



DEVON LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting held on Friday 6th October 2006 at The Knowle, Sidmouth

Present

Anne Whiteley, Director of Children & Young People's Services
Chris Dimmelow, Children's Safeguarding Manager, Devon Children & Young People's Services
Deborah Booth, Strategic Project Manager for Educational Achievement
Juliet Hammacott, Acting Principal Education Welfare Officer
Mary Mitchell, Assistant Chief Officer, Devon & Cornwall Probation Service
Laura Spittles, Named Nurse – Child Protection
Cathy Ellingford, Devon PCT
Derek Moore, Assistant Director of NCH
John Davey, Director of Service Delivery, Connexions
Claire Mitchell, Nurse Consultant (Safeguarding Children) RD&E NHS Trust
Jane Richards, Portfolio Holder, Devon Local Medical Committee
Ann Morecraft, Designated Manager – Child Protection
Corinne Hayes, Consultant Paediatrician, RD&E NHS Trust
Alison Kearnes, ACSM, NSPCC Devon, Dorset & Cornwall
Bob Brown, Head of Community Support Unit, Devon & Cornwall Police
Colin Terry, BCU Commander for North and East Devon, Devon & Cornwall Constabulary
Kath Crompton, Director of Mid-Devon Primary Care Trust
Helen Hyland, Designated Nurse, North & East/South & West Devon Health Community
Martin Gladwin, CAF/CASS
Peter Jeffs, Director of Communities, East Devon District Council
Piers Tetley, Devon County Council
Julie Phillips, Administrator/Minute Taker

Others invited / apologies / copy of minutes to:

Beverley Dubash, Senior Education Welfare Officer
Martin Spragg, Youth Offending Service Manager
Madeleine Jackson, Senior Crown Prosecutor, Crown prosecution Service
Janet Phipps, North Devon NHS Trust
Adrian Childs, Devon Partnership Trust
Peter Adey, Directorate Manager, RD&E
Peter Hancock, Director, Mid-Devon District Council
John Rom, South/West Devon Strategic Health Authority
Charles Holme, Designated Doctor, South & West Devon Health Community
John Clements, Crime Manager, Devon & Cornwall Police

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Martin Spragg, Charles Holme, Miles Hapgood, Adrian Childs and Peter Smith.

Ann Wilson had retired and was thanked for her hard work for the Devon Local Children's Safeguarding Board and for its predecessor the Area Child Protection Committee.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Accuracy

Page 4 – The correct spelling of Ann Morecraft's surname was noted.

Page 6, item 6 – The correct spelling of the word Education in the heading was noted.

Matters Arising

Page 2 – Chris Dimmelow advised there had been technical difficulties in setting up the accounts but invoices were on their way now.

Page 7, item 9 – Chris Dimmelow advised of a change of landlady of the C pub in Exeter. This pub was being allowed to continue in operation because of undertakings offered in respect of future conduct.

Chris Dimmelow at this point advised that District Councils had started to issue guidance with regard to the Gambling Act, on similar lines to those issues in respect of the Licensing Act. There would be a number of nominated authorities who would have an ability to express concerns with regard to process in respect of applications for casinos, and in respect of any outlet which had a gambling machine. The LCSB had to express satisfaction or otherwise with child protection safeguarding elements within that.

2a) LCSB Budget

The LCSB received a paper which had been prepared by Miles Hapgood, concerning re-organisation of the PCT, noting that his recommendations were interim proposals to the 31st March 2007.

Ann Morecraft advised that item 1.2 a) concerned herself and Jane Richards. Until the new Chief Executive was in control (towards the end of November 2006) this matter remained to be clarified. There was a desire to maintain some sort of continuity throughout the transitional period however. The Meeting was then advised that the new Chief Executive had been appointed and this was Dr Kevin Snee.

Item 1.4 - Chris Dimmelow made the point that the sum of £15,590 was half the amount the LCSB would get from the 6 PCTs October to March, but this presumed they paid for the first half of the financial year, which they did not. Had these PCTs

agreed to provide this money? It was thought that those PCTs who had identified a source of payment, would pay their contribution on receipt of an invoice.

ACTION:

CHRIS DIMMELOW TO SEND INVOICES TO THE PREVIOUS SIX PCT REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE OUTSTANDING PART OF THEIR FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION.

Chris Dimmelow commented that he continued to have no clear understanding of what the business support needs of the Children's Trust were. There were additional business support costs for the LSCB arising not originally built into the budget. LCSB business support needs were immediate and were being carried by the County Council and Children's Services. Without the necessary business support, the LCSB would fail to fulfil its requirements.

Anne Whiteley stated that the LCSB was primarily responsible for the leadership and co-ordination of the Stay Safe aspect of the Children and Young People's Plan. From the Joint Agency Review action plan there were clearly identified requirements on the whole system. In addition there was the revised Working Together and allegations management. Anne Whiteley had arranged to meet with Miles Hapgood next Thursday and would follow up with him establishing a way forward.

