

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Cabinet **DATE:** 19 June 2017

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WARD(S): All

PORTFOLIO: Cllr Bedi – Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Families

PART I **NON-KEY DECISION**

SLOUGH CHILDREN'S SERVICES TRUST – UPDATE

1 **Purpose of Report**

To provide the Cabinet with an update on the work of the Trust over the past 12 months, and progress made in improving services providing to support the most vulnerable children and young people in the borough.

2 **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Cabinet is requested to resolve that the report be noted.

3. **The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

3a. **Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

1. Protecting vulnerable children – ensuring that children's services in Slough are rated 'good' by Ofsted, and that all children are safe and protected from abuse and neglect, providing them opportunities to achieve their best in life and enabling them to fulfil their ambitions.

3b **Five Year Plan Outcomes**

- Our children and young people will have the best start in life and opportunities to give them positive lives – through the establishment of a children's services provision judged 'good' by Ofsted by the end of 2018.

4 **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

There are no financial implications in relation to this report.

However, following the multi-year settlement provided by government to Slough Borough Council, Slough Children's Services Trust has received similar financial certainties from SBC, this is in relation to the amounts it is intending to provide as part of the Trusts Core Contract and are as follows:-

2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
£24.411m	£24.811m	£25.211m

(b) Risk Management

Risk	Mitigating action	Opportunities
Legal	None	None
Property	None	None
Human Rights	None	None
Health and Safety	None	None
Employment Issues	None	None
Equalities Issues	None	None
Community Support	None	None
Communications	None	None
Community Safety	None	None
Financial	None	None
Timetable for delivery	None	None
Project Capacity	None	None
Other	None	None

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Act implications in relation to this report.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

There is no identified need for the completion of an EIA in relation to this report.

5 **Background**

- 5.1 The Slough Children's Services Trust took over the management of Slough's children's social care services in October 2015, following two Ofsted judgements of 'inadequate' since 2011.
- 5.2 In November/December 2015, Ofsted undertook a full Single Inspection Framework for services for children in need of help and protection; children looked after and care leavers. This inspection found services were 'inadequate'.
- 5.3 Following the 2015 inspection, the council and Trust worked together to develop a joint action plan for addressing the findings of the Ofsted inspection and to develop a good and outstanding services for vulnerable children, young people and families in the borough. The Ofsted Delivery Plan was approved by the Council, the Trust and endorsed by Ofsted in June/July 2016.

6 **Joint Improvement Board**

- 6.1 In August 2016, the council and Trust established a Joint Improvement Board. The purpose of the Board is to develop and oversee the delivery of the Ofsted Delivery

Plan, and to ensure that standards in practice are driven up through the improvement process.

6.2 The Joint Improvement Board meets monthly, and the membership is made up of key partners alongside the council and Trust. The Chief Executive of Slough Borough Council chairs the meeting, and the Chief Executive of Slough Children’s Services Trust is the vice chair; the Department for Education attends as an observer.

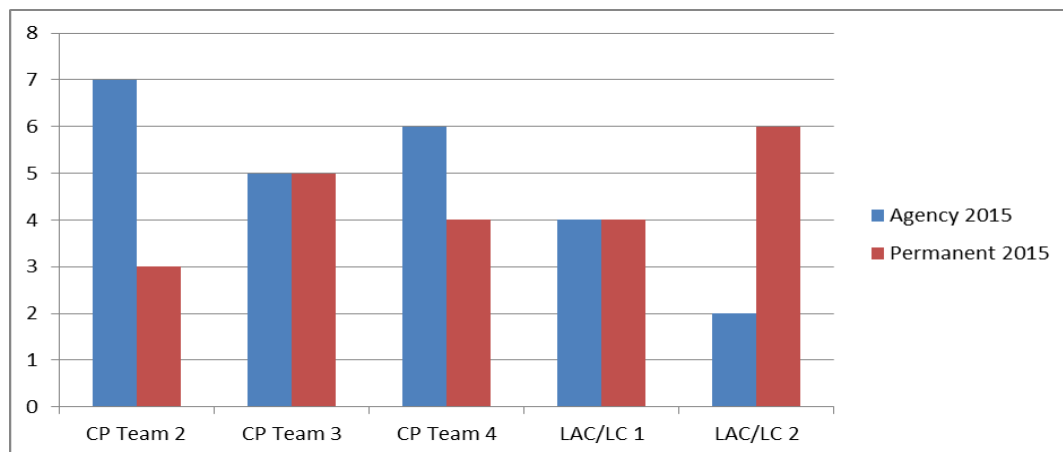
6.3 At each meeting the Board discusses performance and audit information, receives an update on progress made in delivering the actions set out in the Ofsted Delivery Plan, along with themed reports on key focuses for that particular meeting e.g. services for care leavers.

