

**Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development**

**Report to Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)**

**Date: 13<sup>th</sup> February 2014**

**Subject: Recommendation Tracking – Improving School Attendance**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

1. This report sets out the progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the previous Scrutiny review in Improving School Attendance published on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April 2012.
2. The Scrutiny recommendation tracking system allows the Scrutiny Board to monitor progress and identify completed recommendations; those progressing to plan; and those where there is either an obstacle or progress is not adequate. The Board will then be able to take further action as appropriate.

**Recommendations**

3. Members are asked to:
  - Agree those recommendations which no longer require monitoring;
  - Identify any recommendations where progress is unsatisfactory and determine the action the Board wishes to take as a result.
  - Note the recommendations where satisfactory progress is being made.

## **Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report sets out the progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the previous Scrutiny review into Improving Attendance.

## **1 Background information**

- 2.1 The Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) was tasked by Council with carrying out a piece of work this year on each of the three Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) obsessions. The second of these relates to school attendance.
- 2.2 At its meeting in April 2012, the Scrutiny Board agreed a report summarising its observations, conclusions and recommendations.
- 2.3 The Scrutiny recommendation tracking system allows the Board to monitor progress and identify completed recommendations; those progressing to plan; and those where there is either an obstacle or progress is not adequate. The Board will then be able to take further action as appropriate.
- 2.4 The Directors Response was presented to the Scrutiny Board at the meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July 2012. Having considered the response the Board accepted that recommendation 5 could not be implemented by the Director of Children's Services as a zero tolerance policy to term time holiday absence is unlawful and can potentially expose schools/the authority to legal challenge.
- 2.5 The Scrutiny Board considered progress against recommendations at the 13<sup>th</sup> December 2012 meeting. The Board resolved that recommendations 1,3,4,9 and 10 no longer required monitoring or were complete.

## **2 Main issues**

- 3.1 A standard set of criteria has been produced to enable the Board to assess progress. These are presented in the form of a flow chart at Appendix 1. The questions in the flow chart should help to decide whether a recommendation has been completed, and if not whether further action is required.
- 3.2 To assist Members with this task the Principal Scrutiny Adviser, in liaison with the Chair, has given a draft status for each recommendation. The Board is asked to confirm whether these assessments are appropriate and to change them where they are not. Details of progress against each recommendation are set out within the table at Appendix 2.

## **3 Corporate Considerations**

### **3.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 3.1.1 Where internal or external consultation processes have been undertaken with regard to responding to the Scrutiny Board's recommendations, details of any such consultation will be referenced against the relevant recommendation within the table at Appendix 2.
- 3.1.2 The Executive Board Member for Children's Services has been consulted on the response to the recommendations.

### **3.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

- 3.2.1 Where consideration has been given to the impact on equality areas, as defined in the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme, this will be referenced against the relevant recommendation within the table at Appendix 2.

### **3.3 Council Policies and City Priorities**

- 3.3.1 This section is not relevant to this report.

### **3.4 Resources and Value for Money**

- 3.4.1 Details of any significant resource and financial implications linked to the Scrutiny recommendations will be referenced against the relevant recommendation within the table at Appendix 2.

### **3.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 3.5.1 This report does not contain any exempt or confidential information.

### **3.6 Risk Management**

- 3.6.1 This section is not relevant to this report.

## **4 Conclusions**

- 5.1 The Scrutiny recommendation tracking system allows the Board to monitor progress and identify completed recommendations. Progress in responding to those recommendations arising from the Scrutiny review into Improving School Attendance is detailed within the table at Appendix 2 for Members' consideration.

## **5 Recommendations**

- 6.1 Members are asked to:
- Agree those recommendations which no longer require monitoring;
  - Identify any recommendations where progress is unsatisfactory and determine the action the Board wishes to take as a result.
  - Note the recommendations where satisfactory progress is being made.

