

Leicester
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED
ALL WARDS (CORPORATE ISSUE)**

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:

Cabinet

9 April 2001

**BEST VALUE REVIEW - YEAR TWO
SERVICES TO VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
SCOPING EXERCISE**

Report of the Assistant Director Children and Family Services

1. **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek Cabinet approval of the draft Scope presented as part of the Children and Families Best Value Review, in the context of the criteria set out in the latest revision of the Best Value Review Process.

1.2 BACKGROUND

The draft Scope for the Children and Families review is set out in Appendix 1 to this report. After considering the reason why the Theme was chosen it is recommended that the review focuses on services to Vulnerable Children.

The theme will address the following challenge:

“To advance the delivery of services to vulnerable children in order to improve life chances, revitalise neighbourhoods and promote independence”.

The scope draws upon definitions and principles set out in the Department of Health document a “Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and sets these within the context of the Council’s key Corporate and Departmental Service strategies.

Due to the limited period allowed for preparing the draft scope it has not been possible to take into account all of the consultation feedback. Therefore it is proposed that Stakeholders’ views on the scope received prior to Cabinet but after Leader’s Briefing, be considered by the review Assistant Director.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 Cabinet is asked to:

- (i) Endorse the work carried out in order to inform the scoping recommendations.
- (ii) Agree the scoping recommendations.

3. **REPORT**

3.1 This paragraph and the sub-headings address the key questions posed as part of the scoping exercise.

(i) **Community Plan**

The Community Plan highlights the goals for Leicester as a diverse City where the community is safe, well educated, healthy and where social care supports those in greatest need. The theme of services to children and families lies at the heart of achieving the plans objectives and this link achieves greater relevance when considering how to improve the life chances of vulnerable children. Improvements across this breadth of services challenges our partnerships with the Health Authority, Police, Schools and other key partners to resolve how together we can:

- ensure that services are sensitive to peoples cultural , linguistic and access needs.
- support the victims of domestic violence, while taking firm action against its perpetrators.
- ensure that the achievement gap is closed between children in public care and children with special education needs and other pupils in the City.
- close the gap of health and social inequality, as it applies to vulnerable children, designing services to meet peoples needs rather than requiring needs fit into existing services.

(ii) **The Best Value Performance Plan**

The BVPI's Contained in Appendix 2 relate to services to children in need and children looked after as a sub group of vulnerable children. The overall range of appropriate performance indicators is much wider. Consequently a range of other performance indicators, too numerous to list, which are contained within the Social Services Performance Assessment Framework, Quality Protects, Audit Commission and The Education Development Plan, will be considered as part of the review.

3.2 What are the strategic imperatives?

(i) The review will take place within the context of the following key strategic initiatives:

(a) Corporate

- Neighbourhood Renewal
- Best Value Performance Plan

- Community Plan
- EMAS
- Equalities

(b) Service Specific

- Children's Services Plan
- Crime and Disorder Strategy
- The early Years Development and Child Care Plan
- Education Development Plan
- Health Improvement Programme
- Quality Protects
- Behaviour Support Plan
- Neighbourhood Renewal
- Housing Strategy

3.3 What are the key issues raised by Stakeholders

(i) Consultation with Staff

Consultation on the issues facing the review took place with lead officers from each of the business units covered by the theme. Officers were asked to identify the three most important challenges facing the service they delivered. The responses received are included in Appendix 1 to this report. The draft scope included in Appendix 3 draws from and consolidates the feed back received.

- Reducing the impact of school exclusion and non attendance
- Increasing the pace of service delivery
- Recruiting and retaining staff
- Refocusing from statutory intervention to providing community support
- Promoting independence

(ii) Consultation with Trade Unions

Trade unions were invited to review and comment upon the proposed scope. Feedback from the Trade Union Co-ordinator identified the possible need to include a more precise definition of Vulnerable Children in the scope. This would benefit the future use of the scope as a reference document but would not it is believed significantly change the intent of the scope as presented for approval. If a tighter definition is found it is proposed that this be included.

