

APPENDIX TWO

Stakeholder Consultation Paper

Family Support Centre Service for Under 10s

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The purpose of this paper is inform external stakeholders about the new model of service that has recently been agreed by Children, Schools and Families (CSF) for the Family Support Centre Service for Under 10's.
- 1.2. Hertfordshire County Council's cabinet approved the basic framework on January 26th 2004 and this detailed report can be viewed on the Herts Direct website (www.hertsdirect.org).
- 1.3. Feedback is invited on how we can best implement these changes and work together to maximise the impact of the changes.

2. The current service

- 2.1. There are currently ten Family Support Centres, one located in each District or Borough Council Area. All except the Stevenage Centre (contracted out to NCH) are managed in the Local Services Division of CSF. The Service currently employs 104 FTE staff with a wide range of qualifications and experience from social work, social care and early education. The total revenue budget is £3 million a significant proportion of which is staffing costs. This includes the costs for the Stevenage service.
- 2.2. The last Children in Need Survey undertaken in 2003 showed that the service was working with 974 children.
- 2.2. The diagram in Figure 1 is based on the "Hardiker framework", which was introduced as a model for categorising levels of need. The Hardiker framework consists of four levels of provision, in addition to the universal "base level". *Level One* consists of services offered to vulnerable groups and communities. *Level Two* includes services for families suffering early stresses and temporary crises. *Level Three* provides support to those experiencing severe stresses and at risk of family breakdown, whilst *Level Four* services are provided once children have been removed from home. Figure 1 shows the service in Hertfordshire currently provided at each level.

