



CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD
23rd September 2004

CHILDREN'S SERVICES INSPECTION - PROGRESS REPORT

**BRENDA THOMPSON - EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR
SOCIAL SERVICES AND HEALTH**

JAN DOUGLAS - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To inform Members of the progress made in relation to actions arising from the Inspection of Children's Services carried out by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) in July 2003.

BACKGROUND AND EXTERNAL CONSULTATION

2. A report on the SSI Inspection of Children's Services was presented to Members in November 2003 and the action plan was submitted to Executive in January 2004.
3. The action plan was formulated following discussions with the Inspectors and progress monitored at joint meetings on 26 March and 19 May and recently at the Annual Review meeting (28 July 2004).
4. The progress against actions and recommendations will inform the overall assessment of Children's Services. This had been assessed as 'promising capacity for improvement' and 'serving some people well'.
5. Appendix 1 shows the achievements against actions.
6. The outstanding actions relate to long-term change or form part of a wider programme within the service or the Council. These are all on target.

7. The key themes within the inspection recommendations were:
 - the process for receiving referrals and the accompanying large number of 'pending cases'
 - the effectiveness of quality assurance systems
 - the level of demand on services, particularly the high numbers of children looked after
8. A rigorous review of processes and thresholds for service has taken place. The service has been reconfigured to bring referral and assessment systems together under one Social Services Manager, with other teams being locality based.
9. This has resulted in a significant reduction in pending cases (currently 3) and improvement in time scales for initial assessment (75% completed within 7 days).
10. The Inspection Report identified good practice within family placement services, 'highly regarded' leaving care services and a successful outsourcing of the residential services to the independent sector (Five Rivers).
11. The areas of concern in relation to looked after children were:
 - high numbers of children looked after, many entering the system as emergency admissions
 - financial pressures, in part resulting from high numbers of children looked after and the specialist/complex nature of many of these placements.
12. A number of actions have been completed in response to these concerns, including:
 - analysis of the reasons why children become looked after in a 'Matching Needs and Services' exercise.
 - development of a Children Looked After Commissioning Strategy, based on a placement options analysis.
 - a review of thresholds and procedures regarding admission into the looked after system. This confirmed a robust process, with multi-agency involvement at each stage.
 - creation of a specialist 'Children Looked After' team to ensure standards and focus are maintained.
 - development of a 'looked after' business unit, managed by a service manager. This ensures all multi-agency activity is co-ordinated to support this group of young people.

- continuation of the long-term strategy of developing preventative services on a multi-agency basis, to reduce numbers of children looked after.
13. The statistical information available shows that the number of children looked after has slowly reduced over the last 9 months. This however, does not always result in a decrease in budget pressure. Young people entering the system display complex difficulties and the number with complex disabilities is increasing. In addition, intensive support packages to keep children within their families create financial pressure.
 14. The number of Personal Education Plans completed and reviewed has risen significantly and the number of reviews held within timescales.
 15. Overall, good progress in improving the quality of services has been maintained and recent reported performance indicator results confirm this.

OPTION APPRAISAL

16. N/A

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS

17. The action plan has not resulted in additional costs. Services have been reconfigured within existing budgets. There are no specific legal or ward implications.

RECOMMENDATION

18. That progress in respect of the SSI Inspection Action Plan is noted.

REASONS

19. The recommendation is supported by the following reasons:
 - the Action Plan is a response to the SSI Inspection and forms part of Children's Services assessment
 - the Action Plan shows significant progress and achievement in the standards and performance in Children's Services

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- SSI Report July 2004
- Action Plan/Executive Report January 2004

