The Children and Young People's Plan Review 2010 Methodology

Background and purpose

The Children's Trust is required to undertake a review of the Children and Young People's Plan on an annual basis. The aim of the review is to assess the progress made in delivering the priorities set out in the Plan. As a key part of the review and improvement cycle, the outcomes of the review should inform the refresh of the plan for 2010/11 and the development of action plans for year 2.

In 2008/09 the review of the Big Plan was undertaken as a desktop exercise, with key officers submitting key pieces evidence and commentary for analysis. For 2009/10, the review process will be an interactive exercise, carried out by a review team over a period of 5 working days. The model is similar to a peer review process. The review team will organise a range of meetings and focus groups with key officers to discuss progress against priorities, with a view to highlighting where things are going well and where improvements need to be made. The findings will then inform the annual refresh of the Big Plan.

The review will take place 19th-23rd April 2010.

The approach being taken is a pilot one and will therefore need to be evaluated following the review. The County Council's Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee will be involved in this.

The Review Team

The review team will consist of the following members:

- Cllr Shona Johnstone (Review Team Leader)
- Annmarie Aslett NHS Cambridgeshire
- Helen Rawden, Voluntary and Community Sector
- Lia Howlett, Voluntary and Community Sector
- Mary Whitehand, Children's Services
- Samantha McLaughlin, Children's Services
- Michelle Wright, Internal Audit, CCC
- Laura Wilkinson, Children's Services

The review process

The review process will consist of the following stages:

- A desk top exercise to review existing information and evidence

- A 5-day peer review consisting of meetings and focus groups with lead officers, children, young people, parents and carers.
- Production of a report detailing findings and recommendations
- Consideration of the findings by the Children's Trust
- Re-fresh of the plan

Stage 1 - Desk top review of existing information and evidence

Prior to the review week, a desktop review of the following information and evidence will be undertaken:

- Big Plan performance monitoring reports for Q3
- Key statutory and local performance indicators that relate to the achievement of priorities, including district/area based information, where possible.
- The findings of any formal inspections, audits, reviews and evaluations undertaken in 2009/10 that relate to the priorities in the Big Plan
- Results of consultations and participation activity with children, young people and families that relate to Big Plan priorities, including the Tellus 4 Survey
- The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and data profile

This initial desktop review process will help to determine whether a priority is considered to be progressing well, or whether there are issues affecting progress.

Criteria used during the desk top review

Criteria will be used during the desk top review to determine the progress of the priority and areas for focus during the review week. These will include:

- Progress against targets
- Comparative performance to statistical neighbours and national averages
- Trends over the last 3 years
- Quartile position
- Comparative geographical data
- Progress against local measures identified on the Big Plan
- Qualitative information and commentary about progress in quarterly monitoring reports and attached rag ratings

As part of the review process consideration will be given as to whether the areas of focus and associated objectives for the priorities are the right ones. Linked to this, there is a need for the Trust to consider whether current and future financial constraints require priorities to be revised and/or re-focussed. These issues will be explored during the review week.

It is not the intention to re-scrutinise those areas that have been recently subject to formal inspections, reviews, audits and evaluations. Rather, the findings from these processes will be reflected in the review and may be considered as part of the re-fresh of the plan.

Stage 2 – the review week

The aim of the review week is to explore progress against priorities in more depth, with a view to identifying:

- Areas of good practice, where work is making a difference to outcomes for children and young people
- Areas where there are issues with progress and outcomes, and the reasons why

In relation to areas where issues are identified the following questions may be posed and explored:

- Is there anything that needs to be done differently to improve the rate of progress and outcomes?
- Are the objectives and actions the right one to achieve the priority?
- Are all the people/agencies you need involved engaged?
- Are any financial or capacity related issues that impact upon the ability to deliver work related to the priority area?
- Does this work relate to other projects or development or other groups associated with the Trust/Cambs Together? If not, should it?
- What is the proposed action for year 2?

Lead officers for priorities will be invited to attend a focus group or meeting. All participants will be provided with a briefing in advance which details the purpose of the meeting and key areas focus for the particular priority.

Appendix 1 sets out how the review team will operate.

Involving children, young people, parents and carers

Children and young people will be involved in the review in two ways:

- As ‘Young Inspectors’ working alongside the review team to assess progress
- As participants in focus groups about particular priorities

The views of parents and carers will also be sought during the review week through focus groups or 1:1 interviews on particular topics.

Reporting and using the findings of the review

The outcome of the review will be the provision of a report setting out the findings of the review week, including areas of good practice and areas for development.

The report will be issued for consultation two weeks after the review. The purpose of this first consultation will be to ensure all evidence has been captured accurately, and that the conclusions reached are sound. The report will be presented to the Children's Trust Board on 20th May. Following this the Children's Trust will discuss the following:

- What improvements are needed
- Whether any needs have changed
- The impact that current and future financial constraints will have on the delivery of Big Plan priorities
- Revisions need to be made to the plan

Following discussion and agreement the updated Big Plan 2 for 2010-11 will be published.

