

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, 23 May 2007.

PRESENT: Mrs A D Allen (Chairman), Mr M C Dance, Mrs M Newell and Mr M J Northey (substitute for Mrs V J Dagger).

OTHER MEMBER PRESENT: Dr T R Robinson (Cabinet Member for Children and Family Services)

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

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

6. Membership
(Additional Item)

The Democratic Services Officer announced that, since setting the agenda for this meeting, Mr M J Vye had joined the Board to fill the vacancy left by Mrs M E Featherstone. As this announcement had only very recently been made, the issue of the Vice Chairmanship of the Board had yet to be resolved.

7. Minutes
(Item A2 (a) and (b))

(1) RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2007 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman. The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2006 are already approved and signed, and are included for reference only.

(2) There were no matters arising from the Minutes of 14 March 2007.

8. Chairman's Announcements
(Item A3)

Margaret Featherstone

Members expressed sadness at the great gap left by Margaret's death and the loss of her expertise to the work of the Board. It was agreed that a letter of condolence be sent to Margaret's family.

Press Release - Out of Area Placements

The Chairman reported a press release from 22 May about children in care being placed out of their home area. This had been issued following a visit to Kent by the Minister for Children, Young People and Families, Beverley Hughes MP, who had pledged her support to reducing the number of out of area placements. Discussion of this issue gave rise to

Members' concern about the funding of Foster Care placements, and Members asked to have a comparison of Kent's and national Foster Care rates paid to Foster Parents, and other payments available (for example, for special skills).

New start time for Board Meetings – 2.00 pm

Members decided that, as Board meetings no longer followed on from other morning meetings, as had been the case when the Board was first established, meetings could now start earlier. Accordingly, the start time of the Board meetings from September 2007 onwards would move forward to 2.00 pm.

9. Improving the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children *(Item B1 - Report by Director Commissioning Specialist Services)*

(1) Mr Mitchell introduced the report, which outlined work by the County Council and its partners to improve the educational achievement of children and young people in care. He highlighted the varying patterns of achievement across England which had been identified, and the reasons for these, where these had been possible to identify, and explained that national statistics from the DfES would add to this picture when these became available in the near future.

(2) Arising from the information in the report, and from Members' discussion of it, the following points were raised:-

- (a) The spread of LAC between schools in Kent was becoming more even, although there were still more in East Kent than in West.
- (b) Performance indicators which measured absence from school did not distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absences, and include absences which were not the fault of the child, for example when the child was awaiting a placement in school. The new Schools Admissions Code will help with this as it would empower local authorities to accommodate LAC in an appropriate school part way through the year, even if that school was officially full.
- (c) The average length of stay in care was now 47½ months, so children and young people were spending more of their school careers in care. If a child were to have a short term placement and then move, the authority would try as far as possible to keep them at the same school. Stability at school became even more important when their home life was disrupted and transient.
- (d) Many children and young people known to Social Services but not in care were also known to experience problems with achieving well at school. Being a LAC is not necessarily the reason for poor school performance as many already were performing badly when they became looked after, for example, due to an unsettled family situation. While concerned with raising standards for all children and young people, the County Council had a specific duty to promote the achievement of children who did become looked after.
- (e) Although the total number of LAC in Kent had reduced in recent years, those in care were more vulnerable than before.

- (f) The advent of the Freedom Pass, giving free travel to school for all young people under 16, would help children and young people access their chosen school and maintain a good attendance habit. In addition, the Care Matters green paper included a proposal to provide free home to school transport for looked after children.
- (g) The lack of settled family life need not necessarily mean a child or young person would perform poorly at school. Many unaccompanied minors do very well at school, as evidenced in local and national media in recent years.

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

10. Children's Trusts Update

(Item B2 - Presentation by Joy Ackroyd, Trust Development Manager)

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

(1) Ms Ackroyd updated Members on the ongoing development of Children's Trusts. Arising from her presentation, and in response to questions put by Members, the following points were raised:-

- (a) The establishment of Children's Trusts offered a good opportunity to address historic problems and identify ways to change.
- (b) Although Kent was not one of the 34 local authorities in the official pilot, there was still much good work going on in partnership initiatives and innovation with three local pilot pathfinder projects in Maidstone, Shepway and Tunbridge Wells. Pathfinder clusters were based on school clusters.
- (c) Progress on Children's Trusts had identified the need for strong local arrangements to underpin work at County level and the need to ensure that all necessary partners were engaged.
- (d) Much of the work related to pilot schemes was already going on around the County and data from existing activities was useful to feed into and inform the new initiatives. The new arrangements offered the opportunity to pull together existing work.
- (e) The new arrangements were undeniably complex but the gains from them could be huge.
- (f) Members' involvement in the development of Children's Trusts was vital and Members could be involved in a number of ways, including via Local Boards.
- (g) The involvement of parents and young people was also vital and this was a key theme to be addressed as the Children's Trusts arrangements moved forward.
- (h) The pilot pathfinder projects were making use of/would make use of the 'Mosaic' system of data analysis.
- (i) Work of the Children's Trusts related to that of the Children's Champions Board in that, although Children's Trusts were for all young people, those who would most benefit from them were those most vulnerable who needed the most support to lead good quality lives.

