

CHANGE FOR CHILDREN

PROGRAMME AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY: CHILDREN'S SERVICES

CABINET

29TH SEPTEMBER, 2005

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To advise Cabinet of progress on "Moving towards a Children's Trust", Integrated Services and the position locally on Safeguarding Children.

Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision

Recommendation

THAT Cabinet note the report and comment on the strategy paper and performance outlined in Appendices 1, 2 and 3.

Reasons

To demonstrate the direction of travel and performance to date and continue the routine progress reporting to Cabinet.

Considerations

Safeguarding Children

1. In July 2005 the second joint national Chief Inspector's Report on Arrangements to Safeguard Children was published.
2. The report's key findings were:-
 - some agencies still give insufficient priority to safeguarding and children's interests and there are some groups of children, including those with disabilities and those living away from home, whose needs are not always given sufficient recognition or priority;
 - there are still considerable concerns about the differing thresholds applied by social services in their child protection and family support work and about the lack of understanding of the role of social workers by other agencies; and
 - continuing difficulties in recruitment and retention in some services affect their ability to safeguard children effectively and may restrict their capacity to deliver the new Every Child Matters arrangements.

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

3. It is important to outline the Herefordshire position in relation to these findings and summarise the position on children placed out of area (attached at Appendix 1).
4. It is relevant to note that in relation to looked after children the DfES distance tool puts children placed 20 miles from Hereford as "out of area". There are placements 20 miles from Hereford that are in the County.

Integrated Services

5. The development of a framework for future planning is a necessary part of the development of the Children's and Young People's plan for Herefordshire. The attached paper (Appendix 2) is a consultation paper with key partners and stakeholders, including the school sector.
6. The strategy framework points to a Herefordshire shape for services which can combine local primary schools, extended schools and children's centres, alongside "virtual" multi-professional teams covering the 7 proposed locality partnership areas.

"Moving Towards a Children's Trust"

7. At the same time as the JAR inspection, Herefordshire has been asked to update the self-assessment previously reported to Cabinet on our progress on the Every Child Matters, Change for Children agenda. The template has significant sub-questions which are pointing to changes expected some time ahead. This will be used alongside the JAR outcome and with progress on the Local Area Agreement (LAA) - C&YP pillar to inform the agenda for a Herefordshire Priorities meeting on 6th December.
8. The completed template is attached at Appendix 3 and is supported by the C&YP Partnership Board.

Alternative Options

There are no alternative options

Risk Management

The direction of travel towards a Children's Trust needs to be robust to ensure Herefordshire Council and partners are making proper progress. This links to the Corporate Risk on the Children Act 2004.

The establishment of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board in Herefordshire is a vital ingredient of the improvement/change journey. The arrangements are well in place for this to happen before the due date of April 2006.

The integrated Children's Strategy is part of the local area planning and is timetabled to receive feedback from consultation in time for the Children and Young People's Plan to be finalised prior to April 2006.

Consultees

Children's and Young People's Partnership Board for Herefordshire
Area Child Protection Committee for Herefordshire

Background Papers

Previous Change for Children Cabinet Reports.