

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: BEST VALUE SUB COMMITTEE - 16 MAY 2002

REPORT ON: BEST VALUE REVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING SECTION OF THE SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

REPORT NO: 450-2002

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report describes the outcome of a Best Value Review of the Strategic Planning Section of the Social Work Department.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that -

2.1 The Strategic Planning Section should assume an extended role for the Social Work Department in strategic development and performance management as outlined in Paragraph 12, Option 3.

2.2 This section should now be renamed the Strategy and Performance Service to better reflect it's new duties and responsibilities.

2.3 The sub committee agrees with the proposals for continuous improvement in the planning and development of social work services.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This review accounts for 0.6% of the Department's Revenue Budget at a budget cost examined of £328,000 and this represents 12% of expenditure reviewed in this Department in 1999/2000

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

This report has no Local Agenda 21 implications.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

This report has no equal opportunities implications.

6.0 DEFINITION OF THE SERVICE REVIEWED

The Strategic Planning Section promotes social welfare by improving policy and planning and by providing a framework against which improvement in the development and delivery of social work services can be measured. The section has a staffing structure, which includes 2 principal officers, 4 senior planning officers, 1 development officer, 1 information officer, 1 administrative assistant and 3.5 clerical staff.

Staff within the Strategic Planning Section undertake duties associated with the department's statutory responsibilities which include the preparation of Community Care and Children's Services Plans, and their annual review, the production and

publication of public information and the collation and submission of performance indicator information to the Scottish Executive and Audit Scotland.

They also contribute to a quality framework by the development and review of operating procedures, service standards, management information monitoring systems and good practice guidance.

Staff are also responsible for the effective development of departmental policy and planning initiatives, and for contributing to corporate and partnership initiatives. They ensure that such developments are not only in line with local and national policy and UK legislative and circular advice, but also with UK, European and international research and evidence about best practice. In carrying out these duties, the section also co-ordinates involvement and consultation with service users, their families and carers on the planning, development and delivery of services.

The planning and development of criminal justice services is undertaken separately by staff located within the Criminal Justice Service.

7.0 JUSTIFICATION FOR REVIEWING THIS SERVICE

This review is to help determine whether the current remit and responsibilities of the Strategic Planning Section are still appropriate to departmental needs and to examine whether the section, as a support service, impacts on the quality of operational services.

The review also considers the levels of staffing and financial investment in strategic planning within the Social Work Department.

8.0 REVIEW METHODOLOGY

8.1 The review team consisted of a Team Leader (Steve Swann, Personnel and Management Services Department), a Lead Officer (Graham Oliver, Manager, Children's Services, Social Work Department), Gordon Wood, Joan Mitchell, Laura Bannerman, Jenni Tocher, Diane McCulloch, Helen McKay, officers within the Social Work Department and Dave Berry of the Finance Department.

8.2 The process consisted of consultation, benchmarking and option appraisal.

9.0 CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

9.1 Stakeholders

- Heads of Service
- Director
- Staff
- Elected Members
- Other departments
- Public
- Finance
- Scottish Office
- Health
- Voluntary agencies
- Service users/carers

9.2 Consultation

Consultation was carried out with users of this service through a structured questionnaire which included a comments section.

9.3 Critical Success Factors

From this consultation the Critical Success Factors were established as follows:

- Reliable Information
- Clear Information
- Impact on Services
- Expertise
- Cost

10.0 **PERFORMANCE REVIEW**

The Performance Indicators, against which the quality of the current service is measured, and current performance are:

Critical Success Factors	Performance Indicators	Current Performance
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information is fit for the purpose • Statutory information is provided on time • Information is clear and easy to understand • Information contributes effectively to improved service outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 61% • 100% • 67% • measurement tool to be developed
Impact on Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction that the development and production of plans facilitate strategic aims • Satisfaction that the planning process provides improved outcomes for people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 64% • measurement tool to be developed
Expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction that the section is a useful source of knowledge and information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strategy development and planning - policy and practice issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 67%
Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of function as a % of the Social Work budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.6 %

Issues identified

From comments made during consultation, there are clearly issues relating to how staff within the Social Work Department understood the function of the strategic planning section. There were mixed views of what this section was expected to provide to operational staff and in some areas there was no expectation at all.

