

This report may be of interest to: Neighbourhood Services Committee, Children's and Youth and Community Learning Committee

SOCIAL SERVICES ISSUES

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1. Purpose

1.1 To inform the Committee of some Government announcements with important implications for Milton Keynes and to report on local issues including the performance of some key services.

2. Summary

2.1 This report summarises:

- (a) the announcement on National under fives day care inspection arrangements;
- (b) the key messages of the eighth Annual Report of the Chief Inspector, Social Services Inspectorate 1998/99;
- (c) the local feedback on the recent Performance Assessment visit; and
- (d) the local social care key performance indicators as of 1 August 1999.

3. Recommendations

3.1 The Committee is asked to:

- (a) Consider the recent developments summarised in the report.
- (b) Comment on local performance information.

4. **Background**

- 4.1 This is the regular report which the designated Director of Social Services provides to this Committee covering strategic issues, matters of particular concern and policy, performance monitoring and review information relating to the Council's Social Services functions. It seeks to cover some national issues of relevance to the Council as well as some matters specific to Milton Keynes.
- 4.2 Some of the proposals included in the **Social Services White Paper "Modernising Social Services"**, published in November 1998 are being implemented although some changes will require primary legislation.
- 4.3 The management action plans and new money as part of Quality Protects and the Partnership and other adult social care initiatives, will be major vehicles to drive the changes.
- 4.4 The Performance Assessment framework and the related inspections and performance indicators are also having an impact on all Social Services Authorities.
- 4.5 Another significant development could be the recent appointment of a new minister to co-ordinate policy across the areas of health and social care – Grisela Stuart. Her task is to promote seamless services although John Hutton retains primary responsibility for areas of social work covered by the Department of Health.

5. **Issues and Choices**

- 5.1 In the White Paper, the Government announced its intention to transfer Regulation and Inspection responsibilities from Local Authorities and Health Authorities to 8 Regional Commissions for Care Standards. (This will require new Legislation and the Care Commissions are expected to become effective from 2002). It delayed a decision on under fives.
- 5.2 However, it has recently been announced that rather than be retained by Local Authorities or transferred to the Commissions for Care Standards, **under-fives day care is to become the responsibility of a new arm of Ofsted**. This will combine the functions of the Children Act 1989 with the Ofsted Inspection of early years provision under the Nursery Education and Grant Maintained Schools Act 1996.
- 5.3 The plan is to develop new national standards and for the new arm of Ofsted to be in operation by April 2001. There has been a mixed reaction to the announcement.
- 5.4 **The eighth Annual Report of the Chief Inspector Social Services Inspectorate 1998/99 "Modern Social Services: A Commitment to Improve"** has recently been published. This draws on the work of the Social Services Inspectorate over the past year and provides a commentary on the action which Social Services need to take to ensure that the modernisation agenda outlined in the White Paper is delivered.
- 5.5 The Chief Inspector, Denise Platt comments on the commitment of staff and the examples of innovative work and good practice. However, concern is expressed about the lack of consistent high quality across the country.

- 5.6 The report stresses the importance of good leadership from Councillors, and Senior Officers to support staff and learn from theirs and others good practice and from external scrutiny and review. Corporate and collaborative strategies across agencies are essential to improving performance as is best Value.
- 5.7 It particularly highlights the following:
- (a) the critical importance of front line managers in delivering quality services;
 - (b) concerns about the current state of social work practice;
 - (c) the need to target resources to promote independence;
 - (d) the need to develop quality assurance and performance management systems to ensure consistency of response;
 - (e) the need to use information positively to improve and reshape services to achieve better outcomes for service users; and
 - (f) the need to listen to users and carers and to put their concerns at the hear of service development.
- 5.8 Officers are examining the relevance of the Chief Inspector's commentary to Milton Keynes.
- 5.9 Denise Platt gives high priority to visiting social services staff and users and carers throughout the country. The Committee will be interested to note she will be visiting Milton Keynes at our invitation on 27 September 1999.
- 5.10 As reported to the Committee meeting in July, all Social Services Authorities were required to complete a **Performance Assessment** self-evaluation schedule. This was followed by a meeting to examine the Council's responses which took place on 13 July.
- 5.11 At the time of writing, a draft response has been received. The comments did not contain any surprises and were generally positive.
- 5.12 They included the view that Milton Keynes
- (a) "appears to have engaged positively with the priorities and objectives in the National Priorities Guidance, and these are clearly reflected in strategies and plans for the year 1999 and beyond";
 - (b) "noted the commendable work undertaken to engage users and carers in young people's services and to make positive use of concerns expressed by service users"; and
 - (c) confirmed we meet the conditions from continued payments of the Partnership Grant.

- 5.13 The areas requiring development were:
- (a) strengthening information systems so they link comprehensively with targets and better outcomes for users and in respect of Quality Protects, ensuring the baseline position is identified and targets set in line with Government key objectives; and
 - (b) providing information on year on year efficiency gains to demonstrate we are making the best use of resources.
- 5.14 Work is progressing on replacing the current social services information system and responding to the development requirements which have been identified.
- 5.15 Information on **Local Social Care Key performance Indicators** continues to be produced on a monthly basis and circulated to all Members of the Council.
- 5.16 The headline information as of 1 August 1999 has already been circulated.
- 5.17 The main points were:
- (a) Milton Keynes has the highest rate of children placed with foster carers amongst the “Quality Protects” Regional Group.
 - (b) The number of children on the Child Protection Register continues to fluctuate monthly but is gradually reducing towards the national average and “quality Protects” target.
 - (c) There has been a small increase in the number of people awaiting residential care/nursing home placements from hospital/the community. (The position is being closely monitored).
 - (d) There has been a steady increase in the number of people over 65 supported at home by Home Care in recent months.
- 5.18 Information on the position as of 1 September 1999 should have been published by the date of the meeting.
- 5.19 The Council responded to the consultation on the **“Key statistics” to be part of the Performance Assessment framework** outlined in the Modernising Social Services White Paper. 46 Performance Indicators were proposed covering the full range of social care activity.
- 5.20 Following a period of consultation, the Government has recently announced that 8 of the performance indicators are to be deleted but 12 new indicators have been added.
- 5.21 They cover national priorities and strategic objectives, cost and efficiency, effectiveness of service delivery and outcomes, quality of services for users and carers and fair access.
- 5.22 The first performance data, based on 35 indicators, will be published in October. Councils will not be expected to meet all 50 indicators until 2002.

5.23 Our local Performance Indicators will be amended so they are in line with the new national requirements.

6. **Implications**

6.1 Environmental

There are no direct implications.

6.2 Equalities

Equalities must have a central place in the delivery of quality services.

6.3 Financial

Officers are seeking to achieve the maximum benefit from the new Quality Protects and Modernisation Grants.

6.4 Legal

Some of the White Paper proposals will require primary legislation.

6.5 Staff and Accommodation

Some additional staff will be employed funded by the new grants.

7. **Conclusions**

7.1 Milton Keynes Council has continued to give high priority to the implementation of the modernisation agenda and to the recommendations of the local SSI report.

Background Papers: Modern Social Services: A Commitment to Improve. The 8th Annual Report of the Chief Inspector Social Services Inspectorate 1998/99.

Letter from Mimi Konigsberg, Social Services Inspectorate, dated 2 August 1999.