

SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE - 14th JANUARY 1992

Report of the Director of Social Services

'The Pindown Experience and the Protection of Children' : Report by Mr.  
Alan Levy and Mrs. Barbara Kahan

1. Purpose of the Report

To inform members of the Social Services Committee of progress made in the implementation of the 'Action Plan' considered by the Child Care Sub-Committee on 14th June 1991.

2. Background

The report by Mr. Alan Levy and Mrs. Barbara Kahan, published in May 1991, identified a number of issues requiring attention by the Social Services Department and others, and necessitated a review of the department's approach to the structure and management of services to children and families, the roles and skills of managers and practitioners within these services and the level of resources available to them.

In my report to the Child Care Sub Committee on 14th June 1991 I set out a range of proposals for action, including short, medium and longer term responses to the issues identified in the 'Pindown' report.

3. Progress Report

During the past 6 months the issues set out in my 'Action Plan' have commanded much attention, thereby enabling me to report considerable progress. Appendix 1 details the proposed action together with progress made in respect of each of the 27 issues.

4. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Progress Report be received and noted.

5. Background papers

1. 'The Pindown Experience and The Protection of Children' - Report by Mr. Alan Levy and Mrs. Barbara Kahan - May 1991
2. Report of Director of Social Services to the Child Care Sub Committee held on 14th June 1991.
3. BASW : Code of Ethics
4. Social Care Association : Codes of Practice

'The Pindown Experience and The Protection of Children': Action Plan for Response to Recommendations

PROGRESS REPORT

Action

1. Review the structure of the department to deal with issues of accountability, spans of control, expertise in support and supervision to facilitate communication and sharing of information; to establish integrated staffing and staff development strategies to establish planning, monitoring, evaluation and inspection processes; and to maximise resources.
  - (a) outline principles and proposals
  - (b) consultation with staff, council members and professional associations.
  - (c) finalise and implement.

Progress

Several recent reports to Committee have provided detailed proposals for the future structure and management of the Social Services Department. These have been prepared following extensive consultation with staff, council members and professional associations and will provide a sound basis on which to develop high quality services.

<p>2. Develop an integrated strategy for children and young people.</p> <p>(a) Establish interim management arrangements for residential child care units together with appropriate support and consultation.</p> <p>(b) Implement interim management arrangements for residential child care units and provide briefing for residential staff.</p> <p>(c) Review and develop an operational brief for each residential child care unit.</p> <p>(d) Review and propose new staffing structure(s) for residential child care units.</p> <p>(e) Establish overall strategy for children in care including family placement.</p> <p>(f) Provide appropriate professional support to residential child care staff.</p>	<p>A residential child care management team was immediately established, ensuring that residential staff were well supported and operational difficulties resolved with a minimum of delay. The development of operational briefs for each unit is progressing well, and the current review of residential child care needs will ensure that each unit has clearly identified 'goals'. Expansion of Family Placement resources, within the proposed departmental structure, will further enhance the current priority being afforded to children in residential care. Training for residential staff has been considerably increased, including further opportunities for secondment to professional training.</p>
<p>3. (a) Adopt the BASW Code of Ethics and the Social Care Association Codes of practice. Incorporate within contracts and conditions. Promote through staff supervision and training.</p> <p>(b) Implement above proposals.</p>	<p>These have been adopted by Committee and widely distributed throughout the Social Services Department. They are regularly referred to throughout the recruitment process and within departmental training programmes.</p>
<p>4. Review the present complaints procedure for Staffordshire's staff, foster carers and children and young people and amend, as appropriate.</p>	<p>The complaints procedure was immediately issued to all children, young people and foster carers. It has recently been reviewed in accordance with Children Act 1989 guidance and is soon to be implemented.</p>

<p>5. Review present arrangements and guidance relating to the control of visitors to establishments and placement of children in accommodation. (Guidance issued April 1991).</p> <p>6. (a) Issue written instructions to all residential staff, to include the requirement to record details of all visitors in the daily log.</p> <p>(b) Reinforce these instructions through the management/supervision process.</p>	<p>Written guidance has been provided for residential staff, reinforced through supervision and monitored by residential child care managers and statutory visitors.</p>
<p>7. Issue clear written instructions to all staff regarding the approval of lodgings and the placement of young people in lodgings or similar accommodation.</p>	<p>Procedures relating to the use of lodgings were immediately issued and are currently being revised in accordance with Children Act 1989 guidance.</p>
<p>8. Establish clear records of approved lodgings and other accommodation for young people as an integral part of family placement provision.</p>	<p>The approval of lodgings is not yet an integral part of family placement provision, but clear records are now maintained by district staff.</p>
<p>9. (a) Establish basic requirements for the physical well-being and maintenance of good health of children in care. (Guidance issued in April 1991).</p> <p>(b) Reinforce these requirements through the management/supervision process.</p>	<p>The guidance issued in April 1991 has been and is regularly reinforced through supervision and training.</p>
<p>10. (a) Review the process of statutory visits (i.e. those undertaken by officers as required by S.3 (2) of the Community Home Regulations 1972) to residential child care establishments and agree a framework for such visits including issues to be scrutinised.</p> <p>(b) Ensure that statutory visits are undertaken on a variable pattern, by suitably qualified and experienced personnel, and ensure that they refer to previous statutory visit reports covering a minimum of six months.</p>	<p>The process of statutory visits was immediately reviewed and is now only undertaken by staff experienced in child care. The situation is currently subject to further review as a result of Department of Health Guidance.</p>