7 Key developments in Slough Children’s Services Trust

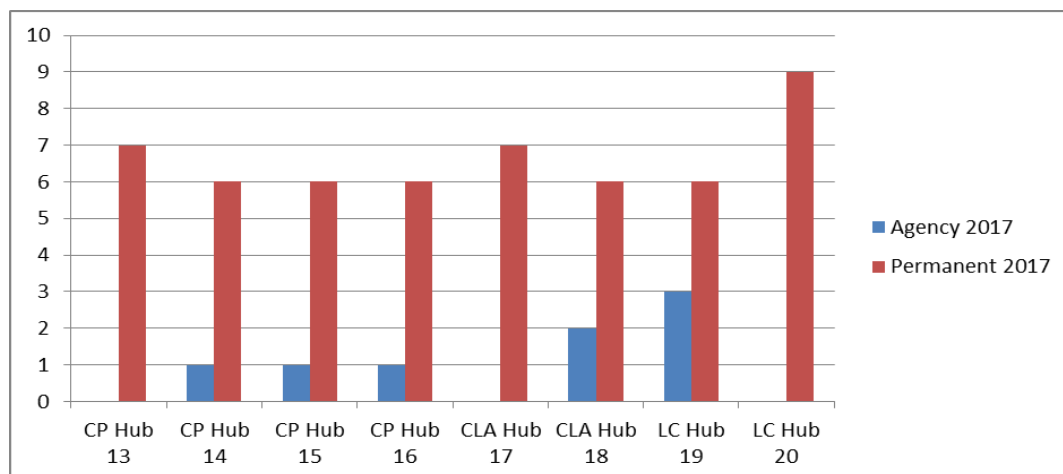
Workforce

7.1 In October 2015, at the point that staff transferred into the Trust, agency staff represented approximately 50% of the frontline operational workforce and 37% of the overall establishment of approximately 350 posts, with some child protection teams being wholly staffed by agency staff.

