

PERFORMANCE REVIEW REPORT 2003:

LONDON BOROUGH OF BARKING & DAGENHAM

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Improvements observed since the previous annual review

Assessment has highlighted the following improvements to services since the last Annual Review:

- good performance on the stability of placements of children looked after has been maintained. There has however been no improvement in the long term stability; (Standard 3)
- good performance in placing children looked after with family or friends, which is above the outer London average; (Standard 3)
- the percentage of children looked after who have had the relevant health checks and immunisations has improved. This was raised as an area for development in last year's Annual Review; (Standard 3)
- almost all reviews of children looked after have been completed within the required timescales. This is above the outer London average and this improvement needs to be maintained and continued. This was an area for development in last year's Annual Review; (Standard 3)
- virtually all children looked after have an allocated social worker. This needs to be sustained; (Standard 3)
- there has been a reduction in the percentage of children looked after who missed more than 25 days schooling, and the number of children permanently excluded from school is less than half the outer London average; (Standard 3)
- the percentage of care leavers engaged in education, training or employment has improved. The SSI inspection of children's services in May 2002 noted that the leaving care team provided a good service to care leavers; (Standard 1)

- all relevant care leavers have a pathway plan in place and an allocated personal adviser; (Standard 1)
- some additional foster carers have been recruited; (Standard 3)
- in July 2003 all children on the Child Protection Register had an allocated social worker. Earlier in the year there were a number of unallocated cases reported and it is imperative that the current level of allocation is sustained; (Standard 3)
- there has been an improvement in reviewing children on the Child Protection Register and 98 per cent are now completed within the required timescale. Continued improvement is required to achieve 100 per cent compliance. This was noted as an area for development in last year's Annual Review; (Standard 3)
- there has been a reduction in the unit cost of foster care; (Standard 2)
- performance has improved in the percentage of children registered on the Child Protection Register who had been previously registered. This was noted as an area for development in last year's Annual Review; (Standard 3)
- there is a developed system for managing performance and ranges of enhanced monitoring activities are in place and are planned; (Standard 1) and
- appropriate advocacy and interpreter services are available when required. (Standard 5)

Areas for Improvement

Assessment has highlighted the following concerns about performance:

- there has been a reduction in the number of children adopted, and performance is now in the lowest band. This issue was raised as an area for development in last year's Annual Review. Additionally, no child adopted last year had been placed for adoption within 12 months of the best interest decision being made. However, permanency planning is a priority for 2003/04 and 20 children have been placed for adoption during last year, with more adoption orders being made already in 2003-4 than 2002-3; (Standard 1)
- the percentage of children looked after placed in foster care or for adoption remains low and below the outer London average. There is a comparatively low number of approved adopters and foster carers as a percentage of the number of children looked after. A comparatively high proportion of children looked after are mostly unaccompanied asylum seeking children in residential care placements. The percentage of young children looked after in foster care or placed for adoption has improved. This was an area of development

identified in last year's Annual Review; (Standard 3)

- the recent National Care Standards Commission inspection of fostering services raised significant concerns about procedures for placing unaccompanied asylum seeking children. At the time of the inspection 70 children and young people were placed through an agency whose foster carers had not been through the usual checks and some of whom were actually operating as unregistered children's homes. This situation has now been remedied; (Standard 3)
- performance has deteriorated in relation to the percentage of young people leaving care with at least one GCSE grade A*-G and is now in the lowest band. Pupils are now individually tracked with education colleagues and it is envisaged that performance will improve. Only 40 per cent of children looked after have access to a computer where they are living and this is below the outer London average (68.3 per cent); (Standard 1)
- only 50 per cent of children looked after directly communicated their views to a statutory review last year, which is below the outer London average (77.4 per cent) and needs to be improved; (Standard 4)
- performance is poor in undertaking assessments within the timescales laid down. Only 4 per cent of initial assessments are done within 7 days, a deterioration in performance from last year. It is planned that this should rise to 40 per cent in 2003-2004 but this is still well below the outer London average this year of 60.1 per cent. 38 per cent of core assessments are done within 35 days, below the outer London average of 46.6 per cent; (Standard 4)
- while performance has improved slightly in the duration on the Child Protection Register, further improvement is required to ensure that children do not remain on the register for more than 2 years; (Standard 3)
- the unit cost of residential care for children is very high and has risen by £1100 a week since last year. Commissioning options for children's care need to be explored to ensure Best Value is obtained; (Standard 2)
- the self assessment audit which was recently undertaken following the Victoria Climbié Inquiry showed a need for improvement in the following areas; (Standard 4):
 - the number of unallocated Child in Need cases;
 - the number of AEB trained social workers needs to be increased;
 - Area Child Protection Committee guidance on children from overseas is required; and

- a mechanism to record unmet need should be developed. This is being addressed.
- actions arising from recommendations in the SSI inspection of children's services in 2002 need to be completed.

Capacity for Improvement (Standard 6)

Assessment has highlighted the following improvements to capacity:

- the council has adopted the Balanced Scorecard to assist with performance management in children services. A performance management and quality assurance culture must be embedded throughout the department to promote continued improvement in services;
- there is an increase in funding for children's services in 2003-04;
- there is a commitment at Chief Officer and Member level to secure the improvements necessary in children's services; and
- a Financial and Commissioning Framework has been agreed for 2003-06, focusing on service modernisation, integration and the redirection of resources to Children and Families services.

