



meeting	SOCIAL SERVICES STANDING SELECT COMMITTEE	
date	20 th July 2004	agenda item number

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

INTERIM REPORT – PROPOSED MANAGEMENT OF SHORT TERM BREAKS PROVISION AT MINSTER VIEW

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to:

- (a) inform the Select Committee that the capacity of the short term breaks unit at Minster View is to be temporarily reduced from 8 to 4 places whilst the nature and level of the service provided is reviewed. The revenue released from the service will be used to support a range of alternative supports for disabled children.
- (b) to seek approval to the establishment of a Select Committee Study Group to look at the Provision of Short Term Breaks to Disabled Children offered by the Department.

2. Information and Advice

- 2.1 Minster View is a residential unit in Southwell which provides care to children with severe learning difficulties and challenging behaviour on a long term and short break basis. The eligibility criteria are attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.2 The Best Value Review of Services for Disabled Children raised issues relating to the occupancy levels of the short break unit and this has continued to be an area of concern on each occasion the Improvement Plan has been reviewed by the Select Committee. A commitment was made to the Select Committee in January 2004 that occupancy figures would increase to 80% by December 2004. It now appears unlikely

that this can be achieved within the current Statement of Purpose and eligibility criteria for Minster View.

- 2.3 There has been an ongoing debate regarding the eligibility criteria for the service. One view is that the criteria should be changed to accommodate children with less challenging behaviour and/or mild to moderate learning disabilities. However, the policy is that residential short breaks are appropriate when all other forms of support have been explored and are unable to meet the needs of the child. This proposal will allow a review to take place and ensure that revenue from Minster View is used to benefit disabled children while this is taking place. Any review of Minster View occupancy cannot be done in isolation of other services that are offered by the Department to disabled children.

2.4 Outline of Proposal

- 2.4.1 A delegated decision has been submitted which proposes that the short term break unit at Minster View be temporarily reduced by 4 beds, for up to 12 months. This would mean that staffing levels would be reduced to 75% of current establishment:-

- Residential Social Workers – reduction of 8 fte posts
- Residential Care Workers – reduction of 1.5 fte posts
- Assistant Manager Posts – reduction of 1.5 fte posts

- 2.4.2 Current staff vacancies are approaching 25% of staffing establishment therefore this reduction could be achieved without affecting any existing staff. Ancillary staff levels are already consistent with the staffing establishment of a 12 bed unit.

2.5 Strengths of Proposal

- (a) The occupancy of the smaller unit would be near to 100%
- (b) Unit Costs would remain similar to existing levels given the staffing reduction
- (c) No staff would be directly affected given the level of current vacancies
- (d) Patterns of care or levels of care will not be affected as it is possible to be flexible about the staff rota – this will result in the overall average occupancy figure being 4
- (e) The reduction gives the Authority an opportunity to focus on Minster View's role, and consider options for the short breaks service.

2.6 Disadvantage of Proposal

- 2.6.1 The number of families receiving a residential short break service will remain static over this period. Capacity for newly referred families will only be met by the reduction/cessation of existing arrangements.

2.7 Review of Criteria for Review

2.7.1 A review of the short breaks service based at Minster View is planned. Issues that would be considered would include:-

- (a) levels of unmet need for short breaks
- (b) how does Minster View 'fit' with other services?
- (c) should the eligibility criteria for Minster View be amended?
- (d) could the service be reconfigured to enable a wider range of children to access the service?
- (e) how can it be ensured that the individual needs of children continue to be met if a broader spectrum of need is accommodated?

2.8 Financial Implications

2.8.1 This proposal will allow 12 months funding currently committed to staffing at Minster View to be released to fund other services.

- budget released 2004-05 - £243,085
- budget released 2005-06 - £66,235

2.8.2 This funding is to be used to meet the costs of placements for disabled children via the Specialist Placement Panel and increase the amount of money available for Direct Payments to families with disabled children.

3. Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that the Select Committee:

- (a) note and comment on the report
- (b) approve the establishment of a Study Group of 5 Members to look at the provision of short term breaks to disabled children as outlined in Appendix 2 and bring a final report back to the Select Committee in December 2004.

STUART BROOK
Director of Social Services

(comm/Select/SCSS147)