
Council

9 July, 2024

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People - Councillor P Seaman

Cabinet Member for Education and Skills – Councillor K Sandhu

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Director of Law and Governance

Ward(s) affected:

City wide

Title:

Statement of Assurance (Director of Children's Services)

Is this a key decision?

N/A

Executive Summary:

This report informs Council of the arrangements being put in place following the departure of the statutory Director of Children's Services (DCS) and provides a Statement of Assurance as to how the statutory responsibility of the Director of Children's Services under Section 18 of the Children Act 2004 will continue to be met.

The DCS is appointed for the purposes of discharging the education and children's social services functions of the local authority. The functions for which they are responsible are set out in section 18(2) of the Children Act 2004. This includes (but is not limited to) responsibility for children and young people receiving education or children's social care services in their area and all children looked after by the local authority or in custody (regardless of where they are placed).

Recommendation

1. The Council is recommended to note the report and Statement of Assurance.
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Law and Governance to amend the Council's constitution to reflect the changes outlined.

List of Appendices included:

Assurance Document for fulfilment of the Director of Children's Services (DCS),– **Updated May 2024**

Background papers:

None

Other useful documents - None

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny? - No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body? No

Will this report go to Council? Yes – 9 July, 2024

Report title: Statement of Assurance (Director of Children's Services)

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 In May 2023 the Director for Children's Services (DCS) (who held the statutory role under Section 18 Children Act 2004), resigned his post. Under his leadership, Children's Services had moved from a service requiring improvement to a service that is deemed by the inspectors to be Good.
- 1.2 The resignation of the DCS had coincided with the appointment of a new Chief Executive for the City Council. It was therefore considered that interim arrangements for the DCS should be put in place pending the arrival of the new Chief Executive and her further consideration as to what arrangements she considers would best serve the organisation on a permanent basis moving forward.
- 1.3 Therefore, on a temporary basis, an Interim Director of Children's Services was internally recruited who was responsible for Children's Social Care including Child Protection, Youth Justice and Early Help services. Further, on an interim basis, the Chief Partnerships Officer became the statutory Director of Children's Services under Section 18 Children Act 2004 to discharge the education and children's social services functions of the local authority.
- 1.4 A Statement of Assurance was prepared to outline these arrangements and provide assurance as to how the statutory functions of the Director of Children's Services would be met and this was considered by Council at its meeting on the 20 June 2023.
- 1.5 The Chief Partnerships Officer has resigned her post and will be leaving the organisation on 30th June 2024. Following a comprehensive recruitment process a new Director of Children's and Education Services has been appointed who will join the City Council on 19th August when she will take on the statutory role of Director of Children's Services. Between the 30th June and 19th August 2024 the Interim Director of Children's Services, Neil McDonald, will take on the statutory role of Director of Children's Services.

2. Options considered

- 2.1 There is a statutory responsibility for the local authority to have an officer designated as the Director of Children's Services responsible for education and children social care.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 The efficacy of more permanent arrangements will be subject to review, as part of the process of securing continuous sector-led improvement in the quality of services. This will include listening to the young people of Coventry to establish their experiences and confidence in the new arrangements.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 The new arrangements will be put in place from the 30th June 2024.

5. Comments from Director of Finance and Resources and Director of Law and Governance

Financial implications

There are no financial implications in respect of this report.

Legal implications

A local authority in England must appoint an officer as the Director of Children’s Services for the purposes of discharging functions relating to education and children’s social care

Local authorities will, as a matter of course, want to ensure their structures and organisational arrangements enable them to:

- fulfil their statutory duties effectively (including ensuring that children, young people and families receive effective help and benefit from high educational standards locally);
- be transparent about responsibilities and accountabilities,
- support effective interagency and partnership working.

A local authority should carry out effective assurance checks, integrated as part of their usual decision-making and scrutiny work, of their structures and organisational arrangements. Once any new arrangements are in place, local authorities should review their arrangements regularly to satisfy themselves that they continue to be effective.

Report author(s):

Name and job title:

Julie Newman, Director of Law and Governance

Directorate:

Law and Governance

Tel and email contact:

Julie Newman e mail Julie.newman@coventry.gov.uk

Enquiries should be directed to the above

Contributor/approver name	Title	Service Area	Date doc sent out	Date response received or approved
Contributors:				
Adrian West	Head of Governance	Law and Governance		
Suzanne Bennett	Governance Services Co-ordinator	Law and Governance	30/05/24	30/05/24
Names of approvers for submission: (officers and members)				
Julie Nugent	Chief Executive		30/05/24	30/5/24
Susanna Chilton	Director of Human Resources	Human Resources	30/05/24	30/5/24
Julie Newman	Director of Law and Governance	Law and Governance	30/05/24	30/05/24

Barrie Hastie	Director of Finance and Resources	Finance and Resources	30/05/24	30/05/24
Members: Councillor P Seaman	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People		10/06/24	25/06/24
Members: Councillor K. Sandhu	Cabinet Member for Education and Skills		10/06/24	24/06/24

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