

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

RESPONSE TO THE REVIEW OF CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To report back to the Social Services Standing Select Committee on the actions in relation to the recommendations on the findings of the Social Services Standing Select Committee in relation to Children's Residential Services.

2. Information and Advice

- 2.1 An initial report was considered by the Social Services Standing Select Committee on 29th July 2003 and subsequently by the Overview Select Committee on 11th September 2003. The report to Cabinet on 3rd December 2003 included the Cabinet Member's response to the recommendations.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Social Services Standing Select Committee note and comment on the Cabinet Member's response to the recommendations of the review of Children's Residential Services.

COUNCILLOR CHRIS BARON
Chair of the Social Services Standing Select Committee

Report



meeting	CABINET	
date	3 rd December 2003	agenda item number

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR SOCIAL SERVICES

RESPONSE TO THE REVIEW OF CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

2. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the actions in relation to the recommendations of the findings of the Social Services Standing Select Committee in relation to Children's Residential Services.

2. Information and Advice

- 2.2 An initial report was considered by the Social Services Standing Select Committee on 29th July 2003 and subsequently by the Overview Select Committee on 11th September 2003.
- 2.3 The Overview Select Committee approved the report and asked for a response from Cabinet to be brought back to the Overview Select Committee by no later than 10th December 2003.
- 2.4 The report of the Study Group dated 29th July 2003 outlined the terms of reference for the review, the process, identifies issues and made a number of recommendations in relation to improving the Children's Residential Services.

3. Recommendations of the Review of Children's Residential Services

3.1 Recommendation A

A pool of relief workers should be established across the service.

- 3.1.2 The developing workforce plan has identified that there needs to be a co-ordinated pool of relief workers to cover a range of social care situations

when there is an unforeseen absence. i.e. not annual leave or training. Work on this issue will consider the impact and implications of having a countywide response. Currently each unit have named relief workers who can be called-on at short notice. The benefit of this approach is that the relief worker knows the unit and its procedures and practices and in most cases will be known to the young people. As an interim measure, each recruitment drive to the service also recruits relief workers to specific units. In the future relief workers will be appointed to a group of homes managed by a Group Homes Manager.

3.2 **Recommendation B**
The development of support workers is supported and consideration should be given to develop these posts across the sector.

3.2.1 The new staffing structure to support the implementation of the Residential Child Care Strategy has established support worker posts. These posts will be known as Residential Care Workers and will work along side Residential Social Workers. Their role will be to provide safe and supportive care to all resident young people and will include assisting young people in a range of tasks in relation to their daily life in the home, in school and in the community. They will be expected to work towards the NVQ level 3 Caring for Children and Young People. Twenty seven posts have been established in the new structure.

3.3 **Recommendation C**
Flexible rota planning will mean the ability to utilise staff at the most critical times and avoid the need for the introduction of split shifts.

3.3.1. Flexible rota planning is better achieved in the larger units where staff can be called upon to cover critical periods i.e. early mornings and evenings. Minster View have been piloting a 'self rota' process as part of the work life balance project. This has been considered a successful pilot and is due to be evaluated in the near future. This is less achievable in the smaller homes.

3.3.2. However, as part of the implementation of the staffing structure to support the residential strategy, homes have been grouped together under the management of a group homes manager. Staff in the group can be called upon to work for a period of time in one of the other homes in their group.

3.3.3. This allows greater flexibility and consistency of care and more effective use of resources.

3.4 **Recommendation D**

Partnerships with Health should be established and urgent consideration be given to providing appropriate Health support to the staff and young people at Caudwell House.

- 3.4.1. A series of meetings have been held with representatives from the 7 Primary Care Trusts (PCT's) since May 2003 to consider the most appropriate means of meeting the health needs of children who are both resident and who receive short breaks at Caudwell House.
- 3.4.2 The PCT's have all undertaken an assessment of the health needs of their children using a common framework. Because of the number of children requiring assessment and the assessment taking place whilst they are at Caudwell House, this has taken 3 months, but is now nearing completion.
- 3.4.3. Newark and Sherwood PCT have provided an on-call service to Caudwell House since May 2003. However, there have been some difficulties with this. The nurses providing cover did not know the children and the advice they could give was limited. A contract is being finalised between Newark and Sherwood PCT, and Broxtowe and Hucknall PCT for the staff that cover the Children's centre to also cover Caudwell House.
- 3.4.4. A medication group is to be set up so that staff at Caudwell House receive appropriate guidance from health staff.
- 3.4.5. Work is ongoing to agree how to ensure appropriate health care is provided in the future.

3.5 **Recommendation E**
There should be a review of staffing levels at Minster View to enable the service to operate at full capacity and reduce the numbers of empty beds.

- 3.5.1. As part of the staffing review to implement the new structure, all homes have considered their levels of staff in relation to the number of young people they care for or the complexities of their needs. Minster View has been allocated 6 new posts of residential care workers. However, due to the complex nature of some of these young people, there are times when a staffing ratio of 1:1 is needed.
- 3.5.2. The manager considers this when making arrangements for short breaks and tries to ensure that there is a balance between those young people needing a high ratio and those who are more independent.
- 3.5.3. To ensure that the Department is making optimum use of this scarce resource, a review of staff will be undertaken by end March 2004. Any

increase in the staffing establishment will affect the unit cost for this service.

- 3.6 **Recommendation F**
The emergency bed system that currently operates at the Big House should be considered across the other two units for children with disabilities.

- 3.6.1 This system clearly works well and is valued and understood by the parents. It works by allocating the 8th respite bed on the understanding that should an emergency arise then that bed will be allocated. Parents whose children are booked in that bed understand and accept this. Children with less complex needs and who are less vulnerable are allocated this bed so that the impact of cancelling this respite at short notice for an emergency will be minimised.

