

CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER
CHILDREN'S TRUST SHADOW BOARD

Meeting held on 24 March 2009

MINUTES

Present:

Steve Robinson (Chair), Chief Executive, CWAC
John Stephens (Vice Chair), Director of Children's Services, CWAC
Cllr Arthur Harada, Executive Member for Education and Children, CWAC
Moira Chapman, Police Authority
Jon Betts, Cheshire Constabulary
Wendy Meredith, Director of Public Health
Lizzie Wiffen, NHS Western Cheshire, Non-Exec Director
Alison Navarro, Third Sector
John Davidson, Cheshire Probation Service
Steve Hoy, Interim Outcome Lead for Making a Positive Contribution
John Barber, Interim Outcome Lead for Economic Well-Being
Neil Massingham, Principal Manager Strategy, Children's Services, CWAC

Apologies:

Sarah Lee, Schools Forum
Steve Edwards, Interim Outcome Lead for Enjoy and Achieve
Catriona Sreenan, Interim Outcome Lead for Stay Safe

1. MINUTES AND ACTIONS OF LAST MEETING

Future Governance arrangements would be discussed by the Board on 23 April.

Outcome Leads had been contacted about Interim arrangements and John Barber and Steve Hoy were in attendance, but it was recognised that there was more work to be done on the role, procedures and expectations of outcome leads and groups. Steve Robinson would meet each individually to discuss at an appropriate time in the future.

Some initial discussions about engagement and how to link this to development of the Children Plan had taken place, but much more work was needed. A Trust conference in September remained a key suggestion in order to feed into the priority and budget setting processes of partners in February prior to the Annual Review of the Children Plan to be completed by 1 April each year. However, further time and capacity was needed in order fully to explore engagement options. (Action NM)

It was agreed that wherever possible engagement would be with existing reference groups such as the Parent Partnership. A quick mapping exercise would be undertaken to highlight which groups existed across the range of children's services so that the Board could identify gaps and priority groups to reach. (Action NM)

Alignment of priority issues to outcome areas had taken place and prioritisation of key issues by the Board would be discussed under agenda item 4.

2. THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN ENGLAND – LORD LAMING’S REPORT

John Stephens briefed the Board on the key issues arising from Lord Laming’s progress report on safeguarding children. While clearly some important matters needed to be addressed by the Government and the relevant agencies – including Children’s Trusts – it should be noted that Lord Laming had stated that progress by Trusts was generally good despite some confusion about the purpose of Trusts and the relationship with the LSCB.

John Stephens particularly highlighted the need for all agencies impacting on outcomes for children to view services and situations from the child’s perspective, especially if a child was very young. Following procedures was appropriate, but agencies had to assure themselves that the procedures were right from the child’s perspective.

There were some concerns on this latter point about Laming’s recommendations as these appeared to suggest that the LSCB should report to the Trust Board, which would be wrong as the LSCB must have an independent strategic scrutiny and review role in relation to safeguarding practice and procedures.

The Stay Safe group of the Trust Board is the operational sub-group tasked with implementing multi-agency safeguarding. The role of the LSCB was to work with the Trust Board to highlight priority issues to address. The Trust Board’s role (as the Executive of the Trust) was to commission the Stay Safe group to address them.

Comments made during discussion with the Board included:

- The Trust needed to pick up any performance issues for CWAC and address them;
- Serious Case Review process must focus on lessons to learn;
- Poor school attendance was often linked with neglect of abuse issues and should be monitored as a safeguarding issue. Technology could help with this;
- Elective Home Education was also a significant safeguarding risk and one that the Government needed to urgently review as there as no automatic right of local authority access to a home educated child;
- Multi agency teams around schools were a potential solution;

Action:

That the LSCB be asked to review Lord Laming’s report and identify the priority issues for Cheshire West and Chester agencies involved with safeguarding children to the Trust Board for consideration and action. (John Stephens to action)

3. ARE WE THERE YET – SELF ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR TRUST BOARDS

The Audit Commission self assessment handbook had been circulated. While it was acknowledged that these questions were intended for Boards to review their arrangements it would nonetheless be useful to work through the questions so that the Board could take account of these matters when setting up its Trust Board working and governance arrangements.

