

Minutes of the Children's Service Improvement Panel
Meeting Held: 7 December 2011 14:30 Cabinet Room

Present:

Mrs Whittle (Chair)
Mrs Allen
Mr Christie
Mr Ferrin
Miss Hohler
Mr Lake
Mr Smith
Mrs Waters

Officers:

Andrew Ireland
Jean Imray
Donna Shkalla
Jennifer Maiden-Brooks
Fiona Maycock (Clerk)

Apologies:

Mrs Dean
Mr Wells

1. Previous Minutes

1.1 The minutes were provisionally approved with requests for alterations to improve accuracy.

1.2 A report on progress towards the adoption target was agreed to be received at the February meeting. Mrs Whittle described some of the possible improvements which could be made to increase the number of children adopted, including working groups with the courts, more information for prospective adopters, improving the website, an interim management team and encouraging collaborative working between children's services and adoption teams.

2. Progress Report

2.1 Andrew Ireland explained that the draft report following the Inspection of the Adoption Service has not been produced because the inspectors are returning on 8th and 9th December.

2.2 The progress report demonstrates the improvements made over time; the deep dives have been a substantial contribution to this and will be continued in 2012 with dates set in January, March and June.

2.3 Andrew Ireland reported having visited all 12 districts, and seeing the improvements in offices at Croft and Queen's Houses. He was encouraged by the morale of staff, manager grip on data and district level issues and the amount of drive forward.

2.4 Support was shown for the LAC “pods” which are estimated to have considerable impact and a better alignment with adoption. The LAC Placement Strategy will come to a future meeting of this panel.

2.5 In respect to the trends shown in the Initial Assessments graph on page 4, Donna Shkalla explained the expected rise and fall in numbers of referrals and therefore assessments due to seasonal variations. However the reduction in September seems to have levelled following the full implementation of the Central Duty Team.

2.6 It was confirmed that approximately 10% of Kent children are placed out of the local authority boundaries. Mrs Whittle described the criteria for placing Kent children outside of the county and asked Members to consider the needs of the child.

2.7 Jean Imray assured Members that there are no unallocated Child Protection or LAC cases, and herself and Andrew Ireland are routinely informed of reasons for unallocated cases on a weekly basis.

2.8 A child in need is one who “is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him/her of services by a local authority”. The Children in Need in Kent do benefit from the money raised by the National Children in Need campaign, however, the majority of this money goes to children benefiting from the work of preventative service work.

2.9 A targeted intervention service (mainly for under 2 years and adolescents) which meets the needs of families 24 hours a day is in procurement, and work towards commissioning a contact service has begun.

3. OfSTED Inspection Report

3.1 Jean Imray indicated that the suggested areas for development in the report are covered by the phase 2 improvement plan. Members should be reassured that, if this had been an inspection of a “performing authority” and emergency inspection would not have been triggered.

3.2 It was acknowledged that staff are showing more productive working in comparison to the previous OfSTED inspection, however there are still areas for improvement and to achieve this, tools must be given to allow staff to work efficiently and effectively.

4. Multi-agency Access Point Report

4.1 Jean Imray Described the proposed model and emphasised the benefits of having agencies that take Child Protections Referrals being in the same office.

4.2 The current model of the Central Duty Team has reduced referrals into Specialist Children's Services; with other agencies coming into the Central Referral Unit additional focus will be evident.

4.3 Jean Imray confirmed that staff from Specialist Children's Services (including Out of Hours) will make up the largest proportion of the Central Referral Unit.

5. Data Reports

5.1 Donna Shkalla tabled the data report published by the DfE but raised caution in using it for current comparisons due to the progress made since March 2011.

5.2 Donna Shkalla informed Members that additional data will be released by the DfE in the near future which allows you to see which authorities are in intervention to allow for better comparisons.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 Nothing to discuss.

7. For Information Reports

7.1 Donna Shkalla explained that the sample scorecard and data report in the KSCB report will be used to improve the scrutiny function of the KSCB. The maps show variations across the county however they do only show a snapshot and can hide the trends in the data.

Dates of future meetings

Agenda Setting*	Time	Meeting	Time	Venue
12 April	4 pm	26 April 2011	12.30	Waterton Lee
3 May	11 am	17 May	4 pm	Swale 3
7 June	4 pm	22 June	9 am	Medway
6 July	3.30 pm	13 July	3 pm	Swale 3
27 July	10 am	25 August	11 am	Swale 3
31 August	2 pm	20 September	2 pm	Medway
12 October	10.30am	24 October	2.30 pm	Cabinet Room
15 November	11am	7 December	3pm	Cabinet Room
4 January 2012	3pm	17 January 2012	2pm	Cabinet Room
14 February	10am	29 February	2.30pm	Cabinet Room
21 March	10am	11 April	3pm	Cabinet Room