

STRATEGIC AREA 5

Providing for the needs of vulnerable children

We will identify, assess and provide services for vulnerable children, including those at risk of suffering harm and those whose health, education, social, or emotional development needs are not being met. This includes children who are in care or are leaving care, those at risk of offending or re-offending, those at risk through homelessness and unaccompanied asylum seekers.

PRIORITIES

There are five priorities in this Strategic Area:

- 5.1 To secure a safe environment for every child, particularly those who are vulnerable**
- 5.2 To work with schools and other agencies, on national and local initiatives designed to tackle issues facing children and young people, including the provision of support to specific vulnerable groups**
- 5.3 To recruit, retain and provide support to foster carers and adopters, in order to enhance the service they offer to children**
- 5.4 To ensure children in public care have their health, education, social and emotional development needs met**
- 5.5 To enable children who leave public care to be supported in their settings and to assist them in their transition to adulthood**

The above have been identified as the main priorities for the coming year because:

- Priority 5.1 continues to be a priority from 2002/03 because there is a constant need to be vigilant, to further improve practice and develop services that safeguard the welfare of children in Hertfordshire. Inter-agency work to protect children's safety and welfare has to be a key focus of activity because of CSF's statutory responsibilities
- Priority 5.2 continues to be a priority from 2002/03 because a number of national initiatives continue in 2003/04. They are supported by funding and tackle a range of issues facing children and young people such as:
 - drug and alcohol abuse (year 2 of a 3 year plan)
 - youth crime
 - teenage conceptions and pregnancy (year 2 of a 10 year plan)
 - young carers

- Priority 5.3 continues to be a priority because there is an increasing demand for fostering and adoption placements given the rising numbers of children in public care (11.8% rise in Hertfordshire in 2001/02) and an increase in the complexity and difficulties facing these children and young people and their carers. We must continue to improve our performance in order to ensure that children in public care have an opportunity to live in a family environment
- The wording of priority 5.4 has been amended to state more explicitly our commitment to meeting the needs of children in care. It is recognised that children in care have not achieved as well as their peers educationally or socially and that their standard of health is not as good. It is known that children who have been in care are over represented in EBD provision, in mental health institutions and in the criminal justice system
- Priority 5.5 has been amended to take account of The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, which was implemented in October 2001. This places duties on the local authority to ensure all care leavers are supported in education, training or employment and are living in appropriate housing
- The priority in the 2002/03 Plan around supporting schools to identify vulnerable groups has been assimilated into Strategic Area 1 in this draft plan

In developing the actions for this strategic area, the following have been taken into account:

- Hertfordshire performed well on child protection targets as outlined in the Performance Assessment Framework. However, early indications of our performance in 2003/04 show that key areas for improvement include:
 - the allocation of a key worker to children on the Child Protection Register
 - the holding of Child Protection Reviews within the prescribed time-scales
 - the reduction of the number of re-registrations of children on the Child Protection Register
- The Victoria Climbié Inquiry was announced by the Government in January 2001 and will be reporting in the near future. We anticipate there will be recommendations about strengthening and changing the role of Area Child Protection Committees. We will receive the outcomes of the Inquiry and consider with partner agencies how the recommendations are implemented in Hertfordshire
- The National Framework for Assessment (DoH requirement) needs to be fully integrated within the Unified Casework Framework (UCF) in CSF. The UCF governs all casework activity with children and families and our knowledge of the national trends indicate that is an area for continued improvement
- The Government requires local authorities to develop a programme of transforming children's services in respect of vulnerable groups, particularly children at risk of harm and children in public care. The actions in respect of this are shaped by our knowledge of the changing demography of Hertfordshire and feedback from service users through consultation and through the complaints/compliments process

- The Adoption and Children Act was passed in November 2002, and will be implemented over the course of the next year. It will modernise the existing legal framework for domestic and inter-country adoption. Hertfordshire has already implemented most of the requirements but further development work is needed to provide greater use of adoption and to develop a comprehensive post-adoption service
- Research about adoption demonstrates that the provision of appropriate support (both post-placement and post-adoption) reduces the number of placement breakdowns
- Action is needed to improve the life chances of young people for whom we are the corporate parent. Early indications of our performance in 2002/03 suggest that we need to improve our performance relating to:
 - the education of children in care;
 - training and employment;
 - the health of children in public care;
 - cautions and convictions of children in care;
 - unaccompanied asylum seeker children who become 'looked after children'
- In 2001/02 a comprehensive Leaving Care Service was developed with NCH Action for Children (NCH). Further developments are needed to ensure these young people have a smooth transition to independence. Feedback from young people indicates that we need to improve our performance on:
 - the training and employment of care leavers
 - the provision of suitable, safe accommodation
- The Homelessness Act 2002 and accompanying guidance 'Supporting People' sets out new duties for Housing Authorities and the County Council. We need to develop and implement a strategy for sixteen and seventeen year olds presenting as homeless, in response to the changes brought about by this new legislation

ACTIONS

Each year we take action to achieve the priorities and targets we have set ourselves. The actions and associated tasks for 2003/04 are set out below.

5.1 To secure a safe environment for every child, particularly those who are vulnerable

5.1.1 To develop from the recommendations of the Climbie Inquiry, appropriate actions in line with the anticipated legislation, working with partner agencies and to include all divisions within CSF.

