

ITEM NO. 6

**SCRUTINY & REVIEW
(CHILDREN'S SERVICES)**

**SOCIAL CARE IN RELATION TO YOUNG PEOPLE
WORKING GROUP
FINAL REPORT - MARCH 2007**



SEFTON MBC

**LOCAL PEOPLE
LOCAL CHOICE**

Scrutiny And Review Committee (Children's Services)

Social Care in Relation to Young People Working Group

FINAL REPORT

Chair's Introduction

Since September 2005 a Working Party of this Committee has been reviewing Social Care in Relation to Young People. The review has involved numerous meetings involving a number of site visits and taking evidence from officers from the Looked after Children's Service, Children's Services and from Young people in Care. The Working Group also visited other areas to look at examples of good practice.

I would like to acknowledge the hard work of the Working Group in drawing up this report and to thank the officers from the Looked after Children's Service, Children's Services and from the Scrutiny and Review Support Staff for their help and expertise.

I would like to thank staff from Halton Borough Council who helped facilitate the Working Group's visit to their area and to Councillor A. Massey, Cabinet Member, Halton Borough Council for his welcome and hospitality during the visit.

I would like to thank staff from Nugent Care Homes who helped facilitate the Working Group's visits to Clumber Lodge, Freshfields and the Nugent Home, Billinge

I would also like to make particular mention of the young people in care who kindly gave their views to the Working Group.



**Geoff Howe,
Chair,
Social Care in relation to Young People
Working Group**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 At the meeting of the Scrutiny and Review Committee (Children's Services) held on 26 July 2005 (Minute No. 9 refers), it was agreed to appoint a working group to consider Social Care in relation to young people.

1.2 The Membership of the Working Group was agreed as follows :-

Councillors Howe (Lead), Doran, Firth, Mrs Kerrigan and D. Rimmer.

1.3 Following changes to the Membership as a result of the municipal elections, the Scrutiny and Review Committee (Children' Services) at its meeting held on 27 June 2006 (Minute No 10 refers) resolved to continue the work of the Social Care in Relation to Young People Working Group and appointed members to serve on the Group.

1.4 The reconstituted Working Group consisted of:-

Councillors Howe (Chair), Bigley, Byrne, Fairclough and Glover.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Working Group held meetings as follows:-

- (i) 27 September 2005;
- (ii) 14 November 2005;
- (iii) 21 November 2005;
- (iv) 28 November 2005;
- (v) 13 February 2006;
- (vi) 13 March 2006
- (vii) 18 July 2006
- (viii) 26 September 2006

2.2 At the first meeting of the Working Group Councillor Howe was appointed as Lead Member for the review and the members of the group reconsidered the scoping document. A scoping document with the following terms of reference was agreed:-.

- 1. Residential Care
 - (a) Are they necessary
 - (b) Are they fit for purpose
 - (c) What other provision exists
 - (d) Standards
 - (e) measures for action following visits

- 2. Fostering
 - (a) Availability of Placements
 - (b) difficult placements
 - (c) private/Local Authority placements

- 3. Safeguarding Children

- 2.3 In respect of Safeguarding Children it was reported that a presentation was to be given on this subject at the next meeting of the Scrutiny & Review Committee (Children's Services) on 4 October 2005 and consequently it was considered appropriate that further details be added to that topic following the presentation.

A copy of the scoping document is attached as appendix A to this report for information.

- 2.4 As part of the scoping process, the reconstituted Working Group planned the investigation using the Planning Chart as detailed at Appendix B. This enabled the Working Group to remain focussed and gave them targets to work to. In planning the investigation the Working Group had regard to the "Ten Step Process" as set out at Appendix C and the Scrutiny and Review Process as set out at Appendix D.

3.0 SITE VISITS

- 3.1 In order to understand the position within Sefton and to look at examples from other areas Members carried out the following visits to Children's Homes :-

- (i) Halton Children's Home, Widnes;
- (ii) Melrose House, Bootle;
- (iii) Kirwan House, Southport;
- (iv) Cherry Road;
- (v) Knowsley Road, Bootle;
- (vi) Springbrook, Ainsdale;
- (vii) Clumber Lodge, Freshfields;
- (viii) Nugent Home, Billinge;

- 3.2 On each of these visits Members were given the opportunity to view the fabric of the building and how it operated, speak to members of staff regarding the running of the premises and to any young people present to get their views on the premises and its operation.

- 3.3 On 15 March 2006 Members also observed a meeting of the Placement Panel, an officer working group which considers the most appropriate placement for Young people coming into the care of the local authority.

