

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES
SELECT COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY 28 MARCH 2001 AT 10.30 A.M.**

Agenda Item No.

8

**QUALITY PROTECTS MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVE 6 –
SERVICES TO DISABLED CHILDREN**

Report of the Director of Social Services

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1. Purpose of the report

To consider services to disabled children as a possible scrutiny item for the Select Committee, as outlined in the Quality Protects Management Action Plan Objective 6.

2. Summary

Disabled children are included as a new Quality Protects priority area for the first time in 2001/02. This is in response to evidence that indicates heavy demand pressures and shortcomings in the provision of services nationally. In Hertfordshire we have been implementing a county wide strategy to improve services for the last two years. This was initially funded through Joint Finance. Quality Protects and Carers Grants are now being used to cover longer term funding.

These service developments have included a pilot project co-ordinating inter-agency assessments of newly diagnosed children with disabilities and additional:

- respite care places,
- family based shared care services,
- long term residential care places
- special needs playscheme places

Members have raised concerns as to whether this increase in resources has achieved greater equity of provision across the county, and to what extent the level of provision

is meeting the needs of disabled young people to experience age appropriate leisure activities, and the needs of their parents/ carers to have regular breaks.

3. Conclusions

The Select Committee will wish to decide whether to scrutinise this matter further.

1. Inter-agency assessment project

Two pilot projects have been running in Hertford/Ware and Hemel Hempstead since 1999. The aims are to co-ordinate initial assessments of newly diagnosed children with disabilities under the age of 5 years, to reduce duplication between health, education and social services, and to create a more holistic and client centred process.

Approximately 30 children have now been seen in this way, and the teams have developed integrated care planning and review procedures with these children. The last project evaluation report in June 2000 identified a number of recommendations for streamlining procedures further. A final stage of evaluation is currently being planned for April 2001 to seek the views of parents, including those who have now experienced the joint review process and to identify the resource issues in expanding this approach to other areas of the county and to a wider age range of young people.

2. Respite Care

Respite care beds are distributed across the county as follows:

Quadrant	Organisation	Location	Beds/Day Care Places
North West	Stairways, Harpenden Mencap	Harpenden	4 beds/1 day care place
North West	CSF, Woolmer Drive	Hemel Hempstead	7 beds
South	Adrian Road NCH	Abbots Langley	3 beds/5 day care places
East	Jubilee House Care Trust, Jubilee House	W.G.C.	5 beds/day care places
North	CSF,Mendip Unit	Lonsdale School, Stevenage	Interim service - 3 beds; full service (opens summer 2001) - 4 beds

Despite the provision of additional funds to increase the numbers of places, waiting lists have now built up at most of these services and consideration is being given to setting up admission panels, possibly involving health, to improve consistency in decision making. It would be possible to look at whether any of the units could be used to offer more specialist services for certain types of young people e.g. those with challenging behaviour. Parents have expressed concerns at the reduction in flexibility over dates since the units' occupancy has increased, and a pilot project in one unit is being considered in response to this.

3. Shared Care

This service offers family based after school, weekend and/or overnight care to disabled children. The post of Shared Care Manager has led to improved standards and consistency across the county. Shared care places are distributed across the county (month ending December 2000) as follows:

Quadrant	Number of carers	Number of children placed	Number on W/L
West	34	37	28
South	26	31	26
East	34	52	40
North	29	51	23
TOTAL	123	171	117

14 potential new carers are currently undergoing assessments or completing training. This is a voluntary service, and carers are given an allowance of £3.10 per hour.

4. Long Term Care

There are 4 beds for disabled children needing full time residential care in the CSF unit, The Gables, near Hoddesdon. Two houses in Ripon Road, Stevenage are being adapted to create a new 7 place unit, with the aim of reducing the numbers of young people having to be placed out of county, in expensive placements which are often at great distances from their families. The projected opening date for this service is August 2001, so referrals have not yet been formally invited, but there is a high level of interest in these places.

5. Playschemes

The map of community playscheme places across the county is currently being updated. This shows locations of school holiday playschemes, Saturday clubs, after school clubs, youth groups and sibling support groups for young people with SEN and disabilities. These services are mostly run by District Councils and Voluntary Organisations. Districts vary in the amount of provision offered, both in terms of numbers of places and weeks of the year that services run. Some areas have a good range of both specialist and integrated provision, whilst other district council areas need further encouragement to make their services more inclusive.

