

CCRAG News

SPRING 2008

The triannual newsletter from the
**Children's Cross Regional
Arrangements Group**

Welcome to the first Newsletter of the Children's Cross Regional Arrangements Group - CCRAG

The Children's Cross-Regional Arrangements Group – (CCRAG)

CCRAG consists of 48 Local Authorities from the East, East Midlands, South East and South West Regions. The LAs within CCRAG work together to operate the Cross-Regional Procedures for

Monitoring the Cost and Quality of Out of Authority Provision

and

Consultation over Exceptional Fee Increases in Independent and Non- Maintained Special Schools (INMSS) and Children's Residential Homes.

The cross-regional procedures involve the allocation of each of the INMSS and Children's Residential Homes used by 2 or more of the 48 LAs across the participating regions, to a link LA. Each link LA undertakes monitoring and exceptional fee increase consultation tasks with its allocated Providers on behalf of the other LAs. The procedures are supported by written guidance, protocols and standard letters/forms to promote their quality and consistency in application.

Sharing of the monitoring and exceptional fee increase information is facilitated through a web based **cross-regional database**.

Appointments have been made to the Hertfordshire Regional Team, funded through LA subscriptions, to manage the database and provide administrative support for these joint working arrangements

CCRAG Newsletter

Over the last two years a great deal of work has been undertaken in order to develop and refine the **cross regional procedures**. This work is now coming to fruition and in order to keep all our key stakeholders informed and up to date it is intended that a **CCRAG Newsletter** is issued three times a year. Individual regions or LAs are also welcome to send in any articles or information that they feel is relevant to share.

Published 3 times a year in January, May & September

Deadline for submitting articles to be included in next newsletter 30th April

By email to: Danielle.young@hertsc.gov.uk

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2008-2009 Cross-Regional Procedures for Exceptional Fee Increases in Independent and Non-Maintained Special Schools And Children's Residential Homes

A revision of the Cross-Regional Exceptional Fee Increase Procedures has been undertaken following a consultation exercise and a cross-regional meeting in July 2007 involving LA and Provider representatives.

The 2008-09 Cross-Regional Exceptional Fee Increase Procedures document along with the revised Link LA allocations has been circulated to LAs and Providers. You may find copies of this document on the following web site link: <http://www.easttogether.org.uk/pages/viewpage.asp?uniqid=168>

In order to support the procedures further, in the next edition, we will publish a **table to show the Fees Consultation reports that are available and those pending** for each LA

Tasks Due or Pending

By December 07

- Link LAs should notify the Hertfordshire Regional Team of fee increases for their allocated Providers indicating whether the increases are exceptional
- LAs that are not the Link LA for providers they place with should have sent out letter 6.6

By end of February 08

- Notification by Provider of the actual fee increase to all commissioning LAs.

From Dec 07 until March 08

- Consultation tasks should be underway with Providers with exceptional fee uplifts (Notify the Herts Regional Team that the consultation process has begun)
- Link LAs to submit the outcome of any exceptional fee increase consultation on the Consultation Report Form (6.8) to the Herts Regional Team. For any non-exceptional fee uplifts the Link LAs should submit, the first 4 sections of the Consultation Report Form (6.8)

Training in the Cross-Regional Exceptional Fee Increase Procedures

Bob Denman (Developing Partnerships Project (SCRIP/SERSEN)) organised a small task group comprising colleagues from education, social care, finance and procurement to develop a training workshop in each of the regions involved in operating the Exceptional Fee Increase Procedures.

The first of these workshops, for the South East Region, took place on Monday 7th January in Bracknell Forest. The workshop was a whole day event that provided delegates with:

- a full understanding of the procedures and the Link LA tasks/responsibilities;
- information concerning the benefits and value for money of the procedures;
- the opportunity to share practices and build consistency in the operation of the procedures;
- the confidence to undertake the procedures and ways to obtain support;
- guidance on effective practice in consultation with Providers;
- details of how the current overall performance of the regions involved can be improved.

The delegates found the workshop and the materials provided to be very helpful. They provided the organisers with some very useful feedback which will be taken on board for the next regional workshops.

Future workshop dates

The South West Region will run an event on the 17th January in Bath. Contact John Lees for further Information J.Lees@dorsetcc.gov.uk

The East Region will run an event on the 1st February in Cambridge. Contact Tracy Bowers or Danielle Young for further information. (See front page for contact details)

The East Midlands Region to be confirmed. Contact pat.graham@goem.gsi.gov.uk

Form B – Local Authority Annual Monitoring of Providers Contractual Compliance Guidance (October 2007 to September 2008)

After many months of hard work the new Form B was launched for use with this year's LA Link allocations. We have had a number of requests to make some changes to the Form B procedures since the launch. These changes have been made and the final version of the Form B procedures (Protocol, Letter and Form) will be issued in January and reviewed in the summer. Please ensure that you discard the October edition and use only the January edition.

