

Children's Services in Hertfordshire

Quality Protects

THIRD MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

2001/2002

Objective 1

Objective 1 – To ensure that children are securely attached to carers capable of providing safe and effective care for the duration of their childhood

A) PROGRESS AND RESULTS 99/2000 AND 2000/2001

Describe your progress to date under this objective, including evidence of improved outcomes for children.

Placement Choice: Revised placement stability figures (PAF A1) show consistent improvement (97/98: 13%; 98/99: 10%; 99/00: 8%).

By March 2000 had already met original 2002 target of 77% of LAC in foster placements. Long-term foster placements (PAF D 35) improved from 44% in March 1999 to 49% in March 2000.

LAC Allocation: Percentage of cases allocated (QP 1.1.2) fell from 97.8% in March 1999 to 94.1% in March 2000 due to staffing shortages. Following recruitment campaign rose to 98% in October 2000. Experienced Professional Assistants with close supervision now hold stable LAC cases. Target is 100% allocated by March 2001.

Family Support: Relative spend (PAF E44) increased from 40.7% in March 1999 to 42.3% in March 2000.

LAC Numbers: have dropped for the first time in four years: 845 in April 2000 to 804 in November 2000.

Fostering:

- March 2000 recruitment targets met. 2000/2001 recruitment expected to meet target of 80 carers with predicted losses less than 10%.
- Target timescales of 6 months for assessment and approval of carers – achieved except where carers circumstances prevent meeting target.
- Enhanced financial packages for hard-to-place children.
- Shared Care recruitment (respite care for disabled children) - 15 new carers, plus 7 in assessment.
- Dedicated Foster Care trainer appointed; NVQ training for foster carers – 20 intake in 99/2000 and 13 intake in 2000/01.
- Supervision practice and revised competency based assessment implemented in accordance with National Standards for Foster Care.
- Improved speed and accuracy of foster payments as part of retention strategy.

Adoption: In 99/2000 achieved target of 5% of LAC adopted (PAF C23) by:

- Meeting recruitment targets: 41 adopters recruited in 99/2000; 20 approved and 40 in assessment in 2000/1 (target: 55).
- 47 children matched with adopters 99/2000 and 50 anticipated in 2000/01.
- 40 adoption orders in 99/2000. 21 adoption orders granted in 2000/1 so far. Of further 34 applications in court, 21 have no hearing dates fixed yet. March 2001 6% target dependent upon these cases being heard. Representations have been made to Family Court Business Committee.

Objective 1

- For under 5's already meeting 2004 target for average time to adoption (24 months). Overall average duration rising (98/99: 28 months; 99/00: 32 months). Partly due to achieving adoption for older hard-to-place children (including 8 children over 5 years in care).

Member Corporate Parenting Panel have received reports on Foster Care Standards and Adoption in 2001/2.

B) PLANS 2001/2002 AND BEYOND

Set out what you will achieve under this Objective in 2001/2 and beyond, and how you will achieve it.

Placement Choice: Target: to achieve and maintain 6% (PAF A1), by extending placement choice within County and enhancing wrap-around support to LAC and carers (see Objective 11).

Revised target is 79% of LAC in foster placements, and 51% in long-term fostering, by March 2002.

LAC Allocation: Target: 100% cases allocated.

Family Support: Increase in relative spend likely to be sustained in 2001/2: establishment of CSF Service in April 2001 will save on administrative costs and resources re-cycled into front-line and family support services.

Kinship Strategy:

Finding Kinship Placements with extended family and "significant others" places children with people they know; also keeps many children out of LAC system and expands pool of carers for those who enter it. Policy has been developed and training held, to encourage kinship as a placement of first choice wherever possible. In 2001/2 we will:

- Support up to 50 Section 17 Kinship placements
- Improved assessment, support and training for 100 new LAC kinship carers, and 80 existing kinship placements
- Encourage Residence Orders (and new "special guardianship" orders proposed in White Paper) by providing ongoing support to kinship foster carers.
- Continue support of majority of unaccompanied asylum seekers in 'Friendship groups', placed with asylum seeking adults they know

Early Rehabilitation: Are encouraging rehab by District teams and NCH Over Tens Family Support Service in first month after being accommodated. Will expand NCH teams in 2001/2, to take on more of this work.

Care Planning: Manual tracking system has been established for use at LAC reviews, to help focus managers on speedier outcome planning (rehabilitation or permanency/adoption) and help identify obstacles. In 2001/2 will be integrated with LAC Review documentation into new "Oracle" system being developed for CSF Service (see Objective 11).

Objective 1

Fostering

In 2001/2 will focus on maintaining placement stability; enhanced placements for children with complex needs, including disability; and development of recruitment information systems.

Adoption:

Target is 7% of LAC adopted by 2002 (achieving White Paper 5-year increase of 40% within 2 years).

- Care planning tracking system shows teams choosing long-term fostering rather than adoption. In 2001/2 will use system to establish within 6 months of entering system whether adoption appropriate and to accelerate adoption planning.
- In 2001/2 will aim to find adoptive families within 6 months of plan being agreed, particularly focussing on hard-to-place children, including disabled and mixed heritage children.