- a) Analyse the Climbie Inquiry report with an emphasis on the implications for CSF
- b) Contribute to the Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) Business Plan in response to the Climbie Inquiry
- c) Implement actions arising from ACPC Business Plan in response to the Climbie Inquiry
- d) Report to the ACPC re c) above

5.1.2 To develop with the Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) a performance monitoring system to ensure child protection work is a priority within all divisions of CSF, schools, Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and other partner agencies.

- a) Contribute to the development of a performance monitoring system via ACPC
- b) Agree Performance Indicators and measures for ACPC to monitor
- c) Implement the performance monitoring system within CSF
- d) Take corrective action in response to the ACPC review of Performance Indicators
- e) Work with ACS and HPT to implement protocols for families with dependent children where one or both parents has a disability, chronic illness, or a mental health problem

5.1.3 To develop with ACS, HPT and voluntary providers of services to adults, joint assessment tools and protocols for parents who have learning disabilities, mental health problems or engage in substance misuse and whose parenting is therefore impaired.

- a) Identify key agencies, re-establish ACPC Working Group to undertake action
- b) Develop joint assessment tools and protocols

- c) Develop multi-agency training opportunities (including ACPC Conference 2003) to disseminate key details and ensure effective use
- 5.1.4 To develop, a multi-agency “child in need” planning system (similar to child protection system) which will provide a clear process for assessment, care planning and review for children in need.
- a) Agree process and procedures with multi-agency reference group
 - b) Agree policy/procedure within CSF
 - c) Deliver multi-agency training
 - d) Implement the new procedures
- 5.1.5 To further develop the Unified Casework Framework (UCF) in order to integrate the DOH Assessment Framework, Child Protection and Looked After Children processes and documentation, thus ensuring government targets are met.
- a) Prepare for the introduction of the Integrated Children's System, due to be implemented in 2004
- 5.1.6 To support young people at risk of becoming looked after and enabling them to safely remain within their families.
- a) Identify children who would benefit from such a service
 - b) Develop a strategy to reduce the number of children in care by links to the Youth Strategy, Family Support (over 10's) service, parenting programmes run by the Young Citizen's Programme (YCP) and consultation with young people
 - c) Formalise family network meetings which enable packages of support to be in place to strengthen parents capacity to cope and prevent family breakdown
 - d) Develop a pool of outreach staff to provide a rapid response to support young people within their families
 - e) Develop 'block contracts' with providers to support young people within their families
 - f) Implement assertive outreach and Family Network Meeting Service
 - g) Develop a 'specification' for an Adolescent Resource Centre which would provide a comprehensive adolescent service including parenting programmes, individual/ group work with young people, after-school activity, crisis intervention, weekend activity (the comprehensive service needs to link to CAMHS, Drug Action Team (DATs), Youth Strategy, Young Offender Teams (YOTs);

h) Consult with young people about this service

5.1.7 To develop the Herts Residential Family Assessment Unit in line with the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000.

a) Recruit and appoint to post of Domestic Bursar for Unit

b) Recruit and appoint to post of 2nd Deputy Manager for the Unit

c) Manage the re-provision of the Unit to suitable premises

5.2 To work with schools and other agencies on national and local initiatives designed to tackle issues facing children, and young people, including the provision of support to specific vulnerable groups

5.2.1 To implement the second year of the Young People's Substance Misuse Plan by focusing on young people most at risk of drug or alcohol use.

a) Develop the adolescent drug and alcohol service located in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

b) Continue to develop systems and arrangements for the collection of data and analyse initial data to inform planning and target setting

c) Work with ACS and HPT to implement transition protocols for young people with drug and alcohol problems

d) Develop protocols for referral in to tier 3 treatment services which allow for ongoing and post-treatment support from the referring agency

e) Identify the implications of emerging national standards on the delivery of drug and alcohol services in Herts

f) Develop education and information for parents, carers and young carers through family learning programmes, parent support strategies and consult them on their needs

g) Expand the programme of staff training by developing and implementing a modular, multi-agency training package

h) Assess the effectiveness of drug education policies in schools

5.2.2 To improve the delivery of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy by focusing on communication and planning across agencies.

a) Develop further the 2002/3 Media and Communication Strategy

b) Work with Young Offender Teams (YOTs) to implement training with young people to understand sexual and parenthood issues

c) Work with Herts Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) Advisers and schools in high rate areas

d) Identify areas of good practice in delivering services to young people

and disseminate good practice to preventative services such as family planning and genito-urinary medicine clinics

- e) Improve the equitable distribution of childcare provision for vulnerable children of teenage parents in high rate areas
- f) Engage with district housing officers in the identification of gaps in housing provision, focusing on implementing multi-agency responses to supporting young people in housing

5.2.3 To develop new initiatives in order to work with young people responsible for, or convicted of, vehicle crime or domestic burglary and divert young people from crime by organising access to sporting activities and setting up restorative justice schemes with young people in foster care.

- a) Recruit an officer (subject to external funding) to manage and oversee the engagement of young people with sporting activities/clubs
- b) Develop programmes to work with young people responsible for vehicle crime, through voluntary organisations and police e.g. Driver Rectification courses
- c) Extend restorative justice conferencing to foster carers
- d) Extend 'Wheels Project' and explore the development of drunk driving courses for young offenders with Hertfordshire Alcohol Problems Advisory Service
- e) Ensure that issues of accommodation and homelessness, related to young offenders, form part of the 'Supporting People' strategy at county and district level
- f) Monitor, review and evaluate the Youth Justice Accommodation Scheme with a view to planning a forward strategy for 2004
- g) Work with the Police and Community Safety Partnerships to reduce the number of young people involved in domestic burglaries
- h) Develop, with CAMHS, and Herts Health Action for the Homeless (HHAH) services to promote the emotional and mental health of young offenders

5.2.4 To develop and implement the policy on Hospital and Home Education in the light of the Access to Education statutory guidance.

