

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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### CHILDREN'S CHAMPIONS BOARD

MINUTES of a meeting of the Children's Champions Board held in the Medway Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 21 October 2010.

PRESENT: Mrs A D Allen (Chairman), Mr M J Vye (Vice-Chairman), Mrs P T Cole, Mrs V J Dagger, Mr L B Ridings, Mrs P A V Stockell and Mrs J Whittle

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs S V Hohler, Cabinet Member

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms H Davies (Director For Specialist Children's Services Group), Ms P Davies (Kent Safeguarding Children Board Manager), Mr P Brightwell (Policy & Performance Manager - Looked After Children), Ms D Marriott (Acting Safeguarding Policy & Performance Manager), Mrs M Blanche (Policy Manager-asylum & Migration) and Mrs C A Singh (Democratic Services Officer)

#### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

##### **36. Minutes of Meeting held on 19 May 2010**

*(Item A3)*

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 May are correctly recorded subject to the word 'by' being altered to read 'but' on page 3 paragraph 31 (1) bullet point 6 and that they be signed by the Chairman.

##### **37. Meeting Dates for 2011**

*(Item A4)*

Members noted that the following dates had been reserved for the Board's meetings in 2011:-

Wednesday, 30 March

Tuesday, 21 June

Thursday, 13 October

*(All meetings will commence at 2.00 pm at Sessions House, County Hall)*

##### **38. Chairman's Announcements**

*(Item A5)*

(1) The Chairman advised that she had attended the Foster Carers Awards and wished to congratulate the organisers of the event and the very moving evening where she had met guests who had been Foster Carers for over 30 years.

(2) Ms Davies advised that the nomination for the Foster Carers Awards came from a mix of people including young people and social workers. The nominations were received by a Board. The Board made the final decisions on the award winners

which came in categories that included; Bronze, Silver, Gold and long service. A press release was also issued.

(3) Mrs Davies confirmed that Ofsted had been carrying out a 2 week announced inspection which was due to conclude on Friday, 22 October 2010.

### **39. Deputy Cabinet Member's Update**

*(Item A6)*

(1) Mrs Hohler confirmed that there had been an unannounced inspection of the Council's Duty and Initial Assessment teams in the Summer. A verbal report had been made to Cabinet on 11 October. She added that this was followed by an announced inspection that had taking place over two weeks and would conclude on 22 October. The inspection report would be published on 19 November and would be reported to the next appropriate meeting of Cabinet.

(2) Mrs Hohler advised that a multiagency/cross party Improvement Steering Group had been set up. The Group met on a monthly basis. She was very impressed by the positive feedback from the practitioners who concurred that this was an important area that needed improvement and put forward ideas.

(3) The Chairman requested a report on the outcome of the announced inspection.

(4) In response to a question, Ms Davies advised that the Ofsted considered that the CSS thresholds were in the right place but were applied inconsistently across the County.

(5) RESOLVED that the verbal update be noted, with thanks.

### **40. DVD - 'Care to Listen': feedback from Members and the Children in Care Council (CICC) and discussion of how and when to use the DVD**

*(Item B1)*

(1) Mr Brightwell tabled the 12 recommendations from the Children in Care Council on the DVD- 'Care to Listen'. The recommendations were divided into 3 areas; Going into care, Being in care and Leaving care.

(2) The Chairman sought Members comments on each of the recommendations. Members suggested the following:

Going into care

- (1) *Make all foster families produce a family pack*
  - Members advised that fostering already do this
- (2) *Talk to us not about us*
  - This was an ongoing issue
- (3) *Dedicate time to us to explaining each stage of the process*
  - This was over and above the IRO role. Voice for us had an independent system. There was a list of things already being carried out.

