



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMISSION 23 JANUARY 2007

Report of the Corporate Director for Children & Young People

Children Looked After Topic Review – Action Plan

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the Commission note and endorse the action plan produced in response to the topic review recommendations.
- 1.2 That the Commission receive a report of progress against the action plan in October 2007.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

2.1 Background

The Overview & Scrutiny Commission undertook a review of services for Looked After Children in July 2006. Its report was published in October 2006 and contained 34 recommendations. This report presents the proposed response and action plan in respect of those recommendations.

- 2.2 The action plan has been produced against a very tight budget setting process. Whilst many of the recommendations carry cost implications every effort has been made to take these into account. A number of the recommendations have already been achieved and others can be achieved at very small or nil cost.
- 2.3 Twenty five of the recommendations are accepted and plans are in place to achieve these over the next twelve months, many will be achieved before this. Six of the recommendations require further work to examine their viability for Derby and their potential impact. These are specifically identified within the plan and a timescale is given for the necessary work.
- 2.4 One recommendation, 12, is partially accepted but is not achievable in the financial year 2007 – 08. This refers to our alignment of fostering allowances with fostering networks recommended levels. Currently our allowance levels are within the Governments indicative level for fostering allowances excepting our allowances for children under two years of age. Our allowance levels for teenagers are now slightly above these indicative rates. It is our intention to review again our allowance structure and use the increase planned for 2007 – 08 to address this. It remains a Council commitment to improve allowances and fees paid to our foster carers as resources permit.

- 2.5 Recommendations numbers 15 and 29 are not accepted. These concern the direct collaboration with neighbouring Authorities in fostering recruitment campaigns and the use of a beacon schools scheme.

3. Conclusion

The undertaking and completion of the Topic Review is welcomed. The report itself has been disseminated to all of those who took part in the review for use within their respective services. The Looked After Children Strategic group, which is chaired by the Assistant Director – Specialist Services, will take responsibility for ensuring the plan is progressed and monitored.

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Background papers:	CLA Topic Review October 2006
List of appendices:	Appendix 1: Action Plan

APPENDIX 1 CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER – TOPIC REVIEW ACTION PLAN

JANUARY 2007

	Recommendation	Current Position	Action	Who	When
1.	Managers and staff should accurately record all time spent working, including evenings and weekends, to enable decision and budget makers to have a true picture of the extend of the problem and allocate resources more accurately.	Achieved. It is a requirement that staff do record this in accordance with the European working time directive. Currently staff use either the TOIL record or the work life balance form.	Recording to be standardised and monitored quarterly by Service Managers.	SM's	Jan 2007
2.	A twin approach is needed to minimise the time spend by social workers and family support workers on administration: making sure all the tasks that <i>can</i> be undertaken efficiently by administrative staff are undertaken by the; using computer software to link form filling and report writing to replicate information for Section 47 enquiries, care proceedings, looked after children reviews and adoption processes.	The Integrated Children's system and the Electronic Social Care Records project are on track to achieve this by the end of 2007.	A Project Board and lead HOS are in place to deliver this requirement as part of the e-government initiative.	AD HOS (PO)	Dec 2007
3.	Generally training budgets need to be protected in order to promote the professional development of staff; there needs to be sufficient staffing capacity to allow team members to be released to take up appropriate training opportunities.	A review of training and development requirements is underway under pinned by the Children's Workforce Development Council. Within current budget constraints relevant training is prioritised for staff including within post development activity.	Complete the review in line with CWDC recommendations. Ensure training activity is prioritised within existing budgets.	AD's HOS'	On Going.
4.	The budgets that allows the 'home growing' of qualified social workers, through the training of family support, community care and residential care workers need protecting – and ideally expanding.	The budget for traineeships has not been reduced in the proposed 2007 – 08 budget. There is however no current capacity to increase this although it is expected that the growth in newly qualified workers projected for 2008 will come through.	No action proposed over and above current traineeship activity.		

5.	There is a national need to raise the status of social workers in court proceedings, to have them accepted as professional experts, and achieve a concomitant reduction in the use of other experts. To initiate a campaign the Council should express these views in writing to the Secretary of State and Lord Chancellor, copies to lead members and directors for children and young people and the professional journals.	The recommendation is accepted.	C&YP's DMT to discuss and develop proposal for COG / CE to take forward with the Leader and the Cabinet Member. Comments to be included in the Council's response to the "Care Matters" Green Paper.	C&YP DMT	Jan 2007
6.	The Chief Executive, as chair of the Community Safety Partnership, should engage with the Court Service with a view to reducing waiting times at the Youth Court; this might be achieved through indicative hearing times being given in advance and SMS alerts on the day.	There is an established Family Court user group on which the Council has membership.	This should be used as the initial vehicle to take this recommendation forward with the assistance of legal services.	AD Legal Svcs.	April 2007
7.	Looked after children should be asked periodically whether there are wider family members – aunts, uncles, cousins etc – with whom they might wish to have contact; ii) a lack of time to provide transport by social worker, residential worker and foster carer should not be an obstacle to such contact – CRB-cleared volunteer drivers should be used and, when needed, the costs of overnight accommodation reimbursed.	For CLA contact is routinely covered within the statutory review framework. Social Workers to be reminded of this. The issue of volunteer drivers is more complex and needs to be properly explored in terms of cost, risks and feasibility.	Ensure CLA have their contact issues routinely addressed and considered by the SW. HOS to undertake a feasibility study and look at any Authorities who have a volunteer driver scheme for CLA.	HOS SM's HOS	Jan 2007 May 2007
8.	The Council should explore with representatives of looked after children the desirability of an adult befriending scheme; this might be along the lines of an adoptive auntie or uncle or the American "big brother, big sister" concept.	Each child's needs are considered on their own merits. The use of both the Independent visitor scheme and the advocacy project should ensure that no child is without some level of independent support.	This matter is covered within the Green paper – "Care matters" and will be developed further within the Government's response – "Care Matters – Next Steps"	AD LAC Strat Group	June 2007