Child Protection & LAC/LC Teams 2015

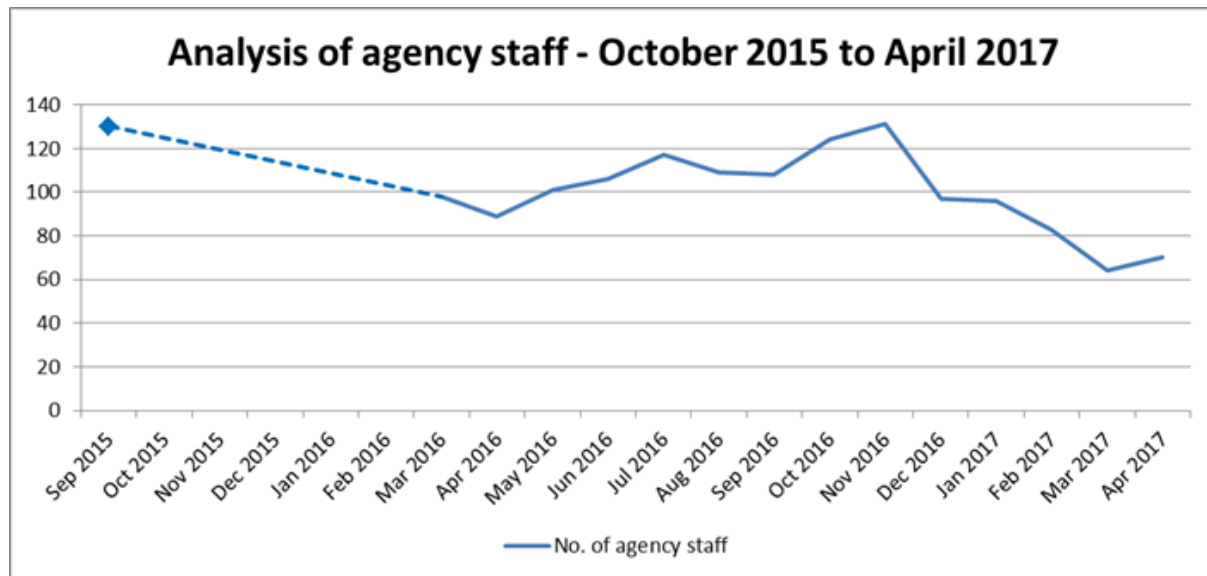


Child Protection, Children Looked After & Leaving Care Hubs 2017



7.2 As of the end of April 2017, the Trust's establishment was 390 posts. This was made up of 277 permanent and 67 agency. In addition, there are a further 33 vacancies across the whole Trust which are not filled by agency workers; some of these posts have been appointed to however start dates for these appointments are to be confirmed.

7.3 Of the 390 posts, 72 of these are frontline practitioner posts within the Hubs (social work qualified only), of which 24 of these are vacant or currently under offer; this equates to 33%.



N.B. The period between 30th September 2015 (the dot) and 31st March 2016 is represented as a dotted line. This is because there are only figures for the beginning and end of this period, whereas monthly figures are available from 31st March 2016 onwards.

7.4 With the introduction of the Hub model of working (see information on Safe, Secure & Successful), the skills makeup of the Hub is somewhat different from the Team approach that was inherited on Transfer.

7.5 The Hubs benefit from contributions into cases from qualified Social Workers, Clinicians and Family Support Workers who bring a variety of different skills, experience and approaches to the work with Children & Young People.

Safe, Secure, Successful

7.6 Over the latter half of 2016, the Trust introduced a new model of social work practice, transforming the way that social care services are provided in the borough with the aim to ensuring that children, young people and families experience a more complete and responsive service to address some of their most common concerns.

7.7 Safe, Secure, Successful moves the service away from conventional teams into small 'hubs' made up of professionals from different disciplines who work directly with children and families. The model focuses on the following principles:

- Interventions should be 'right first time' in order to provide timely and cost effective help to families
- Children and families should experience the fewest number of transfers of cases and 'handoffs' as possible

- Decisions about which service provides a service should balance the principle of fewest moves, with the need to ensure the hub/team with the most appropriate knowledge, skills and information is working with the child and their family
- Interventions should be timely, should help families become resilient and able to find their own solutions within the community
- Children should be listened to and their views heard about what they want and what difference interventions have made to them. Workers should consistently seek children's views through direct work and use consultation tools and questionnaires to gather information about children's views of the service they receive
- Only appropriate professionals should be involved in working with the child
- At the end of an assessment, where there is no need for social work involvement and the child's plan can be delivered by another agency, the child and family should be informed of which agency will provide services, and when and how the plan will be carried out

7.8 In order to assess the impact that this model is having on services, Slough Children's Services Trust is working with researchers at the University of Bedfordshire as part of a project 'Measuring What Matters' the University is undertaking with 10 local authorities to help develop a better picture of what social workers do with families and how good practice relates to improved outcomes. The University is specifically helping the Trust to understand how the new Hub model is contributing to improved practice and what this means for families.

7.9 Early findings from Measuring What Matters indicates that families are being dealt with respectfully and compassionately, avoiding judgemental and punitive action. Children are held at the centre of discussions, but parents are still involved in working out how best to help and support; consistent practice in this regard is a fundamental building block to developing an outstanding service. There remains the ongoing challenge of translating discussions into practical, SMART work with families in the often messy reality of daily life.

Innovation Funding

7.10 The establishment of the Early Intervention hubs as part of Safe, Secure, Successful combined early help and child in need services into two hubs which provided improved, flexible, coordinated responses to those needing additional support, including those who may have previously been successfully supported through child protection or children looked after services, and require a lower level of ongoing support.

7.11 The Early Intervention hubs have built Trouble Families criteria into all referral, assessment and closure summaries, and staff have been training in Troubled Families outcomes and how to evidence change using robust data and information for each family. This enables a clear link on issues faced by individual families throughout the time the Trust and partners are working with, and supporting, them.

7.12 In February 2016, it was confirmed that the Trust had been successful in its Innovation Fund bid, enabling the transformation of the staffing model by introducing Enhanced Hubs, a more dynamic way of delivering early help and support to children in need, introducing a practice model including Signs of Safety and a new domestic abuse assessment response. £1.4 million total funding was received including £200,000 for evaluation. The additional funding lasts for two years 2017/18 – 2018/19.