Both Minster View and Caudwell House are looking to adopt this approach.

- 3.7 **Recommendation G**
Consideration should be given to securing a more appropriately constructed and robust building to replace Lawn Place, Ashfield.

- 3.7.1 Lawn Place is two semi-detached properties made into one house. Room sizes are small although they meet current minimum standards. There is a shortage of communal living space and overall it is too small for 4 young people. As part of the Residential Strategy the numbers at Lawn Place have been reduced to 3 to address the difficulties of space. There is not sufficient ground/garden space to the rear of the building which means that the young people congregate at the front of the house which is on the road.

- 3.7.2 There has been considerable damage to this property recently caused by the behaviour of one difficult young person who has now moved on. The amount of damage is in relation to the robustness of the building.

- 3.7.3 However, the building does have some advantages. It is homely and is well placed for local amenities. However, I am committed to looking at the possibilities to make the building more fit for purpose, should this not be possible or cost effective then I will consider both the budget and service implications of securing an alternative building.

- 3.8 **Recommendation H**
The review group supports the removal of the Clasp building

behind The Big House.

3.8.1 We are committed to looking at proposals to address the issue of the Clasp building at The Big House. Currently we are continuing to explore funding with Health and this is currently under review.

3.8.2 Once this has been clarified I will report back on this matter at a later date.

3.9 **Recommendation I**
There should be a review of the criteria of admissions to units for children with disabilities.

3.9.1 The criteria for The Big House and Minster View have both been reviewed. Both reflect the recommendation in the Best Value Review that residential care offers respite care to children with severe learning disabilities and challenging behaviours where community packages no longer meet a child's needs. The criteria for Caudwell House have been reviewed. It is felt that it appropriately offers respite care to children and young people with severe physical disabilities and complex health needs.

3.10 **Recommendation J**
There is support for the ongoing NVQ programme for all residential staff.

3.10.1 The basic minimum qualification requirement for all residential staff is the NVQ Level 3, Children and Young People award. The Government target is that all residential workers will be qualified to this level by 2005.

3.10.2 Currently there are 99 residential workers who have obtained the award and 217 who are registered on the award and working towards it.

3.10.3 In Nottinghamshire there is a commitment to ensuring that all new residential staff entering into the service are registered onto the programme after 3 months in service.

3.11 **Recommendation K**
Maintenance budgets should be established and ring-fenced for each home to enable the upkeep of the building and to continue to meet the requirements of the National Care Standards 2000.

3.11.1 Day to day maintenance allocation for Children's Residential Services is £80,549 and is not devolved to individual homes but is centrally managed by Property Services. The criteria for authorising the day to day requests are based on a Risk Management approach. However, the demands on this budget currently exceed available budget. In particular demand from

an individual home have been high in relation to the damage caused by an individual young person.

3.11.2 Planned Maintenance budget is directed through Corporate Property and is directly related to the Asset Management Plan. The majority of the Planned Maintenance Programme is apportioned against centrally agreed criteria via Corporate Management Board.

3.11.3 In a Local Authority, there are requirements to meet the National Care Standards 2000 on all Children's Homes. This will place additional demands on this budget. Failure to comply with the standards can risk the registration of the home and our ability to deliver the service.

3.11.4 Considerable investment has been made in implementing the Residential Care Strategy and we will be required to maintain the upkeep of the buildings to continue to meet the standards.

3.11.5 In order to estimate the amount of budget that is required by each home, a budget line has been established and any issue of compliance with the care standards will be coded against this line. This will enable future budget needs to be projected.

3.12

Recommendation L

The review group supports the proposals for the management structure that has been developed as a result of the impact of the National Care Standards and the implementation of the Residential Care Strategy.

3.12.1 The staffing proposals have been subject to wide consultation and the job descriptions and staffing establishments have been agreed through the JCNP sub group for residential child care. A process of assimilation is currently out for consultation with a view to implementation on 1st January 2004 once the process has been agreed.

4. Statutory and Policy Implications

4.1 This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, personnel, crime and disorder and those using the service. Where such implications are material, they have been described in the text of the report. Members' attention is, however drawn to the following:

4.1.1 Personnel Implications

Where relevant personnel implications have been included within the report.

4.1.2 Financial Implications

The financial implications of the Residential Child Care Strategy have been dealt with in other reports. There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

4.1.3 Equal Opportunities Implications

The proposals in this report will ensure that there is a wider choice of placement units and location for young people in residential care and as such will enable more appropriate placements in respect of age, gender, race and community of origin.

4.1.4 Implications for Service Users

The outcome of the review has reinforced the residential strategy that small, domestic, homely environments enable young people to progress and meet their full potential.

4.1.5 Crime and Disorder Implications

The strategy of having smaller family homes enables closer supervision of young people and the likely reduction in offending behaviour.

4.1.6 Human Rights Act Implications

Article 8 of the Human Rights Act requires the right to respect for private and family lives.

4.1.7 Strategic Property Implications

These are contained in the body of the report.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 It is recommended that Cabinet supports the response from the Cabinet Member for Social Services to the final report and that the report be referred to the Overview Select Committee for information.

6. Head of Legal Services Comments (DLS - 19/11/03)

6.1 Consideration of the Select Committee's recommendations and the response from the Cabinet Member for Social Services is within the authority of Cabinet. There are no other legal issues arising from the report that require specific comment.

7. **Director of Resources Financial Comments** (TMR – 12/11/03)

7.1 The financial implications are contained within the report.

8. **Background Papers Available for Inspection**

8.1 None.

9. **Electoral Division(s) Affected**

9.1 Nottinghamshire.

COUNCILLOR ANTHONY
Cabinet Member for Social Services

comm/cab/CAB158 (VS)