These services are often funded through a variety of sources e.g. SSD, District Councils, Health, Child Care Grant. Many of these funding arrangements are short term which hinders service development. Additional places have been funded through the Carers Grant as well as Early Years Child Care Grant, but developments have been slower than anticipated due to recruitment difficulties, and lack of infra structures for some groups. Many of these services require assistance to increase staffing levels and access specialist staff training in order to support more disabled young people. Funds are available for additional places to be developed in 2001/02

and beyond, and there is a need to review priority areas across the county to ensure young people have a range of choices for accessing leisure activities.

6. Proposals for Scrutiny

It is proposed that this item is discussed fully at the Select Committee and the Chair of the Select Committee has formulated some questions as outlined in Appendix 1 (attached along with the Quality Protects Management Action Plan Objective 6 at Appendix 2). Should Members wish to have a fuller scrutiny, then it would be proposed to set up a task group consisting of representatives of the main stakeholders involved with services for disabled children, including parent/carers.

APPENDIX 1

OBJECTIVE 6 – MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN (Q.P.)

Interagency Assessment – we have two local projects:

- how long have they been going, where are they?
- have we any plans for widening this out if it is worthwhile?

Respite Care- need to get an idea of the scale of the need.

- How many families want respite care?
- What is their entitlement?
- Where is it provided?
- What is the demand – are there long waiting lists?
- What age groups is it provided for?
- How many beds are available in each quadrant?
- Is there unmet need – in some quadrants/all over the county?

Maybe carers representatives should be invited to the meeting.

Shared Care

- How many carers have we?
- Is this a countywide resource?
- What does the waiting list bit mean?
- How successful is shared care?
- Can some groups of disabled children not access it, is this taken into account when allocating respite care?

Long Term Care

- Will the new seven-bed unit meet the demand?
- Is there a waiting list?
- What other facilities in the county do we have?
- What kind of young people need long term care?

Play Schemes – “571 new places”

- How many places do we have in total?
- Are these places in specialist or integrated play schemes?
- Are there any parts of the county where there is a shortage of integrated schemes or specialist schemes?
- Do the play schemes operate weekends/summer holidays only/all holidays, including half term?
- Do they open all day/half day?
- Are there any problems with play schemes e.g. staffing, venues, working with the Districts?
- Are these new places funded by the District Partnerships administering the Carers Grant?

Tanis Kent
1 March 2001

APPENDIX 2

QUALITY PROTECTS MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN (EXTRACT)

Objective 6 - To ensure that children with specific social needs arising out of a disability or health condition are living in families or other appropriate settings in the community where their assessed needs are adequately met and reviewed.

A) PROGRESS AND RESULTS 1999/2000; 2000/2001

Describe your progress to date under this objective, including evidence of improved outcomes for children.

Inter-agency assessment project in two local areas has led to streamlined and co-ordinated approach between health, education and SSD for newly diagnosing under 5's with severe and complex needs, and parent held joint report/action plan; 25 interagency assessments completed to date.

Residential respite units

- Increased staffing levels in existing services (Carers Grant) ensures improved levels of care, particularly for children with complex needs.
- Phase 1 of new service just opened at Lonsdale School, Stevenage using school's residential accommodation at weekends and holidays, offers more local provision to North quadrant, and includes some nursing input/joint approach with health.

Shared Care

Additional Shared Care staffing has led to:

- 15 new carers recruited, trained and approved.
- 7 assessments ongoing and 9 prospective carers completing training.
- Waiting lists now reduced from 152 in October 1999 to 117 in October 2000.

Long term care

Planning consent now obtained for new 7 bed unit in Stevenage, which will reduce numbers of young people placed at great distances from their families and local communities.

Playscheme places

571 new places funded through Carers Grant including new integrated scheme and innovative music making project for physically disabled children, broadening range of activities offered.

Education

In-County developments have been planned in conjunction with social care developments:

- 8 place Autism & MLD unit. Training in schools with Autistic/Asperger children.
- East Herts has 6 'Dyslexia friendly' secondary schools; specialist training of staff extended to West.
- Improved funding/support for disabled in 6 schools. Access Initiative funding develops facilities in targeted schools.

- Opportunity Classes consistent with agreed county framework; 4 training sessions to pre-school providers.

Participation

- We have commissioned training from the Children's Society on their "I'll Go First" pack which is designed to aid disabled young people's participation in their planning and review meetings.
- Carers and voluntary organisations were well represented at consultation workshops on QP.
- MAP was discussed with parents and carers at Parents Advisory Group.

B) PLANS 2001/2 AND BEYOND

Set out what you will achieve for children under this objective in 2001/2 and beyond, and how you will achieve it.

Inter-agency project

- Plans to roll out this approach for under 5's in other areas of the County will be reviewed in the light of new CSF structures and evaluation of the New Assessment Framework pilot.
- Will implement revised model in the 2 new Child Development Centres opening in Watford and St. Albans in 2001, and work with paediatricians and other health professionals in the East and North of county to agree best way forward.
- Will examine the feasibility of extending this approach to older children.

