



Internal Audit Final Report

Volunteer Drivers Follow Up Audit

Directorate: Children
Date: 29th March 2010

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 A follow up audit review of the Volunteer Drivers service was undertaken as part of the 2008/09 annual follow up work. The original audit in this area was carried out in 2007 and was graded as Adequate Assurance.
- 1.2 During the original audit the functions of the section were documented, key controls were identified and testing undertaken. These have only been updated where there have been changes to the system / section since that time.
- 1.3 The audit findings recorded in this report are based on discussions with staff, observations, and the results of sample testing. As a result, each recommendation previously made has been classified as follows:
- A. Implemented
 - B. Partially Implemented
 - C. Not Implemented
 - D. Superseded

2. Objectives of the Follow-up Audit

- 2.1 The main objectives of the audit were to:
- Verify that the recommended controls have been put in place and that controls are operating effectively.
 - Establish if there have been any significant changes to the system since the last audit.
 - Verify that where recommendations have been superseded due to changes in the system that the new control is operating effectively.

3. Audit Opinion

- 3.1 A total of 10 recommendations were followed up during this review, one of which was classed as Significant. As a result of our discussions with staff and our audit testing, the following was established regarding the current status of the recommendations:

Classification	Number
Implemented	2
Partially Implemented	4
Not Implemented	2
Superseded	2

- 3.2 It is pleasing to note that the majority of recommendations made have been implemented, or partially implemented, where possible. It is acknowledged that the Service has had a change of manager since the previous audit, which has meant that there has been a lack of continuity in ensuring all recommendations are fully implemented.

- 3.3 However, a number of further recommendations have been made as a result of the follow up work, both to ensure all previous recommendations are now fully implemented, or as a result of new issues identified. Two of these have been classed as Significant.
- 3.4 Based on the fact that there remain a number of issues outstanding, and that two further Significant recommendations have been made, the overall opinion remains that the controls in place are operating effectively and the level of assurance gained is **adequate**. The implementation of the recommendations made will further enhance the level of assurance which can be given.
- 3.5 Further details relating to the recommendations made can be seen in section 4 of the report.

Acknowledgement

- 3.6 A number of staff gave us their time and co-operation during the course of this review. We would like to record our thanks to all of the individuals concerned.

4. Findings and Recommendations

Ref	Original Recommendation	Categorisation	Follow Up Findings	Status at time of follow up	New Recommendation	Categorisation
4.1.1	<p>Management should consider introducing guidelines for voluntary drivers including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age limits • Medicals • Recommended maximum number of hours driving • Frequency of vehicle checks (specifically where there are high mileage claims). 	Significant	<p>It was advised that guidelines have not been introduced as recommended.</p> <p>The Volunteer Drivers team did seek advice from the Legal department following the last audit, and it was confirmed that the regulations in place for e.g. taxi drivers would not be applicable to volunteer drivers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is no requirement for an upper age limit and medical issues can be self declared. The oldest volunteer driver is currently 75. - A maximum number of driving hours is not necessary as journeys undertaken are mostly local. - An annual MOT is sufficient. <p>This advice was not confirmed in writing. It is felt that it would be beneficial to obtain formal advice in writing, to protect the Team should any incidents occur.</p>	Partially Implemented	Written confirmation should be sought from the Legal Department of the advice previously given regarding driver guidelines.	Merits Attention
4.1.2	In view of the limited number of staff involved in the service and to ensure continuity of service, documented procedures should be developed for the Volunteer Drivers system. As a minimum these should outline the key legal requirements.	Merits Attention	<p>A procedure document has now been put in place. A copy was reviewed during the follow up audit.</p> <p>It was noted that a few instructions have become out of date since the document was produced, for example the office location and the need to perform data</p>	Implemented	The procedure document for the Volunteer Drivers Scheme should be periodically reviewed and updated where necessary.	Merits Attention

Ref	Original Recommendation	Categorisation	Follow Up Findings	Status at time of follow up	New Recommendation	Categorisation
			back ups.			
4.1.3	Management are advised that there should be off-site storage of one generation of system backup disks.	Merits Attention	Following the change in office location from Nolton Street to Sunnyside, the computers used by the Team are all now connected to the BCBC network and backed up by IT.	Superseded	None	N/A
4.1.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of CRB checks should be retained on all personal files. All drivers should be issued promptly with ID badges and instructions issued to display the ID badges. Refer to previous recommendation relating to guidelines relating to voluntary drivers. 	Merits Attention	<p>A sample of 10 drivers was selected from a Cedar download of all driver payments made in 2008/09.</p> <p>Files for each driver were reviewed to ensure evidence of a CRB check was in place and drivers held up to date ID badges (The date of ID badge expiry is recorded on the annual review form). The following issues were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For one driver there was no evidence of a CRB check having been completed. It was advised that this driver used to be a foster carer and was CRB checked then, however written confirmation of this was not obtained from the foster team or HR. In some cases complete CRB disclosure certificates have been retained on file. This may be a breach of data protection legislation and the department was advised that only the date of the 	Not Implemented	<p>Where a volunteer driver has previously been CRB checked by a different BCBC department, written confirmation should be obtained from HR to confirm that the previous check is portable. If so, written confirmation of the details of that check should be requested. Where the check is not portable the Volunteer Drivers section should ensure a new check is performed prior to any work taking place.</p> <p>Complete CRB disclosure certificates should not be retained on file. Only the slips provided by HR, or the essential details, (name, date of check) need to be retained.</p>	<p>Significant</p> <p>Merits Attention</p>

