

## **CABINET**

**1 OCTOBER 2013**

### **REVIEW OF CHILDREN'S TRUST AND PROPOSED FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS**

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Mike O'Brien, Children's Services (Lead Member)

Report from: Barbara Peacock, Director of Children and Adult Services

Author: Helen Jones, Assistant Director, Partnership Commissioning

#### **Summary**

This report summarises the review undertaken on the Children's Trust arrangements and proposes future arrangements for multi-agency partnership working. It recommends the establishment of Medway Children's Action Network.

#### **1. Budget and Policy Framework**

1.1 This report is in response to the policy changes at a national and local level with:

- a) the establishment of Health and Wellbeing Boards
- b) the withdrawal of statutory guidance on Children's Trust Boards (DfE 20 October 2010).

1.2 The proposals in this report are consistent with Medway's budget and policy framework. Relevant policy documents include:

- Council Plan 2013-15 – linked to the priority 'Children and Young People have the best start in life in Medway Council'
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013-17 – linked to strategic ambition 'Give every child a good start'.

#### **2. Background**

2.1 A review of the Medway Children's Trust concluded that these arrangements were no longer fit for purpose due to:

- i) The establishment of the Medway Health and Wellbeing Board and the need to streamline partnership arrangements.
  - ii) The withdrawal of statutory guidance on Children's Trusts (DfE October 2010)
  - iii) The need to improve the effectiveness of partnership arrangements in response to the Safeguarding and Children in Care Ofsted inspections.
- 2.2 Moving on in Medway: getting it right for every child (September 2013) identifies targets to establish and implement more effective and streamlined multi-agency partnership arrangements. This paper outlines proposals for the establishment of the Medway Children's Action Network (Medway CAN) to develop more effective partnership working to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.
- 2.3 The guiding principles applied in reviewing the future arrangements for partnership arrangements were to ensure they:
- would be solution focused and make an impact on improving outcomes
  - did not cause duplication
  - built on the lessons learnt from the Ofsted inspections
  - built upon strengths of the Children's Trust
  - had a focus on Medway health and wellbeing priorities
- 2.4 A range of stakeholders was engaged in the review including the CCG, the Parent's Forum, Public Health, Councillors, CVS, Voluntary Sector Forum and Medway Community Health.
- 2.5 The review identified a general consensus that the Children's Trust, agreed by Cabinet in November 2008, was no longer fit for purpose and there was a need to move to a more streamlined action approach which has become possible due to recent changes in government guidance providing greater flexibility as set out in paragraphs 6.2 and 6.3 of this report.

### **3 Medway CAN**

- 3.1 In order to engage voluntary and statutory partners in improving services and outcomes for children, young people and their families, it is proposed that a Children's Action Network, chaired by the Lead Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, is established.
- 3.2 The purpose of Medway CAN is to call a network of multi-agency partners together to develop and implement solutions to key issues to improve outcomes for children and young people and their families. This network will focus on areas around narrowing gaps in health and educational attainment and ensuring universal services are supporting children in Medway who may need additional support. An example of key issues could include reducing permanent exclusions; implementing more effective early help; or reducing the number of children requiring specialist social care and health services. Medway CAN will be solution and outcomes focused, responding rapidly to concerns about performance or service delivery which require a multi-agency response. It will not be focusing on highly specialised services or duplicate the work of the Medway Safeguarding Children's Board.

### 3.3 Medway CAN is not a decision making body but will:

- Ensure the engagement and collaboration of the VCS and statutory services in improving outcomes for children and their families
- Influence commissioning intentions
- Ensure the voice of children and young people is championed
- Engage with the Children in Care Council and Medway Youth Parliament
- Identify opportunities for joint working to reduce health, educational and life inequalities
- Share best practice
- Support the council in achieving its vision for Children's Services in Medway

3.4 It is proposed that membership will include the Lead Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Chair), Director for Children and Adults Services, Assistant Director Partnership Commissioning, Director of Public Health, Chair of the VCS Forum, Primary and Secondary school headteacher representatives (x 2), FE College Principal, Dean of Rochester Cathedral, representatives from the Police, Children's Centres and Medway Ethnic Minority Forum. It is intended to have no more than 20 members in total. Given that the membership has not been finalised, it is proposed that Cabinet delegate authority to the Director of Children and Adults Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, to finalise the membership.

3.5 Medway CAN will meet 3 times a year with a launch, subject to Cabinet's approval, in November. Medway CAN will organise an annual event for a wider range of partners to engage in the agenda for Children's Services. It will hold two "deep dives" each year to address key issues where there is a need to improve outcomes. Additionally, it may rapidly bring partners together or establish time limited working groups to tackle persistent areas of concern that need a multi-agency response and solution. Medway CAN will also seek to use ICT solutions to develop virtual discussion groups and share best practice.

3.6 The outcome of the annual event and deep dives will be a report which may input into reports to Health and Wellbeing Board, Medway Safeguarding Children's Board or the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee depending on the topic.

## 4. **Children and Young People's Commissioning Plan**

4.1 Partnership Commissioning is currently developing a Children and Young People's Commissioning Plan (previously referred to as Better Start in Life Strategy).

4.2 The plan will look at the total resource for children, families and young people in Medway, how we are investing (or proposing to invest) it and identify jointly agreed objectives. Key priorities include:

- Early Help
- Children in Care/on the edge of Care
- Children with Special Educational Needs and disabilities
- Health and Wellbeing

4.3 This plan will support the delivery of the aims and objectives of the Council Plan, Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Improvement Plan. The plan will come to Cabinet at a later date or approval.

## **5. Risk management**

5.1 There are no identified risks to the recommendations. The proposal to establish Medway CAN will mitigate risk of ineffective partnership working.

## **6. Financial and legal implications**

6.1 Administration for the new governance arrangements will be met from within existing revenue budgets.

6.2 Although the statutory guidance on Children's Trusts was withdrawn by the Department for Education with effect from 31 October 2010, there is still a legal requirement under the Children Act 2004 for each local authority to have a Children's Trust Board. The Board must include representatives of the local authority and 'relevant partners', which include schools and the police.

6.3 The withdrawal of the statutory guidance means that there is now more flexibility in how local partners may implement the Children's Trust Board requirements to reflect and meet local needs. For example, there are no longer any guidelines setting out how often the Board should meet.

6.4 The legal duty in section 10 of the Children Act 2004 on local authorities to promote co-operation to improve the well-being of children in the authority's area remains in force.

6.5 Medway CAN will fulfil the Council's statutory requirements as outlined above.

## **7. Recommendations**

7.1 Cabinet is requested to:

- i) approve the establishment of Medway CAN, as set out in paragraph 3 of the report.
- ii) delegate authority to the Director of Children and Adults Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, to finalise proposed membership, as set out in paragraph 3.4 of the report.
- iii) note the development of a Children and Young People's Commissioning Plan.

## **8. Suggested reasons for decision(s)**

8.1 Although the statutory guidance surrounding Children's Trust Boards has been removed, there is a continuing legal requirement for authorities to have a Children's Trust Board and to promote effective partnership working to improve outcomes for Children and Young People and their families. Medway CAN will be outcomes and solution focused and will bring together VCS and statutory partners.

## **Lead officer contact**

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## **Background papers**

Council Plan 2013 – 2015

<http://www.medway.gov.uk/councilanddemocracy/performanceandpolicy/councilplan.aspx>

Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2012 – 2017

<http://democracy.medway.gov.uk/ielIssueDetails.aspx?IId=9188&Opt=3>