- a) Convene a working group to draft, consult on, finalise and publish the County Policy for the Access to Education for children with medical needs
- b) Support schools in developing their own policies
- c) Investigate and provide appropriate group educational opportunities for pupils unable to return to school in the immediate future for reasons of ill

health

- d) Investigate the barriers which prevent sick children returning to school and set up cross professional mechanisms to tackle these

5.2.5 To implement the Young Carers Strategy.

- a) Improve the recognition of young carers and young carer issues
- b) Consult on the draft Young Carers Management Action Plan (YCMAP) for 2003/04 based on prior consultation with young carers and with partner agencies
- c) Review practice guidance and carers breaks guidance
- d) Ensure resources and services are in place to meet statutory duties
- e) Ensure young carers participate in the planning and delivery of services and that their views on services they currently receive are considered
- f) Ensure young carer training is incorporated into the CSF Learning and Development Plan and that of partner agencies
- g) Ensure draft YCMAP (CSF) 2003/04 is signed off

5.2.6 To develop support to homeless 16 and 17 year olds in line with changes brought about by the 'Supporting People' Programme and the Homelessness Act 2002.

- a) Monitor the implementation of the Young Homeless Strategy
- b) Review joint working protocols with Housing Authorities
- c) Evaluate the overall services to young homeless people

5.3 To recruit, retain and provide support to foster carers and adopters, in order to enhance the service they offer to children

5.3.1 To develop a placement strategy to provide appropriate placements to meet the needs of looked after children including hard to place children.

- a) Ensure that we have an accurate understanding of our current looked after children (LAC) population
- b) Determine the likely profile of the LAC population for the next three years
- c) Determine our likely in-house provision for the next three years
- d) Consider our relationship with existing providers
- e) Complete the placement strategy

5.3.2 To recruit, prepare and support adopters to maximise the contribution of adoption in providing permanent placements for children unable to live with their birth families.

- a) Review the cohort of children whose Care Plan is adoption and provide a rapid response to prevent drift
- b) Target recruitment of adopters with particular focus on children with complex need, maximising use of Adoption Week (Oct)
- c) Complete assessments of adopters within National Standards timescale of 6 months
- d) Provide focused and targeted Training and Development Programme for staff on Adoption, highlighting factors which lead to successful adoptions
- e) Establish within each Quadrant a Managerial lead on adoption who will develop expertise and who will meet quarterly with Adoption Managers to review performance, and agree actions
- f) Develop the expertise of identified staff in respect of direct work with children preparing them for adoption
- g) Review the impact of the peripatetic adoption workers, appointed in 2002/03, on timescales for achieving adoption
- h) Review the adoption allowance scheme in relation to new guidance anticipated in 2002/03
- i) Contribute to development and implementation of ORACLE Phase 3 in relation to all Adoption and LAC requirements

5.3.3 To develop the post-adoption service in line with National Adoption Standards, including support to children subject to Residence Orders.

- a) Consolidate the development of the service following the appointment of a Team Manager and specialist Social Workers in 2002/03
- b) Seek adopters' view to inform the development of the service through the annual adoption allowance financial review
- c) Develop policies and procedures to integrate support to children and families subject to Residence Orders
- d) Establish a helpline for post adoption queries
- e) In conjunction with CAMHS, develop post-adoption therapeutic services using dedicated resource appointed in 2002/03 from CAMHS funding
- f) Develop support to birth parents to include, where required, counselling on post adoption contact prior to adoption placement

- g) Review face to-face contact, arrangements with a view to developing within the post adoption team support face to face contact, including financial support and supervision where required
 - h) Conduct a needs analysis of respite provision for adoption placements
 - i) Provide social work support to the annual adoption allowance review
 - j) Set up monthly and quarterly activity levels monitoring
- 5.3.4 To recruit, retain and provide support to foster carers in order to enhance the support they offer to children.
- a) Target the recruitment of foster carers, focusing on specific areas of need
 - b) Recruit a marketing and communications officer to develop a recruitment strategy for fostering and adoption placements (following lead from other authorities where this has been successful and releasing scarce management and social work expertise)
 - c) Develop a quarterly foster carer newsletter to disseminate information specifically related to and for foster carers (of Herts and Minds)
 - d) Review the effectiveness of the Family Placement Service (FPS) training strategy in relation to outcomes for children
 - e) Provide financial incentives for foster carers to prioritise training
 - f) Provide financial incentives and recognition for long service at five-yearly intervals
 - g) Implement a supervision policy which prioritises outcomes for children who are in care, focusing on educational achievement and health
 - h) Increase support to foster carers through additional professional assistant posts
 - i) Review the operation and effectiveness of the out-of-hours support team implemented in 2002/03
 - j) Maximise the use of funding extensions to carers' property to provide additional placements
 - k) Provide funding to support the purchase/leasing of large vehicles for foster carers where average sized vehicles are not adequate
 - l) Contribute to development and implementation of ORACLE Phase 3 in relation to all Adoption and LAC requirements