4.0 PRESENTATIONS

- 4.1 The Working Group received presentations from the following:-

Anne Harvey,	Service Manager
Liz Mulligan,	Resource Manager Children's Services, LAC - Children's Homes
Mike Fletcher,	Registered Manager, Melrose House, LAC - Children's Homes

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- 4.2 In addition the Scrutiny and Review Committee (Children's Services) at its meeting held on 4 October 2005 (Minute No. 20 refers), received a presentation from the Service Manager - Safeguarding Children dealing with Government proposals in respect of safeguarding children and action which Sefton proposed to take in response to the proposals.

5.0 CONSULTATION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

- 5.1 On 13 March 2006 Members met the Children's Participation Officer and Young people resident at Melrose House, Bootle and Knowsley Road, Bootle in order to gain their views on the services provided. The young people answered questions on their views of the establishments they lived in, their support from staff and many more general issues relating to their lives.

6.0 RESIDENTIAL CARE

- 6.1 The majority of "looked after" children (currently approximately 80%) within Sefton are placed in foster care, but the Council also provides residential placements for other "looked after" children, because of their particular needs/background. Members carried out visits to a number of Children's Homes both inside and outside the Borough in order to gain a view of the service provided.
- 6.2 The Children's Home visited in Halton was a small unit which catered for 4 children on a long term basis. The Working Group felt that this size of establishment was ideal and provided an environment which most closely resembled a family home with continuity and stability for the young people. Members noted however that the service provided was relatively costly. The premises had recently been converted and refurbished at a cost of £90,000 following an inspection of Halton's services and as a response to the level of out of Borough placements. In addition the annual Revenue Budget for the premises was £210,000.
- 6.3 The majority of Sefton's establishments cater for eight children on a long term basis often with an additional "emergency bed" used to cater for a child or young person entering the care system on a short term basis (usually 24 hours) until a decision can be made in relation to a suitable more permanent placement (usually a foster placement). Working Group Members compared the Sefton Model to that of Halton and felt that there was a less personal feel to the premises and the option of an emergency placement created a lack of a continuity and stability within the environment.
- 6.4 Whilst the Working Group considered that the smaller unit was ideal it accepted that moving towards this would represent a significant cost. Although the group did not feel that the larger unit was ideal, the young people interviewed had not complained about the establishments and in fact those who were resident at Melrose House, Bootle were extremely happy with the environment provided.

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- 6.5 Having visited Kirwan House, Southport, the Working Group considered that this was no longer fit for purpose and a suitable alternative needed to be sought. Officers from Children's Service are already aware of the issues and are working with partners and agencies in an effort to secure a long term solution.
- 6.6 Clumber Lodge, Freshfields was visited by the Working Groups this Home again caters for smaller numbers of Young People with resulting relatively high cost.
- 6.7 Nugent Home, Billinge is used by Sefton as it provides specific care for young people with specific needs. Whilst the cost of placements are high it is likely that this facility will continue to be used for those young people whose needs require this level of extra care.;

7.0 FOSTERING

Having received detailed information from the Service Manager - Safeguarding Children, and being informed of an excellent independent inspection report, Members were content that the Council was providing an excellent service in relation to fostering and that no action needed to be recommended by the Working Group, However, it was noted that this service should continue to strive for further improvements.

8.0 SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

- 8.1 The Scrutiny and Review Committee (Children's Services) at its meeting held on 4 October 2005 (Minute No. 20 refers), received a presentation from the Service Manager - Safeguarding Children which dealt in detail with Government proposals in respect of safeguarding children and set out action which Sefton proposed to take in response to the proposals.
- 8.2 In response to the requirements of the Children Act 2004 the Council proposed to establish a statutory Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) in partnership with other local agencies. This was expected to be in place by April 2006. The Board would replace non-statutory Area Child Protection Committee and would be to co-ordinate and ensure the effectiveness of each of the Board partners individually and collectively for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the local authority area.

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8.3 The Board would be responsible for ensuring delivery of the five key outcomes had been identified nationally in respect of safeguarding children:-

- (i) Be Healthy;
- (ii) Stay safe;
- (iii) Enjoy and Achieve;
- (iv) Make a positive contribution; and
- (v) Achieve economic well being.

8.4 Having listened to the proposals, the Working Group was satisfied that the Council was making good progress in respect of Safeguarding Children and did not feel it necessary to make any further recommendations in this respect.

9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Working Group wishes to present the following recommendations for consideration:-

- (i) the Council should continue to work to increase the proportion of “looked after” children (currently approximately 80%) who are placed in foster care, thereby reducing reliance on expensive residential placements;
- (ii) the Council should continue to provide residential placements for 10% - 15% of “looked after” children, because of their particular needs/background;
- (iii) although it is recognised that the standards of residential care are generally very high, Kirwan House, Southport is not considered to be “fit for purpose”; and the Cabinet be requested to examine the feasibility of a suitable alternative to Kirwan house immediately;
- (iv) alternative residential placements, particularly in smaller units, should continue to be investigated; and
- (v) consideration should be given, if possible, to reducing the capacity of some of the other residential establishments in the Borough.