3.4 What is the potential scale of the review

Given the scale of this review and the number of service reviews that will contribute to the review process, it is proposed to progress it in parallel with the Revitalising Neighbourhoods Project. However, phase two of the best value process will need significant project management support in order to achieve this milestone.

What are the final recommendations for the scope and why?

(i) Focus of Review

The theme of Services to Children and Families (C&Fs) covers a wide vista of activities delivered through a number of Business Units within Education, Arts and Leisure and SSD. It was felt necessary to focus the review in a way that would reduce the work load to a manageable level while not eliminating the more vital services delivered. This has been achieved by focusing on services to Vulnerable Children, thereby excluding from the review the universal services delivered to all C&Fs.

Fig 1 in Appendix 3 diagrammatically represents the position of vulnerable children within the context of all children within the City. The review will seek to organise services in a way that will ultimately reduce the number of children categorised as vulnerable and the diagram illustrates the direction of travel represented by this movement.

(ii) Areas Excluded from the Scope

The proposal to focus on Vulnerable Children excludes Grants and Awards (Education) from the review as it does not provide a specific service to this disadvantaged group.

The recent review of access services to C&F's, has also allowed this part of the service to be placed in year 4 of the review programme. Therefore the proposed scope only covers the contract management and delivery of services to C&F's, together with any ongoing access issues dealt with locally.

Most other business units within Arts and Leisure that deliver services used by C&F's, have either been reviewed or are to be reviewed in subsequent years. None of these services are seen as delivering services to vulnerable children. However, reviews that have been completed will inform this review, eg in the area of socially excluded group. It is important to recognise that vulnerable children may access a broad spectrum of City Council services, however, these are categorised as universal services and are not targeted to meet the specific needs of vulnerable children. Hence these services have not been included in the review.

Given the foregoing, if the proposed scope is approved only Education and SSD services will be included in the review. The only remaining services to vulnerable children delivered by Arts and Leisure i.e. Community Partnerships and Community Development Services are being transferred to Education.

(iii) Strategic Imperatives

Based upon the experience of year one reviews it is proposed that the review concentrates upon delivering five strategic imperatives identified by the Scope Working Group. There is also a need to consider more of the specific issues raised by representatives of the business units included in the review. It is proposed that these be addressed in parallel and inform decision making on the strategic imperatives. The scope separates these aspects.

The short time available in which to produce the draft scope has limited the inclusion of feedback issues and it is proposed that appropriate late returns be back fitted prior to presentation of the scope at Leader's Briefing.

(iv) Implications of the Scope for the Review structure

Initial thinking on how the strategic imperatives might be pursued through a review structure, suggest that the Core Review Group could initially consider alternative options for departmental and business unit structures in the light of key corporate and service strategies. These options could then be presented as frameworks to be tested against the remaining four imperatives

- Ensuring effective user participation and empowerment
- Removing unnecessary professional boundaries
- Achieving the most economic and efficient use of available resources through integrated partnerships and strategic alliances.
- Explore the opportunities for data sharing with other key statutory agencies with a view to providing a seamless service.

In order to identify the model that would deliver Best Value.

5 **FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Services to Children and Families are funded, in many areas, by ring-fenced specific grants. Therefore the future requirement to consider possible 2% savings generated by the review will be effected. The focus in these areas will be to ensure that grant funding is used to maximum effect in providing best value.

Total value of services within the review £15.6 million.

6 **EQUALITIES**

The take up of Children and Families services is not representative of the demographic profile of the cultural diversity of the community of Leicester. Within the City over half of the 0 to 18 year population is from minority groups whereas the take-up of service from minority groups remains disproportionately low. The reasons for this need to be explored within the context of this review.

7 **SUSTAINABLE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

The review will evaluate, where appropriate, the use of Information and Communications Technology. This will be a key factor when considering the most economic and efficient use of available resources through integrated partnerships and strategic alliances.

