

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CHILDREN'S CHAMPIONS BOARD

MINUTES of a meeting of the Children's Champions Board held in the Swale 1, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 24 September 2008.

PRESENT: Mrs A D Allen (Chairman), Mr M J Vye (Vice-Chairman), Mr J Curwood, Mrs V J Dagger, Dr T R Robinson, Mr J D Simmonds and Mrs M Newell (Substitute for Mrs C Angell)

ALSO PRESENT: Mr L B Ridings

IN ATTENDANCE: Miss T A Grayell (Democratic Services Officer), Mrs K Lambourn (Policy & Performance Manager, Child Protection) Ms S Hammond, (Policy and Performance Officer, Safeguarding), Mr A Heather (Principal Educational Psychologist) and Mrs J Doherty (Policy Manager).

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

12. Minutes of Board Meetings held on (a) 12 March 2008 and (b) 21 May 2008 *(Item A3)*

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2008 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman. There were no matters arising.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2008 are already signed and had been included for reference only.

13. Dates of Future Meetings *(Item A4)*

The Board noted the dates of its future meetings, as follows:-

Wednesday, 11 March 2009 (Child Protection)
Wednesday, 20 May 2009 (Looked After Children)
Wednesday, 23 September 2009 (Child Protection)
Wednesday, 2 December 2009 (Looked After Children)

All meetings will start at 2.00 pm at County Hall.

14. Chairman's Announcements *(Item A5)*

1. The Chairman welcomed the new Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Educational Achievement, Leyland Ridings, to his first meeting in his new role. She also welcomed Sarah Hammond, new Policy and Performance Officer for Safeguarding, who was observing, and Andy Heather, Principal Education Psychologist, who would be attending and reporting to the Board in place of John Mitchell.

2. She thanked Members of the Board who had attended the very successful meeting with young care leavers on 14 August. The event had been enjoyed and had a very positive outcome. The meeting notes were still awaiting comments from young people and would be sent when they were cleared. The next meeting would be in the October half-term week at Oakwood House, Maidstone and would be preceded by an evening meal. Marilyn Hodges, Director of Strategy Policy & Performance, had kindly offered to cover the cost of the event.

3. Later in the meeting it was announced that Kent had scored a 'Good' rating in its recent adoption inspection, and this news was welcomed by Members.

15. Child Trafficking

(Item B1 – Report by Director, Strategy, Policy & Performance)

(Teresa Gallagher, Team Manager, West Transitions Team, was in attendance for this item)

1. Ms Gallagher introduced the report and highlighted key facts about trafficking:-
 - (a) the absence of any quantity of research into the subject, with research started to be done only recently, in 2003/04. Some pilot work was being undertaken in London boroughs, eg., Harrow.
 - (b) the difficulty of defining "Trafficked" as opposed to smuggled or unaccompanied young people. This difficulty hinders research into the extent of the problem and also the ability to bring cases to court.
 - (c) Trafficking is not necessarily into the UK from abroad – young people can also be trafficked within and around the UK.

2. In debate, and in response to questions from Members, the following points were highlighted:-
 - (a) The UK was still very attractive to young people from abroad who still believe they can find easy prosperity here. Finding relatively low paid work with wages which are exploitative by UK standards still gives them more than they would earn at home and allows them to send some money back to their families. Many, however, become trapped in exploitative and abusive relationships, working for those who brought them into the country.
 - (b) The UASCYP team do not send a young person to live with a putative relative in the UK unless and until a detailed kinship assessment has been undertaken. This will look at the relative's ability and motivation to care for the young person and check that they have suitable accommodation for them. A kinship assessment is similar to that undertaken prior to a Foster placement. Members of the team will then attend a supervised visit of the young person to the relative before allowing them to be placed there.
 - (c) As trafficking is difficult to detect, Social Services rely on colleagues in other disciplines/professions to help pass on information, as well as the

public to report suspicious behaviour. To help with this, however, the public need to be able to identify signs of trafficking before being able to judge what is or is not suspicious. The public also need one central, well-publicised point of call to report suspicions, similar to the 'Childline' number.

- (d) The Contact Point processes scheme would help in identifying a child who may have been trafficked, as databases of information from different disciplines come together. Schools are a good first source of information (eg., to identify a child who suddenly stops attending and may have been moved on to another part of the UK). However, some children do not enter the education system at all.
3. From discussion, a number of ideas for possible work were put forward:-
- (a) KCC could produce a Pledge for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children and Young People (UASCYP), similar to that produced for Looked After Children; and
 - (b) A public awareness campaign to raise public knowledge of the issue could also send the message to traffickers that we are watching them. School children could be asked to design posters and publicity material for the campaign, and an awareness week like Fostering Week or Adoption Week could also be helpful.
4. RESOLVED that:-
- (a) information set out in the report, and given in response to questions, be noted, with thanks;
 - (b) a report be presented to a future meeting of the Board to set out outcomes of the Harrow pilot work. To this meeting it would be useful to invite representatives from the Police and the Immigration Services, the latter to tell the Board about training given to Immigration Officers around the issue of trafficking;
 - (c) The Leader of the County Council be fully briefed on the issued of trafficking to give it a higher profile as part of the immigration issue; and
 - (d) The ideas for suggested future works set out in paragraph 3 above be developed.

16. Aiming High Pathfinder Program

(Item B2 – Report by Director, Children’s Social Services)

(Liz Totman, Head of Specialist Children’s Services was in attendance for this item)

1. Mrs Totman introduced the report and set out key points of the program and the way it operated. In discussion, and in response to questions, the following points were highlighted:-

- (a) Kent had done very well to win Pathfinder status for short-term breaks and was one of only 21 other local authorities to do so. Kent was well

placed to deliver this service and had a good reputation with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) for innovative service delivery, and had one more than the basis funding to run the scheme.

- (b) Although there were localised initiatives and good provision around Kent, there had previously not been sufficient co-ordination and dedicated funding to build a project like Aiming High.
- (c) Aiming High will apply to Kent's own children as well as those placed in Kent by other local authorities. However, it could only apply to children with single, not multiple, disabilities.
- (d) The purpose of funding under the Aiming High Scheme was to add value and it could not be used to provide services which should already be provided – eg., to allow disabled children to join in with a school outing. Members expressed concern that funding was not ring-fenced but were advised that services provided under the Aiming High programme could be accessed using Direct Payments.
- (e) The short break service would link to and make use of Sports for Disabled Children. Members suggested adding cricket to the sports on offer.
- (f) Members suggested using the celebration of the UK's Olympic and Paralympic success to raise the profile of and advertise the Aiming High programme.
- (g) It was suggested that Aiming High could link to and feed into the work of the ASD Select Committee, in relation to the transition phase.

2. RESOLVED that:-

- (a) information set out in the report, and given in response to questions, be noted, with thanks;
- (b) regular future update reports on the development of the programme be made to the Board, suggested every 6 months; and
- (c) the ideas for suggested future work, set out in paragraphs in (e), (f) and (g) above, be developed.