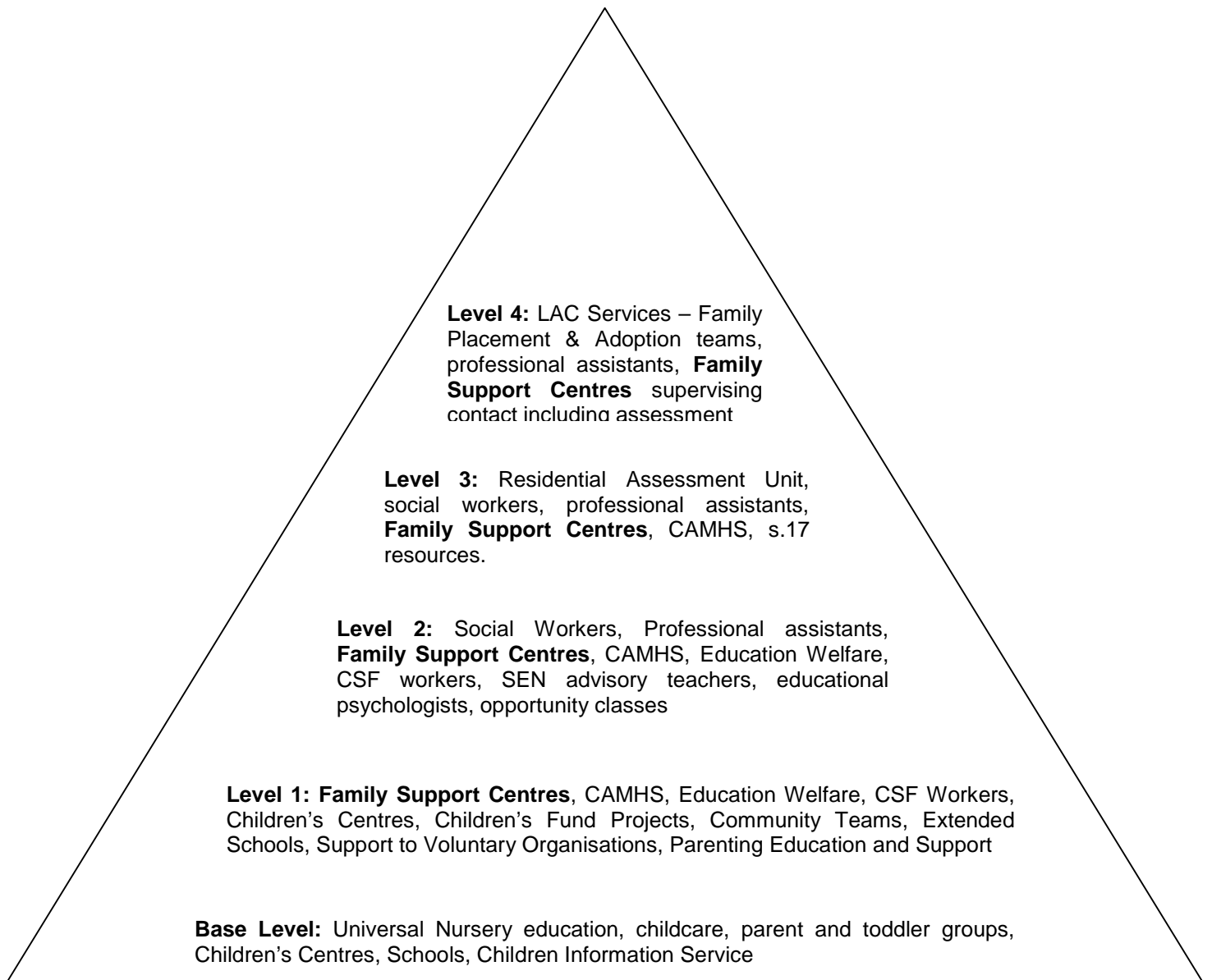


Figure 1: The range of CSF Support at each level of need

- 2.3. The Service undertakes work across all levels of need. This includes assessments, group work with families/ adults and children, individual work with adults and children, groups and “drop-ins” in the community and work in families’ own homes. Voluntary and community groups and other professionals use the child and family friendly environments of the Centres.
- 2.4. A snapshot of work undertaken by the service in October 2002 revealed that in relation to cases on average, 5.5 % of the work is at

level 1, 55.5.% on level 2, 28% on level 3 and 11% on level 4 of the framework.

3. Drivers for Change

3.1 The key drivers for change are:

- The Green Paper “ Every Child Matters”
- Development of universal early years services
- The Looked After Children Strategy

3.2. Every Child Matters

3.2.1. The Government Green Paper, entitled “Every Child Matters” recommends a range of support to families, as a part of universal services such as children’s centres, schools and health services to those providing specialist and targeted support to families in crisis.

3.2.2 The Green Paper focuses on a number of areas to achieve early intervention and effective protection that include:

- Improving information sharing
- Establishing a common assessment framework
- Identifying lead professionals through multi disciplinary teams
- Integrating professionals
- Co-locating services
- Effective child protection procedures.

3.3. Development of universal Early Years services

3.3.1 Over the last 5 years there has been a significant increase in universal early years services delivered by an effective multi agency partnership. By April 2004 all 3 and 4 year olds will be entitled to a funded part time nursery education place. We have created over 12,000 new childcare places between 2001/4.

3.3.2 Hertfordshire now has 4 Children’s Centres providing a range of integrated services including early education, childcare, health and parenting support in some of the most deprived areas of the county. We will expect to have a further two Centres by the end of this year as well as 70 Neighbourhood Nursery places. Our other 13 Nursery Schools are all providing some additional services. We are supporting the inclusion of children with particular needs through a range of strategies.

3.3.3 These services are beginning to provide a strong bedrock of universal services at the base and level one of the Hardiker framework.

3.4 Increasing numbers of children in the Looked After System

- 3.4.1. In March 2003 there were 380 looked after children under the age of 10. At current rates of increase, it is predicted that there would be 390 looked after children in this age group by April 2004, when the above plan would begin to be implemented and 447 looked after children by March 2008. This represents an increase of 57 children in 4 years in this age group.
- 3.4.2. The increase is due both to more children entering the system and more children being looked after for longer periods.
- 3.4.3. The development described below is linked to the Looked After Children Strategy, which seeks to address the increasing numbers of looked after children.

