

WORK PROGRAMME

Report By: Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

1. To consider issues for inclusion in the Work Programme.

Background

2. In January the Committee agreed to develop its approach to its work by establishing three task groups to cover the following service areas:
 - Services for Older People (Councillors Mrs P.A. Andrews, Mrs A.E. Gray, R. Mills, Ms G.A. Powell,)
 - Childrens Services (Councillors Mrs E.M. Bew, Mrs J.A. Hyde, P.G. Turpin)
 - Mental Health (Councillors K.G. Grumbley, Mrs M.D. Lloyd-Hayes, Mrs J.E. Pemberton).
3. The task groups met informally on 9th March, receiving presentations on the three service areas, discussing the key issues involved and identifying areas for in-depth investigation.

Issues

4. The Council's Scrutiny handbook sets out the steps to a successful investigation and the proposals set out below have been evaluated with regard to those principles. If the areas for investigation are approved by the Committee the next step as outlined in the handbook would be to project plan the investigations and produce scoping statements.

Services For Older People

5. The Task Group has identified the provision of Home Care as an area worthy of investigation. It is a key issue for Members, the Council and the Government and provides the opportunity for the Committee to make a distinctive difference to service delivery. Such a review could include an examination of how services are currently planned, the implications for changes in working practice, the impact on users and carers, rehabilitation and direct payments.

Childrens Services

6. The Task Group identified the importance of close working relationships between staff in Social Care, Education and Health in ensuring effective service delivery as the area it wished to pursue. However, the provisions contained in the Children's

Further information on the subject of this report is available from Tim Brown, Committee Manager (Scrutiny)
on 01432 260239

Services Bill have such an important bearing on this issue that it is suggested that it is not prudent to proceed with this work at this time. Opportunities for Members of this Task Group in the interim are set out below.

Mental Health

7. The Task Group identified the provision of supported housing for vulnerable people and, within this context, the joint working between Social Care and Strategic Housing as the area which should be investigated. The provision of supported housing has a high level of national priority and is of interest to Members and members of the public. A mental health strategy is required as part of the general housing strategy and the investigation would span the breadth of the Committee's remit.

Membership of Task Groups

8. In-depth investigations are resource intensive and time-consuming. As reported above it is suggested that the investigation identified in the area of Childrens Services is deferred for the time being. If acceptable to the Committee it is suggested that rather than identifying a second priority in that area the Committee focuses its energies on the other two areas. It is suggested that Members of the Childrens' Services Task Group, if they so wish, join in the work of one of the other Task Groups.
9. It is suggested also that as part of the scoping exercises consideration is given, in discussion with the Herefordshire Community Care Alliance and the Involving People Team, to the most effective way of involving the Voluntary Sector and others in the investigations.

Updating the Work Programme

10. In September 2003 the Committee confirmed a work programme for 2003/2004 incorporating a number of items which had been identified as requiring periodic monitoring and attention and providing a basis for the Committee's work, to be added to as required. A proposed programme for 2004/2005 compiled on the same principles is appended. This will need to be amended following completion of the scoping exercises referred to above.

RECOMMENDATION

- THAT (a) scoping studies be prepared for the investigations into the provision of home care and supported housing for vulnerable people and reported back to the Committee for approval;**
- (b) that the investigation into joint working in delivering Childrens services be deferred pending enactment of the Children Services Bill and receipt of relevant guidance;**
- (c) Members of the Childrens Services Task Group decide whether they wish to participate in the work of either of the other Task Groups, and the arrangements for the involvement of the voluntary sector and others be noted;**

and

- (d) the work programme as appended to the report be approved subject to review at the next meeting.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None