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JULY 2004

Recommendation from the Inspection Report	Outcome to be achieved	Action to be taken	Monitoring Performance Indicators + Evidence	Targets + Milestones			Responsible Manager
				Within 3 months	Within 6 months (specify)	Over 6 months	
<p>2.1</p> <p>The Council should agree medium term local plans and targets within the context of ongoing strategic planning work that could contribute to a reduction in the number of children looked after (para 4.16)</p>	<p>A CLA strategy containing clear eligibility criteria relating to admissions, range and type of placement is produced</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of pathways to care and criteria (Matching Needs & Services Exercise) Review contracts and placements Benchmarking with comparable authorities Baseline accurate data Multi-agency consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MNS number of emergency placements (baseline 57 plan) Jan - Jan CLA in foster placements (PAF 1370) number CLA production of strategy 	<p>Achieved MNS completed December 03</p> <p>85</p> <p>77 per 10,000</p>	<p>Achieved 13 emergencies Jan-July 04</p> <p>85</p> <p>strategy (May 04) Comm Strategy April 04 - achieved</p>	<p>30</p> <p>85 (88%) achieved</p> <p>70 per 10,000 (12 months) (67.3 per 10,000) - achieved</p>	<p>Sally Robinson</p>

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<p>2.2</p> <p>The Council needs to update the user involvement strategy and within this process, consider :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how a broader range of user representation and involvement could be achieved to involve groups who do not currently influence change (para 4.23) • how some current groups could be promoted and developed to encourage new and increased membership (para 4.24) 	<p>Updated strategy detailing a broader, more valid user involvement and participation in planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • update of user involvement strategy • team performance plans to reflect user involvement strategy 	<p>production of strategy</p> <p>Team performance plans</p> <p>Evaluate user involvement against desired outcome</p>	<p>production (March 04)</p>	<p>Achieved Agreed July 04</p> <p>April 04</p>	<p>Sept 04</p>	<p>Sue Little</p>

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<p>2.3</p> <p>The children's service needs to continue in its efforts to increase placement choice for looked after children that reduces reliance on high cost, out of area placements (paras 5.38 and 5.39)</p>	<p>Availability of local placement choice, to ensure better outcomes for young people</p>	<p>Matching Needs and Services exercise</p> <p>Review 5 Rivers contract and service specification</p> <p>Review NCH contract</p> <p>Feasibility study of 'professional carers' scheme</p> <p>Baseline of out of area residential placements</p>	<p>Analysis of MNS</p> <p>Revised contract</p> <p>Revised contract</p> <p>Discussion paper</p> <p>Reduction in out of area placements by 10% over 12 months</p>	<p>Achieved January 04</p> <p>January 04</p> <p>Achieved March 04</p> <p>Achieved January 04</p>		<p>August 04</p> <p>18</p>	<p>Sally Robinson</p>

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<p>2.4</p> <p>The Council needs to consider and address the pressures that Social Services were under in terms of current service demand and its capacity to respond to identified needs (para 5.12)</p>	<p>A balanced, consistent finance and workload profile which reflects the needs of the community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of accurate budget information and management information • Improved and enhanced 'activity level' information • HR strategy encompassing recruitment, retention, training and appraisal • Review of 'first contact services' • Review of teams and skill mix 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balanced budget • Monthly management information • Analysis of activity reports • Production of strategy • Reconfigured 'first contact' • Reconfigured locality teams 	<p>Monthly reports Feb 04</p> <p>February 04</p>	 <p>Quarterly reports April 04</p> <p>April 04</p> <p>Achieved July 04</p> <p>April 04 Achieved July 04</p>	<p>Balanced budget profile (12 months)</p>	<p>HBS (Tony Parkinson liaison)</p> <p>HBS (Tony Parkinson)</p> <p>HBS (Tony Parkinson)</p> <p>Denyse Waites</p> <p>Denyse Waites/ Jenni Cooke</p>

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<p>2.5</p> <p>Social Services managers should identify opportunities to work in collaboration with Sure Start programmes as a means of building bridges to access preventative services for families with younger children (para 5.15)</p>	<p>Development of locality based services on a multi-agency basis utilising progress already achieved by Sure Start</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-location of services where feasible • Profiling and sharing of referral information • Social Services on Sure Start Management Boards • SureStart on Teenage Pregnancy Board • Social Services staff in Child Care Information Centre 	<p>Evidence of joint location</p> <p>Information exchange</p> <p>Representation</p> <p>Representation</p> <p>Presence evaluation</p>	<p>Achieved Established protocol and procedure</p> <p>Achieved January 04</p> <p>Achieved December 03</p> <p>Achieved December 03</p>		<p>Shared premises (9 months)</p> <p>Sept 04 (evaluation)</p>	<p>Denyse Waites</p>

