

BEST VALUE REVIEW OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN IN PUBLIC CARE: TERMS OF REFERENCE

Report of the Director of Social Services

SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report proposes the scope and terms of reference for the Best Value Review of Children Looked After Services to be undertaken this year. The review forms part of the Authorities Statutory requirement to review its services under the Local Government Act 1999.
- 1.2 Services for Children in Public Care form the major part of the Department's work with Children and Families. The strategy continues to be one of reducing the numbers of Children Looked After and increasing the investment and focus on preventative services. Whilst this strategy is progressing the investment in these services continues to be in the order of £9.5 million.
- 1.3 The Review will be lead by the Assistant Director, Social Services, Children's Services (Resources and Projects). It is proposed that the scope of the review should include those services that are concerned with children once the decision has been reached to bring a child into Public Care. It will not focus on those services that are concerned with Family support since these were reviewed under Best Value in 2000/2001.
- 1.4 The Review will be undertaken using the Authorities Best Value revised tool kit and through a Project Management approach. It is proposed that three specific project sub-groups be established to examine services within the framework of the four "C's" – Consult, Compare, Challenge and Cost. The proposed sub-groups are outlined in section 1.2 of this report.
- 1.5 **Options Considered**
In determining the scope of the review it is important to examine the process by which a child or young person enters Public Care. The role of the social worker (care planning) as well as the provider services need to be included in the review. Whilst the major costs lie within the provider services, predominantly residential childcare and foster care services, the role of care planning is critical to the quality of care that Children in Public Care experience.

In addition to these two aspects there should also be a focus on the quality control and monitoring aspects of the system. This would include the statutory review process, the regulation and inspection framework, the independent visitor service and the role of the adoption panel.

It is therefore proposed to establish three sub-project groups within the review as follows:

- Social Work and care planning for Children in Public Care
- Provider Services for Children in Public Care
- Quality Assurance for Children in Public Care

Each sub-project will need to consider the role of partner agencies as well as the independent and voluntary sector within their sphere of operation.

It is not proposed to undertake a review of specialist services for disabled children within the scope of this review. Issues relating to access and equalities for all Children in Public Care, including those who have a disability, will be examined within the review.

1.6 Recommendation

It is recommended that the review be undertaken through a project management approach, incorporating the three project sub-groups as described in 1.2 above.

1.7 Reasons for the Recommendations

The project management approach to a Best value Review, with the establishment of appropriate sub-project groups, was used effectively for the BVR of family support services.

MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION

2.1 Scope of the Review

This third year review will examine the range of services both provided and purchased by the Social Services Department for Children who are in Public Care. These services fall into three distinct areas that combine to meet the needs of Children Looked After :

- Assessment and care Planning
- Direct Services
- Quality Assurance

The review will therefore be conducted in three parallel stages and this will determine the structure of the review team.

2.2 Structure of the Review and Key Issues

2.2.1 It is proposed to adopt a project management to the review and to consider the three strands as sub-projects. Combined, these will form a comprehensive Best Value review of services for Children Looked After. The three areas will be considered simultaneously and be co-ordinated by a small Best Value review core team.

2.2.2 The Services for Children in Public Care have been selected for review because:

- The Government objectives demand a stringent programme of improvement for Children Looked After through their objectives for children and the Quality Protects programme.
- The Social Services 5 year budget strategy for children's services is based on a continued reduction of the numbers of children that the Council looks after.
- Although the numbers have steadily fallen since LGR against a national upward trend the overall numbers for Derby continue to place us in the upper quartile for an Authority of our size and demographic make up.
- Although the Authority makes relatively low use of independent service providers, both in fostering and residential services, the unit cost of these is very high. They therefore warrant review.
- Services for Looked After Children make up the greatest proportion of the Departmental spend on Children's Services.

2.2.3 The three areas proposed for examination in this review are:

- Assessment and care Planning: Field social work, the assessment of need and planning for Children Looked After.
- Direct Services: The provision of placements of all types, both provided by the Council and purchased by the Council. This will include residential, fostering and adoptive placements.
- Quality Assurance: To include statutory reviewing processes, inspection and scrutiny of services and the role of the adoption panel.