C) SPECIFIC IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES 2001/2002 AND BEYOND

What are the key elements of your strategy to provide more family placements (a) through foster care (including recruitment, retention, training and support of foster carers and (b) through adoption (including recruitment and post-adoption support).

a) Fostering**Recruitment:**

Year-round recruitment activities to support 2001/02 target of 60 new foster carers:

- Targeted campaign for 30 teenage placements planned for March 2001. Review of allowances for teenage placements 2001/02.
- Whilst 11% of LAC have ethnic minority origins, only 8% of foster carers are in single or dual heritage ethnic minority households. Recruitment target of 18 new ethnic minority placements will reflect the ethnic minority communities of each county quadrant.
- 3 additional enhanced placements for hard to place children.

Support:

- 8 Emergency Carers
- CAMHS Support Service (see Objective 3)
- Extension of out of hours support
- Salaried positions for support carers

Training:

- Mandatory core programme
- Continue NVQ programme
- Introduce TCI, a behaviour management / safe caring programme

Objective 1

Retention

- Funding home extensions for carers to increase capacity for priority groups
- Develop agreements with 10 District Councils around housing needs for foster carers and leisure facilities for children in foster care

b) Adoption

Recruitment: Target is 60 adopters. Will particularly target recruitment and prioritise assessments of adopters for:

- 23 children hard to place because of age, size of sibling group, medical complexity or developmental delay.
- dual heritage children, for whom adoption placements are particularly scarce.

Of the 28 children awaiting placement for over 6 months, 9 have possible matches of which 6 are with their current carers. The remaining 19 are included in the 23 hard to place children.

Where adopters not matched within 3 months, we refer to regional consortium. Where not matched within 6 months, we refer to BAAF Link. Ethnic minority adopters who cannot be matched on approval with a Hertfordshire child are referred immediately. The 6 unmatched adopters are all currently under consideration and have limiting matching requirements.

Adoption Allowances: Will pay enhanced allowances for up to 25 hard to place children and for 8 children where loss of fostering allowance is preventing adoption by foster carers.

Training: Implement Adoption Training Strategy for adopters, Family Placement and District Team staff.

Post Adoption. Will set up dedicated post-adoption team to develop the service. Will evaluate Post-Box contact service (currently over 200 contacts) in conjunction with University of Luton.

The number of approved adopters at 1 January 2001 who do not have children matched or placed with them:

6

The number of children at 1 January 2001 with adoption as the plan (approved by Adoption Panel or agency decision maker) who do not have an adoptive family matched with them and have been waiting more than six months.

28

Objective 1

What steps are you taking to ensure that you have the appropriate range and level of residential placements?

We are expanding in-County resources, and wrap-around support, to maintain links with families and local communities/ schools. Placement stability has increased and few children now go out of county from children's homes.

A new 6-bed unit opens in Summer 2001, giving us 50 mainstream beds.

Disabled Children: Two new units opening in North of County where there is no provision at present, giving us 22 beds for disabled children: a unit providing 4 respite beds at weekends and school holidays (using special school premises) opened for Christmas 2000; a 7 bed long-term home opens Summer 2001

Residential Family Assessment: In 2000 unit expanded to support third family, and to provide space for Health clinical support sessions, including CAMHS input.

Support: Development of wrap-around support and inter-agency links:

- One children's home specialises in supporting unaccompanied asylum seekers
- Development Officer and Training Officer dedicated to the service.
- LAC nurse; Advisory Teachers; links with EBD schools and Education Support Centres;
- For each home: CAHMS consultation sessions; fostering link worker; VCC designated advocate.
- Service is Waterhouse compliant
- For independent providers we have developed a detailed service specification, which outlines what every child should expect to receive.

Objective 2

Objective 2 – To ensure that children are protected from emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, and neglect

A) PROGRESS AND RESULTS 99/2000 AND 2000/2001

Describe your progress to date under this objective, including evidence of improved outcomes for children.

The number of children on the CP Register at 31.3.00 was 535, (533 at 30.9.00 indicating stability at around this figure) a reduction since last year and on the projection. Those children subject to legal orders giving parental responsibility to the local authority, where there are no plans for rehabilitation and who are no longer at risk, are now removed from the CPR at an earlier stage, presenting a more accurate picture of those actually at risk of significant harm.

Numbers of children re-registered (PAF A3) has halved to 7%, indicating better assessments prior to de-registration.

Reviews held within correct timescales (PAF C20) were 96% as at 31.3.00 and this had improved to 97% by 30.9.00.

Those on the Register for over 2 years (PAF C21) had increased to 6% at March 2000. This relates to cases brought before the court where level of significant harm was not considered to warrant an order and current auditing (September 2000) indicates a drop to 3%, which should be sustained. These cases are audited on an ongoing basis to confirm appropriate registration, that drift is not apparent or a need for legal intervention.

Number of children with allocated key worker (QP 2.3.5) increased from 91% to 93.4% despite staffing shortages.

7.8% of registered children as of 31.3.00 were from ethnic minority families, an over representation compared to 6% of child population overall. Further work needed to identify causation factors. 2.4% of registrations were of disabled children.