2b) Safe Recruitment Standards for Local Safeguarding Children Boards

The above mentioned document, produced by the Department for Education and Skills was received.

Chris Dimmelow suggested that agencies take this document back and assess how their respective organisations fitted against the listed standards.

ACTION:

AGENCIES TO RETURN THEIR CHECKLIST AND A COPY OF THEIR RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES TO CHRIS DIMMELOW, WHO WILL THEN COLLATE THIS INFORMATION.

Jane Richards asked whether records of interview questions and answers were kept, and, if so, was that not at odds with the principle of Data Protection? It was felt most likely that interviewees would be told at the outset that a copy of questions asked and their answers were being kept in order to meet compliance. The suggestion was made that in any event, such information would only be valid for a set period of time.

Anne Whiteley remarked that Devon County Council considered it was good practice to keep records of interview questions and answers. The leading JAR Inspector had advised they would be looking at HR practice in that and other respects. The issue of safe recruitment practice was of high political priority currently.

Anne Whiteley asked agencies, when they returned their audit information, to confirm whether their organisation had audit trails – how often checks were made to ensure practice was compliant. It would be helpful for the LCSB to know this.

ACTION:

CHRIS DIMMELOW TO CHECK WITH GEORGIE MACINTOSH, ALLEGATIONS MANAGEMENT ADVISOR.

AGENCIES TO CONFIRM WHETHER OR NOT THEIR ORGANISATION HAS AN AUDIT TRAIL PROCESS.

Alison Kearnes asked about training needs in this respect for the voluntary sector and said she was happy to provide information to go on the check list. Chris Dimmelow responded that it was one of the requirements on a LCSB that part of its monitoring process was monitoring training was undertaken by individual agencies with respect to safe recruitment processes. Devon County Council had a well developed recruitment and selection programme. Chris Dimmelow had asked that this be reviewed to include all the requirements laid down in the DfES document ‘Safe Recruitment Standards for Local Safeguarding Children’s Boards.’

Ann Morecraft stated that each panel should have a member who was trained in safe recruitment procedures, hence there was a huge need for some advice at the least. Chris Dimmelow responded that at the moment our recruitment training was general and safe recruitment practices would be built into that. For smaller organisations it would be an issue to find one panel member who had this background.

Alison Kearnes was aware there was some DfES safer recruitment training which would include face-to-face training. This had been trialled with schools and voluntary organisations and it was intended to roll this training out regionally – encouraged through local LCSBs. The provision of on-line training available to Education staff had had a very low take up. The DfES had designed some modules and it was intended that this was made more widely available.

ACTION:

ALISON KEARNES TO LET CHRIS DIMMELOW HAVE FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE ABOVE MENTIONED INITIATIVE.

Ann Morecraft stated that she and Jane Richards would take this back to the four Representative Committees to ensure that they were aware of this development.

Peter Jeffs stated that he would take this back to District Councils in Devon, remarking that he was aware there were very few departments which would have regular and direct contact with children. He felt that the working histories section would be likely to pose District Councils with some difficulties in the light of age discrimination legislation.

Deborah Booth cautioned the need to consider people who had access to data on vulnerable children but who did not have direct contact with children.

2c) Managing Allegations against Adults who work with Children and Young People

The above mentioned document, produced by the Department for Education and Skills was received. It was noted that it included the independent sector providing services for children and young people.

Chris Dimmelow stated that this document did not seem, on first reading, to differ greatly from existing child protection procedures. From the last Meeting, agencies were asked to review their procedures. In theory, these processes and those posts should have been in operation with effect from 1st October 2006. It was acknowledged that we had not had much time to get these into place, but there was a need to quickly determine who fulfilled this role in respective agencies.

Chris Dimmelow asked Board members to read the above document in conjunction with the document entitled "Proposed Minimum Data Set" and reiterated that this Board had immediate business support needs in relation to compiling this dataset. There was a need for a procedure whereby the LADO was informed of all allegations against staff as in due course they were likely to have to provide returns.

Chris Dimmelow asked for volunteers to form a working group to meet as soon as possible in order to formulate specific recommendations.

Martin Gladwin advised that Jane Booth of CAFCASS had a statutory responsibility here, and offered to form part of a working group. Anne Whiteley suggested a Board member with a HR background should also be part of this group. Named leads were required, even if only a transitionally named person, for this information to go back to Georgie MacIntosh by 13th October 2006.

ACTION:

AGENCIES TO E-MAIL CHRIS DIMMELOW THEIR NOMINATED OFFICERS BY MONDAY NEXT, 9th OCTOBER 2006.

3. REPORT FROM THE TRAINING SUB-COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 11th September 2006 were received.

Piers Tetley explained that the committee had tried to make the case for a different model for the management and development of learning throughout partner agencies, the idea being this would be a contribution to a centralised structure operating on behalf of the LCSB and directly accountable to the Board. What was being suggested was a Learning and Development Manager responsible for a much wider remit, also contributing to workforce strategies across agencies ensuring agencies had a process around recruitment of staff which ensured safeguarding.