The consultation exercise was carried out with a wide range of staff across all services within the department. Many of these staff do not come into contact with this section at all and may be unaware of what it contributes to service development and delivery. A concern here is that the low scores could be attributed to lack of effective communication and understanding as well as the need to improve impact. It is also possible that the score attached to information may have been provided on the overall of perception of information with the department rather than specifically this section.

Most comments made by staff were positive although many areas for improvement were also identified. These included visibility, closer integration with operational staff, the need for a clearer understanding of the role, the provision of useful information, the availability of better performance information but the majority of these comments related to how people were unclear of the remit. There is also the belief that better Information Technology systems are required which is not currently within the responsibilities of this section.

The Strategic Planning Section does not have responsibility for any function related to the Criminal Justice service. This function is currently carried out separately.

In addition, a Business and Quality manager has responsibility for producing the Department's Service Plan, ongoing collation of service plan Performance Indicator information, providing a framework for service manager's actions plans, and for monitoring action plan progress and achievement. Providing Corporate Planning with progress reports on Council Plan performance indicators and social work service plan performance indicators is also included in the postholder's remit. This role also includes project managing best value reviews and undertaking other reviews of services, monitoring and reporting on continuous improvement within the department including service user involvement and consultation and other areas of quality improvement.

11.0 RESULTS OF COMPARISON

11.1 Local Authorities

Several local authorities were contacted in an effort to benchmark the service provided within Dundee City Council with other similar services. It proved difficult to get detailed information from some councils. Within those councils where a response was elicited and followed up, no direct comparison was found.

Renfrewshire Council Social Work Department has a Planning and Development Section within its headquarters structure, which undertakes a range of planning, service development and service support tasks. This section is part of an overall Strategy and Development Service which, as well as social strategy/planning and commissioning, also carries out work on research, management information and information systems and hospital resettlement programmes.

Fife, Angus and East Renfrewshire Councils' Social Work Departments all described sections which have moved to combine strategic planning activities with those of quality assurance and performance management planning responsibilities. Angus in particular is developing a performance monitoring function. This monitoring will include costs and standards and will apply to both internal and external provision. However, no qualitative information is yet available.

In East Renfrewshire Social Work Department the quality and standards section is made up of a planning and review section and a registration and inspection section. There is no distinct budget for the planning and review section, which is managed within the overall Quality and Standards section.

Fife Council Social Work Department has a Planning and Evaluation Team, which forms part of the Department's Support Services. This team carries responsibilities covering planning and research tasks across children's services, community care services and criminal justice services.

In summary, other authorities provide broadly the same range of services, which may or may not include planning in relation to criminal justice services. Several authorities have incorporated all quality and continuous improvement responsibilities within their planning function. No quality comparison has been possible due to a combination of a lack of direct comparability and also of available information. However, some limited cost comparison has been possible.

The cost of Dundee City Councils' Social Work Strategic Planning Section as a percentage of the total Social Work Budget is 0.6% which is less than the 1.4% comparative figure provided by another local authority. This may indicate that less resources have been utilised within Dundee to operate an effective planning service in comparison to the size of the Social Work provision in general.

12.0 OPTION APPRAISAL

There is a statutory responsibility to carry out the strategic planning and performance reporting functions within the Social Work Department.

Bearing this in mind the following options were considered:

1 *Disband Strategic Planning Section*

Advantages

- Strategic planning embedded in operations
- Planning officers have day to day management responsibilities within operations

Disadvantages

- Loss of technical expertise
- Loss of coherence
- Less co-ordination of cross service activity
- Less reliable and clear information
- Less priority given to developmental (e.g. standards, procedures) function
- No or negative impact on services
- Quality issues carried out in isolation
- Reduced priority given to statutory duties

2 *Maintain current configuration of Strategic Planning Section*

Advantages

- Closer working relationship with operations
- Single point of contact for internal and external customers
- Economies of scale
- Centralised support to corporate/ directorate functions
- Positive impact on services
- Clear and reliable information

Disadvantages

- Not formally tied into quality or performance management framework
- Fragmented corporate working on quality issues

3 *Expanded remit including Service Improvement, Department Service Planning, and Planning for Criminal Justice Services and renamed Strategy and Performance Service*

Advantages

- More strategic focus on quality and performance monitoring
- Better use of existing skills and abilities – improved expertise
- More direct impact on services
- More co-ordinated approach to some aspects of clarity of information
- Greater economies of scale
- More opportunity for multi skilling staff
- Links with training
- Skilled expertise

Disadvantages

Appears to remain centralised.

