HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 17 MARCH 2004 at 10.00AM

Agenda Item No

1

FAMILY SUPPORT CENTRE SERVICE FOR UNDER 10'S

Report of the Director of Children, Schools and Families

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Executive Member: Jane Pitman

1. Purpose of the report

1.1. This report was requested by Tanis Kent for scrutiny by the Committee.

1.2. A report seeking approval for proposals to remodel the Family Support Service for Children under 10, was submitted to Cabinet on 26 January 2004 (see Appendix One). A decision was made to agree the proposals and that implementation should commence with a full stakeholder consultation to be completed by 31 March 2004. The purpose of this report is to outline the consultation process to enable members of Scrutiny Committee to participate.

2 Summary

2.1. Extensive consultation has taken place with Family Support Centre managers and staff over the last 18 months. The stakeholder consultation will include quadrant workshops targeted at external stakeholders to the service. Families and children using the service will be able to participate through a Viewpoint survey.

3. Conclusions

3.1. The Scrutiny Committee is invited to be involved in the consultation process and to question Officers and the Executive Member on the proposals contained in the Cabinet Report and the consultation document (See Appendix Two). The outcome of the full consultation will be reported to Children and Families Panel on 13 May.

4. Consultation Plan

4.1. The consultation document in Appendix Two describes the current service, explains why the service is being remodelled, the framework for the new service and the likely impact of the changes.

4.2. Since the project to develop the service began in July 2002 three one-day workshops have been held for Family Support Centre Managers including other relevant Local Services managers. Two one-day workshops for the whole staff group have been held. The most recent one was held on 6 January when the framework for the service considered by Cabinet was shared with staff.

4.3. Whilst supporting the overall principles, staff have expressed concerns about the Quadrant based team approach in relation to continuity for service users, community and partner agency links and variety of work for staff. These issues will be further explored and addressed in the wider consultation and implementation phase of the project.

4.4. A Project Group has been supporting the developments and this group will be enlarged and supplemented by a project reference group during the implementation phase.

4.4 The stakeholder consultation will focus on the following five key areas:

i. Gaining the commitment and involvement of key partner agencies.
ii. The development of the Contact Service.
iii. Accessibility and thresholds.
iv. Ensuring the service is responsive to the needs of service users
v. Integration with other CSF quadrant services

4.5. External and internal stakeholders will be consulted, including the following:

- Service Users (both adults and children)
- Health Services, including CAMHS
- Primary and Nursery Schools
- Voluntary and private providers of early years service.
- Children's Centres
- Voluntary Agencies
- Other CSF staff

5. Methods of Consultation

5.1. Service Users

5.1.1. In line with the report to Children and Families Panel on 5 February 2004, the Consultation and Participation of Parents and Carers we will use Viewpoint for this consultation. This will enable us to obtain feedback from users of all the Family Centres, across a range of

services. It builds on work already undertaken by the centres and can be adapted for use on an ongoing basis.

5.1.2 The areas for consultation with service users will include local accessibility, preferred times and methods of service delivery and general feedback about satisfaction with various elements of service.

5.2. Quadrant Forums

5.2.1 There will be four quadrant consultation forums, to which representatives from a wide range of external stakeholders will be invited, including schools.

5.2.2. These meetings will have taken place before Scrutiny Committee meets on 17 March and a report will be tabled.

5.2.3. As well as explaining the Plan to key external and internal stakeholders within each quadrant, areas for consultation at these meetings will include:

- Shared objectives and how agencies will be involved in the new service,
- How contact can best be provided and co-ordinated within the new service and with the voluntary sector.
- Issues of accessibility and thresholds.

5.2.4. A consultation document and questions will be made available on the Herts Direct website so that those unable to attend the meetings have an opportunity to respond.

5.3. Committee and Partnership Consultations

5.1. The Plan will be an agenda item on the next available meeting for key partnerships and subgroups, including:

- Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (Young in Herts) County Partnership, including its Parenting and Family Support Sub-Group and District Subgroups
- Children and Young People Strategic Partnership
- Preventative Strategy Co-ordinating Group
- Primary Schools Forum
- Nursery Heads Forum
- Children's Centres Forum
- CAMHS Steering Group
- Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board

5.2. Some of these meetings will take place after 31 March. Representatives will be invited to the workshops and feedback will be built into the project on an ongoing basis.

6. Financial Implications.

6.1 See Cabinet Report at Appendix One for financial implications.

7. Access to Service implications

7.1 As a part of the project to implement the new service a full impact equalities assessment will be undertaken at an early stage and kept under review throughout its duration.

Background material referred to by the author while compiling this report

" Every Child Matters" 2003 The Stationary Office