Peter Jeffs noted that District Councils did not feature on the list of LCSB partnership organisations.

Ann Morecraft made the point that the Avon & Somerset LCSBs did not pick up any contributions from their PCTs. Piers Tetley acknowledged this. Martin Gladwin stated that CAF/CASS did not appear on the Bristol model also. Piers Tetley stated that the model followed was not dissimilar to what Sarah Aggett proposed at the time of transfer over from ACPCs to LCSBs, the idea being that the partners not included would purchase units of learning – so there were two models.

Mary Mitchell stated that, in respect of the Probation Service, she would be in support of spot purchasing of training and then to make a contribution into the main LCSB budget.

Piers Tetley considered that with a flexible approach, it would be possible to respond to need. In terms of contributions to a central fund, he noted that Ann Wilson had retired and Devon County Council, like other organisations, was in financial difficulties and as such needed to find efficiencies. It would be very difficult in the future to take sole responsibility for management and delivery and would require some contributions towards infrastructure costs from other agencies.

Derek Moore stated that NCH had been able to secure some money this year for infrastructure development.

John Davey asked if the intention was that training should be free at the point of delivery. His organisation employed a similar sized staff pool to that of a large comprehensive school. Piers Tetley responded that social care was picking up the greater percentage. There was a need to look at the overall contribution. Anne Whiteley felt there was a need to agree a pro rata system which reflected size of organisations and anticipated take up. There was a need to decide either (1) to collaborate or (2) appoint someone at Devon County Council whom agencies all spot purchased from. Alison Kearnes considered one of the strengths of a collaborative approach would be that LCSBs had a wider responsibility to promote training.

The Meeting heard that PCTs agreed to the proposals in principle, were happy with the general direction, but the figures quoted were different to what they had submitted and got agreement to from the various Boards.

Colin Terry stated that in principle the Police would support the proposals, although he personally thought this was a policy decision to be made through Police Headquarters. Bob Brown felt that he could support the proposals in principle.

Anne Whiteley asked whether there had been any communication with Plymouth or Torbay LCSBs. Chris Dimmelow advised that these Boards both had their own arrangements around the provision of multi-agency training.

ACTION:

CHRIS DIMMELOW TO CHECK WITH THE PLYMOUTH AND TORBAY LCSBs WHETHER OR NOT THEY ARE INTERESTED IN JOINING IN THIS INITIATIVE.

Chris Dimmelow commented that he could understand the attraction of spot purchasing for some organisations but the fact that child safeguarding is of increasing importance is needed to response to new needs. Helen Hyland thought that Torbay might well be interested because part of the new Torbay PCT linked in with Torbay Hospital and it would be useful to have a conversation with Torbay LCSB.

ACTION:

BY THE END OF OCTOBER 2006, AGENCIES TO PROVIDE PIERS TETLEY WITH A WRITTEN COMMITMENT IN PRINCIPLE, SO THAT HE CAN USE THIS IN SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSIONS WITH MILES HAPGOOD.

4. REPORT FROM HEALTH SUB-COMMITTEE

Ann Morecraft advised that she would circulate new Minutes to Chris Dimmelow in due course, including its revised terms of reference. She would also send him a formal copy of the Minutes but not for circulation.

Ann Morecraft advised that Charles Holme had been working on a serious case review with the NHS Ombudsman, out of which had come an issue around consent on receiving and sharing information on sensitive issues. The Children's Trust would be setting up a working group to deal with that.

The Health Sub-Committee had been looking at the work of the Strategic Health Authority and its relationship with LCSB. John Rom had told the Committee that there was some money available for infrastructure costs in relation to child protection. The Ambulance Trust wanted to use this finance to set up video conferencing facilities especially where a case stretched across a large geographical area, and also to utilise this money for set up costs to make sure all Named Nurses had laptop computers and access to the internet.

The Health Sub-Committee had decided they needed to resurrect their Audit Group to look at individual SCRs.

The Committee had talked about CRB checks, noting the lack of clarity about the regularity or not of these being undertaken. National CRB staff had offered to come and talk to groups of people and make clear what the issues are.

Charles Holme was undertaking a lot of work and had written papers on proposals to set up the Child Death Screening Committees, there being one such committee per 500,000 population so one each for Plymouth, Devon and Torquay – the Devon one perhaps incorporating Torbay. As there were a number of concerns around named and designated colleagues in Cornwall, they had been invited to join the Health Sub-Group to give them peer group support plus in this way links would be strengthened.

Corinne Hayes commented that her organisation did not get the chance to bid for extra funds.

Helen Hyland advised that Health had increased the Designated Nurse hours by one day, with the result that she now had two days in Devon.

Ann Morecraft considered there was a need for clarity as to whether the Sub-Group came up with something significant to their professional did that have to come back to LCSB.

