

## REVIEW OF SCRUTINY OF SERVICES FOR DISABLED CHILDREN

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

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#### 1. Purpose of the report

To report to members on the developments in services for disabled children since the scrutiny which reported in March 2002.

#### 2. Summary

The report sets out the follow-up work which has been undertaken in response to the findings of the scrutiny of services for disabled children. It describes the positive contribution this work has already made, and will continue to make, to service improvement and outcomes for service users.

#### 3. Conclusion

The Scrutiny Committee will wish to note the actions taken over the year and comment on the developments, including work on the joint disability strategy.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1. A detailed scrutiny of services for disabled children and their families was carried out from October 2001 – January 2002. In March 2002 the CSF Scrutiny Committee considered a report outlining the key findings and proposed action arising from the scrutiny process. The Action Plan is attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.2. A special needs working party undertook the scrutiny. Visits were made to a wide range of services both in CSF and in the independent sector. There was significant involvement of parents and young people which positively contributed to the comprehensive evaluation and recommendations that members made.
- 1.3. The over-riding finding of the scrutiny was that while progress had been made in achieving a more equitable distribution of services across the county, there were still areas for improvement in meeting the needs of children and their families. In 2002/03, an additional £923,045 was invested in developing these services. Details of this funding are found in Section 14.
- 1.4. Implementing the Action Plan has made a very positive contribution to improving these services over the last year. Work continues to progress these developments and utilise the resources in accordance with the direction of scrutiny findings. There has already been a measurable impact on services and outcomes for disabled children and their families. This will increase even further as these new approaches become fully established.
- 1.5. As at the time of the scrutiny, there have continued to be serious difficulties in recruiting the quality and quantity of staff needed in most areas of CSF's work with disabled children. This is a situation affecting all local authorities in south-east England and is particularly acute in the recruitment of social workers and occupational therapists. However, this has not stood in the way of progressing the Action Plan and making good use of the addition resources.
- 1.6. Managers have used a range of innovative ways of undertaking the activities using different staff when the recruitment of the staff identified in the Action Plan was not immediately possible. These alternative approaches have included secondments, the use of locums, and the appointment of Occupational Therapist Assistants, Senior Practitioners and Professional Assistants.
- 1.7. Where Professional Assistants have been appointed, priority has been given to their professional development in order to provide a longer-term solution to the social work shortage as well as secure the quality of their immediate work. The calibre of the Professional Assistants recruited has been high and their development has been promoted through supervision and access to the Learning and Development Programme. From 2003/04, two Professional Assistants per Quadrant will be supported by CSF in applying for Diploma in Social Work courses.

- 1.8. Alternative approaches have also been used for Occupational Therapy. OT Assistants have played an important role together with the use of part-time OT students. A pilot project is being developed with Adult Care Services and District Councils to develop a professional qualification route for OT Assistants.
- 1.9. The next sections of this report follow the headings of the Action Plan and set out:
- the scrutiny findings
  - the actions taken
  - further action planned
  - the impact on services and outcomes for users

## **2. Short Breaks / Respite**

### **2.1 Findings of the scrutiny process:**

Scrutiny found that future respite provision would need to meet the increased volume and more complex needs of disabled children.

### **2.2 Action taken:**

- In response to the scrutiny findings, a wider range of more flexible short breaks/respite services (referred to as short breaks in the rest of the report) have been developed. These will meet the more complex needs of the children and include the extension of existing services as well as the development of new ones.
- A salaried shared care specialist scheme for children with more complex needs is in development and a project worker has been appointed.
- Staff from Webb Rise and Rippon Road Units have been used to establish a short breaks outreach service.
- A Head of Services for Disabled Children was appointed in September 2002 to provide an operational lead for taking forward the development of shared care and outreach services.
- Disabled young people have had increased opportunities to take part in arts, leisure and cultural activities. Play scheme places for disabled children have been increased in both specialist and integrated schemes.
- The Youth Service have employed a project officer to ensure disabled young people can integrate into Youth Service provision.

- The operational issues concerning respite units referred to in the Action Plan were followed up and resolved through the normal management channels. The partnership working arrangements between Webb Rise and Lonsdale School have been monitored and appropriate steps taken to seek to resolve the issues raised on the scrutiny visits.

### 2.3. Further action planned:

- A further shared care recruitment campaign will be launched in March 2003 and will feature in local newspapers, radio and Herts Direct.
- Plans are in hand to expand the number of places provided by outreach staff in 2003/04 and consideration is also being given to implementing an outreach service in the West Quadrant.
- Direct payments will be launched in April 2003. Under this scheme CSF makes the payment to the parent or carer so that they can purchase short breaks instead of the service being arranged by CSF. This will promote flexibility and enable families to have more control over the choice of the support they need and how they access it. A report "Direct Payments Scheme to support disabled children, young people and their families" was presented to the Strategy Panel on 27 February 2003.
- Four Youth Service integrated pilot projects will be launched in Autumn 2003. Preparation for this will include training of staff, review of access to premises, and a large participation and consultation event in June 2003.
- The operation of the partnership arrangements between Webb Rise and Lonsdale School will be subject to a round-table discussion with all stakeholders to see how we can develop and improve this innovative service.

