

Date: 19 June 2002
Venue: Committee Room 2, National Assembly for Wales
Title: Child Care Expertise and Experience in Local Authority Management Teams and Visits by Elected Members("Lost in Care" Recommendations 54, 55, 56, 60,61)

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to supplement information given to the Committee in 2001 about the extent to which five of the Tribunal's recommendations are reflected in local authority arrangements for management of social services for children and their families, and elected members' visits to children's homes.

Summary/Recommendations

2. The Committee is invited to:

- note the information in this report
- note that the Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (SSIW) will continue to address these matters in the course of its development and inspection work with local authorities.

Background

3. At the Health and Social Services Committee on 18 July 2001, the Social Services Inspectorate undertook to summarise information contained in a paper to note. The purpose was to bring together local authority responses in a way that would help identify whether there might be cause for concern that any authorities had a pattern of not taking account of the Tribunal's recommendations.

4. The chart included at appendix 1 provides a summary of the responses received from local authorities. It includes some updated information about the way in which changes associated with modernisation have influenced local authority structures. It demonstrates that while authorities have adopted varying approaches their responses indicate that they are taking account of the recommendations.

MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

5. The Tribunal's report predated changes associated with local government modernisation and its recommendations are drafted in terms of the organisational structures that existed at the time. While all authorities report that arrangements for management of social services for children take account of the Tribunal's recommendations it is no longer the case that they all have social services committees and departments spanning adult and children's services or that they have social services departmental management teams.

Recommendation 54

"There should be at least one full member of a local authority's social services department management team with child care expertise and experience."

6. Authorities provided information about posts designated as "assistant director", "head of service", "assistant chief officer" and divisional director. While authorities described posts that are broadly comparable, there are some significant differences both in the responsibilities associated with the posts and their location within the structure of authorities. Most are wholly or substantially dedicated to children's services, with a few carrying responsibility for other areas of service delivery. Some post holders report directly to an elected member or committee while others report through a director.

7. Nineteen authorities reported that the post holder has child care expertise and experience and we are aware that this has since increased to twenty. A further authority is reviewing its management structure to take account of the recommendation and the other has a head of children's services whose experience and expertise, prior to appointment, was in education and who is supported by a team of managers with expertise and experience in children's services.

Recommendation 55

"The responsibility for policy and service development and for oversight of the delivery of a local authority's children's services should be assigned to one member of the social services department management team of at least assistant director status."

8. Over half the authorities reported that they assign responsibility for policy and service development and for oversight of the delivery of social services to children and families to one manager who is of at least assistant director status.

9. While other authorities reported a variety of arrangements, they all include some division of responsibility for operational and strategic management functions between two posts at assistant director/head of service level.

10. The pattern across authorities suggests that while some share the Tribunal's view that a single manager should be responsible for policy and service development and oversight of delivery of children's services others choose to split strategic and operational responsibilities. Consideration of how organisational structures assist or hinder social services performance is something the Assembly will wish to keep under review in the overall context of evaluating social services performance.

Recommendation 56

"Staffing resources at intermediate management level for a local authority children's service should be sufficient in number and quality to enable positive and close supervision and support to be given to residential establishments and the fostering service."

11. Authorities report that their structures include intermediate management posts, usually designated as service managers or principal officers/principal assistants, and team managers, with responsibility for supervision and support to residential establishments, and/or fostering and adoption services. Several indicated that this level of management has been strengthened since local government reorganisation to increase their capacity to monitor performance, assure the quality of services and improve safeguards for children.

12. Larger authorities are generally able to achieve a greater specialist focus to posts at this management level than their smaller counterparts and in some small authorities the specialist focus is at first line management (team leader/manager) level. Some authorities have particularly lean or flat structures and need to keep under review the extent to which their structures ensure their management capacity has sufficient depth and breadth to enable managers to fulfill their responsibilities.

13. Seven authorities have reported that they are not direct providers of residential establishments for children. Two of the seven reported that a voluntary organisation provides residential services on their behalf while the others appear to spot purchase residential services from external providers when necessary.

VISITS TO CHILDREN'S HOMES

Recommendation 60

"The purpose and scope of visits in children's homes, whether by councilors or by senior and intermediate managers should be clearly defined and made known to all such visitors."

14. Authorities have reported that they clearly define the purpose and scope of visits and make this known to the elected members and managers who undertake such visits. Several referred to training and information leaflets that they provide or are developing to support elected members. Some of the training for members is provided in partnership with the WLGA and Syniad.

