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Project Update 9 November 2004

The 'Every Child Matters' project continues to make progress on all fronts.

The main news in recent weeks has been the appointment of the new Director of Children's Services, Lisa Christensen, currently Head of Social Services at County Hall. Lisa is expected to take up her post in the New Year.

Away from the headlines, the eight sub-project teams are forging on with key aspects of the programme. The sub-project teams are multi-agency and include senior managers from Education and Social Services and staff from health, Connexions, the voluntary sector and other organisations. Each has a 'critical friend' from the Advisory Board and all are expected to report in January when decisions on what further work needs to be taken forward will be made.

In this briefing note we turn the spotlight on those teams, looking at their progress to date and where they're going from here.

Work on the vision - at the outset we wanted to make a clear statement of our aspirations. By setting out what positive outcomes we should be striving to achieve for children and young people, we can all be clear of the needs that the new integrated services have to meet.

We carried out an extensive consultation with stakeholders, practitioners and children and young people themselves to ensure we got the message and the wording of the Vision right. Now we are in the process of choosing a design to communicate that Vision and again children and young people, and those who work with them and care for them, will be part of that decision-making process.

Our ultimate aim is that by making the Vision pertinent and relevant, everyone involved with children and young people will adopt it and, more importantly, contribute to achieving these goals.

To get an insight into what adopting the Vision will mean in practice, the team is working with a high school to look at the implications.

Examining our resources - we are currently collecting all the information on 'What we do now' covering functions, budgets, staff levels, deployment and premises. This information, from 12 agencies and services, will be collated against four service descriptors (universal, prevention/early intervention, targeted and acute) and four age groups.

The sub-project team is also collecting information on how effective those services are using current performance indicators. Recent inspection reports have been reviewed and summarised by the Dartington Social Research Unit.

The team is also using inspection reports, external evaluations and links with other authorities to identify effective models of service delivery. Once this work is complete they will move onto how services may develop in the future and look at options for beginning to integrate functions, resources and processes, particularly in Education and Social Services.

Realistic outcomes for children and young people over the next five years - the team is holding a series of workshops in November and December to develop a series of high level outcomes that could realistically be achieved for children and young people in Norfolk in the next five years. The workshops will be facilitated by Dartington Social Research using a 'logic model' process.

Having identified the outcomes, the workshops will then look at the logical steps to achieve them. This work will be key in the development of services in the future. It is critical to get the process right and ensure that the outcomes agreed and the strategy developed are valid and robust.

The workshop participants include the County Council's Chief Executive, Tim Byles as well as Directors of Education and Social Services, other key officers from health, Connexions, YOT, police, head teachers and the voluntary sector.

Making better-informed decisions - this sub-project team is identifying how to improve information sharing including compatible IT systems, what assessment framework can be used and joining-up research and management information functions.

The team has already prepared an information-sharing toolkit which is currently waiting on government guidance but should be implemented soon. The common protocol to improve information-sharing at both practitioner level on individual cases and at a strategic macro level is planned to proceed in Spring 2005.

A consultation on the Common Assessment Framework has been published and a reference group will be meeting soon to respond to this. A sub-group has also been formed to look at how schools can be involved in the consultation along with another specialist group examining how research and management information functions can be joined up

Planning and commissioning services jointly in the future - the sub-project team has been working to establish a Norfolk Strategic Partnership for Children and Young People, building towards defining the membership and core terms of reference for more locally-based partnerships as well. The outline role and function of the County partnership was set out in June and further detail should be finalised in the New Year.

Over 50 groups attended a conference to consider the establishment of a County Forum for voluntary and community sector organisations and a group is now working on setting up the forum.

The team is currently looking at how they can increase the involvement of schools and children and young people in the planning of services for the future. They are also developing options on how services are planned and delivered at a local level within operational boundaries and how political arrangements will need to be revised to take into account planned changes.

Workforce development - the major milestone for this project team is to establish a broad vision for the development of the children's workforce in Norfolk for the next ten years.

The starting point for this has been collecting information on the current workforce profile within the county. It has also become clear that the co-ordination of national initiatives will be a major factor in progressing work. The team is now drawing together all the workforce-related activity currently being

undertaken on a national scale with the aim of having a clear direction of travel by next month.

The team is currently undertaking research and analysis of the skill sets required for key jobs within children's services and the types of training and development offered to sustain and improve service delivery and outcomes.

Pursuing 'Quick Wins' - four initiatives have been identified by the team as 'quick wins' which will have a high impact on the progress of the project and which can be achieved in a short timescale.

The initiatives are: · Developing a Children's Service Directory - a single directory which draws together information about all the organisations involved in children-related service provision · Modelling one or more new, inter-agency services based on Dartington Research · Exploring the options for closer multi-disciplinary participation in group training by developing a forum looking at the training of designated school staff · Using a 'pilot community' to bring together as many local practitioners as possible to explore practical and operational issues around planning and delivery - the team has now selected Methwold for this research as it was agreed greater understanding was needed about service delivery and planning in areas of sparse population and limited facilities.

How we will measure our success - The sub-project team are currently identifying some key over-arching, high level quality of life/well-being indicators which are robust, link in to the Vision, and can be tracked on a regular basis.

They are working with performance leads in partner organisations to take stock of performance regimes and targets and to look at any opportunities for rationalising the collection of information. The team is also looking at how they can involve children and young people to find out how they would like achievements measured.

Their next step is to create one common set of data which can inform decisions about children's services and consider how this can be carried into the future.

If you have any questions you would like answered please contact the Every Child Matters team on 01603 228851 or email everychildmatterscomments@norfolk.gov.uk

If you would like more information go to the county council website on <http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/> and follow the links to Every Child Matters.

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