

**COMMITTEE:** CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

**DATE:** 1ST JULY 2004

**SUBJECT:** PROGRESS REPORT-BEST VALUE REVIEW OF SERVICES TO CHILDREN (0-9)

**REPORT BY:** DIRECTOR OF HOUSING AND SOCIAL SERVICES

**CONTACT OFFICER:** WES CUELL 547502

**IMPLICATIONS:**

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

**WARDS AFFECTED: ALL**

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**PURPOSE**

1. To inform the Panel of progress with this Best Value Review following completion of the Vision Report in September 2003

**RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2. Children's Services Scrutiny Panel is recommended to note the report.

**BACKGROUND**

3. This review was carried out as a cross departmental review (Children's Social Services and Lifelong Learning, including Luton schools) but also involved Health Services agencies (Primary, Community and Acute Trusts), all other statutory agencies, and the voluntary sector. This very large scale piece of work was undertaken in recognition of the fact that services to children and families in the chosen age range (0-9) are divided between many different agencies, either as commissioners or providers, and no single agency can operate in isolation from the others. On the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2004 a progress report on this Review was presented

to the Best Value Scrutiny Panel, seeking the views on the Panel as to the best way of taking the Review forward. That Panel advised that it would be appropriate to seek to incorporate the Vision Statement from the Review into the thinking that will inform the re-structuring proposals for the new Children and Learning Department but added that the Best Value Scrutiny Panel wished to have the opportunity to be consulted at the earliest possible stage about these re-structuring proposals. It was suggested by the Panel that to avoid duplication, it would be helpful for a joint meeting of the Best Value Scrutiny Panel and the Children's Scrutiny Panel to be arranged for this purpose.

4. The Best Value Scrutiny Panel also advised that although re-structuring will deal with many of the key issues arising from this Review there will be some remaining issues. It was agreed with officers that once the re-structuring work is complete an Options and Improvement Plan will be completed and reported to the Best Value Scrutiny Panel so that all stages of the Review are properly completed.

## **REPORT**

5. Inevitably the review was a very big task and involved a large group of people, but those involved valued the work and the Vision Report demonstrated a high level of agreement about the future development of the services involved.
6. The key recommendations of the review were: - (a) the development of a universally available and locally provided early intervention/family support services across the Borough to ensure that children's needs are identified and met at the earliest stage, (b) clearly identified referral routes between these early intervention services and the more specialist, higher level services, (c) arrangements to ensure that front line early intervention services have access to advice, support and consultation from specialist/expert teams (d) a Borough wide service directory to provide information about services available and how these are accessed, (e) arrangements to share key service user data between agencies to support 'joined up' working, (f) arrangements to share information, ideas, good practice, etc, between agencies.
7. At the point where the Vision Report of the review had been completed discussions had commenced about the Government Green Paper 'Every Child Matters' which was also published in September 2003, and which outlined a blue print for the future strategic direction of children's services in England and Wales. The Green Paper indicated that large scale re-structuring of the organisations involved in providing children's services was likely.
8. In Luton discussions commenced to look at the possible implications of the Green Paper and it was noted that the key recommendations of the Best Value Review were in accord with 'Every Child Matters' and would therefore provide an excellent basis on which to plan for the future.
9. It was also noted that to achieve the key recommendation of the review (a), the development of an early intervention service across the Borough, it would be necessary to integrate the existing initiatives (Sure Start, On Track, Children's Fund, Flying Start) which are funded through a mix of core local authority funding

and Government Specific Grant funding, would require major organisation change, outside the normal remit of a Best Value Review.

10. For this reason it was agreed that rather than proceeding to an Options and Improvement Plan in the usual way, the Vision Report would be accepted as an agreed basis on which to develop the thinking in the Borough about future organisational development. This commenced with work to plan the proposed 'Children and Learning Department' and is on going.
11. The recommendations in the review that concerned the sharing of information were taken forward as part of the Identification, Referral and Tracking project, which is a separate Government initiative, also commenced in 2003 but now incorporated into the Children Bill, (the vehicle through which the Government will deliver the Green Paper objectives)
12. All the work that would normally be delivered through an Options and Improvement Plan is therefore underway, but because of the unusual circumstance arising from the timing of the Green paper, this work is not now specifically identified as being part of a Best Value Review.

**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**  
**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, SECTION 10**

13. Best Value Review of Services to Children aged 0-9, Vision Report
14. Report to Best Value Project Board-9<sup>th</sup> September 2003