

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE BEST VALUE REVIEW OF SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITY AND/OR A SENSORY IMPAIRMENT

Introduction

1. The Best Value Review's overall aims were to try and address some of the inequalities that people with a physical disability and/or a sensory impairment experience in every day life. The objectives it set itself were to enable people:
- to have more choice about their opportunities to remain living as independently as possible in the community;
 - to benefit from a greater range of day time activities;
 - to gain easier access to appropriate support services; and
 - to increase their chances to influence service planning and review.

The specific, main significant issues on which it focussed are detailed below.

User Empowerment

2. The consultation surveys undertaken during the Review drew attention to the limited influence which service users feel they have in decisions about what services are provided and how they are delivered.

3. The Review recommends that a network of user forums, a central reference group and partnership board, and protocols for communication between the reference group and senior management, are developed by 31 December 2003.

Supported Living

4. There is an imbalance between the number of people which the County supports in residential care and nursing homes and those it supports living at home. The Council's performance, in comparison to other local authorities, in relation to the average unit cost it pays for nursing home/residential care also needs to improve.

5. Housing, home care and other services need to develop in order to improve the opportunities for people to continue to live in their own home. In this regard, the services at Freda Eddy Court must be reconfigured and relocated to provide supported housing and outreach services and reduce average unit costs of care.

Employment and Day Opportunities

6. In order to increase the number of service users that the Department supports, and to improve the service it offers, smaller, modern day services need to be introduced. The new services must provide greater choice of leisure, educational, and employment opportunities.

Rehabilitation

7. It is recommended that day services are developed and, initially, a new service, based upon the principles of the proposed new approach, will replace the existing service at Sandalwood by 31 March 2004.

8. A much greater emphasis is placed today on the need to prevent unnecessary admission to acute hospitals and to avoid any delay in hospital discharges, and support services need to make a greater contribution to the rehabilitation agenda.

9. By 31 October 2004, it is recommended that Health Trusts and the Social Services Department establish integrated community rehabilitation teams.

Transport

10. The current aims and objectives of the transport services are unclear and there is inconsistency across the County in the level of service provided.

11. In future, the Department will work with the County Transport Planning Group to establish a public transport service able to satisfy the requirements of most people with a physical disability and/or a sensory impairment, and for those needs it cannot meet, the Department will procure a specialist transport service.

Carers

12. Questions were raised during the Review's consultation exercises about: (i) how representative are carers' organisation in the County; and (ii) the degree of influence that the organisations have over service provision and planning.

13. It is recommended that a network of carer forums is established to enable carers to share views and comments about service content and availability.

Access

14. Information about services does not always reach the people who require it nor is it received at a time when help is needed. The consultation exercises drew specific attention to the need for contact points for users, carers and professional staff to use for up to date information about services and how to access them. It is recommended that such contact points are established by March 2004.

Service Procurement

15. Whilst many services are already purchased from the external market, there is room for improvement in the way the Social Services Department collects and collates information to determine the type, quantity and quality of service it requires, and how these services are provided.

16. It is recommended that the Department develops a procurement strategy by 2004/2005, giving details of the needs it will address, the services it will provide, and from where and in what quantity the services will be commissioned.

Options for Consideration

17. The Best Value Review Panel is asked to consider the report and to decide whether to endorse its contents, including the proposed action plan, and to approve the recommendation that the report is presented to Cabinet for its consideration.

Contact Points

Specific Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Social Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:- "Best Value Review Of Services For People With Physical Disability And/Or A Sensory Impairment – Main Report" A copy of this report is available in the Members Information Room