

# minutes



Meeting SOCIAL SERVICES STANDING SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2003 (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	R Needham	A	R Needham
	Mrs Sue Bennett				Peter D Prebble
	Steve Carroll				Chris Preston
	Rod Kempster	A	R S Robinson		
	J T A Napier				Rita Sharpe
		A	K Walker		

## ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Roy Barsley

## MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting of the Select Committee held on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2003 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

## APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs Sue Bennett, R Needham and R S Robinson.

## DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

None.

## KEY ACTIVITIES IN SOCIAL SERVICES AND FORWARD PLAN

In the absence of the Cabinet Member, Mr Pearson, Assistant Director of Social Services introduced the report which he explained identified the main issues of the current agenda for Social Services and highlighted the risks. In response to a question from Councillor Lonergan, Mr Pearson explained that the costs anticipated in relation to proposals to lift the starting salary for social workers and occupational therapists were anticipated around £50,000. This was because the existing scale was already provided for in the budget as budgets were costed at the top of the

scale. He added that there was an understanding with the Director of Resources that if there were additional costs linked to job evaluation it would be considered if extra resources were needed.

Councillor Lonergan commented that he had received a lot of e-mails from people dissatisfied about the Hay job evaluation. Mr Pearson explained that the job evaluation process had been significant for the Authority and staff. He indicated that the nature of evaluation was that there were changes in relativity and salaries and that as a consequence some were reduced. He stated that this had resulted in concerns from staff across the Authority. In Social Services there were 57 staff out of 850 who would be on protected salary which would fall out in due course. There were other people in a variety of sections where previously they had been on a par but one had had an increase. He agreed that the job evaluation keyed into recruitment and retention, as pay strategy was one part of that. It was also part of the wider County Council Strategy.

It was agreed that:-

The Study Group into recruitment and retention should look at the Hay evaluation as part of its review.

Councillor Lonergan asked about the proposed development of a mixed economy of residential provision for children. It was agreed that more details on this would be circulated to Members of the Select Committee.

## **DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**

The report was noted.

## **BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT PLAN: SERVICES FOR DISABLED CHILDREN PROGRESS REPORT**

Angela Milne from the Social Services Department gave a presentation to the Select Committee. She stated that the team for the north of the county would be fully operational from January 2004. The team was to be dispersed so that they can be closer to local areas. A community resource budget had been established for the north of £15,000. Fusion 4, the planned multi-agency team covering Mansfield would be operational from January 2004. The delay had been caused by difficulties recruiting staff. She stated that 550 families were assisted across the county.

Ms Milne stated that there was increasing emphasis on community provision as opposed to care away from home. This required changing the culture of both professionals and parents. She referred to the launch of the direct payments scheme. She pointed out that there had been some problems as there had been a lack of suitable, independent sector providers particularly in the north of the county. It was planned to have a dedicated home care budget for disabled children by April 2004. She referred to the development of contract carers for short-term family based breaks and to the development of salaried carers for children who required longer-term care. With regard to the Children Trust Pathfinder, a project manager was being recruited to take this forward.

Councillor Baron expressed concern that the review had particularly highlighted respite care and that the Department seemed to be changing the emphasis. He pointed out that there were empty beds at Minster View which could be used. This provided an opportunity for families for respite care and then the disabled child could return and continue family life. He pointed out that another recommendation was around Saturday Clubs which, again, was a form of respite. These had not been expanded and was a cause for concern.

Ms Milne explained that short-term care was in line with the Department of Health guidance. This was that children should be away from home less and more in the community. The Department was saying that respite care was for those with high levels of dependency. They were trying to get reasonable alternatives in the community to help disabled children live as normal a life as possible. Councillor Baron asked for a reply in writing about the criteria used for respite care and what provision there was in the community. He thought that the recommendations of the review had been altered. Councillor Lonergan stated that he shared some of the concerns expressed by Councillor Baron. He pointed out that Angela Milne had stated that the Department had not reduced respite care. His impression was that the others were in addition not as a replacement. He added that the Parents' Reference Group had wanted respite care to continue without a reduction. He asked for a reassurance that respite care would continue and that Edwinstowe Hall would continue. Councillor Baron pointed out that there was a split between commissioning and direct services and there needed to be better liaison so that bed spaces were fully occupied. Councillor Lonergan pointed out that Minster View had given concern about the number of unoccupied beds.

Hilary Owen, Commissioning Officer in the Social Services Department stated that it was difficult to make changes with existing families. She pointed out that the problems at Minster View were that some disabled children lived there and it was difficult to meet their needs and fill empty beds.

Councillor Carroll referred to the parents' reference group and asked how it was proposed to involve parents in the delivery of service. Angela Milne stated that there had been Parents' Reference Group for the Best Value Review but that this had now ended. She stated that there were other consultation groups around the establishment of the Trust. These evolved over time depending on the theme.

Councillor Baron stated that it was necessary to see the written response from the Department and if it was felt necessary there would be a report to the Select Committee.

### **PROGRESS ON DELAYED DISCHARGES**

Mr Dillon, Assistant Director of Social Services stated that the new arrangements for charging would be fully operational from January 2004. He added that the Department and Health Trusts had tried to work together to keep the level of delayed discharges low. He explained that all the recommendations of the review had been accepted apart from one which suggested that budgets to purchase home care packages should be allocated to hospital social worker managers to enable them to purchase home care directly. It was felt the Rapid Response home care service, which was being developed, would reduce this problem.

In response to questions from Councillor Napier, it was stated that since the Study Group had carried out their report additional staff had been employed. With regard to the Diagnostic Treatment Centres it was explained that the contracts indicated that the private provider would be undertaking rehabilitation for patients for the first 6 months. He agreed that there was a need to be clear about the detail of the scheme.

