

Report



meeting	SOCIAL SERVICES STANDING SELECT COMMITTEE	
date	16 th December 2003	agenda item number

REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES STANDING SELECT COMMITTEE

JOINT WORKING BETWEEN THE PENSION SERVICE AND ADULT CARE FINANCIAL SERVICES IN SOCIAL SERVICES

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To inform the Select Committee of the draft report on the Joint Working between the Pension Service and Adult Care Financial Services in Social Services.

2. Information and Advice

- 2.1 The Department of Work and Pensions has invited Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Council Social Services Departments to participate in a pioneering step towards the development of a Third Age Service. The attached draft report is to be considered by Cabinet on the 7th January 2004 for final ratification of this initiative.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee note and comment on the attached draft report.

COUNCILLOR C. BARON
Chair of the Social Services Standing Select Committee

(Comm/MISC/FWBPS.doc /RH)

Report



Draft 6

meeting	CABINET	
date	7th January 2004.	agenda item number

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR SOCIAL SERVICES

JOINT WORKING BETWEEN THE PENSION SERVICE AND ADULT CARE FINANCIAL SERVICES IN SOCIAL SERVICES

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 One of the Government's manifesto commitments is to a "Third Age Service" which would coordinate all advice and access to services for older people, such as benefits, social care, health and housing. The policy direction for this Third Age Service is with the Department for Work and Pensions.
- 1.2 The Department for Work and Pensions has invited Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Council Social Services Departments to participate in a pioneering step towards the development of a Third Age Service. This would be to develop joint teams which would bring together The Pension Service Local Service and the Financial Assessment Service Team (FAST) of Nottinghamshire County Council Social Services Department (Adult Care Financial Services, who both visit service users in their own home, offer benefits advice and collect financial information.
- 1.3 This report is to seek Cabinet approval for this initiative following the outline approval contained in the report to Cabinet on "Best Value Review - Promotion of Independence of Older People".

2. Information and Advice

a. Pension Service Local Service

The Pension Service is the part of the Department for Work and Pensions whose role is to "understand the needs and wishes of today's pensioners and future pensioners and providing State Financial support for pensioners". The "local service" of the Pension Service exists to deliver a face-to-face service for the most vulnerable pensioners and their representatives.

b. Fairer Charging

“Fairer Charging” is Department of Health guidance to Social Services Departments which provides a framework for charging their service users according to their ability to pay for adult non-residential social services such as Home Care and Direct Payments. This guidance also requires Social Services Departments to provide full welfare rights advice and assistance for the service user, their carer and any other people living in the service user’s home. In Nottinghamshire, FAST provide this service. This team provides advice and charge assessments for service users of both pensionable and working age. There is scope for joint working with the Pension Service in the provision of advice, financial assessments and benefit claims.

c. Supporting People

Supporting People is an Office of the Deputy Prime Minister initiative, which separated accommodation related support charges from Housing Benefit and created new Supporting People teams to administer this function separately. Part of the charging structure for Supporting People services is linked to Fairer Charging. Supporting People services are provided for adults of all ages, although most people receiving these payments are over pensionable age.

d. Modernisation

All areas of government are charged with modernisation and improvement of their services. In particular, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is encouraging local government to develop Information and Communications Technology based solutions to service provision issues such as front line information and the joining up of information provision. Local government is also committed to the implementation of “e-government” by 2005.

e. Best Value

Nottinghamshire County Council has recently completed a Best Value Review on the Promotion of Independence of Older People¹. Two of the recommendations most relevant to Third Age Service joint teams were:

1. To improve access for information about existing services and to promote new services and to enhance advice on benefit entitlement.
2. Exploring pilot status with the Department for Work and Pensions in developing a Third Age Service. The first phase of the Third Age

¹ Best Value Review. Promotion of Independence of Older People July 2003 Nottinghamshire County Council.

Service is expected to build on current activity on Fairer Charging, Supporting People and Social Services Payments and Collection.

f. Legal Services Commission

The Legal Services Commission has the responsibility of coordinating and developing community advice and monitoring the quality of advice services. It does this through encouraging organisations to be part of the Community Legal Service; join one of the two local Community Legal Service Partnerships and to meet the Legal Services Commission Quality Mark. Nottinghamshire County Council is committed to the Community Legal Service. Nottinghamshire County Council advice and information services providers meet the appropriate Community Legal Service Quality Mark standards.