2.2.4 A scoping event was held on the 30 May at which all stakeholders were represented. The event was enriched by the direct input from three young people who have direct experience of public Care. The young people contributed through direct presentation and through work in the small groups. The risk assessment produced as a result of the session is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

The key risks identified are:

- Staff shortfall and recruitment and retention
- The growing levels of complex needs of children
- Safety of Children and the shortage of appropriate placements
- The potential loss of ring fenced funding
- The increasing costs of services for Children in Public Care

2.3 The Review Team

2.3.1 The review team leader will be the Assistant Director (Projects and Resources) who will oversee all three strands through the establishment of a core review team. This team will direct and monitor the work of three sub groups, one for each specific area. These groups will undertake the detailed work within their service area, reporting to the core review team.

2.3.2 The core review team will comprise:

Keith Woodthorpe	Assistant Director (Resource and Projects)
Rachel Dickinson	Assistant Director (Assessment/Care Planning)
Rod Jones	Group Manager (Residential Services)
John Ashton	Group Manager (Fostering & Adoption)
Sue Richards	Principle Officer
Elene Constantinou	Group Manager (Assessment & Care Planning)
TBI*	Project Officer (BVR)
TBI*	2 Children / Young People who are CLA
Simon Fogell	Trade Union Representative
TBI*	Education Service
TBI*	PCT representative

* To be identified

- 2.3.3 The sub group overseeing the Assessment and Care planning Service will comprise:

Elene Constantinou	Group Manager (Assessment & Care Planning)
TBI	Service Manager (Assessment & Care Planning)
TBI	Social Worker
TBI	Project Officer (BVR)
Sam White	Finance
TBI	Trade Union Representative

- 2.3.4 The sub group overseeing the Direct services will comprise:

Rod Jones	Group Manager (Residential Services)
John Ashton	Group Manager (Fostering and Adoption)
Michelle Whittingham	Service Manager (Fostering)
Mohammed Jakahara	Service Manager (Adoption)
Kevin Fletcher	Service Manager (Residential)
TBI	Project Officer (BVR)
TBI	Centre Manager
TBI	Residential Social Worker
TBI	Foster Carer
Sam White	Finance
TBI	Trade Union Representative

- 2.3.5 The sub group overseeing Quality assurance will comprise:

Sue Richards	Principal Officer
TBI	Reviewing Officer
Jean Park	Centre Manager
TBI	Service Manager
TBI	Project Officer (BVR)
Sam White	Finance
TBI	Trade Union Representative

- 2.3.6 Other staff and representatives from other services (Health, Education, Voluntary and Independent sector) will be identified and involved in specific aspects of work as appropriate.

- 2.3.7 The involvement of Children and Young People and the wider consultation work with them will be organised through the Children's Participation Officer and the established children and young peoples reference group.

2.4 Timetable for Review Stages

This review will encompass a significant part of the Department's resources. Completion of the review within the timetable set will be challenging. This programme details the dates of the Cabinet and Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee to which the review stages will be reported:

Timetable for review stages	Key Dates
<p>Stage 1 – scope and resources</p> <p>Proposed structure for undertaking the review, key issues and risk assessment.</p> <p>Report to Cabinet. Report to Scrutiny.</p>	<p>9/7/02</p>
<p>Stage 2 – baseline</p> <p>Sub-groups complete baseline assessment for their specific segment of the review.</p>	<p>1/10/02</p>
<p>Stage 3 – 4Cs activity and analysis</p> <p>A challenge event will take place in September. To be undertaken by each of the sub-groups and monitored and co-ordinated by the core team. (See section 2.6). Interim report to Scrutiny.</p>	<p>09/02 30/11/02 Dec 2002</p>
<p>Stage 4 – options appraisal</p> <p>Options to be examined from key issues in relation to each of the sub-groups specific areas. Amalgamated by the Core team. Report to Scrutiny.</p>	<p>31/1/03 Feb 2003</p>
<p>Stage 5 – final report, improvement plan and implementation</p> <p>Full report to Scrutiny and to Cabinet.</p>	<p>April 2003</p>

Resources

Details of the resources required on the review

The proposed structure for the review outlined in section 2.3 will place substantial demands on the key managers and staff within the service. An attempt to appoint a BVR Project Officer for 12 months to help facilitate this review has so far been unsuccessful. Alternative arrangements are being considered to increase the potential to appoint or second an appropriate person to this role.