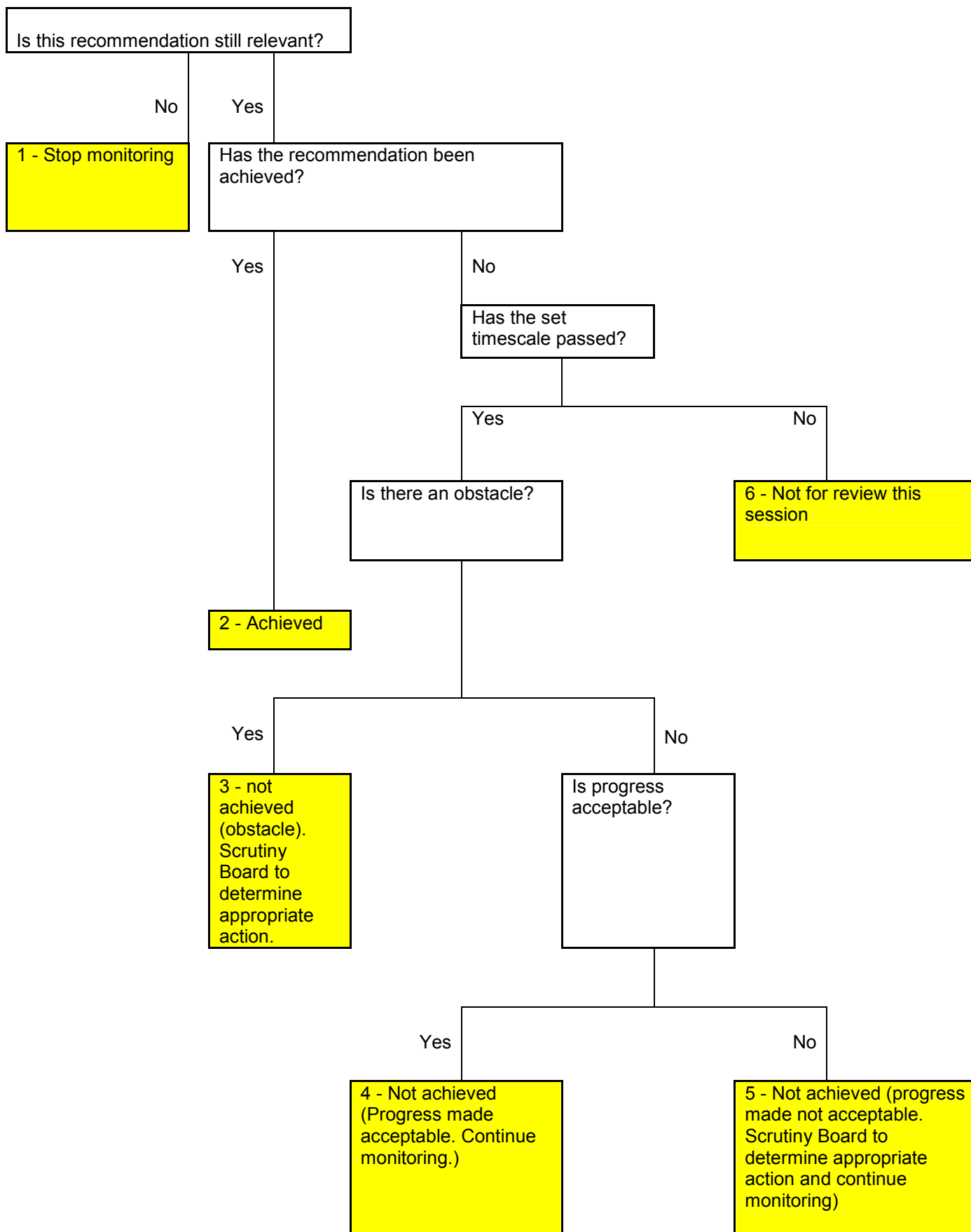
## **6 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 6.1 Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development to the Children and Families Scrutiny Board – Scrutiny Inquiry Final Report Improving School Attendance 26<sup>th</sup> April 2012
- 6.2 Report of the Director of Children's Services to the Children and Families Scrutiny Board 'Directors Response Scrutiny Inquiry into Improving Attendance' 26<sup>th</sup> July 2012.
- 6.2.1 Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development to the Children and Families Scrutiny Board Recommendation Tracking – Improving School Attendance 13<sup>th</sup> December 2012.