Councillor Lonergan asked for more information on the Gedling Action Team. He expressed concern that vulnerable old people may be caught between two processes, the pressure on hospitals to reduce waiting lists and financial pressures on Social Services. He expressed disappointment that there had been a lack of progress about the introduction of a 7-day and evening working for hospital teams. Councillor Rita Sharpe expressed concern that the recommendations for discharge depended on a social worker in the hospital being there.

Councillor Baron commented that the report stated that there was a pilot for Saturday mornings. He pointed out that although the report stated that the recommendation was accepted the paragraph below seemed to imply it was not. In response to a question from Councillor Baron, Mr Dillon stated that the norm was now for the hospital social worker to take over the assessment and arrange discharge when a patient went into hospital. It was only a very small minority of cases where the social worker from the locality that had worked with the family for some time would remain involved.

Mr Dillon stated that a lot of work was being carried out around protocols to not make the 3 days critical but to deal with issues before that. The aim of the discharge team was to bring assessments together. He stated that staff were being encouraged to challenge doctors if it was felt that a patient was not ready for discharge. He added that decisions as to which route to follow were critical ones. Hospitals were not healthy places to stay and it may be that an interim placement may be a sensible move. He stated that the Rapid Response Team was designed to fill the gap when a patient went home and would then hand over to the normal service. He agreed that not as much had been done with the 7-day service as should have been. He stated that the pilot had been in Bassetlaw but that staff had not been keen to volunteer. He added that there would be into a new stage of recruitment if changes were made. He added that staff and unions may well oppose this. Councillor Baron agreed that it seemed logical to do assessments at an earlier stage rather than leaving them to the last minute. Councillor Rita Sharpe pointed out that the clock ticked over weekends. She thought that there was a need to look at posts for weekends and expressed concern that the service still finished at 5 pm on a Friday. Mr Dillon stated that it was not always straightforward to do assessments. He pointed out that although hospitals operated for 7 days there was a different service on Saturdays and Sundays and that Fridays were a critical day. He emphasised that discharges should be a co-ordinated approach. He added that there was a cost to extra hours and that the challenge was how far the Department could spread the resources which were available or obtain additional resources.

### **BEST VALUE REVIEW PROMOTION OF INDEPENDENCE OF OLDER PEOPLE**

Mr Dillon, Assistant Director of Social Services explained that all the recommendations had been accepted in principle but the caveat was that 5 of these required additional funding to bring in. These were part of the budget planning process at the moment.

It was agreed to note the report.

## **SOCIAL SERVICES INSPECTORATE – INSPECTION INTO CHILDREN’S SERVICES**

Jill Pedley, Assistant Director of Social Services gave a presentation to the Select Committee, which was based on the presentation that Chris Batty, the lead inspector from the Social Services Inspectorate had given to Cabinet. The conclusion of the inspection was that the provision of children’s services in Nottinghamshire was moving in the right direction in terms of serving most people well with promising prospects for improvement. She stated that the action plan which had been drawn up to address the 13 recommendations made by the inspection had been approved. Councillor Lonergan commented that the inspection had produced a good result. He added that it was pleasing to see that the inspectors had agreed that the smaller homes approach was the right one.

In response to questions from Councillors Lonergan and Napier, Jill Pedley stated that a new set of **Policy and Practice** guides was being prepared for the Kinship care policy. This **development** would be starting in **the new year** which was to support families in the community **and avoid children becoming looked after unnecessarily**. Seminars were being arranged **and the service would develop as funds became available** which would be built on as resources became available. Family group conferences were to be **rolled out next year which will also help children to remain in their families and communities**.

With disabled children parents were given information but this was not enough, patchy or not at the point of need. The Department’s view was that although this had improved there was still a long way to go which was one of the reasons why we had successfully applied for Pathfinder status. **In relation to After Care, the Management arrangements were being strengthened to give clearer accountability, through the appointment of a Senior Team Manager. This will enable performance in After Care to be more closely monitored, and an improvement in outcomes is expected over the next year.**

Councillor Prebble asked about the Green Paper – Every Child Matters. Jill Pedley stated that there was to be a report to Cabinet, and the Department of Health response was required by the **1st** December. Councillor Baron agreed to put this item on the next agenda.

## **THE DAY SERVICES MODERNISATION PLAN FOR LEARNING DISABILITY SERVICES IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**

Joy Cooper, Assistant Director Social Services introduced the report. The Department of Health White Paper “Valuing People” required each local authority to produce a day service modernisation plan. Of services for adults with learning disabilities 86% are provided in house. These provide respite which carers say is very important. Nationally employment for adults with learning disabilities was very low. There were difficulties in getting employers to take on people with learning disabilities and benefit rules prevented people. The Authority had a number of large centres, which had seen better days, and it was not proposed to rebuild them. The vision was for more dispersed services. She pointed out that adults with learning

disabilities were a vulnerable group. She stated that the challenges were the accommodation and the cross-cutting themes of the review because although Social Services were the main provider of current day services the modernisation agenda depended on effective partnership working with others. She emphasised that it was early days of the modernisation process but that there were only 2½ years to implement this.

In response to a question from Councillor Baron, Joy Cooper indicated that a Study Group could look at accommodation, cross-cutting issues and local strategic partnerships – how they got involved. Councillor Baron suggested that a Study Group be established to look at this and that a report setting out the scope of a review be presented to the next meeting.

Councillor Lonergan stated that there was the sheltered employment service which was run alongside this. Joy Cooper explained that sheltered employment was part of the plan.

The meeting closed at 12.26 pm.

## **CHAIR**

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