

# DEVELOPING A HEREFORDSHIRE APPROACH TO CHILDREN'S SERVICES

## PROGRAMME AREA RESPONSIBILITY: CORPORATE STRATEGY AND FINANCE

CABINET

15TH JULY, 2004

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### NB

This report has been prepared by the Chief Executive within the remit of the Leader of the Council but it is recognised that this is a cross-cutting report which is relevant both to the Social Care and Strategic Housing, and Education Programme Areas. Subject to the passage of the Children's Bill, the Constitutional Review Working Group will have to consider whether there will be consequential changes to the Cabinet portfolios and/or the timing of changes.

### Wards Affected

County-wide

### Purpose

To consider a report on the range of changes and improvements needed to respond to "Every Child Matters" and the Children's Bill.

### Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision.

### Recommendations

- THAT**
- (a) a Member/Officer group be set up to steer the changes;**
  - (b) a children's whole system inspection preparation group be set up to ensure a self-assessment is prepared against the new model;**
- and**
- (c) the preliminary steps taken by the Chief Executive to commission further work on service integration be noted.**

### Reasons

The Council needs to respond to the national children's policy changes and build on the local good practice to ensure the right arrangements are in place.

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Further information on the subject of this report is available from  
N.M. Pringle, Chief Executive, on 01432 260044

## Background

1. There are a number of significant national drivers in the development of children's services that will require a strategic overview by organisations that provide services.
2. These include:  
  
*National Service Framework (NSF) for Children*  
  
*The Green Paper "Every Child Matters" and the Children Bill (due for royal assent in November 2004)*
3. The common themes and the Government expectations are that Council areas will develop policies and ways of working that will reflect these issues particularly which need to be in place by 2006-08:
  - Commissioning of services
  - Better integration of services (the debate regarding Children's Trusts; education and children social services)
  - Demonstrable partnerships between the statutory and voluntary sectors.
  - Development of statutory child protection boards (Local Safeguarding Children Board)
4. The Council clearly has a lead in the development of these services with the expectation of the development of the function of Director of Children's Services and the identification of a lead Member for children's services. In bringing forward the proposals it is important that the Council recognises and protects the significant areas of existing good practice.
5. It is important to be explicit about the continual attention that needs to be given to school improvement against the background of the existing good performance of our schools.

## Considerations

6. The values and principles which support key outcomes for children are:-
  - Placing the child and the child's experience at the centre of provision and service design.
  - Sustaining the stability of service delivery - particularly to ensure the safe guarding of children.
  - Enabling effective joint working.
  - The focus of whole family and the school as a community and transition into adult arrangements should be enhanced and protected in any new arrangements.
  - The engagement of schools as key partners in the outcomes for children.
  - Services should be grouped together where the outcomes can be best achieved.

- The requirement to support the children's whole system by sharing information across agencies and disciplines.
  - The need for everyone involved in services to children to be part of the child protection system.
7. The importance of remembering that children can be most at risk when services are pre-occupied by structural change must be stressed.
  8. The further integration of services across education and social care must make sense to children and their families.
  9. The principle has to be that services "wrap" round the child rather than that the child moves through services - the child's journey needs to be understood, so duplication is identified, and ways to integrate services are found. This development process must involve staff and service users, and be followed by production of appropriate tools and procedures and protocols.
  10. The Herefordshire Child Concern Model gives the basis for the changes in practice and improvement in information sharing.
  11. The new inspection model for children's services - the Joint Area Review - will influence the next Comprehensive Performance Assessment. It seems possible Herefordshire may be a pilot in Summer 2005.

