
Cabinet Performance Management Sub Group (06.09.2006)

Quarterly Corporate Performance Management Exception Report

Quarter 1 (April to June 2006)

Cllr Charles Fraser- Macnamara
Cllr Pat Martin
Cllr Anne Millward
Cllr Kenneth Turner

Comment

In the reporting quarter (April to June 2006) the Cabinet Performance Management Sub Group identified five areas for attention:

Caring Matters

BVPI 163 – *number of looked after children adopted during the year*

FIN BEN 002b – *number of successful new claims for Attendance Allowance & Income Support*

Environment Matters

BV 064 – *number of unfit private sector dwellings made fit or demolished*

Learning Matters

Local PI DELL A&I 027 – *percentage of looked after children having a current (up to date) Personal Education Plan (PEP)*

Local PI L&P LDS 129 – *percentage of prosecutions issued for non-school attendance within 14 days of receipt of instructions*

The Group requested further information about activities relating to the progress of these performance indicators, which is detailed as follows:

Caring Matters: BVPI 163

Responsible Manager: Jane Prashar, Principal Services Manager, Children's Services

1. Definition

The number of looked after children adopted during the year as a percentage of the number of children looked after at 31 March who had been looked after for 6 months or more on that day.

2. Current Performance

The target is 6% and performance in quarter 1 was 3.9%. There were 6 adoptions in quarter 1, with a further 11 current applications.

3. Future Performance

There has been no change to the improvement plan presented in the Exception Report for quarter 1 2005/06. Recruitment to the team has been successful since that time, however, and there are plans to recruit a Psychologist to support children with attachment issues. Two workers have been appointed to focus on adoption (Permanent Placement Team).

A bid is also in progress for funding for Treatment Fostering for pre-school children.

The National Adoption Task force is no longer in operation; Dudley is currently working with other local authorities in this area.

Caring Matters: FIN BEN 002b

Responsible Manager: Gayna Phelps, Benefits Shop Manager, Directorate of Finance

1. Definition

Benefits Shop activity: the number of successful new claims for Attendance Allowance & Income Support

2. Current Performance

The target is 1050 for the year. Actual performance in quarter 1 was 122 against a profiled target of 263.

3. Future Performance

Low performance was due to a staff vacancy in the early part of the quarter. The post has since been filled and in addition the Benefit Take-Up Strategy and Action Plan is being formalised. Early information in quarter 2 suggests that the position is recoverable and that performance will be back on track by the end of the second quarter.

Environment Matters: BVPI 064

Responsible Manager: Alan Kirk, Private Sector Housing Principal Officer, DACHS.

1. Definition

Number of non- local authority-owned vacant dwellings returned to occupation or demolished during the financial year as a direct result of action by the local authority.

2. Current Performance

The target is 66 for the year. Actual performance in quarter 1 was 9 against a profiled target of 16.5.

3. Future Performance

The Council adopted a new Empty Homes Strategy in June 2006. The strategy includes a detailed action plan to:

- Reduce the number of empty homes across the borough.
- Obtain clear and accurate information on empty homes in each area and to establish priorities.
- Enhance the process for managing the identification, assessment, prioritisation of empty homes and any enforcement action to be taken.
- Raise awareness of empty homes.
- Promote the availability of help & assistance through an Empty Homes Information Pack.

Actions to be achieved by the end of September 06 include:

- Developing processes and service standards to manage the identification, assessment, prioritisation of empty homes and for enforcement action.
- Developing robust monitoring processes to enable our performance to be accurately monitored.

The private sector team will also be undertaking a number of specific actions during the second quarter of 2006/07 including:

- A further mailout to owners of empty homes.
- Requests to other directorates / RSLs to inform us of the work they are undertaking on bringing empty homes back into use.
- Offering additional incentives to owners of empty homes through making private sector energy efficiency grants available where the occupation is intended for vulnerable households.
- Promoting the empty homes database to prospective purchasers.

In addition, Members requested further information relating to the length of time taken to deal with a reported property during quarter 1:

The Empty Homes Strategy is available on the intranet. See link:

http://insidedudley/housing/infostore/06housingdivisi_/emptyhomesstrat/emptyhomesstrat.pdf

Learning Matters: Local PI DELL A&I 027

Directorate Contact: Ruth Tykiff, Support Services Manager, Children's Services

1. Definition

The percentage of looked-after children having a current (up to date) Personal Education Plan (PEP).