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

**Recommendation tracking flowchart and classifications:**  
**Questions to be Considered by Scrutiny Boards**



**Review of Improving School Attendance Inquiry (April 2012)**

Categories

- 1 - Stop monitoring
- 2 - Achieved
- 3 - Not achieved (Obstacle)
- 4 - Not achieved (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- 5 - Not achieved (Progress made not acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- 6 - Not for review this session

Recommendation for monitoring	Evidence of progress and contextual information	Status (categories 1 – 6) (to be completed by Scrutiny)	Complete
<p><b>Recommendation 2</b> - That the Director of Children’s Services engage with School Governors to establish a special responsibility for one Governor in each school which includes challenging the attendance performance of the school and maintaining a focus on reducing absence levels.</p>	<p><b>Directors Response:</b> There is a specific training briefing for governors on attendance, available through the governor support unit and guidance has been issued to governors about utilising the committee framework to monitor and challenge attendance throughout the course of the school year. The advantage of the committee framework is embedding a shared understanding of attendance across the whole of the governing body. In schools with good attendance, distributive leadership across the whole organisation generates shared ownership. Schools with poor attendance often place responsibility for attendance with one particular role e.g. assistant headteacher, head of pastoral etc. Targeted Services regularly communicate to governors through the governors bulletin with respect to attendance and the role all governors can play in supporting their school improve policy and practice in order to raise attendance.</p>		

	<p><b>13 December 2012:</b> Governor training on attendance is being delivered in the New Year and Targeted Services will be taking the opportunity to support the governor’s marketplace event.</p> <p><b>Current Position:</b> Advice and guidance about the recent changes to legislation has been provided to all headteachers and governing bodies and the attendance training programme continues. In addition, training across a number of clusters has taken place that has included governors who have also been invited to join Outcomes Based Accountability workshops for attendance. Governors continue to play an additional role in the governance of clusters that enables influence on activity and provides a channel for support and challenge, particularly around the obsessions and other cluster priorities, of which school attendance is key.</p>	5	
<p><b>Recommendation 6</b> - That the Director of Children’s Services engages with National Health Service providers and General Practitioners in Leeds to identify how absence from school for health appointments could be reduced.</p>	<p><b>Directors Response:</b> A small scale information gathering exercise in the CATTs (Ardsley and Tingley) cluster was undertaken during the Easter term to investigate what types of medical appointments children are missing school for. The findings have been shared with School Health, the lead for Emotional Health and Well-Being in the West North West and the Head of Commissioning Children and Families in NHS Leeds.</p> <p>Next steps planned are to repeat the investigation in a more inner-city/deprived area of the city and to try to expand the data captured to the number of appointments not attended, whether GP appointments were routine or responsive to illness and to establish if children returned to school in the afternoon – the greatest majority of appointments were during the morning.</p>		

An Outcome Based Accountability workshop with Children's Services and partners in health is planned for the next academic year. Preliminary discussions have already generated no-cost, low-cost ideas such as community paediatrics including text in their appointment letters advising parents that their child will be able to return to school following their appointment; for GP practice managers to be advised of school holidays to offer routine appointments during these periods which could also increase the likelihood of children attending the appointments.

**13 December 2012:** Open XS cluster have agreed to undertake an investigation into the types of medical absence across schools in the cluster. This represents a much more diverse locality with much higher levels of deprivation.

**Current Position:** Unfortunately, the Open XS cluster were not able to undertake this piece of work. Discussions with the CCG have identified that there is little influence possible over this type of absence as the vast majority of appointments during the school day are required because of genuine illness and that routine appointments would not generally be offered to children during the school day. The CCG's have also been engaging in the cluster model of service delivery and are looking for opportunities to pool resources or jointly commission services to tackle health inequalities and key issues for children and young people, such as mental health and emotional well-being as these are a far more significant cause of prolonged absence from school.