3. Work to Date

a. Meetings

Interagency discussion has taken place on Third Age Service development with appropriate partners in Nottinghamshire County Council, District Councils and voluntary organisations. There have also been discussions with Nottingham City Council. They have decided not to progress to joint teams with the Pension Service so quickly.

b. Steering Group

A joint Nottinghamshire County Council Social Services Department / Pension Service local service steering group has met regularly to oversee the work behind this report and progress Third Age Service development.

c. Quality Mark

As part of the Community Legal Service, Nottinghamshire County Council is in partnership with the Legal Services Commission to develop a new Quality Mark accreditation for FAST. This would result in Nottinghamshire Welfare Rights Service being accredited by the Legal Services Commission to award the "General Help Quality Mark" to the Financial Assessment Service Team.

d. Welfare Rights

Nottinghamshire Welfare Rights Service supervises and supports the Financial Assessment Service Team through training, casework supervision and audit as part of the Service Level Agreement between Nottinghamshire Welfare Rights Service and the Financial Assessment Service Team.

e. Third Age Service Working Group

Nottinghamshire County Council representatives attend the national Third Age Service Working Group in London with the Department for Work and Pensions to aid the development and coordination of Third Age Service.

- f. The Pension Service local service produces monthly internal joint team operational partnership development news to keep staff up to date on joint team operational developments in the East Midlands.
- g. This work is linked in to the work of the Countywide Older Persons Forum as the vehicle for a countywide strategy on ageing.
- h. A member of Nottinghamshire County Council Social Services Department staff attended a Department for Work and Pensions workshop in Glasgow on the development of Third Age Service.
- i. Nottinghamshire County Council Social Services Department gave a presentation to the Department for Work and Pensions Client Board.
- j. A member of Nottinghamshire County Council Social Services Department staff represents the Local Government Association on Third Age Service development and chaired a Local Government Association meeting on Joint Teams for other local authorities.

4. Immediate Aims

4.1 First Steps

a. Introduction

The Pension Service has invited Nottinghamshire County Council to participate in the development of joint teams as a first step towards a Third Age Service. This section looks at proposals for partnership working between the Pension Service and Nottinghamshire County Council Social Services Department to improve the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of financial assessments and advice for adult care service users and older people.

b. What are Joint Teams?

The aim of a joint team is to meet, fully, the needs of the partnership organisations while delivering “best in class” customer service.

A joint team exists where a service is delivered in an integrated partnership between The Pension Service and a Social Services Department, where the operational management of the team rests under a single, local authority wide, Management Board. Members of the joint team must be able to perform the full range of assessment, information, advice, data capture and verification duties required by the

partners. Partners must be committed to developing the systems, processes and infrastructure required to reduce duplication and focus on customer service. (From "Beyond Green Standard", Pension Service document 2003.)

c. Composition of Joint Teams

As a minimum, the joint team will include all of the Pension Service Local Service staff covering Nottinghamshire and an appropriate staffing commitment from Social Services.

This integration of local Pension Service staff and the Financial Assessment Service Team should be the initial building block of the wider Third Age programme.

d. Independent Advice

Service users may need to access independent advice across a range of issues including benefit eligibility. This remains an important individual right. Nottinghamshire County Council Welfare Rights Service will, therefore, not become members of the joint team as they undertake independent information and advocacy. They will however, be, involved in the direction of the wider Third Age Service through the new Joint Management Board.

e. Who are our Service Users?

Social Services Adult Services make provision to a wider age range than older people. In order to provide a consistent service, and in recognition of the resources contributed to a joint team by the local authority, it is accepted that the whole joint team will also provide services to the under 60s. Training and support will be available to the staff members to reflect this. In addition, arrangements will need to be negotiated with Jobcentre Plus to facilitate as smooth a "hand off" as possible.

f. Joint Team Development

The initial partners of the joint team should negotiate with other potential partners [see Partnership below] such as District Councils, Legal Services Commission, Health, voluntary advice providers and the voluntary sector to ensure that Third Age Service developments are agreed and directed through integrated management arrangements. This partnership is also critical to take advantage of the new flexibility on financial information verification and claim form dating.