7.13 The First Contact Service has already moved to a 12 hour service model, and the innovation funding will enable the Trust to develop Early Intervention into a 7 day week service in the future, expanding the flexibility of support to the borough's families to meet their changing needs. The First Contact Service is not affected by the funding in any way. The Early Intervention Service is affected and a financial plan is in place to allow this service to be sustained beyond the 2 years of additional funding.

8 **Key Performance Indicators**

8.1 Appendix A provides a list of Key Performance Indicators that the Trust monitors. There are a number of areas over the past year which have shown clear improving performance:

- KPI 4: We have seen consistently strong performance in the % of children subject to a child protection plan for 2 years or more.
- KPI 6: There has been particularly strong performance in Quarter 4 of 2016/17, and a noticeably stronger year-end performance when compared to 2015/16 in the timeliness of our decision making around referrals.
- KPI 9: There has been a significant reduction in the % of contacts that have lead to a referral, which can be linked to a growing effectiveness of the MASH and Early Intervention Service.
- KPI 16: Our performance in the timeliness of holding Initial Child Protection Conferences remains well ahead of our statistical neighbours and the England average, and this has been sustained throughout 2016/17, despite significant staffing changes in this area.
- KPI 18: There has been improved performance in limiting the % of looked after children with three or more placements in the last year, moving us closer to our target as well as our statistical neighbours and the England average.
- KPI 22: The % of children who have participated in their LAC review has improved over the second half of 2016.17 and is now at a very high level.
- KPI 24: As 2016/17 drew to a close, there was positive improvement in the number of approved SCST foster care households.
- KPI 26: There has been substantial improved performance since the start of 2017 in the % of eligible looked after children with a current Pathway Plan, and the month on month information indicates that this trend is continuing.

8.2 In addition to the above, the Trust is also continuing to focus on, and drive improvements in the following areas:

- KPI 2: The % of Section 47 enquiries that led to an Initial Child Protection Conference fell slightly in 2016, when compared with 2015/16. An initial investigation into 10 cases found that the decision to not go to Conference was made correctly.

- KPI 5b: This is an area of continuing focus for the Trust, and is viewed in relation to the level of Child Protection visits being completed every 2 weeks (88%). Performance during the latter half of 2016/17 is slightly weaker than in the first half, and this continues to be regularly discussed in detail within the Trust. This indicator is also affected by the timeliness of visits and of recording – if there is a delay to a visit, or a delay in writing up a visit, that may affect this indicator.
- KPI 14: The apparent increase in the proportion of children subject to a Child in Need plan for over 12 months is likely related to the falling number of plans themselves; those remaining are more likely to be long-running plans for children with disabilities or those subject to Special Guardianship Orders with ongoing support requirements.
- KPI 19: There continues to be a focus on improving the recruitment of local foster carers (see comment above re. KPI 24), and it is expected that there will be an improvement in the % of children placed over 20 miles from the borough, evidenced through this KPI, over the course of the next year.
- KPI 25: Performance in the % of care leavers in education, employment and training is improving, but there is still more work to do. There is strong partnership engagement in this area of work, and it is a focus for the Joint Parenting Panel which is driving the development of an Education, Employment and Training Strategy for looked after children and care leavers.

8.3 Appendix B provides some of the key trends in performance.

8.4 Members should note that the data in the scorecard is currently unvalidated, meaning that the figures have not been quality assured by the Department for Education (where applicable). This means that published figures may be different to those shown here. Please also note that the currently listed targets are subject to a review for the coming year.

9 **Ofsted Quarterly Monitoring Visits**

9.1 To date, Ofsted have made two monitoring visits to Slough under their 'Monitoring and re-inspection of local authority children's services judged inadequate' framework.

Front Door (2-3 November 2016)

9.2 The inspectors saw evidence that the new LSCB Threshold Document was being effectively applied at the front door, and that in most cases, Strategy meetings were taking place quickly and with appropriate actions to protect children. However, there was still work to do to strengthen multi-agency information and the quality of analysis.

9.3 The introduction of the new social work hubs was having a positive impact on the early response to need and risk within families

Services for Care Leavers (28 February – 1 March 2017)

9.4 Progress had been made in key areas, including:

- The establishment of the Care Leavers Panel enabling assurance that care leavers are safe and being appropriately supported.
- The introduction of the Hubs, decreasing caseloads and comprehensive, bespoke training which is improving practice.
- Most care leavers are living in suitable accommodation and are seen by their PAs at least 6 weekly.

