

**POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET BOARD
27TH MARCH 2008**

FINANCE & CORPORATE SERVICES DIRECTORATE

REPORT OF THE SOLICITOR AND CHILDCARE MANAGER

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SECTION C

ITEM 1

BUSINESS PLAN MONITORING - WEST GLAMORGAN JOINT CHILD CARE LEGAL SERVICE

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To report on the progress of the above Business Plan for 2007/2008, for monitoring scrutiny purposes. A full copy is available on the Intranet for Members use.

PROGRESS OF THE BUSINESS PLAN FOR 2007/2008

A. Description of the Business Unit

The Team continues to undertake childcare legal work for the three local authorities of Neath Port Talbot, Swansea and Bridgend. The Team provided emergency legal cover for Cardiff Children's Services Department over the Christmas and New Year period 2007/08 at short notice at the request of Cardiff Council's Head of Children's Services.

B. Context of the Business Unit

The Team remains employed by Neath Port Talbot Local Authority with its main administrative centre at County Hall, Swansea and office provision in all three local authorities. The Child Care Management Board in November 2007 endorsed proposals that the support/admin section of the Team transfer to the City and County of Swansea to achieve efficiencies in costs and service in the longer term. The Service Manager is currently preparing the relevant report for Members consideration.

C. Organisational Structure

In April 2007 funding was approved for an additional Senior Lawyer post to be utilised if required for capacity reasons. That additional Lawyer post was filled on 12 September 2007 with the promotion of an Assistant Lawyer to the Senior role.

Although the Lawyer structure is fully occupied, there are a number of part time post holders which means that the structure has one FTE vacancy.

However the Team's capacity has been adversely affected by:

1. The impact of further maternity leave. Currently two Senior Lawyers and one Trainee Legal Executive are on maternity leave.
2. One Senior Lawyer has been unable to assume her duties since August 2007.
3. There is also one vacancy within the four Trainee Legal Executive posts.
4. The support/admin structure has three vacancies out of eight posts. This has resulted in the use of agency staff to ensure that service delivery is maintained.

The Management Board is currently reviewing the structure of the Child Care Legal Team. A recommendation has been made that the Support Team transfer to the City and County of Swansea. It is clear that the current structure for the legal staff is not adequate to deal with the current volume of work, including advocacy (see D below). However, there are no additional funds available in 2008/09 to provide further support to the Lawyers. One of the options currently being explored by the Management Board is the generation of income to increase the Team through the expansion of the service to other neighbouring authorities, in keeping with the Shared Services Agenda.

D. Financial Information

The budget for 2007/08 is projected to be £30,000 underspent due to the salary savings caused by staffing difficulties as outlined above. However there will be a significant overspend in the Council's fees budget for each authority due to:-

1. The shortage of Senior Lawyers to undertake complex advocacy.

2. The Swansea Care Centre (which hears both Swansea and Neath Port Talbot cases) has since June 07 been chosen to be a pilot for the new Public Law Outline which will be adopted throughout England and Wales in April 2008. The Team has struggled to cope with the additional demands placed upon it by the Public Law Outline.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SERVICE FOR 2007/08

These remain as outlined in the Business Plan. However, the Business Plan for 2008/09 will reflect within the aims and objectives and within a newly drafted action plan and targets the following additional objectives:-

1. To capitalise upon the Team's experience of being part of a pilot area for the PLO by delivering training to other local authorities, private sector etc.
2. To raise the profile of the Team and to generate income by expanding our current training programme as outlined above.
3. To actively explore the potential benefits of joint working with neighbouring authorities.

ACTION PLAN OVERVIEW

Attached to the Business Plan 2007/08 in Appendix 2 is the Service Work Plan (Action Plan) and the Five Year Targets Plan (Appendix 3). Outlined below is a progress report on some of the actions and targets previously identified as significant for comment. However, a new action plan and target plan will be implemented for the Business Plan for 2008/09 that will be more focused and relevant for the service as it currently operates.