2. Performance

Performance for this indicator is showing an upward trend, but remains below target. The target for 2006/07 has been increased to 100% and performance in quarter 1 was 60.2%.

3. Future Performance

Performance has shown improvement since quarter 2 of 2005/06, and the Improvement Plan continues to be subject to continuous strategic review and monitoring:

- There is now a dedicated social worker working in the Education Support Service (ESS) who is responsible for working with and supporting children's social workers with the PEP process and he, together with the teachers in the ESS, monitor draft PEPs for timeliness, for the issues raised, and for quality
- A monthly report is made to all area and team managers, and to individual social workers, identifying which children do not have a current PEP
- All PEPs are now centrally recorded on the Swift system
- Performance is monitored by the Children's Social Care Divisional Management Team and necessary action taken
- ESS team members offer support to attend PEP meetings for initial PEPs and for PEP reviews where there are issues around underachievement, behaviour or school attendance
- Training is offered to staff both on an individual basis and at a termly joint training event for teachers, social workers, carers, and governors
- Independent Reviewing Officers should be ensuring that all children have a current PEP
- All relevant social workers and teachers have recently received a detailed aide memoire on the completion of PEPs
- All schools now have a designated teacher for looked-after children, and they work in partnership with social workers to ensure each child has a current PEP
- In the light of continued poor performance, the Director of Children's Services and the Cabinet Member will, until performance improves significantly, receive a monthly update on looked-after children without a current PEP, showing reasons. Appropriate management action will then be taken.

In addition, Members requested further information relating to the processes and number of children involved:

- Number of children involved = 315.
- The process for the development of a PEP is that the allocated Social Worker for the child/young person will work with the Education Support Service to develop the plan; a standard proforma is used. It is worthwhile to note that this indicator includes children that may have only just become 'looked after' and for whom a PEP has not yet been fully completed and so gives a potential distorted picture.

Learning Matters: Local PI L&P LDS 129

Responsible Manager: Keith Edwards

1. Definition

The percentage of prosecutions issued for non-school attendance within 14 days of receipt of instructions.

2. Current Performance

This is a new local performance indicator. The target is 90% and performance in quarter 1 was 14%.

3. Future Performance

The target has not been met due to available resources, leave/workloads plus changes of personnel within the section.

Additional notes

In addition to the areas of concern above, clarification was requested on the following issues:

Environment Matters

BV 082ai + BV 082bi – % total tonnage of household arisings recycled and/or composted

While performance is on target, Members questioned the target set for these and other waste indicators.

When comparing Dudley's performance with that of Council's in the same waste group, the Audit Commission found that:

- Dudley remains in the best quartile for the volume of waste collected (BV84)
- Dudley remains in the best quartile for the tonnage of waste used to recover heat, power and other energy sources. (BV82c)
- Current recycling performance should now place us in the best quartile for kerbside recycling (BV91b)
- Current landfill levels should now place us in the best quartile for household waste that is landfilled (BV82d)

BV82's – Household Waste

Initiatives continue to be rolled out across the borough, which will provide access for more people/ households to recycle waste.

- Black box recycling of 3 recyclables (tin cans, glass, paper). (BV82a)
- Recycling coverage was 60% at 31st March 2005, has now reached 89% of borough residents. (BV91b)

- Green wheeled composting bins are being delivered within a 3 year programme to households within the Borough. (BV82b)
- Alternative recycling schemes are being sought to provide recycling opportunities to borough residents living within blocks of flats.
- Civic amenity site allows the splitting of waste into several categories which enables further recycling of waste. (BV82's)
- Dudley is currently ahead of the statutory targets set by DEFRA for recycling and composting household waste. (Combined (BV82ai & BV82bi)
- The incinerator based at Lister Road is in constant use with spare capacity being taken up by neighbouring Councils. (BV82c) –top quartile
- Landfill performance is currently 17% which is within the top quartile(BV82d)

Learning Matters

BV 045 and BV 046 – % half days missed due to total (that is authorised and unauthorised) absences in secondary and primary schools maintained by the LEA

Members requested a breakdown of authorised and unauthorised absences in future reports.

Section 2 of the Quarterly Performance Report

BV 178 – % of the total length of rights of way in the local authority area that are easy to use by the general public

Members requested details of the restrictions to access.