<p><b>Recommendation 7</b> - That the Director of Children's Services works in collaboration with the Cluster Chairs to undertake a review of the attendance improvement and family support service configuration. The purpose of this review would be to identify if there is sufficient resource appropriately allocated to each cluster.</p>	<p><b>Directors Response:</b> Allocation of AIO resource is based on level of need which is a combination of the numbers of persistent absentees and the distribution of Targeted Services.</p> <p>Therefore clusters with the highest need in terms of Targeted Services will have the correspondingly higher level of AIO resource. The status of the schools in the cluster also has a bearing as academies are funded directly for the provision of support services for attendance and therefore do not receive any non-statutory provision from the local authority.</p> <p>Family Support Workers are school/cluster based staff and not a provision of service made by the local authority.</p> <p>The Family Intervention Service (FIS) that is provided by Children's Services is accessed by the Children Leeds Panels, at present. All cases that have been through Guidance and Support where it is felt that this level of intensive family support is now required can be referred for consideration of support (which includes Multi-Systemic Therapy, Signpost, commissioned FIS and Children's Services FIS). This resource is not allocated to clusters but through the integrated processes, beginning with a CAF.</p> <p>This service has also been restructured and its capacity increased.</p> <p>In the past, the distribution of the attendance service has been reviewed annually to accommodate changes in patterns of absence across the city. However, this necessitated the movement of staff which schools and services reported to be highly disruptive to the development of working relationships and caused discontinuity in the service to families.</p> <p>It is the view of the director that current arrangements need a significant period of time to embed and grow and that regular review of the dashboard and other data will continue to inform decisions about how</p>		
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	<p>resource is distributed.</p> <p><b>13 December 2012:</b> Not for review at that session</p> <p><b>Current Position:</b> Since the last update to scrutiny, clusters and local practitioners have been able to access the intensive family support offer directly without needing to refer to the area panels. This has streamlined the process and enabled a service that can be more responsive to the needs of families.</p> <p>Since the last update to scrutiny, there has also been a significant reduction in the grant funding by the government for the provision of a range of education services, including statutory and non-statutory attendance functions, which will require immediate and longer term savings to be found. Opportunities to better integrate services will need to be identified as attendance remains an obsession. There will continue to be a range of services and skilled practitioners available to clusters, as the continuing preferred vehicle for local delivery, to support schools and families to remove barriers to good school attendance.</p>	2	
<p><b>Recommendation 8</b> - That the Director of Children’s Services establishes as part of the Youth Offer Review the possibility of providing Youth Service support for young people, who are persistently absent, from school from the age of 11 years.</p>	<p><b>Directors Response:</b> The Youth Service priority age range is 13-19 (25) However, support is available from 11+ where there is identified need. Addressing persistent absenteeism and increasing engagement with young people most at risk of entering care or being NEET are priorities for the youth Service from age 11.</p> <p><b>13 December 2012 :</b> Targeted work with 11+ continues. The city-wide Youth Offer review is on-going.</p> <p><b>Current Position:</b> The city-wide Youth Offer review/restructure is complete. Geographically targeted youth work is delivered both in house and by other youth work providers. These providers deliver <b><i>the targeted guarantee</i></b> component of the youth offer. This work is</p>	2	

	<p>delivered predominantly in targeted neighbourhoods i.e. 40% most deprived lower super output areas, within the area committee boundary. These youth work opportunities are targeted at young people aged 11-17. Emphasis is given to programmes which aim to address the needs of local young people, particularly the needs of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, taking full account of equality and diversity issues; thereby reducing the demand for more specialist services.</p>		
<p><b>Recommendation 11</b> - That the Director of Children's services investigates the problems associated with transient neighbourhoods. In addition, investigates how the schools admissions system for Leeds could be adapted in our most deprived wards to ensure parents can place their children in schools close to their homes and siblings.</p>	<p><b>Directors Response:</b> The problem of transient neighbourhoods is one that is limited to a small number of localities in the city, Inner East being one of these. The cluster have undertaken an Outcomes Based Accountability workshop for a host of services/agencies to look at this issue in their locality, which has a particular focus on the impact and needs of the Roma community.</p> <p>A pathfinder project has already begun to allow schools to accept applications directly from parents for in year admission transfers. The aim is to reduce the amount of time taken to find school places for children and young people. All schools will be managing admissions in this way by September 2013. There is a small working group of specialists within Children's Services considering the impact of admissions on children missing education particularly in transient neighbourhoods where there is a high degree of mobility between schools.</p> <p>We will continue to seek to provide additional permanent and temporary school places in areas where families are not always able to secure a place at a reasonable local school. We want all children to have access to a good local school.</p> <p><b>13 December 2012 :</b> The pathfinder was to be implemented in all schools by September 2013 but as the pathfinder project has been so successful it is to be rolled out across the city after the October 2012</p>		

