

BRIEFING NOTE

Agenda
Item No. 8

TO: Children's & Young People Scrutiny & Performance Panel
DATE: April 28th 2011

RE: Impact of the Review of Safeguarding Services for Vulnerable Children Working Group

Purpose

To provide Walsall Council with an update on the impact of the Review of Safeguarding Services for Vulnerable Children Working Group.

Background & Context

The Working Group report was voted unanimously to endorse the report by Panel on 25/1/2011 and the Cabinet agreed the proposals on 16th March 2011.

Update

1. Recommendations

1.1 **Children's and Young People Scrutiny & Performance Panel Members are identified on an annual basis to act as Leads as part of Children's Specialist Services visits and inspection activity;**

Councillors O Bennett, R Martin, D Shires and R Thomas have agreed to be the key links to the Council Children's Homes with the Children's Home Managers on 4/4/2011

A session has been planned for 4th April is for Councillors to familiarise themselves with the children's homes and plan how to get the best out of those visits.

An Appreciative Enquiry event which will enable stakeholders and councillors to meet with service users and service deliveries is being planned for later in the year.

1.2 **The role of Members as Corporate Parents is strengthened. This should include representation from each of the main political parties on the Corporate Parenting Board;**

The Corporate Parenting Board now has each of the main political groups represented: -

Councillor R Andrew, Portfolio holder for Children's Services, Conservative;
Councillor K Chambers, Labour Champion; and Councillor D Shires, Liberal Democrat Champion.

1.3 **Officers continue to Work Smarter, including the identification of the most effective methods for ensuring that social workers have manageable caseloads in support of the delivery of services;**

The Working Smarter programme has continued to progress. Some reshaping has occurred to reduce work loads and 100% of LAC and Children with a Protection Plan are allocated. A series of experiments are being undertaken to learn more about how administrative support can be used differently, a re-design of contact services and changing processes to enable social workers to spend more time with children.

In the meantime, workloads are being tightly managed through the balanced score card monthly performance process and the Council has put itself forward as an early adopter for the Social Work Reform Board Employer Standards of which this is a part.

1.4 Officers continue to strengthen the risk assessment process and first line management provided to staff in support of the delivery of service.

Managers are being trained in the Tony Morrisson Reflective supervision model (this is the only evidenced based model specifically for child protection). Feedback from the first 2 cohorts has been very positive and the impact will be assessed through audits and 360 degree appraisal later in the year.

2. Implications

2.1 Financial

There is a considerable budget pressure on Children's Services as a result of the number of Looked After Children and children with a Protection Plan. It is hoped that the Working Smarter approach will help ease the numbers of children requiring this level of support making budgets more manageable. Together there is also considerable work being put into the commissioning and procurement of children's services and the service re-design in order to control spend.

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