

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Subject: DCS Assurance Test
Committee: Audit Committee
Date: 29 June 2017
Cabinet Member: Cllr Beer
CMT Member: Tracey Lee Chief Executive
Author: Alison Botham (Assistant Director, Children Young People and Families)

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Key Decision: For information and note

Purpose of the report:

This report briefly explains the reason for and purpose of the Director of Children's Services (DCS) assurance test. It explains the review of the assurance test undertaken this year. This builds on work undertaken after further activity on the People Directorate review. It also takes into account the work undertaken by the current DCS who undertakes a number of strategic responsibilities across this organisation and NEW Devon CCG.

The Council Corporate Plan 2016 - 2019:

The DCS assurance test being undertaken contributes to Plymouth's Caring objective within the Corporate Plan. The assurance test specifically supports the outcomes "We will prioritise prevention" and "Children, young people and adults are safe and confident in their communities" which are supported by the Children's Services Improvement Plan and the Plymouth Children's Safeguarding Improvement Plan within which this action and related activity sits.

Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications: Including finance, human, IT and land

None identified

Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management:

- Child Poverty
- Community Safety
- Health and Safety
- Risk Management

The DCS assurance test is undertaken to ensure that the focus on outcomes for children and young people are not be weakened or diluted as a result of adding other responsibilities to the role of Director of Children’s Services.

The role of DCS includes ensuring a wide range of outcomes are achieved for vulnerable children and families, the majority of which relate to addressing issues of risk management, health and safety, community safety or child poverty.

Equality and Diversity

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? No

Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:

I. Members note the DCS Assurance Test has again been reviewed and revised using a risk assessment framework.

Alternative options considered and rejected: None

Published work / information:

The Department for Education guidance “Statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children’s Services and Lead Member for Children’s Services” (April 2013)
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/271429/directors_of_child_services_-_stat_guidance.pdf

Background papers:

Title	Part I	Part II	Exemption Paragraph Number						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
DCS Assurance Test 17 September 2015.	x								

Sign off: comment must be sought from those whose area of responsibility may be affected by the decision, as follows (insert references of Finance, Legal and Monitoring Officer reps, and of HR, Corporate Property, IT and Strat. Proc. as appropriate):

Fin	pl1718.50	Leg	LT/28315	HR	DA-HR 20.06.2017
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Introduction

The Department for Education guidance “Statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children’s Services (DCS) and Lead Member for Children’s Services” (April 2013 sets out the expectations for the local authority DCS, their appointment, role and responsibilities in relation to education and children and young people’s services.

Section 6, entitled *Additional Functions not related to Local Authority children’s services*, states that “local authorities should undertake a local assurance test so that the focus on outcomes for children and young people will not be weakened or diluted as a result of adding such other responsibilities”.

PCC Structure

The Plymouth City Council (PCC) Senior Management structure is such that, since 2012, a single role of a Strategic Director for People encompasses the duties of Directors of Children’s and Adult’s Services. The responsibility for providing services to vulnerable adults is retained despite the transfer out of a large number of employees responsible for direct delivery of these services.

In 2014, a review of the Directorate was undertaken and it was restructured at the beginning of 2015. More recently, during 2016, further alignment of functions and responsibilities led to more restructuring. This included an end to end review of Children, Young People and Families functions.

There has been further extensive work in shaping the People Directorate to better serve the requirements of the people of Plymouth partly in response to the wider Transformation Programme, closer working with partners and the move towards an Integrated Commissioning model, This has been in addition to the constant need to address financial constraints.

Our innovative joint budget arrangement with NEW Devon Clinical Commissioning Group continues, along with a number of strategic staffing arrangements ensuring key senior people are able to hold the wider system to account and make best use of joint working for mutual benefit.

One of the impacts of this is that Carole Burgoyne, Strategic Director of People, holds the Western Locality system as Senior Responsible Officer working alongside the Chief Operating Officer of NEW Devon CCG.

PCC DCS Assurance Test

A template for the local assurance test was previously obtained from another Local Authority and completed by the Assistant Director for Children, Young People and Families. The Local Assurance Test document is split into six sections which contain a total of 13 questions. These are designed to confirm that the role of Director of Children’s Services and its key responsibilities are being sufficiently resourced and addressed.

The assurance test was first undertaken in 2013. A review was undertaken in 2015 in light of the implementation of the People Directorate Review, as well as comments by Ofsted in their report on

the Single Inspection published in January 2015. That review was undertaken and completed in June 2015. On completion of the updated assurance test, PCC commissioned the audit partnership to audit the test. Members were updated on that review, PCC's responses and the subsequent audit at a meeting of the Audit Committee on 17 September 2015.

As a starting point for this version of the Assurance test a check has been made against the recommendations from that report.

Key updates since last DCS Assurance Test

This latest DCS Assurance Test has been reviewed and, where necessary, updated to reflect changes that have occurred.

The 2015 report highlighted a number of areas where improvements had been made. These included:

- a clear structure in place to provide line management and accountability at all levels and to promote improved outcomes for children.
- a clear level of data available for review, and this is presented to a number of audiences in order to enable the service to be held to account, this included operational management and Councillors
- that there is ample opportunity for children to input into the service
- the sound basis of Supervision, Review and Learning & Development
- a high level of positivity towards the effectiveness of the CAF overall,

Some of the recommendations made at that time are now firmly embedded within the wider operating model, these include:

- A continuation of the close working with the Independent Chair of the PSCB
- Work with partner agencies continues to be monitored by the children's improvement board and the PSCB.
- Our clear model of Early Help is monitored via the CSC improvement plan.
- Since completion of the audit report, all CYPF employees have been offered an online training course on the prevention of terrorism.

Outcome of Review.

We have assessed all areas within the risk assessment as good, whilst continuing to look for opportunities to further improve and promote best practice.

After Members have reviewed this report and copy of the assessment we will share the outcome with the Independent Chair of the PSCB. This allows for any Member comments to also be shared at the next available opportunity.

The DCS Assurance Test continues to be a key document in holding our services to account and ensuring that children and young people are safeguarded

Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:

Members note the DCS Assurance Test has been again been reviewed and revised using a risk assessment framework.