

Report to: **Social Services and Health Scrutiny Committee**

Date: **7 May 2003**

By: **Chair of the Project Board for the Best Value Review of Family Support Services**

Title of report: **Best Value Review of Family Support Services : Final Monitoring Report**

Purpose of report: **To advise the Committee of progress made in the implementation of recommendations arising from the best value review of Family Support Services.**

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Committee is recommended to:**

- a) Consider the progress made in the implementation of this best value review**
  - b) Consider whether they wish to continue to monitor any particular areas of service**
  - c) Comment on the method of single member monitoring as a contribution to the evaluation of the pilot.**
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### **1. Financial Appraisal**

1.1 The undertaking of this pilot method of monitoring has been resource intensive in terms of Member and officer time. Whilst there have been no financial costs incurred it is considered appropriate to note the opportunity costs.

### **2. Supporting Information**

2.1 The Best Value Review Report of Family Support Services was accepted by the County Council in April 2002. Following consideration of ways of improving the monitoring process, Audit and Best Value Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a pilot on single member monitoring of the outcomes of this review. An interim report was presented to this Committee on 12 December 2002.

2.2 The schedule in the attached Appendix has been used for recording discussions and developing a record of progress. The columns on progress and examples of evidence have been agreed with the Director of Social Services. The final column contains the judgements of the Chair of the Project Board.

2.3 Five meetings have been held with managers to discuss progress against the 14 recommendations. These meetings have included one with the Assistant Director, Children and Families, three additional meetings with the Head of Locality Services and one meeting with two Operational Managers. In addition, brief surveys of staff and partners were undertaken as forms of reality checks. Some key documents on policy and strategy have also been made available.

2.4 The process has enabled a very comprehensive approach to monitoring. Given the broader context and changing environment within which managers and staff in Family Support Services are working, it is considered that overall good progress has been made in achieving the intended outcomes of the review.

2.5 Particular strengths have been identified in moving forward in working with external partners from a strategic and operational perspective. There are indications that some of the outcomes from changing strategies are beginning to emerge. Benefits from implementing new

procedures eg workload management system and Carefirst applications may not be that evident to staff yet but managers are committed to driving them forward. Similarly it may be too early to detect whether any of the recommendations are providing more satisfaction for clients.

2.6 Much groundwork has been covered in moving forward on new arrangements for supervised contact (recommendation 9) and developments planned for this business year should yield the benefits originally envisaged in freeing up social worker time for more intensive support on acute family and children cases. The service is being delivered within budget, which was reduced by £100,000 from April 2002, thus yielding both financial and efficiency savings as required under the recommendations.

2.5 Due to new Government guidance on preventative strategies for local authorities and the publication of the Victoria Climbié inquiry at a later date than initially envisaged, it has not been possible to monitor outcomes yet in these two areas (recommendations 8, 11 and part of 1).

2.6 Action still in progress or yet to be implemented is now incorporated within the Business Plan 2003/4 for the Children and Families Division. It should be noted that progress on three key recommendations has been considerably hindered by ICT difficulties and the Scrutiny Committee is urged to consider how best to bring this to the attention of the respective Lead Cabinet Members.

2.6 The Committee's views are sought on the progress made to date on implementing the recommendations of this review and on whether it would be desirable to continue to monitor progress in some areas, either on the same basis or by commissioning a report from the Director in six months time.

2.7 The Committee's views are sought on the effectiveness of this method of monitoring. These will be included in the overall evaluation of the pilot which will be reported to Audit and Best Value Scrutiny Committee on 17 June 2003.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS  
Best Value Review of Family Support Services, March 2002