

# HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**CABINET**  
**FRIDAY 22 MARCH 2002 AT 2.00 P.M.**

Agenda Item No.

**4**

## **HOME-START SCHEMES IN HERTFORDSHIRE - suggested developments**

### Report of the Director of Children, Schools and Families

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#### **1. Purpose of the report**

- 1.1 To provide sufficient information about Home-Start in Hertfordshire to enable Cabinet to decide whether or not to support the suggested development plan.
- 1.2 To outline the development plan and its financial implications as presented to Resources Panel on 20 March 2002.

#### **2. Summary**

- 2.1 Home-Start is a voluntary organisation whose volunteers provide regular help & support to families under stress with children under five in their own homes.
- 2.2 The report suggests a four year development plan in partnership with Home-Start. The principles of the plan are:
  - 2.2.1 to enable Children, Schools and Families(CSF) funding to be distributed according to need, without destabilising existing schemes.
  - 2.2.2 to ensure schemes are helped to gain increased external funding.
  - 2.2.3 to ensure the service is extended across the whole county.
  - 2.2.4 to demonstrate the financial savings Home-Start makes for CSF.
  - 2.2.5 to employ the improved working relationship with Home-Start to advance the development plan.
  - 2.2.6 to provide a four year contract for Home-Start.

#### **3. Conclusions**

- 3.1 Cabinet is asked to support the suggested development plan in partnership with Home-Start.

## 4. Background

### 4.1 An Overview of Home-Start

- 4.1.1 Each Home-Start scheme is linked to Home-Start UK. All Home-Start schemes are registered charities, which have Home-Start Constitution and Standards and Methods of Practice to provide a common structure. Each Home-Start is managed by a committee of local representatives from relevant statutory agencies, voluntary organisations, individuals and usually 2 or 3 Home-Start volunteers. The Home-Start approach depends on independence from the statutory sector whilst working in close partnership for the benefit of the family.
- 4.1.2 Home-Start will accept referrals from families and professionals alike, as long as the families concerned are agreeable to Home-Start becoming involved.
- 4.1.3 Home Visiting by volunteers is the cornerstone of the Home-Start service. This relies more on a realistic, flexible and caring approach than on a clearly defined method of working. Visits are usually once or twice a week. Visiting may include accompanying a family on outings or appointments.
- 4.1.4 Home-Start schemes have a paid organiser(s). Schemes rely upon their volunteers, all of whom are parents themselves.
- 4.1.5 Volunteers are matched with 1 – 3 families, for as long as necessary.

### 4.2 Current Funding for Home-Start & Distribution of Schemes across the County

- 4.2.1 There is no rational basis, at present, for the amount of funding CSF provides Home-Start schemes in Hertfordshire. For historical reasons schemes have not been funded equitably, on the basis of needs in our quadrants. Although there has been a Home-Start scheme in Borehamwood and Potters Bar for 18 months, CSF provides no financial support to this scheme in the current financial year.
- 4.2.2 The provision of schemes across the county is uneven. Neither Broxbourne nor Welwyn & Hatfield have a scheme. The lowest level of CSF funding is provided to East Quadrant, which has only one scheme. North Herts District alone has two schemes.
- 4.2.3 Current Funding for Home-Start is as follows:

Home-Starts	North Herts	Royston	Stevenage	St Albans	Dacorum	East Herts	Boreham wood	Watford & 3 Rivers	Total
CSF Grant 2001/2002	£ 54,709	£ 24,799	£ 37,853	£ 15,423	£ 55,566	£ 33,575	£ nil	£ 57,104	£ 279,029

2001/02 figs.

