

DUDLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH

GOOD HEALTH SELECT COMMITTEE

16 November 2004

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To present to Good Health Select Committee:
 - The Inspection of Children's Services undertaken in July 2004.
 - The inspection of Dudley's Fostering Service in January 2004
 - The inspection of Dudley's Adoption Service in May 2004
- 1.2 To present action plans to meet the recommendations of each of the Inspections

2.0 BACKGROUND

Children's Services Inspection – July 2004

- 2.1 The Commission for Social Care Inspection arranged an inspection of Children's Services in Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council between 12 and 23 July 2004 as part of a national programme of inspections. Three inspectors and a lay assessor carried out the inspection which aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of council services for children in need, including looked after children, those on the child protection register, and children receiving family support services. The inspection looked at the effectiveness of service delivery, referral, assessment, care planning and review processes, cost and efficiency, and the way services were planned and managed.
- 2.2 The inspection was based on national standards and criteria drawn from legislation, guidance, research and understandings of good practice. The standards are attached as Appendix 1
- 2.3 In the light of these findings, the inspection team concluded, "*that some people were well served by the Directorate and that prospects for the further improvement of children's services in Dudley were promising*".
- 2.4 A summary and recommendations from the Children's Services Inspection is attached as Appendix 2. An action plan to meet the

recommendations of the Children's Inspection is attached as Appendix 3. Both report and action plan were presented to and approved by the Executive on 27 October 2004.

Fostering Service Inspection – January 2004

- 2.5 Independent and Local Authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) are subject to inspection, to establish if the service is meeting The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the Children Act 1989.
- 2.6 The Fostering Service Regulations 2002 are secondary legislation with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards, which form the basis of judgments by CSCI.
- 2.7 The inspectors used a scale to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met. The scale ranges from:
- 4 - Standard exceeded (commendable)
 - 3 - Standard met (no shortfalls)
 - 2 - Standard almost met (minor shortfalls)
 - 1 - Standard not met (major shortfalls)

In total there are 32 standards. However one standard which relates to short breaks/respite care did not apply to Dudley's Fostering Services as this provision is provided by Barnardos on behalf of the Local Authority under a Service Level Agreement.

- 2.8 The inspection found that all of the standards were met or partially met and in 3 instances the standard was exceeded.
- 2.9 The inspection identified 7 requirements with which the Fostering Service will need to comply to fully meet the standards and 6 good practice recommendations. An action plan addressing the recommendation is attached as Appendix 4.

Adoption Services Inspection – May 2004

- 2.10 Local Authority Adoption services are subject to inspection by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), to establish if the service is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Adoption Services and the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, the Adoption Act 1976 as amended, the Adoption Agency Regulations 1983 as amended and the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003.

- 2.11 In total there are 28 standards. The Inspectors used a scale to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met. The scale ranges from:
- 4 –standard exceeded (commendable)
 - 3- standard met (no shortfall)
 - 2-standard almost met (minor shortfall)
 - 1- standard not met (major shortfall)
- 2.12 The Inspection found that 15 standards were fully met and one was exceeded. 9 standards were almost met and 4 standards were not met.
- 2.13 The inspection identified 7 statutory requirements with which the Adoption service will need to comply to fully meet the standards and 7 good practice recommendations. An action plan is attached as Appendix 5.

3.0 PROPOSALS

- 3.1 That Good Health Select Committee receive the report of the Inspection of Children's Services, and inspections of Adoptions and Fostering services.
- 3.2 That Good Health Select Committee receive and comment on the attached action plans.

4.0 FINANCE

- 4.1 The 3 year financial strategy for Social Services 2003/06 is sited in the inspection report as a demonstration of commitment to further improvements in Children's Services. This will need to be sustained and developed further in planning for 2005/06 to ensure delivery of the action plans is aligned to financial resources.

5.0 LAW

- 5.1 The main provisions relating to the Social Services function are contained in the Children Act 1989.

6.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- 6.1 The provision of children's social services is central to the promotion of the welfare of all children and particularly those children in families most at risk. In supporting children and families in need service will ensure that children most at risk of social exclusion have every

opportunity to build successful and independent lives and demonstrate improved outcomes.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 That Good Health Select Committee agree the proposals in Section 3 of this report.