5.4 To ensure children in public care have their health, education, social and emotional development needs met

- 5.4.1 To ensure effective educational planning and support at every key stage that delivers year on year improvement in attainment for looked after children and care leavers.
- a) Ensure a Personal Education Plan is written for the results of effective joint planning for every looked after child that helps raise their achievement
 - b) Raise attainment by enriching the educational experience of children in care both inside and outside school hours by:
 - individual support to children and young people to support learning and educational success
 - enabling carers to support learning effectively
 - ensuring all schools support the education of looked after children
 - ensuring children in care are admitted to school within 20 school days
 - auditing the educational potential of all looked after children and ensure that they are supported to achieve their potential
 - c) Reduce the number of fixed and permanent exclusions from school for children in care
- 5.4.2 To implement and evaluate services that support unaccompanied asylum seekers.
- a) Establish a dedicated team to ensure that unaccompanied asylum seekers receive a holistic care and education service
 - b) Ensure that all unaccompanied asylum seekers who are looked after or are care leavers have a Care/Pathway Plan
 - c) Establish procedures to ensure that all unaccompanied minors receive schooling that meets their education needs
 - d) Develop arrangements to ensure that unaccompanied asylum seekers aged over sixteen can access appropriate further education, training and employment opportunities
 - e) Develop commissioning plans to ensure that all unaccompanied asylum seekers have accommodation that meets their needs
- 5.4.3 To develop the Contact Service pilot for children who are in care or on the Child Protection Register via the Family Support Service in the North Quadrant.
- a) Recruit peripatetic contact service workers and a service co-ordinator
 - b) Monitor and evaluate the impact of the pilot projects

5.5 To enable children who leave public care to be supported in their settings and to assist them in their transition to adulthood

5.5.1 To implement support that ensures that every young person leaving care is able to access and sustain appropriate education, training and support.

- a) Complete an audit of all resources currently supporting young people leaving care
- b) Establish a partnership with NCH Leaving Care Team and the Education Support service to analyse the educational requirements of care leavers
- c) Work in partnership with accommodation providers to ensure care leaver have a secure home base and summer vacation accommodation for those young people at university from which they can access and sustain (ETE) Education Training and Employment
- d) Negotiate contracts with training providers and employers (HCC) to develop supportive and alternative training programmes
- e) The work in partnership with the Children's Participation Team to develop Teenager 2 Work schemes
- f) Review and develop all current incentive schemes that encourage young people to sustain and attend education, training and employment

5.5.2 To develop support and accommodation services in order to ensure that every care leaver is kept safe and well.

- a) Develop, with CAMHS; NCH and Herts Health Action for the Homeless (HHAH) services to promote the emotional and mental health of care leavers
- b) Develop, with housing authorities, providers and other relevant agencies, a range of accommodation options for care leavers including vacation accommodation
- c) Ensure that the services provided by NCH, CSF, Connexions and housing authorities and co-ordinated and dovetail with each other
- d) Audit the services provided to care leavers by CSF and NCH
- e) Continue to increase the number of care leavers involved in sport, arts leisure and cultural activities

STRATEGIC AREA 6

Exploiting Information and Communication Technology to support learning and improve services

We will use Information and Communication Technology to transform and enrich learning opportunities and services for children.

PRIORITIES

There are four priorities in this Strategic Area:

- 6.1 To raise the level of ICT skills and awareness**
- 6.2 To ensure that ICT systems support the raising of achievement by helping children and adults to learn in school and elsewhere**
- 6.3 To use ICT to integrate the management of knowledge and communications to benefit the work of CSF and partner agencies**
- 6.4 To use ICT to improve the delivery of the Department's services to adults, children and schools**

The above have been identified as the main priorities for the coming year because:

- Priorities 6.1, 6.2 and 6.4 are new but reflect the priorities in the 2002/03 Plan. The new priorities tackle the same issues as those in the 2002/03 Plan but are more focused and clear in their purpose i.e.
 - improving staff IT skills both in the CSF development and in schools
 - developing the use of e-communication especially between the CSF department and schools
 - using ICT for service delivery
- Priority 6.2 remains the same
- These priorities reflect the decision by CSF to use ICT to improve service delivery and communications for schools, parents and children and to use ICT as an integral part of teaching and learning in order to raise standards of achievement

In developing the actions for this strategic area, the following have been taken into account:

- The need to provide a range of ICT training opportunities for staff in schools and in the CSF department. These will reflect the wide range of current knowledge and skills among staff and the e-technologies used by them. The actions in 2003/04 therefore reflect more diverse training opportunities and advice to help staff make the most of ICT

- Work during 2002/03 to ensure that ICT systems support the raising of achievement in schools has continued. The volume of internet access by schools and the number of documents on HGfL has increased so that by the end of the year our targets will have been met. The action in 2003/04 is to continue to undertake work on these developments
- To support further the work of schools networks, of primary and secondary schools will share best practice in ICT to support children's learning, and the provision of ICT equipment to children in care will be extended to KS3 children
- The development of e-communications during 2002/03 has concentrated on projects which demonstrate what can be achieved through ICT, for example, the roll-out of the e-mail pilot to all schools and the Tring Paper-Free Project. In the area of management information the focus during 2002/03 has been the creation of databases, protocols for sharing information between agencies and the basic exchange of information; all of which have increased the use of ICT for exchanging information and which will secure our targets
- During 2003/04 action will focus on moving towards integrating management information, disseminating good practice from pilots and developing the capacity of CSF to use ICT to share practice with partner agencies such as health and the police
- The use of ICT to deliver transactional services has made major progress during 2002/03 in the area of admissions to nursery, primary and secondary schools. Initially run as a pilot for nursery admissions in September 2001, it is now available for all admissions. This experience allows the Plan for 2003/04 to contain a substantial expansion in transactional services for the public and schools. This will include the use of e-mail as a significant means of communicating with schools and parents and the wider use of ICT for payroll, personnel, staff recruitment and consultation with parents and schools

ACTIONS

Each year we take action to achieve the priorities and targets we have set ourselves. The actions and associated tasks for 2003/04 are set out below.