## **5. The Case For Supporting Home-Start**

- 5.1 Home-Start is a UK-wide charitable organisation of national standing.
- 5.2 The schemes provide a valuable preventative service which is entirely consistent with and contributes to the CSF Preventative Strategy.
- 5.3 The schemes in Hertfordshire are well managed, deliver good outcomes for children and save money for CSF, well in excess of our funding to schemes.
  - 5.3.1 The formation of CSF is, in part, posited on the belief that preventative services save money. Providing more support at lower levels gives better outcomes for children and families because these children and families tend not to need higher level services. Better outcomes for children go hand in hand with financial savings. CSF funding to Home-Start is more than repaid in financial savings in reduced numbers of looked after children and the costs of CSF staff.
  - 5.3.2 Home-Start saves CSF expenditure on Children in Care.  
The average cost of keeping one of Hertfordshire's 850 children in foster care and residential care for a year is £28,543 (2001/02 figs).  
Home-Start schemes across the county work with about 1,000 children under five. If Home-Start has prevented 10 children (only one in a hundred of those they work with) coming into care, this alone would save more than the total CSF grant to Home-Start.
  - 5.3.3 Home-Start saves CSF expenditure on the costs of CSF Staff.  
The work Home-Start volunteers do can reasonably be compared with the work of our own Professional Assistants.  
Hertfordshire Home-Start has approximately 280 active volunteers. Each volunteer is in contact with families for an average two hours per week. Allowing an additional hour for travel etc, the contribution to family support which Home-Start volunteers make is 43,680 hours per year, equivalent to 22.7 Professional Assistants whose cost to CSF is £433,000 per year.  
Therefore, Home-Start saves CSF £433,000 a year in staff costs. This is £150,000 more than the total CSF grant to Home-Start in Hertfordshire.

## **6. The Suggested Four Year Development Plan**

- 6.1 A long-term strategy with Home-Start is needed in order to achieve the objectives of the suggested development plan because:-
  - 6.1.1 To bring about funding according to need, without destabilising schemes, will take some years.
  - 6.1.2 It will take some time to gain funding from other agencies. For example, the Primary Care Trusts' (PCT) priorities for children are not yet published. So there is reason for concern that delay in PCTs resolving these priorities might delay their financial support to Home-Start schemes.

6.1.3 It takes some years to establish a new Home-Start scheme from scratch.

6.2 The Principles for the Development Plan are:

6.2.1 To fund Home-Start according to need.

This involves moving progressively, over four years, to supporting Home-Start schemes in accordance with quadrant needs. At the same time we shall be seeking to ensure that the changes to CSF funding are not destabilising for schemes. This will involve reducing CSF funding to schemes which receive more than indicated by the needs formula, from year 2 of the plan (2003/04). However, the plan is that these reductions should at least be compensated for by the introduction of additional external funding. If the increase in the contribution from external funding is less (or slower) than anticipated, the timing of the development plan will be reviewed to avoid damaging existing schemes.

6.2.2 To secure additional external funding.

A key element of the plan is for negotiations to be held, with PCTs, District Councils and others, for their financial and in-kind support for Home-Start schemes across the county.

6.2.3 To extend the Home-Start service to cover the whole county.

This would be achieved by investing additional CSF funding in the Borehamwood and Potters Bar scheme, in year 1 of the plan, 2002/03. This would also be achieved, in subsequent years of the plan, by gaining additional funding from partners and perhaps from CSF, to enable the development of new schemes, or the expansion of existing schemes, to serve Welwyn & Hatfield and Broxbourne. These are areas of the county where no Home-Start service exists at present.

6.2.4 To continue to monitor & demonstrate the savings Home-Start makes for CSF.

6.2.5 To sustain the improved working relationship recently established between CSF and Home-Start. This positive relationship has been developed in order to reinvigorate the partnership such that both parties build trust that each values and will support the other. To ensure that this relationship is maintained and that the development plan is given the best chance of success, it is proposed the CSF contract manager should work intensively and collaboratively with individual Home-Start schemes and the new Hertfordshire Home-Start Development Worker. Key objectives in this stronger partnership will be jointly seeking grants from potential funding partners and extending the service across the county.

6.2.6 To provide a four year contract for Home-Start schemes.

Consistent with the revitalised partnership it is proposed to provide the increased security of this longer contract.