15. In May 2002 the Welsh Assembly Government held a conference under the auspices of the Children First on “corporate parenting. The conference was intended for and well attended by elected members and officers of local authorities

Recommendation 61

“The willingness of councilors to visit children’s homes should be a pre-condition of appointment to the committee responsible for the homes and the importance of fulfilling the duty to visit and to report on visits should be explained to them. Elected members should be provided with appropriate guidance including reference to the need to be vigilant in protecting the interests of the child residents as well as to be supportive of the staff.”

16. Changes in political management structures of local authorities associated with modernisation have taken place since the publication of the Tribunal’s report and mean that not all authorities have a committee as referred to in the recommendation.

17. There is no statutory requirement for elected members to visit homes, and while it is possible for elected members to carry out the visits required by regulation most authorities have arrangements in place for officers to carry out and report on these visits.

18. Authorities report that elected members generally continue to consider visiting children’s homes, although not required by regulation, to be part of their contribution to fulfilling their authority’s responsibility as the corporate parent of looked after children, although some authorities reported that not all scheduled visits take place. One authority reported that it has appointed a lay person, a former elected member with experience of visiting children’s homes, to carry out visits when elected members are unable to meet their rota commitments.

19. Elected members involvement in visits usually takes place on a voluntary basis and is not a formal pre-condition to membership of a committee. Reports from some authorities suggest that members may sometimes be apprehensive about the responsibilities involved in such visits, it is important that this is acknowledged and that members have access to appropriate information and support.

20. Authorities reported that they provide briefing for members who undertake visits to children’s homes with the mechanisms varying between authorities,

examples included member seminars, briefing meetings, written guidance and formats for recording the visits.

Compliance

21. There are no issues of regularity or propriety arising from this report.

Financial Implications

22. There are no financial implications from this report.

Action

23. The Committee is asked to:

- note the information in this report
- note that officials will continue to address the issues raised by these recommendations in the course of development and inspection work with authorities.

Jane Hutt
Minister for Health & Social Services

	LOST IN CARE RECOMMENDATIONS 54, 55, 56, 60, 61 SUMMARY OF RESPONSES
ANGLESEY	<p>Recommendation 54: The head of service post fulfils the expectations set out in the recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 55: Delegation of responsibilities to the Head of Service fulfils the expectation of the recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 56: The authority's management structure includes posts at service and team manager level with responsibility for supervising and supporting residential and foster care services.</p> <p>Recommendations 60 and 61: Elected members carry out visits to children's homes. Training and briefing is provided for individuals undertaking such visits.</p>
BLAENAU GWENT	<p>Recommendation 54: The head of service post fulfils the expectations set out in the recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 55: The responsibilities are held between the head of service post and other members of the social services management team.</p> <p>Recommendation 56: The authority has a flat management structure. It has a post at team manger level with responsibility for foster care services. It does not have residential establishments for children.</p> <p>Recommendations 60: Not applicable, the authority does not have any children's homes</p> <p>Recommendation 61: Not applicable, the authority does not have any children's homes.</p>

	LOST IN CARE RECOMMENDATIONS 54, 55, 56, 60, 61 SUMMARY OF RESPONSES
BRIDGEND	<p>Recommendation 54: The assistant director post fulfils the expectations set out in the recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 55: Delegation of responsibility to the assistant director post fulfils the expectation of this recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 56: The authority's management structure includes posts at principal officer and team manager level with responsibility for supervising and supporting foster care and residential services.</p> <p>Recommendations 60 and 61: Elected members carry out visits to children's homes. Training and briefing is provided for individuals undertaking such visits.</p>
CAERPHILLY	<p>Recommendation 54: The assistant director child care post fulfils the expectations of this recommendation</p> <p>Recommendation 55: Delegation of responsibility to the assistant director child care post fulfils the expectation of the recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 56: The authority's management structure includes posts at service manager and team manager level with responsibility for supervising and supporting foster care and residential services.</p> <p>Recommendations 60 and 61: Elected members carry out visits to children's homes. Training and briefing is provided for individuals undertaking such visits.</p>

	LOST IN CARE RECOMMENDATIONS 54, 55, 56, 60, 61 SUMMARY OF RESPONSES
CARDIFF	<p>Recommendation 54: Management arrangements, introduced as part of the modernising agenda, differ from those envisaged by the Tribunal. There is no social services department. The Head of Children's Services is the Designated Director of Social Services and represents the Service in the Portfolio Group. The post holder has a background, as an Assistant Director of Education: Special Education. The children's services management team includes managers with child care expertise and experience.</p> <p>Recommendation 55: The delegation of responsibility to the head of service post fulfils this expectation.</p> <p>Recommendation 56: The authority's management structure includes operational manager and principal officer posts with responsibility for supervising and supporting foster care and residential services.</p> <p>Recommendation 60: Elected members carry out visits to children's homes. Briefing is provided for individuals undertaking such visits.</p>
CARMARTHEN	<p>Recommendation 54: The head of service post fulfils the expectations set out in the recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 55: The delegation of responsibilities to the head of service post fulfils the expectation of the recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 56: The authority's management structure includes principal officer and tem</p>