Ref	Original Recommendation	Categorisation	Follow Up Findings	Status at time of follow up	New Recommendation	Categorisation
			<p>check needs to be held.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For 6 drivers there was no evidence that they held an up to date ID badge. In some cases it was confirmed by the Coordinators that a badge had been issued after the annual review form was completed, but written evidence of this is not kept. <p>The department holds a list of all drivers and the date their CRB check is due for renewal. They are proactive in ensuring all drivers are checked in time.</p> <p>It was discussed that it would be useful to hold a central record of due dates for annual reviews, ID badges and CRB checks. Currently this information is held in a variety of locations and as such key dates may be missed. The expiry dates of ID badges are not recorded anywhere and would only be identified during an annual review, which may be some time after the expiry date.</p> <p>Such a database is already in place but has not been updated for some time and is not currently used.</p>		<p>It is suggested a central record is kept which documents details such as CRB expiry date, ID badge expiry date, next annual review date etc. for each volunteer driver. This record should be regularly reviewed to ensure expiry dates are not missed.</p>	<p>Merits Attention</p>

Ref	Original Recommendation	Categorisation	Follow Up Findings	Status at time of follow up	New Recommendation	Categorisation
4.1.5	<p>Drivers should be requested to make BCBC aware of situations where they feel the need to be accompanied by escorts.</p> <p>Also, Management should ensure that all drivers are made aware of the requirement to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform the BCBC Volunteer Driver Section of situations where they feel the need to be accompanied by escorts. • Provide details of all escorts to the Volunteer Driver Section to enable CRB checks to be carried out. 	Merits Attention	<p>The annual review report, which has to be signed by the driver, states that all persons accompanying drivers must have a current CRB check in place. By signing this form the drivers take responsibility for ensuring escorts are not allowed in the vehicles unless they know they have been checked.</p> <p>It is felt that the wording of this statement could be enhanced, to enable the Volunteer Drivers service to make the decision regarding validity of CRB checks, and not the drivers themselves. In order for a decision to be made regarding the validity of any CRB checks, details of any accompanying drivers should be passed to the Service in advance of each journey, rather than declared once a year during the review process.</p> <p>It was advised that no further action has been taken in respect of asking drivers to make BCBC aware of situations where escorts are needed and the subsequent CRB checking of these escorts. There are currently no known cases of drivers taking escorts with them on journeys- it was advised that the instances picked up in the last audit were specific to drivers who no longer work for the Service (for example one driver who often took his wife on journeys with him). As long as the review form is signed each year this is felt to be sufficient.</p>	Partially Implemented	The wording on the annual review report should be amended, to request that drivers inform the Service of any accompanying drivers in advance of each visit, to enable the Service to make their own assessment of the need for any additional CRB checks.	Merits Attention

Ref	Original Recommendation	Categorisation	Follow Up Findings	Status at time of follow up	New Recommendation	Categorisation
4.1.6	To ensure the continued recruitment and retention of volunteer drivers, there should be a formal periodic review process for the mileage rates.	Merits Attention	Following the last audit the mileage rate was reviewed annually as recommended. The mileage rate has now been brought in line with that of Foster Carers, and is set each year by Finance.	Superseded	None	N/A
4.1.7	Management should consider enhancing the volunteer driver application and information pack to include: a) A section on additional payments and the introduction of a reasonable reimbursement limit to ensure that all drivers are treated equitably. b) A requirement for drivers to make a declaration that they will inform BCBC of any traffic or other offences incurred after commencement.		a) A copy of the current driver application and information pack was obtained, and it was confirmed that a section has been added on the additional reimbursements available to drivers. b) Any offences or incidents occurring within the last 12 months have to be declared during the annual review.	Implemented	None	N/A

Ref	Original Recommendation	Categorisation	Follow Up Findings	Status at time of follow up	New Recommendation	Categorisation
4.1.8	<p>In an attempt to remain within budget, Management should consider using budget profiling and periodically liaising with service managers on the level of available funds. This procedure would aid in the financial planning process within the service areas should travelling arrangements need to be funded by the services rather than the volunteer drivers budget.</p>	<p>Merits Attention</p>	<p>At the time of the last audit (2006) the department was over budget, hence the recommendation made.</p> <p>A Cedar download completed for 2008/09 shows that the department was £30,000 <u>under</u> budget.</p> <p>It was advised that currently no budget profiling is undertaken as previously recommended. The budget is monitored by a Finance Officer but the Volunteer Drivers manager does not liaise with him throughout the year to request updates.</p> <p>It is felt that the reasons for overspending at the time of the last audit (2005/6) were mainly due to the number of out of area placements the Authority was dealing with at that time. There are currently far fewer of these and subsequently costs have dropped.</p> <p>The Manager confirmed she would like to look into the current underspend further, to ensure they are utilising all their budget to provide the maximum possible service. Areas to be considered include improving the financial package offered to drivers, and attempting to recruit additional drivers to meet the demands for the service.</p>	<p>Not Implemented</p>	<p>The Volunteer Drivers manager should regularly review the budget position throughout the year, to ensure the service remains within budget wherever possible.</p>	<p>Significant</p>

