



HERTFORDSHIRE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

THE CHILDREN'S FUND IN HERTFORDSHIRE

Introduction

The Children's Fund was launched in November 2000 and is being rolled out nationally in three waves. Hertfordshire is participating in the third wave of funding. The overall objective of the Fund is to help children overcome poverty and to ensure that vulnerable children get the best start in life. The aim is to create a web of services and support by providing additional resources over and above those provided through existing, mainstream, statutory, specific programmes and through earmarked funding streams. Some of this preventative activity already exists and some will need to be developed.

Information about the Children's Fund is available on the websites: www.cypu.gov.uk and www.go-east.gov.uk and from the Children and Young People's Unit, Caxton House, ^12 Tothill Street, London SW1H 9NA.

Scope and objectives

The Children's Fund involves preventative services for children aged 5-13, although there is some flexibility within this to address key transition points in children's development. This bridges the gap between Sure Start for pre-school children and Connexions for the over 13s.

The objectives are to ensure that:

1. there is an agreed programme of effective interventions that pick up on early signs of difficulty and that
2. children and young people who have experienced early signs of difficulties receive appropriate services and in order to obtain maximum life chance benefits

The sub objectives are to:

- Promote attendance in schools
- Achieve overall improved educational performance
- Ensure that fewer young people commit crime or are victims of crime
- Reduce child health inequalities
- Ensure accessibility

The Hertfordshire Children and Young People's Partnership

In line with their community leadership role, the government has asked local authorities to facilitate the development of effective cross-agency and cross sectional partnership working on the Children's Fund. The Hertfordshire Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership is developing and managing the Children's Fund in Hertfordshire.

The Partnership involves voluntary organisations, community and faith groups working in partnership with local statutory agencies and with children, young people and their families to plan and deliver high quality preventative services that meet the needs of their communities. All sectors are equal partners. The Partnership is being expanded to include all appropriate stakeholders. The Partnership is considering the priorities for different age ranges, for discussion at the next meeting on 1 July. Children and young people will be consulted through Viewpoint (a computer based consultation) and the Children and Young People Reference Group. Information will be identified from each member organisation to inform discussion of the priorities.

Other key partnerships to make an input to Children's Fund planning include Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships at District and County level and local strategic partnerships.

The HCYPSP has set up a Children Fund Sub Group to advise on and develop the detailed work needed to develop the Children's Fund proposals by 31 December 2002, reporting to the Partnership. Membership of the Sub Group currently includes two representatives each from primary care trusts, district councils, voluntary sector, the Health Authority and the County Council's Children Schools and Families Service. The Sub Group is recruiting a Children Fund Programme Manager.

Funding

Hertfordshire has been invited to develop proposals to access the grant from April 2003. Development grant of up to £40,000 has been made available from April 2002 to help the Partnership work up proposals. Up to £2m will be available to the Hertfordshire Children and Young People's Partnership in 2003/4, although the exact amount depends upon the proposals. Third wave funding is agreed for one year in the first instance and confirmation of funding beyond this period will be given in the light of the next Government spending round. However, partnerships are encouraged to develop proposals for preventative services for a 4 to 5 year period, to allow real progress to be made.

Development of the Hertfordshire Children's Fund Plan in 2002

Children's Fund Programme Manager

The Government's Children and Young People's Unit, Eastern Region, has agreed £40,000 development grant and initial funding for a Children Fund Programme Manager, taken from the first year's allocation. The Partnership

has agreed that the Children, Schools and Families Service will be the employer in the first instance and accountable body for the Fund. The Children's Fund Programme Manager will be located at County Hall, Hertford in the first instance. At the end of the development phase the partnership will be asked to consider where the post would best be located. The purpose of the job is to manage the development, implementation and review of the Children Fund programme in Hertfordshire, working across all sectors, meeting targets to ensure £2m funding in 2003/4.

Development work

On behalf of the Partnership, the Sub Group successfully submitted a bid for development work in the following areas:

- Consultation with children and young people at risk of social exclusion and their families
- Identification of local risk factors and analysis of audit of needs, building on existing work undertaken for other plans, to include funding short-term consultants/seconded colleagues
- Enabling the voluntary and community sector to participate fully in developing the bid.

The aim is that by the time the Partnership begins drafting the plan, in the autumn:

- The key stakeholders will have been identified
- Risk factors will have been mapped, including an audit of existing investment in preventative work for 5-13 year olds and their parents, building on current mapping work undertaken for other plans
- The views of children and young people will have been considered along with the views of their families/carers and others who live in, or are part of, the communities identified
- The gaps in support will have been outlined, particularly in neighbourhoods where there is a high proportion of children at risk of social exclusion and where, as a result, the partnership may want to target Children's Fund activity.

Implementation of the Children Fund

Hertfordshire's Children's Fund Plan will be assessed in January and February 2003 by the Children and Young People's Unit. When it has been agreed, the Partnership will invite project proposals which meet the Children's Fund Criteria and fill an identified gap in preventative services for children aged 5-13 and their families.

Children Fund Local Network Fund

The local network fund, targeted at volunteer lead activities, is being managed by the Hertfordshire Community Foundation, with which the Partnership is liaising. Contact: Tony Gilbert, Director, Sylvia Adams House, 24 The Common, Hatfield, Herts AL10 ONB.

The East of England Regional Children and Young People Unit

The CYPU Eastern Region holds regular networking meetings for Children Fund Programme Managers in all three waves. The aims are to network, offer support, share practice and problem solving and information. Thematic issues being looked at include involvement of children and young people, community cohesion, street crime and identification and referral mechanisms. Contact: tanthony.go-east@go-regions.gsi.gov.uk

Work undertaken so far in Hertfordshire

Many organisations are already carrying out preventative work. For example: The objectives of the Children Fund closely match Hertfordshire County Council's key priorities set out in the 2002/03 Children, Schools and Families Plan to promote prevention and early intervention for children from 0 –21 years. The Children Schools and Families Preventative Strategy is being rolled out in partnership in 27 localities in the County, with the aim of preventing children from failing at school or living in unsupportive environments. The Children Fund Programme Manager will work closely with the CSF Strategic Partnerships Manager to harness the synergy between the Preventative Strategy and the Children Fund Programme. Health Improvement Plans and District and Borough Council Community Plans, community safety plans and sport and leisure strategies include a range of policies and services to promote the health and wellbeing of vulnerable children and young people. The voluntary and community sector and faith organisations provide many preventative services and opportunities.

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