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<p>2.6</p> <p>Work that was underway to address the need for a more effective response to initial requests for service and screening needs to be progressed by senior managers to a timely and successful conclusion (para 6.13)</p>	<p>That the 'first contact' service be effective in 'screening' enquiries and ensuring assessments are timely and appropriate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reconfigure service and teams Introduction of SWIFT Monthly monitoring of 'pending' cases Dissemination of 'criteria to services' to public and professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial assessment within 7 days Number of appropriate referrals Number of re-referrals Number of pending cases (over 3 days) Leaflet produced Staff training 	<p>65%</p> <p>10%</p> <p>15</p> <p>Achieved Jan 04</p> <p>Jan 04</p>	<p>70%</p> <p>74.7 - achieved</p> <p>8%</p> <p>10.7% -</p> <p>10</p>	<p>80% (12 months)</p> <p>Target 1450 (12 months total)</p> <p>6%</p> <p>10</p> <p>8 - achieved</p>	<p>Denyse Waites</p>

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<p>2.7</p> <p>Senior Managers should ensure that following the introduction of new information systems, Managers are supported in achieving maximum benefit from management information, in order that they effectively manage allocation of workloads and actively monitor completion of assessments (paras 6.14 and 6.27)</p>	<p>Provision of regular, relevant management information, to enable analysis and planning of services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of SWIFT • Monthly and quarterly agreed management information report • Training for Managers on analysis of data 	<p>SWIFT system live</p> <p>Reports produced</p> <p>Managers workshop</p>	<p>Achieved Nov 03</p> <p>Jan 04</p> <p>March 04</p>			<p>HBS (Tony Parkinson liaison)</p>

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				Within 3 6 months months	Within 6 months (specify)	Over	

<p>2.8</p> <p>Senior Managers must ensure that the practice within teams consistently reflects practice standards that have already been agreed and specifically, that :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the completion of assessments is monitored to ensure that quality standards and timescales are met (para 6.28) core groups for registered children take place regularly (para 5.34) that identified gaps in care plans are addressed (para 6.30) reviews of looked after children and statutory visits are completed within required timescales (paras 6.33 to 6.35) 	<p>Improved quality of service for the user as a consequence of consistent practice and improved performance management that :</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of QA systems Establish Quality Circles Team Managers induction and development programme Management information on 'key' PIs Improved social worker awareness and understanding of standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposals for improved systems Regular QC meetings/reports Workshops implemented on performance and quality Monthly reports Staff briefing session 	<p>Achieved Feb 04</p> <p>Achieved March 04</p> <p>Jan 04</p> <p>Achieved Jan - April 04</p>	<p>Achieved May 04</p>		<p>Ann Smith</p> <p>Sally Robinson</p> <p>Patrick Duffy</p> <p>Jenni Cooke</p>
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2.9 Senior Managers need to review monitoring systems that are in place to ensure that those used are effective, used regularly and result in improvements to service quality (para 6.40)	Performance management to ensure compliance to established standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of QA system • Team Managers development programme • Improved SW awareness and understanding of standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposals and action plan • Workshops implemented on performance and quality • Staff briefing sessions 	Achieved February 04	Achieved May 04		Ann Smith Sally Robinson Jenni Cooke

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<p>2.10</p> <p>Managers should develop a system for care file recording that clarifies decision making and the justification for such decisions (para 6.44)</p>	<p>Clear recording, identifying when and who made key decisions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider other Authorities examples of decision-making recording • Proposals/consultation 	<p>Introduction of scheme</p>	<p>Achieved December 03</p>			<p>Sally Robinson</p>

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<p>2.11</p> <p>Senior Managers must address the security and safe storage of closed case files as a matter of priority (para 6.46)</p>	Files maintained in secure, safe storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion with HBS regarding documentation system • Identify storage • Review of destruction policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of action plan • Files stored securely • Revised policy 	March 04	<p>Achieved May 04</p> <p>Achieved April 04</p> <p>April 04</p>		<p>HBS (Tony Parkinson liaison)</p> <p>Performance and Modernisation</p>

