

Meeting: Cabinet

Date: 11th November 2004

Subject: CSCI Annual Review

Responsible Officer: Executive Director (People First)

Contact Officer: Paul Clark

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Margaret Davine, Social Services & Health

Key Decision: No

Status: Public

Section 1: Summary

1. This is a covering report for the Commission for Social Care Inspection Annual Review Letter. Each year the performance of the Social Services component of People First is assessed by National Government against a set of performance targets and pre-determined criteria.
2. This is summarised in an Annual Review meeting and followed up by formal Annual Review letter (copy attached).
3. This letter sets out the achievements of the council and those areas where further work is required.

Decision Required

4. Cabinet is asked to consider and comment on the Annual Review Letter (attached).
5. Cabinet is asked to instruct officers to take appropriate action to continue performance improvement along the lines set out in the document.

Reason for report

6. This report is brought to Cabinet to comply with the requirement of Central Government for political consideration and open publication of the letter report and to inform Cabinet of progress made and work still to be done as part of the overall Council improvement programme.
7. The improvement programme set out for People First Social Care links to the Corporate Plan, Community Strategy and the Primary Care Trust local delivery plan. Future work will link to the requirements of the Green Paper for Children's Services and the National Service Framework for Children's Services as well as the National Service Framework and policy statements from Government for the development of Adult Services.

Benefits

8. By supporting the work of People First Social Care in continuing to improve against the targets set out in the Annual Review of Performance. The Council will see
 - ◆ Service Improvement for vulnerable users in Harrow
 - ◆ Increasing Public support for the quality of service and
 - ◆ Improve performance measures both locally and nationally impacting on the Corporate Performance Assessment.

Cost of Proposals

9. The improvement of services is set out in the relevant Business Plans for both Adult and Children's Services.
 - ◆ Capital and Revenue costs are dealt with within the medium term budget strategy and the year on year budget adjustment.
 - ◆ There are options for further and speedier improvements subject to the available funding from the Council.
 - ◆ The current plans for the service do set out appropriate development and services improvement.

Risks

10. Failure to make the appropriate improvement would result in
 - ◆ reduced quality of service to vulnerable service users.
 - ◆ a risk of adverse impact on individual service users.
 - ◆ a lowering of the reputation of the Council both locally and nationally.
 - ◆ a failure to improve the Council's CPA rating

Implications if recommendations rejected

11. The council would be in breach of the requirement to publicise the Commission's findings.

Section 2: Report

12. The Commission's letter addresses three main areas, Children's Services, Community Care Services and capacity to improve.

Children's Services

13. The Commission notes both areas of improvement and items where services are in need of development.

14. All areas covered by the annual review of performance were those highlighted by officers within the service and drawn to the attention of the commission.

15. The introduction of rigorous audit of performance and clear performance management has begun to make an impact across the service. Work is still required to embed this throughout every part of Children's services and not only to improve performance within the social work component but to draw this together with the integrated Children's Service.

16. The areas requiring attention relate to services for Looked After Children and improving the quality and quantity of their placements, be it in adoption, fostering or family. All of these are covered in our Business Plan. Improvement work to ensure Looked After Children attend school regularly, reduce their level of offending and improve their attainment is also underway and co-ordinated with Youth Offending team.

17. The issues of the Victoria Climbié Self-Audit reflect rigorous action taken in Children's Services to review each case on the Child Protection register and ensure the absolute best practice was current. In some cases work was needed to improve and develop the quality of service. This was openly reported to the Commission and an action plan put into place immediately to improve the service. I can report this action plan has been completed and were we to be audited today we would report 100% compliance.

18. It is good to see that the commission has begun to realise the amount of effort, staff, managers and councillors have put in to improving and developing a very positive service for Children and the recognition of the business planning, performance management, commissioning strategy, integration of services, improvement of life chances and the development of a balanced scorecard is welcome. It is fair to say that good work has been done, more work is needed and the staff, council and managers are committed to taking this work forward.

Adults

19. The Commission's judgement is that Adult Services still require modernisation and improvement. Nonetheless a number of improvements are noted. The Mental Health services are performing strongly and making good progress in implementing the National Service Framework. Harrow is reported to be well ahead of the Outer London average performance on the speed of delivery of care packages when an assessment has been completed and on assessing the needs of carers. The Learning Disability Service has delivered an improved level of respite provision. Comparative costs are favourable and in some cases being reduced.
20. In a number of areas the Council is recognised to have improved its processes which should lead to better planned and more accessible services. Examples include clearer eligibility criteria, and multi-agency referral processes. In a number of crucial areas the Inspector notes that work has started and will need to be sustained. The most important of these relate to service planning and commissioning, performance management, improvements in the quality of data.
21. The areas the Commission concludes are in need of improvement are familiar. Active improvement programmes are in place for all the key issues, some of which, e.g. Direct Payments and delivery of equipment for disabled people are now showing through in improved Performance Indicators. The most significant issue requiring additional attention relates to the speed of assessment. This is a new Key Threshold Indicator on which the Council's performance is particularly weak. Initial efforts have already improved performance, although the target level for 2004/5 has not yet been reached. The work already undertaken to revise care management procedures will help in this area but there will need to be further attention to speeding up administrative processes and stream-lining work management within offices.

Capacity to improve

22. The Commission notes the increased resources made available to social care, and the commitment of Members to improvement, including Cabinet consideration of Performance Indicators. Corporate work on recruitment and retention of staff, the Vitality Profiles and a corporate approach to meeting social need are seen as improvements. The major further improvements identified concern budget allocation and management and more robust IT systems.

Consultation

23. Consultation on the performance recorded and discussed with the commission was carried out prior to the formal Annual Review Meeting.

Stakeholders from Health were present throughout the Annual Review Meeting.

Financial Implications

24. These are covered within the Medium Term budget strategy.

Legal Implications

25. If the council did not comply with the Performance Improvement required in this report there could be issues of judicial challenge from service users and in some cases the council may be in breach of statutory duties.

Equalities Impact

26. The business plans for Adults and Children's Services place clear focus on improving the services in a way that ensure the diverse communities of Harrow receive appropriate and respectful services taking account of their different cultures, faith and background.

Section 3: Supporting Information/ Background Documents

27. The detailed business plan for each of the teams within adults and children social care together with the overall plan for Children Social Care are available if required for members and have been shared and discussed with Portfolio holders. These plans will be reviewed and improved during the rest of this year so that new sets of plans are available for action in the new financial year.