

**COMMITTEE:** BEST VALUE SCRUTINY PANEL

**DATE:** 10TH MAY 2005

**SUBJECT:** BEST VALUE REVIEW CHILDREN'S SERVICES  
0-10

**REPORT BY:** CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN &  
LEARNING

**CONTACT OFFICER:** JENNY COLES 547506

**IMPLICATIONS:**

LEGAL		COMMUNITY SAFETY	
EQUALITIES		ENVIRONMENT	
FINANCIAL	✓	CONSULTATIONS	✓
STAFFING	✓	OTHER	

**WARDS AFFECTED: ALL**

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**PURPOSE**

1. The purpose of this report is to present the Best value Improvement Plan for Review of Children's Services 0-10, to the Best Value Scrutiny Committee.

**RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2. Best Value Scrutiny Committee is recommended to agree the Improvement Plan for the Best Value Review of Children's Services 0-10

## **BACKGROUND**

3. The Best Value Scrutiny Panel will recall that the Best Value Review of Children's Services 0-10 was undertaken prior to the launch of the Green Paper Every Child Matters in September 2003. Since this time there have been further documents issued by the DfES, including most significantly Every Child Matters-Next Steps and Every Child Matters-Change for Children. In November 2004 The Children Act received Royal Assent.
4. The Borough Council, in response to the Every Child Matters document, made the decision to restructure the Life Long Learning Department and the Housing and Social Services Department and create the Children and Learning Department from April 2005.
5. As a result of the changes to legislation, guidance from central government and the changes to the structure of services for children within the Council, the Best Value Scrutiny Panel agreed that rather than proceeding to an Options and Improvement Plan in the usual way, the Vision report would be accepted as a basis on which to develop the discussion and planning for the organisational development of children's services in the Council.

## **REPORT**

6. A key theme of the recommendations of the Best Value Review 0-10 was to achieve an integrated and "joined up" approach to family support services with increased access to information to enable the provision of services to children and families at an earlier stage. The restructuring of education and social care services, to establish the Children and Learning Department, is therefore central to delivering this objective and provides the overarching framework to the Improvement Plan.
7. The geographical alignment of services within three defined areas will enable family support provision in schools to be linked more effectively into multi agency support services. It is planned that different projects of Flying Start, On Track and Children's Fund family workers will be merged and managed through three family worker co-ordinators.
8. The Information Sharing Agreement (previously IRT) project and information sharing developments for the new Children & Learning Department have increased accessibility for staff to a basic set of data about vulnerable children. It should also be noted that the project which focused on gaining consent of parents and carers to share information has been shown as an example of good practice on the DfES website. The web based service directory within the Children's Information Service supported through ISA grant funding is now functioning and a similar

directory has been developed by the Connexions Service for the older age group.

9. The Common Assessment Framework and implementation of the Lead Professional system will further enhance the work of the family workers in schools and other staff working with children and families as well as the quality of information sharing. The Lead Professional system will be implemented through the multi agency school liaison meetings in the first instance. The DfES has issued draft guidance on both of these areas. However, it is likely that final guidance relating to the Common Assessment Framework from the DfES may be delayed in order to evaluate results from the pilot authorities.
  
10. Key issues for the Review were to promote a more integrated approach to organising family support services for children in the Council; a focus on early intervention; ensure quality and accessibility of services without jeopardising current good performance; ensure statutory services are provided; and mainstream targeted initiatives such as Children's Fund and On Track projects. The Improvement Plan details how the improvement tasks relate to these original key issues. The relevant corporate values are lifelong learning for all; protect and support the vulnerable and promote independence; promote equal opportunities; value the workforce and provide value for money; and partnership working. The Improvement Plan also relates particularly to the 2011 goals for education and health and social care.

### **PROPOSAL/OPTION**

11. The Scrutiny Panel can agree the attached Improvement plan or require further work to be undertaken

### **STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

12. The Implementation Plan makes reference to the development of a Children Workforce Strategy by the Children & Learning Department to fulfil the requirements of Every Child Matters-Change for Children.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

13. There are no legal implications contained within this report, this has been agreed with the Council's solicitor on 27 April 2005.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

14. Relevant funding arrangements are detailed in the Implementation Plan. The Finance Manager, Children & Learning confirms that sufficient funding is available within the base budget and DfES grant, 27<sup>th</sup> April 2005.

## **CONSULTATION IMPLICATIONS**

15. The Best Value Review consulted a wide variety of stakeholders as detailed in the Executive Summary.

## **APPENDIX**

16. Appendix 1 - Executive Summary of Best value Review Children's Services 0-10
17. Appendix 2 - Implementation Plan

## **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS** **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, SECTION 100D**

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