Part of departmental Equalities Action Plan is to audit accessibility to conference venues and availability of language and communication interpreters across the county, followed by action plan.

All indicators show a better than average performance compared to England and Shire Counties.

Objective 2

B) PLANS 2001/2002 AND BEYOND

Set out what you will achieve under this Objective in 2001/2 and beyond, and how you will achieve it.

PAF A3: All cases where re-registration has occurred to be audited to identify common factors and more accurately predict long term position.

PAF C21: Auditing process to continue at threshold of two years plus on the Register and each subsequent Review, as above.

PAF C20: All cases are now reviewed within 3 months of initial registration and tighter administrative procedures are in place to ensure 100% subsequent reviews within 6 months. No cases have gone beyond 7 months. Additional staffing should assist this, in covering sickness and annual leave.

QP 2.3.5: Weekly monitoring ensures adherence to minimum standards for all children registered in cases where there is no key worker. Recruitment and retention strategies, including appointment of Senior Practitioners to address staffing difficulties ongoing.

Amalgamation of SSD into Children, Schools and Families Service as of 1.4.01 and the full integration of referral and assessment processes within multi-professional groups present a challenge to maintain high standards in child protection.

Timescales between commencement of investigations and initial conferences are not currently met. Requires greater vigour by first line managers and child protection system to achieve these.

ACPC and Area Monitoring Groups are seeking greater involvement from agencies working with parents who misuse substances and have mental health difficulties, whose children are over represented on the Register. Work to identify incidence of drug and alcohol abusing parents and services available to them underway.

Following Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, we will ensure that racial harassment issues are included in:

- revised CP procedures to ensure issues addressed throughout CP investigation and conference processes
- CP basic training and reinforced through all multi-agency CP training.
- all Assessment Framework training (multi-agency).

We will also enter into discussion with partner agencies via ACPC to achieve CP teams that reflect Herts community.

ACPC Conference in June 2001 entitled Protecting Disabled Children to increase multi-agency profile of this issues.

ACPC active in addressing lack of reference to child protection in submissions to Secretary of State for changes within health authorities and setting up of PCTs throughout the county.

Objective 2

Involvement of Personnel, HCC Employment Agency and voluntary organisations in implementation of Protection of Children Act.

Launch by ACPC/Herts Police of "Child Safe" initiative to safeguard children using sport and other organised activities as well as systematic targeting of all organisations involving children (including churches) to raise child protection awareness.

Strategy to implement Waterhouse Report recommendations endorsed by Corporate Parenting Panel.

C) SPECIFIC IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES 2001/2002 AND BEYOND

What systems do you have or are you putting in place for monitoring and auditing that the timescales for child protection processes - as set out in the revised Working Together - are being met?

The IT systems do not currently gather this information and data for 31.3.01 will be obtained from manual systems maintained within area teams and may therefore not be entirely accurate.

As of 1.4.01 and the integrated CSF Service, a new IT system will be in operation which includes a specification to collect all this information and that required for CPR 3 as well as additional management information to ensure tighter and more regular monitoring of all child protection episodes.

This will be part of the integrated referral and assessment process.

What progress are you making in implementing the other changes required by revised Working Together?

First Reviews are being held with 3 months (provisionally 100%).

New CP Procedures are to be introduced in 2001 to incorporate all the changes in Working Together (1999). Timing has been delayed due to CSF re-organisation and the need for stability during periods of extreme change.

ACPC is actively reviewing the composition of conferences in response to guidance regarding quorum and the current child protection team system operating in this county, as well as the implications for Part 8 Review Executive Summaries to be made public.

Extensive training programmes are ongoing on a multi-agency basis to implement the Framework for Assessment and the links with Working Together to include assessments of significant harm and robust child protection plans.

Individual school child protection profiles identified nature of CP work in schools and CP training for schools has been provided.

Objective 3

Objective 3 - To ensure that Children in Need gain the maximum life chance benefits from education opportunities, health care and social care

A) PROGRESS & RESULTS 99/00; 00/01

Describe your progress to date under this objective, including evidence of improved outcomes for children

Education

Expecting to meet targets of 0.5% days unauthorised absence (QP5) and reduce exclusions (QP4) to 192 maximum (1% of total) by 31/3/01

- 8 inter-agency Out Of School Groups monitor children out of school & help returns to appropriate education.
- Youth Programmes Unit (YPU) provides alternative education for key stage 4 & helps transition for 200+ young people.
- Hospital Home Education Service (HHES) provides education for 350+ where medical problems disrupt schooling.
- Education services focussed on disabled children - see Objective 6.

Health Care

- GPs hold pilot drop-ins @ Royston secondary schools for children & teachers. Two Health visitors and a school nurse will provide support and advice to other professionals and parents/carers re managing difficult/challenging behaviours and emotional problems.
- Drug Action Team appointed a Training Co-ordinator to link with other agencies' to ensure preventive work occurs with high-risk groups (YOTs & excludees).

Family Support

Operational Policies & Care Practice Standards for family centres updated using "Getting Family Support Right" framework.

