

SLOUGH CHILDREN'S TRUST BOARD - Meeting held on Tuesday, 24th November, 2009 at Connexions, High Street, Slough.

Present:-

Name	Representing
Leon Burke	Youth Worker, SBC
Rafiq Chohan	Assistant Director, Economic Development, SBC
Elaine Coleridge Smith	Independent Chair, Slough Local Safeguarding Children Board
Robin Crofts	Assistant Director, Inclusion, SBC
Jesal Dhokia	Slough Council for Voluntary Service
Cilla Dorman	Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals Trust
Janine Edwards	Homestart Slough/SCVS
Linda Evans	JCP
Aman Gill	Performance & Information Manager, SBC
Leigh Gravenor	Slough Local Strategic Partnership
Katherine Horler	Connexions Berkshire
Rebecca Lacey	Berkshire East PCT Community Health Service
Jacqueline Laver	Slough Primary Heads
Councillor Natasa Pantelic	Commissioner for Education and Children's Services
Jeff Richardson	Slough Secondary Heads
Jean Robertson	East Berkshire College
Ian Sandbrook	Interim Director of Education and Children's Services, SBC
Flick Schofield	Interim Assistant Director, Children's Social Care, SBC
Mary Shannon	Business Manager CT/LSCB
Sian Snagg	C&YP Health Improvement Coordinator SBC
Sandra Storey	Performance and Projects Manager, SBC
Jane Weller	Royal Berks Fire Rescue
David White	Learning and Skills Council

Apologies for Absence:- Neil Aves, Rekha Brigue-Parker, Chris Etheridge, Kate Ford, Bob Garnett, Trevor Keable and Denis Kitchener.

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18. Welcome / Introductions

It was noted that in the absence of Clair Pyper, Ian Sandbrook would be chairing the meeting. Members were informed that Clair Pyper was recovering well following her recent operation.

Liz Curry-Hyde from the Commissioning Support Programme was welcomed to the meeting.

19 Reports on Key Areas

Commissioning Update: Self Analysis and Planning Exercise

Robin Crofts (RC) addressed the Board by stating that

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commissioning needed to take a higher profile in Slough and that it was important that all partners were involved in creating the capacity required in Slough to give commissioning a higher profile. Details relating to the scope of the children and young peoples commissioning strategy were outlined. It was noted that this was the process for deciding how to use the total resource available for children, young people and parents to improve outcomes in the most efficient, effective, equitable and sustainable way. RC stated that this was a key strategic responsibility for the Children's Trust. The various stages in the commissioning process were identified as –

- Understand - understand needs, resources and priorities and agree outcomes.
- Plan – map and plan sustainable and diverse ways to improve outcomes.
- Do – undertake the appropriate options identified at the 'plan' stage.
- Review – monitor delivery of outcomes and take remedial action if necessary.

RC stated that Slough Borough Council was receiving twenty days support through the DCSF National Commissioning Support programme and that this included a self analysis exercise and planning programme. It was explained that there was a national requirement to assist Children's Trust in developing their commissioning by identifying a commissioning champion and for the Children's Trust to carry out a self-analysis and planning exercise.

Liz Curry-Hyde (LCH) delivered a detailed presentation to the Board regarding the recently published Children's Trust guidance. It was noted that there was a statutory requirement for Local Authorities to have established a Children's Trust Board by 2010 and that this guidance would be used to strengthen the role of Children's Trust.

In addition, it was noted that responsibility for producing the Children's and Young People's Plan (CYPP) would rest with the Children's Trust Board and not the local authority. As such, the implementation and delivery of the aims in the CYPP would be the responsibility of the Board partners. The scope of the CYPP was defined and that it focused on cross cutting priorities and joint activity by a wide range of partners. It was noted that there was also a requirement for the CYPP to include a needs assessment.

LCH advised that the self-analysis template was based broadly on three sections which were –

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- (a) Commissioning Governance and Framework
- (b) Commissioning Activity
- (c) Commissioning Capacity and Competence.

Members were informed that following an initial self assessment exercise, thirteen responses had been received from partners involved with the Children's Trust. The average score ranged from 1.69 to 3.00. Most significantly, however it was highlighted that as a Children's Trust Board all the partner agencies did not fully understand the commissioning strategy. Areas that the local council were good at were highlighted and included:

- Standard 1 – we are clear and agreed about the outcome improvement we need to achieve children, young people and families in our area.
- Standard 5 – we really understand the needs of the children young people and families in our area.

