

Minutes of the Children's Service Improvement Panel
Meeting Held: 25 August 2011 11:00 Swale 3

Present:

Mrs Whittle (Chair)
Mr Christie
Mr Cubitt
Mr Ferrin
Miss Hohler
Mr Koowaree
Mr Lake
Mr Smith
Mrs Waters
Mr Wells

Officers:

Malcolm Newsam
Debra Exall
Eileen McKibben
Jennifer Maiden-Brooks
Fiona Maycock (Clerk)
Karen Ray
Rob Semens

Apologies:

Mrs Allen
Mrs Dean

1. Previous Minutes

1.1 Malcolm Newsam confirmed that the data relating to the recruitment and retention work of Core Task 7 had not been sent directly to Members but would be included in item 3a on the agenda.

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

2. "Stock Take" Report

2.1 Malcolm Newsam introduced the report. The first wave of Improvement Targets have been achieved, and the foundations are being laid to deliver future improvements.

2.2 Mr Lake asked whether there is any risk that new targets will be set for Kent now that Ofsted can see these have been achieved. Malcolm Newsam confirmed this was unlikely. Targets were set to span a two year period; this initial phase was a clean up exercise to begin to gain good management grip and judgement, and there were further challenging targets to be achieved.

2.3 Malcolm Newsam stated that phase two will focus more on sustainability, providing value for money and improving quality of practice and outcomes for children. Mr Ferrin questioned whether we are truly out of phase one because further groundwork is still required. It is important that resources are sustained to ensure continued progress. Mrs Whittle agreed that staff can not afford to become complacent, and resources will be made available to deliver the improvements, however it is critical to ensure the most appropriate return for this investment.

2.4 Mrs Whittle asked for the Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy to come to a future meeting.

2.5 Mr Christie expressed concern that progress and quality will be compromised when the peripatetic team is disbanded. Malcolm Newsam reassured Members that staff are currently developing a plan to manage the ending of the project.

2.6 Miss Hohler said that the performance reports should be maintained even after improvement targets have been met; new targets should be set, as appropriate, so staff are challenged and a grip on current position is maintained. Mr Cubitt commented that the excellent performance management and quality assurance frameworks will undoubtedly set the standard for improving quality.

2.7 Malcolm Newsam informed Members that a new Improvement Plan will be created which will focus, amongst other things, on a fit for purpose restructure, staff training, supporting managers, and retaining and recruiting experienced staff.

2.8 Mr Ferrin suggested it may be beneficial to undertake a mock inspection by bringing in an independent inspector. Malcolm Newsam confirmed that the one year unannounced inspection is now due, and reported that he had already brought in an independent children's social care expert, Beverley Clarke, to complete an inspection of the DIAT teams. She had found that six were inspection ready, two were almost ready and four needed supporting to improve further. **A presentation of these results will be brought to a future meeting.**

2.9 Mr Christie commented that the high level of referrals is a significant factor in ensuring sustainability within districts. **A report on this will be brought to a future meeting.**

3. Recruitment, Retention and Establishment

3.1 Karen Ray stated that the market premia payments have been made; Rob Semens confirmed that eligibility in this case refers to the relevant group of employees. In future eligibility will be based on performance and guidelines to support this will be issued shortly.

3.2 Factors contributing to the number and length of service of agency workers in Kent was discussed and Malcolm Newsam confirmed that it is the intention for agency staff to be replaced by full time employees through the recruitment programme. It was suggested that with other authorities reducing their numbers of social workers, there would be a wider pool of permanent staff to recruit to Kent.

3.4 Karen Ray informed Members a Staff Survey will be implemented in September following a series of focus groups. A discussion was had around

the appropriateness of surveys compared to the value of having feedback in other formats.

3.5 Eileen McKibben explained the establishment modelling process and emphasised its three dimensional approach using a variety of contributing factors.

4. Data Reports

4.1 Malcolm Newsam confirmed that considerable progress has been made since the reports were published in July.

5. Improvement Plan Highlight and Exception Reports

5.1 Jennifer Maiden-Brooks explained that the exceptions within the report are minor and will not affect delivery of other actions on the plan.

5.2 The County Duty Team has now expanded to 27 staff and from September will be taking on all child contacts.

5.3 The future restructure of Specialist Children's Services will be linked in with Andrew Ireland taking up his post in November.

5.4 Mr Christie asked who is being consulted on the changes to the Children's Trust. Malcolm Newsam replied that all Members directly involved with the Kent Children's Trust had been consulted, and a report will be going to Cabinet on 19 September.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 Nothing was discussed.

Dates of future meetings

Agenda Setting*	Time	Meeting	Time	Venue
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
12 October	10.30am	24 October	2.30 pm	Cabinet Room
15 November	11am	1 December	3pm	Cabinet Room