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Contact Officer

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Appendix 3

INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Action plan to meet recommendations of the Inspection – July 2004

	Recommendation	Action	Lead	Timescale	Progress
2.1	The Council should confirm its intention that corporate planning, the Best Value Review programme, and corporate parenting will emphasise the council's responsibility for children in need in Dudley across council services.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Corporate Planning reviewed as part of CPA. 2. Children & Young People are now identified as a key priority of DCP. 3. Incorporate CYPP vision for children and young people in 'Dudley Challenge' process. 4. Identify areas for cross cutting Best Value/Improvement Reviews. 5. Disseminate corporate parenting principles and implement strategy. 	<p>L.Warren</p> <p>L.Warren</p> <p>L.Warren</p> <p>L Warren P.Sharratt</p> <p>P. Sharratt</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>April 2005</p> <p>April 2005</p> <p>February 2005</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p>

2.2	Lead Members and Chief Officers should consider in consultation with the NHS and stakeholders the status of a review of services for children with disabilities and their families, and ensure management capacity and resources are made available.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete multi-agency strategy for children with disabilities through the CYPP and develop action plan. 2. Align action plan with Children Act and NSF. 	S.Roxburgh S.Roxburgh	September 2005 September 2005	
2.3	Lead Members and Chief Officers should establish and implement a strategy to improve all aspects of the education of Looked after Children.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development and implementation of Action Plan for the continued improvement of educational outcomes for Looked after Children. 2. Implement LPSA Targets. 	J.Porter P.Sharratt S.Menghini	December 2004 As defined in LPSA Action Plan	
2.4	The Council should ensure in consultation an ongoing dialogue with minority communities about all aspects of services to Children & Families.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree a continuing dialogue with BME Communities through Social Services Consultation Conference. 	L.Warren P.Sharratt	November 2004	

2.5	The Commissioning Strategy should begin to address mainstream services for Looked After Children, in particular Residential Care and Family Placement capacity.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider options for regional commissioning through West Midlands Consortium. 2. Review placement needs and capacity to inform commissioning strategy. 	<p>P.Sharratt</p> <p>J.Prashar G.Tilby</p>	<p>March 2005</p> <p>December 2004</p>	
2.6	Planning for permanence processes should be reviewed and benchmarked with Consortium partners.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and implement a model to track permanency plans. 2. Work with RDW to identify best practice. 	<p>C.Ballinger J.Prashar</p>	<p>March 2005</p>	
2.7	Support to foster carers should be quality assured through service standards drawn up in consultation with carers.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop QA model based on minimum standards. 	<p>J. Prashar G.Tilby</p>	<p>March 2005</p>	

2.8	<p>Children on Care Orders placed with parents should be reviewed with Legal Services with a view to discharging or varying inappropriate orders, and reducing overall numbers.</p>	<p>1. Identify capacity and set targets to implement action plan to reduce numbers of looked after children.</p>	P.Sharratt	December 2004	
2.9	<p>The corporate objective of modernising public access to the Council should ensure that people using Social Services facilities for different purposes find good quality accommodation.</p>	<p>1. Ensure facilities are appropriate and new developments designed and resourced to meet Social Services requirements, including through CATS programme.</p>	L.Warren	Ongoing	

2.10	<p>Work on the Children Bill reforms should ensure that in assessment work agreed quality standards are met on an inter-agency basis.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support the implementation of the Children Act 2004, in particular the common assessment framework and lead professional arrangements (Child Concern Model) in conjunction with the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, the Directorate of Education and Lifelong Learning and other agencies. 	<p>C.Ballinger P.Sharratt S.Menghini</p>	<p>As per guidance</p>	
2.11	<p>Case allocation must ensure that qualified staff have primary responsibility for the child and family concerned.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and enhance capacity within fieldwork services. 2. Develop and implement workload management scheme and protocols for case management allocation. 3. Change roles of YPAs. 	<p>L.Warren P.Sharratt C.Ballinger</p>	<p>March 2005 December 2004 December 2004</p>	

2.12	<p>The structure of case files should be reviewed in conjunction with the development of e-records with a view to rationalising plans and other file documents. Management recording of decisions and supervision should be strengthened.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and implement ICS Strategy linked to ESCR. 2. Review linkages between recording and supervision policies. 	<p>C.Ballinger A.Griffiths S.Roxburgh R.Perrett</p>	<p>December 2005 March 2005</p>	
2.13	<p>In developing its strategic approach to children in need, the council should ensure an effective preventative strategy is developed offering family support at all times of the week, and respite care.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop Preventative Strategy under auspices of CYPP. 	<p>C.Ballinger</p>	<p>January 2005</p>	
2.14	<p>Managers should review the operation of complaints procedures and ensure compliance with national guidance.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop Action Plan to address compliance issues and forthcoming national guidance. 	<p>B.Clifford</p>	<p>March 2005</p>	

2.15	<p>The Children and Families Division should ensure that the costs of external placements do not continue their upward trend, and that the Commissioning Strategy begins to ensure better value and outcomes for children in agency placements.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct quality audit of external placements. 2. Use outcomes of audit to inform commissioning and financial strategy. 	<p>G.Tilby G.Tilby J.Prashar</p>	<p>December 2004 March 2005</p>	
2.16	<p>The role of Councillors needs to be developed in its Scrutiny function, and in establishing a dialogue with young people and carers.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Refer to 2.1 Corporate Parenting Strategy 	<p>P.Sharratt</p>	<p>February 2005</p>	
2.17	<p>Roles and responsibilities in Social Work teams need to be clarified and kept under review to ensure best use of resources and meeting case-holding requirements.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Refer to recommendation 2.11 	<p>P.Sharratt C.Ballinger</p>	<p>December 2004</p>	

