



Leeds
CITY COUNCIL

Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) – Review of Children's Social Care System Working Group

DRAFT Notes of meeting on 10 August 2011

**Councillor Judith Chapman (Chair), Councillor Bob Gettings and Councillor Karen Renshaw
John Malone**

Introduction

- 1 The Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) agreed in June 2011 to maintain this working group which had met during the second half of 2010/11. The remit of the group is to track implementation of the new children's social care record system. Since the working group last met Councillor Renshaw had replaced Councillor James Lewis as a member.
- 2 John Malone presented an update on progress with procurement of the new system. In summary, the pre-qualification questionnaire returns were currently being evaluated to create a shortlist of 5-7 suppliers who would be invited to tender in September.
- 3 In addition, he outlined work under way to explore whether the Single View requirements could be met with existing technology. If it proved feasible, this would enable the Single View element of the programme to be brought forward.
- 4 John explained that the extent of staff consultation and input to the development of the system had meant some further slight delays to the procurement process. It had originally been planned to issue tender documents in June. However, staff involvement was felt to be an essential part of the development process, learning the lessons from the ESCR system.
- 5 The working group agreed that, whilst the delay was regrettable, it was the right decision in the circumstances as staff engagement was crucial to the future success of the system.
- 6 Members learned that over 120 staff took part in the initial scoping workshops. Further team visits were taking place to further influence development of the system. The Director of Children's Services had stressed that child safety is paramount, and therefore meetings have been arranged around the caseloads of social work staff.
- 7 Members asked for confirmation that the option for adult social care to procure the same system remained viable. This was an issue that had been discussed in detail in previous working group meetings.
- 8 It was explained that many of the suppliers being considered to be invited to tender provided systems that covered both adults' and children's social care. However, the tender specification for children's services would not cover any specific adult services

requirements. In addition, it was likely to be early 2012 before adult social care were ready to specify their requirements; it was still possible that their future needs would be more closely aligned with the existing health recording systems.

- 9 It was confirmed that adult social care was represented on the project board, particularly with regard to the transition of young people from children's to adult social care services. John reiterated that relevant staff would have access to both systems and that information would be transferable between the systems.
- 10 In addition the Single View would flag the existence of records relating to other family members. This would help to address councillors' ongoing concern about ensuring that the family approach to service delivery is supported by the technology.
- 11 Members were also reminded that professional practice and procedures would outline standard checks to be made regarding other family members in receipt of services. The regular supervision and audit of social work staff would be tracking that they have asked the relevant routine questions.
- 12 Members asked whether the IT system could be configured to force such checks to be made. They were told that this would not be recommended, but that an audit trail could be set up to log whether such checks were undertaken.
- 13 The working group was reminded that at the end of the day the system is there to support staff to carry out their professional roles. A key element of the Munro review's conclusions was to emphasise the importance of social workers exercising their professional judgement on a case by case basis. The IT system will provide appropriate information to support them in performing this aspect of their role.
- 14 John confirmed that the work was also underway to prepare data for the new system as well as standard forms, reports and templates. It may be possible to claw back some of the delays if this work progresses well.
- 15 The working group discussed the tender evaluation process. This would include visits to other local authorities to see the systems in action and would take into consideration the scale of authorities involved as well as the success of the systems, for example as reflected in Ofsted assessments of safeguarding arrangements. The support available for the system and ongoing development would also be important. Members asked if there would be penalty clauses in the contract and it was confirmed that this was being considered.
- 16 It was noted that the final decision on procurement was likely to be taken at Executive Board in late 2011 or early 2012.

Next Steps

- 1 It was agreed that the next meeting of the working group would take place during half term week in October. The meeting would include a presentation on the design of the new system and lessons learned from the ESCR system. There would also be a demonstration of the existing ESCR system.
- 2 It was also agreed that this meeting would be opened up to all members of the Scrutiny Board to attend if they wished to, with prior notification.