

Appendix 2

Coventry City Council - Test of Assurance on the effective discharge of the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and Director of Adult Social Services.

Date: March 2016

Summary

The objective of this review was to carry out a test of assurance as to whether the governance arrangements in place, specifically relating to the roles of the Director of Children's Services (DCS) with the Director of Adult's Social Services (DASS), are in compliance with statutory guidance.

Background

Section 18 Children Act 2004 requires the City Council to appoint a Director of Children Services. Section 6 Local Authorities Social Services Act 1970 requires the City Council to appoint a Director of Adult Services. The Executive Director, People (EDP) is appointed to these statutory posts.

In April 2013 the Department for Education published statutory guidance for local authorities on the roles and responsibilities of the DCS. The guidance covers the legislative basis for the appointment of the DCS, the roles and responsibility of the post holder and how this relates to Government expectations about local authorities role in education and children and young people services.

The guidance also requires the City Council to ensure it has effective governance arrangements in place, where there are arrangements to combine the roles of DCS with other operational functions of the Council and in particular should "...undertake a local test of assurance so that the focus on outcomes for children and young people will not be weakened or diluted..." by combining the roles with the DASS or any other functions.

An initial assurance document was prepared in 2013 when the People Directorate in the City Council was established and the EDP assumed the statutory role of DCS and DASS. This assurance document was reviewed in September 2015 when a new leadership structure of the People Directorate was proposed. These leadership arrangements have now been in place for six months and this assurance review has been undertaken to provide assurance that effective governance arrangements are in place relating to the roles of DCS or DASS.

Assurance Check

Reference	Assurance requirement	Response
1	Are the constitutional arrangements in place to clearly identify the statutory appointments?	The City Council's constitution (Part 2M: Scheme of Functions Delegated to Employees) confirms that the Executive Director, People is the Director of Children's Services (Section 18 Children Act 2004) and that the Executive Director, People is the Director of Adult Services (Section 6 Local Authorities Social Services Act 1970).
2	Does the current structure deliver on the statutory requirement of the posts?	<p>The People Directorate leadership team structure creates an Executive Director post with the statutory role of DCS and DASS. This is a politically restricted Statutory Chief Officer post; a first tier officer reporting directly to the Chief Executive.</p> <p>The structure also creates four director posts reporting directly to the EDP. These four senior manager posts provide senior leadership for the individual areas of the EDP responsibility namely Education, Children Services, Adults and Public Health. As members of one leadership team these posts further allow for significant opportunity for cohesive working across the directorate.</p>

Reference	Assurance requirement	Response
4	How does the local authority discharge its children's services functions and be held accountable for them from political, professional, legal and corporate perspectives?	<p>See attached governance chart. The scheme of delegation sets out the authority for individual officer roles.</p> <p>In addition to the Council's own arrangements there is additional oversight and accountability through an Improvement Board with an Independent Chair and 6 monthly DfE review meetings.</p> <p>The lead member for Children's Services also provides a statement to every Council meeting (4-6 weekly) on children's services issues and progress.</p> <p>The EDP has monthly oversight meetings with the Chief Executive on People Directorate issues and progress towards key objectives. The EDP provides monthly supervision to each Director.</p>
5	Does the breadth of responsibility allocated to the EDP impact upon her ability to undertake those responsibilities?	The EDP with Directors underneath and associated management provides capacity and service area expertise to enable the EDP to deliver her responsibilities.
6	Is professional leadership and practise robust in relation to child protection, is there challenge on a regular basis, including an appropriate focus on offering early help and working with other agencies in doing so?	<p>Quality assurance and audit processes have been reviewed and revised from January 2016. Challenge and learning from audit is considered through the range of governance arrangements in place to drive improvement activity.</p> <p>At the heart of the work of the People Directorate is recognising the importance of managing a whole system with earlier intervention and prevention to address educational, social and emotional needs of children.</p>

Reference	Assurance Requirement	Response
7	The adequacy and effectiveness of local partnership arrangements.	<p>The EDP represents the People Directorate in key system leadership and partnership forums including the Health and Well Being Board. Directors take the lead on other partnership forums and work with the EDP and People Directorate leadership team to ensure responsibilities are discharged.</p> <p>The Children and Young People's Partnership Board has been recently reviewed and governance amended to ensure there is alignment with the Health and Well Being Board to deliver the refreshed Children's Plan as an integral part of the overall Health and Well Being Strategy.</p>