5. REPORT OF THE SERIOUS CASE REVIEW SUB-COMMITTEE

Chris Dimmelow reported as follows:

(1) AC

AC presented at hospital with superficial injuries, but on examination at the RD&E he was found to have non-accidental serious head injuries. Ashley is making a good recovery. His father remains the prime suspect, but the Police have been unable to prove he had the sole care of his son during the critical period. Chris Dimmelow and Juliet Hammacott had done a first report in draft, which would be circulated as soon as it was ready. Comments by e-mail would be appreciated as this report has go on to CSCI.

An issue arising is the use of the phrase “rough handling” referring to a lesser form of abuse.

Another issue is the medical response to what appeared to be superficial injuries described as “rough handling” and what level of medical intervention was needed at the initial stage.

(2) KB

KB is an adopted child who had been stabbed by her adoptive older brother who is a young person with special needs. He is currently in custody whilst KB is in care in a foster home. She has made a full recovery.

KB was placed with adoptive parents by Bedfordshire, the adoptive family having been approved by Plymouth Social Services. This was felt to be a risky placement, but the adoption went ahead.

The overview report in respect of this case would be complex and given the involvement of two other areas would need to be undertaken by an independent practitioner. John Ingham would be doing the overview report and Jane Richards had kindly offered to be the link person with the Serious Cases Review Sub-Committee.

(3) SL

SL sustained significant head injuries, the perpetrator of which was believed to be her mother’s latest partner, but this was not yet proven in terms of the Police investigation. SL had made a good recovery from her injuries.

A Serious Case Review is awaited.

(4) KW

KW's mother has a history of mental ill health and in June 2006 was making open threats that she might harm her daughter. Mother is in hospital in Barnstaple. A multi-agency plan was put into place but not under the auspices of a formal Child Protection Plan. This case would go to Serious Case Review.

Chris Dimmelow noted that CSCI felt the plan was well thought out and comprehensive, but questioned why it was not a Child Protection Plan.

KW had made a full recovery from superficial knife injuries, was back in the care of her father with a full Plan around her. Her name was also now on the Child Protection Register.

(5) Childminder DH

Chris Dimmelow reported that there was concern that some of the key professionals and staff members involved in this case (especially Health and Children's Services) may not be aware of the conclusions and recommendations made by the independent review. A timescale had been agreed within which the two agencies would consult with their staff, and the Serious Cases Review Committee would comment on the facts highlighted in the report and conclusions reached before there was any feedback to parents.

OFSTED say that DH is still technically registered as a childminder. Despite the outcome of the second Police investigation, there were still not the grounds on which to deregister. DH was not working as a childminder currently. Chris Dimmelow would be meeting with Alison Bailey of OFSTED to discuss this case. They had given a clear commitment that if DH was to resume working as a childminder, the Local Authority would initiate a Section 47 investigation.

Alison Kearnes asked if Chris Dimmelow could raise with OFSTED the need for clarity around the grounds for deregistration. The NSPCC might be able to take this issue up nationally. Chris Dimmelow responded that he shared the concerns about this case. OFSTED did deregister DH but DH successfully appealed that decision. Alison Bailey had read the report commissioned and her initial response was that that did not change OFSTED's stance.

Corinne Hayes questioned whether the de-registration of DH as a childminder would be a satisfactory outcome. Chris Dimmelow responded that he supposed there would still be risks, on the balance of probabilities, but there would be a significant degree of relief to know DH would not be involved in caring for other people's children.

Anne Whiteley asked if DH still appeared on the Devon County list of childminders. Chris Dimmelow confirmed DH did not, as the list only contained those persons who were actively seeking to childmind. Also DH did not have to go through any retraining in order to reactivate their registration. Anne Whiteley asked if DH was

flagged up as a concerning person on any DCC system. Chris Dimmelow responded DH had not because she had not been assessed and categorised as posing a risk to children. She had been assessed as being a competent childminder in that she has received registration and there is the OFSTED view that that registration cannot be taken away. Chris Dimmelow considered that a risk assessment had been undertaken, in a second hand way, through DCCs own processes. If OFSTED maintained DH could not be deregistered in spite of the outcome of the report, an approach might want to be made to DH so she could be told that on the balance of probabilities she was still deemed to pose a risk, so that if she wanted to resume childminding, the Local Authority would want to undertake a risk assessment. It was contradictory to have a person who had been identified as being dangerous to children still able to child mind.

(6) RB

DCI Bob Brown reported that on 30th September 2006, a telephone call was made to the Ambulance Service to advise that a seven week old child had stopped breathing. The attending ambulance crew discovered the child was not at home - it transpired that the child's father had taken RB to Plymouth A&E Department. A&E managed to resuscitate RB who was transferred to Frenchay Hospital where he later died. On examination in hospital, RB was found to have serious non-accidental injuries and his father was later arrested. He is now on bail.

Initial indications are of a failure to manage information around the history of RB's parents.

DCI Brown had sent details of the case to the Serious Cases Review Panel.

Extensive enquiries were being made of the GP practice in Tavistock.

