guide to adoption is available for older children and young people to help them understand the opportunities and challenges this presents, and how they can influence the process

- all new looked after children and existing looked after children with significant changes to circumstance will have a designated Educational Psychologist
 - two additional Looked After Children Achievement Officers have been recruited to the Virtual School
 - most district councils are now offering free or reduced cost sports and leisure activities for looked after children and young people
 - a new data sharing system is in place between Health and Children's Social Care that will assist in identifying health concerns of looked after children
 - an increase in the number of salaried carers for young people in need of specialist foster care placements
 - the establishment of a new Family Assessment and Contact Service which provides a consistent approach to contact across the County
 - increased leave available for Nottinghamshire County Council staff who are taking on the care of a child through a special guardianship order.
6. Following a review of the LAC Strategy action plan in November 2013, additional work streams have been identified which further support the Council's commitment to children in care. Progress on these work streams will be monitored by the LAC Strategy Steering Group as part of the ongoing six monthly action plan monitoring, to ensure the priorities of children in care are promoted. These additional work streams include:
- the involvement of looked after children and young people in a two year self harm research project through the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
 - Children's Social Care representative for the Nottinghamshire Children and Young People's Participation Group
 - the current review of the Children's Disability Service through the Children's Social Care Transformation Programme.

Other Options Considered

7. The report is for noting only.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

8. The report is for noting only.

Statutory and Policy Implications

9. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Implications for Service Users

10. Looked After Children will benefit from clear commitments from the County Council and partner agencies which support them, based on what young people in care have told us is important to them in The Pledge.

Public Sector Equality Duty Implications

11. The Strategy commits Council and partner services to giving Looked After Children the same opportunities as any other group of children and young people.

Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults Implications

12. The Strategy strengthens the commitment of the Council and partners to effectively safeguarding this vulnerable group of children and young people.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the update on the progress of the action plan for the Looked After Children Strategy be noted.

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Constitutional Comments

12. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

Financial Comments (KLA 21/02/14)

13. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Looked After Children Strategy – report to Policy Committee on 18 July 2012
Looked After Children Strategy update – report to Policy Committee on 16 January 2013
Looked After Children Strategy update – report to Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee on 16 September 2013

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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