

## **Children's Centres – Health Representation Protocol**

### **Background**

The Local Authority recognises the importance of having close links between Children's Centres and representatives from health services.

These links are likely to happen at a number of levels:

- Where Centre Managers and Health professionals need to discuss and agree operational matters which don't impinge on any other aspect of the centre's work they are likely to do so through one-to-one contact.
- Participation in Practitioners' Fora will give Health professionals the opportunity to directly represent their service and provide a health-related viewpoint on operational matters affecting all those delivering services for the centre. These meetings also allow practitioners to be aware of each other's views and influence the thinking of the Centre Manager when he or she is dealing with detailed front-line issues.
- Members of a Partnership Board contribute at a personal level in a voluntary capacity. All members of PBs are unpaid volunteers who have an interest and commitment in supporting the work of a particular centre. The knowledge and experience of health professionals will be valuable in the development of a corporate community view on strategic issues. The Board's purpose is not to discuss operational detail but to bring a clear community focus to strategic, medium and long term decisions on how the centre can best meet the overall needs of the children and their families in the local area. Because its members are volunteers, the Partnership Board has an independence from vested interest which allows it to be a powerful force for public good.
- Partners can be invited to attend Partnership Boards to provide briefings or information as the need arises and, for this purpose, do not need to be a member of the Partnership Board.

### **Protocols**

- All practitioners must be invited to Practitioners' Forum meetings and can attend whenever they feel the agenda is of interest. These meetings can be managed in whatever way is convenient for those entitled to attend.
- The Practitioners' Forum must nominate all Provider/Practitioner members for appointment to the board apart from the centre manager/co-ordinator and the third party and/or site representative. Those nominated represent the views of the broad range of professionals who attend the forum and not only their specialist or professional area. It should be noted that this is the only route for a Health practitioner, within their Health role, to be a member of the Partnership Board.
- If a Practitioners' Forum nominee is unable to attend forum meetings they will need to have clear lines of communications with it (e.g. members of their team attending the Forum) in order to be familiar with the likely broad professional view.
- There is no provision for substitutes to be sent to represent any absent members

- An application form needs to be completed for all Partnership Board posts. The Centre Manager will need to ensure that details of all those willing to stand as Provider nominees are considered by the Forum. The forms of those chosen should be signed by the Centre Manager to confirm that they are Provider nominees and returned to Governor Services.
- The expectation is that an individual would not normally be a member of more than two boards.
- It is hoped that health organisations will support their staff being Partnership Board members by allowing time off to attend meetings and perform other relevant duties relating to their role which occur during their normal working hours.
- If a candidate from health applies to be a Partnership Board member where they have no direct responsibility for services within the area served by the Centre they could take up a community post.
- If a Health professional filling a provider post leaves their job and therefore ceases to have a connection with services provided through the Centre their term of office will end on the last day of their employment. Their successor can apply to be a member of the Board but they will need to be nominated for the vacancy by the Practitioners' Forum.
- It is a matter for the Practitioner Forum to decide who to nominate to represent forum members on the partnership board of the children's centre. All appointments to PB are made by the LA.

The guidance in the Governance for Children's Centres in Hampshire model needs to be followed in relation to other procedural issues (terms of office, eligibility for chair, etc.).

This protocol was agreed by Janet Hoff (HCC) and Nicky Adamson-Young (Health) on 29 July 2008