

To: SOCIAL WORK (OPERATIONS AND SERVICES) SUB COMMITTEE		Subject: REPORT ON THE PROGRESS OF SOCIAL WORK RECEPTION SERVICES
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 4 MAY 2004	Ref: JD/JJ/LN	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 To advise Committee of the progress of the operation of Reception Services Teams within the Social Work Department.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Reception Services are an important element of the Departments Assessment and Care Management activity, being the first point of contact for many service users.
- 2.2 The introduction of the revised Reception Services in April 2002 followed the findings of a Departmental working group. The Review noted that systems to deal with initial enquiries from the public varied from area team to area team, with no consistent approach to referrals and screening arrangements. Consequently the service received by the public varied from area to area.
- 2.3 The Review concluded that, for the most part, public enquiries related to requests for information and advice which, with a change to the system of operation, could be dealt with to conclusion at the point of contact or within a short space of time thereafter.
- 2.4 The working group was given the remit to design consistent, quality Reception Services across the Department embracing the principles contained in the Modernising Government Agenda. The overall recommendation of the group was that dedicated Reception Services Teams be established in each of the six area teams across the Authority.
- 2.5 It was recognised that a new post of Reception Services Senior Social Worker was required. As part of the overall re-structuring of the Social Work Department, Social Work Committee approval was sought to create 6 new posts of Reception Service Seniors. In addition, six posts of Social Work Assistants were approved to facilitate the introduction of the service. The full staff compliment of the teams was achieved by transferring existing posts of Social Work Assistant and Occupational Therapy Assistants to Reception Services Teams.
- 2.6 The review noted that referrals made to Reception Services did not need qualified Social Workers to be part of the Reception Services team but to be available to provide professional support.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1. Reception Services Teams became operational in each of the six area teams on 1st April 2002.
- 3.2. Initially an implementation group met monthly to deal with operational issues arising from provision of the service. This has now been streamlined and the group comprising of an Operational Manager, Service Manager and the six Senior Social Worker Reception Services meets quarterly. It provides a means of disseminating best practice across the Authority and ensures consistency of service.
- 3.3. In 2003/4 Reception Services teams dealt almost 33,000 enquiries which equates to two thirds of the new work coming into the Department.
- 3.4. Just under half of the referrals to the Department resulted in assessments being undertaken (almost 10,000), with the remainder being dealt with without the requirement of a full assessment.
- 3.5. Over half of these assessments were carried out by Reception Services Teams, 5,000 in total.
- 3.6. In 90% of cases Reception Services Teams completed assessments within one week.
- 3.7. Following a review of workload, all teams increased the original staffing compliment by the transfer of additional posts to Reception Services Teams.
- 3.8. Reception Services Teams play a central role in the Joint Future Agenda, particularly Single Shared Assessment. Senior Social Workers, Reception Services, are members of the Local Care Partnerships include Health, Housing and Carers. The meetings are held within localities and chaired either by the Area Service Manager, Social Work Department or the General Manager of the Local Health Care Co-operative.
- 3.9. Senior Social Workers meet and liaise regularly with their colleagues in the Housing Department. They discuss areas such as anti-social behaviour, rent arrears and eviction issues.
- 3.10. Overall the consistent nature of staff within Reception Services is positive in building relationships with key partner agencies. A customer service survey carried out also highlighted a high degree of customer satisfaction.

4. DEVELOPMENTS

- 4.1 A Departmental group is currently reviewing public information. Reception Services is represented on this group and the recommendations are awaited.
- 4.2 An online referral form is in the process of being developed. Currently the public can request information about services via e-mail to all Reception Services Teams.
- 4.3 Proposals for ongoing Customer Satisfaction feedback are under discussion with a framework to be agreed.
- 4.4 Practice issues continue to be reviewed on an ongoing basis, currently considering a Domestic Violence Protocol and the operation of Blue Badges.
- 4.5 The Department is currently considering Reception Services for Charter Mark status as a means of existing continuous improvement in Reception Services.

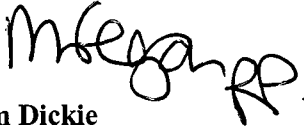
5. FINANCIAL / PERSONNEL / LEGAL / POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. There are none at this stage.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Committee is asked to:

- i) note the progress of Reception Services within the Department
- ii) request the Director of Social Work to bring forward a further Report on the progress and operation of the teams



Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work
5 April 2004

For further information on this report please contact Jane Johnstone, Operations Manager, Tel: 01698 348268.