The immediate aim of a partnership between the Pension Service and the Social Services Department should be to develop full working relationships with a new single line management structure.

4.2 **Virtual Team**

4.2.1 The first stage in this development should be full cooperation between the Pension Service Local Service and the FAST. This may involve cooperation in joint training, common administrative resources, data sharing such as exchanging financial information and shadowing.

4.3 **Co-located Teams**

4.3.1 The final stage in the development of joint teams would be a single line management structure, with team members from Social Services and Pension Service doing the same work in the same base or bases sharing the same information systems working to a single line management structure.

5. **Change Management**

a. Dedicated project

The Pension Service has appointed a manager and deputy to oversee the development of joint teams. Nottinghamshire County Council Social Services Department has set up a steering group of officers to develop the project. The whole change management process should be managed as a project using the "Prince 2" project management approach as local and central government share this approach.

b. Process mapping

The steering group has completed an outline of the current roles and structures of the Pension Service Local Service and the Financial Assessment Service Team.

c. Management in Pension Service and Nottinghamshire County Council

The steering group has become aware of the need for temporary additional project management resources within Nottinghamshire County Council. This would enable the project to meet the timescales, risk and quality requirements of central government. This post has been approved under Delegated Authority.

d. Risk Analysis

Substantial change involves substantial risk to the effectiveness of the current work of the Pension Service Local Service and the Financial Assessment Service Team. The steering group believe that a thorough risk analysis is necessary before the approval of each stage of this project. Members of the Fairer Charging Project Board have produced a preliminary risk list, which could be a starting point for development of this analysis.

6. Resource Implications

This project will require the harnessing of resources to enable two separate local and central government sections to join together under separate management. Fortunately additional resources will be available from the Department for Work and Pensions as “Third Age Programme Funds”. The Department for Work and Pensions is consulting with partners on a bidding process for this funding.

a. Start Up Costs

Additional temporary project management resources are currently a cost for Nottinghamshire County Council as well as resources to meet new estates requirements.

b. Information and Communications Technology

Joining up two substantial Information and Communications Technology systems will require a substantial resource. The Tameside National Benefits Project has already commissioned some work from Microsoft, but local work will be needed to link the local and national Information and Communications Technology systems of the Pension Service and Social Services.

Additional resources will be needed to enable both Pension Service and FAST to have access to the service user’s current benefit data.

7. Legal Implications

a. Information Sharing/Data Protection

Service users have to give their permission for their personal details to be passed to other agencies. A single agency between the Pension Service and Nottinghamshire County Council will be able to collect data, but while the two services remain separate, it will be important to ensure that service users give their permission for data sharing.

b. Independent Advice

Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottinghamshire voluntary advice agencies are part of the Community Legal Service. They are required to provide independent and impartial advice and advocacy in the interests of their client. This agreement will require a clear arrangement between the new service and independent advice providers such as Nottinghamshire Welfare Rights Service / Citizens Advice Bureau and the Pension Service / FAST to ensure that client confidentiality is maintained.

c. Verification

Part of the role of the joint team will be to check people's income and savings before awarding benefits or setting a service charge. The new service will have to be aware of data protection issues relating to the storing and use of electronic data.

d. Changes of Circumstances

Information on changes of circumstances such as increase of savings, deterioration of health or change of family composition may affect both benefit entitlement and Social Services charges. Staff must be aware that they must pass on these changes to the appropriate part of Department for Work and Pensions or the Social Services Department to minimise under or overpayments.

e. Appeals and Reviews

Some people will not agree with the decision of the Department for Work and Pensions or Social Services Department and may wish to appeal against a decision. There are strict time limits for Department for Work and Pensions appeals and reviews and the new team will have to be aware of these in advising service users.

f. Complaints and Comments

Both Pension Service and Social Services Departments have formal complaints processes. These have to be integrated as a seamless procedure.