	<p>manager posts with responsibility for supervising and supporting foster care and residential services.</p> <p>Recommendations 60 and 61: Elected members carry out visits to children's homes. Training and briefing is provided for individuals undertaking such visits.</p>
CEREDIGION	<p>Recommendation 54: An assistant director post fulfils the expectations of this recommendation</p> <p>Recommendation 55: The delegation of responsibilities to the assistant director post fulfils the expectation of this recommendation</p> <p>Recommendation 56: The authority's management structure includes service manager and team manager posts with responsibility for supervising and supporting service delivery. The authority does not have any children's homes.</p> <p>Recommendations 60 and 61: Not applicable, the authority has no children's homes.</p>
CONWY	<p>Recommendation 54: The authority has a new management structure for social services that includes a post that fulfils the expectations of this recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 55: The responsibilities are delegated to the post referred to in response to recommendation 54 and other members of the social services management team.</p> <p>Recommendation 56: The authority has managers with responsibility for supervising and supporting residential and foster care services.</p> <p>Recommendations 60 and 61: Elected members carry out visits to children's homes. Briefing is provided for individuals undertaking such visits.</p>

DENBIGH	<p>Recommendation 54: The authority is reviewing its management structure for social services and this will take account of this recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 55: The authority's review of its management structure for social services will take account of this recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 56: The authority's management structure includes service manager and team manager posts with responsibility supervising and supporting service delivery including foster care services. The authority commissions an independent provider to provide residential accommodation.</p> <p>Recommendation 60 and 61: Elected members carry out visits to the children's home and are issued with explanatory notes, which provide guidance.</p>
FLINTSHIRE	<p>Recommendation 54: Management arrangements, introduced as part of the modernising agenda, differ from those envisaged by the Tribunal. There is no social services department and social services for children are located with education and recreation services. The head of children's services post fulfils the expectations of this recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 55: This is the responsibility of the head of children's services.</p> <p>Recommendation 56: The authority's management structure includes service and team manager posts with responsibility for supervising and supporting service delivery including foster care services. A service managers oversees a service level agreement with an independent agency who manages children's homes on behalf of the authority.</p> <p>Recommendations 60 and 61: Not applicable as the authority is not a direct provider of residential services for children.</p>

GWYNEDD	<p>Recommendation 54: The senior management team includes members with child care experience and expertise.</p> <p>Recommendation 55: The assistant director for children's services is responsible for management of operational services for children and families. The Assistant Director for planning and commissioning is responsible for planning, commissioning and monitoring services for children and families.</p> <p>Recommendation 56: The authority's management structure includes posts at service and team manager level with responsibility for supervising and supporting service delivery including foster care and residential services.</p> <p>Recommendations 60 and 61: Elected members carry out visits to children's homes and an information leaflet is available to them setting out the statutory context and advising on the scope and purpose of the visits and member's responsibilities.</p>
MERTHYR TYDFIL	<p>Recommendation 54: The senior management team includes posts with child care experience and expertise.</p> <p>Recommendation 55; The delegation of responsibilities to the head of children & families post fulfils the expectation of this recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 56: The authority's management structure includes service and team manager posts with responsibility for supervising and supporting service delivery including foster care services. It does not maintain a children's residential establishment.</p> <p>Recommendations 60 and 61: Not applicable, the authority does not maintain residential establishments for children.</p>

	LOST IN CARE RECOMMENDATIONS 54, 55, 56, 60, 61 SUMMARY OF RESPONSES
MONMOUTHSHIRE	<p>Recommendation 54: The head of children's services post fulfils the expectations of this recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 55: The delegation of responsibilities to the head of children's services fulfils the expectation of the recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 56: The authority's management structure includes an operations manager and team leader posts with responsibility for supervising and supporting service delivery including foster care services. The authority does not have residential provision.</p> <p>Recommendations 60 and 61: Not applicable the authority does not have any children's homes</p>
NEATH PORT TALBOT	<p>Recommendation 54: The head of children's services post fulfils the expectations of this recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 55: The delegation of responsibilities to the head of children's services fulfils the expectations of this recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 56: The authority's management structure includes principal officer and team manager posts with responsibility for supervising and supporting service delivery including foster care and residential services.</p> <p>Recommendations 60 and 61: Members carry out visits to children's homes and the recommendations will be taken into account in a review of the authority's structure as part of the modernising agenda.</p>

