

**KENT COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CHILDREN'S CHAMPIONS BOARD**

MINUTES of a meeting of the Children's Champions Board held at Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday 21 May 2008.

PRESENT: Mrs A D Allen (Chairman), Mr M J Vye (Vice - Chairman), Mrs C Angell, Mr J Curwood, Mrs V J Dagger, Mr I T N Jones, Dr T R Robinson and Mr J D Simmonds.

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr P Brightwell, Policy and Performance Manager (Looked After Children/Leaving Care), CFE; Mr J Mitchell, Joint Commissioning Officer, CFE; and Miss T A Grayell, Democratic Services Officer, CED.

**UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**

**5. Membership**

1. Members noted that Mrs C Angell and Mr J Curwood had joined the Board in place of Mrs M Newell and Mr D A Hirst, respectively. Mrs Angell and Mr Curwood were welcomed to the Board.

**6. Minutes**

*(Item 3 (a) and (b))*

1. RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2008 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman. The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2007 are already approved and signed and are included for reference only.
2. Mr Brightwell advised the Board that KCC's Pledge to all children and young people had been launched at two events, in East and Mid Kent, which had been well publicised and attended. It would have two more launch events, one in West Kent and one for children placed in Kent by other local authorities. He undertook to ensure that all Board Members were advised of the dates of the future launches and invited to them.

**7. Update on Actions Identified from the Meeting with Looked After Children and Care Leavers on 23 January 2008**

*(Item 5 - Report by Director, Strategy, Policy and Performance and Director of Children's Social Services)*

1. Mr Brightwell introduced the report and explained that it updated progress made since the last report to the Board on 12 March 2008. Much progress had been made since that meeting in addressing the three biggest issues raised by young people - the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service, housing and travel - the latter via the Freedom Pass. Comments

made by young people at the 23 January meeting had prompted some changes to the IRO invitation card scheme.

2. RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the information given in the report, and in response to questions raised by Members, be noted and welcomed; and
- (b) the future actions set out in "next steps" of the report be agreed and supported.

**8. Outline of Programme for Corporate Parenting Briefing, 6 June 2008**

*(Item 6 - Report by Director, Strategy, Policy and Performance)*

- 1. Mr Brightwell explained that the new Corporate Parenting Guidance 'Putting Corporate Parenting into Practice', issued by the National Children's Bureau, had greatly influenced the programme for the event. The 6 June briefing for all Members would focus on the 'Universal' Corporate Parenting responsibility, shared by all elected Members, while future proposed events would address the 'Targeted' and 'Specialised' Corporate Parenting roles, which concerned fewer Members.
- 2. In discussion, the following points arose:-
  - (a) Members welcomed the opportunity to be updated on changes to their role as Corporate Parents;
  - (b) Members of the Board had been sent a copy of the NCB Booklet 'Putting Corporate Parenting into Practice' which was welcomed as a very clear and informative document; and
  - (c) concern was expressed that some Members of the County Council may still believe that the Corporate Parenting role was restricted only to Members of the Children's Champions Board, and the briefing on 6 June would be a good opportunity to reinforce the fact that the role was shared by *all* elected Members.
- 3. RESOLVED that the information given in the draft programme and in Mr Brightwell's presentation, be noted and welcomed, and the proposed future events which will cover the 'Targeted' and 'Specialised' Corporate Parenting roles be supported. *(Later in the meeting, when discussing Terms of Reference, a date for a half-day briefing on the Targeted Corporate Parenting role was set as 8 July, pm.)*

**9. Parental Alcohol Misuse and its Impact on Children in Kent**

*(Item 7 - Report by Director, Strategy, Policy and Performance)*

*(Mrs K Lambourn, Safeguarding Policy and Performance Manager, and Ms K Sharp, Commissioning Manager, Young Persons' Services, KDAA, were in attendance for this item)*

- 1. Mrs Lambourn introduced the report and explained that it had been requested by the Board arising from a recommendation in the report of the Select Committee on Alcohol Misuse, published in March 2008, which had expressed concern about the potential impact of alcohol misuse on children. Arising from this discussion, and in responses given by Mrs

Lambourn, Ms Sharp and Mr Brightwell to questions put by Members, the following points were highlighted:-

- (a) Although localised schemes had done much good work over the years to address locally-identified problems, there was a need to spread good work and take a strategic and systematic approach to service delivery across the whole County.
- (b) To this end, a Hidden Harm Group had been established to bring together agencies to address strategically the issues identified by the Select Committee on Alcohol Misuse, as well as services relating to Drugs Misuse.
- (c) Much work was being done by voluntary bodies, the most well known of which were the Sunlight project in Thanet and the Windmill Clinic in Medway, Swale and Dartford, but there were many more good local projects around the County.
- (d) Funding and services for alcohol misuse had traditionally been directed towards misusers themselves and not to those affected by alcohol misuse. It was important now to redress this balance.
- (e) Previous uncertainty over continued funding for KDAAT's alcohol misuse work had now been lifted with the Government's commitment to three years' more funding. The allocation of that funding, however, was still an issue to be addressed.
- (f) KCC could help support and spread the work of voluntary organisations by taking up the issue via Children's Trusts.
- (g) Members were keen to visit and support the work of local schemes in their areas and would be given details of them.