10.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Working Group is grateful to all those witnesses and other persons who assisted it with its research and provided it with information.

11.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 10.1 During the process of this review, the Working Group has gathered a substantial amount of information and data, which has been invaluable in helping it to form its conclusions and recommendations.
- 10.2 Any background information required is available on request from Ian Aylward-Barton, Scrutiny Support Officer (telephone 0151 934 2788, e-mail: ian.barton@legal.sefton.gov.uk)

SEFTON COUNCIL



**SCRUTINY AND REVIEW COMMITTEE
(CHILDREN'S SERVICES)**

**SOCIAL CARE IN RELATION TO YOUNG
PEOPLE WORKING GROUP**

SCOPING EXERCISE

METHODS OF ENQUIRY

Investigative techniques/site visits

Speakers

Visits to other Local Authority Children's Homes

- Comparison with (a) Beacon Councils
 (b) Benchmarked Authorities

TIMESCALES

Planning Chart

OFFICER SUPPORT

Named Officers / witnesses

- D. Charlton
- L. Mulligan
- A. Harvey
- M. Fletcher
- K. Gray

OTHERS WHO WILL BE INVOLVED

Residents, stakeholders, tenants, other public sector organisations to call as witnesses etc. or consult etc.

Halton Borough Council
Young children in residential care

ARRANGEMENTS FOR REPORTING TO CABINET/COUNCIL

Timetable of committees, link into the planning chart, type of report/minute

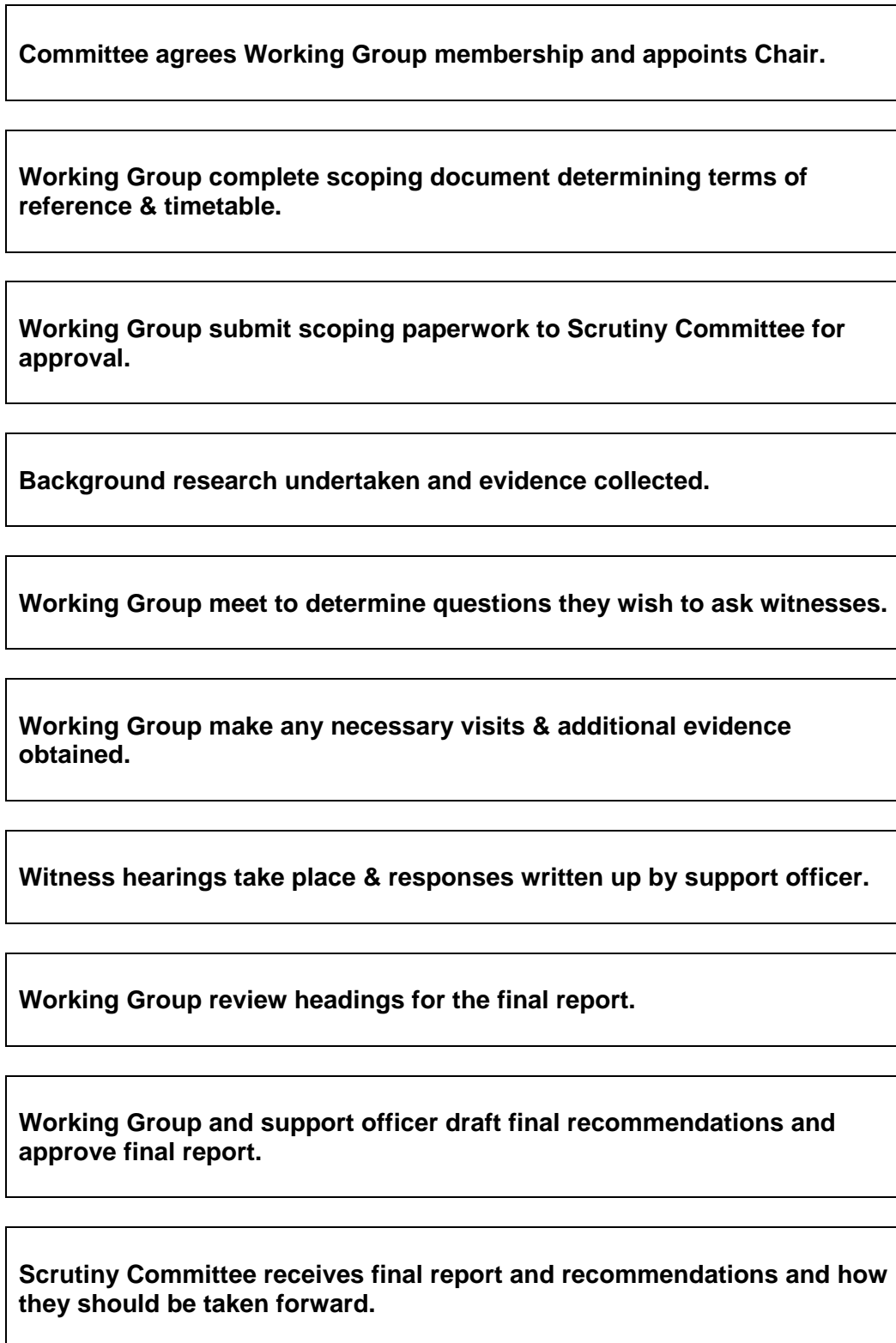
Appendix B

PLANNING CHART

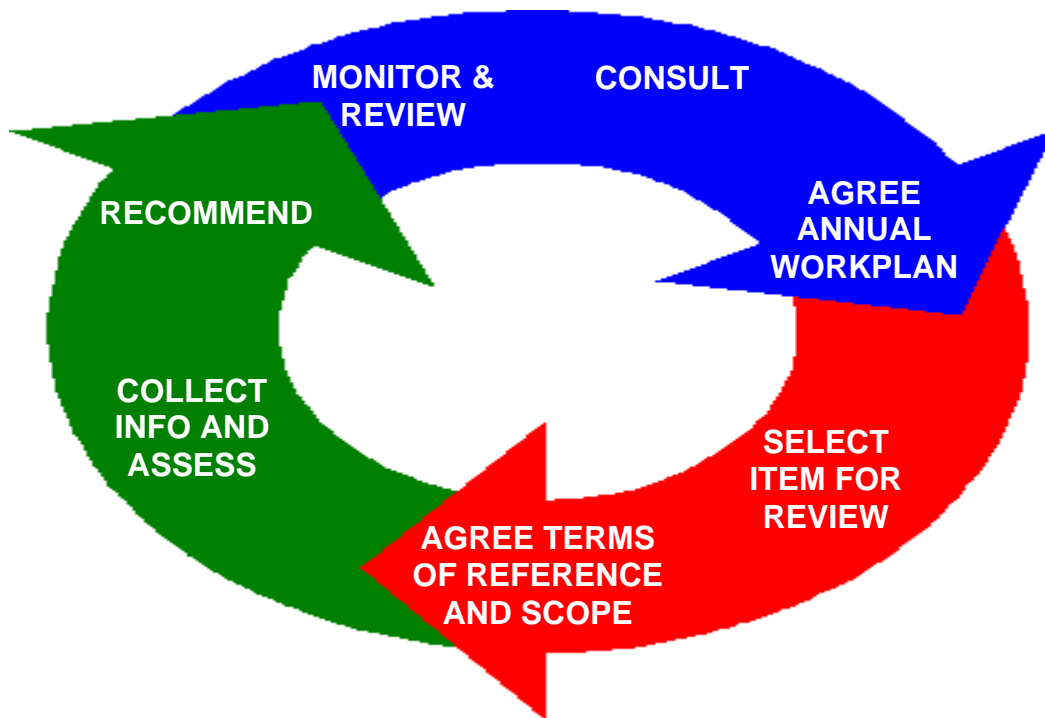
