

Director of Children's Services and Director of Adult  
Services

Test of Assurance

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to set out how Stockton Borough Council has assured its executive and political leadership that the arrangements in relation to filling the posts of Director of Children's Services and Director of Adults Services in compliance with the statutory obligations placed on the Council and the Statutory Guidance relating to the roles are sound.

## **National Context**

Statutory Guidance in relation to the roles of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services was released by the Department for Education in 2005, 2009 and 2012 and was updated in 2013. Local Authorities in England must have regard to it in relation to the appointment of the Director of Children's Services and the designation of the Lead Member for Children's Services. The guidance covers the legislative basis for the two appointments, roles and responsibilities of the post holders, and how this relates to Government expectations. Should authorities depart from it they need to have 'clear reasons for doing so'. Clauses within it have the potential to present a risk to the Council should the necessary assurances not be in place.

The clear requirements within the guidance arising from one of the recommendations in the Munro review are that authorities should give due consideration to protecting the discrete roles and responsibilities of Directors of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services before allocating them any additional functions other than children's services. Whilst it is legally permissible for the DCS and LMCS roles to be combined with other operational and political functions, where authorities choose to allocate additional functions they should subject the decision to a local test of assurance that is reviewed on a regular basis. The DCS and LMCS are appointed for the purposes of discharging the education and children's social services functions of the local authority and the guidance states that "local authorities must ensure that there is both a single officer and a single elected member each responsible for both education and children's social care", and that, "local authorities should give due consideration to protecting the discrete roles and responsibilities of the DCS and LMCS before allocating to them any additional functions other than children's services". The assurance needs to ensure that the focus on outcomes for children and young people is not weakened or diluted as a result of having additional responsibilities and due consideration needs to be given to the potential impact on adult services where a DCS role is combined with that of the Director of Adults Services.

Statutory Guidance relating to the role of Director of Adult's Services was issued in 2005 and whilst it makes reference to the Lead Member role it should be noted that this was in advance of the statutory arrangements relating to Health and Well Being Boards and no up to date guidance in relation to adult services has been issued.

Around a third of local authorities with responsibility for children and adult services have combined the responsibilities into a single Director portfolio. In some instances these also include additional responsibilities such as housing, public health, education and learning. The key reasons for combining functional responsibilities into a single post include:

- Having a single conversation with key stakeholders (particularly partners in the health sector)
- The opportunity to focus on a 'whole family' approach and integrated commissioning of services
- The need to make savings in local government budgets

### **The Stockton position**

The decision to create the post of Director of Children's and Adult's Services is a long standing one which was taken in 2004 following the outcome of Planning for the Future 2 , which created the new service groupings of Children, Education and Social Care, Development and Neighbourhood Services and Resources and associated Corporate Director roles. There have subsequently been 2 incumbents (including the current one). Following the departure of the previous incumbent of the joint role to a new role out of the local authority area, an assessment was made of the merits and risks of continuing the arrangement and for the reasons outlined below it was deemed appropriate to continue with the appointment as a joint one.

- The integration of 'people' related services in to one Service Grouping supports joined up strategic planning, commissioning and delivery
- Provides a focus on the whole family
- Supports transition
- Facilitates effective and efficient service delivery

Following the statutory guidance issued in 2012 a risk assessment was undertaken and presented to the Corporate Management Team and to Cabinet for challenge. The outcome was subsequent endorsement of the arrangements. Following a further update to the guidance in 2013 and the identification of a number of issues pertaining to the functional areas covered by the role the risk assessment was again reviewed. The key areas of risk are associated with the increase in numbers accessing Children's Social Care Services and capacity within the service. This is reported regularly to Cabinet alongside the actions being taken to address it.

### **The Assurance Test**

The risk assessments identified in the previous section are part of a wider assurance framework that provides scrutiny and challenge to practice and performance in relation to the areas of children's and adult's services and this framework can be found at the end of this document.

The risk assessment was undertaken independently from the Children, Education and Social Care Service Grouping and was subject to challenge by the Corporate Management Team, Corporate Governance Group and the Council's Cabinet.

# Assurance Framework