6.1 To raise the level of ICT skills and awareness

- 6.1.1 To provide a range of training opportunities including European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) for school based staff in order to develop and improve their ICT skills.
- a) Develop and consult on training delivery methods appropriate to the differing staff groups in schools
 - b) Launch ECDL and ICT skills based training course programme with schools
 - c) Provide, on a traded basis, ECDL log books, interaction, self-studying packages and materials, support and training opportunities and ECDL test facilities
 - d) Continue to develop and offer on a traded basis basic ICT skills courses to ensure new technology/software changes are incorporated into all relevant courses and courses are modified to reflect feedback from delegates
- 6.1.2 To provide a range of training opportunities specifically focused on e-technologies used by staff e.g. Oracle, Lotus Notes, Office Products.
- a) Promote ICT skills training through the Performance Management & Development process
 - b) Identify priority groups of staff who require specific ICT training
 - c) Produce a programme of IT training
 - d) Advertise and deliver the programme
 - e) Monitor and evaluate the programme
 - f) Continue supporting Oracle development and provide training for new staff
- 6.1.3 To develop further approaches to using ICT technology in order to increase the efficiency of the service.
- a) Install network links to family support centres as part of the corporate programme
 - b) Install local area networks and cabling in family support centres
 - c) Purchase and install additional PCs for new network sites and in existing offices

- d) Ensure that staff directly using new PCs are linked to appropriate training and support programmes

6.2 To ensure that ICT systems support the raising of achievement by helping children and adults to learn in school and elsewhere

- 6.2.1 To provide ICT support to schools for producing school ICT development plans, training in ICT subject knowledge and skills and in the use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning.
 - a) Deliver an inset programme for ICT focusing on development plans, assessment, subject knowledge and skills, effective teaching and learning across the curriculum
 - b) Deliver bespoke ICT consultancy to schools
 - c) Produce guidance materials on the management of ICT in schools
 - d) Develop the ICT website further to ensure it contains a comprehensive range of ICT information and acts as a 'one stop shop' for schools
 - e) Develop and implement a county ICT strategy
- 6.2.2 To consult with schools on what they need from the Hertfordshire Grid for Learning (HGfL) in order to develop materials and promote its use.
 - a) Implement with schools an evaluation of the HGfL infrastructure and content, and develop with them a vision for its future, through consultation with the appropriate management partnership group, structured interviews with a sample of schools and the establishment of a teachers' panel
 - b) Manage the development of the HGfL infrastructure towards broadband and implement other technical developments arising from b) above in order to meet government targets
 - c) Provide, on HGfL, a comprehensive range of content which has a direct impact on the quality of teaching and learning and on school management
 - d) Support schools in the creation of websites which promote the school itself and effective teaching and learning strategies
 - e) Deliver an in-service training programme which develops knowledge and understanding of HGfL content and offers strategies for raising attainment through its effective use in the classroom
- 6.2.3 To provide children in care at Key Stage 3 with access to ICT equipment, the internet and educational software.
 - a) Install computers in the homes of children in care at Key Stage 3
 - b) Provide foster carers and residential social workers with information about the use of ICT

- c) Evaluate the impact of access to ICT on school achievement at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4
- d) Evaluate level of skill in use of ICT by foster carers and residential social workers
- e) Consider whether to roll-out the programme to Key Stages 1 and 2
- f) Develop a replacement programme for old machines

6.3 To use ICT to integrate the management of knowledge and communications to benefit the work of CSF and partner agencies

6.3.1 To improve the management of pupil achievement data, its exchange between schools, the LEA and external agencies and its integration with the client database on Oracle.

- a) Install the PULSE database and make operational, including training of staff
- b) Clean and load historic achievement data
- c) Provide cleaned achievement data to schools, as required, to integrate with their local database
- d) Load Achievement data into Oracle and establish routine updates
- e) Introduce the use of PULSE into the operational processes for handling Key Stage data during 2003/04
- f) Use data from PULSE to inform value added analysis etc. and feed into schools and CSF management information systems
- g) Evaluate the 2002/03 project to provide specialist assessment software (TRACA) to schools to complement Schools Information and Management System (SIMS) Assessment module

6.3.2 To develop further the schools management information (MI) profiles.

- a) Review with schools the improvements required to the existing MI Profile and establish a minimum electronic data standards within schools to feed the profile process
- b) Develop the processed systems and collect and hold the additional data to populate the MI profile system
- c) Test and pilot the revised MI profile
- d) Refine the MI profile in light of the results from the pilot scheme
- e) Launch to schools with appropriate support and training

- 6.3.3 To establish electronic data sharing within the Department as the usual way for collating, monitoring and sharing data in respect of a limited number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
- a) Identify KPIs to be produced and shared economically
 - b) Develop an electronic means for calculating and collecting KPIs
 - c) Test the results produced by the new systems
 - d) Refine, with managers, the presentation of the KPI data
 - e) Develop a web page for information about KPIs
 - f) Launch the web page and conduct training with managers
- 6.3.4 To embed the use of the Oracle system, pilot its use in schools and introduce the use of electronic files.
- a) Provide training and infrastructure support to ensure that the system supports service delivery requirements
 - b) Identify a representative sample of schools and engage them in a feasibility study
 - c) Report on the implications, benefits and costs of wider school engagement
 - d) Pilot scanning and electronic data capture arrangements and implement as necessary
 - e) Systematically increase the number of cases for whom the majority of key information is stored electronically
- 6.3.5 To disseminate and promote the experience and benefits of the Tring Paper-Free Project to all Hertfordshire schools.
- a) Publicise the outcomes of the project within the Department and through the annual ICT Conference
 - b) Publish outcomes on-line