	LOST IN CARE RECOMMENDATIONS 54, 55, 56, 60, 61 SUMMARY OF RESPONSES
NEWPORT	<p>Recommendation 54: Management arrangements, introduced as part of the modernising agenda, differ from those envisaged by the Tribunal. There is no social services department. The head of children & family services post fulfils the expectations of this recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 55: The delegation of responsibilities to the head of service post fulfils the expectation of this recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 56: The authority has service managers and principal officers with responsibility for supervising and supporting service delivery including residential and foster care services.</p> <p>Recommendations 60 and 61: Elected members carry out visits to children's homes. Briefing and a prescribed format is provided for individuals undertaking such visits.</p>
PEMBROKESHIRE	<p>Recommendation 54: The head of child care services post fulfils the expectations of this recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 55: The delegation of responsibilities to the head of child care services fulfils the expectation of this recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 56: The authority's management structure includes posts with responsibility for supervising and supporting foster care services and is being strengthened to increase its capacity to support residential services for disabled children.</p> <p>Recommendations 60 and 61: The authority is taking account of these recommendations in</p>

	arrangements to support its one residential establishment that provides respite care for disabled children.
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	LOST IN CARE RECOMMENDATIONS 54, 55, 56, 60, 61 SUMMARY OF RESPONSES
POWYS	<p>Recommendation 54: Management arrangements, introduced as part of the modernising agenda, differ from those envisaged by the Tribunal. There is no social services department and social services for children are located with education services. The head of children's services post fulfils the expectations of this recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 55: Delegation of responsibilities to the head of children's services fulfils the expectation of this recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 56: The authority has management posts with responsibility for supervising and supporting service delivery including residential and foster care services.</p> <p>Recommendations 60 and 61: The authority has one children's home that provides respite care for disabled children. Elected members carry out visits to the home and training and briefing is provided for individuals undertaking such visits.</p>
RHONDDA CYNON TAFF	<p>Recommendation 54: Management arrangements, introduced as part of the modernising agenda, differ from those envisaged by the Tribunal. There is no social services department and social services for children are located with education services. The divisional director, children and young people post meets the expectations of this recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 55: The delegation of responsibilities to the divisional director for children and young people fulfils the expectation of this recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 56; The authority's management structure includes principal officer, service and team manager posts with responsibility for supervising and supporting service delivery including</p>

	<p>residential and foster care services.</p> <p>Recommendations 60 and 61: Elected members carry out visits to children's homes. Training and briefing is provided for individuals undertaking such visits.</p>
SWANSEA	<p>Recommendation 54: The assistant director post for child & family services fulfils the expectations of this recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 55: The delegation of responsibilities to the assistant director for child & family services fulfils the expectation of this recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 56: The authority has manager posts responsible for supervising and supporting residential and foster care services.</p> <p>Recommendations 60 and 61: Elected members carry out visits to children's homes. Briefing is provided for individuals undertaking such visits.</p>
TORFAEN	<p>Recommendation 54: The post of assistant director children's services meets the expectations of this recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 55: The delegation of responsibilities to the assistant director children's services fulfils the expectation of this recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 56: The authority's management structure includes group and team manager posts with responsibility for supervising and supporting service delivery including foster care services. The Authority has no residential establishment for children and young people.</p> <p>Recommendations 60 and 61: Not applicable. The authority does not have any residential establishments for children and young people.</p>

	LOST IN CARE RECOMMENDATIONS 54, 55, 56, 60, 61 SUMMARY OF RESPONSES
VALE OF GLAMORGAN	<p>Recommendation 54: The head of children's services post fulfils the expectation of this recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 55: These responsibilities are delegated to the head of children's with some joint planning resources shared with the head of strategy & business support.</p> <p>Recommendation 56: The authority's management structure includes principal officer and team manager posts with responsibility for supervising and supporting residential and foster care services.</p> <p>Recommendations 60 and 61: Elected members carry out visit to children's homes. Training and briefing is provided for individuals who undertake such visits.</p>
WREXHAM	<p>Recommendation 54: The head of child & family service post fulfils the expectations of this recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 55: The head of child & family services post is assisted policy & service development work by a generic resources manager post. Both posts are included in the Social Services Management Team.</p> <p>Recommendation 56 The authority's management structure includes service and team manager posts with responsibility for Supervising and supporting residential and foster care services.</p> <p>Recommendations 60 and 61: Elected members carry out visit to children's homes. Training and briefing is provided for individuals who undertake such visits.</p>