

Overall Performance Improvement Plan 15th February 2007: exceptions report to the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council

EXCEPTIONS

Children and Young People Programme (Status Amber)

Previous reports have drawn attention to the substantial increase in referrals of children in need, ahead of target, and the consequent difficulties this success has created in respect of workloads and the timeliness of the much greater number of assessments.

These trends continue. The key end of January 2007 performance figures are as follows (March 2007 targets shown in brackets):

Referrals of children in need per 10,000 under 18 - 268 (220)

% of referrals of children in need leading to initial assessments – 60.7 (60)

% of initial assessments within 7 working days of referral - 63 (75)

No. of core assessments of children in need per 10,000 under 18 – 46.2 (45)

% of core assessments completed within 35 working days of their commencement – 54 (80)

Despite the additional appointments already made to strengthen the teams, further qualified social worker resources are required. This has been reflected in the spend-to-save and spend-to-mitigate proposals for the coming three years that Cabinet has approved in principle.

At 31st January 50.32 wte posts were filled (an increase of 3.62 against the previous report). Of these 5 are agency staff. This marginally exceeds the March 2007 target of 50. Subject to the funding referred to below being confirmed, the target is to reach, by March 2009, an establishment of 15.3 qualified social workers per 10,000 (57 wte posts).

Work is progressing in order to try and identify some resources within the current financial year to ensure that additional qualified social workers can be recruited promptly, subject to the approval of the additional funding. This is against the background of the continuing challenge of recruiting and retaining qualified social workers. Nationally it is estimated that the available workforce of qualified social workers represents approximately 80% of the numbers needed. The existing recruitment and retention strategy is being reviewed to ensure that everything possible will be done to address this critical issue.

In light of the above, the estimated outturns for the current year have been reviewed and, where appropriate, revised. Although the original APA targets cannot be amended, the GOWM Board has accepted the revised estimates, the rationale for them and the action plans to achieve them. It has also agreed that the associated risks are being managed effectively.

A performance workshop was held on 5th February in order to set realistic but challenging targets for 2007-08.

An interim Performance and Improvement Manager is now in post, pending completion of the permanent appointment process during February.

GOWM officials will report to the Minister in April on the Council's progress in implementing the agreed improvement plan. In addition to the safeguarding issues referred to above, in compiling that report GOWM will be paying particularly close attention to the following:

- the development of the Children's Partnership Workforce Strategy: although a revised draft has been prepared, substantial further work is in hand to ensure that it is of the required standard
- the development of the Disabilities Strategy: a draft is under consideration and will be further developed before it is considered by the GOWM Board
- the IPC evaluation of our progress in implementing the four performance improvement projects
- GOWM will be conducting meetings with a range of staff to test our application of project management disciplines and other factors

The Minister will decide, in the light of the report, whether the GOWM Board should be stood down or continue.

Adult and Community Services Programme (Status Amber)

Cabinet has approved substantial additional investment for the radical improvement over the coming years of adult social care and related services for older people and adults with learning disabilities. It has been the intention to begin the programmes as quickly as possible, for which purpose it has been agreed that additional, time-limited appointments are essential.

The plan was for these to be made by 1 April 2007 but this now seems unlikely. In part, this is due to the need to follow the protocols for appointments agreed with the PCT in connection with the proposal to create a Public Service Trust.