

LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	11 November 2003
Subject:	SSI Annual Review
Key decision:	No
Responsible Chief Officer:	Director of Children's Services
Relevant Portfolio Holder:	Social Services and Health
Status:	Part 1
Ward:	All
Enclosures:	SSI Annual Review of Performance letter - 15 September 2003

1. Summary/ Reason for urgency (if applicable)

- 1.1 This is a cover report for the SSI Annual Review letter. The directorate's Link Inspector Ann Daniel's will attend the Cabinet meeting to present this letter and respond to any questions or clarifications sought by Cabinet Members.
- 1.2 The Department of Health requires council's to present this letter "to an open meeting of the relevant executive committee of the council within two months of the date of this letter".

2. Recommendations (for decision by Cabinet)

- 2.1 **The Cabinet is asked to consider and accept the content of the Annual Review of Performance letter attached as an Appendix.**
- 2.2 **To instruct officers to ensure that remedial actions to achieve improvements in line with the concerns raised in this Performance Review are incorporated in People First Business Plans**

REASON: The letter accompanies a report of the Social Services Inspectorate's annual review of council's social services performance and officers have been asked to present it in open session to the Cabinet within two months of the date of the letter.

3. Consultation with Ward Councillors

- 3.1 Not applicable

4. **Policy Context (including Relevant Previous Decisions)**

- 4.1 The considerations in this report are relevant to the Council's interpretation and delivery of major national and local social services policies.

5. **Relevance to Corporate Priorities**

- 5.1 Achieving good quality social services is a major Council responsibility, and is consistent with delivery of the Council's strategic corporate priority:

“We will improve the quality of health and social care in Harrow - by improving the life chances of young people, by promoting and maximizing the independence of disabled, frail and chronically ill people, by ensuring appropriate levels of safe care and support for those not able to live independently, and by enabling choice and access to good quality housing.”

6. **Background Information and options considered**

- 6.1 The performance rating for 2002/03 was 1 star with uncertain prospects. Since that time there have been major managerial and organisational changes. The performance report identifies Improvements observed since the previous annual review, Areas for Improvement, and Capacity for Improvement in relation to Children & Families services, and for Services to Adults. These are set out in detail in the letter; there are however highlights that I would wish to draw Members attention to that have been discussed with the SSI Link Inspector over the past year or so that are relevant to both the content of the letter and our continuing work to improve the quality and focus of the council's social services.

6.2 **Children & Families**

There have been significant improvements to these services since the review in 2002. In particular: the positive assessment made on the information submitted in relation to the Climbie review of children's services earlier this year; improvements in services for children Looked After by the Council; better multi agency work and activity in assessing and reviewing services to children.

We have not developed a commissioning strategy to ensure that we forward plan to meet future needs and ensure that we are proactive in assessing the needs of the borough's children, making best use of our resources. Over the years insufficient attention and investment has been made in these services and it is clear that the SSI are critical of the level of spend for children's services relative to the average spend of other outer London boroughs.

The SSI letter indicates a concern that, as with all organisational change, there is a need to manage the process and that we have to ensure that this reorganisation does not lift focus from the need to continue with improvements made in the past 12 months specifically for children with social care needs. The configuration of children's services within People First is completely in line with the recent Green Paper *Every Child Matters*, September 2003. The People First director's group is determined to achieve the positives afforded by this structure, and our improved strategic and working arrangements with partner agencies.

The areas, which the SSI has identified for improvement, are in line with our own assessment and, particularly with the opportunities afforded by the reconfiguration into

People First, we are improving our strategic commissioning, integration of services for children in need and work with local communities and schools.

6.3 **Services to Adults**

There are improvements identified since the last review, in particular in maintaining older people in their own homes through good performance in delivering equipment and intensive home care.

Overall, the SSI recognise that we need to be more proactive in planning to meet service needs through stronger strategic commissioning; in reducing costs for residential care (a problem shared with other London boroughs), and delivering better information and service assessments for these client groups and their carers.

Arrangements to achieve a service integration for this range of services with the PCT is recognised, although a concern is raised about our capacity, and that of the PCT, to deliver to the stated target date of April 2005.

6.4 **Overall**

The SSI continues to have concerns about our overall grasp of the strategic agenda for both these sets of services. The SSI recognise that we have made improvements over the past year and are better informed about the weaknesses in the infrastructure supportive of both Adult and Children & Families services, and have developed ways of tackling these that are being implemented.

They are now looking for conclusive evidence that the Council will afford these services priority and investment, and that we will sustain improvements into the future.

A specific Action Plan in regard to the concerns raised in this letter has not been developed. This is a considered action, which has been discussed with the SSI, as these issues and other performance priorities are being incorporated in business plans being developed within People First to give more purposeful direction across the range of services.

7. **Consultation**

7.1 As part of the achievement of several of the service improvements identified here we will continue both formal and informal discussions with partner agencies.

8. **Finance Observations**

8.1 None specifically relating to this report. Achieving the improvements necessary requires both sustained investment and maximising the resources available to social service.

9. **Legal Observations**

9.1 None specifically relating to this report

10. **Conclusion**

10.1 There are significant messages to elected members and managers within the Council in this annual performance letter. We will continue to be monitored on our performance in

delivering national and local social service priorities, the SSI view of how well we do will be contained in next annual review.

11. **Background Papers**

11.1 The SSI Annual Review letter dated 15 September 2003.

12. **Author**

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