

# **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**At a Meeting of the Scrutiny Sub-Committee to Promote Strong, Healthy and Safe Communities** held at the County Hall, Durham on **Monday 1 December 2003 at 10.00 a.m.**

### **Present:**

**Councillor M Nicholls** in the Chair

### **Members of the Sub-Committee**

Councillors Armstrong, Barker, Blenkinsopp, Coates, Cordon, Douthwaite, Ebbatson, Forster, E Hunter, Marshall, O'Donnell, Quigley, Stradling and Wright.

### **Co-opted Members:**

Councillor A Ambler

### **Other Members**

Councillors Hodgson, Hogan, Knox, Myers, Pye, Thompson, Walker and Watson

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Gibbon (Co-opted Member).

### **A1 Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 September 2003 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

In relation to Minute Tom Bolton, Senior Scrutiny Support Officer informed the Sub-Committee that in relation to the issue raised by Councillor Coates concerning costs of residential care identified under the Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) indicators, a meeting had now been held with Councillor Coates at which a detailed breakdown of the figures had been provided.

Councillor Coates added that the meeting had been very productive and that he was happy with the information provided.

## A2 **Best Value Review of Community Safety – Presentation**

The Sub-Committee considered a presentation by Peter Brookes, Head of Service, Community Support Unit and Richard Hughes, Community Safety Officer concerning the Best Value Review of Community Safety (for copy of slides of presentation see file).

Peter Brookes and Richard Hughes highlighted the following during the presentation:-

- (i) BVR National Framework
  - Challenge
  - Compare
  - Compete
  
- (ii) Process
  - Core Team
  - Scoping Event
  - Winter Review Team
  - Baseline Report
  - Options Report
  - Final Report
  - Improvement Plan
  
- (iii) What are the Key Issues?
  - Leadership
  - Citizen Focus
  - Partnership working
  - Accountability and Delivery
  - Capacity and Skills

Then they continued by outlining how improvements can be made by the County Council in relation to the identified key issues.

The presentation concluded by the identification of the next steps to be undertaken by the Authority as follows:

- CMT and Cabinet Approval of final report.
- Agreed Implementation Plan.
- Improvement Plan integrated into the Community Safety Team Plan for 2004-6.
- Additional post identified.
- Achievement of Implementation Plan – by 2006.
- Ongoing support of partners, important for delivery of Implementation Plan in full.

Councillor Cordon commented that the perception of crime is often greater than the incidence of crime itself. There is a need for an effective communication plan and he asked whether the central team will be responsible for devising and communicating the correct current information.

Richard Hughes, Community Safety Officer responded that each partnership had agreed a communication plan which the Central Team would have to progress. Peter Brookes, Head of Services Community Support Unit commented that it is essential to work with partners in relation to strategic communication.

Councillor Nicholls commented that there is a need to look at youth club provision for young people. He continued that there is a need for the number of youth workers within the County to be increased.

Peter Brookes responded that there needs to be a strategic approach in relation to the provision of services provided by different agencies. He continued that there is a need for work to be undertaken locally with local groups.

Councillor J B Walker expressed his concern about various fragmented agencies in the County and District. He continued that there is a need to know what provision is currently provided by the County, what is provided by the District Council in order to avoid duplication, he highlighted the need to work together possibly by the pooling of budgets.

Peter Brookes agreed and said that partnerships are the key to more strategic working and that there is a need to look at pooled budgets.

Councillor Dormer commented that people's tolerance had changed and they are not willing to have youngsters hanging around street corners.

Richard Hughes responded that recent legislation giving new powers will have to be used carefully. He continued that there is a need to get the balance correct between tolerance and intolerance.

Councillor O'Donnell reminded Members that the Crime and Disorder Panels which have been operating for some time involving multi-agency representation. He continued that they tackle most of the issues which will be dealt with by the proposed partnership working with the Crime and Disorder Teams and the Crime and Disorder Panels. He asked what is different in the BVR proposals.

Peter Brookes suggested that there is a need to use what is available locally to build upon it as there is a need for a strategic countywide approach.

Councillor Cordon commented that anti-social behaviour by young people tends to take place within the villages where provision for young people tends to be limited rather than the city centres where there is adequate provision.

Peter Brookes responded that there is a need to see children as children, he highlighted the need to get the balance of provision correct. He continued that a lot of good practice already exists and there is a need to bring the various providers together.

