

DEVELOPING THE CHILDREN'S AGENDA IN HEREFORDSHIRE CHANGE FOR CHILDREN

PROGRAMME AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY: CHILDREN'S SERVICES

CABINET

17TH FEBRUARY, 2005

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To note progress in the local change programme.

Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision

Recommendation

- THAT (a) the report be noted;**
- (b) the proposed response to the consultation on the Joint Area Review inspection (in Appendix 1) be agreed; and**
- (c) the revised priorities for the 1st March priorities conversation (as in paragraph 3) be agreed.**

Reasons

To keep Cabinet informed of the Change for Children Programme locally.

Considerations

1. The initial priorities were outlined to Cabinet on 13th January, 2005. Given current inspections and the self-assessment of both the current improvement plan and the direction towards Children's Trust arrangements, it is important that improvement plans on key areas are seen to be delivering.
2. The priority list also forms part of the Change Advisor priority conversation now set for 1st March in Herefordshire.
3. The focus of this meeting is to:
 - discuss our assessment of available data, and the views of children and their families, on how well all children and young people in your area, and specific groups of more vulnerable children and young people, are doing against the five outcomes for children and young people;

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Sue Fiennes, Director of Children's Services on 01432 260039

- agree local priorities for improving outcomes, in the light of this analysis and of key national priorities as set out in PSA targets;
- discuss your evaluation of current services against these demands, and your assessment of the priorities for change in local practice, workforce and organisation in order to meet those needs;
- agree priorities for our local change programme;
- agree the broad shape of support which will be required from DfES, CSCI and DH, and from Government Offices, to support implementation; and
- If you are a pilot Local Area Agreement authority, the meeting will discuss and seek to agree LAA proposals for outcomes, funding streams and freedoms and flexibilities for the Children and Young People's Block.

4. The priorities have, therefore, been revisited and can now be described as:

- setting up a Children and Young People Partnership Board;
- creating a shadow Local Safeguarding Board (ahead of national requirement);
- continue current developments in integrating front-line services:-
 - children's centres
 - extended schools
 - children with disabilities
 - child protection - co-location;
- explore the feasibility of different integration models:-
 - South Wye
 - other rural localities;
- continue the implementation of the Child Concern Model, strengthening the "consultant" roles in each agency/sector and building confidence in the criminal justice and schools sector;
- further develop the information sharing and information management approaches;
- examine performance in the key areas:
 - re-registrations on the child protection register
 - life chances of children looked after, particularly school absence/attendance
 - special needs - statements done within the required timescales
 - attendance/achievement of vulnerable children and young people, in both education and employment;

- check if improvement plans have delivered or whether new effort and resources needs to be applied both in terms of data quality and service delivery.
5. The Joint Area Review 42 key judgements also have attached a list of key indicators. The consultation document states:

Rules will apply when making the children's services judgements for the local authority. For the social care judgement, key thresholds (formerly known as key performance indicators) will be used to provide a consistency check. A Council cannot be judged to be performing well (grade 4 - delivering well above minimum requirements) if it fails to reach the specified level of performance for any of these indicators. It is also proposed that, for the overall children's services judgement, if either one of the education or the social care judgements is judged inadequate (grade 1 - not delivering minimum requirements) then the overall judgement will be inadequate, regardless of the rating of the other function.
 6. This highlights the requirement to be focusing attention on those indicators where improvement is needed and locally concentrates the action into the broader vulnerable children, disadvantage and diversity areas.
 7. The consultations covering the children's area currently inviting responses are:-
 - Audit Commission – CPA From 2005
 - Annual Performance Assessment of Council Children's Services
 - Joint Area Review of Children's Services
 - The Framework for Inspection of Children's Services
 - The Common Framework for Inspecting Education and Training
 - CSCI – Inspecting for Better Lives
 - BFI – CPA 2005
 - Draft Statutory Guidance on the Roles and Responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member
 - Draft Statutory Guidance on Inter-Agency Co-Operation to Improve the Well-Being of Children: Children's Trusts
 8. The circular related to the inspection arrangements is attached (CSCI-CI(2004)6) (Appendix 1).
 9. The significance for Herefordshire is how the JAR is going to impact in Autumn 2005. In order to place concerns and comments before OFSTED the attached response is proposed (Appendix 2).
 10. It seems important in this context to revisit the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the lead member for Children's Services. These are outlined in the extracts from the Draft Guidance shown in the Executive Summary and paragraphs 3.1 to 3.3.2 (Appendix 3). The local leadership, therefore, to achieve this agenda has to be taking the right priority steps to achieve the infrastructure and key improvements outlined in the revised priorities in paragraph 4.

11. The support needed to secure the change has been endorsed by Cabinet and the change team is in the process of being set up.
12. The communication of this new Children's Services direction requires a concerted effort for the leadership to be visible and clear information to be available to all stakeholders.
13. The Communication Strategy has already begun with the first newssheet going out week commencing 17th January. The Director of Children's Services will have a planned programme of visits to schools and governing bodies over the next period.
14. The next step is the set up of the Children's and Young People's Partnership Board locally. A date has been set to launch this on 15th March.

Alternative Options

There are no alternative options

Risk Management

The Council needs to demonstrate leadership and engagement in this new Children's Services endeavour. The planned approach described in this report and the report to Cabinet of 13th January, 2005 gives a clear start to that ambition.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Consultees

Staff and Stakeholders

Background Papers

None identified