

## THE REPORT

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**By:** Mark Lemon  
Strategic Business Advisor

**To:** West Kent Health and Wellbeing Board  
20/01/2015

**Subject:** Children's Operational Groups

**Classification:** Unrestricted/Exempt

### Summary

#### **Purpose of report:**

To update the West Kent Health and Wellbeing Board on progress of Children's Operational Groups to inform decisions about arrangements in West Kent.

### 1. Introduction

Children's Operational Groups (COGs) came into being following the decision to replace the previous arrangements of local Children's Trusts in 2013. According to the Terms of Reference agreed by the Kent Health and Wellbeing Board (attached at Appendix 1):

"The purpose of the Children's Operational Group is to ensure effective child and family centred local engagement by partners with responsibility for children and young people; to promote collaboration between these organisations with the aim of improving the wellbeing of all children through the effective implementation of strategies, integrated planning and commissioning and effective service delivery."

Children's arrangements are underpinned by the 'duty to cooperate' provision of s.10 of the Children Act 2004. However, the prescriptive statutory guidance was withdrawn on 31 October 2010, but how they operate, what they are called and how they will work with the HWB is a matter for local determination.

The groups' reporting responsibilities are defined as being to the local Health and Wellbeing Board and the Kent Children Health and Wellbeing Board, itself

a subcommittee of the Kent Health and Wellbeing Board. The governance of the COGs therefore runs to the Kent Health and Wellbeing Board through both routes.

The role and purpose and the reporting lines for COGs reflect the responsibilities of the Kent Health and Wellbeing Board and those of the local boards. The Kent Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy are therefore key reference documents for the work of the groups. Outcome 1 of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Ensuring every child has the best start in life, is particularly relevant.

COGs are currently supported through the KCC Community Engagement Officers.

## **2. Development**

Because of the governance through local Health and Wellbeing Boards it has been assumed that COGs must be constituted on a CCG boundary. However, whilst any arrangement must work at this level the COG Terms of Reference allow flexibility in implementation to reflect local circumstances. COGs have accordingly developed at slightly different rates and directions across the County. The progress made may also reflect the wider issues associated with governance of local Health and Wellbeing Boards associated with the varying degrees of complexity within different CCG boundaries.

Local Health and Wellbeing Boards where there is co-terminosity with a single district (or part of a district) have arguably made most progress. For Ashford, Thanet and Swale COGs have been established and have begun meeting. These groups are also clear about their relationship with their Local Health and Wellbeing Boards and membership.

Canterbury Coastal have also made good progress and have established a Board for Canterbury that also includes Faversham.

In South Kent Coastal, Dover and Shepway have revised their initial arrangements moving from district based COG's to holding "thematic summits" and reporting on these to the local H&WB.

In DGS a multi-district model has been adopted. COGs meet in each district but have an agreed reporting arrangement to the Local Health and Wellbeing Board to enable a consistent oversight by the Board.

It is in the West Kent Area, which is the largest and most complex, that agreement on the way forward has been more difficult. Tonbridge and Malling have established a COG on a district basis and Sevenoaks have convened a Children's Local Operational Group reporting to the SDC Local Strategic Partnership. Additional progress awaits further discussion.

### **3. Options**

Ongoing discussions around COGs, including the relationship with other bodies such as the Children's Health and Wellbeing and Kent Safeguarding Children Board, have recognised that whatever arrangements are implemented must reflect what works best at a local level. It is for local Health and Wellbeing Boards to determine how this is best achieved.

The options for West Kent remain:

A single COG for the CCG area – this is probably administratively most convenient but loses the local focus of district based arrangements.

COGs based on district geography with co-ordination through the Local H&WB, possibly developing the model adopted in DGS.

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# Appendix 1

## Children's Operational Group

### Terms of Reference

#### Role of the Subgroup

The purpose of the Children's Operational Group is to ensure effective child and family centred local engagement by partners with responsibility for children and young people; to promote collaboration between these organisations with the aim of improving the wellbeing of all children through the effective implementation of strategies, integrated planning and commissioning and effective service delivery.

#### The Children's Operational Group will:

1. Report to the local Health and Wellbeing Board and the Kent Children Health and Wellbeing Board.
2. Drive and support joined-up service delivery and promote service integration and take forward projects on behalf of or in collaboration with the local Health and Wellbeing Board.
3. Consider how resources can be pooled for a positive impact on the wellbeing of all children.
4. Debate and explore ideas to address current, emerging and future needs, problems and issues inhibiting effective delivery of integrated services and make recommendations to the local Health and Wellbeing Board and the Kent Children Health and Wellbeing Board and other bodies as appropriate.
5. Monitor and challenge service delivery where outcomes are poor.
6. Review lessons learned and use benchmarking information to improve services.

- 7. Ensure effective local engagement on children's issues, using existing mechanisms and where necessary linking up with appropriate bodies.**
  
- 8. Advice (as part of the early warning system) the local Health Board and Wellbeing and the Kent Children Health and Wellbeing Board (other bodies as appropriate) on local service issues that may have adverse impact on the wellbeing of all children.**
  
- 9. Report to the local Health Board and Wellbeing and the Kent Children Health and Wellbeing Board no less than twice a year on its activities and any significant emerging issues.**

## **Governance**

**The Operational Group is a Subgroup of the local Health and Wellbeing Board and is accountable to it for the effective delivery of its programme. The Group is required to prepare annually a plan of its activities to be approved by the Health and Wellbeing Board.**

**The Chairperson will be appointed by the local Health and Wellbeing Board to be responsible for ensuring that the Children's Operational Group effectively fulfils its roles.**

**If not already a member of the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Chairperson of the Operational Group will become a member of the Board in order to be accountable to the Board for the Subgroup's effectiveness.**

## **Membership**

**Membership will include:**

- Primary/Secondary/Specialist Schools representative**
- District Councils representative**
- Housing representative**
- Kent Police**
- KCC Specialist Children's Services representative**
- KCC Education and Young People's Services representative**
- Youth Services representative**

- **Clinical Commissioning Group**
- **Voluntary Sector representatives**
- **Other representatives as agreed by local Health and Wellbeing Board.**

**The Operational Group is able to co-opt specialist members onto the Group for a period to assist the group with their expertise.**

## **Meeting Arrangements and Frequency**

**Meetings of the Operational Group will be held every two months. Minutes of the meetings will be made available to the following local Health and Wellbeing Board meeting.**

**Linked KCC Strategic Commissioning Officers will provide planning and information sharing support to the Children's Operational Group.**

**KCC Community Engagement Officers will assist with the transition and continue to provide organisation, facilitation support.**

**Terms of Reference agreed by Joint Children and Young People Board on 01.08.13. Updated on 27.01.14; 31.07.14)**