Councillor Mrs Hunter highlighted the need for Community Safety partnerships to have young people representatives serving on their boards.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

**5. Social Services Re-inspection – Two-Star Rating**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Director of Social Services concerning the Annual Review of Performance and Star Rating 2002/03, for the Social Services Department (for copy see file of Minutes).

Peter Appleton, Head of Quality and Performance, Social Services Department informed the Sub-Committee that on the 13 November 2003 the Social Services Inspectorate announced their Star Ratings for all Social Services Departments.

The judgments reached for Durham County Council's Social Services Department are as follows:-

**Services for children**

Serving people well - some  
Capacity for improvement - promising

**Services for Adults**

Serving people well - most  
Capacity for improvement - promising

These judgments resulted in a combined Star Rating of 2 Stars for Children and Adults.

He continued by highlighting the following areas of good practice as follows:-

- Improved performance against a key set of performance indicators.
- Consistent progress in respect of the Invest to Save Strategy for Children Looked After.
- Positive progress in the development of a Multi-Agency Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services Strategy.
- The establishment of a children and young people's planning Framework within the County Durham Strategic partnership.
- Positive progress in the implementation of the modernising Services for Older People Strategy.
- Improvements in Delayed Transfers of Care (hospital discharge).

- The growth in Direct payments and Welfare to Work placements respectively.
- Settlements reached on fees for Residential/Nursing Care and a framework for future negotiations.
- A continuing commitment to involving service users (Children and Young People and Adults) in Service Department.
- A Corporate led programme to address race equality.

However in relation to the next steps to be taken by the Authority, the Social Services Inspectorate had highlighted the following areas:-

- Victoria Climbié – high workloads experienced by social workers.
- Improved Life chances for children and families.
- Initial Assessments for children and families – Completion of initial assessments within 7 working days.
- Emergency Admissions to Hospital.  
The Department must remain vigilant in terms of responding to requirements for speedy assessment and discharge from hospital.
- Partnership Boards  
The Social Services Inspectorate will now need to see how the partnership working arrangements translate into improved outcomes for service users. He emphasised that the areas for improvement identified will form part of the Department's improvement agenda.

In addition he highlighted in the evidence submitted to the SSI that the role undertaken by Scrutiny in relation to the Social Services function was a key area of improvement.

Councillor Coates referred to paragraph 10.2 'Improved Life chances for children and families'. In the following report, relating to Performance Management the indicator concerning absences from school is orange. He questioned whether the authority had put enough resources into improving this indicator.

Peter Appleton responded that the most recent information received concerning the absences from school indicator was in the yellow banding. He highlighted that the banding had improved.

**Resolved:**

The Sub-Committee welcomed the awarding of the 2 Stars rating and the headline areas for improvement which will form part of the Department's Improvement Agenda.

## 6. Performance Management

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Director of Social Services concerning Performance Management (for copy see file of Minutes).

Keith Newby informed Members of the current position. In relation to children's services – 14 out of 18 indicators were reported.

In relation to performance indicator A2 (percentage of children leaving care aged 16 or over with at least 1 GCSE at Grade A-G). Keith explained that this remains in the orange banding although urgent work was currently taking place for the authority to move forward concerning this indicator. (An increase in performance of 2% would lead to an improved banding).

With reference to indicator C18 (Final warnings and convictions of children looked after) this remains in the orange banding, although Keith Newby explained that this is partly a result of moving some challenging young people from out of County provision back into County provision.

A restorative justice project had also been started which links with the established Youth Offending Team workers and the policy on police involvement is currently being reviewed. In addition a mentoring project for Young Offenders is also being funded.

In relation to indicator C20 (the percentage of child protection cases reviewed in the last year), Keith Newby informed Members that the Department of Health have issued revised banding thresholds for this indicator with performance currently in the 'good' banding. However, monitoring work will continue in order to ensure that half year performance is maintained throughout 2003/04. He emphasised that this indicator is very important as it limits the maximum star rating for Children's Services.

In relation to indicator C23, (percentage of Children Looked After who are adopted), this has moved into the yellow banding for the first half of 2003/04. The reason for this is a reduction in the number of children looked after placed for adoption in the first half of this year, as opposed to a fairly high number adopted in 2002/3. Keith Newby highlighted that work continues in relation to this indicator.

With reference to indicator D35, (percentage of children who have been looked after for at least 4 years who have been in their current placement for at least 2 years) this has slipped into the orange banding.

Keith Newby explained that the reason for this had been the move referred to earlier, of bringing young people who had been in expensive out of County provision, back within the County's residential sector. A small improvement in performance will result in a change of banding.