6.4 To use ICT to improve the delivery of the Department's services to adults, children and schools

- 6.4.1 To develop e-technology as a means of communicating with parents/carers and children and the normal means of communicating with schools.
- a) Make use of the e-mail developments in 2002/03 by promoting use of e-mail between schools and the department
 - b) Use the web as the means of communicating all cyclical and new publications (schools and parents/carers)

- c) Develop protocols and procedures for communicating with parents by e-mail
- d) Promote libraries and other resource centres as access points to HCC electronic services

6.4.2 To extend and develop the range of transactional services delivered by e-technology to parents, carers and children in particular in the areas of admissions, staff recruitment and financial support.

- a) Continue to develop and raise e-admissions services and awareness to parents, particularly in relation to interactive distance measurement and appeals
- b) Implement an on-line recruitment process for CSF departmental staff, as part of the corporate process
- c) Draw up detailed and costed proposals for the introduction of e-supplies for the administration of financial support to parents on benefits which involve direct connections with Social Security Offices
- d) Approach the Cabinet Office for agreement to implement the proposals in partnership with Social Security offices in Hertfordshire. Further action is dependant on the response

6.4.3 To extend and develop the range of transactional services delivered by e-technology to schools in particular in the areas of admissions (VA and Foundation schools) and traded services.

- a) Develop data sharing methods and protocols with VA and Foundation schools mostly in regard to parents' applications and the allocation of school places
- b) Develop a pilot working with other admitting authorities regarding the allocation of school places
- c) Audit the service processes used by traded services, which impact on schools
- d) Develop with schools electronic solutions to managing the service process for the service area
- e) Cost the existing system and the implementation and operational costs of the new system and draw up proposals for implementation which will achieve in time:
 - a number of immediate and simple transfers from paper to electronic systems
 - a longer-term development requiring more fundamental change to working priorities
- f) Commence implementation on the immediate action

- g) Create a programme of actions for 2004/2005 with appropriate consideration of resource requirements
- h) Connect with corporate lead, Finance, HR and payroll project to ensure e-government objectives are met in CSF

6.4.4 To develop the capacity for all units to establish and review websites which disseminate information and share good practice.

- a) Publicise the Web Consultancy Service and encourage units to publish and keep up to date their information
- b) Help units to consult with end users to determine requirements for new websites
- c) Plan website structure to maximise access to information
- d) Ensure handover to units to maintain and review launched websites

STRATEGIC AREA 7

Involving users and stakeholders in the development of the Service

We will work in partnership with service users, children, parents/carers and stakeholders to improve our services. We will develop the involvement of all communities and stakeholders, including hard to reach groups, in our consultation and participation strategy.

PRIORITIES

There are two priorities in this Strategic Area:

- 7.1 To enable more effective participation and learning through improved information and feedback**
- 7.2 To promote participation and partnership working in the planning, development and delivery of services**

The above have been identified as the main priorities for the coming year because:

- The objective of Hertfordshire County Council and Children, Schools and Families to serve all communities shows that we need to ensure we go beyond the majority groups to ensure we take account of minority and specialist views. Our focus will be on work with 'hard to reach groups' so that our services are in touch with and responsive to all parts of Hertfordshire's population. We take special note of the experience of parents, carers, young people and school communities and use their views to help shape and improve our service
- Although we have made good progress in building our basic systems and mechanisms for participation and consultation, we still have more to do to ensure that these systems work as effectively as possible and that we make best use of new technologies in this area. The first priority addresses this requirement
- There are opportunities to strengthen coherence between our work in this area and that of our partner organisations
- We have specific responsibilities to involve looked after children in the planning and delivery of services

In developing the actions for this Strategic Area, the following have been taken into account:

- There are growing requirements from central government for active participation of users and for involvement of the voluntary and community sector in the planning and delivery of our services
- While improving services to all users and potential users, we also need to ensure that we take account of groups who have particular needs and who have been less involved than others in our work

We have made use of some new computer software to improve our understanding of the views of those who use our services. These have included:

- ‘Viewpoint’ – a computer-based software programme that seeks to obtain the views of children about aspects of their lives. This has included specific programmes for looked after children
- ‘Inquisite’ – a system that collects views electronically and that then collates and organises the material for detailed analysis

We have received positive feedback about both of the above from those who have used them.

We need to ensure people who are consulted are given information as to the changes made as a result of their input.

ACTIONS

Each year we take action to achieve the priorities and targets we have set ourselves. The actions and associated tasks for 2003/04 are set out below.