User survey (see Objective 8) suggestions included:

- More parenting courses: this is one of the priorities for TP and CSF Preventative Strategies
- More locations for services: additional outreach workers have been financed through Early Years Childcare Grant in 1999/2000
- Services for disabled children appreciated but more wanted: additional family support for disabled children being developed in 2001/2 - see Objective 6
- More advice on dealing with older children and their problems: Family Centres have started to do more joint work with NCH Over Tens Service

Black and Ethnic Minorities

Strategy is to increase work with CIN whilst reducing proportion of LAC:

- Met 2001 target of 1.2 (PAF E45) by March 2000.
- CIN Census showed 19% of children using family centres were from ethnic minorities (7% in community overall)
- Training on impact of race & racism implemented for staff.

Objective 3**Young Offenders**

- Two additional Young Citizens Project (preventive arm of YOTs) teams have been established and now serve whole of county. The four YCPs have 97% take up rate; only 2% offended post intervention.
- Bail Support/Remand Scheme reduced numbers in LA/Secure accommodation & extended to remands to care (see Objective 11).
- All parents under 16 in court considered for parenting orders.

Young Carers

- 'Breaks' provided for 100 young carers through Carers Special Grant
- Support Groups involving 40 young carers, in 3 Districts

B) PLANS 2001/2002 AND BEYOND

Set out what you will achieve under this Objective in 2001/2 and beyond, and how you will achieve it.

Education

Target 0.4% of days lost through unauthorised absence and exclusions reduced to 165 max by 31/3/02 through:

- £1.13m Pupil Retention (£1.3m likely in 2001/2):
- reviewing Education Support Centre provision:
- increasing resources to HHES:
- continuing YPU development:
- £520,000 Standards Fund money for Secondary School Learning Support Units:
- continuing to develop the ACE Project (managed by Herts Care Trust):
- Standards Funding supporting ESCs:
- developing multi-agency Children Out of School Groups
- ensuring more young mothers remain in education by making childcare information more widely available, & schools admit girls on reduced curriculum.

Health

- Teenage Pregnancy strategy to be submitted to TP Unit 3/2001 (see Objective 4).
- HAs appointing 2.5wte young people's Drug/Alcohol (D&A) workers to provide tier 3 D&A treatment services for 14-16s with serious D&A use/dependency and to develop drug services for young people which will include drop ins, and information packs for young people. Aim to link treatment service with new adolescent service (2002).

Family Support

- Implement co-ordinated service strategy for family support within CSF, including family centres, NCH over tens service, & CAMHS
- Over Tens will develop preventive groupwork and rehabilitation support.
- Map parenting services across Hertfordshire to identify gaps in provision, and provide training to Family Support Centres in using the Webster Stratton model of parenting courses.

Objective 3

Black and Ethnic Minority Children

We will improve services by:

- developing links with black community organisations, to identify a range of community based services and activities.
- developing targeted services;
- transferring lessons from consultation to mainstream services;
- employing more black staff.

Young offenders

Young Citizens Programme will be integrated with CSF Service in April 2001.

YOTs will: engage all those with parenting orders within 10 days: reduce LA/Secure accommodation: assess 100% on supervision orders for eligibility: 80% progress where ASSET used: improve opportunities for those with drugs issues: 80% packages taken up.

To be achieved through assessment training, liaison with detention & treatment units, monitoring offenders, partnerships, CPNs providing quicker access to treatment, improved relationships with parents, parenting programmes.

Young Carers

Through YC staff raising agencies' awareness will increase assessments of need, referrals to Carers in Herts, and range of agencies supporting young carers.

Will ensure all Districts have multi-agency YC Steering groups & 6 Districts have YC Support Groups by March 2002: Good Practice Guide for SSD staff

C) SPECIFIC IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES (2001/2002 – AND BEYOND)

How are you ensuring effective linkages with the following programmes &/or objectives where they exist in your council area?

Sure Start

We do not have Sure Start funding, but have initiated a Sure Start type project (involving SSD, Education, ECU, Health & Herts Regional College/Next Step Centre) in Waltham Cross. The Project:

- was approved by Children's Joint Commissioning Board, and funded by Early Years.
- consists of community playworker, speech & language therapist and (soon) community health visitor.
- provides open access service to residents with children under 4yrs.
- is managed by partner agencies.
- We are agreeing protocols for joint working should the project develop further, if we receive an invitation to bid for Sure Start or Early Excellence Centre funding (or combination) in 2001.

Objective 3**Connexions**

- Connexions pilot set up, Project Manager and local managers appointed, and Project Plan agreed. Two stakeholder conferences held including wide range of participants from schools, colleges and voluntary sector. Young people's conference planned. Needs assessment mapping exercise being carried out.
- Service being developed in conjunction with Children's, Schools and Families Service to ensure inter-agency partnership and joint working practices.
- Senior HCC and Health managers represented on Management Committee (including Chief Executive and Director of CSF Service). QP lead is on Implementation Group; QP Listening to Children lead involved in young people consultation initiatives.
- Service will be delivered through a network of 450/500 fte Personal Advisers, building on work of Learning Gateway and New Start strategy (including "Kick-Start" project for care leavers - see Objective 5).
- Tackling disaffection in isolated pockets and groupings of young people strand will target services on care leavers, black and ethnic minority children, travellers, and young people from deprived areas. Proposal submitted for summer activities programme for young people at risk of not continuing in learning.