Ref	Original Recommendation	Categorisation	Follow Up Findings	Status at time of follow up	New Recommendation	Categorisation
4.1.9	Management should consider inviting estimates from local companies for a sample of the regular routes, for cost comparison.	Merits Attention	It was confirmed that no formal exercise of cost comparison has been undertaken. However, Social Workers are periodically asked to obtain quotes from taxi companies for some routes, but this is done on an ad-hoc basis and the results are not recorded. General feeling was that taxi companies would be more expensive than the Volunteer Drivers service.	Partially Implemented	None	N/A
4.1.10	Management should consider the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exploring the feasibility of short term contracts for school journeys; Liaison with the Education Directorate on the issue of sharing the cost of transporting children to schools in the BCBC area; 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because the number of longer journeys undertaken for out of area placements has dropped significantly since the last audit, some of the points raised in relation to costs are no longer felt to be necessary. Some long school journeys are still made but these are far less frequent, e.g. monthly rather than daily. School journeys are provided wherever possible by the Education Transport Service, but where they do not have the capacity, volunteer drivers are used. It was confirmed that meetings have been held in the past with Education to discuss the possibility of recharging the costs of these journeys to Education, Transport, 	Partially Implemented	Management should further pursue the possibility of recharging the cost of school journeys to Education Transport rather than these being met from the Volunteer Drives budget.	Merits Attention

Ref	Original Recommendation	Categorisation	Follow Up Findings	Status at time of follow up	New Recommendation	Categorisation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparison of the estimated costs to local transport/taxi companies. • Provision of an estimate of the cost when the journeys are requested and liaison with Children's Services on the additional cost impact on out of area placements. 		<p>but this was never followed up.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As discussed in Section 4.1.9. • Where longer journeys are requested an up-front cost can be provided to Social Workers if they require, but it was discussed that the service has to be provided regardless of cost. The issue of driver costs would not influence the consideration of a placement. 			

5. Management Action Plan

Rec. No.	Recommendation	Categorisation	Para. No.	Agreed	Management Comments	Officer Responsible	Date to be implemented
1.	Written confirmation should be sought from the Legal Department of the advice previously given regarding driver guidelines.	Merits Attention	4.1.1	yes	Email to be sent to legal services requesting written response to proposals for guidelines	Team Manager Family Support Services	10.06.10 (all targets have been revised.. The long term absence of a key member of staff has caused a significant delay in schedules
2.	The procedure document for the Volunteer Drivers Scheme should be periodically reviewed and updated where necessary.	Merits Attention	4.1.2	yes	Current procedure document to be reviewed and updated by team manager	Team Manager Family Support Services	July 2010 and annually
3.	Where a volunteer driver has previously been CRB checked by a different BCBC department, written confirmation should be obtained from HR to confirm that the previous check is portable. If so, written confirmation of the details of that check should be requested. Where the check is not portable the Volunteer Drivers section should ensure a new check is performed prior to any work taking place.	Significant	4.1.4	yes	Request to HR that this recommendation be actioned for all volunteers. This arrangement is in place for foster carers so should not be problematic.	Team Manager Family Support Services and HR	30.06.10
4.	Complete CRB disclosure certificates should not be retained on file. Only the slips provided by HR, or the essential details, (name, date of check) need to be retained.	Merits Attention	4.1.4	yes	In place from January 2010	Team Manager Family Support Services	completed
5.	It is suggested a central record is kept which documents details such as CRB expiry date, ID	Merits Attention	4.1.4	yes	Database discussed and being designed	Team Manager	July 2010

Rec. No.	Recommendation	Categorisation	Para. No.	Agreed	Management Comments	Officer Responsible	Date to be implemented
	badge expiry date, next annual review date etc. for each volunteer driver. This record should be regularly reviewed to ensure expiry dates are not missed.					Family Support Services	
6.	The wording on the annual review report should be amended, to request that drivers inform the Service of any accompanying drivers in advance of each visit, to enable the Service to make their own assessment of the need for any additional CRB checks.	Merits Attention	4.1.5	yes	This will be included in the review of procedure document	Team Manager Family Support Services	July 2010 and then annually
7.	The Volunteer Drivers manager should regularly review the budget position throughout the year, to ensure the service remains within budget wherever possible.	Significant	4.1.8		This will be reviewed on a quarterly basis from April 2010	Team Manager Family Support Services	August 2010
8.	Management should further pursue the possibility of recharging the cost of school journeys to Education Transport rather than these being met from the Volunteer Drives budget.	Merits Attention	4.1.10		Proposal to be taken to families & nurturing strategic group for consideration	Team Manager Family Support Services	July 2010