9.	Although there was no evidence that Derby's Child Protection Register thresholds were misplaced, the comparatively high number of registrations means there would be merit in an inter-authority bench marking exercise.	The recommendation is accepted. Review of our thresholds against other Authorities has taken place.	Further bench marking to follow in relation to the newly published IPF data.	HOS (QA)	On Going
10.	The reported difference in the ratio of children and families social care staff between Derby (35 per 10,000 children) and Nottingham (48 per 10,000 children) needs examination. The Commission wishes to have this question answered: is the difference a reason for our social workers needing to work in the evening and at the weekend?	The question is extremely difficult to answer due to being able to compare like with like, particularly in respect of preventative resources. The approach being taken in Derby is to bring a far wider group of staff together to respond to the needs of families and children.	This question will be raised within the context of developing integrated locality services. TOIL levels to be routinely checked by HOS / SM's	AD HOS SM's	April 2007 On Going
11.	Council Cabinet should protect Family Support staffing levels when considering future revenue budgets.	Frontline services, including family support, have been protected wherever possible within the 2007 – 08 budget setting exercise.	Two FSW posts have been reinstated as temporary posts with a proposal that these are made permanent in the 07 – 08 budget report.	AD's	Jan 2007
12.	The Council must complete the move to Fostering Network-recommended allowance levels.	Budget restrictions currently do not allow for increases above the level of inflation.	The Council remains committed to achieve this as resources permit.	C&YP DMT	April 2008
13.	Foster carers in the employment of the City Council should as of contractual right have up to 3 working days per year to attend reviews and other meetings about the child(ren) in their care; through the Derby City Partnership other employers should be encouraged to do the same.	The recommendation is accepted in principle.	AD to prepare proposal through the Council's AD HR group.	AD	April 2007
14.	To make the fostering task easier, the Council should consider giving non-cash incentives to its foster carers, for example, free parking or bus pass, free entry to leisure centres.	The recommendation is accepted in principle.	AD to prepare proposal through the Council's AD HR group.	AD	April 2007

15.	There should be closer collaboration between councils over the recruitment of foster carers in the region, including co-ordinated, jointly funded marketing campaigns.	This recommendation is not accepted. Derby recruits and retains a significant number of carers who do not live in the City. The evidence is that we would be a net loser in any joint campaigns.	We will continue to develop and improve our solid approach to marketing. Previous joint campaigns have been failures; in particular a Government lead national campaign in 2001.	AD HOS	On Going
16.	There should be a record kept of the number of 18+ year olds who continue to reside at the foster carer's address.	This recommendation is accepted.	HOS to establish a system with carers' agreement.	HOS	June 2007
17.	Because of the high number of mixed heritage looked after children, there should be increased cultural awareness training so that every child can learn about <i>all</i> aspects of their background.	The recommendation is accepted although the number of CLA from dual heritage backgrounds is not statistically higher than would be expected.	Encourage use of the on-line equalities training module and prioritise access to diversity training through the A&D process. C & YP fostered with carers of different cultural backgrounds should be helped to access information about their own heritage.	AD's HOS' LAC Strat Group	Jan 2007
18.	The 'Roller Coaster' fostering recruitment DVD should be shown at the beginning of a full Council as the web-cast makes it accessible to a wider audience; it should also be shown at a round of Area Panel meetings.	The recommendation is accepted in principle.	DCS to raise with COG and the Leadership for the DVD to be shown.	DCS	Mar 2007
19.	The Council Cabinet Members for Children and Young People and for the Environment be requested to jointly consider the specification for fixtures and fittings and repair standards in the five children's homes and report back to the Commission the outcome.	Specifications for fixtures and fittings within Children's homes are currently determined by the SM and home manager within the available budget.	The HOS to review specific issues and likely cost implications for specific discussion with AD and cabinet Member(s).	HOS	April 2007
20.	Each Council children's home should have broadband access for staff and residents.	This recommendation is accepted and arrangements are in place for broadband roll out during 2007.	Continue roll out.	HOS	Oct 2007

