

minutes



Meeting SOCIAL SERVICES STANDING SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Wednesday, 17th March 2004 (commencing at 10.30 am)

membership

Persons absent are marked with `A`

COUNCILLORS

Chris Baron (Chair)
Joe Lonergan MBE (Vice Chair)

	John Bell		Peter D Prebble
A	Mrs Sue Bennett		Chris Preston
	Steve Carroll	A	R S Robinson
	Rod Kempster	A	Rita Sharpe
A	J T A Napier		K Walker
	R Needham		

MINUTES

The minutes of the last meetings of the Select Committee held on 27th January 2004 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:-

Councillor Mrs Sue Bennett
“ J T A Napier (on other County Council business)
“ R S Robinson
“ Rita Sharpe

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

None.

KEY ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES IN SOCIAL SERVICES AND THE FORWARD PLAN

Councillor Anthony, the Portfolio Holder for Social Services introduced his report. In response to a question from Councillor Baron, Councillor Anthony explained that one of the great difficulties in employing care workers was around their present salary. He added that he was taking a report to the Labour Group which it was hoped would address these issues.

In response to a question from Councillor Prebble, Councillor Anthony stated that the Department had to use agency social workers as they were not able to meet demand. He added that last week the Department had decided to sever links with one organisation due to the lack of training they provided.

Councillor Lonergan referred to the establishment of Childrens Trusts and commented that this seemed a confused area where there was a need for a steer. Councillor Anthony stated that the establishment of the Childrens Trusts was complicated and that it was not easy. He added that we had Education and Social Services working together but he wondered whether they were working as well as they could. Jill Pedley, Assistant Director of Social Services explained that the scope had broadened and that the latest versions confirmed that. She stated that they had proposed to bring to Primary Care Trusts and Members that the scope should include all children who needed an assessment requiring specialist services to be part of the Trust. The purpose was to co-ordinate services better. She added that the establishment of the Trust was a learning process as it was a new area and was the only one in a county area. Councillor Preston thought that the Select Committee should have a report on the Childrens Trusts so that it could be scrutinised and the Select Committee have some input. Councillor Baron suggested that there should be an update at the June meeting of the Select Committee and that it should be a standard item thereafter.

Councillor Lonergan referred to the feedback from the Social Services Inspectorate on performance targets for Social Services Departments and asked what were the "difficulties with health". Councillor Anthony stated that he would make a copy of the report available to members of the Select Committee. He stated that the health problems were around partnership working with 9 Primary Care Trusts. He added that the different levels of salary between Health and Social Services staff caused difficulties in joint working.

It was agreed that a report on the Childrens Trusts be considered at the June meeting of the Select Committee.

SERVICES FOR DISABLED CHILDREN

Jill Pedley, Assistant Director of Social Services introduced the report. She stated that she was aware there was disquiet at the speed of implementing the review. She added that she felt the Department had been over ambitious on the originally proposed timescales. She pointed out that the Saturday Clubs were a brand new service. She commented that the environment had changed since the review and that there was now more emphasis on family support through Quality Protects. New OFSTED regulations had had an impact as well. The Department had limited resources and staff to take the issues forward which were very complex and there was no quick fix solution.

Jenny Strickland from the Play Centre stated that a copy of the consultation report on the Saturday activities project had just been completed. This was with families and the young people themselves through 8 fun days which were run in all the Districts. Those not attending the fun days would be spoken to separately, She explained that the aim was to establish local steering groups and encourage community involvement together with the use of mainstream leisure facilities. She added that the next stage would be to run a pilot in May/July in Bassetlaw. She indicated that Bassetlaw had been chosen because it was receiving no service other than the statutory relief. A new team of workers was being recruited to deliver the services but there was a need for proper induction before it was run out to all Districts in September. She stated that there was a need to make sure the services was productive and safe.

Councillor Baron stated that he was disappointed only two service users were at the Gedling meeting. He wondered how many more there were in the community that did not know about it. He commented that there had been a two year wait for the befriending service which was an alternative to respite. He wanted to ensure that the Select Committee had a further update on progress by the July meeting. Councillor Rita Sharpe stated she was disappointed that there was only a few people at the fun day at Pleasley. She added that it was a shame that the Saturday activities were not being rolled out faster and wanted to see more progress. Jenny Strickland stated that this was a complex matter and that the registration and recruiting of teams and OFSTED registrations held matters up. She commented that although there were a small number attending the consultation other parents were expressing an interest through word of mouth. Jill Pedley stated that now that there was the Childrens Trust we wanted Saturday Clubs to be part of the range of services e.g. Culture and Community Department providing activities.

Councillor Preston stated that the Beeston meeting had been quite well attended. He thought that the Saturday activities would be over-subscribed.

Councillor Baron asked for all Bassetlaw Members to be notified when the Saturday project started.

It was agreed that a report be made to the June meeting of the Select Committee outlining progress.

PROGRESS ON SERVICES TO CHILDREN IN NEED REPORT

Tim Brooke from the Social Services Department introduced the report.

Councillor Lonergan commented that a couple of the indicators were encouraging. The reduction in vacancies and absenteeism was good news. He asked why Social Services was not included in the Corporate Customer Services Centre. He added that there was still concerns about the availability of computers, particularly laptops. Mr Brooke explained that the aim was to continue to provide a dedicated out of hours service so that the quality was there.

In response to a question, Mr Shilton from the Social Services Department explained that last year Meadow House had established a flexi work pilot project which encouraged staff to work at home as part of their work. This was a pilot and there was a need to test it further. He added that there were draft guidelines over strict

limitations on the use and security. He pointed out that it was no different to carrying a computer compared with carrying case files. Councillor Prebble asked whether the Department had looked at voicemail recognition to avoid Social Workers typing up reports.

DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

This report was noted.

WORK PROGRAMME

The programme of work was noted.

The meeting closed at 11.40 am.

CHAIR

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