half term holiday. A number of temporary solutions were also implemented at schools in Inner East and Inner South, two of the most deprived wards, for September 2012 and further proposals for permanent expansions will be brought forward.

**Current Position:** Following the changes to legislation that came into effect on September 1<sup>st</sup>, Leeds no longer co-ordinates applications for schools transfers during the academic year.

Building on the success of the pilot scheme, parents now approach schools directly to apply for a place. Since many schools are now their own admissions authority, and make the decisions on who they can admit, this has led to a reduced wait for information on whether a place can be offered. Where a place cannot be offered parents are supported with information on other local schools where there are spaces currently available. If parents continue to be unable to secure a place, the authority contacts them again and, where appropriate, make referrals through targeted services to identify a service that can offer family support.

Work between targeted services, safeguarding and admissions is on-going to ensure there are no gaps in process. This includes the work of Fair Access panels, which support the most vulnerable children and families, including many with high mobility.

Work continues to ensure sufficiency of school places, with 183 bulge reception places provided for the 2013 entry, and a staff restructure to better support this work.

<p><b>Recommendation 12</b> - That the Director of Children’s service in collaboration with Cluster Chairs identifies the most effective way of sharing case information with stakeholders involved in the support of children and their families, whilst adhering to required data protection legislation and safeguarding requirements.</p>	<p><b>Directors Response:</b> There is an on-going review of ESCR and investigation into the procurement of a suitable solution which will need to provide a consistent case management tool for services and practitioners which will maximise the effectiveness and timeliness of communication and understanding about children and families and those who are working with them.</p> <p>The Targeted Service Leaders and Area Heads of Targeted Services are available to support clusters in developing robust information sharing agreements which safeguard children without causing unnecessary barriers to communication and intervention by services.</p> <p>There have been preliminary discussions as to how access to the Children’s Services pupil database (not ESCR) could be extended to a range of practitioners that could include school SENCOs, Family Intervention Service and cluster based staff such as Family Outreach Workers.</p> <p>The Troubled Families initiative will also map out and test the information sharing protocols between the authority and clusters/partnerships/services.</p> <p><b>13 December 2012</b> :Staff working across 9 clusters are now able to make use of the Synergy Gateway to both access child records to view and also to add notes in respect of actions and interventions and this model is being rolled out across the remaining 16 clusters. This is enabling practitioners to see which other services are engaged in work with children and also reducing the need to hold information about children in multiple locations. The Families First Information Sharing agreement has also enabled a much wider discussion across agencies in respect of families and households causing concern to a range of agencies that covers worklessness and crime and anti-social behaviour.</p>		
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	<p><b>Current Position:</b> An early help module has been developed as part of the framework-I implementation. This module is separate from the children's social work services module but information can be passed between the two modules when necessary.</p> <p>This will allow all relevant information from different agencies to be captured and stored in one place to allow easy, timely access to up-to-date information for anyone with appropriate consent.</p> <p>Individual agencies that are involved with a child and family will be able to update their information in real time and anyone searching the system, will, as a minimum, be able to identify who is currently working with them.</p> <p>Implementation has already begun with key people in clusters trained on the system in January 2014.</p> <p>Ensuring the most efficient use of the system will be part of the development undertaken with all multiagency partners as the system is rolled out over the next 18 months.</p>	4	
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