A. Action Section

No.	Task	Performance Review
2	Outsourced work - maintaining care proceedings in-house	<p>3 lawyers on maternity leave in 2006/07 and 1 vacant post - impact on capacity of team to handle caseloads.</p> <p>Work has been outsourced since August 2006 - 12 cases in total. All work has now been reclaimed or completed.</p> <p>Further maternity leave in 2007/08 has led to continuing capacity difficulties and a continuing increase in the use of Counsel throughout 2006-2008.</p>
13	Expand Training Programme for client	<p>The Team has provided the normal range of training to both in-house staff and client departments. However, Swansea Care Centre is a pilot for the Public Law Outline and significant amounts of additional training are being provided by key members of the Team to the other in-house staff, client departments and have also delivered training at a national level.</p>

A. Target Section

No.	Target	Performance Review
2 & 3	Retaining work in-house	<p>Work was outsourced in August 2006. All work has now been reclaimed or completed. No further work has been outsourced despite current staffing difficulties.</p>

11	Training for support staff	This target has been further exceeded with a detailed programme of in-house and client training and also training delivered at a national level.
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List of Background Papers

None

Wards Affected

All

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Appendices

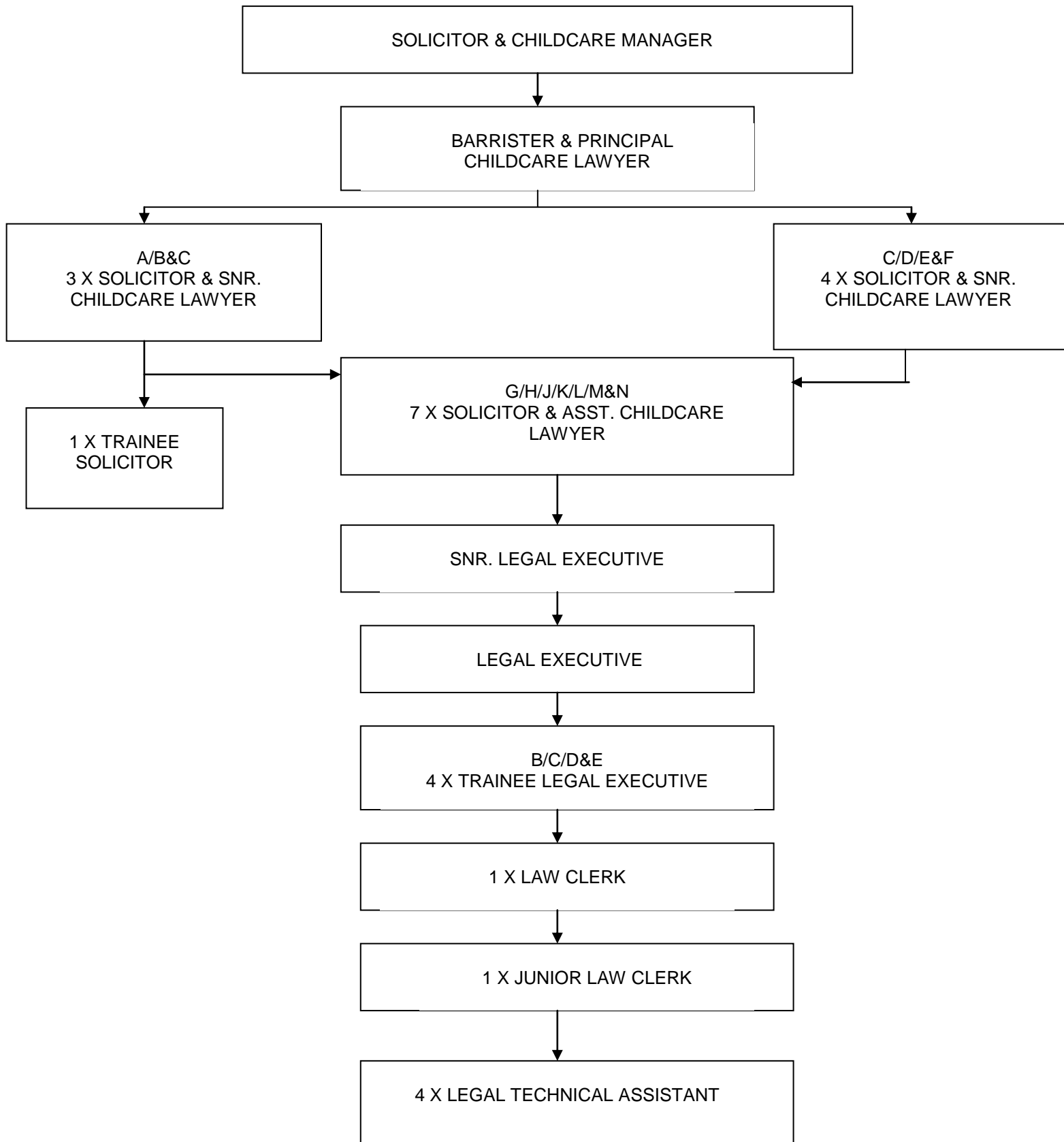
Appendix 1 - Organisational Structure

Appendix 2 - Work Plan

Appendix 3 - Five Year Targets

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

APPENDIX 1



Child Care Legal Team – Work Plan 2002 to 2007 – Revised May 2007

No.	Task	Commenced	Completed	Comments	Legal Objective	Action Plan	Targets	Community Plan Other
1.	Recruit staff in accordance with structure for regional team and for structure to be reviewed by Joint Management Board every 6 months.	Summer 2004	Ongoing	<i>1 vacant assistant lawyer post..</i>	LO1 LO4	AP1	T1 T2 T26 T28 CCT 1	CP
2.	Reclaim outsourced care proceedings and maintain future proceedings in house.	March / April 2003	Initially completed April 2004. Work outsourced again August 2006	Due to staffing difficulties caused by maternity leave 12 cases have been outsourced. 6 remain outsourced			CCT 2 CCT 3	
5	Formalise joint working arrangement / co-location by establishing a rota of lawyers attendance at co-located offices.	<i>14 April 2003</i>	Ongoing	Difficulties in establishing and maintaining rota due to lack of IT connections in all offices.	LO4	AP2 AP4	T1 CCT6	CP

Child Care Legal Team – Work Plan 2002 to 2007 – Revised May 2007

No.	Task	Commenced	Completed	Comments	Legal Objective	Action Plan	Targets	Community Plan Other
7.	Use intranet for dissemination of information to the client.	2 January 2003	Ongoing	<i>Childcare Manual and Legal Manual have been published on intranet (CCS). Also regular updating bulletins for client.</i>	LO4	AP4 AP22	T15 CCT5a CCT5b CCT8	