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APPENDIX 1

Best Value Review of Children and Families Services Scope for Consultation

The Best Value Review of services to Children and Families will focus on the issue of vulnerable children. It will use the definition set out by the Department of Health in their document a “Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need” namely:

“Vulnerable Children are those disadvantaged children who would benefit from extra help from public agencies in order to make the best of their life chances”

Within this definition it is the duty of the local authority under Part III of The Children Act, 1989 to both safe guard and promote the welfare of vulnerable children.

The review will take place within the context of the following key strategic initiatives:

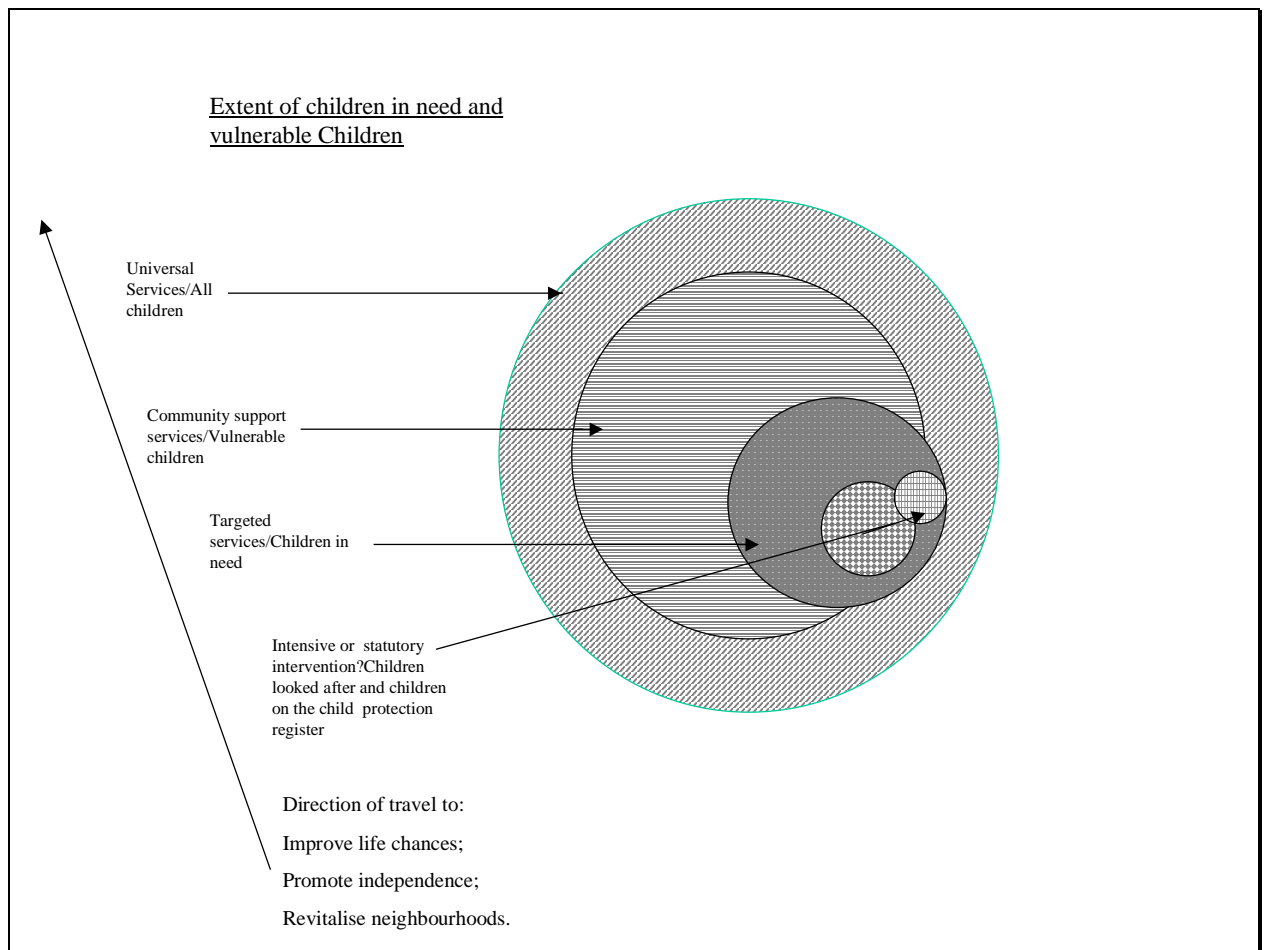
Corporate

- Neighbourhood Renewal
- Best Value Performance Plan
- Community Plan
- EMAS
- Equalities
- Revitalising Neighbourhoods

Service Specific

- Children’s Services Plan
- Crime and Disorder Strategy
- The early Years Development and Child Care Plan
- Education Development Plan
- Health Improvement Programme
- Quality Protects
- Behaviour Support Plan
- The Housing Strategy

The review will follow the principle that both best value and improved life chances will be delivered if children can be moved to a position where the level of targeted support can be progressively reduced. Ultimately to the point where they receive universally delivered services. The following, model based upon national figures of need illustrates these support levels.



To achieve this objective the review will consider the following key areas

- The most appropriate departmental and business unit structure and associated systems to deliver high quality, timely, locally accessible and responsive services.
- Ensuring effective user participation and empowerment
- Removing unnecessary professional boundaries
- Achieving the most economic and efficient use of available resources through integrated partnerships and strategic alliances.

When addressing the above the following detailed issues will be addressed

- Reducing the impact of school exclusion and non attendance
- Increasing the pace of service delivery
- Recruiting and retaining staff
- Refocusing from statutory intervention to providing community support
- Promoting independence

The following business units will be included within the review

