

Minutes of the Children's Service Improvement Panel
Meeting Held: 13 July 2011 15:00 Swale 3

Present:

Mrs Whittle (Chair)
Mrs Allen
Mr Christie
Mr Cubitt
Mr Lake
Mrs Waters
Mr Wells

Officers:

Malcolm Newsam
Peter Bole
Debra Exall
Donna Marriott
Fiona Maycock (Clerk)
Michelle Pennellier
Donna Shkalla

Apologies:

Mrs Dean
Miss Hohler

1. Previous Minutes

1.1 Donna Shkalla confirmed that referral data requested at the previous meeting was included with the papers.

1.2 Mrs Whittle informed Members that reports on the joint procurement with Health of a Community Children's and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) model and a new Integrated Children's System (ICS) would proceed to Cabinet on 18th July 2011.

1.3 The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the last meeting.

2. Integrated Children's System Progress Report

2.1 Peter Bole gave a presentation on the progress against the two Improvement Plan targets relating to the Integrated Children's System (ICS). **These slides will be distributed after the meeting.**

2.2 The issues raised from the Price Waterhouse Cooper report were outlined. A new team with a mix of expertise is working together to focus on improving technical, infrastructure and delivery elements of the current ICS.

2.3 Peter Bole confirmed that an OJEU advert was placed on 1st July for a new ICS and the procurement process is likely to last until September.

2.4 Mr Christie raised concerns over the different needs of users across Kent. Mrs Whittle emphasised the importance of finding an ICS which requires all staff to adhere to one way of working. Peter Bole explained that there are two types of system; prescriptive systems force the user to complete the process in a set way and others allow authorities to design elements themselves. Continually making improvements to the current ICS contributed to the system's weaknesses. Mr Newsam emphasised the importance of

instilling procedural rigour into a consistent way of practice. Mrs Whittle stated Kent should not be innovators in this area but procure a system with a large client base which is known to work well and permit problems to be rectified more speedily.

2.5 Mr Christie asked what the likely cost will be. Peter Bole stated that the anticipated cost of full implementation, including licence fees (estimated at £400,000), installation, training and migration of information is between £1.2 million and £1.5 million. Mrs Whittle advised that Capita would wish to assist with the migration of data.

2.6 Mrs Allen asked whether there is evidence to show inputting times have reduced with the improvements to the ICS. Donna Marriott replied that there are statistics showing improvements in the speed of running the system. She stated that the average time is currently 1 hour to complete a referral which is a significant improvement. Mr Newsam added that compliance rates are increasing with the improvements being made.

2.7 Mr Wells asked whether information is available regarding the Ofsted rating of other authorities who use the Capita One ICS. **Officers agreed to investigate this.** The rating of ICS includes the delivery, management and use of the system. Peter Bole confirmed that when authorities are going out to tender for a new ICS, Capita are no longer bidding, which indicates they do not have a long-term future in this particular market.

2.8 Mr Newsam explained the importance of getting strong leadership to manage the implementation of the new ICS. Mrs Whittle added that gaining user feedback and allowing an admin support base for practitioners is critical to success. Mr Lake also highlighted the importance of senior people being able to zoom in to team level information.

2.9 Members thanked Peter Bole for his presentation and asked for further updates to come to the Panel in due course.

3. Corporate Director's Progress Report

3.1 Mr Newsam reported that fantastic progress continued to be made on the number of Initial and Core Assessments out of timescale since the report was written. For the new year to date, 72% of assessments have been completed within timescales, currently exceeding the target of 67%.

3.2 Mr Christie noted the encouraging progress but asked how confident can we be that staff are dealing with the current work and not allowing new backlogs to build up. Mr Newsam replied that following the District "Deep Dives" he was indeed confident that new work was being progressed in a timely fashion. The trackers have really helped improve management grip and keep staff on top of deadlines and staff feel a millstone has been lifted from them. When the peripatetic team and the PCAS workers are no longer working on the backlog, the existing staff will cope with the workload. The

other dimension is to ensure the establishment matches the demand, and we have the right number of social workers in the right locations. A report on this will be brought to the next Panel meeting.

3.4 Mr Wells warned that when the new ICS system was brought in and data was migrated, this would have a temporary impact on productivity.

4. Core Strategy Updates

4.1 Debra Exall reported that there was now audit evidence that the County Duty Team was bringing consistency to decision-making and was reducing referrals to Duty and Initial Inspection Teams and there were now plans for it to expand to take on all contacts relating to children's referrals in the near future.

4.2 A consultant has been contracted to support the development of the Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy so this report will be brought to the Panel in October.

4.3 On supervision, Mr Wells questioned the need to bring the level of supervisor down to Senior Practitioner level. Donna Marriott explained that a balance needed to be struck between experience and need; some Senior Practitioners had the capacity and experience to be supervisors, and this was a sensible solution to a situation where so many supervisors had too many people to supervise.

4.4 Following the tabling of a report from Rob Semens on Core Task 7, Mr Christie asked what the current turnover of staff is. **Rob Semens will contact Members with an answer to this.**

4.5 Mrs Whittle asked for a robust marketing campaign for experienced social workers and a **report on the impacts already felt to be brought to the next meeting.**

5. Performance and Quality Assurance Frameworks

5.1 Donna Marriott and Donna Shkalla presented the Performance and Quality Assurance Frameworks, including an explanation of the online audit tool. **The slides will be emailed to Members after the meeting.**

5.2 Mrs Whittle asked for Internal Audit to be included in the process of quality assurance. For example, they could have a role to audit the quality of the audits being done as this would not require social work knowledge.

5.3 Donna Marriott explained the complex sampling arrangements to ensure fair representation of cases. The pilot will run for a few months to ensure smooth operation, involving all managers and supervisors from the Corporate Director down, with the view to expanding to all social work staff and preventative services in the future.

5.4 Mrs Waters asked about the impact on morale if staff are regularly graded inadequate. Donna Shkalla confirmed that the ratings will highlight capability issues, but tools will be available to address this.

5.5 Mr Christie asked whether trade unions have been involved. Mr Newsam confirmed that they had been invited to contribute but had not yet responded to his letter.

5.6 Members thanked Donna Shkalla and Donna Marriott for their presentation and felt reassured that the service was responding positively to Ofsted's criticism around the lack of frameworks and embedding of a performance management culture.

6. Data Reports

6.1 Donna Shkalla drew Members attention to the referral data that was circulated with the performance reports.

7. Improvement Plan Highlight and Exception Reports

7.1 No actions to take.

8. For Information Reports

8.1 **Agreed that future meetings need to focus on one or two strategic issues.**

Dates of future meetings

Agenda Setting*	Time	Meeting	Time	
12 April	4 pm	26 April 2011	12.30	Waterton Lee
3 May	11 am	17 May	4 pm	Swale 3
7 June	4 pm	22 June	9 am	Medway
6 July	3.30 pm	13 July	3 pm	Swale 3
27 July	10 am	25 August	11 am	Swale 3
31 August	2 pm	20 September	2 pm	Medway room