8.	Introduce 'End of Case' Satisfaction Questionnaire for completion by social workers.	2 January 2003	Ongoing	<i>Purpose to obtain feedback on improvement of Legal Service and satisfaction with counsel if instructed. Questionnaire to be fully implemented with new electronic case management system.</i>	LO4	AP4	T2 T26 CCT9	

Child Care Legal Team – Work Plan 2002 to 2007 – Revised May 2007

No.	Task	Commenced	Completed	Comments	Legal Objective	Action Plan	Targets	Community Plan Other
13.	Expand training programme for client.	Summer 2002	Ongoing	<p>The following training has been provided by the team:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Rolling programme of court skills training.2. Drafting of Care Plans and obtaining emergency orders.3. Protocol training.4. Specific training to Independent Reviewing Officers.5. Training to the Adoption Teams on the new adoption legislation.			T1 CCT 12	CP

Child Care Legal Team – Work Plan 2002 to 2007 – Revised May 2007

No.	Task	Commenced	Completed	Comments	Legal Objective	Action Plan	Targets	Community Plan Other
16.	To be more proactive in the business of FCBC, FCUG.	March / April 2003	Ongoing	Increased attendance since April 2003. Dependant on team's capacity and workloads.			T1 CCT 15	
20.	Establish links with comparable joint Child Care Legal Service, with a view to improving service.	1 April 2003	Ongoing	A meeting and information exchange has taken place with Reading Borough Council who host regional Child Care Team.	LO4			
22.	To implement electronic case management system for care proceedings.	January 2004	Ongoing	System currently being finalised. Has been given priority by support services in Swansea.	LO1 LO4			

Child Care Legal Team – Work Plan 2002 to 2007 – Revised May 2007

No.	Task	Commenced	Completed	Comments	Legal Objective	Action Plan	Targets	Community Plan Other
24.	To develop IT links with offices at Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend	November 2004	Ongoing	IT links needed to operate regional working. IT link established in Port Talbot Civic Centre. Also IMATE handsets to be supplied to lawyers to facilitate remote working and improve efficiency.	LO1 LO4		CCT6	
25.	Reclaim work outsourced by Bridgend CBC.	November 2004	May, 2005	Work outsourced again in August 2006.	→ see task No. 2		CCT2 CCT3	
27.	To draft and implement a staff recruitment and retention policy.	May 2005	Ongoing	To address area of risk identified in Business Plan.	LO1			

Child Care Legal Team – Work Plan 2002 to 2007 – Revised May 2007

No.	Task	Commenced	Completed	Comments	Legal Objective	Action Plan	Targets	Community Plan Other
28.	To review structure of support/admin. team.	November 2006	Ongoing	Review Exercise completed by Joint Management Board in April 2007. To be implemented.	LO1			
29.	To attempt to resolve difficulties experienced with Authority's travel policy.	April 2005	March 2007	Agreement reached with NPT re: the completion and processing of team's travelling expenses claim forms.				