On Track

Although our On Track bid was unsuccessful, the Youth Justice Service has several elements that align with the basic ethos of On Track:

- A positive preventative element being piloted currently is the use of interactive software (Viewpoint) to ascertain the views of the whole of our client group (both compulsory and voluntary users).
- The YOT and YCP teams where possible respond to local needs of communities through specialised activities e.g. drugs drop-in facility where there is a perceived problem locally, young persons parenting groups rather than inappropriately placing young parents into adult environments.
- YCP offer holistic problem solving/mediation to parents and siblings of young people in difficulty.
- The use of the tripartite database remains the foundation upon which we identify young people who are at risk of escalating into a criminal career or poor educational attainment.
- The philosophy behind the new youth justice service is to reduce the risk of offending. Bringing five agencies together to work with the same client group helps ensure co-terminosity of service, streamlines decision-making and intervention processes, and offers enhanced services to young people and their families.

Objective 3

Health Improvement Plans & Health Action Zones

- Children's Joint Commissioning Board (JCB) includes SSD, Education, and representatives from Health Authorities and Trusts, and PCGs (voluntary sector selecting representatives currently). Herts is not a HAZ area.
- Inter-agency Health of Vulnerable Children Group set up under QP to focus on health of CIN and LAC.
- Each year QP MAP and HImPs are developed simultaneously through JCB. For 2001/2 JCB has established children's priorities for HImPs as: children looked after; disabled children; children with special educational needs; those with drug and alcohol problems; those at risk of social exclusion; teenage pregnancy; continuity of health care during children's transition to adulthood.
- SSD District Managers sit on local PCG/ HImP planning groups
- 8 PCTs to be established 2001: local partnership planning groups will be aligned to PCTs
- HimP lead has run consultation workshop for key County Council managers from SSD, Education, Corporate and Environmental Services. Aim to integrate HImP planning with HCC processes: business planning; cultural strategies; county/ district/ local community strategies.
- Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinators (based in HAs) bring proposals to JCB, which will consider draft Strategy. JCB Chair (SSD) has TP strategic lead for HCC, and HESS Manager (Education) has operational lead.

Joint CAMHS development strategy

Joint commissioning manager for CAMHS works with the various agencies developing services to ensure a clear commitment to the joint development of CAMHS as outlined in the joint strategy:

- Specification agreed for CAMHS LAC support service: will offer fast track assessment and brief intervention for LAC. Funded from Modernisation Fund/ MH Grant.
- Improved service provision at tier 2 in relation to assessment & support to families & tier 1 / 2 professionals resulting in less stigmatising services, and earlier detection & intervention for children with mental health problems. Currently appointing a psychologist and a CPN in West Herts. Plan is to repeat this for East Herts in 2001/02.
- Developing outreach services (which will also free up tier 4 beds).
- Review of service provision at tier 3 focussing on health, education and SSD roles.
- Tier 3 services are exploring ways of reducing the DNA rate. Possible ideas being explored include closer working with schools and holding clinics at local EBD schools where appropriate

Proposed transfer in 2001 of CAHMS to a pan-Hertfordshire Integrated Partnership Trust.

Member Corporate Parenting Panel have received reports on CAMHS Strategy.

Objective 4

Objective 4 - To ensure that children looked after gain the maximum life chance benefits from educational opportunities, health care and social care.

A) PROGRESS AND RESULTS 1999/2000; 2000/2001

Describe your progress to date under this objective, including evidence of improved outcomes for children.

Education

30.8% of care leavers had at least one GCSE/ GNVQ (PAF A2) in March 2000. In 2000/1 a much higher proportion of year 11 LAC had SEN statement than in general population (19% EBD; 19% MLD; 6% SLD).

11.3% of LAC at March 2000 had 5 A* - C GCSE grades.

Improvements in LAC performance in all other Key Stages despite high incidence of SEN. To enhance attainment we have:

- established Corporate Parenting Officer/ dedicated LAC Advisory teacher team
- set up pilot 'computers for KS4 in foster care' initiative.

Attendance:

Percentage of LAC permanently excluded (QP 9) reduced from 2.2% in 98/99 to 1.9% in 99/2000. 2000/1 target is 1%.

16.7% of LAC missed 25 days schooling (PAF C24) in 99/2000. Aim is to reduce to 14.7% in 2000/1.

Implementation of the Guidance

- Policy on the Education of Children in Public care drafted
- Personal Education Plan completed
- Designated Teachers nominated – 60% received initial training – video and handbook developed
- Young people participated in and consulted on training and policy.
- Increased AWPU and joint funding for transport

Health

Actual figure for health checks (PAF C19) at March 2000 was 26% (not 95% reported, based on a sample of 3 districts). Target for March 2001 is 50%.

- The LAC Nurse provides a clinic service in each home.
- Drug and alcohol policies have been introduced, as has a sexual health policy.
- "Healthy Home" pilot on diet for Residential Services

LAC Reviews

- 79% of LAC reviews completed within the required timescales in 99/2000 despite staff vacancies. Percentage increasing due to staffing initiatives.

