

By: Jenny Whittle, Cabinet Member, Specialist Children's Services
Malcolm Newsam, Interim Corporate Director Families & Social Care

To: County Council – 6 April 2011

Subject: Governance Arrangements for Children's Social Care Improvement

Summary: This report outlines the proposed governance arrangements for Children's Social Care Improvement.

1. Improvement Board

(1) The purpose of the Kent Improvement Board is to support rapid and sustainable improvement of services in the county that safeguard children and/or support looked after children. Its key roles are to agree, monitor and report progress on the actions in the Kent Children's Services Improvement Plan. That will include monitoring the targets set out in the Kent Improvement Notice issued by the Secretary of State in January 2011. This report was considered by Vulnerable Children and Partnerships Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 30 March and Cabinet on 4th April and any amendments will be reported back to the county council at this meeting.

(2) The Board has appointed an independent chair, Liz Railton, which has been approved by the Parliamentary under Secretary of State for Children and Families. The Chair will report directly to the Minister and the Leader of the Council on progress on a quarterly basis

(3) The Board meets monthly and its membership includes:

- The Independent Chair
- KCC Lead Member for Children's Services
- KCC Corporate Director Families & Social Care
- KCC Director of Specialist Children's Services
- Department for Education observer
- The Chair of the Kent Safeguarding Children's Board
- The Primary Care Trust Chief Executive
- Kent Police

(4) The Board's work will be reported to:

- KCC Cabinet
- KCC Vulnerable Children's Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committee
- Kent Children's Trust Board
- Kent Safeguarding Children's Board
- County Council
- PCT Executive Board

(5) The Board's membership and Terms of Reference are set out in **Appendix 1** to this report.

2. Governance within Kent County Council

Attached as **Appendix 2** is a diagram illustrating the governance arrangements for Children's Social Care Improvement. There is top level ownership of the Improvement Plan within the Council, as follows:

- a. The Leader will receive quarterly reports from the Chair of the Improvement Board and will meet regularly with the Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services and the Interim Managing Director of Children, Families and Education
- b. The Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services and Managing Director will have a key leadership role within the Improvement Board
- c. Progress on the Improvement Plan will be monitored by Cabinet and the Vulnerable Children's Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The Vulnerable Children's Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committee will set up a Children's Services Improvement Panel to offer support and challenge and to provide the detailed monitoring of progress
- d. The Children's Services Improvement Panel will be cross party (based on proportionately) and comprise nine Members, chaired by the Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services. It will replace the CSS Improvement and Development Steering Group (a Member and Officer working group) and the Children's Champion Board. It will meet after the Vulnerable Children's Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee and will receive detailed progress reports on the Improvement Plan and up to date management and performance data. The meeting will not be webcast, however papers will be published.
- e. The Children's Services Improvement Panel will be supported by two key groups:
 - (i) **The Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP):** This Panel will be responsible for ensuring the best possible social, emotional, health and educational outcomes for all looked after children. Alongside all its other duties, it will be responsible for listening to the experiences of Looked after Children and feeding this into the Children's Services Improvement Panel. The Panel will be chaired by Mrs Ann Allen (Chairman of the Vulnerable Children and Partnerships POSC)¹, and will have a cross party Membership consisting of 9 County Council members. It will also include two foster carers and two representatives from the Children in Care Council. The CPP will also act as the governing body of the Virtual School for Looked after Children.
 - (ii) **Staff Advisory Group:** this will be the forum in which front-line staff, including managers, will be able to report directly to Members their experience of the improvement plan.
Members of the group will include the Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services and Deputy Cabinet Member, social workers, principal social workers and team leaders who are responsible for delivering front-line Children's Specialist services. The group will feed

¹ Subject to approval of County council on 6th April 2011, Vulnerable Children and Partnerships Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee (POSC) will change to Families & Social Care Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee (POSC)

back views about the extent to which the improvement actions being taken is impacting on their day to day responsibilities and they will make suggestions about any further action required. They will also assist Elected Members in understanding the support they can provide to front-line workers. In addition the Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services will engage with a series of meetings with front line staff.

The Children's Services Improvement Panel, Corporate Parenting Panel and the Staff Advisory Group will be held, informally without webcast in order to allow for in-depth discussion regarding performance and ensuring staff and carers have the freedom to discuss their views. It is not intended that these be formal committees or sub-committees of either the Council or the Cabinet. They have been established to monitor and deliver the objectives set out in the Kent Improvement Notice.

3. Recommendations

The County Council is asked to:

- (i) formally disband the Children's Champion Board, and
- (ii) approve the establishment of the:
 - (a) Kent Improvement Board and draft terms of reference, as set out in Appendix 1
 - (b) Children's Services Improvement Panel and draft terms of reference, as set out in Appendix 3
 - (c) Corporate Parenting Panel and draft terms of reference, as set out in Appendix 4.

Malcolm Newsam
Interim Corporate Director Families & Social Care
01622 694372
malcolm.newsam@kent.gov.uk