APPENDIX 3

WEST GLAMORGAN JOINT CHILD CARE LEGAL SERVICE – TARGETS

CCT NO.	CCT (CHILD CARE TEAM TARGETS)	2002/03 ACTUAL	2003/04 TARGET	2003/04 ACTUAL	2004/05 TARGET	2004/05 ACTUAL	2005/06 TARGET	2005/06 ACTUAL	2006/07 TARGET	2007/08 TARGET	RESPONSIBILITY	
1	Number of vacant permanent posts (lawyers only) at the end of financial year	2	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	DJS & Joint Management Board	
2	Number of outsourced care proceedings reclaimed.	0	22	20	0	2	0	0	0	0	Child Care Team	
3	Number of cases retained in house (regional team) to include anticipated increase based on average of past 6 years.						This needs to be recalculated on basis of new regional team					Child Care Team
4	Maintain Lexcel accreditation	Accreditation Acquired 28/03/03	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	The Team	
5a	Number of updates of Child Care Legal Manual achieved per year.	Initial Draft completed	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	Principal Lawyer (K.W.) or delegated person	
5b	Number of Consultation exercises held to develop the Manual.	3	5	6	6	3	7	5	7	7	DJS & KW	
6.	Number of days that Port Talbot Office is staffed per week.	2 days	2 ½ days	0	4 days	1	4 days	1	4 days	4 days	The Team	
		IT difficulties still being resolved.										

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CCT NO.	CCT (CHILD CARE TEAM TARGETS)	2002/03 ACTUAL	2003/04 TARGET	2003/04 ACTUAL	2004/05 TARGET	2004/05 ACTUAL	2005/06 TARGET	2005/06 ACTUAL	2006/07 TARGET	2007/08 TARGET	RESPONSIBILITY
7	Number of advice surgeries held per annum.	0	7	9	42	9	63	Duty Solicitor system established	84	84	The Lawyers
8	Number of items added to intranet per annum.	1	3	2	3	0	3	1	3	3	DJS, KW & JJ
Manual and bulletins have been distributed manually											
9	Percentage of questionnaires sent at closure of case.	0%	100%	*	100%	*	100%	*	100%	100%	JJ, HB and Law Clerk
* None - to be introduced with new case management system.											
10	Percentage annual client questionnaires sent from target client list.	0%	100%	100%	100%	Nil	100%	Nil	100%	100%	DS & JJ
Failure to distribute questionnaire in 2004-2006											
11	Number of Training days provided to statement takers/support staff.	0	½ day	1 ½ days	1 day	1½ days	1 day	3 days	1 day	1 day	All Lawyers
12	Number of Social Services Departments Training Days attended by Lawyers.	4	10	9	12	10	14	7	16	18	All Lawyers
13	Number of Lawyers accredited to Law Society Children's Panel.	2	4	0	6	0	8	0	10	12	All Lawyers
Law Society accredited Children Panel Course to be arranged for 2006-2007											

APPENDIX 3

WEST GLAMORGAN JOINT CHILD CARE LEGAL SERVICE – TARGETS

CCT NO.	CCT (CHILD CARE TEAM TARGETS)	2002/03 ACTUAL	2003/04 TARGET	2003/04 ACTUAL	2004/05 TARGET	2004/05 ACTUAL	2005/2006 TARGET	2005/06 ACTUAL	2006/07 TARGET	2007/08 TARGET	RESPONSIBILITY
14	Percentage of new lawyers provided with Induction Pack.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	JJ
15	Percentage of: (a) FCBC (b) FCUG Meetings attended.	0	50%	*	70%	100%	90%	100%	95%	95%	DJS & KW
		* Data not available.					*Data not available				
16	Percentage of proformas for recording of clients instruction completed.	100% from 03/03/03	60%	100%	70%	100%	80%	100%	90%	95%	All Lawyers