Assessment has highlighted the following concerns about capacity:

- recruitment and retention of children and families staff remains an issue, which could impede the council's ability to deliver, service improvements. A strategy has been put in place and its implementation should address the difficulties in recruiting to key social care posts. A workforce strategy across health and social care sectors is being developed;
- a low percentage of the staffing budget is committed to training. The percentage of social workers who have attained the PQ1 award in child care is very low compared with the outer London average. Similarly a low percentage of residential child care staff have achieved NVQ3. It is recognised that a significant number of staff are being supported to undertake Dip SW training; and
- work needs to continue to ensure that equality issues become integrated into all the mainstream work of the department.

SERVICES TO ADULTS

Improvements observed since the previous annual review.

Assessment has highlighted the following improvements to services since the last Annual Review:

- there has been an increase in the amount of intensive home care and an improvement in the provision of intensive home care as a proportion of intensive home care and residential/nursing care and performance is now in the top band. Alongside this there are plans to further increase intermediate care services and extra care housing tenancies; (Standard 1)
- the number of assessments of older people has risen and performance in this area is now good. There has been an associated rise in the percentage of assessments, which have led to the provision of a service; (Standard 5)
- the number of adults with learning disabilities helped to live at home has slightly increased from last year and this trend needs to be continued. This was raised in the Annual Review 2002; (Standard 3)
- there has been a reduction in the number of delayed transfers of care from the local acute hospital. This improvement needs to be sustained. The council was designated as a 'hotspot' and the issue of high levels of delayed discharges was highlighted in the Annual Review in 2002; (Standard 1)
- there has been an improvement in the percentage of people who receive a statement of their needs following an assessment. This was raised as an issue in last year's Annual Review. Continued improvement is still required; (Standard 3)
- there has been a good increase in the percentage of people receiving a review and performance is now in the top band; (Standard 3)
- revised eligibility criteria which are compliant with Fair Access to Care were put in place and operational by April 2003; (Standard 4)
- there has been an improvement in the unit costs of intensive social care and the residential care of older people; (Standard 2)
- a fully integrated health and social care commissioning structure and team is almost complete; (Standard 1) and
- appropriate advocacy and interpreter services are available when required. (Standard 5)

Areas for Improvement

Assessment has highlighted the following concerns about performance:

- despite the improvements in intensive home care and the reduction in admissions to residential/nursing care, performance in helping older people to live at home remains poor. This was raised as an issue in the Annual Review last year; (Standard 3)
- there has been a slight reduction in the numbers of older people admitted to residential or nursing home care but admissions are still significantly above the outer London average. There needs to be continuing efforts to further reduce residential and nursing home placements and to provide more support in the community and greater independence for older people; (Standard 2)
- performance has deteriorated in the number of adults waiting more than 6 weeks from first contact to a service being provided. There are also waiting lists for occupational therapy assessments, which need to be reduced; (Standard 4)
- few service users are as yet receiving Direct Payments and these numbers need to be increased. It is noted that current scheme members include older people and people with learning disability as well as younger physically disabled service users and this is encouraging; (Standard 3)
- some slippage has been reported on the implementation of plans for a number of Valuing People objectives, including transition into adult life, more choice and control, good health, moving into employment, quality and partnership working. The percentage of adults with a learning disability getting short term breaks has halved from last year and is much lower than the outer London average. The momentum in improving services for adults and young people with learning disabilities needs to be maintained; (Standard 3) and
- there has been an improvement in the percentage of equipment delivered within 3 weeks but this is still below the outer London average. (Standard 3)

Capacity for Improvement (Standard 6)

Assessment has highlighted the following improvements to capacity:

- a Financial and Commissioning Framework has been agreed for 2003-2006, focusing on service modernisation, integration and the redirection of resources to Mental Health services;
- integrated teams have been developed with health colleagues to develop improved services.
- there is a commitment at Chief Officer and Member level to secure improvements in adult services;
- there is an increase in funding for social services in 2003-04. A capital programme worth £15 million over three years has been agreed; and
- the council has adopted the Balanced Scorecard in adult's services to assist with performance management. A performance management and quality assurance culture must be embedded throughout the department to promote continued improvement in services.

Assessment has highlighted the following concerns about capacity:

- recruitment and retention of adults' staff remains an issue, which could impede the council's ability to deliver service improvements. A strategy has been put into place and its implementation should address the difficulties in recruiting to key social care posts. A workforce strategy across health and social care sectors is being developed;
- a low percentage of the staffing budget is committed to training for adults staff, but there are plans to increase the number of students supported through DipSW training;
- the council has not yet completed the necessary processes to implement the Caldicott Standard into social care and there is uncertainty that the timetable will be met. Action is being taken to rectify this; and
- it has taken some time to develop the integrated PCT/social services structure following the joint appointment of PCT Chief Executive and Director of Social Services. It is hoped that greater evidence of benefits to service users resulting from more integration and better partnership working will be seen in the coming year. The challenges faced by the PCT are likely to impact on the improvement agenda for social services.