BVPI 178 requires the assessment of public rights of way as to whether they are easy to use. There are various requirements to be met in order for public rights of way to pass the assessment. The main areas which have affected the pass rate for Dudley in recent assessments have been the following:

- Missing Signposts - This is a constant issue due to cases where signs have been newly installed and replaced only to be vandalised or stolen within the time periods of the public right of way being revisited for assessment. Other sign are in need of replacement.
- Missing Waymarks - There are instances where waymarks have never been installed, however the areas surrounding the public rights of way may have changed and the route may not be as easily identifiable as it once was, when it was last assessed. Other waymarks are in disrepair and replacement is required.
- Obstructions - Overgrowth and up growth from vegetation over time can obstruct the public right of way, to the point where it is unidentifiable on the ground. Also tree growth can also affect the public right of way and cause obstruction.

The random nature of the assessment areas obviously effects the year on year results of this performance indicator. Furthermore, the timing of the assessment can also affect the result. Guidance suggests assessments be undertaken in the spring and in winter, therefore weather conditions can also affect the results of the assessment.

BV 224a – % of the non-principal classified road network where maintenance should be considered

Members requested commentary on financial pressures and allocation of available resources.

This is a new indicator for 2005/6; the survey methodology is being developed.

The historic method for assessing these roads was a Course Visual Inspection (CVI). In 2005/6 this method was replaced using machine based assessment SCANNER. This methodology although used abroad and on our motorways is being introduced for all classified roads in England. There have been problems with the survey data. For more information see attached letter from Transport.

The maintenance of this category of road is influenced by the Department of Transport funding through the Local Transport Plan settlement.

In the governments 10 year plan for Transport published in 2000 targets were identified to

- a) Arrest the deterioration of the highway network by 2004 and
- b) Eliminate the backlog of maintenance work by 2010. To achieve these targets the Department for Transport have injected an identified sum circ £1m per annum for local road maintenance. This money has been combined with revenue monies circ £2 m for the maintenance of the non principal road network. At present we have no commitment from the Department of Transport that this additional funding will continue.

August 25 2006

Creating **the future of transport**

To:

**Local Authorities in receipt of SCANNER survey data
from Data Collection Limited**

Direct Tel +44 (0)9344 770265
Fax +44 (0)9344 770356
E-Mail mwright@trl.co.uk

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Use of SCANNER survey results provided by Data Collection Limited (DCL) for BVPI reporting

I am writing to you on behalf of TRL Limited, appointed by the Department for Transport as the Auditor for SCANNER surveys in England

Following an extensive investigation we have identified a potential problem with the measurement and reporting of cracking by the DCL ARAN survey machine. It appears that the machine is identifying and reporting a much higher level of cracking during routine surveys than other accredited survey machines and than the reference method.

The machine successfully passed the acceptance tests to the TTS specification in 2005, and subsequently the acceptance tests for the SCANNER specification in 2005. Survey data has been provided during the re-accreditation tests in 2006 which also appears acceptable. Despite this, there is some difference in the way the machine performs during routine surveys, compared with its performance during acceptance and accreditation tests. DCL is currently investigating the causes of this difference with the manufacturer, the Roadware Group Inc, Canada.

This difference affects two of the parameters used to calculate the SCANNER Road Condition Indicator, the "whole carriageway cracking intensity" and the "wheel track cracking intensity", causing them to be much higher than expected in some (but not all) circumstances. Consequently the SCANNER RCI "red" and "amber" percentage lengths derived from the SCANNER survey data provided by DCL in 2005/06 may be significantly greater than would be expected. This will affect the percentage lengths reported for BV223 and BV224a. BV223 and BV224a are NOT used in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment in 2006.

The Department for Transport has discussed this with the Audit Commission, and they have agreed that the results provided by focal authorities from DCL data will be accepted and published, but they will NOT be used to make comparisons between authorities. They will NOT be used in the calculation of national averages or quartiles. These results will be flagged with a footnote in the national publication to state that they differ from the other figures reported and are not comparable.

TRL's investigations have not found any problems with any of the other SCANNER parameters measured by the DCL ARAN survey machine, and these may be used with confidence by local authorities as part of their maintenance management regime.

TRL

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The Department for Transport is considering the implications of this for use of the BVPI in financial allocations, and for the calculation of BV223 and BV224a in future years

DCL is working with the Auditor to investigate the causes of this discrepancy. The machine has not yet been accredited for surveying to the SCANNER specification in 2006107, and will not be accredited until it is able to provide consistent and reliable results in accordance with the current SCANNER specification.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Wright', written in a cursive style.

Alex Wright

Infrastructure and Environment Division TRL