It may also be found at <http://www.easttogether.org.uk/pages/viewpage.asp?uniqid=168>

The Form B is a longer document than the original. Therefore it is strongly recommended that both Link LA officers and Providers follow the protocol in the guidance document in order to reduce the length of the visit and ensure the visit is focused and useful for all involved.

It is intended that after this first year with the new Form that, where there is evidence of meeting contractual requirements during the initial visit, future visits will provide the opportunity to refresh and update information. Please see the January Form B Procedures protocol section for further information

The new completed Form B reports cannot be fully represented on our existing database, however copies of the full reports will be available upon request from CSF.Commissioning@hertscc.gov.uk. All new Form B's will be uploaded onto the matching engine, and placed in the corresponding provider record when it is up and running.

Form C – Local Authority Monitoring of Providers – Quality Assurance

After many months of work **Form C has been finalised.** Form C is not currently part of the Link LA system. It may be used by any LA that either places CYP with the Provider or is considering doing so. The completed Form C will be submitted to the cross-regional database. It is anticipated that the LA intending to make a visit will contact the Provider and refer to the database to prevent duplication. Copies of the Form C will be sent to LAs and providers after the issue of this newsletter.

Form C is a tool for LAs to use to:

- record the outcomes of a LA quality assurance monitoring visit;
- fulfil the LA requirement to evidence that the services commissioned are of a suitable quality to enable the CYP concerned to achieve required outcomes;
- make a considerable contribution towards matching needs with the provision and assessing its cost effectiveness;
- inform a placement decision by gathering more in depth information than obtained in the completion of Form B;
- Quality assure the welfare and progress of any CYP placed by a LA, for example in advance of an annual review or placement review or where issues have been raised about a placement.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What if our LA no longer have placements with a Provider we are the Link LA for?

Please contact other placing LAs to arrange the transfer or swap of the link allocation and inform the Herts Regional Team of any changes to link allocations. Any problems contact your regional representative

2. What happens if the Provider will not return Form B?

It is recommended that the LA writes to the Provider advising that their Form B will be placed on the database without their comment unless they respond within 5 working days. If there is still no response the LA may submit the Form B to the database. (See Form B Procedures Protocol section)

3. What happens if the Link LA does not contact us to arrange a visit?

Please contact the Link LA to make an appointment. If this is not possible contact the Herts Regional Team .

Form B Training

Due to the number of LAs joining the procedures and new staff taking on regional tasks it was agreed at the CCRAg steering group to organise Form B training within our regions

Olga Sullivan and Iain Campbell from Buckinghamshire visited the East Midlands region to deliver training and guidance on the completion of Form B. Their visit was very well received and helpful.

The East Region also conducted Form B training and discussions in December. Colleagues were able to clarify a number of the Form B procedures.

Form B completions

In order to support the procedures further, in the next edition, we will publish the **intended Form B visit dates** and a table to show the **completed Form B's** and **those pending** for each LA.

FORM B Tasks Due

- LAs should have contacted their Link Allocation Providers to make appointments for Form B visits.
- LAs should inform Danielle at csf.commissioning@hertscc.gov.uk of the intended date of visit.
- Any completed Form Bs to be sent to Danielle at csf.commissioning@hertscc.gov.uk

Form B Financial Benefits

In order to assess the financial benefits of taking part in these monitoring procedures we recommend you follow the formula below.

Number of Residential Homes & Special Schools used by LA = **X**

Salary costs (of monitoring officer) = £x p.a. ÷ 260 working days p.a. = £x per day

Travel cost = Assumed 160 mile return journey per visit = 160x 40p per mile = £64 per visit

Cost per visit:(Salary +Travel)

Estimated cost without cross regional procedures

X days x (Salary + Travel)per day = £A

Estimated Cost with cross regional procedures

(number of Link & Sole Allocations x (Salary +Travel) per day = **£B**

Estimated saving = **£(A-B)**

National Schools Contract

Following consultation, the revised National Schools Contract for the placement of children in I&NMSS is now available. All LAs across the 4 regions are signed up to using this contract. The full list of LA usage, copies of the revised contract and further guidance is available from the following link.

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/planningandcommissioning/nationalcontracts/>

or

<http://www.nassschools.org.uk/pages/nationalcontract.htm>

Guidance from the Every Child Matters web site on using the revised National Schools Contract is included below

"The DCSF and National Association of Independent Schools and Non- Maintained Special Schools (NASS) are expecting that most schools and authorities will use the contract for new placements starting at the beginning of the 2007-08 academic year.

They are not expecting all existing placements to immediately move from the old contract to the new contract. They suggest a transition period leading up until September 2008 whereby schools review and switch contracts at the child's annual review. There are no barriers to schools or authorities switching contracts from the start of June 2007."