## **Adult Services**

In relation to Adult Services 15 out of 31 indicators were banded and recorded.

Keith highlighted that no indicators are in the red or orange bandings although this represents less than half the PAF indicators for adults.

In relation to banding for indicator B11, (households receiving intensive home care as a proportion of those receiving intensive home and residential care) has achieved an improved banding.

In relation to indicator D41, (the number of delayed discharges per 100,000 of the population) has an improved banding. However further work is ongoing to improve performance against this indicator.

He concluded by emphasising that attention will be drawn to those indicators where improvements are most urgently needed.

In relation to indicator D39, Councillor Coates commented that the percentage of adults and older people receiving a statement of their needs and how they will be met, he understood that the authority had tackled this problem however the banding is currently red.

Keith Newby responded that the Authority's target is 93% although the current performance level is acceptable. He emphasised that there is a need for improvement and that further action is required although a change in definition does not give a true picture of the authority's performance.

In relation to D35, E44 and E45 Councillor Coates commented that it seemed as if performance was slipping back, in relation to these indicators.

Keith Newby responded that the targets for these indicators are in need of review.

Councillor Dormer questioned whether, if a greater sum of funding was spent on fostering, would this result in a higher banding.

Keith Newby responded that he would expect that increased expenditure would result in an increase in the number of foster carers. He highlighted that this indicator has an effect on the Authority's final assessment.

Councillor Barker commented that work is currently taking place with Collingwood College whereby 20 students are linked with 17 young people in care. He suggested that this project be extended as it had proven to be very successful.

**Resolved:**

That the information contained in the report be approved.

**7. Sickness Absence in the Social Services Department**

The Sub-Committee considered a Report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny concerning the level of Sickness Absence in the Social Services Department (for copy see file of minutes).

Tom Bolton, Senior Scrutiny Support Officer, informed Members that the Working Group had been meeting since July 2003 with evidence being taken from the Social Services Department in the form of both current and historical data about sickness absence levels, the causes of sickness absence and how sickness management is managed.

The Group had received regular updates about sickness absence levels and that levels have begun to fall by 0.2% in 2002/03 compared with the previous year.

Further meetings are planned with the County Council's Senior Occupational Health Physician to examine best practice in other local authorities and the private sector.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

## **8. Traffic Speed and Road Safety**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny concerning a recent presentation to Members of the County Council and the Police Authority about Traffic Speed and Road Safety issues (for copy of report see file of Minutes).

Tom Bolton, Senior Support Support Officer informed Members that a recent presentation given to Members of the County Council and the Police Authority concerning target 8 in the County Council's Local Public Service Agreement on the 9 October 2003. In addition there have also been discussions in the Durham Member Area Panel about fixed speed cameras.

Two issues resulted from the presentation as follows:-

- (i) The importance of tackling the issue of speeding via education, encouragement, engineering and enforcement.
- (ii) The Funding of initiatives via the MAP process.

Councillor Thompson commented that at the seminar he had suggested that vehicles show externally the speed at which they were travelling, displayed in the rear window of the vehicle. This idea was to be raised by the Chief Constable with APO. In addition officers from the Environment Department were to contact the Environment Agency to ascertain their feelings concerning this issue.

Councillor Thompson highlighted that he had written to motor vehicle manufacturers about this idea and was awaiting their response.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.



## 9. **Report of Budget Working Group**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny concerning the Budget Working Group Report of discussions with Director of Social Services (for copy see file of minutes).

Tom Bolton, Senior Scrutiny Support Officer, informed the Sub-Committee that Members had raised a number of issues including:-

- (i) The need to continue to be pro-active in sickness absence.
- (ii) The need to look at car mileage.
- (iii) A monitoring requirement to ensure that savings from Early Retirements and investing in older people are clearly visible in 2004/05 budget.
- (iv) More clarity about management and support costs. A clearer financial breakdown of the Social Services Department management and support costs is required.

### **Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

## 10. **Forward Plan**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny giving details of the sections of the Council's Forward Plan which are contained within the Sub-Committee's jurisdiction (for copy of report see file of Minutes).

### **Resolved:**

That the report and section from the Forward Plan be noted.

## 11. **Work Programme**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny (for copy see file of Minutes) to update Members about the Work Programme for the Sub-Committee.

Councillor Mrs Hodgson requested that the "Valuing People Project" be considered as a future project to be undertaken by the Sub-Committee.

### **Resolved:**

That the report be noted.