

AGENDA ITEM: 6

Brief for visitors to the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee – October 13 2005

The Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) has a number of responsibilities. Members consider and, where necessary question, decisions made by the Cabinet. They also monitor the way that services are provided and make recommendations on whether new policies or changes to existing policies are needed. Issues of public concern are considered and changes to improve matters are recommended. Put simply, OSCs have been set up to help improve the way that the Council does its work and to make sure it gets its decisions and policies right.

At the heart of all of the OSCs' work is the consideration of what impact the Cabinet's policies and plans will have on the communities of Buckinghamshire and ensuring that the right decisions are taken in the first place.

In relation to Every Child Matters and the development of the Children's Services portfolio, the OSC's role is to ensure that ultimately the service meets the identified needs of the children and young people of Buckinghamshire. This is particularly of course in relation to the five Every Child Matters outcomes:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

A prime consideration in this is the way that partnerships operate across the County. A central tenet of Every Child Matters is that... "no single agency can deliver any one of the five outcomes for children or the 25 aims in the Outcomes Framework by working in isolation". The Children's Act places a duty on all local authorities in England to make arrangements to promote co-operation between the authority, the "relevant partners" and other locally determined partners, to improve the wellbeing of children in the authority's area.

The local authority has been designated as the lead member in the partnership and all "relevant partners" have a duty to cooperate with each other in making arrangements to improve children's wellbeing.

The relevant partners as described in the "statutory guidance on inter-agency co-operation to improve the wellbeing of children" include among others:

- District Councils in two tier authorities. Services provided by the district council which impact upon children's wellbeing include housing, leisure and recreation
- The Police Authority
- Primary Care Trusts (PCTs)

At present the OSC members are concentrating on these three, which they consider to be the major partners.

Buckinghamshire has a good record of working in partnership and this is recognised by members of the OSC. At this stage of their work the OSC is seeking answers to a

number of questions in order to be able to assess how quality partnerships can be brought to bear in the development of the new children's service.

The questions relate to the five but primarily to that of staying safe. Therefore members would be grateful if you could address the following questions:

- What do you see as the greatest risk(s) to children and young people?
- What is your organization doing to minimize risks to children and young people?
- How would you see your organization working with the other partners to children and young people safe?
- What do you see as the greatest challenge (or challenges) for the partnership?
- How would recognize improvement?