

**SERVICE DIRECTOR REPORT CHILDREN AND SAFEGUARDING**

*To:* **Audit and Accounts Committee**

*Date:* **29<sup>th</sup> July 2019**

*From:* Executive Director People and Communities.

*Electoral Division(s):* **All**

*Purpose:* As requested at a previous Audit and Accounts Committee the attached report which went to Children and Young People Committee contains the most recent update on key areas of performance within children's services and the work being undertaken in respect of the development of the Family Safeguarding model.

Appendix 1 is the original report which went to Children and Young People Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> July.

During discussion at that Committee Members:

- Asked whether the table at paragraph 2.5 was the best way of displaying data about caseloads. Officers stated that it was usual for local authorities to measure caseloads based on an average figure, although it was acknowledged that this could mask differences in individual workload. The aim was to reduce the average caseload to 15, but this would be dependent on recruiting the necessary staff which remained a challenge, particularly in some parts of the county;
- Asked whether it was correct that Central Bedfordshire Council was paying higher wages to attract social workers. The Executive Director for People and Communities stated that a memorandum of co-operation existed between members of the Directors of Children's Services (DCS) regional group regarding pay levels to provide a consistent offer, although exemptions could be sought in areas where particular difficulties existed with recruitment. Central Bedfordshire's pay scale was the same as Cambridgeshire, but they offered a 'golden handshake' payment of £5000 to new joiners. Northamptonshire County Council was not a member of the DCS Regional Group and paid significantly higher rates. The Service Director for Children's Services and Safeguarding was looking into these examples, but his preliminary view was that any additional payments should be related to retention rates rather than targeted to new joiners. In response to a Member's concern that retention incentives could prove divisive amongst staff, officers stated that if this option was pursued, it could be targeted at those teams experiencing particular retention difficulties and so would be open to any member of staff willing to move to work in those teams;
- Asked whether the proposed work on recruitment and retention could

include a collaborative piece of work across children's social care and education to explore ways of developing new pathways into social care professions via the county's academic and health service providers. The Executive Director for People and Communities stated that she chaired the Council's Recruitment and Retention Group and would be happy to take this question forward through that forum. The Service Directors for Education and Children's Services and Safeguarding noted the need to engage colleges in this work and to consider the role of apprenticeships. The Chairman welcomed this suggestion and asked that officers report back on progress in due course.

**(Action:** Executive Director, People and Communities)

- Offered congratulations to officers on securing significant funding from the Department for Education to support the Council's development of the Family Safeguarding model;
- Asked whether there would be value in seeking Transformation Funding for a piece of research into why approaches were made to Children's Social Care rather than to other support services. The Executive Director for People and Communities stated that officers' sense was that those living in more affluent parts of the county had a different perception of what constituted a child in need of social care support. Work with communities was needed to address this and offer meaningful and appropriate alternatives to seeking social care support. The Vice Chairwoman acknowledged this, but commented that the Committee must recognise that in the short term this could lead to identified need going up rather than down. The Director of Children's Services and Safeguarding concurred, stating that the Family Safeguarding model required a different way of working with families which could involve spending longer alongside them supporting them to address practical problems. In Peterborough the number of children on the Child Protection Register had initially gone up, but had now gone down.

The Chairman thanked the Service Director for Children's Services and Safeguarding and his team for their trail-blazing work on safeguarding which represented a significant piece of work.

### **Recommendations:**

Audit and Accounts Committee is asked to note the report

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