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<p>2.12</p> <p>Senior Managers needed to ensure that staff in other agencies and members of the public were provided with information about criteria for accessing children's services (para 7.1)</p>	<p>Clarity provided for professionals and public on 'criteria to services'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Development of criteria agreed on multi-agency basis •Public leaflet developed •Staff training •Evaluation of criteria 	<p>July 03 agreed</p> <p>Leaflet produced</p> <p>Dissemination/ launch</p> <p>Evaluation report and analysis</p> <p>Number of appropriate referrals</p>	<p>Achieved January 04</p> <p>Achieved January 04</p>		<p>Sept 04</p> <p>Target 1450 (12 months)</p>	<p>Denyse Waites</p>

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<p>2.13</p> <p>Senior Managers needed to review the thresholds and systems for access to the looked after system to ensure that :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> those children who were accommodated were placed on a planned basis wherever possible and safe to do so a recognised system was in place that ensured effective gatekeeping only those children who were assessed as needing to be accommodated were placed on the basis that other services were assessed to be inappropriate or had already been tried and found to be unsuccessful (paras 7.5 and 7.6) 	<p>A CLA strategy containing clear eligibility criteria relating to admissions, range and type of placements</p>	<p>Review of current pathways to care and criteria</p>	<p>Proposals and action plan</p>	<p>Achieved March 04</p>			<p>Ann Smith</p>

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<p>2.14</p> <p>Members of the asylum support team must be provided with child protection training and made fully aware of the report and circumstances surrounding the death of Victoria Climbié as a matter of urgency (para 7.21)</p>	<p>Heightened awareness of child protection within asylum seekers services</p>	<p>CP training</p> <p>Climbié report disseminated</p> <p>Reinforce Housing role in ACPC</p>	<p>Provided August 03</p> <p>Provided August 03</p> <p>ACPC training programme</p>	<p>Achieved</p> <p>January 04</p>			<p>Ann Smith</p> <p>Jenni Cooke</p>

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<p>2.15</p> <p>The Council needed to take urgent action to ensure that financial systems were supported by accurate data and information provision for Managers that would help them manage budgets effectively, whilst new commitment accounting systems were being introduced (para 8.5)</p>	<p>Accurate and current financial information and analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of SWIFT • Appointment of Strategic Accountant (August 03) • Improved financial reporting • Finance training for Managers 	<p>SWIFT 'live'</p> <p>In post</p> <p>Regular information</p> <p>Training programme</p>	<p>Achieved November 03</p> <p>January 04</p> <p>March 04</p>			<p>HBS (Tony Parkinson)</p>

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<p>2.16</p> <p>The Council needed to examine the current role of supervision and audit systems in achieving consistency of practice and ensure that systems were put in place that effectively manage performance and achieve change (para 9.17)</p>	<p>Improved quality of service for the user as a consequence of consistent practice and improved performance management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review current QA systems • Introduce Quality Circles • Cross-moderation schemes • Team Managers induction and development programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposals and action plan • Regular QC meetings • Schemes in place • Workshops implemented 	<p>Achieved February 04</p> <p>Achieved March 04</p>	<p>April 04</p> <p>June 04 - achieved</p> <p>May 04 - achieved</p>	<p>Ann Smith</p> <p>Ann Smith</p> <p>Ann Smith</p> <p>Sally Robinson</p>	

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<p>2.17</p> <p>Senior Managers needed to ensure that a comprehensive human resource strategy was developed that addressed :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> workforce planning and profiling (paras 9.32 and 9.34) recruitment and retention (para 9.35) workload and capacity issues (para 9.38) training programmes that were based on needs analysis and linked to service priorities (para 9.52) 	Comprehensive strategy in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaison with HBS regarding production of strategy Joint Council/HBS consultation on services needs and plan 	<p>Production of strategy</p> <p>Established meetings/liaison</p>	February 04	Achieved May 04		HBS (Tony Parkinson)