Transition

- Ensure that effective multi-agency planning is implemented for young people aged 15 – 21 so they are supported in transition to adulthood.
- 2 new Specialist posts in will be funded in CSF, to ensure this area of work is given high priority.

Residential respite: Social work practice will be improved to ensure that up to date care plans and regular reviews are completed for all children having stays of 24 hours or more – grant to be used for additional SW staff to carry out these tasks in each of the new quadrant disability teams.

Long term Residential: New unit opens Summer 2001, increasing number of in-county long-term beds from 4 to 11.

Shared Care.

- Aim to increase level of recruitment building on good start made, and raise profile of service still higher through repeating successful publicity e.g., leaflets and posters, local media, talks to community groups.
- Aim to recruit a minimum of 24 more carers in 2001/02 - 6 households per quadrant.
- Will tackle large numbers on waiting list and length of time young people wait to receive a service, by having more realistic criteria for children accepted for this service, and ensuring that waiting lists are regularly reviewed.

- Equal Opportunities Action Plan will address shortage of black/ ethnic minority Shared Carers.

Community based services

- Complete feasibility study re improved support services for children with complex behavioural problems, and develop additional services in identified areas of the county.
- Will develop the new countywide network for providers to encourage common standards, advise on recruitment and training and share expertise. Will target recruitment difficulties by encouraging providers to consider a joint approach to sharing staff and building up an employment portfolio for part time/ session workers.

C) SPECIFIC IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES 2001/2002 – AND BEYOND

Please say what you will do to:

i) work with partners, including disabled children and their families, to assess needs and commission/provide services with partner agencies.

- New CSF Dept will integrate assessments and co-ordinate education and social care provision in new quadrant teams, and will facilitate joint work with Health. School provision for secondary pupils with MLD and Autism will be developed.
- Services for ethnic minority families – will update CWD Register to improve ethnic origin information. This data will then be used as the basis for targeted, local strategies in the 4 new disability teams.
- Roll out new training programme to improve specialist skills in communication, child protection etc.
- Further use of specialist advocacy worker to seek the views of young disabled LAC, individually and through new focus groups.
- Develop consultation groups to seek views of other young people re: service developments.
- County wide Carers Conference will be repeated next year to report on use of Carers Grant and seek parents' views on how best to develop range of support services, plus local consultation groups re: specific services.
- Set up new joint respite panels to improve decision making about placements and improve equity in county.
- Use County Parent Advisory Group (parent reps of SEN children) to consult on QP priorities and targets.

ii) provide increased family support services (including any linked use of Carers Grants monies)

Additional respite places have been provided through Carers Grant but increased occupancy has led to reduced flexibility for families. Looking at feasibility of “swop shop” system for short notice breaks.

Final phase of Lonsdale School respite service targeted to open May 2001 increases unit from 3 bed to 4-bed service, during weekends and school holidays.

Shared Care.

To increase recruitment of ethnic minority carers by targeting these communities with publicity, and also using kinship networks.

Care at home

Monitor use of Carers Grant to increase range and flexibility of services.

Work with providers to resolve recruitment issues, by supporting more robust infrastructures for voluntary sector services, developing specialist training programmes and developing flexible, rapid response service for families in crisis.

Special Needs Playscheme places - fund additional places in priority areas, and expand integrated services, through Carers Grant/Early Years Childcare Grant.

iii) provide inclusive play and leisure facilities

- Build on links with the 10 District and Borough Councils and out of school providers to advise on training and support issues to increase integration of special needs young people into mainstream provision.
- Improve choice of age appropriate activities through closer working with County and District Arts Development Officers, as well as national charities, (e.g. Chicken Shed Theatre Company, Drake Music Project) to create local inclusive theatre, arts and music projects.
- Closer work with sports Development Officers to improve sporting opportunities for disabled children.
- Complete feasibility study of developing befriending schemes for young people over the age of 14, using young volunteers to support individuals into specific community activities in additional areas of county.

iv) provide joint information services for service users

- New Children, School and Families Dept is commissioning new set of documents for Service users updating referral routes, eligibility criteria, etc.
- Work closely with Early Years Children’s Information Service to maintain up to date information on services for disabled children and publish resource directory for parents.

- Disseminate information to users through members of new countywide providers' network.
- Formalise use of quarterly newsletter (JIGSAW) to all families on CWD register through partnership agreement with Disability Information Services Herts (DISH).

D) EXPENDITURE OF GRANT

Disabled children is a priority area for grant

How much do you plan to spend on this in total in 2001 – 2002? (£)	797,000
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