

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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**CHILDREN'S CHAMPIONS BOARD**

MINUTES of a meeting of the Children's Champions Board held at Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone, on Wednesday 12 March 2008.

PRESENT: Mrs A D Allen (Chairman), Mr M J Vye (Vice - Chairman), Mr T J Birkett (substitute for Mrs M Newell) Mr I T N Jones, Dr T R Robinson and Mr J D Simmonds.

OTHER MEMBER PRESENT: Mr M C Dance (Cabinet Member for Operations, Resources and Skills, CFE)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr K Arthur, Safeguarding Policy and Standards Manager, CFE; Mrs K Lambourn, Policy and Performance Manager (Child Protection/Children in Need), CFE; Mrs J Doherty, Policy Manager, Central Policy Unit, CED; and Miss T A Grayell, Democratic Services Officer, CED.

**UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**

**1. Minutes**

*(Items A3 (a) and (b))*

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2007 are correctly recorded and they be signed by the Chairman. There were no matters arising.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2007 were signed at the December meeting, but one small retrospective correction to the title of Minute 16 has since been made, and a corrected version of this page was signed by the Chairman.

**2. Presentation – Integrated Processes**

*(Item B1 – Presentation by Miss N Patient, ContactPoint Project Manager, who was in attendance at the invitation of the Board)*

*(The slides used in this presentation are attached to these Minutes as Appendix 1)*

(1) Miss Patient referred to a series of slides which had been included in the meeting papers and tabled some additional, updated information. She explained how the ContactPoint and Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes fitted together and the range of services they would cover. Points highlighted in Miss Patient's introduction, and in response to questions from Members, were as follows:-

- (a) the ContactPoint Service would be established in Kent early in 2009, and would bring several benefits. It would allow early identification of children with problems, aid preventative work, and allow one central information database which would link all agencies and avoid duplication;
- (b) the ContactPoint directory would include basic information only – no case notes or information from GPs. There was a statutory requirement for organisations

to supply data, including all schools and independent schools, for example, so this would help identify children not attending school;

- (c) the 'sensitive services' referred to were services relating to any mental health, substance misuse or sexual health needs a young person may have;
- (d) the large number of potential users of the ContactPoint identified – 10,400 – was made up of staff who most needed access to the service to do their jobs; for example, headteachers, deputy headteachers and social workers responsible for referring young people onto services. Access for these users would be introduced in stages;
- (e) all users of the system would need to have had enhanced CRB checks (which would be reviewed every three years) and be fully trained before being able to access it. Miss Patient emphasised that ContactPoint could not be accessed from the Internet, or by any authorised user;
- (f) young people and their parents would not be able to log in directly but a young person could request to see their record under existing Access to Information legislation;
- (g) Members would not be able to access it directly but, to help them assist a local family which had approached them for help, they could request information via an authorised practitioner;
- (h) most children would have one 'lead professional', in most cases their lead Social Worker, but, for those with complex needs, professionals would need to decide between them who would take on the lead responsibility;
- (i) ensuring the quality of the data included was covered in the responsibilities of Miss Patient's colleague, the CAF/Lead Professional Project Co-ordinator, Ms Burwell;
- (j) Members were shown an example ContactPoint screen. The system was flexible and could be searched in several ways. After its launch, the system would continue to be developed to cover further and non-statutory services, for example, allowing a young person to search for local youth club facilities;
- (k) Members asked to be advised of the costs of introducing the new system, once these were known, and be advised as and when each new part of the system was introduced/launched.

(2). RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the content of the presentation, and the information given in response to questions, be noted, with thanks; and
- (b) the Board be kept informed of the progress of the system and be advised when each new part of it is introduced/launched, and the of costs of introducing the new system, once these are known.

**3. The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, and the Independent Safeguarding Authority**  
*(Item B2 – Report by Director, Strategy, Policy and Performance)*

*(The slides on the new vetting and barring arrangements are attached to these Minutes as Appendix 2)*

(1) Mr Arthur introduced the report and explained that the new arrangements had emerged in response to the recommendations of the Bichard inquiry into the murders of two young girls in Soham. The report set out the key points of the new arrangements and had appended to it the Kent Safeguarding Children Board's guidelines on safer recruitment and employment. These guidelines were essentially a set of minimum standards that all agencies within Kent's children's workforce could sign up to in preventing unsuitable people being appointed to work with children.