LAC Offenders

- Proportion of LAC receiving final warnings and convictions (PAF C18) in 99/2000 was 4.4. Target for 2000/1 is 4.0
- Bail Support/Remand Scheme reduced numbers in LA/Secure accommodation & extended to remands to care (see Objective 11).

Objective 4

Black and Ethnic Minority Children

- Children's services supported by expertise and interpreting services provided by four dedicated Asylum Seeker Teams
- Refugee Education Support Group finds and supports school/ FE places
- Asylum Seekers have designated GP's and dentist.
- Each residential home has had REU training on managing diversity
- Staff have had training on preparation of African, Caribbean and Asian foods
- Furnishings, pictures, literature and toys reflect a diversity of races and cultures.

Corporate Parenting Panel have had reports on Children's Homes and LAC Health.

B) PLANS 2001/2 AND BEYOND

Set out what you will achieve for children under this objective in 2001/2 and beyond, and how you will achieve it.

Education

Will sustain percentage of LAC permanently excluded (QP 9) at minimum of 1% 2001/2 onwards.

Target is to reduce proportion of LAC who miss 25 days schooling (PAF C24) to 12.7% in 2001/2.

- Investigate absence
- Continue transition projects for Year 6/7
- Continue strategic use of Standards Fund to prevent disruption

Implementation of the Guidance

- Policy on the Education of Children in Public care will be implemented Spring 2001
- Termly newsletter
- Implementation of education policies for children's homes
- All children (including those placed out of county) with a personal education plan
- Training for all staff.
- Web site – March 2001
- Write children's version of Guidance
- Focus groups of foster carers, young people, designated teachers and social workers to inform progress.
- Built in review of policy – April 2001 and then 6 monthly.

Health of LAC

Our C 19 ultimate target remains 95%. To achieve this:

- New IT system will record that Health Assessments and reviews have taken place, and notify line manager if target date not met.
- Senior Practitioners will promote the importance of the health of LAC with social workers just as the Looked After Nurse has done with primary carers.
- CAHMS staff offer a fortnightly consultation to staff in Children's Homes. This will increase to weekly and extend to foster carers from April 2001.

Objective 4

LAC Reviews

The department plans for 100% compliance. This will be achieved by ensuring all Looked After Children have an allocated social worker. To support this:

- The department is now offering higher starting salaries and the creation of senior practitioner posts as a recruitment and retention measure.
- Stable LAC cases will be allocated to experienced Professional Assistants.
- Head of Child Care post has been created and will have a significant role in ensuring compliance with this PI.

Black and Ethnic Minority Children

- Aim is to reduce LAC whilst increasing Family Support (see Objective 3). Relative proportion of LAC from ethnic minorities (QP 10) reduced to 1.5 (planned position for 31.3.01) by 31.3.00. Aim is to reduce to 1.4 by March 2002.
- Family Placements Teams and Residential services both have a higher proportion of black and ethnic minority staff than in population as a whole, but they are unevenly distributed across teams. The staff recruitment strategy will address this.

C) SPECIFIC IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES 2001/2002 AND BEYOND

Please say what you will do to:

Improve the educational attainment of looked after children (with reference to the original and new PSA targets).

We aim to improve qualifications of LAC/ children leaving care as follows:

- 50% with at least one GCSE/ GNVQ (PAF A2) in 2001/2, and 75% by 2003/4;
- 13.5% with 5 or more GCSEs grade A-C in 2001/2, and at least 15% by 2003/4.

Strategies used will include:

- Implementation of Policy on the Education of Children in Public Care (agreed by Corporate Parenting Panel).
- Ensure that all children in public care have a personal education plan
- Create young people's education advisory group
- Top-down initiative to celebrate achievement
- Motivational scheme for increased 6th Form study
- Foster Carer and Residential home reading scheme
- Devise appropriate performance indicators for children with severe SEN
- Continuation of 'Computers for KS 4 in foster care project'
- Extend achievement recognition to sport and leisure pursuits.
- Education focused summer schools for both school-age and care leavers
- Continuation of training of Designated Teachers and Social Workers which will include local networks.
- Include measurement of attainment in contractual arrangements for out-county providers.
- Monitor additional AWPU spend in schools
- Focus strategic use of Standards Fund to enhance LAC academic achievement

Objective 4

Improve access and delivery of health care – including CAMHS - to children looked after.

- Continued joint funding of Nurse for Children Looked After.
- Joint Health/ SSD group preparing proposals for LAC Health Team
- A CAMHS dedicated rapid response and assessment team will be in place for LAC from 1.4.01
- CAMHS support for foster carers will commence from 1.4.01
- Proposed transfer in 2001 of CAMHS to an pan-Hertfordshire Integrated Partnership Trust with robust contract arrangements in relation to LAC
- Implementation of Sexual Health, and Drugs and Alcohol policies for children in residential care Jan 2001
- Listening to children strategy will inform our work on making medical assessments more meaningful to LAC

Reduce Teenage Pregnancy and support teenage parents into education, training or work.