6.3 The Development Plan Proposals are:

6.3.1 To phase the development plan over the four years of a new contract.

In year 1, 2002/03, CSF would begin to join with partners in funding the Borehamwood and Potters Bar scheme. In year 2, 2003/04, CSF and partners would begin to fund a scheme for Broxbourne. In year 3, 2004/05, CSF and partners would begin to fund a scheme for Welwyn and Hatfield.

6.3.2 To Fund Home-Start Schemes in 2002/03 as follows:

Home-Starts	North Herts	Royston	Stevenage	St Albans	Dacorum	East Herts	Borehamwood	Watford & 3 Rivers	Total
CSF Grant 2002/2003	£ 55,475	£ 25,146	£ 38,383	£ 15,639	£ 56,344	£ 34,045	£ 20,000	£ 57,903	£ 302,935

6.3.3 To provide the Home-Start Eastern Region Office with funding of £2,000 to employ a Hertfordshire Schemes Development Worker. The role of this worker would be to work with schemes, steering groups, local agencies and Home-Start regionally to facilitate the successful implementation of the suggested development plan. The key tasks she would undertake include sensitive negotiations with schemes whose funding from CSF should fall in order that our funding is distributed equitably, the extension of Home-Start across the county and helping to develop the funding base for schemes.

## 7 Financial Implications

### 7.1 Financial Implications for CSF

7.1.1 In 2002/03 the financial implications of the development plan for CSF will be an increase of £20,000 for schemes, on 2001/02 figures, and providing £2,000 to Home-Start Regional Office towards employing a Hertfordshire Home-Start Development Worker. These sums are already in the 2002/03 budget and are to be funded from identified savings within contracts for other external providers.

7.1.2 The principles for the development plan; maintaining existing schemes, funding schemes according to the needs formula and extending Home-Start across the county, depend upon external funding. If funding partners do not provide the funding required to offset reductions in CSF funding (introduced in order to distribute our funding according to need) from year 2 of the development plan, it is proposed that the maintenance of existing schemes, including Borehamwood/Potters Bar, should be the first priority. It is also proposed that the expansion of Home-Start across the county should be progressed only as quickly as funds become available from partners on one hand and possibly from CSF on the other, in response to the savings Home-Start may be able to demonstrate making for CSF. It is further proposed that a shortfall in funding from partners should cause CSF to delay the drive to fund schemes according to the needs formula.

7.1.3 If CSF was to move to funding according to need without external funding being secured, the majority of existing schemes would find themselves in

difficulties arising from the consequent funding shortfall from year two of the development plan.

- 7.1.4 The desired scenario in which considerable external funding is provided for all schemes, enabling the proposed development plan to succeed without undermining schemes, is not secure. It is proposed therefore, that success in the search for external funding should govern the rate at which the development plan is introduced.

## 7.2 Financial Implications for Home-Start

- 7.2.1 The regional and national organisations view the suggested development plan for Home-Start positively because of the logic of maintaining existing schemes, funding schemes according to needs and extending the service across the county. They particularly value the emphasis we place on assisting the organisation in gaining external funding. However, the view of Home-Start schemes is bound to be influenced by the funding CSF proposes to provide for them individually, over the period of the development plan. Schemes will be concerned that funding partners may not provide the funding required to offset any proposed reductions in CSF funding for them in particular. They will be reassured by the proposal that we should prioritise the maintenance of existing schemes over the expansion of Home-Start across the county and the introduction of the needs formula. Home-Start schemes are likely to accept a development plan which proposes that it progresses only as quickly as funds become available from partners to achieve it.
- 7.2.2 East Herts scheme funds their service for Buntingford & Bishops Stortford from Lottery grant, which runs out in December 2002. It is proposed that this loss should be made good by means of attracting external funding. This approach is consistent with deploying CSF funding according to the needs formula.

### **Background papers**

Resource Allocation Formula 2000/01 – Population Modified

Hertfordshire  
County Council

Home-Start General Information Leaflet

‘Supporting Families Strengthening Communities’ Home-Start