21.	All members of the Council should be strongly encouraged to be active Corporate Parents by being CRB-checked and undertaking visits to the Council's children's homes.	This recommendation is accepted.	Arrangements for Councillor visits to homes are currently being reviewed. Awareness raising post the May elections	AD HOS	June 2007
22.	Recruitment of potential adopters for older and other hard-to-place children should be considered on a regional basis via the existing consortium of authorities; locations could include East Midlands Airport, Trent Barton buses and Midland Mainline.	Accepted. There is already a high level of collaboration on the identification and use of adopters within the consortium.	HOS to raise the potential for a joint campaign targeted at older children during 2007.	HOS	Feb Sept 2007
23.	As there was a consensus among witnesses that CAMHS' capacity was inadequate for the number needing its services, the new Derby Primary Care Trust should be asked to augment the service.	CAMHS developments for the City are covered within the CAMHS steering group which is chaired by a C&YP Department AD.	This issue is highlighted within the "Care Matters" consultation and will continue to be pressed.	AD LAC Strat Group	On Going
24.	There should be a change of practice by CAMHS so as to give a priority to looked after children for assessment, though not for treatment which should continue to be based on need.	This issue will be progressed as per recommendation 23.	See above.	AD LAC Strat Group	On Going
25.	The CAMHS pilot at Moorfield Children's Centre should be made permanent and rolled out to the other four homes.	This matter is under consideration by the CAMHS steering group in relation to the CAMHS grant allocation for 07 – 08.	See above.	LAC Strat Group	On Going
26.	The creation of a single Children and Young People Department offers the opportunity to deliver updated co-ordinated awareness training for all school governors and in-depth training for designated governors. Appropriate training should be included in the training programmes for governors and staff.	This recommendation is accepted. Specific training for governors has been provided but take up was poor. Information was sent in May 2006 to support the practical guide for governors 'Supporting Looked After Learners', and articles have been included in the governors' newsletter.	The anticipated requirements of the response to the green paper "Care Matters – Next Steps" will provide an opportunity to engage further with schools and governing bodies later in 2007. Some existing training courses for	AD's	Sept 2007

26 con			governors should be amended to include LAC issues.		
27.	The involvement of looked after children in reviews should be used to check whether the child knows who the designated teacher is at their school <i>and</i> discreetly check whether she or he would feel comfortable approaching that teacher with a problem.	The recommendation is accepted. Statutory reviews already examine progress against the PEP. This issue can be incorporated into that process.	Reviewing Officers to pick up in reviews commencing from February 2007 for school age children.	IRO's	Feb 2007
28.	As a model, draft 'School Policy for Looked After Children' can achieve a de facto city-wide protocol about roles and responsibilities, including those of designated teachers, it is essential the draft is finalised and that all governing bodies are encouraged to adopt it.	This recommendation is accepted. The draft policy is currently under consideration by the trade unions.	Response to Trade Union queries to be compiled, any amendments agreed and final version disseminated to Designated Teachers and governing bodies.	AD PO	April 2007
29.	The creation of a single Children and Young People Department should be used to recognise 'Derby Beacon Schools' as a local scheme to share the best practice between schools in the education of looked after children, with a focus on the successful management of the difficult issues.	Sharing best practice among Designated Teachers is already encouraged: within the operation of the peer mentoring scheme; during visits to Designated Teachers; by dissemination of information through the schools' circular; and in relevant training events. It is not envisaged that a Derby Beacon Schools scheme would usefully add to this area.	Continue to Identify and share good practice in schools, and ensure all schools are meeting the requirements.	AD PO	On Going
30.	The proven skills and tactics of the Leaving Care Team may be transferable to the work with younger, looked after children and the residential service should consider drawing on that to promote school attendance.	This recommendation to be examined in more detail by the Specialist Services Management team.	SSMT to look in more detail and involve the respective SM's to determine what aspects may be particularly more transferable.	SSMT SM's	June 2007

31.	To encourage learning by children who do not attend school, a scheme based on the PASSPORT concept in hostels should be considered in order to give credit for educational and other positive activity.	Currently, alternative provision of various kinds is found for children in care who choose not to attend school. This includes vocational programmes and e-learning which have some accreditation.	The use of the PASSPORT concept requires further research, to see if it can provide appropriate learning activity and accreditation as an additional option.	LAC Strat Group	July 2007
32.	A constructive alternative should be developed for older looked after children who will not attend school. This might be based on the Leaving Care team's highly successful trainee placement scheme that helps the school leavers, but honed of offer an age appropriate experience, for example, in the voluntary sector.	The recommendation has merit and will be included within the 07 – 08 business plan.	A proposal is to be developed covering feasibility and costs within the A&CP business plan for 07 – 08.	HOS'	Sept 2007 for April 2008
33.	Funding for fostered or adopted children to meet special needs and provide behaviour therapy, extra tuition etc should follow the child and not be limited, as now, to schools in deprived wards.	Arrangements already exist to ensure that funding for individual needs highlighted within care plans can "follow the child".	Ensure present system is operated to the child's best interest and not determined by ward deprivation factors.	HOS SM's	On Going
34.	Council Cabinet be informed that it is essential that the LPSA-funded post promoting Employment, Education and Training be continued when the funding time-expires.	The LPSA funding stream is currently under review. This recommendation will be taken into account as far as resources permit.		AD	Sept 2007