

Summary of Feedback from the KCT Strategic Review Consultation

Date of Consultation - 18th July to the 8th August 2011 (inclusive)

Consultation Audience - Anyone currently or previously involved with Children's Trust arrangements in Kent at a senior or local level.

Owner of Consultation - Marisa White, Business Strategy Manager (Children's Services)

Governance for Consultation - Malcolm Newsam (Acting Kent DCS)

Responders:

- **Public Health** - Co-ordinated by Dr Jonathan Sexton (Assistant Director Public Health)
 - **Kent Children and Young People VCS Forum** - Co-ordinated by Richard Eason (Lifewhys)
 - **Swale District Advisory Board (Children's Centres)** - Co-ordinated by Sonny Butler (Chair of Swale DAB)
 - **Tonbridge and Malling LCT Board** - Sent from Independent Chair Jonathan Shaw
 - **Preventative Services** - Lee-Anne Farrach (Preventative Services Manager, Swale)
 - **Ashford Borough Council** - Co-ordinated by Christina Fuller (Director ABC & Vice Chair of Ashford LCTB)
 - **Kent Association of Further Education corporations (KAFEC)** - Co-ordinated by Jane Spurgin (KAFEC Director of Development)
 - **Shepway LCT Board** - Co-ordinated by Independent Chair David East
-

Key Themes from the consultation responses:

1) Delivery of the Agenda

- Support for the retention of a multi agency strategic group focussed on children and young people.
- Concern that 'narrowing the focus' of KCT by only looking at issues that involve 3 or more partners, is an over restrictive approach and leaves swathes of children's services issues downplayed in the County.
- Risk of KCT having a very "social care" view of the world only looking at specialist services and not universal need. It was felt that this was a significant risk to the preventative agenda.
- A discrete JSNA should be maintained to ensure a Universalist approach.
- Plans for a more streamlined approach and membership were generally welcomed in principle.
- The Board would need to meet regularly to have any impact on any of the agendas.
- Communication was a common theme highlighting the need to improve not remove communications across the entire children's and families sector (particularly to the front line staff).

- Need to revisit the arrangements in 18/24 months time to view success and development of other groups such as the Health and Well Being Board.

2) Governance & Leadership

- Strong support for a genuinely Independent Chair for the Board.
- Concern that the links between the County arrangements and the Local Boards were not robust enough in the proposals.
- Concern about whether there is a mechanism to ensure targets set by Ambition Boards are those delivered by KCT and whether KCT is able to set other/wider targets.
- Principle lines of accountability were clear but functional relationships were not i.e. links between Locality Boards and LCTBs, KSCB and KCTB.

3) Partnership

- Wanted clarify about how KFEC and the 14-19 Strategic Forum could feed into KCT strategic arrangements.
- Suggestion for a 'provider advisory group' that meets regularly and feeds into the revised Board. Meeting once a year does not allow for close partnership working.
- Strong support to have schools directly represented on the Board given the resources and influence they have on children, young people and families and that we should not be seen to set them 'further adrift'.
- LCTB Chair representations seen as a positive inclusion. The logistics of how this would work effectively were raised i.e. how it could be representative, should it be more than one rep etc.
- Statutory groups such as District Advisory Boards for Children's Centres were looking for clarity on Governance and reporting lines.

4) Membership

- It was widely felt that the membership was heavily weighted towards statutory agencies.
- Serious concerns from many about exclusion of the VCS in the membership and that this went against the approach adopted by many of the other senior groups such as KSCB.
- Exclusion of education reps most notably schools was questioned by many and identified as a 'high risk'.
- NHS provider services should have representation on the Board
- Strong feelings that there should be VCS representation on the Board given the Localism agenda and the Vision for Kent 'Put Citizens in Control'.
- Felt that VCS would enhance accountability and scrutiny.
- Positive feedback on the inclusion of an LCT Chair.
- KAFEC felt that having a principle on the Board would add post16 knowledge and influence to the membership.
- Equality and Diversity and participation champions should be nominated on the County Group to link with those in place at local levels to ensure that these areas are core to the work undertaken.

5) Localism and Local Children's Trusts

- Clarity needed about the inter relationships with Locality Boards, Health and Well Being Boards and Local Children's Trust Boards - where locally agreed targets 'sit' and whether they can 'feed up' into the process.
- More information and clarity on where responsibility will ultimately lie for streams of work and targets, and how and to whom issues and risks are escalated.

6) Support

- Need clarity about the support that KCTB and LCTBs will receive in the future.
- Retention of knowledge and resources of partnership team is essential for KCT arrangements to continue with meaningful effect.
- Concern about the removal of staffing resources attached to KCT how aspects like performance management will be supported and driven forward.
- Suggestion that the VCS could provide support to the arrangements to create better engagement.
- How will the vital communications elements of the Trust be maintained and strengthened without dedicated partnership resource.

7) Risks

- Concern that 'narrowing the focus' of KCT by only looking at issues that involve 3 or more partners, is an over restrictive approach and leaves swathes of children's services issues downplayed in the County.
- Combining the CYPP and the JSNA could not realistically be achieved with a reduced agenda for KCT. There is still a need for a holistic view of all children's services and issues across the county.
- Maintaining a strict commissioner/provider split is a danger as it means the group do not retain a balanced view of issues from those who are in direct contact with the delivery of specialist services for young people and families.
- Possible disengagement of the voluntary sector at a time where children's services most needs its support (Ofsted) and in contradiction to statements within Bold Steps for Kent, about building partnerships and understanding with the Voluntary sector.
- Strict 'dogma' of commissioner/provider split means there will not be a 'front line' view at the top table to inform and add insight and expertise.
- Success will be ability to commit resources to deliver shared work programme.

Author - James Harman

Title - Strategic Development Officer (KCT)

Contact - james.harman@kent.gov.uk