- Herts rate for under-18s conception is 32/1000 (National rate 46.5/1000). Ten year strategy establishing downward trend in under 16s conception & reducing under 18s conception rate by 15% by 2004, and 45% by 2010.
- Teenage Pregnancy (TP) strategy to be submitted to TP Unit 3/2001, outlining 3yr plan (better SRE & contraceptive advice & services). Includes sections on: education, prevention, LAC, teenage boys, support for young parents.
- Preparation has drawn on experience of professionals with responsibility to influence strategic decisions in their agencies.
- Young people are being consulted through focus groups.
- LAC teenage pregnancy and sexual health is a priority area for Looked After Nurse.
- Sexual Health Policy implemented in Children's Homes
- Home and hospital tuition service provides support and education for teenage parents including child care costs: 5hrs/week tuition available for teenage parents. HHES supported 28 of 47 pregnant schoolgirls & young mothers (99/00); 5 received 32hrs/week childcare through Standards Fund, enabling return to school.
- We have consulted teenage parent care leavers who have asked for "second chance" education opportunities and childcare provision. Are exploring options for including them in higher and further education sponsorship policy (see Objective 5).

Objective 4

Increase opportunities and support for children and young people in care to participate in leisure, cultural and sporting activities.

Our aim is to engage LAC in positive leisure time activities, and enhance their social integration. This will also lead to greater achievements, and so improve their self-esteem:

- We will create a new post to develop leisure, sports and culture opportunities for looked after children, and support their carers in encouraging them to access these opportunities. This officer will help children to build up links with local sports clubs, and other community leisure facilities, and also enhance their ability to access lifelong learning opportunities.
- CSF Service is developing a programme with voluntary organisations Herts to offer opportunities to LAC to develop social integration and achievement through involvement in sports and arts.
- A bid has been made to allow all looked after children to have free entry to public leisure centres and swimming pools.
- We aim that all LAC over 6 years will be able to swim for 25 meters.
- Development of closer links with Youth Service. Children in Public Care are now a target group for this service.

Narrow the gap between the proportion of children in care and their peers who have had a final warning or are convicted

Aim is to reduce relative proportion of LAC receiving final warnings and convictions (PAF C18) to 2.5 by 2000/1.

- To ensure we continue to see a reduction in the numbers and convictions of Looked After Children in line with our targets the Youth Offending Teams will from April 2001 will develop the current programme of preventive work with groups of school children to include our children's homes.
- Each home will have a worker who will link with YOT's to develop a crime prevention/reduction strategy for that home. A YOT worker will also link with each home. This programme will be evaluated in April 2002 and may be developed to family placement teams.
- The Youth Justice Service is currently setting up a mediation service aimed at looked after children and young people who may be having difficulties in their local community. This service will be lead by the young citizens project arm of the youth justice service.

Objective 5

Objective 5 - To ensure that young people leaving care, as they enter adulthood, are not isolated and participate socially and economically as citizens.

A) PROGRESS AND RESULTS 1999/2000, 2000/2001

Describe your progress to date under this objective, including evidence of improved outcomes for children.

NCH are developing a new Leaving Care Service, to meet requirements of the Children (Leaving Care) Act. It builds upon their existing Phoenix Project and supported lodgings services. Slippage has accrued because it has taken NCH longer than planned to recruit all the staff. However, we still aim for the service to be fully operational by April 2001.

Housing

- At March 2000 79% of 19 year old care leavers were in suitable accommodation; Rest being checked through last-known contacts (12% not known, 6% homeless, 3% in adult hostel).
- Of all 1999/2000 care leavers 79% are in suitable accommodation (86% amongst 2000/1 care leavers so far).
- NCH Phoenix Project only take care leavers in long-term beds and 5 other independent sector young homeless housing projects give priority to care leavers. All use Warner staffing standards.
- Young Homeless Development Teams (YHDT) give particular attention to care leavers.

Education, Training and Employment

- At March 2000 71% of 19 year old care leavers were in education, training or employment, which exceeds the 2002 NPG target of 65%.
- Of all 1999/2000 care leavers 67% are in education, training or employment (72% amongst 2000/1 care leavers so far).
- Inter-agency group, including Education, Youth and Careers services, working on employment, training and education needs of care leavers. Links closely with Learning Gateway and new Connexions Service.
- Kick Start Project: New Start funds provided Personal Adviser support for 27 care leavers: 23 now in education, training or employment.

Contact

- At March 2000 66% of 19 year old care leavers were in contact with SSD or a named representative. Target for March 2001 is 70%.
- Of all 1999/2000 care leavers 69% were in contact with SSD or a named representative (79% amongst 2000/1 care leavers so far).
- A further 20% had irregular contact through our partner organisations and ex-carers, although these contacts are not formally monitored.
- NCH already provide drop-in and follow-up support

Objective 5

Health

Phoenix Project has multi-agency links with DAT, Cedar Young Adults Mental Health team, Chrysalis Alcohol Support, and GUM clinic dealing with relationships and sexual health issues.

YHDTs have a mental health outreach worker.

Consultation

In focus groups care leavers and 16+ year olds still in care have responded very positively to our plans, especially about the service being placed with NCH. All proposals have been developed in consultation with Corporate Parenting Panel.