- (4) *Introduce a buddy system to we can pick an adult who can support us*
- The Buddy system could be piloted with the older children who had been through the system the social workers would have to be briefed.
  - There could be a panel of people. Ask the young people what qualities they require in a Buddy.
  - Members could fulfil this role to as part of their Corporate Parenting Role

#### Being in care

- (5) *Give us a consistent IRO and make sure they meet with us a day before the review*
- (6) *Make our social workers meet with us regularly*
- (7) *Make Children and Families and 16+ work together better*
- Members had no comments to add

#### Leaving care

- (8) *Schedule 1 on 1 drop in surgeries with social workers*
- (9) *Provide more support to help us find work and make plans for the future*
- (10) *Take our pathway plans seriously, don't just fill in the form*
- (11) *Require case social worker to schedule hour long fortnightly visits*

- Members had no comments to add

- (12) *Provide us with a contract of entitlement*

- Members felt that this was a way of showing that they were being taken seriously
- There were already documents that met this criteria
- The Pledge could be used as the basis for the contract Mr Brightwell advised that all of the children would not be aware of the Pledge
- Could there be a formal launch
- This could be discussed at the statutory review
- The Children in Care Council was developing a website which may also be a way of reaching all children. Children in care were able to write to them. On the front of the website there would be a link to the KCC website.
- Mr Brightwell advised that the copyright of the DVD was owned by KCC. The Children in Care Council had given permission for the DVD to be used for training and had already been used for Foster Carers/Adoption training. He advised that the Children in care Council were already engaged with recruiting.
- Members felt that it would be useful as part of their training.

- (3) RESOLVED that the comments and suggestion made by Members be considered when Mr Brightwell draws up a list of actions for each of the recommendations and submits them to a future meeting of the Board and Children in Care Council.

**41. Progress report in response to Safeguarding Children in Kent: Defending and Developing the Service**

*(Item B2)*

*(Report by Mrs S Hohler, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education and Mrs R Turner, Managing Director for Children, Families and Education)*

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the report that had been presented to County Council on 14 October 2010 and the summary of the actions taken in response to Safeguarding Children in Kent: Defending and Developing the Service.

**42. Kent Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2009 - 10 / Business Plan 2010 - 2013**

*(Item B3)*

*(Report by Mrs S Hohler, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education and Mrs R Turner, Managing Director for Children, Families and Education)*

(1) The Board considered a report that presented the Kent Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report for 2009/10 and Business Plan for 2010 – 2013 and had previously been debated at the County Council meeting on 14 October 2010.

(2) Mrs Whittle opened the discussion by advising the Board that she had recently visited a Special School in Maidstone where she was approached regarding the Form B she then referred Members to page 41 of the report that covered 'Child Death Review Processes'. The concerns were that the Form B, that the school had to complete, was cold and insensitive. Mrs Whittle suggested that the schools should be encouraged to have support from a member of the Safeguarding Team when completing the form. Ms P Davies said that the staff at the Special Schools knew the children very well and were in the best position to complete the forms but support was offered in filling in the forms.

(3) In reply to a question, Ms P Davies advised that there had been 94 child deaths in Kent the previous year that covered a range of issues including to accidents. Every death had to be looked into. She agreed that the forms were bureaucratic, there were 15 forms in total from the Department of Education but they were required for statutory returns. An expert Advisory Group produced the detail of each case. She stated that very few cases were deemed to be preventable deaths. If a death was preventable such as in the case of an accident, measures were put in place to reduce the risks of it happening again.

(4) In response to concerns that not all the agencies were signed up to working together, Ms P Davies advised that the Kent Safeguarding Children's Board was the best way of making sure agencies worked together. Mr D Worlock, Chairman was aware of this. Each member of the Board was required to share their agency's inspection reports and improvement plans. Mrs Hohler advised that Ms Turner, CFE Managing Director was working on this and was optimistic following the feed back she had received from representatives such as health that considered reducing the 23 districts to 12 was better with a Preventative Services Manager appointed to each and would reduce duplication.

(5) Mrs Whittle advised that following a visit to a special school she was made aware of 3 multiservice hubs in special schools based at Ashford, Sittingbourne and Thanet where the health authority building was on the same site as the school. She suggested that if the health service was on site it would be easier to integrate other agencies. Ms H Davies concurred that this was an excellent example of the local authority and health service working together in the Multi Agency Service Hub (MASH) and reduced the need for children having to travel to appointments.

(6) RESOLVED that the report be noted, with thanks

**43. Looked After Children and Children with a Child Protection Plan:  
Statistics**

*(Item C1)*

The Committee was forwarded statistics on children with a child protection plan and looked after children within each district of Kent for information.