The areas that were highlighted as needing improvement included:

- **Standard 4** – partners and stakeholders, including children, young people and families, understand and support the approach we take to commissioning.
- **Standard 6** – we invest widely and influence the market effectively to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.
- **Standard 8** – Our Commissioners work effectively together to secure improved services and outcomes.

The meeting then divided into three sub-groups to discuss one of each of the standards that had been raised as requiring improvement.

Feedback from each of the sub groups was then reported to the meeting. With regard to Standard 4 it was stated that there needed to be greater focus on specific areas rather than a general and sometimes artificial approach to commissioning. It was raised that an induction for Children's Trust Board members would be beneficial and that it was of paramount importance that the views of children and young people were included within any commissioning strategy.

Robin Crofts/Liz Curry-Hyde to note.

Mary Shannon to action.

Regarding standard 6 it was stated that once the needs of young people had been identified, there was a need for more targeted courses and skills for young people to help them build for the future. It was stated that joint working between groups

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	<p>and agencies was important in investing wisely and influencing the market effectively. As such, a consortia approach to placements was needed rather than individual spot purchases. It was also highlighted that there needed to be a greater emphasis in addressing the issue of young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) and that this should be given an increased profile.</p> <p>Discussions following standard 8 related to the fact that further support and development was needed for Children's Trust members to deliver effective strategies. There was a real need to have an understanding of who was commissioning and what the commissioning arrangements are and that a joint working approach by all agencies was essential in identifying activities. It was noted that by identifying activities and by doing these collectively, better outcomes could be achieved and as such commissioning would be facilitated at a higher level.</p> <p>It was noted that the general consensus of the feedback from the sub groups was that effective coordination of work was required and that the scope of the commissioning strategy needed to be more focused. It was agreed that LCH and RC would look at the results of the discussion group and work out a set of priorities and how the commissioning support programme could help the Children's Trust move forward. It was agreed that a report would be produced and discussed at a future Board meeting.</p>	<p>Robin Crofts/Liz Curry-Hyde to note.</p> <p>Robin Crofts/Liz Curry-Hyde to note.</p> <p>Robin Crofts/Liz Curry-Hyde action.</p> <p>Mary Shannon to agenda plan.</p>
20.	Feedback from CT Executive Board, 5th November, 2009 Noted. Ian Sandbrook clarified that the Children's Trust Executive Board would not be referred to as a 'Board' in order to distinguish it from the Slough Children's Trust Board.	
21.	Review of Outcomes Plans from Outcomes Leads including updates from CT Away Day 15th September 2009 Prior to the meeting being updated on each of the outcome plans IS stated that the Plans were too complex. It was suggested for future that they focus primarily on cross cutting and emerging issues and joint funding. It was also suggested by Rafiq Chohan that a traffic light coding system of red amber and green be used on each priority, in order to easily identify the progress of each action for the top level plans.	<p>All partners to note.</p>

Enjoy and Achieve

Leon Burke commented that contained within the plan were

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	references to the Local Area Agreement Indicators and queried how these related to the plan.	Bob Garnett to action.
	<u>Make a Positive Contribution / Stay Safe.</u>	
	It was commented that the information contained within the plans for Make a Positive Contribution and Stay Safe were duplicated. It was agreed that Robin Crofts and Flick Schofield would meet to look at these. IS stated that the plans were too ambitious and needed to be realistic in terms of delivery. IS informed the meeting that the children's participation group had been meeting for the last 18 months, the group which was being led by Tony Browne.	Robin Crofts and Flick Schofield to look at detail of the plans and amend accordingly.
	<u>Economic Wellbeing</u>	
	It was noted that the Plan also needed to refer to the Government IAG Strategy.	Rafiq Chohan to action.
	<u>Be Healthy</u>	
	Leon Burke stated that awareness relating to the role of health partnership within the Plan needed to be addressed.	Viki Wadd to action.
	There was general concern that not enough time had been allocated to discuss the outcome plans in any great detail and that this would be a consideration in agenda planning for any future meetings.	Mary Shannon to note.

22. Reports on Key Areas

Performance

Aman Gill updated the meeting with regard to the key indicators and measures to support the Children's Trust Board. On NI 59 (Initial Assessment for children's social care carried out within 7 working days of referral) it was noted that 73.1% were completed within the statutory timescale of seven working days. This performance was in line with Slough's statistical neighbours and England averages. It was reported that performance for the second quarter remained lower than target, although it was noted that performance was very slightly higher than the last published statistical neighbour and England average of 73% in March 2009. It was now considered that the target of 80% may have been too ambitious in the context of a nationally raised profile and increased awareness of children's safeguarding issues. Actions to date included a restructure of front and duty services to ensure duty workers were taking new referrals and assessments as the capacity to manage work filling in.

