

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 5 December 2007.

PRESENT: Mrs A D Allen (Chairman), Mr M J Vye (Vice - Chairman), Mrs V J Dagger, Mr D A Hirst, Mr I T N Jones, Mrs M Newell, Dr T R Robinson and Mr J D Simmonds.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr P Brightwell, Policy and Performance Manager (Looked After Children/Leaving Care), CFE; Mr J Mitchell, Joint Commissioning Officer, CFE; Mrs J Doherty, Policy Manager, Central Policy Unit, CED; and Miss T A Grayell, Democratic Services Officer.

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

18. Minutes

(Items A3 (a) and (b))

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2007 are correctly recorded and they be signed by the Chairman. There were no matters arising.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2007 are already approved and signed and are included for reference only.

19. Dates of Future Meetings

(Item A4)

(1) The Board noted the dates reserved for its meetings on 2008, as follows:-

Wednesday, 12 March 2008 (Child Protection)

Wednesday, 21 May 2008 (Looked After Children)

Wednesday, 24 September 2008 (Child Protection)

Wednesday, 3 December 2008 (Looked After Children)

(2) These meetings will all start at 2.00 pm at County Hall.

20. Chairman's Announcements

(Item A5)

(1) The Chairman reported and welcomed the news that Beverley Hughes MP, the Minister for Children and Young People, had made an announcement on reducing the placement of young people outside their home area, a move for which the Board had lobbied.

(2) The Chairman and Democratic Services Officer reported the receipt of enquiries and compliments from other councils on the forward-looking way in which Kent had established its Children's Champions Board four years ago, and on the work it had undertaken since. Other councils admired Kent's pioneering approach and were now starting to look at establishing similar boards. This was a great tribute to the work that Members and officers

had put into the Board. The Democratic Services Officer would send the enquirers copies of the Board's past Minutes and reports to illustrate its work.

(3) There followed a brief discussion on how the Board could spread the message about its work to other County Council Members. For example, the Board had tried to encourage the Children, Families and Education Policy Overview Committee to show the presentation it had seen on child pornography. Although this issue had since been taken forward and was being addressed in other ways, it remained an area of concern for the Board and would continue to be monitored.

21. Presentation – Summary of Kent Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2006/07

(Presentation by Ms P Davies, Manager, Kent Safeguarding Children Board)

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

(1) Ms Davies presented a series of slides which set out the background, development and structure of the Kent Safeguarding Children Board (KSCB) and its progress since its establishment. She answered a number of questions from Members. Points arising from the presentation and in response to questions, were as follows:-

- (a) The KSCB had a broader remit and more statutory responsibilities and powers than the former Kent Child Protection Committee;
- (b) staff hosted by the County Council but seconded to work with the KSCB were accountable to the Board rather than to the Council;
- (c) the relationship of the KSCB to the Children's Trust Board would become clearer as the Children's Trust is developed. The two Boards may have some common membership;
- (d) Members were concerned that the Child Protection ("at risk") Register would cease to exist from April 2008, but were assured that, although the register itself would no longer exist, every child considered to be at risk would have a Child Protection Plan. The County Council had no choice about discontinuing the register – it was a Government directive.
- (e) Members were concerned that the broader remit and responsibilities of the KSCB may lead to resources being spread too thinly;
- (f) some agencies who were partners on the KSCB did not currently contribute any resources to its operation. The County Council could press those who did not currently contribute to do so; and
- (g) the KSCB would shortly be producing a three year plan and this would be shared with the Children's Champions Board.

(2) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the content of the presentation, and the information given in response to questions, be noted, with thanks;
- (b) the KSCB's three year plan be reported to the Children's Champions Board, along with regular updates on the KSCB's work; and

- (c) the County Council press the KSCB's partner agencies who do not currently contribute resources to do so.