8. Personnel Implications

a. Terms and Conditions

The Department for Work and Pensions set national terms and conditions for their staff and, through separate processes, staff grades have been set for staff employed by Nottinghamshire. For now, staff will retain their own terms and conditions as in other joint teams with Health. The project Board will eventually have to address the issues arising from these differences.

b. Line management

A single line management is proposed. This could mean a manager employed by either Pension Service or the Social Services Department with a deputy employed by the other agency.

c. Trade Union Consultation

This is a substantial change in working practice so staff and trade unions will be consulted and have already been informed of the potential changes arising.

d. Health and Safety

Health and safety is particularly important for staff who will visit people in their own homes. It is important that the team develop a seamless joint approach to these issues, working from the best practice of each.

e. Police Checks

There is no agreed protocol on police checks for members of joint teams, but as the team will be visiting vulnerable clients in their own homes and asking about the service users' financial resources the Strategic Board will have to address this issue.

9. Governance

a. Steering Group

A small steering group drawn from Nottinghamshire Social Services Department and Pension Service local service has met to develop these proposals.

b. Joint Management

Building on the work undertaken for both the Better Government for Older People Pilots and the Cabinet Office 'Learning Labs' scheme (which involved a range of external partners including local authorities, the Audit Commission and the voluntary sector), as well as the more recent lessons from Care Direct, the current operational joint teams have developed a management arrangement that has been proven to be successful.

This arrangement has been shown to support the development of an integrated culture within the team and also allows for the mutual support, training and knowledge sharing that is required to allow the individuals within the team to fulfil the range of tasks required of them. As it includes all partners, it provides a clear forum to reduce duplication and at the same time provides the accountability and clarity necessary to support the installation and use of Pension Service information technology into partner estate occupied by the joint team. Additionally this board provides the management framework necessary

to secure the Legal Services Commission accreditation at General Help level.

9.1 **Joint Management**

It is proposed that a two tier management structure be established with an additional Reference group which reports to the Joint Strategic Management Board.

- An overall Strategic Joint Management Board.
- An Operational Management Board charged with implementation and management of the joint teams.
- A Reference Group composed of groups and organisations who contribute at a policy level but have no need to be represented on the Joint Strategic or Operational Boards.

The Strategic Joint Management Board

The Strategic Board needs clear terms of reference to secure both the installation of Pension Service information technology and to qualify for the Community Legal Services Quality Mark. These terms of reference will also provide the clarity of shared ownership highlighted as important in recent Audit Commission and National Audit Office reports. The benefit of a specific multi-agency management board is one of the key lessons learnt from Care Direct and is supported by the experience from the joint teams that are currently in operation.

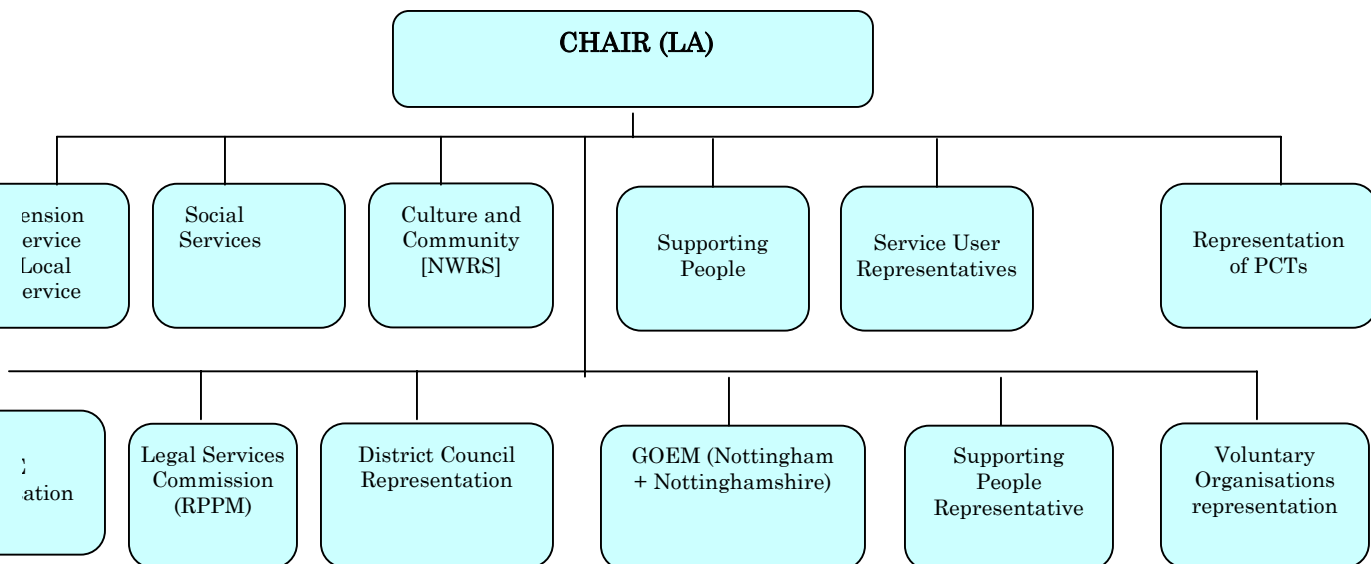
The Strategic Joint Management Board would be responsible for the progress from joint financial assessment teams to the development of Third Age Service.

