

Report



meeting	SOCIAL SERVICES STANDING SELECT COMMITTEE	
date	17 th March 2004	agenda item number

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

PROGRESS ON SERVICES TO CHILDREN IN NEED REPORT

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to:

- (a) provide the Select Committee with information on the progress of the Improvement Plan written in response to the Best Value Review of Services for Children in Need
- (b) allow the Select Committee to comment on the issues raised.

2. Information and Advice

2.1 The Best Value Improvement Plan is attached with the progress on each action indicated.

2.2 There has been significant progress across the actions outlined in the plan since it was presented to the Overview Select Committee in February 2003. This report identifies where tasks have been achieved or are nearing completion. As indicated some items have now been included in the business planning process and human resources strategy of the Department.

2.3 The implementation of Best Value and the service reviews conducted in children's services were considered by the Social Services Inspectorate during their inspection of children's services in June 2003. The processes were evaluated as effective and leading to good action planning and service development. The findings, conclusions and proposed actions from this Best Value Service Review demonstrated the County Council

- already recognised issues identified in the inspection a few months later and was already addressing them.
- 2.4 There have been considerable strides in the recruitment and retention of staff particularly with the development of the trainee programme and the benefits of this will impact on the supply of qualified social workers in children's services over the next few years.
 - 2.5 Many of the recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the social work service for children and families have been implemented. The roll out of the pilot of an enhanced administrative support service across all the Localities developing in parallel with the instigation of the Framework computer system will yield further efficiency and improve contact and access to the Teams which has been an issue at times for our families and partners.
 - 2.6 The decision not to include Social Services in the Corporate Customer Service Centres did effect the plans for how the Out of Hours Service would develop. The emphasis in this service has been on using a more flexible approach to shift patterns that are responsive to fluctuations in demand whilst maintaining a commitment to staff safety and a quality service.
 - 2.7 There has been an opportunity to strengthen the social work provision within Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and use the posts to expand the provision in the north of the county where the need was. The deployment of the additional resources has allowed children looked after and children in need to be further targeted.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that:
 - (a) the improvements achieved are noted and the longer term actions required are integrated into the Department's Business Plan and Human Resources Strategy
 - (b) a further report be brought back to the Select Committee in 12 months time.

STUART BROOK
Director of Social Services