Claire Dorer, the Chief Executive of NASS, will be setting up a working group in early 2008 to take forward a piece of work to develop an outcomes schedule for the National Schools Contract. Further details will be circulated when they are available.

National Residential Contract

Following consultation and an extensive period of collaborative working between Providers and LA representatives, the **National Framework Contract for the Placement of Children in Voluntary & Independent Residential Children's Homes** was launched at the National Centre for Excellence in Residential Child Care's annual conference in Birmingham on 7th November 2007.

The National Framework Contract is the second in a suite of national contracts which are being developed in partnership and with the support of DCSF.

Full details of the contract can be found on the ECM website including a mailbox for queries and Q+As

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/planningandcommissioning/nationalcontracts/>

The Children's Services National Contracts Steering Group will be meeting regularly over the next 12 months prior to the first review. This group is committed to monitoring usage of the contract and overseeing the production of a young person-friendly version.

Many of our LAs contributed to the development of this contract. In particular Darren Newman from Hertfordshire who chaired the Terms and Conditions group and Sika Smith from Northamptonshire who chaired the Specification working group. Sika was also funded by the DCSF to finalise the full contract document and associated guidance. John Lees from the South West Centre of Excellence wrote the pricing schedule and consistently supported the working groups. Iain Campbell from Buckinghamshire and Trevor Williams from Kent represented the South East Region in both the Terms and Conditions and Specifications working groups. Tracy Bowers from Hertfordshire co-ordinated the working groups. Many thanks to those who have contributed to this process and to those responded to the consultation.

National Contract For Independent Fostering Agencies

DCSF have just circulated plans to develop a 3rd national contract for use by IFAs. Work is to begin on this early in the New Year with the aim that it will be ready to launch next Autumn.

DCSF Regional Pilot Bids Update

Cross-Regional Matching Engine

CCRAG has been awarded funding by the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to develop the current cross-regional database to become a **Placements Matching Engine**, as part of the **Regional Commissioning Pilot**. This pilot is one of a number of initiatives identified in Care Matters: Time for Change. The Placements Matching Engine will support LAs by ensuring that children and young people (CYP) are offered a wider choice of safe and suitable placements, which offer value for money and are capable of achieving their specified outcomes.

In order to meet the challenges of this development, inform decision making and consult relevant stakeholders we have formed a database consultation group and a database steering group. The database consultation group is the larger group, comprising Provider representatives and social care, education and health commissioners and placement officers from each of the 4 participating regions. These representatives are the points of contact for their regions or organisations. They are responsible for disseminating the developments of the database to colleagues within their regions and organisations and feeding back their colleagues' requirements or requested information. Please see table.

The database steering group consists of the Herts CC Commissioning Officer (Tracy Bowers), the Programme Manager for the South West Centre of Excellence (John Lees), the Provider Project Manager and Project Developer, and an Essex County Council representative (the host LA for the current cross-regional database). This group is responsible for making final decisions with regard to the development of the matching engine having been informed by both the IT provider and the database consultation group.

The Consultation Group Members

Representing	Contact Name
ICHA	Alison Trainor
NASS	Claire Dorer & Francine Griffith
NCERCC	Jonathan Stanley
NCH	Robyn Kemp
NCVCO	Pat Walton
Health	Linda Parker & Tracey Cogan
East Region	Anthony Cripps (Norfolk), Brenda Riches (Essex), Charles Clarke (Herts), Christine Dixon (Herts) & Tara Geere (Herts)
East Midlands Region	Lynne Childs (Northamptonshire) & Paul Farrell
South East Region	Bob Denman, David Finch (Kent), David Griffiths (Southampton), Hugh Clench, Marlene Morrissey (Kent), Olga Sullivan (Bucks)
South West Region	John Lees (Programme Manager SW Centre of Excellence)
Yorkshire & Humberside	Cathy Stephens / Amanda Ward
DCSF	Claire Lazarus

The consultation group met in May when the aims of the new matching engine were agreed. The consultation group have since contributed, through a telephone conference and via email, to the development of the Form A (Provider Information form) and to the Requirements specification of the matching engine. Further work has been undertaken by the database steering group with the provider and also with other regions beyond CCRAG to ensure compatibility across the developing regional matching Engines.

Following negotiations within the steering group over the way forward, the IT provider has completed their requirements analysis of the specification and has submitted a Statement of Work document to the Steering Group. The Statement of Work document has been agreed and the anticipated timeline for the development of the matching engine, if all goes to plan, is shown in the table below.

Date	Description of milestone
02/01/2008	Essex CC sign off this Statement of Work
18/04/2008	Development and IT provider testing of Software complete
21/04/2008	Present changes and modifications for Essex CC and CCRAG to commence User Acceptance Testing (UAT)
21/05/2008	Completion of Essex CC / CCRAG UAT and formal Acceptance of the modifications
28/05/2008	Deploy changes and modifications into operational environment