Education Department

- Admissions and Exclusions
- Early Years
- Psychology Service
- Educational Welfare Service
- Special Education Service
- Special Needs Teaching Service
- Student Support Service
- Ethnic Minorities and Traveller Achievement Grants (EMTAG)
- Shoppers Play Centre

Social Services Department

- Adoption
- Children's Residential
- Children and Family Resources
- Fostering
- Leaving Care Team

Multi Agency Services

- Child and Adolescent Mental Service (CAMHS)

The following Business Units have been excluded from the review

- Awards and Grants - because service is not targeted at vulnerable children

Finally account will need to be taken of the interfaces to the following areas of service to be reviewed in years 3, 4 and 5 of the Best Value programme.

- Youth Offending Team
- Child Care Operations
- Disabled Children Services
- Children and Family Access
- Independent Monitoring
- Youth Services
- Homelessness services
- Community Services.

APPENDIX 2

BV 37	Average GCSE/NVQ points score of 15 year old pupils in schools maintained by the local education authority.
BV38	Percentage of 15 year old pupils achieving five or more GCSEs at Grades A*-C.
BV 39	Percentage of 15 year old pupils achieving five or more GCSEs at Grades A*-G.
BV 40	Percentage of pupils in schools achieving Level 4 or above in the Key Stage 2 mathematics test.
BV41	Percentage of pupils in schools achieving Level 4 or above in the Key Stage 2.
BV 44	The number of pupils permanently excluded per 1,000 pupils.
BV 45	Percentage of half days missed due to unauthorised absence in secondary schools.
BV46	Percentage of half days missed due to unauthorised absence in primary schools.
BV 47	Percentage of schools in serious weakness.
BV 48	Percentage of schools subject to special measures.
BV 49	% of looked after children with 3 or more placements in a year
BV 50	% of children leaving the care of the Local Authority aged 16+ who obtained at least 1 GCSE at grade A to G in last academic year
BV 51	Gross average weekly cost per Looked After Child in foster care or children's home
BV 61a	Gross expenditure on children in need as a percentage of children's services.
BV 61b	Percentage of looked after children who were in training education and employment.
BV 163	Percentage of looked after children who were adopted in the previous year.

The recommendations of the author support the achievement of these goals and measurements.