

Assurance Document for fulfilment of the Director of Children Services (DCS), Director of Adult Services (DAS) and Director of Public Health (DPH) roles – Updated December 2018.

Introduction

Coventry City Council's People Directorate provides holistic working and effective integration of services for Adults, Children, Young People, Families and Public Health. More recently the People Directorate has expanded to incorporate further diverse service areas delivering housing, customer services, procurement and commissioning, transformation, communications, human resources and ICT.

The People Directorate is led by the Deputy Chief Executive (People).

The Director of Adult Services (DAS), Director of Children Services (DCS) and Director of Public Health (DPH) are all politically restricted statutory officers of the Local Authority and are appointed via a legislative frame work with specified functions and responsibilities.

The City Council constitution currently provides for the Deputy Chief Executive (People) to be the DCS and DAS, whilst the post of Director of Public Health is held by a separate officer reporting directly to the Deputy Chief Executive (People).

The increased breadth of responsibility of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) now carries the potential to negate the ability for one officer to effectively fulfil the differing statutory responsibilities of both DCS and DAS. Given this changing role of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) with its diversification of responsibilities and service areas across the City Council this fresh local assurance review has been undertaken to reconsider if the DCS and DAS posts should be retained by the Deputy Chief Executive (People) or if alternative arrangements should be put in place.

Role of the Deputy Chief Executive (People)

The Deputy Chief Executive (People) holds responsibility for ensuring that staff are supported and developed so that they are effective and competent in discharging the statutory functions across the People Directorate.

The Deputy Chief Executive (People) has responsibility for ensuring elected members are briefed on issues relating to her directorate

The Deputy Chief Executive (People) has a key role in facilitating and promoting partnership working across the City.

The Deputy Chief Executive (People) sits as part of the Strategic Management Board with strategic oversight across the City Council.

Role of Chief Executive

The Head of Paid Service for the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that the Safeguarding Partnership arrangements are appropriate and fit for purpose and that the Chair(s) feel that they have sufficient resource and leadership support to discharge their responsibilities effectively.

Statutory role of DCS and DAS

The City Council's Director of Children Services (DCS) is appointed for the purposes of discharging the education and children's social services functions of the local authority.

The City Council's Director of Adult Social Services (DAS) is responsible for the delivery of local authority social services functions in respect of adults.

The City Council's Director of Public Health is responsible for delivering the corporate public health duties of the local authority including to take steps to improve public health.

Local Assurance and Governance Arrangements

Within the legal framework it is for individual local authorities to determine their own organisational structures in light of their local circumstances.

However, local authorities must ensure that there is a single officer responsible for both education and children's social care. In Coventry City Council this is achieved by an integrated People Directorate approach sitting alongside the Council's key priority that ensures that the safety and the educational, social and emotional needs of children and young people are central to the local vision.

Given the breadth and importance of the children's services functions that the DCS covers, local authorities should give due consideration to protecting the discrete roles and responsibilities of the DCS before allocating to any additional functions other than children's services. With the Deputy Chief Executive (People) now holding significant responsibility for an evolving and diverse directorate alongside taking a key role partnership development across the City this raises the question as to the validity of this post continuing to hold both statutory roles of DCS and DAS creating the real potential for a dilution of the roles.

The Deputy Chief Executive (People) does however maintain strong line management responsibility for five directors (Public Health, Adult, Children, Education and Skills and Housing and Transformation). Each director holding individual areas of responsibility but with a unified cross directorate approach which allows for a collective oversight of an integrated service; held under the umbrella of the emerging One Coventry programme.

The Deputy Chief Executive (People) reports directly to the Chief Executive providing a clear and unambiguous line of responsibility; however direct access between the five Directors, the Chief Executive and Elected Members is in place creating robust local accountability. All directors are also part of the Corporate Leadership Team providing an overview of the City Council's activity and providing the necessary degree of influence over it.