Appendix 1

The review in practice

Roles and responsibilities of the review team

The **review team** will be responsible for the following:

- A desktop review of key evidence
- Identifying key lines of enquiry for the 5-day review
- Co-ordinating the 5-day review programme, including identifying and communicating with participants
- Holding a range of meetings and focus groups with stakeholders during the 5-day review period
- Analysing and triangulating the findings of the review
- Producing a formal report detailing findings and recommendations for the consideration of the Trust

Operational guidance for conducting the review

<u>Confidentiality and dealing with sensitive issues</u>

Information that review team members glean during their interviews and visits is absolutely non-attributable to individuals and this will be emphasised at the start of every meeting and respected at all times. It is vital for the credibility of the review that the team establishes a climate of trust in which people feel they can be open and honest.

It is difficult to predict what issues may arise during the course of a review. If a team member comes across anything in an interview, visit or group that they are worried about, it is important that they share this with the review team leader immediately – **before acting on it in any way**.

The review team leader will need to make a judgment to whether the matter is raised and/or sufficiently serious to be followed up by the review team. The matter should be pursued where the issue is pertinent to the review, or where there are serious concerns about the safety and welfare of children. The review manager may want to involve the Chair of the Trust Board or Executive at that stage.

Although the need is unlikely to arise during this review, if any serious concerns arise on the safety and welfare of children, team members will immediately raise this with the review team leader.

Guidance for interviews

Wherever possible interviews will be conducted by two persons. There may be circumstances, however, where the interview programme means that this is not possible.

Ahead of each interview or visit, the reviewers should agree the areas to be covered, who will provide the initial introductions and scene setting, and who will take notes (if not both of you).

At the start of each session, first introduce yourself, and then invite your colleague/s to do the same. Also take the lead in outlining:
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- The review is not an inspection. It is a supportive but challenging process to assist the Children's Trust to celebrate strengths and identifying their own areas for improvement within the delivery of the Big Plan. The key purpose of the review is to stimulate local discussion about how the Trust can become more effective in delivering improved safe outcomes for children and young people.
- The team is there at the request of the Trust, it is not being imposed on the partners.
- Team members are acting as 'critical friends', looking at both strengths and areas for further consideration.
- The views of a range of people both inside and outside the Trust are being gathered
- The process depends on people being open and honest about what is working and what issues need to be addressed.
- All the information that the team gleans is absolutely non-attributable to individuals

A set of suggested interview questions will help frame each interview. Outside of the introductions, reviewers should try to avoid talking about their own organisation and experiences unless it is strictly relevant to do so. Ensure everybody is enabled to contribute in workshops and that nobody monopolises them. Do not mention comments made by named interviewees in other forums.

Remember that these interviews are for the team to gain information. They should be conducted in an informal manner and with open questions. The team should not use these interviews to form judgements.

At the end of each interview or workshop, ask if those being interviewed have any questions they would like to ask, or any concerns they would like to raise. Thank colleagues for their time and, assuming it has been the case, their openness and honesty.

All team members must keep notes from interviews, focus groups and other review activities and these should be dated and signed. The notes of interviews and focus groups will be collected by the review team leader, retained as part of the supporting evidence for the review, and archived. These written notes should be factual records of the discussions that have taken place.

All written feedback should be written in a clear and accessible way, using proportionate and objective language and ensuring that all recommendations and responses are based on substantiated information.

Where statements are made by individuals it is important that the interviewers ask for details of examples and evidence to illustrate the point made – this provides vital evidence for the review team. The team should not at any time act on ‘hearsay’ or unsubstantiated information. All evidence should be triangulated and robust.

It is absolutely essential that interviews are conducted within the agreed time limits for the discussion. Any over-running will create logistical difficulties. If there is a need for further discussion the review managers should arrange for a second interview.

No surprises policy

It is good practice to adopt a ‘no surprises’ policy. This means that before the final feedback the review team leader should give the Trust’s Chair a good idea as to what will be presented. This gives the chance to clear up any mis-understandings, extra crafting of wording etc. However, it is the review team presentation and they should present what they have found although they should be sensitive to the Trust’s situation.

If time permits (and especially if significant issues have been found) additional informal feedback sessions on progress with the review may be built in.

The review team presents its findings to an audience of the Trust’s choosing. There will be opportunity for people to raise questions and discuss the findings.

The process of review is one of challenge by ‘critical friends’ and the review team will seek to promote a positive experience. As this is pilot work for the Children’s Trust, capturing the learning to inform future reviews will be important.

Should any specific issues arise during the process of the review concerning the conduct of the team, these should be brought to the immediate attention of the review team leader.
Within their work, the review team should always consider the question:
“What will most help the Trust being reviewed to move forward?” Following this principle will help ensure the review process is appropriate and effective.