

minutes



Meeting SOCIAL SERVICES STANDING SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Tuesday, 23rd September 2003 (commencing at 10.30 am)

membership

Persons absent are marked with `A`

COUNCILLORS

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

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Roy Barsley
“ Vicki Smailes

MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting of the Select Committee held on 29th July 2003 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rod Kempster and Richard Robinson.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no declarations of interest by Members or Officers.

AGENDA ORDER

The Committee agreed to change the order of items on the agenda.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION IN THE SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Geoff Ward, Head of Personnel, introduced the report, which included a draft work-force plan for the Social Services Department. He thanked Katy Spencer, a

graduate under the National Graduate Development Programme, for her work on the plan. He emphasised the need for the department to address both current recruitment and retention issues and through planning, to be in a position to tackle future recruitment difficulties and skills shortages to ensure that we can continue to provide high quality services to the Community. Although nationally, other regions were at present facing greater problems in these areas than Nottinghamshire, he emphasised that we cannot be complacent and that the Workforce Plan is intended to ensure that we anticipate future developments at an early stage. Further work was needed, he explained, where there were overlapping functions with the Health Service to ensure that our planning is integrated in those areas, and to devise objectives and the actions to achieve them.

Members commended the report. Councillor Lonergan asked where vacancies were, how the separation rate was calculated and whether information on length of service was consistent. He drew attention to the fact that over 800 staff had been recruited during the period in question. Councillor Needham stressed the importance of keeping lower paid staff. He commented that workers could become cynical about 'glossy' advertising. He some doubts about the reward and recognition scheme. Councillor Preston referred to an example of a worker leaving the Department because of inflexibility over working hours. He also drew attention to the implications of the Climbié report. He suggested looking at the perception of social work and training, and asked about the implications of training lasting three years rather than two.

Geoff Ward and David Pearson, Assistant Director, responded to the comments and questions. Geoff Ward explained that while generally Social Workers were not leaving the authority, they were changing jobs within it and that it would be valuable to explore the reasons for this internal movement using the Exit Interview arrangements. He offered to provide the further information requested, and pointed out that whilst in overall terms the department continues to recruit staff, that is from a reducing 'pool' of potential candidates. Councillor Baron asked for figures showing staffing levels and vacancy levels over the last 3 years, indicating the vacancy, staff group and age of staff. David Pearson referred to other ways of valuing staff, for example, the conferences for front-line staff. He said that advertising should be appropriate rather than 'glossy'. He asked for more information in relation to the example given by Councillor Preston. He pointed out that staffing had implications for the budget, and for use of the independent sector. He referred to the need to work with that sector and with Health to ensure that overall capacity was adequate.

It was agreed to establish a study group comprising Councillors Sue Bennett, Richard Needham, Tom Pettengell, Chris Preston and Rita Sharpe to -

- consider the actions already identified in the workforce plan and the revised version to be produced.
- consider further priorities for the development of workforce planning with regard to both the current and future needs of the service, bearing in mind good practice from elsewhere.
- report on the above by January 2004.

UNIT STRATEGY FOR THE MEALS SERVICE

David Gibbons, Head of Transport, Catering and Services, presented the report, which gave a number of options for replacing the current meals service distribution units, and the reasons for needing to do this. He explained that option 4 was the favoured option, establishing one central unit at the Rainworth site, and using mobile oven vans to distribute meals to more distant parts of the county. Such meals could, he explained, offer enhanced nutritional value. Councillor Baron referred to the need to prepare for the future. He wondered if this was a potential "invest to save" bid to the capital programme. Councillor Bennett asked about the staffing and training implications of option 4. Councillor Sharpe felt that more detailed costings were needed before the Committee could make a recommendation. Councillor Pettengell agreed with this view, and saw some benefits in having two units, in case one went out of operation for any reason. Councillor Needham also asked for more detail, including information on the mobile oven vans.