Chris Dimmelow reported that RB's sibling was immediately placed with relatives in Saltash following the incident. On Monday or Tuesday the Local Authority would be seeking an Emergency Protection Order to keep the child in this household. A Child Protection Case Conference had been booked to take place on 17th October 2006, and Chris Dimmelow had asked the Chair of that Meeting to clearly identify all agency involvement with the case. If the post-mortem examination confirmed the cause of death to be non-accidental injury, that would result in an automatic Serious Case Review.

6. REPORT OF EDUCATION SUB-COMMITTEE

Juliet Hammacott spoke to this report, noting that the Education Bill would have a focus on attendance and would require Local Authorities to be more proactive in finding children who were not in school.

Julie Hammacott stated that last year the Education Welfare Service ran 175 child protection awareness courses, and 3,772 people attended these courses. For this year, efforts were being made to persuade schools to arrange this within their local learning communities. There had been good feed back from Head Teachers.

Section 175 of the Education Act which came into force in 2004 states that schools are required to undertake an annual safeguarding report to their governing body. A memo had been sent to schools reminding them of this responsibility. In response to requests, Beverley Dubash had put together a pro-forma, and schools had been asked to provide the Committee with a copy of the report they submitted to their governors.

At the child protection training for school governors last Wednesday, governors were asked to push on-line training for Head Teachers. Some reluctance to undertake this training was noted as it took around 5 hours to complete.

Deborah Booth asked if any further work had been undertaken around children missing education. Juliet Hammacott responded that she was asked to write a letter of congratulation to schools who sent her the information and a separate letter to other schools chasing up this information. She was receiving submissions from schools by post every day showing where they had taken children off roll, and processing this information was taking up a lot of time.

Anne Whiteley confirmed that the training referred to did not fall within the new commissioning arrangements currently. The training DCC undertook in schools was different to the Level 1 child protection training. Juliet Hammacott responded that all designated teachers in school should have multi-agency child protection training to a basic level, and all staff in schools had to have refresher training every three years.

7. HIDDEN HARM CO-ORDINATOR POST

Maureen Muckersie stated that the Hidden Harm agenda started in 2003, as a response to the needs of children and young people with drug problems. The Government response was feedback on the report. The report contained 48 recommendations, one of which was that multi-agency working was imperative. David Monk undertook a research report in 2003 which highlighted the fact that 60% of child protection cases had a substance misuse element to them. This figure was fairly consistent across the country.

An 18 month piece of research was underway concerning substance misuse within the family, and the researchers were talking to young people and their parents who had or had not used services to gather experiences and consider where improvements could be made.

A total of 130 people attended the first Hidden Harm conference and 100 people attended the second conference. Agreement had now been reached for one year's funding for a Hidden Harm Co-ordinator. This person's remit would be to seek out good practice and to try to standardise practice across the county. An advertisement for the post would be in the press on Monday.

As part of the advisory council for the misuse of drugs a letter had been sent asking for representation on the LCSB for the Hidden Harm Co-ordinator. This had now been agreed.

Maureen Muckersie advised that the Young People's Worker training post had recently been appointed to and this post holder should link with the Hidden Harm Co-ordinator.

Corinne Hayes commented that the salary on offer was not much for what was required. She wondered who would be line managing the post. Maureen Muckersie responded she would be the line manager for the Hidden Harm Co-ordinator, within DAAT. DAAT were looking to second someone to the post. Chris Dimmelow added that she and Maureen Muckersie had discussed the issue of line management and concluded that that function was best undertaken within the DAAT team. The post holder would have the major task of reporting back to the LCSB on a regular basis. The LCSB would have a role in directing their work. The salary was the best that could be offered. It was known that substance misuse was a big issue within many families whose children were on the Child Protection Register.

Anne Whiteley asked if there had been a more positive uptake from families to participate in the research. Maureen Muckersie responded that it was very hard to get families to consent to talking about substance misuse, because of a fear that if they said something their children would be taken away.

Chris Dimmelow reported that he had received an e-mail from Ms Kroll yesterday, having agreed research from an ethical viewpoint, there were data protection and confidentiality issues around how researchers made contact with families and accessed child protection files. The research was starting to get what was hoped would be a meaningful sample of co-operative parents and so it was hoped they would make a positive input into the project.

8. CHILDREN'S TRUST GOVERNANCE AND RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LCSB

Anne Whiteley reported that the Children's Trust pathfinder engaged with an independent reviewer around 12 months ago and the review was to look at what had worked well, how improvements could be made to the governance of the children's trust as it moved to becoming more formal. The reviewer reported in January 2006 and the report went to the Children's Trust Executive. A number of recommendations were made around membership of the Board and around structure. The Children's Trust was about to publish revised proposals for governance arrangements, and it was hoped to have a short period of consultation by the end of November 2006.

With regard to membership of the Children's Trust what had been proposed was that a formally designated member of the LCSB should sit on the Board. The LCSB was not a sub-group of the Children's Trust – it had responsibilities which were very pertinent to itself and it has a monitoring role. The Trust would soon be looking for a nomination of someone to be recommended as a future Board member.

