

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

WEDNESDAY 13 OCTOBER 2004 AT 10.00AM

Agenda Item No.

6

COUNCIL PROMISES – ‘TRAFFIC LIGHT’ MONITOR FOR 2004/05

Report of Director of Children, Schools and Families and the Head of Performance Improvement

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To report the latest data for the promises monitor 2004/05 for member scrutiny. This gives the estimated end of year (outturn) positions based on the latest available data.

2. Summary

- 2.1 This report shows current performance in relation to BVPP Promises, where this information is available. It should be noted that many of the indicators adopted to measure promises for 2004/05 are being used for the first time. The report should be read in conjunction with the Promises Monitor which is circulated separately to all members of the council.
- 2.2 Progress in relation to most of the Promises is encouraging. Where under performance can be identified, there are robust strategies in place for correcting it. This is particularly evident in relation to Promise 8, where the Strategy for School Improvement sets out how CSF will work together in schools to raise the levels of effectiveness and achievement.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 The Scrutiny Committee is invited to note the monitor and identify issues for future scrutiny as appropriate.

Background

1. Data Monitor

- 1.1 Scrutiny Committee Members can refer to the Promise by Promise list for 2004/05 to identify which Promises each Committee scrutinises. Members are reminded that a 'new' set of indicators has been identified through the BVPP Cabinet Panel process to measure the Promises for 2004/05.
- 1.2 Many of the indicators adopted to measure the Promises for 2004/05 have not been used as Promise measures previously or are being developed as entirely new indicators. This has two outcomes. It is not possible to compare performance against the previous year for these indicators and, for a smaller number, it is not yet possible to estimate performance. This is due to, for example, the lack of baseline information, the short amount of time data has been collected, or difficulties in practice with developing robust indicators.
- 1.3 Further to Scrutiny Member comments, we have replaced the yellow traffic lights with amber in an attempt to make the colours more visible on reproduction.
- 1.4 The Promises monitor (circulated separately to all Members of the Council) shows:
 - i) An overview of the promises for 2004/05 showing the numbers of promises on target, under-performing, giving cause for concern or where data is not available, compared to targets for 2004/05 and compared to results for 2003/04 (where possible). In addition, bar charts, showing the performance of indicators, are presented.
 - ii) The promise by promise list for 2004/05 compared to target and compared to 2003/04 performance. Note: 2003/04 figures used for comparison are those submitted to the Audit Commission in June/July 2004 and are currently subject to audit.
 - iii) The detailed Traffic Light Monitor - additionally this shows performance against target for each indicator used to measure the promises for 2004/05.

2. Management Summary

2.1 The paragraphs below provide further commentary on key areas on 2004/05 promises for Children Schools and Families as revealed by the performance data.

(a) Promise 8 (Strive to improve educational achievement throughout the county)

Hertfordshire is a high achieving authority with many schools performing significantly in advance of national expectations. In order to build on this, and continue to support schools across the county effectively, CSF has just launched two new strategies. These are the Hertfordshire's Strategy for School Improvement and The Hertfordshire Learning Partnership. The holistic vision for children's services set out in the recent Children's Bill is a key focus for these new strategies.

The 'Strategy for School Improvement' sets out how we will be working with schools to improve their effectiveness and hence raise levels of achievement throughout the county. The central thrust of this new strategy is to ensure that CSF works in a co-ordinated way, with all parts of our service coming together to support and challenge schools to improve. There is a key focus on dealing with the 'Achievement Gap' and under performing schools. The strategy also emphasises targeted work with challenging communities.

To ensure effective alignment of all this work to support schools in raising standards, CSF has established a Standards and School Effectiveness Board, with four quadrant-based School Effectiveness Boards reporting to it. These boards bring together professionals from CSF and schools to monitor progress of schools. They will also consider and approve strategies for school improvement through a programme of Monitoring, Support, Challenge and Intervention.

(b) Promise 9 (Ensure that children are protected from harm and improve their life chances, and support vulnerable families)

Whilst still reflecting the national picture of underachievement, the educational achievement of looked after children in Hertfordshire continues to improve year on year. GCSE results for the academic years 2003/04 show an upward trend in relation to students sitting and achieving 5 A to C passes, 5 A to G passes and 1 A to G pass at GCSE.

The proportion of statements continues to be disproportionately high for Looked After Children, and particularly so in Key Stage 4. Achievement levels for Looked After Children remains a challenge for CSF. We have a number of strategies for dealing with this including study support, revision classes, individual tuition and training and support for schools. A key part of the strategy for 2004/05 is to reduce the number of young people who fail to sit GCSE examinations for reasons such as disaffection and placement instability.

CSF has always been robust in reviewing children on the Child Protection Register and ensuring that quarterly reviews take place on time. A system for checking and authorising any changes to child protection case conferences is in place and each year a small number of these do have to be re-scheduled. The evidence is that cancelled conferences are re-scheduled quickly. For example, of the 14 cases that did not meet the time-scales, 8 only missed the schedule by less than 5 days. This area was reviewed under the recent SSI Inspection of Child Protection and was deemed good practice. Latest results on the Delivery and Improvement Statement demonstrate a high level of performance in this area compared to other Local Authorities.