4. Framework for the new service

- 4.1. The Family Support Service will consist of two discrete teams dedicated respectively to preventative intervention and focused targeted intervention for families in crisis. It is further proposed that there would be a small Contact Co-ordination Team within each quadrant. The three teams would be accountable to the Group Manager for Referral and Assessment in each quadrant.
- 4.2. In the new service the Focus Intervention Team (FIT) will work intensively with families on a short-term basis at level 3 and 4 of the Hardiker framework. Most of the work will take place in families own homes and the service will be available in the evenings and weekends.
- 4.3. The preventative team will work with families at levels two and three using a range of interventions including parenting education, group and individual work.
- 4.4. The service will build on the links that the existing service has with its partner agencies. It will seek to strengthen the multi agency working, developing working protocols with key partners in health, early years, schools and the voluntary sector to provide a holistic approach to supporting families and children.
- 4.5. The Contact strand of the service will initially continue to provide contact only as a part of an assessment. By establishing a separate strand of the service the model has the potential to develop as a focus for all supervised public law contact and possibly piloting joint facilities for private law contact.
- 4.6. The strategy for accommodation to support a remodelled family support service is based on the following principles:

- i. Re-focusing of the service away from centre-based activities and towards support provided in families' own homes and communities, in line with the recommendations in the Green Paper.
 - ii. Providing services which are accessible to vulnerable local communities.
 - iii. Developing a modernised service with adequate office facilities and good access to networked ICT in order to participate in improved information sharing, again to comply with the requirements envisaged in the Green Paper.
 - iv. Providing adequate, safe, family-friendly Contact Suites to accommodate a discrete, efficient and co-ordinated Contact Service in each quadrant.
- 4.7. The intention is that existing centres would be refurbished or replaced using Private Finance Initiative credits, to achieve the above objectives.
- 4.8. Within each quadrant, there would be two Family Support Centres. One of these would act as the principal management and administrative resource base for both teams. The other would also include some administrative and office space but would also include the Contact Suite for use by the contact team. The Contact Suite would be self-contained in order to minimise disruption to other activities. Both centres would also contain space for parenting and other therapeutic groups for parents and children.
- 4.9. In quadrants where there are currently three centres, family support activities will continue to operate in those areas. These services will either operate out of an existing building or from satellite premises in the locality.
- 4.10. In addition to the centres described below, in order to ensure local accessibility, existing strong links would be developed with local communities, local schools and health services. Family support activities can then be delivered in "satellite" premises that are closer to families' homes, such as schools, children's centres, health centres, and community centres. Linking to existing and newly developed universal services will be a key feature of this development, as recommended in the Green Paper "Every Child Matters"

5. Impact of the changes

- 3.1. The proposed service structure and capital strategy will enable CSF to deliver an effectively focused family support service, targeted both on children and families at greatest risk and on prevention. The short term goal is to reduce the number of looked after children in this age group with the longer term aim of freeing up resources to invest in more preventative work in the future.

- 3.2. A 20% reduction in Looked After Children over 4 years which in view of the experience of neighbouring authorities who have taken this approach is realistic and could result in a £2 million saving.
- 3.3. It responds to the vision of future Children's Services outlined in the Green Paper, "Every Child Matters", strengthening support to families through the multi agency approach outlined in the previous Panel Report and taking the service closer to local communities. The improvement in facilities for staff, including ICT, mobility and a better career structure, will assist retention. The Quadrant rather than District based structure will embed the service securely within Local Services and improve cohesion.
- 3.4. Positioning more of the service at the complex end of the family support continuum and utilising the increased mainstream early years services to support all families and those with early stresses promotes inclusion, provides a full range of family support and effectively targets resources at those most in need.

Consultation Questions

Is your organisation a:

- Primary School
- Nursery School
- Children's Centre
- Voluntary or private provider of early years services
- Health Service
- Voluntary Sector Organisation
- CSF
- Other

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Does your organisation work across the whole county?

Yes No

If no, in which quadrant or quadrants do you operate?

- North
- South
- East
- West

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Do you work with the current service?

Yes No

If yes, briefly describe how.

If yes, How do you think the changes will affect your work?

How would you like to see the new service work with your organisation to improve outcomes for children and families?

Are there opportunities for more co-location of services? What would be needed to support this?

Do you have views about how contact services could be better provided in the future?

How can we strengthen universal services such as schools and early years providers to meet the needs of families at the base and level 1 of the Hardiker framework?

If you would like to receive a copy of the report on the consultation please can you give us your name and address or email below.