The role of this board would include:

- Leadership of the local Third Age Service initiative.
- The preparation of strategic plans for the growth and development of the Third Age Service which includes:
 - Access to services
 - Promotion of services
 - Aims of service
 - Equalities policy
 - Service plans
 - Referral Policies
 - Structure Plans
 - People Management Plans
 - Quality Plans
 - Casework standards

- Running the service
 - Meeting client's needs
 - Planning Benefit Takeup campaigns
- Monitoring and evaluation of the performance of the teams and Third Age Service development.
 - Reporting on progress to central government.
 - Overall management responsibility for the local Third Age Service.
 - To ensure formal linkage with other local arrangements such as the Local Strategic Partnerships and the local Regional Legal Services Committee and Community Legal Services Partnerships (CLSPs).
 - To co-ordinate an integrated approach to the local funding of information and advice services within the area to maximise choice and minimise duplication in conjunction with the Legal Services Commission and their CLSPs.
 - Commissioning research and maintaining communication with other Third Age Services.
 - A commitment to the Community Legal Service and the Legal Services Commission Quality Mark.

Composition of Strategic Joint Management Board



The Operational Management Boards

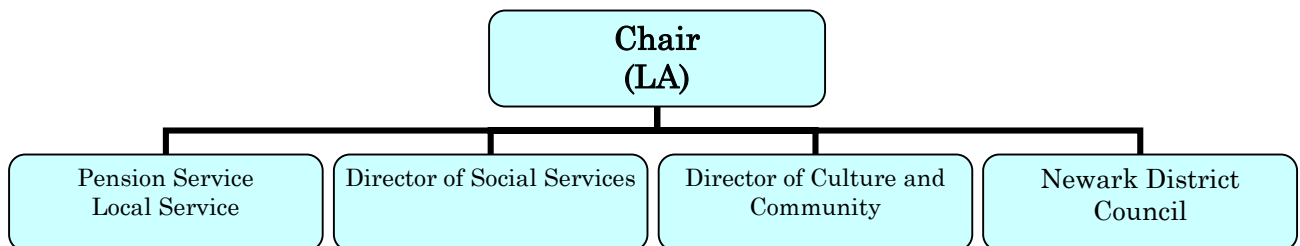
This Board has specific responsibilities. The main responsibilities of the board are:

- To oversee the day-to-day functioning and development of the joint team.
- To ensure performance is monitored against agreed targets and remedial action taken where necessary.
- To develop and coordinate the local priorities for the joint team.
- To provide a focal point for contact between the joint team and other services.
- To be responsible for the systems and processes required for attaining and maintaining the Community Legal Services Quality Mark.