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	<p>NI 68 (referrals to children's social care going on to initial assessment). In the 12 months to September 2009 Slough had received 4,200 referrals of which 51.4% progressed to an initial assessment. It was noted that Slough's performance remained below both the statistical neighbour and England average figures. Board members were informed that this meant Slough Social services continued to receive more referrals that are deemed as not requiring an assessment when compared to other authorities.</p>	
	<p><u>Be Healthy</u></p>	
	<p>It was noted that the figures/data relating to this indicator would be discussed and reported at the next meeting of the Board.</p>	<p>Aman Gill to note.</p>
	<p><u>Rise in Child Protection Numbers</u></p>	
	<p>Flick Schofield (FS) reported that comparative data showed a significant increase in the number of referrals of child protection cases and that there had been a dramatic rise in Slough. It was noted that in September 2009 the service recorded the highest level of contacts, resulting in a two fold increase in referrals received on a monthly basis and a three fold increase in the numbers of children subject to a child protection plan over the last two years. In September 2009 there were 155 children on the child protection register and that in September 2007 this figure had been 58. It was reported that during this period there was no corresponding increase in the numbers of social workers within the service. It was noted that this increase in numbers had led to a number of issues including recruitment and retention difficulties, which added to the existing problems of increased referrals whilst making the workload even more difficult to manage.</p>	
	<p>However members were advised that in response to the steep rise in the numbers of children with a child protection plan, short term funding for additional social workers was made available earlier this year up to March 2010. In attempting to identify the reasons for the increase, it was noted that the Haringey case had been blamed for the increase in numbers. It should be noted however that the 08/09 statistics for councils demonstrated that whilst many councils experienced an increase in referrals following the Baby Peter's case, the rise in Slough was much steeper than was expected. In fact, it was the second steepest increase in the country and the reasons behind this rise were difficult to establish.</p>	

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<p>Two separate but related approaches were being proposed as:</p>		
(i)	<p>Agencies needed to give much greater consideration to contacting social care services. Whilst awareness to safeguarding and particularly of child protection was vital across partner agencies, a more sophisticated approach was needed. Referrers should check with child protection specialists within their own agencies before contacting social care and should consider very carefully whether the concerns they have could be dealt with differently either in their own agency or via the common assessment framework.</p>	<p>All partners to note.</p>
(ii)	<p>Secondly, greater consideration needed to be given to supporting families under section 17 family support, rather than through a formal procedure of a child protection plan. The main reason for those children currently being subject to a plan was neglect (68%). It was noted that agencies and particularly social workers needed to consider whether the same services and support could be delivered through a less intrusive means. By ensuring that only those children most at risk had a formal child protection plan, the bureaucracy around child protection would be directed at fewer children, thereby freeing up social workers and their colleagues in other agencies to work more effectively with families.</p>	<p>All partners to note.</p>

In the ensuing discussion Janine Edwards (JE) expressed concern that agencies and partners were potentially being advised not to contact social services in the first instance and that this could result in genuine cases not being referred. FS stressed that agencies were being told to investigate alternative avenues for support and that any instances of concern relating to child protection should always be reported.

JE stated that had the figures collated relating to the number of referrals made taken into account the number of the repeat telephone calls that had been made. FS stated that this particular issue had been taken into account when collating the data. It was noted that although the importance of partner agencies integrated working was emphasised it was still essential that where there were serious concerns relating to child protection that these were always referred to the appropriate service.

The following recommendations were agreed:-

1. Members of the Board noted the difficulties being faced by children's social care services and agreed in principle to

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	<p>the two set approach set out above.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">2. All multi agency training on safeguarding and the common assessment framework was to be reviewed to ensure that it included accurate information about the role of children's social care and thresholds of intervention.3. Meetings to be arranged with key referrers (schools, health visitors, the police) to seek their views and discuss the issues raised.4. Social Care staff and their partners to consider whether they could offer the same help to families via family support plans rather than child protection plans.5. Agencies to consider whether completing a Common Assessment Framework would be more appropriate than referring to Social Care.	
23.	Items for Update and Information <u>Update on school places</u> IS reported that funding had been secured for the provision of eighty-five school places for reception and year 1 from January 2010.	
24.	Children's Trust Forward Plan Noted. Any items for inclusion on the Forward Plan to be sent to Mary Shannon.	All partners to action.
25.	Agenda Items for Next Meeting Members were requested to contact Mary Shannon with regard to the agenda items for the next meeting.	All partners to action.
26.	Date of Next Meeting The date of the next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, 26 January, 2010.	

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 11.00 am and closed at 1.05 pm)