## **New Arrangements**

12. (a) There will need to be a Local Safeguarding Children Board developed from the current Area Child Protection Committee.
- (b) The current Children's Strategy Group will need to grow into a Local Children's strategic partnership. This should have a performance framework which ensures monitoring of outcomes so that the lead officer/Children's Director can be held to account for their delivery: Key issues will be
  - to show leadership and demonstrate clarity of purpose.
  - to set the cultural tone - to help to create a culture of checks and balances, openness and mutual respect.
  - to establish systems and processes for creating, capturing and sharing relevant information; for checking these systems are working, for monitoring changes and for acting on what the information tells local professionals.
  - to ensure the strategic focus is firmly on improving children's outcomes.
- (c) There will need to be a Director of Children's Services and a lead Member for Children's Services.
- (d) The Director of Children's Services will be accountable for the leadership of the Safeguarding Board and the Strategic Children's Partnership.

## Existing Progress in Herefordshire

13. Herefordshire has an acknowledged approach to partnership and there is a broad view that it should build on the current developments as opposed to going with unnecessary structural change. Children's services can show developments which show that agencies are working within the philosophy of the green paper and impending legislation. Some examples are illustrated below with proposals as to how this might be improved within a county-wide approach
- *Commissioning* – there is now a joint agency process between education/social care/Primary Care Trust (PCT) on developing/providing solutions for children with the most complex needs. Education and Social Care with health colleagues are currently discussing with counties in the region to see whether different approaches to working together can be identified in order to maximise resources. The work is embryonic.
  - *Better integration of services – multi agency* - there is the development between social care and the PCT of integrating of services for children with disabilities. This first year is attempting to look at the common issues of single assessment for example.
  - *Better integration of services – Herefordshire Council* - There is also a challenge as to whether there should be better integration of our Education and Children's Social Services. Services around looked after children should be better integrated, e.g. the current Education Service to this group is managed by Education; the early years' arrangements are managed by Education but there are many joint aspects. The increasing discussions about extended schools and how vulnerable children are supported; the work of the educational welfare officers and social services staff – they are currently managed separately. What about the services delivered by the youth service and their connection with other council services? The Child Concern Model aimed at vulnerable children exposes the need for a more detailed consideration of how services are delivered and whether they can be integrated in more effective ways. There is merit in reviewing the Council's arrangements at the particular points of interface (the above are only a couple of examples) and consider whether our current approach inhibits the improving of service to children and families.
  - *Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)*. – the work undertaken in developing the Child Concern Model is a real demonstration of the approach and attitude that will be required in developing an effective LSCB. The Council is already demonstrating an approach that is prepared to look at the difficult challenges of multi agency working.
  - *Demonstrable partnerships across the sectors* – these can be seen in the development of the partnership boards in for example: early years' and the children's fund.

## What are the Next Steps in Herefordshire?

14. Using the "from Vision to Reality" guide Herefordshire needs an agreed partnership strategic framework and body for children which:-
- improves outcomes for children on a sustainable basis;
  - creates a whole system approach;

- ensures local delivery of improved services for all children with an emphasis on strengthening preventative and universal services and on safeguarding children.
15. Genuine reform requires profound change by people and organisations. This document also provides some suggestions about how to:-
- design a change process;
  - achieve cultural and organisational change;
  - plan services that make sense, and use resources effectively;
  - improve outcomes for all children and for those that are vulnerable or need extra support, active protection, or alternative care.
16. Developing a strong central strategic body that reflects in its membership all the significant partners that will make a difference in the development of effective services in Herefordshire. Currently there are a range of groups but not a central point with appropriate leadership level which will create the direction and approach for the development of effective strategies for children locally.
17. There is currently a Children and Young Persons' Strategy Executive which consists of representatives at various levels from the organisations and therefore a varying capacity to influence policy and shape the use of resources. There is no political involvement or representation. The creation of a properly constituted Children and Young Persons' Board and Executive is essential if there is to be coherence in developing children's services.

## **The Way Forward**

18. In order to shape the next steps, it is necessary to focus on the new accountability arrangements and plan for a self-assessment of children's services by having a further service model of integration in development stage by the end of 2004.

## **Alternative Options**

There are no options for further development on action on accountability arrangements at this stage.

## **Risk Management**

The Council needs to be in a position to describe the plans for Children's Services in Autumn 2004.

## **Consultees**

All Services for children across the Council.

## **Background Papers**

None