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## Slough Children's Services Trust – Second Year Achievements

### Executive Summary

A summary of the Trust's first year achievements, presented to the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel in October 2016, covered the immediate challenges and outlined the Trust's plans to underpin and make the significant changes needed to improve children's services across the Borough.

This year's report reflects on achievements during the Trust's second year of operation, as the new, systemic social work model has embedded and improved to meet the needs of vulnerable children and their families.

The achievements have been captured in the report, entitled Slough Children's Services Trust: Our Second Year Achievements – which was approved by the Trust's Board on December 7, 2017.

In addition to the report itself, this executive summary outlines the key operational and corporate changes that have been made to improve the Trust in terms of quality, workforce, processes and information, so that our services are more closely targeted and deliver what vulnerable children and families need in a timely and appropriate manner.

Our focus in 2016-17 was to build a solid business foundation and to make improvements in line with Ofsted's recommendations in previous inspection reports, as well as learning from the Ofsted monitoring visits, which have taken place every 12 weeks since November 2016.

Operational advances have been informed by evidence-based research, including independent evaluation of our new social work model by the University of Bedford and a greater understanding of the needs of children and young people in care through a survey carried out by a Coram Bright Spots survey.

### Key achievements:

#### Governance

Strong leadership and scrutiny from the Trust's Board has helped focus the Trust on areas for improvement and sustainable change. This has been further enhanced by the appointment of Robert Tapsfield, a former chief executive of two national children and family charities, as well as two Board sub-committees – finance & resources and quality and innovations – which bring clear challenge and support to Trust staff.



The Trust's relationship with Slough Borough Council's officials continues to strengthen and Cllr Shabnum Sadiq, as SBC's lead member for children, has already made a significant contribution and we value her support.

### **Data Quality**

Our data quality and analysis is much improved, due to investment in the data performance team. For example, we now have regular reports on our cohort of care leavers, to ensure everyone has an allocated worker, an up-to-date Pathway Plan and we monitor the frequency of our 'keeping in touch' visits.

Improved performance data and quality assurance frameworks have also allowed for clearer decision-making on areas for improvement and resource allocation. As a result, the Trust has made two key appointments – a principal clinical lead and a practice development manager – both of whom are improving the service offered, by helping to target bespoke services to our clients and by targeting quality improvement in the delivery of that service.

### **Innovation**

In March 2017, the Department for Education approved the Trust's bid for £1.439m innovation funding over two years was successful and we have already established an Innovation Hub, working in a multi-agency, more dynamic way to deliver early help and support to children and families. The hub has professionals from a range of different backgrounds – including health, substance misuse, housing and the criminal justice system – whose specialisms allow us to provide a more holistic and appropriate response to individual needs.

The hub has already attracted national attention (the Guardian Society pages, November 2017) for its impressive results in working with families where domestic abuse is a feature. Of the 30 families who have completed the Inspiring Families assessment programme to date, only two have been re-referred.

### **Workforce**

The Trust has continued to reduce the number of agency staff initially employed to stabilise the service while we moved to our new systemic social work model. On 1 October 2016 the Trust employed 224 permanent staff and 107 agency staff. On 1 October 2017, the number of permanent staff had increased to 274 and the number of agency staff decreased to 59, with an expected further decline over the next 12 months.

The workforce is the Trust's key asset and we continue to develop our training programme (we currently offer 112 training options) as well as extending benefits and encouraging a working environment where staff feel welcome and valued.



## Quality

A programme of regular case file audits provides a key measure of improvement across the Trust and the practice development manager is capturing good practice to share with staff and help drive up standards and quality.

We have largely kept the number of children in placements flat across the year but over the last few months we have seen an increase and we now have the highest number in the Trust's timeline (222). This also reflects the national picture, where there are more children looked after than ever before.

We have improved the mix of placements by increasing the number of our in-house foster carers by 16, which has improved the 'family' feel, with both carers and children closer to the support offered by our social workers.

## Future actions

While the inspection reports from Ofsted's monitoring visits have, on the whole, been positive about our progress, the pace of change has been highlighted as an area for improvement.

The Trust has listened to this message and our future priority is to step up the pace of change and further embed the positive changes we have made. Work on a comprehensive action plan, called Project Pace, is now under way and will continue at pace over the next 12 months.