

Assistant to the Executive – Children’s Services (12 month Review)

Primary Departmental Links: Principal link to Children’s Services with engagement across all departments of the County Council as required. Additionally, links to partner organisations, service users and other key forums as determined by the Executive Lead Member for Children’s Services.

Key outcomes:

The essence of the role is to help support and co-ordinate political engagement and to provide political advice and support for the developing work of the County Council in respect of children and young people against the backdrop of the Council’s statutory responsibilities as set out in the following primary pieces of legislation:

- Children Act 2004
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Education Act 2002 and 2011

The need for robust and effective political engagement is critical as the Department seeks to manage ongoing demand and cost pressures, embrace the potential offered by new technology, and respond and recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. Ensuring high quality services to safeguard children and young people, ensuring the right support and challenge to schools and colleges, and securing the right level of provision for vulnerable children is essential for the County’s future. All of these outcomes require a wide engagement across a range of stakeholders to ensure a common endeavour.

Key Functional Areas:

- To directly support and advise the Leader, Deputy Leader and Executive Lead Member for Children on all aspects of the council’s work with vulnerable children.

The Assistant to the Executive Member has taken on a lead role with regards to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), has taken on a governorship at a SEND school and has advised the Executive Lead Member (ELM) on a variety of issues relating to SEND (including deficits, Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) and outcomes and quality of teaching in special schools).

The Assistant to the Executive Member attends Cabinet and Private Cabinet, attends 1;1s with the Director of Children’s Services (DCS) and ELM, is active re Children and Young People Select Committee, Corporate Parenting Board, Children and Families Advisory Panel and the Education Advisory Panel ensuring that she is representing the Executive at all these meetings sometimes alongside, but on other occasions, representing the ELM on her broad portfolio.

- To support the development of and maintain political links with key partner organisations such as schools, police, NHS and district councils.
See above re governorship and schools.

The Assistant to the Executive Member has also visited schools frequently, representing the ELM and deputises for the ELM on the Health and Wellbeing Board. As stated above the Assistant to the Executive Member represents ELM on the Corporate Parenting Board which has a strong police and health representation and has made the appropriate connections.

- To attend the Children and Young People's Select Committee, the Children and Families Advisory Panel, The Education Advisory Panel and the Corporate Parenting Board and supports and deputises as appropriate for the Executive Lead Member – *recognising that the role does not have an Executive function.*

The Assistant to the Executive Member has attended all of these meetings, supports and feeds back to the ELM/Deputy Leader.

- To assist in the establishment and maintenance of relationships with service users, in particular children and young people, through the Corporate Parenting Board and the Youth Council.

The Assistant to the Executive Member attends the Corporate Parenting Board, has visited the County Council's children's homes and supports the County Council's Youth MPs thus contributing to the establishment and maintenance the council's relationships with children and young people.

- To actively represent Hampshire County Council, including deputising for Executive Members, *as appropriate*, on key forums associated with children and young people and schools, such as Schools Forum and the Local Safeguarding Partnership Board.

The Assistant to the Executive Member regularly deputises at Schools Forum. Opportunities to deputise at the Children's Safeguarding Board have been fewer however, the Assistant to the Executive Member is ready and able to do so not least due to her participation in every 1:1 with DCS.

- Assist the Executive Member, Leader and wider Cabinet colleagues in making representations as appropriate on areas of regional and national policy development.

The Assistant to the Executive Member has attended all LGA lead member meetings on behalf of Hampshire and has contributed towards collective positioning on SEND, the Education White Paper and the independent review of children's social care. She has also attended LGA leadership courses and has brought those skills to bear in holding the DCS to account.

- Assist the Executive Member as required to communicate the County Council's position with regards to children and young people related matters, as agreed through established corporate communication processes and channels.

Communications are generally in the ELM name but The Assistant to the Executive Member has contributed towards the formulation and content of such comms.

- Support the Executive Lead Member in areas of policy development as instructed. This may include, but not be limited to:
 - learning and applying lessons from Covid-19
 - safeguarding children and young people
 - strengthening the voice of service users, their families, carers and wider communities in the developing work of services for children, young people and families

The Assistant to the Executive Member has supported the ELM as outlined above in all of these areas and has brought a particular focus on Covid and the impact upon children in schools.

- Promotes Hampshire County Council's objectives policies and priorities, and associated partnerships as a key contribution to promoting the welfare and improving outcomes for children across the county.

See above re Health and Wellbeing Board, governorship, Corporate Parenting Board and so on.

Contrary to the Executive Member Lead Member for Children's Services, the Assistant to the Executive – Children's Services is not a statutory role and post does not carry Executive decision-making powers. However, importantly, it does provide political support and advice to the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services directly in her role, and as required to the Leader and other Executive Members.

Scale of financial gearing/impact of work undertaken:

The role encompasses a broad range of statutory services requiring engagement across a range of stakeholders.

The Department has a gross revenue budget of some £241m in 2021/22, which continues to come under increasing demand and cost pressures. The Department faces a further savings' targets of £21m by 2022/23, which must be met on top of the £68m savings already between 2017/2021. This role will play an important part in supporting the County Council's interface with its stakeholders and the public to ensure that decisions on what the Department can and cannot provide in the future are informed by the views of residents and service users. This applies equally to engagement on new ways of working, as the County Council seeks to maximise the positive innovations arising from the pandemic.