2. RESOLVED that:-

- (a) The information set out in the report, and in response to questions, be noted and welcomed; and
- (b) The Board receive an update report on the work of the Hidden Harm Group, at the end of its first year of operation.

## **10. Kent Children's Trust Arrangements**

*(Item 8 - Report by Director, Strategy, Policy and Performance)*

*(Mrs J Ackroyd, Trust Development Manager, was in attendance for this and the following item)*

1. Mrs Ackroyd introduced the report and set out national and local developments since the issue was last reported to the Board in December 2007. The KCC had been identified as the Children's Services Authority and so had the lead responsibility for bringing in the changes in the National Children's Plan – 'Building Brighter Futures'. Children's Trusts were the mechanism by which the aspirations in 'Building Brighter Futures'

would be achieved. Mrs Ackroyd pointed out three key aspects of the new changes:

- (a) They emphasised the need to use schools as a medium by which to address the issues;
  - (b) They emphasised the role of the family and the need to support the family as a whole unit; and
  - (c) Changes would be phased over a period of time so they could mature and develop, to affect long term and lasting change.
2. Arising from discussion, and from Mrs Ackroyd's and Mr Mitchell's responses to questions put by Members, the following points were highlighted:-
- (a) The 23 school clusters in Kent were being used as a basis for Local Children's Services Partnerships (LCSPs) to keep schools at the centre of developments and to take advantage of existing relationships and networks. This method had been chosen as a good model in Kent, and other local authorities which had not based their arrangements around schools had found that, to be effective, they had had to change their arrangements to follow this model.
  - (b) Similarly, good engagement and inclusion of parents and families had proven vital to the success of the new arrangements.
  - (c) The new Children's Trusts arrangements had three threads:
    - i they changed the way in which professionals worked together to deliver services;
    - ii they produced a range of new services which had arisen from this new joint working; and
    - iii they led to the establishment of new Children's Centres (of which, 8 were planned for Kent by the end of 2008).
  - (d) Pathfinder Projects which had run across the County had now produced measurable results and had shown how the new arrangements could work. The final evaluation of Pathfinder Projects was due to be published in June 2008.
  - (e) Members expressed a range of individual views about how Trusts would relate to and impact upon the respective roles of CFEPOC and the Children's Champions Board, and how the Trusts' work should be scrutinised, and expressed concerns that the role and profile of the Board should be protected from being eroded. Mrs Ackroyd assured Members that Member engagement had been a well debated issue around other local authorities as the Trust arrangements had developed.

- (f) Members also expressed concern that some detail of how the new arrangements would work was, as yet, unknown, but would need to be known before they could see and judge the whole and how it fitted together and impacted upon the role of Members. Members expressed anxiety that a single, prescriptive template should not be imposed, as one size did *not* fit all. Mrs Ackroyd reassured Members that it was not the intention to impose a standard template.
  - (g) Leading on from the views expressed in (e) above, Members were keen to fit the review of the Board's Terms of Reference into the timetable of the incoming KCT arrangements.
3. RESOLVED that the information set out in the report, and the clarification given in response to Members' questions and views, be noted, with thanks.

**11. Development of the Terms of Reference of the Board**  
*(Item 9 - oral item)*

- 1. The Chairman explained that this issue had been added to the agenda as the impetus to review the Board's Terms of Reference had increased in recent months with the ongoing development of Children's Trusts arrangements and emerging changes to the Corporate Parenting role.
- 2. Members acknowledged the increasing urgency of the issue and expressed various views and concerns, in addition to those expressed in paragraph (e) of the previous minute, about how the development of Kent Children's Trusts would relate to and impact upon the role of the Board. Views contributed to the discussion were:-
  - (a) Members should be able to consider and comment on changes to the Terms of Reference privately and in closed groups, not just in the public at Board meetings.
  - (b) Many children and young people were not in the two groups covered in the Board's current TOR, so were not looked at. There was a whole area of the population just at the edge of the most needy groups, and the review offered an opportunity to include them.
  - (c) Terms of Reference should be a clear indication of what the Board was, and the Board ought to do exactly what the Terms of Reference promised. The Board had the power to focus where it wanted to, and was a good vehicle to influence and affect change.
- 3. RESOLVED that:-
  - (a) A draft of suggested new Terms of Reference be prepared by the officer team in time for Members to consider at the second Corporate Parenting briefing event on 8 July; and
  - (b) A report setting out the Board's desired revision to its Terms of Reference be presented to Cabinet on 15 September.