- (2) RESOLVED that:-
- (a) the content of the presentation and information given in response to questions be noted, with thanks; and
 - (b) a further update report be made to the Board in Autumn 2007, by when the evaluation of the pilot pathfinder projects will be available.

11. Corporate Parenting Update

(Item B3 - Joint Report by Directors of Children's Social Services and Strategy, Policy and Performance)

- (1) Mr Brightwell introduced the report and highlighted a few key points, as follows:-
- (a) Kent had been successful in reducing the number of LAC and increasing the number of adoptions to one of the highest rates in the UK. However, those children which remained in care were the hardest to place.
 - (b) The average length of time children spent in care in Kent had increased from just over 36 months in March 1999 to 47½ months in March 2006.
 - (c) The longer a child remained in the care of the County Council, the wider the range of services he or she would need to access and become involved in. This presented a challenge for service providers but also an opportunity to influence the child's life for the better over a longer period of time.
- (2) RESOLVED that:-
- (a) information in the report and its appendices and given in response to questions be noted, with thanks;
 - (b) Kent's success in reducing the number of Looked After Children and increasing the number of adoptions to one of the highest rates in the UK be commended;
 - (c) KCC's guidance for Members on corporate parenting be updated following the publication of "Care Matters: Next Steps" (White Paper) and the publication of the NCB Corporate Parenting Materials; and
 - (d) a further workshop for Members take place in 2008 to raise awareness of the new changes.



Kent Children's Trust Arrangements

Joy Ackroyd
Trust Development Manager



In partnership with
NHS

Conditions for Change



National Policy Context

- Every Child Matters: Green Paper & The Next Steps - *outcomes for children*
- Children's Act 2004 - *duty to co-operate*
- National Service Framework for Children and Maternity Services - *joint commissioning*
- Care Matters - *Looked After Children*
- Choosing Health

Provide the conditions for a step change in improving outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Partners for Change

Kent Children's Trust Board



Established September 2006

Partners for Change

KCC Partners



Kent Children's Trust

Kent Children's Trust:

Developing the CYPP as the strategic commissioning plan to improve outcomes for Children and Young People.

Local Children's Trust Pathfinders

Local Children's Trust Pathfinders:

A strategic multi agency partnership to jointly plan and commission local services and ensure integrated service delivery.

Partners for Change

Local Children's Trust Pathfinders



Shepway Urban & Rural, Maidstone 2 and
Tunbridge Wells

All pathfinders are asked to:

- Establish a LCT Pathfinder board
- Develop a shared understanding of context and priorities
- Agree a local CYPP
- Evaluate and share their experience

Partners for Change

How local should an LCT be?



Some of the issues:

- neighbourhood change
- complex data sets and resources
- GP practice based commissioners
- engage schools and children's centres
- work with local Voluntary and Community Services

NB. We are pathfinding. Final decisions about size have not been made.



What does the LCT Pathfinder Board look like?

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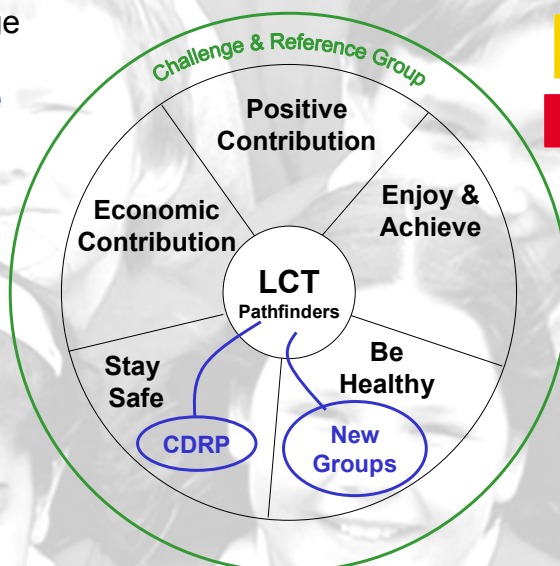
- Education - *'Largest Social Footprint'*
- Children's Social Services
- Health
- Police
- District Council Officers
- Voluntary Sector

Not just about meetings but integrated working arrangements



How will the LCT Pathfinders operate?

Schools are critical partners operating in each outcome area



LCT Pathfinders will need to work together and relate to a range of groups - for example CDRPs.

Data sources for pathfinders



- Mosaic analysis
- 18 high level outcome measures about the lives of children
- The children and young people of Kent

Children's Trust Communications

www.clusterweb.org.uk/Children/childrenstrust.cfm