

Ambition Board 2: To tackle disadvantage - to create opportunities
7 September 2011 - second meeting

MINUTES

Present:

Chairman: Graham Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health (GG)	Kent County Council
Vice Chairman: Peter Fleming, Leader (PF)	Sevenoaks District Council
Jenny Whittle, Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services (JW)	Kent County Council
Bryan Cope, Chairman (BC)	Kent Fire and Rescue Authority
Mark Worrall, Leader (MW)	Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
Malcolm Newsam, Interim Corporate Director, Families and Social Care (MN)	Kent County Council
Abdool Kara, Chief Executive (AK)	Swale Borough Council
Nadeem Aziz, Chief Executive (NA)	Dover District Council

In support:

Graeme Brown, Kent Forum Manager (GB)	Kent Forum Team
Mark Lemon, Head of Public Health Policy (ML)	Public Health Unit, KCC

Apologies

Robert Bayford	Thanet District Council
Colin Carmichael, Chief Executive	Canterbury City Council
Alistair Stewart, Chief Executive	Shepway District Council
Alison Broom, Chief Executive	Maidstone Borough Council
Jenny Dixon, Senior Partnership Officer	Kent Forum Team

Agenda Item	Notes/Action	Lead
1.	Notes of Ambition Board 22 June and follow up actions	
1.1	<p>The notes from the previous meeting were approved.</p> <p>The Chairman (GG) updated the Board on progress since the last meeting, in particular the meeting he had with the Vice Chairman (PF) where it was agreed that the long term focus for this Ambition Board should be on 'Tackling Family Poverty' with four contributory themes. This had been set out in a note sent to all Board members from the Chairman on 22nd July, requesting support for this and ideas for medium term aims and deliverable outcomes.</p> <p>A short debate followed around the role of the Ambition Board. This looked at how the Board may evolve in slightly different ways. The Board could focus on helping Locality Boards deliver better existing policy and programmes and be accountable to the Kent Forum which would involve to some extent scrutiny of Locality Board performance. An alternative is to focus on the county level Ambition</p>	

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2.7	It was acknowledged that the challenge of reducing child poverty also involved the work of Ambition Board 1 (to grow the economy) and Ambition Board 3 (to put citizens in control) and the work already underway on Community Based Budgets.	GG
2.8	It was agreed that there Ambition Board 2 should sponsor a holistic approach across Kent to eradicating child poverty and that it should form a core part of the Board's ongoing work plan.	
3	Welfare Reform	
3.1	PF, who is leading on this topic on behalf of the Local Government Group, introduced this item and spoke to the report on Universal Credit, which it is intended to take to the Kent Forum on 22 September.	PF
3.2	MW strongly endorsed the key issues and risks that flow from the Government proposals that are well articulated in the report, particularly those around internet access and housing. With regard to housing MW emphasised the possible consequences of the current proposals, emphasising that the final proposals must provide better options for those in low paid employment such as carers to have access to affordable housing. PF agreed and commented further that these proposals when placed alongside the proposed changes to Council Tax exacerbated the position for vulnerable people. PF agreed to oversee a further report for the Kent forum on the Council Tax benefit reforms	
3.3	AK commented that paragraph 3.4 could be further strengthened to stress the preferred delivery model through the internet would be a false economy, resulting in additional costs in receiving, clarifying and correcting claims.	
3.4	Chris Grosskoph (who is part of the Working group who had prepared the report) also highlighted that DWP were presently de-skilling their workforce which would be a further barrier to effective treatment of claims.	
3.5	It was agreed that both this report (slightly revised) and a further report on Council Tax Benefit would proceed to the Kent Forum on 22 September.	
4	Early Interventions and Children's Centres	
4.1	JW gave a verbal update regarding children's centres. Work has commenced in KCC which will lead to a Cabinet report. This will include an 'options appraisal' on what to deliver in children's centres and how services should be delivered in order to make best use of the significant resource deployed in this service. Alternative models will be highlighted including management by staff mutuals, VCS, District Councils and schools.	
4.2	MW was in favour of this work. He said the work should also embrace the role of outreach services as many people, arguably	

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4.3 4.4 4.5	<p>many of those most in need of the services, are less likely to attend a centre as they see them as institutions. PF endorsed this and said that children's centres had in places become a source of cheap child care for those who could afford to provide their own provision at the exclusion of the target audience. Better use could certainly be made of the resource.</p> <p>JW was keen for children's centres to extend their hours of opening beyond 9.00 to 5.00. GG asked whether the target age range should also be extended, making them more into family centres.</p> <p>Malcolm Newsam said that it was important to evaluate the impact of children's centres and to establish what is needed from each on a locality by locality basis, tailored to local need. As we move forward we should be commissioning individual services, not children's centres as a totality.</p> <p>JW will keep the Board informed as the thinking progresses.</p>	JW
5.	Presentation by SILK (Social Innovation Lab Kent)	
5.1 5.2 5.3 5.4	<p>Caroline Hooper, Jo Pullen and Vicky Butler made a presentation on the key findings from the 'Just Coping Report' which gives an insight into the daily lives and challenges of families in Kent coping with material hardship. The team also drew attention to some practical projects that have flowed from the Just Coping Report in the last 2 years such as Kent Savers (Kent's Credit Union), Bulk Buying R shop and Time Banking project in Parkwood estate in Maidstone and a Fathers project in Sheerness which engaged absent fathers. The presentation slides are attached to these notes. A link was made with the Marmot report about helping families become more resilient.</p> <p>PF supported this whole approach and would be prepared to fund innovative projects. He also referred to innovative projects where, in Northumberland, Sure Start had been hosted by the Fire Service. Other examples of using trusted intermediaries in both Slough and Manchester were quoted.</p> <p>BC was supportive of the Fire Service becoming engaged and will discuss this with the Chief Executive.</p> <p>AK asked about how the projects were chosen. Mark Lemon said there were a variety of triggers such as where services did not appear to be 'connecting' with the target group. This approach got beneath the surface of the issue and helped co-design and co-produce a service with individuals and the community that would better connect and as a consequence deliver the desired outcome and become more sustainable. This discussion continued with the potential of this approach being endorsed. Through careful selection / sponsoring of projects a number of difficult problems could be addressed. This will support a cultural change so that public agencies become resource providers rather than service providers ie provide resources that will help individuals and communities address their own priorities.</p>	BC ML

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5.5 5.6	The team were thanked for their input. It was considered that this will be the first step in an ongoing relationship. NB. SILK can be contacted through Vicky Butler on the following e mail address: silk.team@kent.gov.uk	
6.	Planning aims, actions and deliverable	
6.1 6.2 6.3	GG reminded the Board that the next meeting was on 3 rd November. This meeting will need to agree an Action Plan to discuss with the Kent Forum on 24 November. Graeme Brown drew attention to some proposed medium and short term aims for Ambition Board 2 that had been circulated with the meeting papers. In addition, he circulated an early draft of some of the comments from the consultation on the Vision for Kent was tabled that should be considered. However there was insufficient time for a considered discussion on this so GG asked that GB give thought to how this is developed which should build upon the discussion at today's meeting.	GB

Graeme Brown
20 September 2011