

West Essex Children's Trust Board Review of Operation, Structure and Membership January 2011

This report outlines the review of West Essex Children's Trust Board in terms of its role and effectiveness, and its renaming to West Essex Children's Commissioning and Delivery Board.

Background

The requirement for Local Authorities to establish Children's Trusts was removed by the Coalition Government and new joint working arrangements saw Local Children's Trust Boards being replaced with Local Children's Commissioning and Delivery Boards (LCCDB's). The purpose of the LCCDB's would similarly be to use effective integrated commissioning to ensure services are delivered with positive impacts and results for children, young people and their families.

The changes in the Essex Structure for Children's Services thus resulted in the need to review the operation, structure and membership of the West Essex Children's Commissioning & Delivery Board, together with the links to District Children's Partnerships and other subgroups. A small subgroup of the Commissioning and Delivery Board therefore met to review these areas and presented a range of findings and proposals to the Board in January. A summary of the findings is as below:

Positive elements of the Board

- The Board was undertaking lots of effective work in terms of local needs analysis and district level partnership working
- There was clear agreement on main priority areas of the Board amongst members
- Successful interventions were delivered at District level through District Partnerships, which were unique to West Essex

Negative elements

- Board membership was too large making it difficult for effective business
- No 'real' decisions had been taken by the Board over the time of its operation
- Concerns were raised that there was little opportunity for Board members to change or influence decisions being made at Essex, leading to disempowerment and subsequent disengagement
- A feeling that the Board is driven centrally and by Essex and that local intelligence doesn't appear to be taken in to consideration

Proposals/recommendations

- That the Board should be a smaller strategic group which has a 'real' commissioning focus

- That District partnerships are retained with service 'providers' as part of their membership
- To ensure mechanisms are in place to enable local Boards to have the opportunity to influence central decisions made at Essex Boards
- To establish a Business Management Group consisting of the chairs of the 3 District partnerships and Chair of the Board, with a remit to oversee the business functions of the Board
- To arrange time limited Task and Finish groups as required, to take forward defined pieces of work.
- To ensure stakeholder input to the Board, via provision of an annual stakeholder/ partnership event

Conclusion

If these proposals are agreed at the next meeting of the West Children's Commissioning and Delivery Board on 14th April 2011, the reduction in membership of the Board will ensure a clearer focus on the work of the District Children's Partnerships and it is hoped will provide a better opportunity to influence decisions on the commissioning of children's services in Essex.

Councillor Lesley Wagland
Council Representative on the West Essex Children's Trust Board