

Item 5 - Briefing Note - Key national updates

Better Care Fund

The Better Care Fund will create pooled budgets in each upper-tier local authority area, between health and social care services, starting from April 2015. It is important to note that this is not 'new' investment from Government, but a re-allocation of money that is currently spent on existing health and social care services.

There has been extensive involvement and engagement of a wide range of partners in developing Cambridgeshire's BCF plan. The final plan was submitted to government on the 4th of April. Work is now ongoing to finalise the terms of the funding agreement with the Clinical Commissioning Group, and to agree with providers on some of the potential schemes.

New adoption agencies

Three new voluntary adoption agencies- including one operating in Cambridgeshire- opened on the 4th of April this year, as part of a £16million government drive to encourage more people to adopt. Each of the new agencies has been awarded a start-up grant of around £500,000 to help to prepare and support potential adoptive parents. The government funding will also go to support additional programmes such as expansion grants for existing voluntary adoption agencies, and new business support for adoption agencies including advice, coaching and guidance to expand.

The new voluntary adoption agency in Cambridgeshire is Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption. Coram already enjoys strong links with Cambridgeshire County Council, having been commissioned in 2011 to help manage the authority's adoption service.

Care Leavers' Charter

123 local authorities- including Cambridgeshire County Council- have now signed up to a Care Leavers' Charter which pledges to provide young people leaving care with advice and support up to their 25th birthday. The charter was first launched by Children and Families Minister Edward Timpson in October 2012.

In Cambridgeshire, only 52% of Care Leavers aged 19 are in education, employment or training, compared to 88% of Cambridgeshire's general 19-year-old population. As well as being a signatory to the Care Leavers' Charter, Cambridgeshire County Council supports care leavers by reserving a number of apprenticeships available at the Council for LAC.

Regional school commissioners

Following the large number of schools in England which have converted to academy status, the government is rolling out a network of regional school commissioners. Regional schools commissioners will take important operational decisions on behalf of the Secretary of State about academies, free schools and sponsors in their region. Commissioners will have no remit to intervene in successful academies and free schools, but will be responsible for requiring academies to address underperformance where it exists. Commissioners will operate with a high degree of autonomy within a national framework. Commissioners will be ultimately accountable to the Secretary of State, and will be supported and advised by local head teacher boards.

Item 5 - Briefing Note - Key national updates

All secondary schools in Cambridgeshire are now academies, and an increasing number of primary schools both nationally and locally are also taking up academy status. Cambridgeshire will fall into the North East London and East of England region.

Reforms to arts GCSEs

On the 9th of April Michael Gove announced reforms to a number of arts-based GCSE subjects, including art and design, music and drama. Other subjects, including computer science, citizenship and PE, will also be reformed on the same timetable, for teaching to begin in September 2016. These 9 GCSEs can be included within the new secondary accountability measure, which is based on a pupil's progress in 8 subjects, namely English and maths, 3 English Baccalaureate subjects, and 3 other subjects. The increase in the number of subjects that count in performance tables, from 5 to 8, will encourage more schools to ensure take-up of arts subjects for post-14 study.

Furthermore, 6 A-level subjects, including music, dance and PE, will be changed to reflect advice received from universities and higher education providers.