7.1 To enable more effective participation and learning through improved information and feedback

7.1.1 To develop a calendar for consultation and participation in the review, planning and development of services.

- a) Publish an annual programme of anticipated developmental work and issues for consultation
- b) Ensure Stakeholder and Partnership groups and other potential contributors are able to decide to which areas they would wish to contribute
- c) Broaden the range of ways in which views can be transmitted e.g. web questionnaire, focus groups etc

7.1.2 To make information more accessible, in particular by involving:

- minority and ethnic communities
 - communication impaired groups
 - faith groups
 - asylum seeker communities
 - looked after children and their carers
- a) Review how CSF information for groups with special requirements is currently distributed.
 - b) Consult with groups with special requirements to ascertain where they think information should be made available
 - c) Devise a programme for dissemination of CSF information in line with recommendations

d) Feedback to the identified groups the actions we have taken

7.1.3 To make better use of new technologies in order to develop participation in service review, planning and delivery.

a) Promote the use of 'Inquisite' to carry out surveys and collect information from service users and stakeholders and devolve the facility to units within CSF

b) Promote the greater use of the CSF website on HertsDirect as a consultation tool

c) Investigate other means of gathering information e.g. use of kiosk technology, 'CONVOY', information held corporately within the authority, mini-polls, forums, text messaging, digital television etc

d) Ensure links are made to the Viewpoint system via the Young People's Channel and the Grid and through other new-tech initiatives such as Internet Access for looked after children

7.1.4 To review and develop learning and feedback mechanisms.

a) Within the Quality Management Framework, review and revise processes for collecting and using the learning from participation and feedback of outcomes

b) Disseminate and implement Participation Standards and their use and impact

c) Promote the use of the 'Convoy' database on Connect for collection of information arising from participation and consultation and inputting of outcomes

d) Develop management information to CSF Planning and Unit Planning leads and include feedback from service user participation so that this is used in the review of CSF and Unit Plans

e) Review and strengthen ways in which feedback is given to those taking part in participation and consultation exercises

7.2 To promote participation and partnership working in the planning, development and delivery of services

7.2.1 To develop our processes for the participation of children and young people within CSF and to co-ordinate with and support the work of partner agencies in this area.

a) Continue to manage the CSF Young Persons Reference Group and develop creative consultation methods to inform major planning processes

b) Develop 'pupil voices' via the Viewpoint website by piloting with thirty schools and Youth Centres relating to:

- School Councils
 - Healthy Schools
 - School Self-Assessment
 - School Improvement Plans
 - CSF/HCYPSP Planning
- c) Develop an accredited certification for young people who participate in groups and events
 - d) Ensure that a Young Persons CSF Plan is distributed via the website in order to give feedback to young people following their involvement
 - e) Chair the HCYPSP Participation sub-group and ensure existing for a are linked with it in order to meet its objectives

7.2.2 To continue to develop the participation of looked after children.

- a) Launch and circulate the guidance on using Viewpoint for LAC reviews
- b) Agree contract with the Viewpoint organisation to become a managed service to deliver LAC reviews and develop website version
- c) Continue to develop and manage the LAC reference group – CRAC – and participate in membership of the national DoH reference group and CSF reference group
- d) Develop Viewpoint and make available a secure website for CSF managers to analyse LAC review outcomes for strategic planning

7.2.3 To develop the involvement of looked after children in training and recruitment processes.

- a) Jointly devise a recruitment process which specifies which posts will involve our users, young people and parents
- b) Identify training activities which would benefit from the involvement of looked after children
- c) Develop guidelines for involving looked after children in recruitment and training
- d) Create a register of specific groups of looked after children to be involved in both training and recruitment

7.2.4 To work in partnership with the voluntary and community sectors in order to build their capacity and increase their participation in service planning and delivery.

- a) Work with voluntary, community and statutory sector partners to develop the Hertfordshire Compact five codes of practice
- b) Develop and implement a communications strategy that will improve the

flow of information between the voluntary and community sector and CSF

- c) Identify appropriate funding opportunities for the voluntary and community sector and support them with preparing applications
- d) Support CSF staff in implementing the recommendations of the 'Cross-cutting review on the role of the voluntary and community sector in service delivery'
- e) Identify opportunities for the involvement of the voluntary and community sector in the development and implementation of CSF strategies
- f) Develop arrangements for support in kind through community use of schools and other CSF resources
- g) Develop ways of sustaining short-term funded projects in the longer term

7.2.5 To work with the Hertfordshire Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (HCYPSP) and local strategic partnerships in order to develop shared priorities for children and young people.

- a) Establish arrangements to ensure consistent input from CSF staff into local strategic partnerships and community strategies
- b) Work with local strategic partnership (LSP) partners to identify key priorities and targets for children and young people
- c) Bring together the main objectives of community strategies, local Health Improvement Plans and Preventive Strategy Locality Action Plans to ensure maximum impact for children and young people
- d) Develop local projects for children and young people in conjunction with LSP partners

STRATEGIC AREA 8

Maximising user satisfaction and securing best value from all services

We will constantly review the management of resources and the views of service users to secure continuous improvement in all services. In addition, we will take advantage of external resources which can support service improvement.

PRIORITIES

There are four priorities in this Strategic Area:

- 8.1 To use government initiatives, funding and public/private partnership to improve services**
- 8.2 To secure continuous improvement through a rolling programme of Best Value Reviews and other reviews and, through using efficiency savings, to develop the service**
- 8.3 To procure and maintain sufficient suitable buildings and equipment that represent value for money and are fit for purpose**
- 8.4 To ensure that the planning of school places and admission arrangements support parents/carers, operate cost-effectively and support the raising of school standards**

The above have been identified as the main priorities for the coming year because:

- Priorities 8.1 and 8.2 continue from the 2002/03 Plan because it is important to secure the continuous improvement of services. The DfES Budget League Table Indicators relating to Section 52 Statement data for 2002/03 demonstrate excellent performance in relation to relative costs. Social Care Unit Cost Indicators used by the Social Services Inspectorate also indicate that our expenditure is in line with comparator authorities. Our targets related to the effectiveness of the work in relation to our statistical neighbours are challenging and so we need to continue to focus on improving these
- Our initial assessment is that the priority in the CSF Plan for 2002/03, to develop our contract and commissioning arrangements, will secure the improvement needed in the current year. This priority has therefore been removed from the draft Plan for 2003/04

