



Title	Children's Safeguarding and the future role of Member Children Champions
For further information about this report please contact	Bill Hunt Deputy Chief Executive 01926 456014 bill.hunt@warwickdc.gov.uk
Wards of the District directly affected	All
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?	No
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number	
Background Papers	None

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	No
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	No
Equality and Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken	n/a

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive		Author
Head of Service		n/a
CMT		
Section 151 Officer		Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer		Andrew Jones
Finance		
Portfolio Holder(s)		Cllr. Mobbs
Consultation & Community Engagement		
n/a		
Final Decision?	No	
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		
Report to Executive		

1. **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report makes proposals relating to the potential future role that elected member Children's Champions could undertake within the context of the Council's Safeguarding Children responsibilities.
- 1.2 Subject to discussion of the proposals at this Committee it is proposed that a subsequent report is taken to Executive seeking formal approval for this Committee's recommendations in this area.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That Committee notes that a s11 audit has been completed and submitted to the Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board and that the findings of this audit will be reported to Executive in September 2014.
- 2.2 That Committee agrees or amends the proposals as to the future role of the Council's Member Children's Champions as set out in paragraphs 3.5 to 3.8.
- 2.3 That, subject to agreement of recommendation 2.2, Committee instructs officers to prepare a further report to Executive for presentation in conjunction with the report on the outcome of the s11 audit.

3. **REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The Children's Act 2004 created statutory responsibilities for district councils in the field of Children's Safeguarding. Section 10 of the Act places a reciprocal duty on the Children's Services Authority for an area (in our case the County Council) and local district councils within that area to co-operate in inter-agency work to improve children's well-being. Section 11 places a duty on named agencies, including district councils, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- 3.2 The Act also required Children's Services Authorities to establish and maintain local Safeguarding Children Boards and for those agencies with Section 10 responsibilities to support the operation of those Boards. Consequently this Council has been a member of the Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) since its inception in October 2005. The WSCB's purpose is to coordinate the activities of its members in relation to all safeguarding and child welfare issues within the county and to ensure the effectiveness of the work being undertaken by each individual organisation. Further information on the WSCB and its work is available at: <http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/WSCB>
- 3.3 The WSCB has recently instigated an audit of all member organisations designed to allow them to self-assess their compliance with all aspects of their Section 11 duties against the minimum standard. The completed self-assessment audit report will be presented to Executive in September and will allow the Council to highlight and consider its response to areas where further development or improvement is required.
- 3.4 The Council already has a senior officer (Deputy Chief Executive BH) as its Children's Champion, who attends the WSCB and is responsible for ensuring the Council is fulfilling its Section 10 and 11 responsibilities. However, the s11 audit has highlighted that although the Council has identified 2 Member Children's Champions, Councillor Gallagher from the Executive and Councillor Falp as

Cahir of Overview & Scrutiny Committee, their role is currently ill-defined. It is therefore proposed that an accompanying report to the September Executive sets out the proposed future role for consideration and formal approval, subject to the consideration and debate by this Committee.

- 3.5 It is proposed that the Member Children's Champions must work within the existing political and managerial structures of the Council and will not have any formal decision making powers or delegated authority. They must not commit the Council in any way or act in a manner that could be interpreted as being contrary to an established policy or practice. However, they may, with the consent of the Leader of the Council be a media contact in respect of child safeguarding or welfare issues.
- 3.6 It is further proposed that the role of the Member Children's Champions should be to:
- Ensure that sound arrangements to protect children and promote their welfare are in place within the district council;
 - Ensure that the Council is promoting and engaging in effective interagency cooperation and collaboration in these fields;
 - Undertake reasonable investigations so as to be able to form a view of the quality of the Council's child safeguarding activities and work with the officer Children's Champion to improve quality and/or effectiveness whenever appropriate;
 - Act as a 'critical friend' to constructively challenge officers and members on child safeguarding and welfare issues as appropriate;
 - Promote awareness of child safeguarding and welfare issues and the activities and processes undertaken by this Council amongst elected members.
- 3.7 In the short term there are likely to be a number of areas where the Council needs to develop its systems and processes, as identified by the s11 audit. It is envisaged that the Member Children's Champions will take an overview of progress against any future Action Plan approved by Executive and ensure that appropriate update reports are brought to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Executive.
- 3.8 There are also likely to be a number of areas where it is envisaged that the Member Children's Champions may wish to work directly with the officer Champion in the development of specific actions or activities. There is no definitive list of such work which it is envisaged will be defined by the Champions themselves but current examples might include:
- Assisting in the development of a robust training programme for elected members and provide feedback on its effectiveness;
 - Ensuring that child safeguarding and welfare issues are given due weight in the induction programme for newly elected members after the May 2015 elections;
 - Assisting in the development of a formal Child Protection Policy
- 3.9 It is recommended that Committee considers the proposed role and determines if any amendments are required to the proposals set out above to enable the proposed report to be taken to the September Executive.

4. POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 The Council's statutory duties are set out within the Children's Act 2004. However, the principles of child safeguarding and the promotion of children's welfare are relevant to all the Council's activities.

5. BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK

- 5.1 There are no budgetary implications arising from this report.

6. RISKS

- 6.1 There is a risk in having Member Children's Champions that they could be perceived to be operating outside of the Council's recognised political and managerial arrangements. This risk can be mitigated by the adoption of a set of principles governing the work of the Champions, as set out in paragraph 3.5. Subject to the debate at this Committee it is recommended that these principles form part of the proposed subsequent report to Executive.
- 6.2 Whilst there is no specific or statutory requirement for a local authority to have Member Children's Champions there is a risk that, if they don't, elected members become disconnected from and unaware of the Council's statutory responsibilities and the actions and activities that the Council has in place to fulfil them.

7. ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S) CONSIDERED

- 7.1 One alternative option would be for the Council to operate without any member Children's Champions. Equally, a range of options exist as to what their role within the organisation should be if they are to be formally appointed. It is, therefore, proposed that these issues are fully debated by the Committee to allow a formal report setting out proposals on Member Children's Champions to be taken to Executive for formal approval.