

REPORT TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

20 APRIL 2007

Performance Management in Children's Social Care

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to give an overview of the performance framework in place and to provide Members with information about performance management practice in Children's Social Care.
- 1.2 The report will be presented with additional sample performance documents on 20 April 2007.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Management Information in Children's Social Care (CSC) is provided by a small team of three staff. Three years ago a combination of disciplinary action and long term sickness left the team with only one staff member (who was new into post) for several months. Priority had to be given to Government requirements and data no longer reached the teams. The staff were then reorganised into a larger team covering all of Social Services.
- 2.2 New appointments were made to the posts and, under new management arrangements, work began to analyse, prioritise and facilitate data flow from front line staff to Management Information staff and thence to senior managers. Improved software systems were introduced and a new culture of performance management was introduced that placed the onus on operational teams to improve their inputting arrangements (despite them initially not receiving management information in return).
- 2.3 Annual returns to Government had been maintained during the crisis but no capacity had been available to produce any in-year reporting. Consequently planning processes had been compromised. Operational staff had no means of judging their performance on key indicators in any context.

3.0 Inspection Report

- 3.1 At the time that the Joint Area Review (JAR) team of inspectors arrived in North Yorkshire, team-level data was about to be reported in-year. These new reports were more sophisticated than the previous ones had been. They were not uniform but divided the indicators into those which were relevant to each type of specialised team. They also had individually-set coloured bandings so that staff would be aware of when a change in performance was especially sensitive. The inspectors were shown draft reports and shown how these are specialised for individual team requirements.
- 3.2 Despite agreeing that there was evidence of good work in progress, the inspectors said that they were obliged to report on the systems that were up and running and consequently their final report declared that Performance Management for CSC was weak.

4.0 Recent Progress

- 4.1 The hard work that has been ongoing for many months prior to the inspection has continued. The production of team level in-year management information reporting has been a crucial foundation for a number of other improvements which were awaiting implementation.

These include:

- Team managers taking responsibility for data inputting by local staff resulting in more accurate data collection
 - Identification of apparently poorly performing teams with consequent analysis of practice issues
 - Managers using centrally produced data rather than inventing individual spreadsheets which could not be integrated
 - National definitions of performance being better understood by staff
 - Business planning processes at team level being aligned with Directorate priorities
 - Teams being set individual performance targets that stretch each team without being unrealistic.
- 4.2 At the last routine monitoring visit by CSCI the team targets were presented and their rationale explained. These were very well received and the opinion expressed that this level of performance management is in advance of that which many Local Authorities are using.

5.0 Current Plans

- 5.1 Having established sound and reliable data collection methods, the Senior Management Team are now committed to embedding Quality Assurance mechanisms throughout the Directorate.

- 5.2 One of the first areas of work to be examined more closely will be Core Assessments. Standards for assessments are being drawn up and a programme of audit will be put in place. Quality Assurance of assessments will be through staff supervision (both formal and informal) by line managers and also through other processes such as the monitoring of assessments for Looked After Children by Independent Reviewing Officers.
- 5.3 The Management Information staff have now been disaggregated from Adult Social Care and will soon be embedded in a new team serving all of the Children and Young People's Service. This will give added resilience to the small group.
- 5.4 One of the next priorities is the production of data by new locality. This will enable staff from each of the partner agencies to better understand the social care profile in their area.
- 5.5 As capacity becomes available, Management Information staff will also be able to collate data requested by individual teams rather than the current tight focus on Government required data. Teams are already requesting this facility, eg wanting to know how many fathers are involved in meetings about their children.

6.0 Recommendation

- 6.1 It is respectfully recommended that Members note the contents of this report.

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