1. **Purpose of Item**

1.1 This report sets out the interim findings from the fundamental review of services for disabled children and their families, to be supplemented by a PowerPoint presentation presented by the Assistant Director, Children’s Care.

2. **Recommendations**

2.1 Members are asked to consider:-

2.2 The review’s interim findings and identify any further issues which they feel may need to be explored and addressed in the final report.

2.3 For the final report to be brought back to the Committee at the May meeting in order to make recommendations to the Cabinet as to their preferred options.

3. **Background**

3.1 Medway Council commissioned this review to analyse existing services for Medway’s disabled children and their families, in partnership with health and the voluntary sector.

3.2 The review has adopted the National Service Framework (NSF) definition of disabled children:

“children and young people who are disabled and/or those with complex health needs, including children and young people with learning disabilities, autistic spectrum disorders, sensory impairments, physical impairments and emotional/behavioural disorders. Many disabled children have no need for ongoing health interventions; others require ongoing treatment and/or nursing care and help with everyday activities.”
4. Issues

4.1 Medway’s child population is 69,324 (2001 census data) therefore, based on national trends, there could be around 3,500 disabled children in Medway. However, available data is limited and not robust. Currently each organisation adopts different criteria and definitions and collects its own statistics.

4.2 Medway’s rate of children in need receiving social care services is 10 per 10,000 population 0-17, well below the England average of 27 (source: DOH census 2003).

4.3 Health, education and social care services in Medway report a significant increase (40-60%) in referrals for children within the autistic spectrum.

5. Interim Findings

5.1 Initial feedback from children, families, staff and service providers indicate support for a high quality, integrated service that is responsive and flexible to meet local need.

5.2 There is a need to set up a short life, multi-agency project group to:

- identify the total number of children receiving services from one or more agency;
- review the criteria currently used by all agencies and agree a joint approach;
- verify and validate current statistics;
- establish and implement data / information sharing protocols;
- agree the form and frequency of future data collection and performance monitoring; and
- develop a format for a regular statistical summary report to the Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership.

5.3 There is a need to create a robust, detailed evidence base of needs from which to plan and commission future service development.

5.4 It is suggested that options development should be informed through these key questions:

- What can be done to give disabled children and their families a better experience of services?
- What can be done to ensure that disabled children and their families “tell their story once”?
- Are services responsive enough to the needs of disabled children and their families?
- How can services be more joined-up?
- What should be done to improve information?
- How can service planning for integration be properly addressed?
• Are the right services available in the right quantity to meet the needs of disabled children and their families?
• Is the right support available to prepare children for adulthood?
• How will the development of a multi disciplinary service create efficiency savings?

6. Options for the future

6.1 The possible options for future service provision include:

• Do nothing – continue current arrangements with inconsistent definitions and eligibility criteria across and within organisations, multiple access points and fragmented quality of service delivery.
• Agree immediately a joint commissioning and delivery strategy (based upon poor quality data and mapping)
• Phased move towards ‘Children’s Trust’ arrangements for children with disabilities; informed by robust evidence base of current and future need.

7. Review Timetable

7.1 In 2003/04 children’s services were subject to a Social Services Inspectorate (SSI)/Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) inspection. The Council produced and implemented a detailed action plan as a consequence of the inspectorate’s recommendations. All of the recommendations have now been actioned with the exception of the requirement to conduct a review of services to children with disabilities.

7.2 The outline timetable for the review is set out below:-

• Scoping Report to Cabinet – 13 December 2005
• Interim Findings Report to Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 30 March 2006
• Children’s Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 3 May 2006
• Cabinet to consider final Options report and agree timeline for implementation, including stakeholder consultation and communication – 16 May 2006

7.3 In order to both continue and focus the review, Members are asked to identify further issues for the consultants to explore and address.

8. Financial and Legal Implications

8.1 The costs of undertaking this review will be met from existing budgets.

8.2 The procedures to be followed by social care, education and health in relation to disabled children are set out in the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (October 2004).

8.3 All proposals resulting from the review will be fully and robustly costed.
8.4 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report at this stage.

9. **Background Papers**

9.1 CSCI Inspection report – November 2004  
    Scoping report to Cabinet – December 2005

**Contact for further details:**
Name   Caroline Budden, Assistant Director Children’s Care  
Phone no. 01634 331320  
Email  caroline.budden@medway.gov.uk