Chris Dimmelow remarked that it was important the LCSB sorted with the Children's Trust a clear channel of communication around commissioning arrangements, as initiatives were being commenced which had joint commissioning implications.

There was a need to bear in mind the recommendations of “Every Child Matters” and the LCSB responsibility there.

Mary Mitchell asked Anne Whiteley her view. Anne Whiteley responded that she would prefer the LCSB representative on the Children’s Trust Board not to be a Local Authority representative. Membership of the Children’s Board includes of a number of parent/carer representatives, elected Members and persons who did not have a commissioning function. A strengthened District Council representation was being recommended. Anne Whiteley considered that the LCSB representative on the Children’s Board needed to be somebody who was up to speed on all issues, was able to influence and promote, plus speak with authority on behalf of the LCSB. It might not prove possible to find one person who had all these qualities, and so perhaps LCSB representation on the Children’s Board ought to be shared between two LCSB members?

Anne Whiteley further considered that the Children’s Trust would need some sort of group, perhaps a Chief Officers’ Group, which took decisions around strategy and resources. There was a need to find some way of bringing Chief Officers together to look at some key strategic issues. Trusts were working in an increasingly complex environment around decision making and needed to ensure their arrangements were as straightforward as they could be, and decision making arrangements were not duplicated. Devon LCSB had a clear responsibility to deliver the “Stay Safe” part of the Children’s Plan, and also had a clear role with regard to exercising their duty with regard to safeguarding and commissioning.

9. CHILD WITNESS SUPPORT PROJECT

Alison Kearnes presented a paper which had been prepared by Sarah Allum, Children’s Services Manager for the Devon & Cornwall Young Witness Project.

Alison Kearnes made the point that although the trial was taking place in Exeter, the NSPCC would be prepared to offer support to child witnesses out of the area brought back into the Devon area where the alleged offender was being charged and put on trial within Devon.

The aim of the project was to help children overcome adverse circumstances and protect them from abuse, by way of supporting processes within the criminal justice system to bring offenders to justice. It was well known that abused children were vulnerable to further abuse.

It was noted that many of the children the project encountered were not open cases to Children and Young People’s Services Teams and did not have an allocated Social Worker.

The NSPCC had received good feedback from both parents and children in respect of the young witness project. The NSPCC was trying to introduce some fairly sophisticated evidence-based means of measuring the difference to children which the project had made - at the end of their intervention and support.

Alison Kearnes noted that what the NSPCC did not offer, because they were not financed to do so, was a follow up service to children and families. Many sought post-abuse support, and guidance as to how they as parents could manage their children's emotions and feelings. It was not uncommon to come across children who felt suicidal and made active plans for this. The NSPCC was trying to fast-track inputs from Health and Education, so that these agencies could provide what support they could, being always mindful of the child's wishes and noting that not all parents wanted their child's school involved.

Within Exeter, the NSPCC had been given funding for a remote video link and the project would be moving to a new building in Southernhay which was better sited for their work with children around giving evidence, plus preparation and support for going to Court. The NSPCC would like to be able to roll out the project to Plymouth and Cornwall, funding permitted, given the positive reception it had had in Exeter. The NSPCC was trying to agree a form of contract acceptable to Devon and Torbay in the first instance.

Corinne Hayes asked if there was any age limit to the children whom the project would work with, noting that anyone who was a victim would be vulnerable. Alison Kearnes responded that because the NSPCC was funding the bulk of this service, they retained independence which allowed them some flexibility. No-one would ever be turned away and this meant support would be offered to 17-18 year olds. The service was offered on the basis of need, and in respect of any child proposing to use the service an assessment was undertaken as to whether it was in their best interests to be able to give evidence. Additional resources were put in for a child with special needs/medical needs.

The NSPCC had found that older teenagers were extremely isolated in terms of service – there were issues around transition from child and adolescent mental health services to adult mental health services where far less choice was available. Such young people were often estranged from their families with little chance of rehabilitation.

Alison Kearnes made the point that each of the 4 LCSBs contributed to a funding formula broadly based on population. Devon was a busy area for this service. She would like this LCSB to agree funding in conjunction with the other 3 LCSBs from 2007-8 – funding was available for the current financial year.

Chris Dimmelow noted that contract officers from Devon and Cornwall had met and tried to apply the scheme to the standard contract arrangements which both Devon and Cornwall used. Primary Care Trusts had indicated that until the LCSB had an appropriate contract set up and made decisions around the longer term life of the project, they would not pay any more contributions. Chris Dimmelow considered that the young witness project was a very well regarded, nationally ground breaking scheme which provided very practical assistance to children who had suffered abuse and was a direct expression of the LCSBs responsibility towards such children. The scheme had been most helpful in Operation Kansas. It was unlikely that contract and commissioning issues would be resolved by the end of the current financial year, and it would be a real shame to see the project crumble.