(c) Promise 10 (Promote the learning of all children by tackling behavioural problems and truancy)

CSF will continue to implement the Behaviour and Achievement Strategy which includes developing the capacity of schools through the creation of Learning Support Units in secondary schools and Nurture Groups in primary schools.

We are moving from the current EBD provision into supporting children to remain in their own school bases through the provision of peripatetic teams. Additional initiatives include the Anti - Bullying project and the expansion of special school provision for children with EBD Statements.

We are further developing KEY Stage 4 provision through a project set up in partnership with a special school and Hertfordshire Regional College, due to commence in September 2005.

The recent review of Learning Support Units show that schools feel that these units have enhanced their capacity to deal with those young people who have highly challenging behaviour.

We are currently conducting a full impact assessment of the whole Behaviour and Achievement Strategy and this will go to the Education Panel in November.

(d) Promise 11 (Assist under performing schools to improve their standards substantially)

The recently launched 'Hertfordshire Learning Partnership' sets out the new arrangements for CSF to work in partnership with schools to support them all, especially those that are under performing, to improve their standards. Every school will now have an annual whole day review conducted by a School Effectiveness Adviser from the Standards and School Effectiveness Division. The outcome of the review is that schools will be placed in one of seven categories that will determine the future levels of support that they will be entitled to receive.

The strategy sets a clear framework for Monitoring, Challenging, Supporting and Intervening (MCSI) with schools, which is based upon the development of schools' ability to be more self-evaluative. Schools causing concern will receive higher levels of direct support and intervention. An Action Group will be formed for each of the schools in these categories and will include the Headteacher and Chair of Governors, together with the school's effectiveness adviser.

(e) Promise 12 (Ensure that Hertfordshire has a range of specialist schools)

Hertfordshire now has 52 specialist schools, which is a very high proportion compared with the national picture. The Diversity Pathfinder (DP) initiative, which has now ended, enabled CSF to provide support and encouragement to schools as they planned and completed their submissions. Through this initiative we were able to facilitate schools to work together in local clusters so that the range of specialisms in a locality was as varied as possible and that breadth of involvement of local communities was as wide as possible.

Although the DP initiative has now ended, support for schools wishing to seek specialist status will be provided through the Standards and School Effectiveness Division (14-19 team).

A key challenge for schools, as they seek to become specialist, is the need to raise £50,000 in sponsorship. With so many schools becoming specialist, it has become difficult for many of them to raise this sponsorship. As part of the DP initiative, a Hertfordshire Educational Resources Trust fund has been established, drawing on donations from businesses, to help schools raise this sponsorship money.

(f) Promise 13 (Help people to continue learning throughout their lives)

The County Council's role is to make a distinctive contribution to the provision of local opportunities for adults to learn and develop through life. By using the resources at its disposal the Council commissions a wide range of adult, community and family learning programmes for adult learners whose needs are not significantly catered for by other providers. Action needs to continue to ensure that learners from under represented minority ethnic groups, men and learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have access to learning opportunities that are attractive, accessible and of a high quality.

- 2.2 Appendix 2 provides information on the 2004 assessment test and examination results for Hertfordshire schools. Overall, there has been an improvement in the results across the key stages. At all stages results remain significantly above the national average and there have been improvements at each key stage that, overall, are in line with the national picture. At GCSE 5 A*-C, results have risen by approximately 1% and at A Level, the average points score (APS) per student has increased by approximately 2 points.
- 2.3 The Key Stage 4 and 5 figures are based on the analysis summarised returns from schools and are not derived from an analysis of individual pupil data. The pupil level data will not be available for analysis until 30th September.

3. Traffic Light Monitor and LPSA Monitor Rules

- 3.1 The rules determining whether a promise is on target or not are attached as Appendix 1.

4. Access to Service Implications

- 4.1 Members attention should be drawn to the promise "to promote the right of everyone to equal treatment when they use our services, our buildings or apply for a job with us" in particular, which indicates that we are expecting to meet 3 out of the 4 targets. Data is not yet available for 1 of the 4 indicators, where work is being undertaken to establish baseline data and where the results are not yet available.

5. Resource Implications

- 5.1 None, other than already set out in the CSF Plan.

**APPENDIX 1
TRAFFIC LIGHT MONITOR RULES**

- a) The status, on target (Green) or under-performing/causing concern (Amber/Red) of the majority of PIs measuring that promise determines the overall status of that promise. The number of PIs that are Amber and are Red are added together, as these may prompt remedial action.
- b) If the number of Ambers and Reds is the majority, then it shows the predominant category.
- c) If there is no majority, then the status of the promise is determined in the order, Red and Amber then Green; i.e. if there are 2 red/amber indicators and 2 green indicators, the overall status would be red/amber. This is again based on the premise that this will provide a prompt for action.
- d) Only if all the indicators for a promise are not available/not comparable does the promise show as White.

Other rules (unchanged)

- e) Variance to targets is shown, with a positive result indicating good performance and a negative result indicating poor performance.
- f) All parts of performance indicators are shown as separate indicators.
- g) Weightings for each indicator are applied. The standard weighting is 1. Where an indicator has been split between its parts, the weightings are equally distributed (adding up to 1). Thus at present, no indicator has more or less effect on the overall result than any other.