2.18	<p>The work of the black workers forum, now re-established, should continue to be supported to ensure shared learning about black perspectives on the Directorate's work.</p>	<p>1. Confirm communication arrangements for dissemination of learning across the Division.</p>	L. Warren	January 2005	
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Appendix 4

FOSTERING SERVICES

Action Plan to Meet Statutory Requirements of Commission for Social Care Inspection January 2004

Number	Regulation Standard	Requirement	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Completed
1	3 FSI	The manager must ensure that the Children's Guide contains details of how to contact the CSCI. The manager must distribute the Children's Guide as detailed in Reg 3(4).	Children's Guide now includes details of how contact CSCI once draft is approved by members it will be distributed to foster carers and all children fostered.	Marlene Cauldwell, Service Manager Fostering	June 2004	Yes
2	20 FS3 15	The manager must ensure that there is a system to ensure that all Criminal Records Bureau checks are repeated on a 3 yearly basis	3 yearly CRB checks are undertaken on all carers. Process in place via HR to conduct 3 yearly checks on all newly appointed staff. No process currently in place to complete this for existing staff. This requirement has been brought to the attention of the Head of Human Resources for action.	Andrew Packer Head of HR	Immediate	
3	10 FS 5	Service must explore the possibilities of merging all the fostering services under one manager or nominate a senior manager, who oversees all the services to the CSCI.	Pauline Sharratt, Assistant Director Children's Services is the nominated manager.	Pauline Sharratt	April 2004	Completed

4	34 & 38 FS6	The manager must ensure that foster carers remain within their approved numbers. The manager must ensure that there is a formal process for ensuring that there is a formal process for ensuring that any young person is moved to a more suitable placement immediately after any emergency overnight placement.	Ongoing monitoring & review of any such placements takes place by the manager of the fostering service. Decision maker for approval criteria is consulted wherever possible regarding such decisions. Actions taken consistently and swiftly to secure appropriate alternative placement.	Marlene Cauldwell Jane Prashar	Ongoing	
5	17 FS9	The manager must ensure that there are suitable procedures to enable foster carers to recognise record and address any instance of bullying and to provide foster carers with support in these circumstances.	Manager of fostering team will develop a policy and procedure on bullying.	Marlene Cauldwell	September 2004	
6	17 FS14	The service should develop a policy, handbook entries and suitable training in the area of preparation for adulthood.	The manager will work with the 16+ Team to progress this.	Marlene Cauldwell	September 2004	
7	FS 18	The manager must ensure that carers have access to a "Whistle-Blowing" policy.	Work will be undertaken by the manager to adapt the corporate "Whistle Blowing" policy.	Marlene Cauldwell	October 2004	

FOSTERING SERVICES

Action Plan to Meet Good Practice Recommendation of CSCI January 2004

<u>Number</u>	<u>Regulation</u>	<u>Standard</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsible Officer</u>	<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Completed</u>
1	FS11	It is recommended that fostering workers should ensure that each child has the contact number of their social worker as well as that of the fostering team worker at time of placement	A note will be included in the next newsletter to carers requesting they ensure that all children placed with them know social workers contact number. This will also be raised at DMG and Team Managers asked to ensure social workers check children on their caseload know how to contact them.	Marlene Cauldwell Jane Prashar	June 2004	
2	FS12FS24	It is recommended that greater efforts should be made to collate and record all the necessary information in relation to each child, including obtaining the correct LAC paperwork appropriately completed.	This is fully accepted and actions are already underway to improve this. Carers are being supplied with a full set of paperwork to check against what they receive when a child is placed. DFCA are again conducting a survey of carers supported by managers to ascertain position regarding the provision of LAC paperwork to carers.	Marlene Cauldwell DFCA	Actioned DMG	
3	FS16	It is recommended that the service may find it useful for some joint training to take place between areas and fostering social workers or for the induction process in each team	Some provision and processes already in place e.g. much training already open to both social workers and foster carers. A-B progression for social workers	DMG	Ongoing	

		to include short placements in other teams.	includes this. Other opportunities will be explored.			
4	FS18 FS21	It is recommended that the role of the social worker as supervisor should be clarified and made more explicit to all foster carers.	Supervising social workers will cover this with carers in induction training, individual sessions and support groups.	Marlene Cauldwell	Ongoing	
5	FS25	It is recommended that, if two systems are used to record data, there must be a means of ensuring that they both show the same details.	Discussions will take place with Fostering Admin as to ways of ensuring data on files regarding placements is kept up to date and accurate.	Admin Officer Denise Hewitt	June 2004	
6	FS32	It is recommended that the service should consider how to bring kinship care practices into line with their own processes and practices.	Plans being developed to recruit to a social worker for Caring Relatives. Once done responsibility for support and training will transfer to Fostering Team.	Marlene Cauldwell	December 2004	