(2) Although the funding details of the new arrangements were not yet known, Mr Arthur set out some likely costs. He explained that the current cost of a CRB check was £40 per person, and the new arrangements would require some 30,000 staff to be registered within the Authority. This number covered staff engaged under two areas of activity – regulated (those who worked directly with young people, including Social Workers, Youth Workers, Teachers, School Governors, etc) and controlled (support and administrative staff who would have access to information about young people but not work directly with them). The overall estimated cost for KCC of bringing in the new arrangements was £1.5m. This did not include the costs of supporting those voluntary organisations for which KCC acted as an 'umbrella', as it did for current CRB checking arrangements, and the ISA had stated that there will be no charge for registration of volunteers who meet the criteria. It was also recognised that up to 11 million people will need to be registered with the ISA in total, which will present a logistical challenge to central government, and it has been confirmed that the Criminal Records Bureau will administer the arrangements

(3) There would be a transition period of approximately 12 to 18 months while the new arrangements were set up, and new Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) registrations carried out, and it was important to minimize the risk of people falling through the net during this time. Those likely to be registered first would be those who had either never been CRB checked or had last been checked years ago. Those who had most recently been CRB checked would be registered last by the ISA. Also, in the transition period, everyone currently on a barred list (List 99, POCA and POVA) would be reviewed to see if they met the new barring criteria. Each case would necessarily be reviewed thoroughly by an ISA panel of experts (chaired by Sir Roger Singleton) and everyone was likely to be allowed to make representation, so the review process would be slow and potentially very costly.

(4) RESOLVED that the information given in the report, and in response to questions, be noted, with thanks.

#### **4. Meetings with Care Leavers**

*(Item B3 – Report by Overview, Scrutiny & Localism Manager)*

*(Mr P Brightwell was in attendance for this item at the invitation of the Board)*

(1) Miss Grayell introduced the report of the January meeting with young people leaving care, and sought Members' views on how they wished to approach the next meeting with the same group, due in July 2008.

(2) Members who had attended the meeting said how impressed they were with the mature approach the young people had taken to tackling and relating the problems they had experienced. Members also observed that many of the points raised were those which any young person might share, whether or not they were in care.

(3) Mr Brightwell explained that a recent meeting between the Leader of the County Council and a similar group of care leavers had raised similar issues, which the Leader had asked the Board to address. He set out how he proposed to take forward each of the issues

raised, and explained that he would prepare a detailed action plan which he would share with Board Members. Points highlighted in discussion, and in response to questions raised by Members, were as follows:-

- (a) all young people who have left care continued to receive advice and support from a personal adviser up to the age of 21, via the Connexions service;
- (b) some district councils had raised the minimum age for housing application in an attempt to manage demand on very limited housing stock;
- (c) young people had expressed a range of views on whether or not a school should be advised of a student's care status, but several Members and officers expressed the view that a school did have a legitimate need to know and echoed the young people's unanimous view that such information should be treated very sensitively;
- (d) private and voluntary organisations had a role to play in the provision of housing and advocacy services. KCC supported some such organisations and services via grant funding – for example, the Young Lives Foundation and the Independent Visitor service. Members expressed concern that budget pressures may force the KCC to reduce its financial support, and sought reassurance on this point.

(4). RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the issues which arose at the recent meeting with care leavers, and the actions being put in place to take them forward, be noted;
- (b) the next meeting between the Board and the same group of care leavers, to be held in July 2008, be planned as a daytime rather than an evening meeting, in the school holidays, but the young people be consulted to see if this arrangement also suited them; and
- (c) the second Corporate Parenting event, to which all KCC Members would be invited, be planned for June 2008, so the guidance still awaited from the National Children's Bureau (currently expected at the end of March) could be used in preparing its content. The event would serve to keep all Members up to date with their role as Corporate Parents and also highlight the work of the Children's Champions Board in equipping Members to fulfil this vital role.