

PERFORMANCE REVIEW REPORT 2003:

LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

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:

- positive response to the Children's Safeguards Inspection including:
 - re-launch of the Area Child Protection Committee; and
 - improvement of multi-agency child protection procedures. (Standard 1)
- children's services are included in the LIFT project with Harrow Primary Care Trust, which will result in some services being co-located with health in 2004; (Standard 1)
- pathway plans and personal advisors are in place for care leavers and very good performance has been achieved in enabling employment, education and training for care leavers; (Standard 1)
- maintained very good performance in the timeliness of child protection reviews and in maintaining low levels of re-registrations; (Standard 3)
- services for looked after children have improved as evidenced, by:
 - continued low numbers of children who experience three or more placement moves in a year;
 - high percentage of children receiving a health review;
 - low numbers of children missing 25+ school days; and
 - ninety nine per cent of reviews undertaken on time; (Standard 3)

- increase in numbers of children with disabilities accessing services and in the range of services available; (Standard 3)
- excellent performance in completing initial and core assessments; (Standard 3) and
- audit of council services using the 'Excellence not Excuses' report into the needs of black and minority ethnic communities. Findings from this work will result in an action plan to improve and develop services for black and minority ethnic children and their carers. (Standard 5)

Areas for Improvement

Assessment has highlighted the following concerns about performance:

- low numbers of looked after children achieving educational qualifications; (Standard 1)
- a commissioning strategy needs to be developed for children's services. This needs to include clarity about the future use of in-house residential provision; (Standard 2)
- the council is reporting below average numbers of children looked after per 10,000 population (38 against the outer London average of 55); this needs to be kept under review to ensure that thresholds to become looked after are not too high; (Standard 2)
- high unit costs of residential placements; (Standard 2)
- low numbers of children were adopted. It is noted that increasing the number of children adopted is a Public Service Agreement target, phased over the next three years; (Standard 3) and
- family support services need to be strengthened in order to provide a wider range of services for children in need. (Standard 3)

Capacity for Improvement (Standard 6)

Assessment has highlighted the following improvements to capacity:

- council members have an improved understanding of the statutory and core tasks of social services and are committed to strengthening the departmental infrastructure;

- the financial systems across children and adult services are in the process of revision; accurate financial monitoring data is available monthly . A Children's Services accountant has recently come into post to assist with further developments;
- improved management information is available to support service monitoring, review and development in children's services. The council is preparing to implement a new IT system in 2003-2004 which will improve management information across the whole department;
- improved recruitment and retention of social work staff. A recruitment and retention package in place and a trainee social work scheme has been established with nine people currently on the scheme; and
- quality performance and review group undertakes a rolling programme of service audits

Assessment has highlighted the following concerns about capacity:

- a new structure has been established for children's services across Education and Social Services and the Director of Children First will be in post in September. This structure will need to ensure the continuous improvement of children's social care;
- the budget for children and family services for 2003-2004 is 23 per cent of the Personal Social Services budget, which is below the outer London average of 25 per cent. This is also set in the context of below average number of social workers per 10,000 population (9.8 against 13.6) and concerns raised in the Delivery and Improvement Statement about management capacity to deliver continuous service improvement. The council needs to review whether the resourcing of children's services is adequate to meet the needs of vulnerable children and deliver the change agenda;
- limited progress has been made since the last Annual Review in developing a strategy for children in need rather than just those in need of protection. It is acknowledged that a multi-agency Children's Executive Group has recently been established and will be collaborating to develop a Children's Strategy. The strategy will need to ensure that parents and children have access to a range of family support services. This work should link with Children's Fund developments; and

SERVICES TO ADULTS

Improvements observed since the previous annual review.

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

- continued good performance in relation to promoting the independence of older people with more complex needs, as evidenced by the high provision of intensive home care and low admissions to residential care; (Standards 1 and 3)
- very good performance in delivering equipment within three weeks. Plans are in place to establish joint equipment store by April 2004; (Standard 1)
- pooled budget arrangements are being pursued for residential and nursing care, free nursing care and joint equipment. Decisions and actions will need to be evidenced over the year; (Standard 2)
- very high level of mentally ill people helped to live at home; (Standard 3)
- an increase in the take up of direct payments with further actions planned to achieve further improvement; (Standard 3) and
- work underway with the Asian communities to review their needs and views of current services. (Standard 5)

Areas for Improvement

Assessment has highlighted the following concerns about performance:

- plans are in place to achieve most of the Valuing People objectives, but there was slippage in achieving targets; (Standard 1)
- there has been limited progress in establishing commissioning strategies for adult services; (Standard 2)
- it is acknowledged that action has been taken to reduce the unit costs of residential care and nursing care across adult services, but costs remain high, except in the area of physical disability, where costs are at an average level; the unit cost of intensive home care is also high; (Standard 2)
- mental health services, provided jointly with Central and North West London Mental Health Trust are currently under review. Focus is on improving the performance of Community Mental Health Teams by reviewing the skill mix and roles of the joint agency staff group; (Standard 2)

- helping people with a learning disability to live at home remains an area of low performance. Information in the Delivery and Improvement Statement also indicated that only 50 per cent of the budget for learning disability services was spent on community based services as opposed to residential services. Of this 50 per cent, only 27 per cent was spent on day services. The council should consider increasing the percentage spend in favour of community based services which promote independence; (Standard 3)
- although the number of older people receiving an assessment is high, the number receiving services to help them live at home remains low. The council needs to review whether prevention services for older people are adequate and actively help people to retain their independence for longer; (Standard 3)
- the level of carers assessments (eight per cent) is very low and needs to be improved. The current upper band range is 40 per cent to 70 per cent; (Standard 4) and
- the number of people receiving a statement of their needs at 68 per cent is very low compared with the outer London average of 81 per cent and the overall target of 100 per cent; (Standard 4)

Capacity for Improvement (Standard 6)

Assessment has highlighted the following improvements to capacity:

- as part of the council's restructuring into the People First Directorate, proposals are being drawn up to take forward the integration of older people's services with the Harrow Primary Care Trust (PCT), with the PCT assuming management responsibility;
- introduction of telelogging within domiciliary care is providing information on the quantity and quality of services provided in the independent sector;
- planned implementation of a new IT system across the department, following the evaluation of the pilot scheme underway in physical disability care management; this will further improve the availability of management information;
- the financial systems across children and adult services are in the process of revision; accurate financial monitoring data is now available monthly;
- continuous development of the workforce strategy; work has been completed on an audit of the skills and qualifications of the current workforce in preparation for future service development; and
- LIFT project will enable an improved access to a range of services for older people from 2004-2005

Assessment has highlighted the following concerns about capacity:

- the council has agreed the overall organisational structure for the future provision of adult services and work is in progress to determine the detail of these arrangements and how they will deliver social care services in the future. The outcomes of this detailed work will enable assessment of the robustness of future proposals;
- capacity both within the social services and the PCT to undertake the integration of older people's services by April 2005;
- there is a considerable level of work needed to establish vision, strategy and commissioning intentions across adult services;
- adult services need to establish a consistent approach to monitoring the quality of service delivery; and
- the council needs to review its partnerships with voluntary organisations across children and adult services in order to ensure that service provision meets the priority needs of Harrow residents.