

Reviewing Officers Team, Children and Families Report 2008-09

Introduction

This report summarises the work of the Reviewing Officers Team over the past year and reports on progress to meet targets. Feedback from customers is incorporated into the report.

Service Users and Partners

The Reviewing Officers Team has a diverse range of customers. The primary customer group is predominantly children and young people who are looked after and accommodated away from home (supervision with a condition of residence via a Children's Hearing). The Scottish Government regulations and Council procedures state that all children in this category be reviewed on a regular basis. It is expected that children will be reviewed at 6 weeks, 3 months and then 6 monthly thereafter. The reviews produce a Care Plan of how the child or young person's needs will be met. Subsequent meetings review the progress in achieving the plan's goals. The Reviewing Officer is expected to play a significant role in assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the various agencies in achieving the plan's aims. Young People who have been accommodated in the past who have a right to a 'through care and aftercare' support, are reviewed in a similar manner ("Pathway Planning"). In addition the Reviewing Officers Team act as the independent chairs of Child Protection Case Conferences in West Lothian. This is a service provided as part of West Lothian's inter-agency Child Protection Procedures. All of these meetings are minuted by either the Reviewing Officers or their administrative support.

Reviews and Child Protection Case Conferences usually include a wide variety of people and agencies. Young people and their families are directly involved in the reviews and conferences.

Achievements/Report on previous year targets

The Reviewing Officer team was made up of **3** Reviewing Officers and **3.5** staff who provide administrative support. The number of Reviewing Officers has been increased by one to facilitate the expansion of the service. It is planned that this additional resource will be used to carry out reviews on children and young people who are subject to supervision requirements (via a Children's Hearing) who live at home with their parents or carers. At 31st March **193** children were being looked after away from home and required a review. During 2008, **528** reviews took place (this included 60 Pathway Reviews for young people). During this period, **3.15** Reviewing Officers were in post. On the basis of these figures, each Reviewing Officer carried out 168 reviews. In the same

period, the Reviewing Officers chaired **160** Child Protection Case Conferences. As a result of long-term staff sickness, the planned introduction of reviews of children and young people who are subject to home supervision orders has not been progressed.

Service Standards

We Said We Would:	06/07	07/08	Target 08/09
Chair Child Protection Case Conferences	100%	100%	100%
Organise a Minute Taker for the Conference and circulate reports to invitees (including families) at least 2 days prior to the conference	100%	100%	100%
Meet with all Parents & Carer prior to Case Conference to explain the process	100%	100%	100%
Provide Minutes of Child Protection Case Conferences within 10 working days of the Case Conference	*	*	95%
Chair Reviews of Looked After & Accommodated Children & Young People within recommended time requirements	*	*	80%
Chair Reviews of Looked After (At Home) Children & Young People within the Agreed Timescales	*	*	In Planning Stage
Circulate Minutes & Care Plan following a review within 21 days	*	*	80%
Circulate Minute of Pre-Permanency LAC Review within 5 days	*	100%	100%

* this is a relatively new service and the services marked with * have been recently introduced.

We asked customers and staff about our Service Standards.

- Of the 24 responses received during the period 27th April until 8th May, 75% said that the Service Standards were still relevant and in their experience were met. Two people felt that the Reviewing Officer Team should 'publish' information on the efficiency and effectiveness of the services provided by agencies.
- Overall Reviewing Offers were seen to be either very well or adequately prepared for meetings (79%) and it was felt by 92% of respondents that the meetings were well or chaired.

- All respondents felt that participants were given the opportunity to participate in the discussion. Unfortunately family members or young people returned no questionnaires.

Standards and questionnaires will be reviewed again (summer 2009) and particular consideration will be given to the design of the form and the issue of increasing the return rate from families and young people.

Review of Service Standards within team

As indicated above the Service Standards will be reviewed within the team in the coming months. This will take account of the developments in the service (reviewing children who were not previously reviewed) and the need to incorporate more measurable outcomes in the standards and publish these more widely.

Feedback on Customer Satisfaction

The significant finding of last years Customer Satisfaction survey was that children, young people and their parents felt involved in their reviews and case conferences. Almost all felt that they had the opportunity to express their views albeit some meetings, because of their nature were large and formal e.g. Initial Child Protection Case Conferences. The plans made for children were seen to be clear and it was expected that the aims would be achieved. Relatives and children felt that the right people were attending their reviews. As noted above, the most recent survey produced a very poor response from families and young people and the method of capturing these important responses will be reviewed and consideration will be given to a different approach.

Future considerations

The Reviewing Officers welcome the fact that the scope of reviews will be increased to include children and young people who are subject to supervision requirements and live at home. However this will have a significant impact on their workloads. Current figures suggest that 180 children and young people will require at least two reviews per year. On this basis, it is likely that some form of rationalisation will need to take place. For example, it may be that reviews have to be targeted on those most in need rather than offered to everyone, irrespective of their circumstances and level of need. Children and young people who feel that the review process is not relevant to them (for example, if their placement is secure and permanent) will see this as an improvement in the current service.

It is important to customers that they receive minutes (and where appropriate Care Plans) of meetings as soon as possible. To support this and maintain current service standards it is important that minutes are written and distributed quickly and to this end it is hoped that administrative support is maintained at its current level.