

# minutes



Meeting SOCIAL SERVICES STANDING SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Tuesday, 27<sup>th</sup> January 2004 (commencing at 10.30 am)

## membership

Persons absent are marked with `A`

## COUNCILLORS

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

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

## ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor M Brandon-Bravo OBE  
Councillor Mrs V A Smailes

## MINUTES

The minutes of the last meetings of the Select Committee held on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2003 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

## APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:-

Councillor John Bell (on other County Council business)  
“ Mrs Sue Bennett  
“ R Needham  
“ Peter D Prebble (on other County Council business)  
“ R S Robinson  
Rita Sharpe

## DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

None.

## **RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION IN THE SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

Councillor Preston reported on the progress of the work of the Recruitment and Retention Study Group. He indicated that 2 meetings of the Study Group had been held so far and that they were looking at short, medium and long term issues. He anticipated that the final report of the Study Group would be available at the April meeting. He commented that there was a need for Members of the Study Group to attend the meetings. Councillor Baron commented that there was a wish for County Personnel to be involved in the Study Group. Councillor Preston indicated that this had not happened and it was agreed to ensure that they attended future meetings.

Councillor Lonergan felt that it would be better to delay the final report rather than rush the investigation. He pointed out that Jill Pedley had recently met the Prime Minister and had told him that he needed to talk up the role of Social Workers as this was not happening at the moment. He commented that teachers, for example, were having national adverts about recruitment whereas there was nothing similar for Social Workers. Each local authority was vying against each other to obtain workers in a limited market. He thought there was a need for national adverts to increase the regard for Social Workers. He wondered if the Department carried out an audit of where workers went to when they left the authority. He thought if the Government generated more workers this would assist recruitment.

In response to a question from Councillor Baron, Councillor Preston indicated that the Study Group would try and meet the present deadline but if necessary would ask for an extension. He agreed that the audit may be useful to consider further. He commented that joint working with partners led to close working but also raised problems and gave an example of occupational therapists where there were 2 rates of pay, social services and health.

It was agreed

- (1) to note the progress made to date by the Study Group and
- (2) to look to receive a final report from the Study Group in principle by April 2004 subject to further consideration by the Study Group.

## **SERVICES FOR DISABLED CHILDREN**

Angela Milne from the Social Services Department introduced the report. She stated that since the scheme was implemented 10 months ago, 19 families had been receiving funding from the Direct Payments Scheme with 4 approved waiting for the right service. The total was now 29 families and the maximum each family received was £1000. She referred to the number of initial and core assessments of disabled children which were completed within the assessment framework time scales which illustrated that improvement was required. She explained that all referrals for disabled children were dealt with by the Reception and Assessment Teams and that child protection work would always take priority. Dedicated Disabled Children's teams will be taking direct referrals from April 2004 and it was hoped that a significant improvement would result.

Marcie Taylor from the Social Services Department explained that once a disabled child had been approved for a short break (respite care) the needs tended to increase. Also the numbers requiring care had increased and they were getting younger and younger. She pointed out that a child could be aged 4 when they came into the system for respite care and would need it until they were 18 or 19 years old. She indicated that the strategy in the Best Value Review was to ensure that there was a lowest cost and highest quality and treat disabled children the same as others. The aim was to increase community and family based services. She pointed out that the complex needs of disabled children required complex packages of assistance. She stated that Edwinstowe Hall served 90 families and that in 3 years under 10 new children had been admitted. She pointed out that when they had looked at Minster View's criteria they had asked searching questions and the reality was that there are empty beds. They knew there was a need to maintain capacity to meet the needs of children with complex needs. The Department had agreed to keep the existing criteria but are looking to increase occupancy to 80%. It was felt that on balance the current eligibility criteria should be retained but that these would be looked at again if the 80% target was not reached.

Councillor Baron commented that a senior manager had now been allocated to look at the review. He thought that the time taken to provide Saturday Clubs was a concern and was unacceptable. He added that the pilot scheme in Bassetlaw had not been progressed.

Angela Milne explained that it was hoped that the pilot in Bassetlaw would start in April 2004. She added that the more the project had been looked at it was realised how complex it was. She added that there had been OFSTED issues and that NVQ3 qualified staff were needed for the under 8's. She added that they were looking to work with SureStart. She pointed out that by the end of the next financial year Saturday Clubs would be set up in each area of the county. She explained that some disabled children would need one to one care and that there were different profiles in the groups of children. A Project Worker would be needed for another year and they would be establishing local steering groups in each area. Councillor Baron stated that he appreciated there was a need to take each child's needs into consideration. He pointed out that the Best Value Review was 2 years ago and that respite was a service which parents wanted so that families could charge up their batteries. He thought that there seemed to be an excessive delay and that the priorities from the Best Value Review were being neglected. He commented that it has been stated that the Bassetlaw scheme would start in April 2004 but he thought that this was to have been earlier.

In response to questions from Councillor Lonergan, Marcie Taylor explained that the 6 beds in the report referred to the fact that when Minster View was first established it was for 12 beds but that there was not enough revenue available to make these viable. When it had been reviewed it was felt that it could cater for 16 children but this did not reflect the revenue increase. In the first year the established staffing could only cater for 12 beds. She gave an assurance that the target was 80% of 16 beds and she was confident this could be achieved. She explained that the budget position had comprised a requirement to sell beds but in 1999 the City and County had agreed to go their own way. There was a new position and the budget hole had to be managed. This year there was 1 bed which was occupied by a young person from the City. She stated that as part of the consultation parents had said that befriending, if robust, was better and happier with day-care. They had looked to

focus the increase on these services. She added that there were now focusing on whole short breaks, Saturday Clubs and befriending and hoped to show an increase in both in 12 months times. She commented that the main access to befriender services was no longer through a Panel but was now via the Social Worker. She referred to children currently in placements in the independent sector. She pointed out that the majority had complex needs which were not able to be met in the County and that all were placed on an inter-agency basis and that there was a contribution from Health. She added that Social Services contribution was £793.00 per week for each child. The split varied for each child. She indicated that there was an eighth emergency bed at the Big House and that respite was booked there unless the bed was needed. In response to a question from Councillor Baron, Marcie Taylor indicated that the 80% target would be met in this calendar year.

In response to a further question from Councillor Baron, Angela Milne explained that the 90% target for the completion of initial assessments within 7 working days of referral was a national performance target. She added that a recent national survey indicated that local authorities averaged around 70%.

Councillor Baron stated that when Officers and Members carried out a Best Value Review a lot of work was done and consultation carried out. As a result it was expected that changes would follow. He thought that the implementation of this review had not been completed and that it was now 2 years since the review.

It was agreed that a further report on this issue be presented in June and that the Assistant Director report on progress.

### **INTERIM REPORT OF THE HOMECARE STUDY GROUP**

Councillor Baron reported on the progress so far of the Home Care Study Group. He indicated that there was an extra £1.7m this year and the following year but there was a question about the capacity to spend this. Councillor Napier thought that carers and clients had been missed out from the consultation. He suggested there was a need for the geographic location of the problem areas to be identified. Councillor Baron stated that new contracts would be out in March and there was a need to know who the suppliers would be.

It was agreed that

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That the Home Care Study Group present its report to the meeting of the Social Services Standing Select Committee on Tuesday, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2004.

### **WORK PROGRAMME**

This was noted.

The meeting closed at 11.25 am.

**CHAIR**

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