Chris Dimmelow stated that his recollection was that “Working Together” says that the commissioning function of the LCSB was specific around its corporate training responsibilities. The LCSB should not be a commissioning body for a whole range of services.

ACTION:

ANNE WHITELEY TO TALK TO MILES HAPGOOD ON THIS AREA AT THEIR MEETING NEXT MONDAY.

CHRIS DIMMELOW TO CHECK WHAT “WORKING TOGETHER” SAYS ABOUT LCSB RESPONSIBILITIES REGARDING JOINT COMMISSIONING.

Derek Moore, Assistant Director NCH, expressed an interest in working on this topic.

Anne Whiteley suggested the setting up of development days (over and above business meetings) noting that the DfES had produced clear guidance on the cycle of commissioning for children’s services and that Brian Grady would be able to give clear guidance where the LCSB fitted into this.

At this stage, the Board broke for lunch.

10. MISSING PERSONS PROJECT PRESENTATION

DCI Clements gave a slide presentation and verbal evaluation of the Exeter Missing Persons Intervention Pilot. The background to this project was that Exeter had the highest percentage of missing persons in Devon (accounting for 2/5ths of the total Devon figure) plus a large number of these missing persons were Looked After children and young people.

Corinne Hayes asked whether MISPER reports were due to children not turning up at school. Paul Fletcher responded that all the young people case studies were not in school.

Mary Mitchell asked whether the pilot had identified any common reasons for children going missing. Guy Cochran responded that a large number were not engaging in education, and misuse of drugs and or alcohol played a part too.

Derek Moore made the point that there were other, “pull” factors which led children to go missing, such as a lack of safety in their home and a risk associated to them if they went home. Sometimes talking with a child about their reality, without trying to get them back home as quickly as possible, might uncover some risk factors.

Peter Jeffs asked if any follow up work had been undertaken with children who stopped going missing, or went missing on fewer occasions as a result of their involvement with the pilot scheme. He wanted to know if these children had reduced their risk taking behaviour, and what was the most effective interventions. DCI Clements responded that the experiences of the team was that the provision of

accommodation plus some pastoral/emotional care provision had been found to give these young people the support they needed.

Paul Fletcher remarked that every young person was an individual who was running away for their own reasons. Once “push” and “pull” factors were identified for a young person, the pilot then sought to identify the most appropriate interventions. Family Group Conferences had been a useful means of negotiating between parents and children. The pilot dealt with one child who had been sectioned under the Mental Health Act. Secure Accommodation was always a last resort solution - to keep a child safe for a short period so that professionals had the opportunity to talk to them and work with them.

Martin Gladwin noted that there appeared to be a slight drop off in Exeter based children going into Secure Accommodation. Anne Whiteley responded that in fact there had been a huge increase in Devon children going into the Atkinson Unit. DCI Clements added that criminality was associated with children who went missing, hence if they stopped going missing episodes of criminality dropped off.

Alison Kearnes stated that the NSPCC would be in support of the Missing Persons Intervention Pilot, noting that should this initiative be successful in carrying forward Devon would have the benefit of the Child Line service which was moving to Exeter. Child Line could have a role to play if children were thinking of running away or had run away, so the NSPCC would be interesting in supporting this initiative through the work they already did.

Liam McGrath made the point that in terms of data collection issues, there was a lack of coherent practice between the Police and the Children and Young People’ Services. There was also a wide range of protocols between the Police and a number of agencies who look after children, especially private homes. The initiative in Torbay was started by Liam McGrath when he was divisional commander. A number of private care establishments were having a disproportionate impact on both Police and health resources, so better controls of out of county placements would be good. He would support any attempt to set up a working group.

Bob Brown stated that he was involved in a project to improve the Force’s IT systems. They were near to implementing a new system but there was some delay owing to finance. An advertisement had been drafted up for MISPER Manager for the Force, and in time this could be the person appointed across all the BCUs (forces).

Anne Whiteley noted that the Green Paper on Looked After Children, due to be published next week, would cover this issue also.

Anne Whiteley thanked DCI Clements and his team for their presentation, remarking that it would be useful to see how organisations could join forces or adopt the model and think through resourcing whether by way of money or people. It was known that children who were accessing education were less likely to abscond. The LCSB welcomed the missing persons project.

Chris Dimmelow felt there was a need for a consistent scheme across the South West to reflect the requirements. Contact should be made with the Plymouth Project to

include representations from the LCSB about this. He suggested an education welfare liaison officer to act as liaison offer, and similarly someone from the Exeter DAAT. Liam McGrath made the point that Plymouth had £435,000 of SRB money plus match funding and so they could afford to provide a dedicated team. It would be most useful to have a dedicated steering group, with a chairman being determined quickly. Anne Whiteley suggested that given the number of MISPERs who offended, there should be some involvement from the Youth Panel.

It was agreed that the Children's Trust would give consideration to the setting up of a steering group, its membership, chairmanship and terms of reference.