### 2.4. Impact on service and outcome for users:

- Shared care placements for four children with multiple disabilities (learning disability, mobility difficulties and challenging behaviour) have been identified.
- The use of outreach staff has provided community-based services for four children who are not ready to access overnight services, or are waiting for a long-term bed.
- 485 new places were funded in specialist play schemes and 4 new integrated play schemes provided places for disabled children with an average of 5 children receiving 10 days in each play scheme. The integrated play schemes were supported by additional staff, funded from the Child Care Grant.

- 4 disabled young people from Lakeside School attended an integrated 3-day art project in August, alongside 8 other young people from a range of services. 14 disabled young people took part in 2 days of music and dance activities creating their own songs, music and dance routines with professional artists at the Herts Dance venue in Hatfield. 5 disabled young people were involved in “Sound It Out”, a music and dance workshop managed by Theatre Resource.

### **3. Local Services: Staffing and Workloads**

#### 3.1. Findings of the scrutiny process:

Scrutiny identified the shortfall in staffing to meet the demand for services. Scrutiny also identified that the equipment budget was inadequate to meet the costly, specialist equipment required for the children.

#### 3.2. Action taken:

- A growth bid in the CSF Plan 2002/03 provided funding for: 4 additional social workers, 2 occupational therapists, 2 Moving and Handling Officers, 1 Principal Officer – Occupational Therapy (0.4 FTE). Where it has not been possible to recruit to the originally intended posts, this additional staffing resource has been used creatively to progress the Action Plan.
- The equipment budget was increased by an additional £100,000.

#### 3.3. Further action planned:

- New approaches to recruitment will continue, alongside the systematic professional development of Professional Assistants and Occupational Therapy Assistants.

#### 3.4. Impact on service and outcome for users:

- Duty systems have been made more robust, resulting in one Quadrant halving the waiting list for social work assessments. Appointments to see families are now being booked more quickly.
- In another Quadrant, young people who will need a future service from Adult Care Services have been identified and work started earlier on making the necessary links with schools and Adult Care Services as well as involving the family in the planning process.
- Link workers have been provided in order to work more closely with Special Schools. This has helped identify families needing support before they reach crisis point as well as providing assistance to the schools in managing approximately 240 complex situations over the past year.

- Waiting lists for OT assessments have been reduced in one team.
- Due to the increase in the equipment budget, children are no longer waiting for equipment.

#### **4. Customer Service Centre & Client Services**

##### 4.1. Findings of the scrutiny process:

Scrutiny demonstrated client and partner agency dissatisfaction with the Customer Service Centre and Client Services because of concerns about delays in processing work.

##### 4.2. Action taken:

- The working arrangements between Client Services and the Customer Service Centre have been examined to identify the reasons for the areas of difficulty. Practices have been changed and both supported in working more effectively together.

##### 4.3. Further action planned:

- Monitoring of this work will continue and data about this will be regularly reported in the Members' Bulletin.

##### 4.4. Impact on service and outcome for users:

- These improvements mean that enquiries and referrals are dealt with promptly.

#### **5. Corporate Parenting Officer / Corporate Parenting Panel**

##### 5.1. Findings of the scrutiny process:

- Scrutiny noted a lack of awareness among some staff of the role of the panel and the Corporate Parenting Officer.

##### 5.2. Action taken:

- These issues were addressed by the relevant managers for all staff in post through systematic discussion in team meetings and are now part of the routine induction process for new staff.

5.3. Further action planned:

- A report will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel on 7 May 2003 about its responsibilities towards disabled children in public care.

5.4 Impact on service and outcome for users:

By ensuring clear understanding of corporate parenting by all with a role to play, the best interests of children with disabilities in the care of the local authority are promoted and safeguarded.

## 6. Care in the Home

6.1. Findings of the scrutiny process:

Scrutiny noted concerns that Home Care Agencies varied in the standards of care provided; were often unable to provide staff for children with complex needs; and did not always carry out police checks on staff.

6.2. Action taken:

- In response to families' concerns about the lack of emergency respite home care, a pilot scheme has been set up.
- A review of the main contract for home care is currently being undertaken.
- Police checks are now mandatory.

6.3. Further action planned:

- The possibility of reviewing other home care agencies is being considered for 2003/04 because concerns still remain about the ability of these agencies to meet complex needs.