<p>11. Review the role of rota visits by Members in relation to residential child care establishments.</p> <p>12. (a) Co-ordinate current guidance to residential child care staff regarding their responsibilities for the maintenance of appropriate records, and reinforce through training, supervision and monitoring. (Included in several current procedures and guidance documents).</p> <p>(b) Review current guidance in respect of the use of 'measures of control' and the recording of its use.</p> <p>(c) Reinforce (a) and (b) above through routine training programme.</p>	<p>This matter has still to be addressed.</p> <p>Residential staff have received detailed guidance reinforced through training, regular supervision and monitoring of practice.</p>
<p>13. Write to Department of Health drawing attention to those issues which require central co-ordinated action.</p>	<p>All matters requiring centrally co-ordinated action have been drawn to the attention of the Department of Health.</p>
<p>14. While awaiting Central government amendments to the law regarding 'control and discipline' of children in residential establishments, interpret current guidance in language which is easily understood by staff.</p>	<p>Recent Department of Health guidance clearly describes sanctions which may and may not be used in the control of children in residential care. However, work is currently being undertaken within the Social Services Department with a view to providing staff with more detailed guidance, to be reinforced through more effective staff training.</p>

<p>15. (a) Identify the Assistant Director (Children and Families) as the senior manager responsible for ensuring that the education, career development and working life of all children in care are systematically reviewed.</p> <p>(b) Establish clear liaison between the Assistant Director (Children and Families) and the nominee of the Education Department with responsibility for these issues.</p> <p>(c) Remind all line managers with responsibility for children in care of their duty to consider these issues in the development of Care Plans.</p> <p>(d) Produce the First Annual Report.</p>	<p>These issues have been addressed and a First Annual Report will be produced in July 1992.</p>
<p>16. Ensure that all members of staff are made aware of their precise roles and responsibilities, though a clear departmental structure and organisation and the provision of job descriptions.</p>	<p>The organisational issues are currently being addressed through the restructuring process. However, there has been some delay in the development of job descriptions.</p>
<p>17. Negotiate arrangements with the Staffordshire Constabulary for access to information regarding possible sex offenders.</p>	<p>Following immediate discussions with representative of Staffs. Constabulary no recent problems have been reported.</p>
<p>18. Arrange joint SSD/Fire Service site visits to all residential child care establishments to agree which doors and windows may/may not be secured as a means of maintaining reasonable control or security.</p>	<p>The security of ALL doors and windows is now in accordance with fire regulations.</p>
<p>19. Ensure that, at all stages of any organisational change, staff at all levels of the department are consulted.</p>	<p>Staff at all levels of the department have been consulted throughout the current restructuring process and progress regularly reported.</p>

<p>20. (a) Analyse existing workloads and priorities.</p> <p>(b) Estimate additional workload implications of new legislation.</p> <p>(c) Develop a system to monitor current and future workloads.</p> <p>(d) Progress report and recommendation.</p>	<p>The additional workload and resource implications of the Children Act 1989 requirements have been considered. These have been reported previously to the Social Services Committee and additional resources have been approved. Further work is required with regard to (a) system(s) to assist in the monitoring and control of workloads.</p>
<p>21. Develop an integrated recruitment and staff development strategy to attract professionally qualified and experienced staff to Staffordshire, to include a review of advertising techniques, salaries and Conditions of Service. Progress Report.</p>	<p>Imaginative approaches to advertising and a more professional response to enquiries have resulted in the recruitment of almost 40 members of staff from outside of the County. This will continue to be closely monitored and refined in the light of experience.</p>
<p>22. Establish a system of staff meetings and communication which facilitates the effective exchange of information and views throughout the department. Report for information of Committee.</p>	<p>A series of seminars for District, Divisional and HQ managers focusing on communication, supervision and accountability was held in the Summer of 1991. This has resulted in a significant improvement in communication, which will be further enhanced by the restructuring of the department.</p>
<p>23. Develop a strategy for ensuring the free flow of information between officers of the Social Services Department and members of the S.S.C.</p>	<p>A strategy is being developed to ensure effective communication between officers of the SSD and members of the S.S.C. There have been several recent reports to committee outlining development proposals and implementation progress. Reports to District Advisory Sub-Committees are no longer edited.</p> <p>The first in a series of seminars for members was recently held in relation to the Children Act 1989. This was supported by an information pack setting out the main operational implications and resource requirements. A second seminar to discuss Community Care developments has been planned for March 1992.</p>
<p>24. Review the function and role of the present Social Services Committee structure. Report to Committee.</p>	<p>This is the subject of a separate report by the Director of Social Services to this Committee.</p>

<p>25. Establish with the Clerk and Chief Executive a system of regular review of the working relationship between staff of the two departments.</p>	<p>Regular meetings between Assistant Clerks and Assistant Directors (Children &amp; Families) have been established and provide a sound base for continued effective joint working.</p>
<p>26. (a) Ensure that effective supervision and professional support is provided for all staff in residential child care establishments and monitor its implementation. (b) Develop staff skills through the line management process and training programme. (c) Progress Report</p>	<p>The introduction of the Residential Child Care Management Team in Mid 1991 has ensured that all Officers in Charge of long stay units and Team Managers of family centres receive regular supervision and professional support. However, the provision of formal supervision for other staff in residential units has progressed less quickly. This will continue to be addressed within the current review of residential care provision.</p>
<p>27. Develop and establish a sound system of financial management and information which ensures effective budgetary control and informs the preparation of estimates.</p>	<p>The County Treasurer is currently developing an alternative budgetary framework for the Social Services Department to reflect the proposed departmental structure and organisation and to facilitate clarification of budgetary responsibility.</p> <p>Preparatory work has also been undertaken with a view to devolving budgetary responsibility and improving management information.</p> <p>A finance unit within the Social Services Department has been agreed and a head of unit is currently being recruited.</p>