Action:

June 23 (2-5pm) would be set aside for a workshop on the self assessment tool. Neil Massingham to make arrangements. Neil would also try and speak to all Board members on a 1:1 basis in advance of the workshop.

4. MANAGING THE CHILDREN PLAN AND TRUST PRIORITIES

The priorities table from the 2008-11 Children Plan had been circulated. This summarised the top priorities that had been selected by the former Trust on the basis of the needs analysis undertaken as part of the development of that Plan. However, the impact of LGR on the local authority Children's Services Directorate meant that it would take some time before Heads of Service were in post and all structures and working arrangements were settled down. It was therefore suggested that the Trust Board need to take a light touch approach over the transitional period to September 2009 and focus its limited resources during this time on only immediate priorities.

After some discussion the following priority issues were identified for each outcome area:

Be Healthy – **Under 18 Conceptions** – due to backwards progress on this issue and the visit of the Teenage Pregnancy National Support Team to CWAC on May 12.

Stay Safe – The Stay Safe group would need to focus on those issues for CWAC that arose from **Lord Laming's report** and that advice from the LSCB would influence this. It was anticipated that a key issue would be the **Common Assessment Framework**.

Enjoy and Achieve - **Looked After Children** attainment levels were agreed as the key focus for this group and that the development of a **Virtual School** with a Headteacher would be a key action.

Making a Positive Contribution – this group needed to continue to focus on the range of **LAA priority issues** that it could impact on.

Economic Well-Being – **Reducing NEETs** would be the key focus of this outcome area in light of the recession, though concerns were expressed that the NEET target was probably unachievable when it was negotiated before the recession and that the current environment clearly did not improve the position.

The Trust Board would consider other priorities according to the evidence base presented for each until such time as the Annual Review of the Children Plan (for April 2010) had completed a full review of needs and priorities.

Action:

Outcome Leads to configure their outcome group to work on these priorities on a task and finish basis. Proposed (named) Membership of these groups should be reported to the 23 April Trust Board meeting

Delivery Plans would be sought from Outcome Leads as and when appropriate (taking in consideration what already existed, what national requirements there might be for a delivery plan (ie Under 18 Conceptions), and what the LSP delivery plan arrangements would be.

5. MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

Cheshire Probation would be a full member of the LSCB and LSP but a 'corresponding member' of the Trust Board. The LSCB was where Probation felt it could add the most value and in light of capacity issues it would therefore attend LSCB regularly but only receive Agendas and Minutes of the Trust Board. This arrangement was subject to review and John Davidson underlined that he would attend the Trust Board whenever there was felt to be a specific need to do so.

Decision: Agreed

The Cheshire Colleges Consortium had nominated West Cheshire College (Sarah Mogel) as its link officer to the Trust. Sarah had outlined what the Colleges and WCC could bring to the table as a Trust Board member.

Due to ongoing consideration of the Board constitution and membership – and the desire of the Shadow Board to develop a Commissioning Trust Board with commissioners on the Board and providers on Executive outcome groups – the Board decided to take some time to reflect on this.

Decision: Reconsider at a later date

The Strategic Health Authority was a statutory partner in Children's Trust arrangements and had to be consulted on the Children Plan. However, as the North West SHA covered 24 local authority areas it was unworkable for a senior SHA officer to be on the Board – and the PCT was the key health partner for commissioning. However, in order to ensure a formal link was established between the Trust Board and the SHA it was suggested that the SHA be asked to nominate a 'corresponding member' of the Board.

Decision: Agreed. Neil Massingham to write to Eustace de Sousa.

6. FUTURE MEETINGS:

Trust Board

23 April, 2pm,
Gaskell Room, Nexus House, Chester

Workshop

Are We There Yet – Self Assessment for Trust Boards on Governance and Resource Management
23 June, 2-5pm
Blacon Police Station, Blacon Avenue, Chester

Trust Board

9 July, 2pm,
Venue tbc

Additional meetings:

Commissioning Workshop

Neil Massingham would set up a full day workshop on Commissioning to be facilitated by the DH/DCSF Commissioning Support Team. All lead commissioners of children's services for the PCT and local authority would be invited as well as all members of the Trust Board.