

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
TUESDAY 20 JULY 2004 at 10.30am

REPORT OF THE CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
23 JUNE 2004

NOTE: A copy of the report mentioned below has been sent to all members of the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee and other members who have requested it. Further copies are available from Julia Harries, Room 222, County Secretary's Department, County Hall, Hertford. (Telephone: 01992 555563)

RESPONDING TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SSI INSPECTION
OF CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES IN HERTFORDSHIRE

The Committee considered a report providing an assessment of progress in responding to the findings and recommendations from the inspection report over the period January – June 2004.

The report showed that the first phase of the Action Plan had laid the groundwork for system-wide change, with a full revision of the casework framework completed. The self – evaluation and audit of all child protection cases have confirmed that variability in the quality of casework practice is the key issue for the service. This will be the main focus of Phase 2 of the Action Plan through a learning and development programme for all staff, with work-based coaching to ensure recognition of good practice.

The Committee received presentations on the following key areas:

- Overview of the project managed response – John Harris & Seona Gordon
- The volume and variety of child protection work - David Ring
- The self evaluation audit – Cheryl Hopkins
- The ACPC response and action plan – Carol Taylor
- Increasing capacity in the Quadrants – Mike Benaim
- Child Protection delivery and management framework – Jacki Rothwell
- Learning and Development strategy – Jean Farrer

The Committee noted that there has been a very positive commitment from staff at all levels, and from partner agencies, to improve the quality of the service. It was expected that the effectiveness of the County Council's response would be reflected in the annual performance assessment of Social Services made by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) in July 2004.

The Committee's comments:

The Committee:

- welcomed the report and progress made during the last six months in responding to the recommendations of the SSI Inspection of Child Protection Services in Hertfordshire,
- thanked officers for their presentations and all CSF staff for their commitment and enthusiasm in responding to the Inspection recommendations,
- requested the Director of CSF consider the best way of improving and ensuring a regular flow of information between local managers and local members,
- welcomed the actions taken to date to build capacity and encouraged the Director to ensure that all actions possible continue to be taken to overcome staffing shortages and to assist staff to utilise modern I.T facilities,
- noted the management and Learning and Development framework that has been put place in order to build long term improvement, and
- noted that the independent assessment of cases had reinforced the variability in performance outlined in the SSI report.

Members expressed concerns regarding:

- the risks to capacity in the East Quadrant arising from the higher level of vacancies, and
- the risks associated with the current backlog of unallocated cases but noted the risk management processes used by officers to deal with this.

The Committee would receive a further progress report in January 2005.

**TANIS KENT
CHAIRMAN
County Hall
Hertford**

23 June 2004