6.4. Impact on service and outcome for users:

The emergency respite home care pilot provided 18 hours of care per family. The scheme is now being evaluated in partnership with parents.

## **7. Information and planning data**

### **7.1. Findings of the scrutiny process:**

Scrutiny highlighted the need for easily accessible information for parents in a range of formats. The particular importance of benefits advice was noted.

### **7.2. Action taken:**

- A “Zed Card” (a wallet-sized, fold-out leaflet) has been developed and is attached to this report. This was issued to all families on the Children with Disability and SEN registers.
- Schools, professionals and parents have assisted with the planning and testing of a joint CSF/Health website. It provides information for both professionals and parents/carers of disabled children to access information about the full range of services provided by CSF and by partner agencies. A preview will be held on 4 March 2003 to which members, parents and professionals have been invited.
- The “Children with Disabilities Register”, and “Services for Disabled Children” leaflets have been updated. These are available both through Customer Services and Local Services.
- A new post of Children with Disabilities Register Officer (0.5 FTE) has been created. The postholder has updated and maintained the register and links this with the SEN register, to provide planning data.
- A voluntary organisation, DISH (Disability Information Service in Hertfordshire), has been funded to provide a telephone information service and sends a copy of its quarterly magazine to all families on the register for disabled children.
- The Money Advice Unit (MAU) benefits advice scheme was expanded by a further 0.5 post which was filled in November 2002.
- The expertise of the MAU has been disseminated across a wide range of relevant professionals and families through the following training and information strategies:
  - Disability Living Allowance (DLA) training for health visitors
  - Training programme “CSF Practice Update” included a session on Benefits for disabled children
  - Disability benefits training for GPs
  - 19 talks provided across Hertfordshire to CSF teams, schools, parents groups, health and voluntary organisations
  - New information/training pack on DLA for Children
  - Children with Disabilities Fact sheet produced and distributed in 2002 (being updated to incorporate April 2003 benefit changes)

- Benefits information for parents of visually impaired children updated for sensory impairment team
- Articles in various HCC and voluntary organisation publications, including Jigsaw Magazine
- Benefits information placed on MAU webchannel and Children with Disabilities section on HertsDirect
- Talks provided across Hertfordshire to CSF teams, schools, parents groups, health and voluntary organisations

7.3. Further action planned:

- The successful strategies of the MAU over the last year will be continued and built upon in the year ahead:
- The website will be launched for the public at the beginning of April 2003. The website address is: [www.hertsdirect.org/specialneeds](http://www.hertsdirect.org/specialneeds).

7.4. Impact on service and outcome for users:

- The various improvements to the quality and quantity of information have been positively received by parents and young people. The experience of contributing to the development of appropriate information, and seeing the results of this contribution, has strengthened partnership working with families.

Between April 03 and January 04, the work of the MIU has resulted in benefits claimed for 95 clients.

**8. Relationships with Partner Agencies**

8.1. Findings of the scrutiny process:

Scrutiny found that the benefits of joint agency assessment needed to be expanded to other areas of joint work.

8.2. Action taken:

- The Joint Disability Strategy Group commissioned a report on developing joint agency working that included assessment, care planning and reviews for all disabled children on a countywide basis within existing resources. The report has now been completed and is being progressed within the Joint Disability Strategy.
- The new places in both specialist play schemes and integrated play schemes were the result of partnerships between CSF, the voluntary sector and district councils.
- Steps have been taken to assist the voluntary sector with the recruitment of staff for play schemes. Play schemes and shared care were included in the Early Years recruitment roadshows in Borehamwood, Watford, Stevenage and Hemel Hempstead. An advertisement was placed in HCC payslips in May 2002, seeking

recruits for specialist summer play schemes, resulting in 36 responses and there have been joint advertisements in the local press.

- The new sports, arts, leisure and cultural opportunities which were piloted in the summer 2002 were the result of effective new partnerships between a range of CSF services and private and voluntary sector organisations.
- CSF and ACS are working with the 10 District Councils to identify how to get best value from resources relating to adaptations to both council-owned and owner-occupied homes. Currently each housing authority has different arrangements for adaptations. A comparative study of other local authorities' policies, eligibility criteria and budgets is being undertaken with a view to identify common principles for all the housing authorities and agree policy on such matters as waiting lists and the priority setting. These will be drafted by Autumn 2003.

#### 8.3. Further action planned:

- A possible source of funding has now been identified to meet a long-identified gap in Stevenage for a specialist play scheme.
- The Integrated Equipment Project has resulted in an agreement that Homeability (ACS and CSF) and Health Community Equipment stores will form Hertfordshire's new equipment store with one Operational Manager. Work on a service specification, shared catalogue and a pooled budget is currently underway. The integrated equipment scheme will be in place by April 2004.