The Planning Chart is an example of the way reviews could/should be planned. It is recommended that realistic time frames in which to carry out tasks should be considered including possible delays for public holidays and Council business. Effective planning suggests that more planning time be built into the chart.

Activity	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Planning	▬					
Consider Document		▬				
Witnesses			▬		▬	
Site Visits			▬			
Initial Findings					▬	
Draft Report						▬
S&R Cttee Considers						□
Submit to Cabinet						□

Ten Step Process Flow Chart



Scrutiny and Review Process



Appendix E

List of Consultees

Bryn Marsh,	Strategic Director Children's Services
Graham Taylor,	Project Director Children's Services
Alan Irving,	Schools & Young People's Director
Dennis Charlton,	Assistant Director - Children's Services
Christine Mellor,	Service Manager - Safeguarding Children
Anne Harvey,	Service Manager Looked After Children
Colin Oxley,	Assistant Director - Inclusion
Liz Mulligan,	Resource Manager Children's Services,
	LAC - Children's Homes
Mike Fletcher,	Registered Manager, Melrose House,
	LAC - Children's Homes
Chris Bobb	Team Leader, Knowsley Road,
	LAC - Children's Homes
Karen Gray,	Children's Participation Officer,
	Children's Services,
	Safeguarding Children
Pauline Sabino,	Registered Manager, Kirwan House,
	LAC - Children's Homes
	Registered Manager, Springbrook,
	LAC - Children's Homes
Sally Edwards,	Registered Manager, Cherry Road,
	LAC - Children's Homes
Councillor A. Massey	Halton Borough Council
Chris Taylor	Service Manager Halton Borough Council