In relation to staffing, Mr Gibbons explained that of the three kitchen staff at Retford, two would be re-deployed to Rainworth, with the Supervisor transferred to work on lunch clubs. Cynthia Muir, Service Manager, Catering Services, explained that the delivery staff were willing to transfer to Rainworth. Mr Gibbons stated that the hot oven vans were being used in other local authorities, such as Birmingham. He indicated that staff would need training, and assured Members that all safety aspects of the gas ovens had been addressed. He added that leasing vehicles was an option, and emphasised that timescales were tight, with six months to set up the new arrangements. Julie Martin, Principal Officer (Adults), Property Services explained that costings could not be more accurate until properties were identified. However, she pointed out that options 2a and 4 were more accurately costed than the others. She explained the alterations necessary at Rainworth to accommodate option 4, and said that this option could be delivered within six months.

Councillor Baron pointed out that there was no allocation in the Social Services Capital Programme for this work. He was mindful of the timescales, but suggested that if colleagues wanted more detail, they could visit the units, and receive a further report at the November meeting of the Committee. In response to this point, Members indicated that they were satisfied with the responses to questions, and agreed to recommend to the Cabinet Member for Social Services option 4 (to establish one central unit at the Rainworth site using mobile oven vans). It was agreed to forward the recommendation with the Committee's comments, and that there be a report back to the Committee on the action taken in due course.

HOME CARE SERVICES

Carol Harper, Service Manager, Business Development (Home Care) introduced the report, which covered the Rapid Response Service and the new national minimum care standards. She explained how the standards had come into force on 1st April 2003, with inspections beginning during 2004. Consultation with providers had identified a request for the Department assist with the co-ordination of training.

Sue Hammond, Locality Home Care Manager, outlined the role of the Rapid Response Service as service for people being discharged from hospital. She indicated that the first team had worked with 270 service users since January 2002,

and the second team 45 since June 2003. The service, which had been recruited from existing experienced home care staff, was short term and flexible in nature, though consequently expensive to provide.

Councillor Baron commented that some of the issues could be discussed in the Home Care Study Group. Councillor Needham congratulated the team on the new service, and referred to the difficult judgements which home care staff had to make. Ms Hammond indicated that there had been a positive response from service users and their carers. Councillor Lonergan had concerns at the potential increases in costs of providing home care services and whether the Department was incurring costs that Health should cover, and wondered how the Rapid Response Service fitted with others.

Malcolm Dillon, Assistant Director, Commissioning (Adults) explained that assessment in hospital would indicate whether intermediate care (which was provided jointly with Health) was necessary, or whether Social Services would provide standard care packages. He went on to say that the Rapid Response Service was for people assessed as fit for discharge, but needing a care package at home. The purpose of the rapid response service was to fill the gap where direct services or the independent sector might take a few days to respond.

Ms Hammond added that the Rapid Response Service provided the standard service, plus a lifting and handling risk assessment. There was an intention, she explained, to monitor which health care tasks had been requested. In reply to a question from Councillor Baron, she indicated that there had been occasions, for example, over bank holiday weekends, when the service could not be provided, as it could only be accessed during office hours. Councillor Prebble asked about Newark and Bassetlaw being covered from one location. Ms Hammond explained that while the duty point was at Bishop's Court, care staff worked from home.

Councillor Preston commented that hospital was not a good place to be if it was not necessary, and that costs should be balanced with the needs of service users. Councillor Baron pointed out that the study group had said that authorities should not be fined when relatives or carers gave rise to the delay in discharge. Councillor Bennett asked for more information about the plans for rapid response before admission, and Councillor Baron requested that this be provided when the Study Group went to Leawood on 8th October.

It was agreed that the report be forwarded to the next meeting of Home Care Study Group, and that the Select Committee on 4th November receive a report on action following the recommendations of the Select Committee in relation to delayed discharge.

The meeting closed at 12.20 pm.

CHAIR