Composition of Operational Management Board – Nottinghamshire

Initial Stage

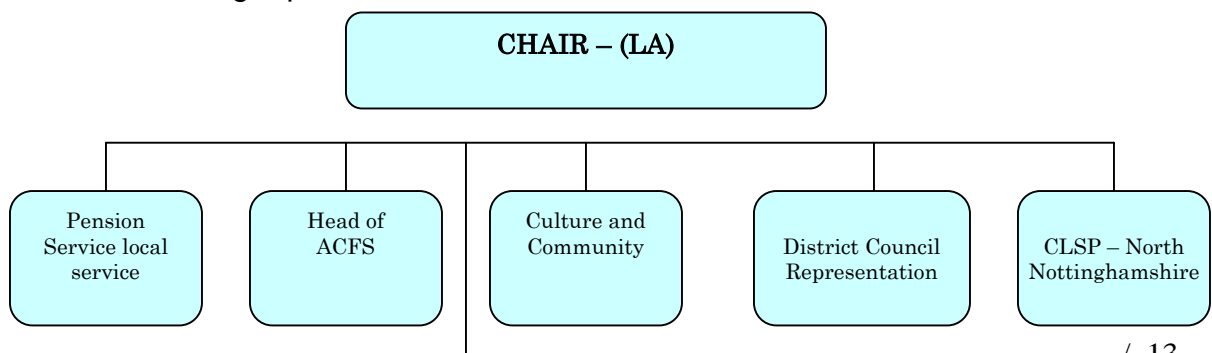
The Operational Management Board will eventually contain representatives from a wide range of stakeholder but a smaller Board will be needed to ensure the rapid deployment and management of joint Pension Service local Service and FAST joint teams.

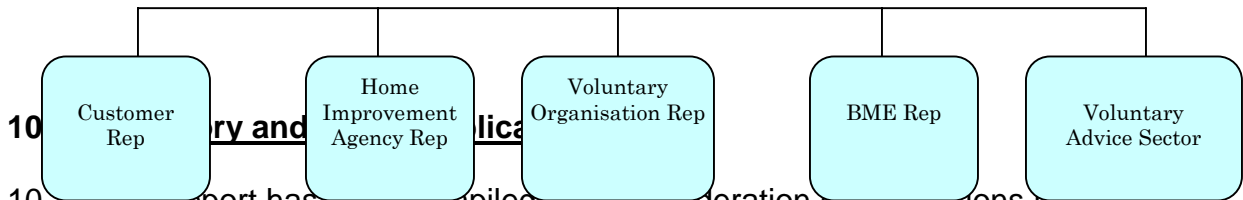


The group would comprise of representation from the Pensions Service local service; representation of the Director of Social Services; a representative from Director of Culture and Community Department and a representative from Newark and Sherwood District Council. The District Council representation would be from Newark as they are piloting co-operation on Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit.

Fully Functional Operational Board

This full Operational Board will have a wider membership of stakeholders and will be set up after the joint team is fully functional. This Board could include the following representation.





10.1 This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, personnel, crime and disorder and users. Where such implications are material, they have been brought out in the text of the report. Members' attention is, however, drawn to specifics as follows:

10.1.1 Personnel Implications

This is a proposal for a new form of cooperative working with a central Government agency. This should result in an improvement of service with no permanent additional staffing.

10.1.2 Financial Implications

Additional funding should be available from central government for start up costs. A project manager has been appointed to oversee the project.

10.1.3 Equal Opportunities Implications

This project will improve the delivery of benefits and services to Social Services users. Particular emphasis will be on serving people who are hardest to reach.

10.1.4 Implications for Service Users

This project should provide integrated assess to benefits and social services and also prevent the duplication of requests for financial implications.

11. Recommendations

11.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Endorse the work to date on the creation of joint teams between the Social Services Financial Assessment Service Team and the Pension Service local service.
2. Approve the creation of the Management Boards set out in the body of the report, which would direct the work of the Financial Assessment Service Team and the Pension Service local service teams while the staff remain the employees of their respective employers.
3. Agree that the Director continues discussions with the Pension Service local service and other partners including Nottingham City Council and

District Councils towards the development of an integrated Third Age Service.

4. Approve the Director reviewing the commissioning of advice by the authority to enable the delivery of a Third Age Service.
5. Agree that the Third Age Service initiative be integrated into the work on Best Value Promotion of Independence of Older People.

12. Head of Legal Services' Comments ()

12.1 *

13. Director of Resource's Financial Comment (JM 20/11/03)

13.1 The financial implications are contained within the report.

14. Background Papers Available for Inspection

14.1 Joint Working between the Pension Service and Nottinghamshire County Council 2003.

14.2 Best Value promotion of Independence of Older People Executive Summary 2003 [Nottinghamshire County Council].

14.3 Agreement between Pension Service and Local Government Association on Joint Teams 2003.

15. Electoral Division(s) Affected

15.1 Whole of Nottinghamshire.

COUNCILLOR DICK ANTHONY
Cabinet Member for Social Services

(COMM-CAB) JH/CAB155 (VS)
John Hannam