

## DEVON CHILDREN'S TRUST- BOARD MEETING

12 January 2009

### Present

#### Board Members

Mary Nisbett (Independent Chair)  
Peter Boeuf (Devon Race Equality Council)  
Garry Ferrand (Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Service)  
Dr Michael Halls (Intercom Trust)  
Bruce Pollit (DAG)  
Debbie Pritchard (Children's Trust Programme Director)  
Jenny Rudge (Connexions SW)  
David Tall (Devon Association of Governors)  
Jo Tennant (Devon and Cornwall Constabulary)  
Councillor Brenda Taylor (DCC Executive Support Member Social Care)  
Anne Whiteley (Director of Children and Young People's Services, DCC)  
Jenny Winslade (Clinician PCT)  
Alan Wooderson (LSCB)

### Also Present

Steven Brown (PCT for Virginia Pearson)  
Mark Goodman (for Heather Colbeck)  
Penny Mathers (Observer GOSW)  
Gerry Rufolo (Committee Secretariat, DCC)

### Apologies

Kathy Beechen (Voluntary Sector - Youth Services)  
Nicola Bulbeck (Devon District Councils)  
Councillor Alan Connett (District Councils)  
Heather Colbeck (Voluntary Sector Early Years)  
Jeanette Kemlo (Parent Carer)  
John Peart (Learning and Skills Council)  
Virginia Pearson (Director of Public Health, Devon PCT)  
Councillor Marguerite Shapland (Non-Executive Director, Devon PCT)  
Alyson Sheldrake (CoE Diocese)  
Councillor John Smith (Executive Member, CYPS, DCC)  
Councillor Nick Way (Executive Support Member, Schools, DCC)  
Eelke Zoestbergen (Devon and Cornwall Police Authority)

## 73 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2008 were signed as a correct record.

## 74 Annual Performance Assessment

The Board received the report of Anne Whiteley on the outcome of the Children's and Young People Services Annual Performance Assessment 2007/08 and service progress and developments. OFSTED had judged the Council's capacity to improve, including its management of services as 'good'.

The report detailed the self assessment compared against the OFSTED outcomes and highlighted the strengths and weakness within the Every Child Matters five outcomes and the LA's management of the service and capacity to improve.

The report outlined the new future inspection processes via a Comprehensive Area Assessment to be undertaken by OFSTED, with a focus on the inspection of field work and using more timely data and information.

Notwithstanding the improvements detailed in the report, Anne Whiteley emphasised the need to avoid any complacency. Sustained improvements were already apparent from the recent improvements within Enjoy and Achieve evidenced by the recent encouraging public examination results in Devon Schools, particularly in Exeter. These recent improvements were not reflected in this latest Assessment by Ofsted.

Board Members' comments and discussion points included:

- the challenges faced in achieving consistency across the county and all the partner agencies particularly in respect of the Common Assessment Framework processes
- the new CAA process and the prospect of unannounced visits for which the LA should be ready with robust policies and effective best practice in the field
- the 'good' assessment within the Stay Safe outcome was subject still to the ongoing reassessment of Devon's Serious Case Review process
- the support by the DCSF in developing a teenage pregnancy strategy and the wider social messages in this area
- the need to record other important issues not referred to or measured in the national indicators/statistics relating to, for example, suicide rates, mental health problems and other associated issues faced by young people within the LGBT community. It was noted that the PCT has developed a Suicide Prevention Strategy and Steve Brown indicated that he would provide more information to Dr Halls on this
- the new impending statutory footing of the Children's Trust and governance arrangements.

The Chairman congratulated the Director and her staff for their hard work and achievements duly recognised by the APA process.

**Are we there Yet? Improving Governance and Resource Management in Children's Trusts: Audit Commission National report and Self-Assessment**

The Board received the report of Debbie Pritchard on the publication of the Audit Commission report on governance arrangements for Children's Trusts and on the self assessment exercise (to be undertaken by the Board at this meeting). The meeting also received additional papers on statutory guidance on inter-agency cooperation to improve the well being of children, young people and their families; and on the role and responsibilities of the Lead Member and Director for Children's Services.

The meeting split into five groups (1-5 below) to address the following questions which would be the subject of further consideration at a Workshop in February 2009 (date subsequently confirmed for 9 February 2009) for the Board, the Chief Officers Group and the CT Executive. The groups gave their assessments from inadequate, adequate, good, and excellent and their reasons.

