

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE 7 JANUARY 1999

NOTE: A full copy of the report mentioned is available from Peter Hull,
Room 222, County Secretary's Department, County Hall, Hertford.
(telephone: 01992 555565)

QUALITY PROTECTS : MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

Quality Protects : Transforming Children's Services is a major Government three year programme designed to help local authorities improve their service to children. This initiative arose out of a range of Government inspections and reviews, such as the Utting Safeguards Review and the Social Service Inspectorate (SSI) report "Someone Else's Children". These had uncovered the following causes for concern:-

- the safety of children in residential and foster-care
- the quality of social work practice, particularly assessment and care planning for looking after children and children in need and
- the support young people receive when leaving care.

To address these concerns a Quality Protects Management Action Plan has been prepared and agreed by the Social Services Committee, Social Services Operations Sub-Committee and the Education Operations Sub-Committee and submitted to the SSI. Further plans will be submitted for the years 2000 and 2001.

The purpose of the plan is to serve as:-

- a readily accessible local project plan for modernising children's services
- a statement against which the entitlement to special grants will be judged
- the basis for assessment by the Department of Health and subsequent monitoring of progress in implementing the Quality Protects Programme and
- a source of information for the Department of Health about further action to be taken regionally and/or centrally to secure the objectives for children's services.

The Plan is a working document which need to develop over a period of time. Plans for years 2 and 3 of the programme will need to be modified in the light of experience in the first year.

These will set out what is required of managers, differing from Children's Services Plans, which provide a strategic overview of what services are needed and how they are delivered.

Budget proposals for spending Government's special grants has been approved and included in the Management Action Plan as follows:-

- Commissioning: placement choice; increasing the choice of adoption, foster and residential care placements for looked after children;
- Assessment: improving assessment, care planning and record keeping
- Audit: improving quality assurance systems to ensure that services are meeting local and national objectives
- Leaving Care: increasing the support provided for care leavers
- Communications: listening to the views and wishes of children and
- Management Information: enhancing the development and use of management information systems.

A summary of the proposals for using the additional resources available is attached at Appendix 'A'.

Hertfordshire would expect to receive the following Quality Protects special grants, based upon the proportion of SSA each authority will receive over the next three years:- £1.046 million for 1999/2000, £1.673 million for 2000/2001, and £2.510 million for 2001/2002. However, the amount of grant available has yet to be confirmed by the Government and minor adjustments may have to be made when the exact figures are known. Should additional special grant funds become available in 1999/2000 the development of the leaving care service will have priority to be brought forward from amongst the developments due to start in 2000/2001.

P M Aldis
Chairman
County Hall, Hertford

7 January 1999