22. Education Provision for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People

(Item B1 – Report by Director, Commissioning (Specialist Services))

(Ms J Robson, Head of Language and Traveller Achievement Service, Minority Communities Achievement Service, and Ms K Goodman, Head of Operations, Service for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, were in attendance for this item)

(1) Ms Robson and Ms Goodman presented the report and highlighted the key challenges facing Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and Young People (UASCYP). Points arising from the presentation, and in response to questions from Members, were as follows:-

- (a) Kent has a particularly high percentage of UASCYP who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) – 30% compared to the national average of 8%. However, Kent had a good record of the number of UASCYP gaining admission to university;
- (b) 45% of this year's arrivals had received two years or less of formal education in their home country;
- (c) it was vital that UASCYP are kept engaged and found useful occupation to help them achieve some stability and recover from the emotional trauma of leaving their home country;
- (d) services for UASCYP were currently underfunded by approximately £4m per annum, and the County Council was lobbying Central Government to address this. This underfunding related only to the Social Services aspects of providing service – the education aspects of the service were funded separately;
- (e) addressing the needs of UASCYP for appropriate training to gain employment was a complex challenge, and the County Council was working with Colleges of Further Education, the Learning and Skills Council, Key Training Services and others to reduce the percentage of those who were NEET. Vocational training was known to be more successful if good competence in the English language was gained first, or at least was developed alongside vocational training. Training in the English language alone has been proven to be insufficient to engage young people as college-based academic courses do not suit all;
- (f) the high percentage of NEET could lead to a high percentage of unemployed young people and the danger of them becoming dependent on a benefits culture.

(2) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the information given in the report, and in response to questions, be noted, with thanks;
- (b) the work being undertaken, in partnership with the Learning and Skills Council, Colleges of Further Education, Key Training Services and other partners, to address the training issue, be acknowledged; and
- (c) a further update be made to the Children's Champions Board in six months' time.

23. Kent's Pledge for Children and Young People in Care

(Item B2– Report by Managing Director, CFE)

(1) Mr Brightwell introduced the report and set out the work undertaken in drafting the Pledge and the consultation with young people which had been included. He explained that the Pledge had two parts – relating to Kent's own children, and children and young people placed within Kent by other local authorities.

(2) The Pledge would be expensive – costing £2.4m - £2.5m per annum to implement – but approximately £2m of this is expected to come from the Government under the “Care Matters” implementation grant, with the remaining £.5m already identified by the Children, Families and Education Directorate.

(3) Members praised the report and the volume and clarity of information it gave against each element of the Pledge - in particular, the financial implications of each. This was a good model which could be followed when presenting other issues.

(4) Members noted that the Pledge contained issues which the Board had put forward and/or worked on some time ago, and were pleased to see their influence coming to fruition in this way.

(5) Mr Brightwell and Mr Mitchell explained that the benefits of the Pledge enjoyed by children and young people in care could be monitored by regular six monthly reviews, carried out throughout the period of care and beyond, up to the age of 21. Finance had been put in place for the mentoring scheme to be continued.

(6) The Pledge would be produced in a range of languages as well as formats suitable for those with learning difficulties and sensory impairments.

(7) RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted, and Members' appreciation of the layout and clarity of the Pledge be conveyed to all the staff who had worked on it.

24. Proposals for a Corporate Parenting Workshop

(Item B3 – Report by Director, Strategy Policy and Performance, and Director, Commissioning (Specialist Services))

(1) Mr Brightwell and Mr Mitchell introduced the report and proposed two events in the New Year to build on the success of previous events held by the Board.

(a) Firstly, another meeting with young people leaving care, like the one held in October 2005. To avoid asking young people to miss school or college to attend, this would need to be in an evening and the aim was achieve the meeting in January 2008.

(b) Secondly, another Corporate Parenting event, to which all Members of the County Council would be invited. This would update Members on developments in the role since the last event in September 2006 and could make use of new training materials being produced by the National Children's Bureau in the new year.

(2) Members welcomed the proposals and agreed that such events were vital in allowing Members to meet young people in an informal setting and hear at first hand their experiences, views and concerns as a way of developing Members' role as corporate parents.

(3) RESOLVED that the proposals be welcomed and work continue on finding a date for the meeting with care leavers in January 2008 and the Corporate Parenting event in Spring 2008.

25 Updating the Board's Terms of Reference

(1) The Chairman reported that the idea of amending the Board's Terms of Reference, to reflect the development of Children's Trusts, had recently been raised. Once the Children's Trusts were more developed and the Board's relationship with them had become clearer, the Board would need to discuss at a future meeting what changes it wished to make to its Terms of Reference, and have the benefit of appropriate officer advice on how this could be undertaken.

(2) RESOLVED that the issue be revisited at future meetings.