Political and Strategic alignment

The City Council is committed to working with local communities to improve the quality of life for Coventry people this is central to the Council's plan and the values of the Council's Elected Members.

To achieve this ambition, the Council's Executive has designated lead Cabinet Members with portfolio responsibilities for Education and Skills, Children and Young People, Public Health and Sport and Adult Services. The Cabinet member for Children and Young People is the lead member for Children's services (S19 Children Act 2004).

Each portfolio holder has responsibility within their areas of responsibility to improve the quality of life for Coventry people, including to improve educational outcomes by working with schools to continue to improve standards (Cabinet member for Education and Skills). Improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities by helping local residents lead healthier lifestyles including better mental health (Cabinet Member for Public Health and Sport). Protecting the most vulnerable people by keeping children safe and providing early intervention for families who need it (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People). Keeping adults safe from harm and enabling people to exercise choice and control in their daily lives (Cabinet Member for Adult Services).

However, these individual portfolio responsibilities operate as a cohesive whole through a holistic approach and joined up delivery by the Cabinet. This is reflected in the operation of the People Directorate, individual Directors mirror the Cabinet portfolios with a Director of Education and Skills, Director of Children and Young People, Director of Public Health and Director of Adult Services.

A joint approach to service delivery through these directorates alongside a partnership approach therefore enables a "One Coventry" approach to meeting the Council's Plan.

Cohesive approach to delivery

Effective partnership working and interagency cooperation continues to be promoted and developed by the Directors including via attendance at forums such as Health and Wellbeing Board, Local Safeguarding Boards for Children and Adults, Head teacher Forums, Youth Offending teams and Children and Adult Commissioning Boards.

Children's social care has been on an improvement journey and the approach to unified Council delivery is part of sustaining improvement.

This Cohesive approach to both strategy and delivery across the Directorate and in particular between the Education and Children's Social Care services enables an integrated approach to service delivery but with identified expert professional leadership. This is manifested in the Co-Chairing by the Director for Children's Services and Director of Education and Skills of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership.

Conclusion

An expansion of the responsibility and increased outward facing development of the role of the Deputy Chief Executive (People), as transitioned from the role of Executive Director (People), demonstrates a need to realign responsibilities in particular the statutory responsibility contained in the role of the DCS and DPH.

The corporate governance arrangements, as outlined above, and the strength of each director's individual and strategic collective oversight demonstrates a more conducive approach for the

statutory roles to sit with the individual Directors reporting in collectively to the Deputy Chief Executive who now holds a wider holistic level of oversight

To avoid any potential dilution of these key roles and to ensure active oversight the statutory role of Director of Children's Services (Section 18 Children Act 2004) should move from the Deputy Chief Executive (People) to sit with the Director of Children Services to reflect the continued regulatory focus on the local authority responsibility for children's social care. The statutory role of the Director of Adult Services (Section 6 Local Authority Social Services Act 1970) should move from the Deputy Chief Executive (People) to sit with the Director of Adult Services. This would align statutory responsibility for these key functions with the Director of Public Health which operates effectively within this corporate arrangement.

The Director with the relevant area of responsibility will be the first point of contact with Public Health England, the Department of Education, Ofsted and all other relevant Government Departments in relation to any matter concerning Public Health, Children and Young People or Adults. All members of the People Directorate Management Team are routinely updated of any contacts and as a result a cohesive approach to responding is initiated. Whilst Individual statutory responsibility would be held by the DCS, DAS or DPH respectively through inspections or otherwise an over arching responsibility for ensuring that the needs of adults and young people in the city are being adequately provided for would also remain with the Deputy Chief Executive (People) and the Chief Executive of the City Council.

Summary

This is now the fifth review of this local assurance and it has been rewritten to take into consideration the new expanding structure within the People Directorate. The efficacy of outcomes will be subject to peer challenge and review, as part of the process of securing continuous sector-led improvement in the quality of services. This will include listening to the citizens of Coventry to establish their experiences and confidence in the new arrangements.