The forthcoming Joint Review of the Social Services Department will also have a significant effect on our ability to deliver this BVR within the proposed timescale.

2.5 Validation

The review team will follow the corporate model. A service team will produce the required report. A validation team made up of Gordon Stirling, Chief Executive's Department, and an officer from Corporate Finance will act in an advisory capacity to ensure that the review meets corporate requirements.

2.6 Strategic Objectives and Terms of Reference

2.6.1 The Social Services Department under the Children Act 1989 provides services for Children in Public Care. Local Authority's are required to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their areas who are in need if:

- They are unlikely to achieve a reasonable standard of health and development without the provision of services.
- Their health or development is likely to be significantly impaired without the provision of such services.

2.6.2 The objectives set by Central Government for Children's services and the Quality Protects targets require us to continually improve our services for looked after children. The primary objectives for the service are:

- To ensure that children are safely attached to carers capable of providing safe and effective care for the duration of childhood
- To prevent unnecessary changes of placement of children within the looked after system
- To ensure that wherever possible children who do become looked after are returned home quickly.

- To ensure that children are protected from significant harm
- To ensure that children gain maximum life chance benefits from educational opportunities, health and social care.
- To actively involve users and carers in decision making and in planning packages of care.

2.6.3 The Department has addressed these objectives in the development of its Quality Protects Map and Business Plan. They are incorporated into the Council's Corporate plan.

2.6.4 The four "C's" will be addressed as follows:

Challenge

The Review will challenge:

- Whether the service needs to be funded at its current level
- Whether the Council needs to provide the current level of service directly
- Whether the service is meeting the needs of children from minority ethnic communities
- Whether the service is adequately focused on the Quality Protects targets and the Governments objectives for children
- Whether services provided are promoting social inclusion and reducing significant harm
- Whether services are provided when and where they are needed
- Whether there are other options for providing these services
- Whether the buildings are fit for the purpose and meet statutory requirements
- Whether the service is meeting the longer term needs for Children and young people

2.6.5 Consultation

This will be carried out in a variety of ways with a range of groups and will utilise existing mechanisms of consultation, particularly with children and young people. Where necessary these will be supplemented with additional forums to ensure consultation takes place with:

- Service Users (children of a range of ages) using a variety of methods to assess customer satisfaction
- Service Users (parents and carers) using questionnaires and group meetings to assess satisfaction
- Employees who commission services
- Employees who provide services
- Partner Agencies, particularly Health and Education
- External providers (partners and agencies, voluntary and independent sector)

2.6.6 Compare

The services provided will be bench marked with :

- All Unitary Councils – selected areas of service
- The Unitary Family - all areas of service
- Independent / Voluntary sector providers – selected areas of service

2.6.7 Compete

The Review will assess:

- Whether there are different models of service delivery that are more cost effective
- Whether there are opportunities to secure added value by co-ordinating and developing partnerships
- Whether the balance of directly provided / purchased services is appropriate

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3. None arising directly from this report, the Best Value Review will expect to achieve efficiencies within the service equivalent to 3% a year in line with the Council's budget strategy.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4. The Local Government Act 1999 requires the Council to undertake Best Value Reviews in all areas of service from April 2000,

PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

5. The process of Best Value Review is rigorous and therefore time consuming. It will bring additional pressures within the service, aspects of which are currently suffering staff shortages. The completion of the review will be affected by the availability of staff time and our ability to recruit to key posts.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6. None arising directly from this report.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

7. The review will consider how well services meet the needs of children from black and minority ethnic communities and disabled children who are in Public Care.

RECOMMENDATION

8. To approve these terms of reference.

Background Papers: None