

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

BRIEFING NOTE – No. 1/19

Date: January 2019

Briefing paper to: All Members of the Children and Young People
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Purpose: To update the Committee Members on transformation
projects in Children Services

Transformation for Children Services Update

1. Executive Summary

In February 2018 a review of transformation projects within Children's Services was undertaken. The review validated the savings, their project plans and resourcing and identified additional opportunities.

Managers across Children's Services lead each project with support from the programme team as required, with the exception of the mobile working project which was led and managed jointly by Children & Adults Transformation and Corporate ICT.

2. Progress by Project

2.1 **Troubled Families (Early Help)**

The national Troubled Families scheme provides payments by result for engaging with and turning around families. This 'turnaround' is done by engaging with the families holistically, understanding the nature of their various problems across six criteria; health, education, being out of or at risk of being out of work, children in need, domestic violence and crime or antisocial behaviour.

Medway continues to coordinate training and engagement across partner organisations, such as schools, in order to improve the access to the scheme for families in the locality.

Progress is positive; the team have reached their target for seven months consecutively.

At the end of December 2018, over 416 families have been identified as having been successfully 'turned around' to date and achieved their agreed outcomes.

2.2 Community-Based Fostering

This is to be achieved by developing fostering communities, or hubs, whereby one experienced, therapeutic foster carer provides support, guidance and respite to a group of six foster carers, who come together as seven households to help each other. As part of a Hub-and Spoke model of community-based foster care, they will provide mentorship, and practical and emotional support to foster carers and their foster children.

This project is in the early stages. There is a new interim Head of Provider Services and a new Fostering Team Manager, who were appointed in December 2018 and will review and drive this project forward.

2.3 Placements

When there is neither the capacity nor the capability to place a child internally, the child is placed in an 'external placement' (i.e. one not owned or run by Medway Council) – potentially an Independent Fostering Agency or a Residential placement. Along with schemes, such as the Community-Based Fostering project (above), there is a drive to increase capacity internally, commission externally in an optimum fashion and to coordinate the balance between the two. This results in improved outcomes for children, in line with national advice, as well as financial benefits to the Local Authority.

Fostering now have their own marketing and recruitment officer (fixed term for 12 months from 1 April 2018) who works with the design and content team.

Activity to date re Fostering

Facebook

As a result of the marketing strategy we have seen a 43% increase in traffic on the fostering Facebook page.

- Page has been verified which will help us come up higher on Facebook searches.
- Personalised auto responses added when people send private messages.
- Promotional posts launched to go out to wider set audience encouraging people to visit our page, website and to contact us.
- In the process of increasing private message response time, which will help increase confidence of people messaging
- Other fostering staff have been added to the Facebook page administration to ensure someone is always available to respond to comments/messages.

Website

In the process of switching to a new domain, in discussion with the design team and content team to put together a template for the new site, including prominent

click to call buttons and call to action buttons. The website has also been recently updated to make it more mobile friendly.

Radio advert

Heart FM – 390 spots over a 14 week period highlighting the need for foster carers.

Leaflets

15,000 distributed to schools in Medway highlighting the need for new foster carers.

Gillingham FC

Advertising slot in fixture cards – approx. 10,000 distributed around Kent.

Medway Matters

Article slot in Medway Matters.

The service is also looking at training for both internal teams and foster carers to increase capability to place internally.

- Meeting with individual carers to identify how we can enable them to care for a wider range of more complex children.
- Group meeting with Foster Carer's scheduled for September to collate training programme to work alongside the individual Foster Carer household training.
- Fostering Mentors and Family Worker working with carers on behaviour management programmes.

We have appointed a new permanent senior to fostering recruitment and are organising recruitment meetings to cover all of fostering, including short breaks and also adoption, with the aim of promoting Medway to all prospective carers in a positive way.

We have 3 new carers due to be approved. In addition 13 enquiries into fostering with Medway included enquiries from carers already fostering with independent agencies, and these are all being followed up.

Although assessments and approvals are still slower than we would like, there is evidence of increase in interest which will translate into more approved carers.

There is an increase in internal placements with 203 internal placements utilised in October and an increase in Parent and Child placements from 2 in January 18 to 6 in October 18. Six new families are attending 'Skills to Foster' session in January 19.

2.4 Home to School Transport (Mainstream)

As part of our statutory requirement, home to school transport is provided to all eligible children within Medway. Through transport provider Arriva, Medway purchases Scholar's passes; morning and evening passes allowing children to use Arriva buses to travel to and from school. It was identified that these passes were costing Medway Council more than the cost of an adult season ticket, so this price was subsequently negotiated.

2.5 Casual Admissions for Schools

The responsibility for admissions to schools (non-specialist places) has been transferred to individual schools rather than managed internally at the council.

2.6 Thomas Aveling

Thomas Aveling started, in this school year, to provide support for 5 secondary-aged hearing-impaired children. This means, that it has not been necessary to send the children to out-of-area, high cost, placements in order to meet their needs. A further 10 places are available from 2019.

We are looking into the possibility whether there are other children, whose needs could be met at Thomas Aveling, who are currently placed out of borough.

2.7 Mobile Working

Over 400 Microsoft Surface Pros have been rolled out across the Children and Adults directorate. The device includes a sim card, which enables it to be used without the need for Wi-Fi thereby providing greater flexibility and responsiveness.

The use of these devices enable front-line staff to access case management records while in people's homes, the children & family hubs, libraries or other locations across Medway and the UK either to view information or input directly to the live electronic record.

The implementation of mobile working reduces duplication of work and provides a far better service to some of our most vulnerable residents.

Feedback from users has been positive:

'It has saved invaluable time by accessing case notes/ previous documents/contacts by when asked questions, I have been able to answer straight away and not wait until back in the office.'

'It has saved some conflict when challenged that referral has not been made/ paperwork has not been sent out, as I have evidence of when it was made and the progress on that referral. This has reduced stress levels and eased areas of conflict - a real benefit.'

'The Surface Pro has added a truer sense of mobile working, with this piece of equipment with me, my office is where I am, when I am in the car, this is my office, when I am with a client their front room is my office. What this means is that I have the full capabilities of the office wherever I go, with the exception of a printer which for the most part, I no longer need due to having the ability to take digital signatures and email information over whilst there.'

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