Appendix 5

DRAFT ACTION PLAN TO THE STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS IDENTIFIED IN THE ANNOUNCED INSPECTION OF DUDLEY MBC ADOPTION SERVICE ON 24TH MAY 2004 BY 16TH AUGUST 2004

Please provide the Commission with a completed Action Plan, indicating how statutory requirements are to be addressed and a completion date within the stated timescale.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS					
No.	Requirement	Regulation	Standard	Action being taken to address Statutory Requirements	Completion date
1.	<p>The Agency must ensure there are sufficient staff experienced and qualified to meet the needs of the service.</p> <p>Delays in allocating work has meant that children have been waiting to be matched to permanent families and that the department have had difficulty in securing better outcomes for some children.</p>	<p>The Local Authority Adoption Service Regulations 2003. Reg.10</p>	LA 2, 4, 5, 14.	<p>There are now no staff absent through long term sickness. A new appointment was made in July, of an experienced Adoption worker and the we have appointed to the newly created Assistant Team Manager post, with the worker commencing on 1st September. An additional experienced adoption social worker has been employed through an agency on a three month contract to cover the remaining vacancy, which was advertised nationally at the beginning of August. There have been seven applications received for this post to date. These initiatives have enabled the backlog of un-allocated work to be moved, enabling the matching of several children to permanent families, to secure better outcomes for them.</p>	31 st August 2004

No.	Requirement	Regulation	Standard	Action being taken to address Statutory Requirements	Completion date
2	All Criminal Records Bureau checks must be undertaken on adopters and staff and panel members.	The Local Authority Adoption Service Regulations 2003 Reg 6 (2) c Reg 11)3)d Reg 15(1) Schedules 3 & 4	LA 4 LA19 LA 25 LA 28	All adopters, staff and panel members have current enhanced Criminal Records Bureau disclosures in place. Systems are in place to ensure that all staff and panel CRB checks are renewed every three years.	30 th June 2004
3	The service manager must implement a process that can demonstrate applicants have read and agreed with the content of the Home Study Form F and that they have returned their comments within the agreed timescale of 28 days.	The Adoption Agencies & Children (Arrangements for placement and reviews) Regulations 1997. Reg 5B(6) h		A pro-forma response sheet is provided to all applicants at the time they are shown their forms F. This is signed and returned in a self addressed envelope to ensure that applicants have signed to demonstrate that they have read and agreed with the content of the Home Study Form F. These forms make it clear that they must be returned within 28 days. Un-returned forms will be followed up, and all forms will accompany forms F that are presented to panel.	31 st August 2004

No.	Requirement	Regulation	Standard	Action being taken to address Statutory Requirements	Completion date
4	<p>The panel must always be quorate.</p> <p>The panel must have an appropriate gender mix.</p>	The Adoption Agency Regulations 1983 Reg, 5	LA 11	Panel will not proceed unless quorate and correctly constituted in future. Two additional male members have been recruited to panel. One is an Independent member who is also an adopter. The second is an Educational Psychologist who was previously a member of Worcestershires Adoption Panel.	31 st August 2004
5	The panel must implement robust tracking procedures to ensure the panel receive regular updates on the progress of children, prospective adopters applications, the family finding and matching process.	The Local Authority Adoption Service Regulations 2003	LA 12 LA 17	Three monthly reports will now be routinely provided to panel on the progress of children, prospective adopters applications and the family finding and matching process.	31 st August 2004
6	The manager must undertake a formal management qualification (by 1.4.05).	The local Authority Adoption Service Regulations 2003 Reg 6 (b) 1	LA 14	The manager is already undertaking the OUBS Masters Degree in Business Administration which was commenced in 2002. He has completed B800 – <i>Foundations of Senior Management</i> which is equal to a first degree in Business Studies. This exceeds the requirement of NVQ level 4.	31 st March 2006

No.	Requirement	Regulation	Standard	Action being taken to address Statutory Requirements	Completion date
7	The Executive Council must receive six monthly reports on the management and outcomes of the adoption service.	The Local Authority Adoption Service Regulations Reg.	LA 17	Six monthly reports will be provided to the Executive of the Council on the management and outcomes of the adoption service. Reports will be provided 6 monthly to the Children's Champions Group. These will be provided and compiled by the Service Manager – Permanent Placements.	31 st August 2004