(1) How far does the children's trust focus on improving outcomes for local children and young people?

Group 1 indicated that their view was that the position was 'adequate'. The Children and Young People's Plan details clearly states what is needed with local targets and focuses on inequalities. Weakness related to the Board's understanding of the operation of performance management and accountability and how the Board works with the CT Executive, the PCT Executive and the other partner executive bodies.

(2) How does the board oversee the effective use of resources?

Group 2 saw the position as 'inadequate'. In respect of some/many members of the Board there was a perceived lack of knowledge and information about resources and how they were applied.

(3) What are the roles of the Children's Trust partners in delivering improvement?

Group 3 saw the position as 'inadequate'. There was a lack of information about joint commissioning arrangements and strategies for example.

(4) (a) How does the board effectively consult, engage with, and involve key stakeholders? (b) How does the board support local capacity building and capability development?

This Group felt that there was a lack of induction training (or packages) for new members. It felt however that the CT partners effectively consult and engage with stakeholders and in this area the assessment was 'good'. However, in terms of local capacity building and capability development there

was a lack of reporting and therefore knowledge by Board members and so the assessment was judged as 'inadequate'.

(5) (a) How are good governance and the principles of public life demonstrated by the board (b) How does the board manage risks and exercise proper controls?

In terms of (a) the Group saw the position as adequate with elements of good practice with for example a register of members' interests.

In terms of (b) the Group saw the position as 'inadequate' with a lack of Risk Assessment information reported to the Board and also in respect of performance management.

Debbie Pritchard thanked the Groups for their feedback, which would be used at the Workshop, and a date would be circulated to Board members in due course.

(Note: date for the workshop agreed for 9 February 2009)

**76 Any Other Business: North England Education Conference**

Mr Tall reported on this recent conference and indicated that the Secretary of State was considering how Health could be involved in School Improvement Partnerships.

**77 Meetings During 2009/10**

The Chairman reported that in view of impending governance changes any further requests to change scheduled meetings could be considered at the next meeting on Wednesday, 11 March 2009.

**78 Devon Local Safeguarding Children's Board**

**RESOLVED** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business in accordance with Section 36 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, by virtue of the fact that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in closing the information.

The Board considered the report by Alan Wooderson independent Chairman of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) and received the Joint Area Review on Children's Services in Haringey; the Government's published response to the 3rd Joint Chief Inspector's report on arrangements to safeguard children; and the national report published by OFSTED on the first 50 Serious Case Reviews that it had re- evaluated since it took responsibility for the inspection of such services. Alan Wooderson further reported on the impact of these developments nationally and in Devon and actions underway via the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and the actions ordered by the Secretary of State. There was also a national review of Safeguarding Children

arrangements on which Lord Laming would report by February 2009. The Secretary of State following the Haringey JAR had asked all LAs to urgently review their own safeguarding arrangements and to reconsider all SCRs that OFSTED had rated inadequate, to be carried out by an independent person. Mr Wooderson explained how 'inadequate' was defined relating primarily to how the SCR was conducted, the quality of critical analysis, what lessons could be learned from the review and how these would be actioned and any weaknesses rectified. The report outlined the timetable for submission to the Secretary of State of those SCRs rated inadequate and revaluation by OFSTED. In addition OFSTED would undertake an annual unannounced inspection of safeguarding arrangements in all areas in addition to the current inspections processes. The report also outlined the actions under way in Devon in response to the Haringey findings and actions specific to Serious Case Reviews. There would also be a strategic review for the oversight of LSCBs, their relationship with Children's Trusts, Lead Members and Directors of Children's Services.

The Devon LSCB would be also producing an annual report for consideration by the Board and constituent partners and interested groups.

Members' discussion points included

- the paramount importance of information sharing between partners and professionals involved in safeguarding arrangements particularly GPs and difficult issues relating to young people in this context from within the LGBT community for example
- the increasing interventionist approach by Government where arrangements were perceived to be failing children
- the review undertaken by the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary in its governance and practice arrangements and the seriousness with which it was dealing with these matters and that follow up actions were already being undertaken
- investment by the LA to encourage the recruitment and retention of experienced social workers in this priority area of work.

A further report would be provided to the Children's Trust when the national report of Lord Laming was published and that follow up actions by Devon about the SCRs would be subject of further report to the Board.

The meeting started at 10.30 am and finished at 12.30 pm