4 *Disaggregation of Strategic Planning Section*

Advantages

- Some more strategic focus on quality and performance monitoring within individual services
- More direct impact on specific services
- Greater economies of scale
- More opportunity for multi skilling staff

Disadvantages

- Loss of focus on specific Strategic Planning remit
- Many more co-ordination issues
- Loss of Departmental strategic focus
- More service fragmentation

13.0 **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Current Purpose Statement

The current purpose of the Strategic Planning Section is to promote social welfare by improving policy and planning and by providing a framework against which improvement in the development and delivery of social work services can be measured.

The Scottish Executive continues to encourage joined up working to promote best value in local government. Significant emphasis is also placed on better integration of service planning, development and delivery as a means of delivering better outcomes for people. Ways of measuring efficiency, effectiveness, and economy as well as continuous improvement are being developed through Audit Scotland's system of Performance Management Planning and the Public Performance reporting systems developed by local authorities.

It is considered, therefore, that joined up working and modernising Social Work services require that all aspects of this work are co-ordinated within the same function. This includes leading on strategic direction, taking account of all government agendas, working in partnerships with service users and other agencies, delivering best value in all we do and effectively monitoring and improving services for Dundee citizens.

It can be concluded that the current remit and responsibilities do not sufficiently meet the needs of the department or its service users. It is necessary, therefore to review and revise the purpose of this service accordingly.

Proposed Purpose Statement (see Annex 1 - Fast Chart)

It is suggested that the proposed purpose of the Strategy and Performance Service is to promote social welfare and to improve outcomes for service users by:

- continuing to deliver on the Department's statutory duties;
- enhancing the quality of social work provision;
- leading on strategic development;
- developing policies and professional practice which supports the Department's strategic direction;
- monitoring and evaluating performance;
- and by supporting and managing change in all areas to ensure continuous improvement.

It is further suggested that the service configuration proposed in Option 3 would best equip the Social Work Department to meet its requirements for planning and commissioning, policy and practice development, management information, performance monitoring and evaluation and departmental service improvement.

14.0 CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROPOSALS

<i>Critical Success Factor 1</i>	<i>by When</i>	<i>by Whom</i>
1 Information		
Make available and promote the active use of data for the purpose of service improvement by managers	March 2003	J Tocher
Review Information Strategy	May 2002	J Tocher
Implement Public Information Strategy and Standards	Dec 2002	G Ireland

<i>Critical Success Factor 2</i>	<i>by When</i>	<i>by Whom</i>
2 Impact on Services		
Integrated approach to all planning through effective business planning as evidenced by the Departmental Service Plans and Service Specific plans	August 2002	H McKay J Tocher D McCulloch
Evaluation systems in place for monitoring impact of service standards and policies	March 2003	J Tocher D McCulloch
Achieve service improvement in aspects of communication, decision making, recognition and reward and referral process	March 2003	H McKay

<i>Critical Success Factor 3</i>	<i>by When</i>	<i>by Whom</i>
3 Expertise Conduct a user satisfaction audit to check if the service is a useful source of knowledge and information on strategy development and planning as well as policy and practice issues	March 2003	J Tocher D McCulloch

<i>Critical Success Factor 4</i>	<i>by When</i>	<i>by Whom</i>
4 Cost Maintain cost of service at 1% or less of the Social Work Department net revenue budget	Annually	A MacKay

15.0 **CONSULTATION**

Internal Social Work customers and partner departments and agencies have been consulted in the preparation of this report

16.0 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Best Value Submission to the Secretary of State for Scotland December 1997. Policy & Resources Committee - 11 December 1997

17.0 **SIGNATURE**

Chief Executive

Date

STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE SERVICE

Proposed Purpose Statement:

To promote social welfare by leading on strategic development which enhances the quality of social work provision and improves outcomes for people.

