

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 5TH DECEMBER 2018**POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE CABINET LEAD MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES****Ofsted – ‘Focus visit on the Front Door’**

At the beginning of October the Department was advised by Ofsted that it would be undertaking a ‘Focus Visit on the Front Door’ the following week as part of the Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services Framework.

Inspectors arrived on site on 10th October and spent two days looking at the work on the front door to social care and early help services. On 4th November a letter summarising the Focused Visit was published. In the letter the inspectors reported that Leicestershire children’s services were last inspected by Ofsted in 2016, when the overall effectiveness of the service was judged to ‘requires improvement to be good’. Since then, with strong political support, and a permanent leadership team, steady and realistic improvements have been made to the first response service. The push to increase capacity, reduce caseloads and create a learning environment has been successful in stabilising the workforce, resulting in children and families receiving improved services.

The Inspectors went on to say that Senior Leaders know their service well. They gain an understanding of social work practice from a range of quality assurance activities and learning from these activities is shared in what social workers describe as a ‘high support, high challenge culture’. This results in them feeling well supported and safe in their practice. Senior Leaders know what the strengths of the service are, but they also recognise that there is much more to do to achieve the goals in their ‘road to excellence’ improvement plan.

I would like to take this opportunity to say well done to the service for the work that has been undertaken over the last two years and to achieve such a positive report from Ofsted.

Innovation Partnership

I am pleased to inform Members that the Department has entered entered into an Innovation Partnership with Barnardos to design and deliver creative service models.

Services will be developed in partnership with Barnados to focus on young people on the edge of care, in local authority care and leaving care, including children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. The Partnership, which started on 1st December, will provide cost effective outcome focused solutions for Leicestershire children.

New Lubbesthorpe – Primary School

Earlier this term it was announced that the OWLS Academy Trust had been selected to run the new primary school being built in New Lubbesthorpe. The new 420 pupil school is being built to provide school places arising from the building of 4,250 new homes in New Lubbesthorpe, on land between Leicester Forest East and Enderby. The OWLS Academy Trust already runs five primary schools in the county and it has a great track record in supporting and raising standards in schools in Leicestershire, and we are confident it will continue to do so in New Lubbesthorpe.

Newlands Community Primary School

I also pleased to announce that in November Newlands Community Primary School celebrated the opening of its new building in Belle Vue Road (formerly Heathfield Academy). The new £5million state-of-the-art facility has been built to replace the old building on Moore Road in Barwell and will cater for up to 420 pupils, increasing the school's capacity to meet with demand.

Ministerial Visit to Leicestershire Youth Offending Service

On Friday 30th November the Youth Offending Service were visited by Edward Argar MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Ministry of Justice. The Minister received presentations from staff across the Youth Offending Service that set out their success in youth crime prevention, reducing re-offending and diversion from custody. This success is evident through the continued reductions in first time entrants to the criminal justice system and re-offending rates that are significantly lower than those nationally. In particular the Minister heard from the IMPACT project and the work being undertaken with young people being criminally exploited across the County.

The Minister was impressed and praised the innovative and tenacious approaches shown by the Youth Offending Service in Leicestershire.

Fostering and Adoption

Finally, I am pleased to share with Members the work the Department is doing around the recruitment of Foster Carers and Adopters for Leicestershire Children in Care.

So far this year the Adoption Service has successfully recruited 22 adopters and placed 24 children with their forever families. This is a significant increase compared to last year. Alongside this, the service has been working hard to increase the number of in house foster carers to provide a family home for children in our care. The Service has seen a real success in the number of people coming forward to apply to be a foster carer with double the amount of carers approved this year, compared to last year. All of this work means we are increasing the availability of in house foster carers and adopters for our 580 children in care.