ACTION: That the Devon Children's Trust is recommended to establish a MISPER Steering Group with the following remit;

- 1. Move toward a single peninsula wide approach for the multi-agency response to missing children.**
- 2. Identify the staffing needs for a peninsula wide scheme.**
- 3. Chairmanship, membership and terms of reference to be agreed.**

11. JOINT AREA REVIEW FINDINGS AND ACTION PLAN

Anne Whiteley stated that the information she was about to share with the Board was embargoed until next Tuesday, 10th October. Devon had 70 days in which to produce an Action Plan (to early December 2006) and Tuesday 28th November 2006 was the nearest appropriate committee date.

The following needed to be borne in mind:

- (a) Joint Area Review reports are written in a certain style/language, which restricts the language which Inspectors could use;
- (b) The language of inspection had changed to the language of OFSTED. In social care, for example 'serving some children well' or 'serving all children well' had become 'inadequate' through to 'good'.

The main messages coming out of the Joint Area Review were as follows:

(1) There is very variable access to services across Devon. Devon historically has a pattern of provision of services that does not necessarily reflect need. Some children and families find it hard to access services.

(2) For immediate action:

The Council and its partners should respond to the most urgent safeguarding concerns identified in the Report by:

- establishing appropriate and agreed thresholds for access to child protection and family support services;

- ensuring that criteria are clearly understood and applied consistently in practice by all staff;
- establishing clear written procedures to notify contracting officers immediately when child protection concerns arise in agency placements of children looked after by other local authorities;
- ensuring comprehensive management oversight of the decisions and actions arising from multi-agency work with individual children.

Themes within the Joint Agency Review were:

Performance management

The need to adopt safer recruitment practices across all areas of work

Quality assurance

Audit trails

The adoption of a consistent, “One Devon” approach

The setting of explicit targets which are smart, achievable and realistic.

The Council and its partners need to agree resources and responsibilities required for the delivery of the Children and Young People’s Plan. Devon’s Plan was considered to be a good Plan which received a lot of positive comment in the Joint Agency Review. The Plan would only be as good as us getting the resources across the agencies to support this and being clear with regarding to accountability framework.

As a Council, immediate action had been taken following the inspection and consultants engaged to benchmark the threshold for entry into social care. The benchmark should reflect “safe and good enough”. Consistency and compliance against the standard is required and will need to feature significantly in the action plan.

A particular issue is the Performance Management of multi-agency oversight of individual cases.

The report also acknowledged that where children were entering into the child protection arena, they were being safeguarded.

Helen Hyland remarked that she felt practitioners felt happier about Help Desk following the introduction of consultants – things had changed in the last few weeks.

Anne Whiteley advised that Devon County Council had agreed to the appointment of additional Social Worker capacity across the county. In this way it was hoped to be able to manage the issue around reducing the thresholds. Social care could not pick up everything and needed to concentrate on the most vulnerable children. Helen Hyland observed that a number of children fell between the Child in Need and Child Protection processes.

Mary Mitchell asked whether there would be a further Joint Area Review to check that Devon had done all that had been asked. Anne Whiteley responded that an Action Plan had to be produced, and there was no suggestion of a follow up visit by the inspectors.

Anne Whiteley would be meeting with Miles Hapgood next week, when the findings of the Joint Area Review would be considered by the Children's Trust Executive on 3rd November. Arrangements would be set up outside of this meeting to start working towards the Action Plan.

ACTION:

A LETTER TO BE SENT TO JOHN ROM BY ANNE WHITELEY.

Chris Dimmelow noted that the Joint Area Review made positive comment about the work done by the LCSB in establishing itself and evidence of its ability to take matters forward.

ACTION:

A DEVELOPMENT DAY TO TAKE PLACE ON THURSDAY 7TH DECEMBER 2006 WHICH FOCUSES ON THE ACTION PLAN.

12. PROTOCOL FOR UNALLOCATED CHILD PROTECTION CASES

A paper by Frances Hunt (Child Protection Officer) and Ian Stewart-Watson (Operations Manager) dated 27th September 2006 was received by the Board.

ACTION:

BOARD MEMBERS TO E-MAIL THEIR COMMENTS TO CHRIS DIMMELOW BY THE END OF NEXT WEEK.

13. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

The Board received details of the Torbay Domestic Abuse Conference scheduled to take place on 22nd November 2006; the NOTA Conference on Child Abuse and the Internet to take place on 10th November 2006; and the Cornwall LCSB Conference on Domestic Violence and its impact on Children to take place on 14th November 2006.

In addition Devon's Children and Young People Plan April 2006-March 2009 was copied to all present. Agencies to let Chris Dimmelow know if they need further copies.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Board heard that the MAPPA Business Plan had now been finalised.

Anne Whiteley thanked Juliet Hammacott, who was attending her last LCSB meeting, for both her contribution to the Board, and to its predecessor the Area Child Protection Committee.

15. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting to take place on Thursday 7th. December 2006.

16. DATES OF 2007 MEETINGS

To be decided at the next meeting.

Signed Dated

Anne Whiteley
Director of Children and Young People's
Services

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