Measure	Slough (Mar 2017)	Slough (Mar 2016)	Statistical neighbours (Mar 2016)	England (Mar 2016)
Accommodation: suitable (% of cohort)	86.3%	70%	82.0%	83%
Accommodation: not known (% of cohort)	3%	23%	12.0%	11%
In touch (% of cohort)	100%	62%	87.4%	87%
Not in touch (% of cohort)	0%	38%	7.0%	8%

Please note that the data is currently unvalidated, meaning that the figures have not been quality assured by the Department for Education (where applicable). This means that published figures may be different to those shown here.

- Recent assessments and pathway plans meet minimum requirements, with some more comprehensive examples. There was evidence that care leavers were better engaged with their pathway plans and that they included their views.
- Care leavers who are missing are visited when they return, and appropriate arrangements are in place to assess and reduce the risk of CSE.
- Senior management and political leaders have taken assertive steps to strengthen the corporate and strategic arrangements underpinning the leaving care service.
- Corporate parenting has improved, with the Joint Parenting Panel having an increasingly systematic appropriate to reviewing the experiences of young people against the promises in the Pledge.
- The establishment of the Care Leavers Forum provides a strong voice, and effective advocacy and participation arrangements are in place, and care leavers believe that if they complain they will be heard.
- The Young People's Service and Virtual School promote meaningful education, employment and training opportunities for young people. However, more work needs to be done to ensure that care leavers who are in full or part time education benefit from a coordinated plan to support them to be successful.
- Creative work is underway to strengthen the local accommodation offer, but it will take time to understand the impact of this.

9.5 There were specific areas identified for further improvement:

- Ensure that all pieces work have purpose, so that the maximum impact can be had.
- Improve understanding of young people's histories or complex needs to impact on the support they are receiving.
- Develop consistent performance reporting for the Joint Parenting Panel.
- Strengthen formal contractual arrangements with Semi-independent accommodation providers.

- Strengthen partnership arrangements around individual care leavers e.g. health histories.
- Improve accessibility to health advice and support.
- Improve arrangements for transition to Adult Social Care for those who will meet the threshold for continuing support and care into adulthood.

10 **Next steps**

10.1 Monitoring Visits

The Ofsted quarterly monitoring visits will continue until such a time as they judge it appropriate to undertake a full inspection. However, it should be noted that a full inspection is due no later than June 2018. Therefore, work is continuing to prepare for individual monitoring visits and the full inspection. At present we have confirmation from Ofsted that they will review improvements in services for children looked after and those being put forward for adoptions.

10.2 Revising Ofsted Action Plan

The Joint Improvement Board has agreed to a review and revision of the original Ofsted Delivery Plan, so that it reflects the current position and the focus for the next 6-12 months in establishing a 'good' service.

10.3 Slough Local Safeguarding Children Board (SLSCB)

The Chief Executive of Slough Borough Council is the responsible officer for the SLSCB Chair and undertakes the annual appraisal. Whilst the SLSCB Chair is independent of all the board partners, there is a required reporting line to the council's Chief Executive and to the Lead Member for Children's Services.

As a consequence of the history with Children's Services and the establishment of the Trust, it has been decided that the responsibility carried by SBC in relation to the SLSCB is not sufficiently visible. To address this, with the support of key partners including the DfE commissioner, responsibility for supporting the SLSCB will be transferred and located within a new Safeguarding Business Support Unit (SBSU), which will also support the Adult Safeguarding Board. This unit will report the Director of Adult Services and will promote a more cohesive approach to safeguarding children and people at risk in Slough. It will also have strong links into the Safer Slough Partnership agenda where there is much common ground with a number of safeguarding concerns that span the particular concerns of the SLSCB and of the Adults Board.

10.4 Special Educational Needs (SEN) Services

Preparations have been made to transfer SEN services from the Trust into Slough Borough Council. This decision is subject to approval by the Secretary of State, and final agreement by the Council.

11 **Conclusion**

The Trust, in partnership with the council and other agencies in the borough, has taken significant steps over the past 12 months to put in place the foundations of a good children's social care service provision.

12 **Appendices Attached**

A – KPI Scorecard
B – Trends

13 **Background Papers**

None.