#### 8.4. Impact on service and outcome for users:

- All these developments have contributed to the increased range of provision available, and the most cost-effective use of financial resources and staff expertise.

## **9. Siblings of Disabled Children**

### 9.1. Findings of the scrutiny process:

Scrutiny noted the effect on siblings of having a disabled brother or sister. Often these children have significant caring responsibilities and may need their own support.

### 9.2. Action taken:

- A Practice Guide on Young Carers is currently being revised and it is planned to issue the guide to staff in March 2003.

### 9.3. Further action planned:

- A report on the future Strategy for young Carers will be considered by CSF's Strategy Panel on 15 May 2003.

### 9.4. Impact on service and outcome for users:

- The Practice Guide emphasises the importance of assessing the needs of young carers to ensure that their caring responsibilities do not hinder the young carer's development.

## **10. Transition**

### 10.1. Findings of the scrutiny process:

Scrutiny identified that transition from children's to adult services is a key area for action and the transition plans should address the needs of young people for education, employment and training.

### 10.2. Action taken:

- Two Transition Development Workers are now in post.
- A draft Transition protocol has been developed and is being consulted on with partner agencies.
- The arrangements for disabled care leavers are under discussion with partner agencies and Pathway Planning issues are being explored with Rippon Road and the Gables Units.
- Following a Transition Conference in October 2002, a Transition Review leaflet has been developed in response to parents' requests.

### 10.3. Further action planned:

- Management information is being developed which will provide improved and timely data on the young people, their needs, and the stage they are at within the transition process.
- A joint CSF/ACS scrutiny of Transition will be held in Autumn 2003.

### 10.4. Impact on service and outcome for users:

- Improvements in transition arrangements protects young people and their families from setbacks at a vulnerable point in their development into adulthood.

## **11. Views of Parents and Young People**

### 11.1. Findings of the scrutiny process:

Scrutiny noted that the whole scrutiny process had benefited from the continuous input of parental views. Feedback from young people was also noted. They wished to see more support for their families; more opportunities for leisure activities; more help to raise school achievement; and a continued say in plans and service development.

### 11.2. Action taken:

- A workshop was held in May 2002 at which parents commented on the short-term plans to improve services as an outcome of the scrutiny.
- Parents and carers have contributed to the working groups that looked at the delivery of more flexible short-breaks and the information needs of families.

### 11.3. Further action planned:

- Parents, carers and young people will continue to play an important part in developing the Joint Disability Strategy.

### 11.4. Impact on service and outcome for users:

- Disabled children have become further involved in the main CSF Children's Participation Programme over the last year. In addition, a focused consultation has been carried out at Greenside School with further consultations in March 2003 at Bushey Meads and Meadow Wood Schools.
- In response to these consultations, new activities have been developed to assist young people in accessing leisure services in partnership with partner agencies.

## **12. Progress on Development of Joint Disability Strategy**

- 12.1. Since April 2002, health colleagues have worked closely with CSF in developing a joint disability strategy.
- 12.2. When the Health Authority and Trusts set up a Review of Children's Services in July 2001, it was agreed that the review of Community Services would focus specifically on disabled children. It was further agreed with Health that a new Joint Disabled Children's Strategy needed to be established and would be led by a Joint Disability Strategy Officer Group. This would be informed by the findings and recommendations of the members' scrutiny.
- 12.3. A working group of staff from both organisations has been considering data, and examining best practice, both within Hertfordshire and elsewhere. It is planned to present the draft joint disability strategy to the Special Needs Panel on 8 May 2003. Following a period of consultation, the report will be presented to the CSF Scrutiny Committee on 18 June 2003, and Cabinet on 21 July 2003.

## **13. Financial implications**

- 13.1. Additional Funding for 2002/03 was as follows:

Child Care Grant	£ 25,500
Carers Breaks	£317,600
Quality Protects	£450,000
CSF Base Budget	£129,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£921,200</b>

- 13.2. The CSF base budget funded 4 social worker posts and necessary support costs in the disability teams.
- 13.3. The total £921,200 plus inflation is also available in 2003/04.

Background information used by the author in preparing this report:

Report to Special Needs Panel, 5 December 2001

Report to CSF Scrutiny Committee, 23 January 2002: Transitional Arrangements between Children, Schools and Families for Young Disabled Children

CSF Plan 2003-04

Valuing People: a new strategy for Learning Disability for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Dept of Health, LAC 2001(23)

Report to CSF Scrutiny Committee, 20 March 2002

Report to SN Panel, 24 April 2002

Ask us! The Children's Society CD, 2002

Members Information Bulletin 3

Scrutiny Report Action Plan (Sept 2002)