

**ANNUAL REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE IN 2002/03 BY THE SOCIAL  
SERVICES INSPECTORATE**

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

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**1. Purpose of report**

To inform members of:

- The findings of the Annual Review of Social Services Performance by the Social Services Inspectorate
- Highlight areas of particularly good performance, as identified by the Inspectorate
- Identify action sheets within the CSF Plan which address the areas identified by the Inspectors

**2. Summary**

2.1 This report presents the findings of the Social Services Inspectorate Annual Review Letter, a copy of which is attached at Appendix A of this report. This report only addresses those points which relate to CSF. The letter is also being presented to the Adult Care Services Scrutiny Committee on the 23 October.

2.2 The SSI recognised the sustained progress and improvement the authority has made over the last year, particularly in the context of increasing demand for services and continuing development of new approaches to joined up services. CSF is noted as having particular strengths and demonstrates improvement in:

- Educational qualifications of children looked after (identified as an area for development last year)
- Numbers of children looked after in foster care

- Health of looked after children (identified as an area for development last year)
  - Review of children on the child protection register
  - Improvements in family placements
  - Employment, education and training for care leavers is cited as excellent
  - Improved CAMH service with clear joint strategy reflecting CSF priorities
  - Improved timescales in relation to the Assessment Framework
- 2.3 Whilst CSF has made improvements in many areas and is performing well the Inspectorate identified the following as areas for development:
- Recruitment & retention
  - Number of children looked after for 6 months who are adopted
  - Developing a long term strategy to deal with the rising numbers of children looked after and child protection cases
  - Developing shared joint priorities with the health partners

### **3. Conclusion**

- 3.1.1 The Social Services Inspectorate Annual Review Letter recognises the continuing development and improvement CSF is making to children's services in Hertfordshire since its creation. Strong performance is noted in a number of key areas.
- 3.2 CSF is aware of the areas for development noted by the Inspectorate and has taken action to address the issues.
- 3.3 All of the issues raised are covered by detailed action plans, covered in the CSF Plan. These are attached at Appendix B

## **4. Background**

- 4.1 The Social Services Inspectorate reaches judgements about performance against a set of standards and criteria, drawing on evidence from a number of standard sources. These include:
- The published PAF performance indicators and other statistical data up to 2002/03, plus data supporting planned targets for 2003/4
  - Monitoring information from the position statements completed in June & October 2002, and the Delivery & Improvement Statement completed in May 2003
  - The audit of services to children in need carried out in response to the Victoria Climbié inquiry
  - Informal discussions with authorities, and the results of inspections throughout the year
- 4.2 Following the Annual Review the inspectors formally write to authorities setting out their view of performance, identifying strengths and areas for development in the coming year.
- 4.3 Authorities are required to present the letter to an appropriate meeting of the council within two months of receipt of the letter and make it available to members of the public at the same time.
- 4.4 The evidence summarised in the letter is used, in conjunction with the processes outlined above to determine the council's performance rating
- 4.5 CSF will receive its performance rating in November.

## **5. Conclusions of the letter**

- 5.1 The letter confirms that we are making steady and continuous improvement in our performance.
- 5.2 It highlights some areas of good practice particularly in terms of our partnership working, looked after children, care leavers and our scrutiny and governance arrangements.
- 5.3 The Inspectors advise CSF of areas for future development and work, particularly in the areas of recruitment & retention and adoption of children looked after for more than six months.
- 5.4 The areas raised have been recognised by CSF as key issues. In terms of recruitment & retention, a specialist recruitment team is in

place and a staff retention working group is examining retention issues for CSF.

- 5.5 CSF does well on the stability of placements for looked after children and the speedy decision to place for adoption but recognises there is a delay in converting to an adoption order. CSF will be chairing a family court working party to look at the issues behind this.
- 5.6 Developing a long term strategy to deal with the rising numbers of children looked after and child protection cases – Hertfordshire in common with the national picture has seen an increase in looked after children numbers together with longer periods in care. A looked after children strategy is currently being developed with emphasis on preventing the need for children to come into the care system and when they do, speeding their exit from the system. An ongoing programme of action is in place with ACPC to reduce the number of child protection cases.
- 5.7 Following the health review of children's services proposals have been made for a move to a single management structure. Meetings are taking place between Health Chief Executives and CSF to work up proposals for a future structure including joint commissioning.

## **6. Financial Implications**

This report is for member information only so there are no immediate financial implications, however the report highlights many of the pressures within the social care field; addressing these may have future financial implications.

## **7. Rural implications**

None

*Background information used by the author in compiling this report:*

Letter from Social services Inspectorate dated 1 September 2003 attached as Appendix A

## **Appendix B**

Detailed action plans in response to issues raised by Inspectors can be found in the CSF Plan 2003/04 as follows:

<b>Area</b>	<b>Action Sheets</b>
Educational qualifications of looked after children	5.4.1
Foster care & adoption	5.3.1, 5.3.2
Health of looked after children	5.4
Child protection	5.1.1, 5.1.2
Family placements	5.1.6
Care leavers	5.5.1
CAMHS	4.2.2
Assessment Framework	5.1.4
Recruitment & retention	2.1.4, 2.1.5, 2.1.7, 2.2, 2.3.3
Partnership working	3.3.1, 3.3.3,