- Priority 8.3 continues from 2002/03. We are currently developing the process to ensure that the future capital strategy reflects all the elements of the Asset Management Plan. In 2003/04, we will need to build on this to create an investment programme which aligns the available resources with the strategic priorities. This will need to take account of developments in 2002/03 which have implications for the use of our property, in particular the Community Plan has been drawn up through the Diversity Pathfinder programme and the work arising from the Preventative Strategy
- Priority 8.4 continues from 2002/03. This is because reducing the percentage of unfilled places remains a challenging target, especially in primary schools and ongoing attention to the planning of school places is needed to respond to the changing demography, information about buildings and school performance

In developing the actions for this Strategic Area, the following have been taken into account.

- The opportunity to develop a PFI bid which includes both educational and care aspects of the work of CSF
- Our analysis of performance against targets leads us to conclude that meeting the improvement in terms of reducing the percentage of primary schools with an excess of 25% surplus places will be the most challenging target in this strategic area; (both in the current year and forthcoming years) consequently, we are proposing enhanced activity in this area
- Feedback we have received from central government in relation to our Asset Management Plan suggested that we needed further clarity about how the plan converts into spending priorities. We have also identified the scope to improve the data quality in the Plan

ACTIONS

Each year we take action to achieve the priorities and targets we have set ourselves. The actions and associated tasks for 2003/04 are set out below.

8.1 To use government initiatives, funding and public/private partnership to improve services

8.1.1 To ensure Hertfordshire receives the maximum resource potentially available from government funding and external resources and to ensure CSF optimally utilises resources to meet the strategic objectives within this plan.

- a) Maintain a central register of all potential sources of external funding, which is shared within CSF and updated to reflect new sources of funding as they are identified.
- b) Collect 'Best Practice' material on how other authorities have utilised external funding to drive service improvements.
- c) Devise a framework for testing that new grants are used optimally and deliver clearly defined outcomes and targets.
- d) Consult with stakeholders on the framework described at (c) above.
- e) Map how resources are utilised to appropriately support all communities.
- f) Produce and publish a guide for schools on potential sources of external funding.

8.1.2 To use private finance initiatives (PFI) to support the raising of standards across CSF services.

- a) Respond to DfES announcements on successful stage 1 bids
- b) If successful outline business case to central government
- c) Whether or not successful:
 - review appraisal by DfES and research why other bids were successful
 - consult stakeholders on developing new/revised criteria to enable further bid(s) to be submitted
 - prepare and submit new and/or revised/initial bid to DfES

8.2 To secure continuous improvement through a rolling programme of Best Value Reviews and other reviews and, through using efficiency savings, to develop the service

8.2.1 To conduct a series of Best Value Reviews in accordance with Hertfordshire County Council's Best Value Review Programme.

- a) Follow up on implementation plans from previous Best Value reviews
- b) Share outcomes of Best Value reviews with all stakeholders
- c) Review outcomes from other authority Best Value Reviews and learn from Best Practice
- d) Link outcomes from (c) above into the budget setting process
- e) Conduct Best Value reviews in accordance with the County Council programme, and reflecting those services where there is greatest scope for improvement

8.3 To procure and maintain sufficient suitable buildings and equipment that represent value for money and are fit for purpose

8.3.1 To review, with partners, the Service Property Strategy to create an investment programme derived from Asset Management Planning (AMP) data analysis that aligns with the strategic property priorities for the service and the DfES.

- a) Collect and analyse AMP data
- b) Establish potential priorities, including legislative requirements, against baseline data with the Resources Partnership Group (RPG) and the Resources Panel
- c) Draft a revised Service Property Strategy and consult with stakeholders
- d) Secure approval of the Schools Forum and the Resources and Property Panels to the Service Property Strategy
- e) Secure resources
- f) Publish the 2003/04 programme to schools and other stakeholders based on 2002/03 Service Property Strategy

8.3.2 To maximise the use of existing property to ensure widest practicable educational, social and community needs are met.

- a) Draft and agree a strategy document including performance for maximising the use of existing CSF property
- b) Identify funding
- c) Consult user groups and managers of CSF property about the draft strategy
- d) Secure agreement of CSF Board to draft strategy
- e) Implement the agreed strategy

8.4 To ensure that the planning of school places and admission arrangements support parents/carers, operate cost effectively and support the raising of school standards

8.4.1 To plan with the Schools Organisation Committee (SOC) where appropriate, for the optimal distribution of school places based on the forecasting of pupil numbers, school and pupil performance data, and asset management data.

- a) Analyse financial, forecasting, demographic information, asset management and achievement data
- b) Publish a draft School Organisation Plan, including a programme of area reviews
- c) Agree the School Organisation Plan with the School Organisation Committee
- d) Undertake the programme of area reviews

8.4.2 To undertake area reviews of primary provision where the balance between the supply of, and demand for, places is adverse in order to contribute to improving pupil achievement and the Council's performance against the Best Value Performance Indicator for school places.

- a) From the programme identified in the School Organisation Plans, undertake area reviews of primary provision
- b) Develop options for the optimal distribution of primary places in the areas under review, and test these through consultation
- c) Secure decisions and implement agreed changes including sponsoring building programmes