B) PLANS 2001/2 AND BEYOND

Set out what you will achieve for children under this objective in 2001/2 and beyond, and how you will achieve it.

Care leavers consulted by CROA have told us that currently, they feel that they are not involved in the decisions about leaving care:

- NCH service will develop Pathway Plans in consultation with them from age 15.

Young people felt that they had to leave care too early, or at a difficult time in their lives. In future they will:

- not be discharged from care when NCH take over case management at 16
- remain looked after whilst in semi-independent hostel accommodation, and will only be discharged from care when they are 18 or are ready

Young people said that they wanted more support to be offered over a longer period, and more services and facilities available to them when they left care. NCH will:

- develop support initiatives for care leavers with a range of agencies: housing, CSF (education and social services), Connexions, and other voluntary organisations.
- provide a range of accommodation for care leavers, varying from the high support Phoenix Project to a range of supported living arrangements;
- provide Young Persons' Advisers up to the age of 21
- continue to offer outreach support to care leavers who have moved on to independence with a support plan to ensure that they manage to cope.

Health

In conjunction with Health we plan to extend the work of the LAC Nurse by developing a team, which will also cover young people who have left care.

The NCH are pursuing funding for a mental health worker to be attached to the new leaving care service.

Access to Records

We will provide access to their records for all care leavers within the 40-day timescale required by the Data Protection Act.

Objective 5

Care leavers Participation

Next years consultation will include:

- groups for care leavers as well as general disabled children and ethnic minority groups, all under the umbrella of Herts Voice (see Objective 8)
- young people will be trained in consultation on Teenagers to Work programme
- VCC Advocacy service will be extended to young people who have left care.

Half of current NCH staff are from ethnic minorities. Next year REU will support NCH and us in work to engage ethnic minority care leavers and young homeless people, who will be trained to be consultation facilitators.

C) SPECIFIC IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES 2001/2 AND BEYOND

What are the key elements of your plans for the suitable accommodation and support for young people leaving care, and those in transition to independence, in line with the legislation on care leavers, and in the light of the new PSA target.

Accommodation and Support

By 2004 we will ensure that at least 95% of care leavers are in suitable accommodation:

- NCH will provide a holistic support and accommodation service with a range of accommodation for care leavers
- Development by NCH of more supported accommodation places, and a second high support hostel (post October 2001)
- Development of emergency same night accommodation beyond existing Phoenix Project and Crash Pad provision
- From October 2001 pick-up of Housing Benefit/ income support costs of prevailing average of 15 new care leavers p.a. in young homeless projects.
- From October 2001 development of up to 20 new low-level supported housing places, to accommodate young people who previously would have gone to unsupported accommodation funded through income support/ housing benefit.
- YHDT advice service extended all over the County
- Care leavers receiving priority treatment for housing by District Councils using messages of LAC (2000) 15 to strengthen existing Joint Housing Protocols (proposal supported by Corporate Parenting Panel).

Education, Training and Employment

We aim to beat the 2004 PSA target by ensuring that at least 75% of *all* care leavers (including 19 year olds) are in education, training and employment by March 2002.

- We will develop a seamless inter-agency service through the Children's, Schools and Families Service 'Young People and Transition' section from April 2001
- Connexions Service will prioritise care leavers (under "tackling disaffection in isolated groupings" strand) and take over funding of the Kick Start project
- "Education of Children in Public Care" policy will be extended to include care leavers

Objective 5

Care leavers have told us they wanted more opportunities to access higher and further education, with financial support:

- we plan to increase of numbers in higher and further education by at least 50% by March 2004
- sponsorship funding will be made available for all care leavers in higher and further education
- vacation accommodation will be funded/made available

Contact

By 2004 NCH will help us ensure that at least 95% of young people who have left Care are still in contact by:

- establishing a network of drop-ins all over the County
- extending existing follow-up support to care leavers in contact with ex-carers and other agencies
- establishing mutual peer group support networks for care leavers
- developing a tracking database which will record and update care leavers' details (including accommodation, and education, training and employment)

How are you ensuring support for young people who will not be covered by the new Act?

Disabled Care Leavers

- New CSF Service will integrate education and social care services for disabled young people (will continue to be SSA funded)
- Two new Transition workers will develop transition services and ensure all children have a Pathway Plan to aid seamless transition to adult services;
- We will ensure that the views and wishes of young people are sought, recorded and taken into account in the transition process.

Young Parents

- Young homeless projects already support a number of young parents in supported accommodation. Phoenix Project also offer follow-up support to young parents.
- Teenage Pregnancy Strategy will prioritise LAC and care leavers, and will include educational support and help with childcare for young parents.

Cross-Authority Arrangements

- Currently we support care leavers from other LAs and sort out funding later.
- We aim to develop reciprocal protocols with other LAs to ensure that they adopt a similar approach.

Young Homeless People

- Support offered by 5 young homeless housing projects, and YHDTs
- Work with young people under 17 who are estranged from their families is carried out by the NCH Family Support Service, who will link closely with the new Leaving Care Service.

Objective 6

Objective 6 - To ensure that children with specific social needs arising out of a disability or health condition are living in families or other appropriate settings in the community where their assessed needs are adequately met and reviewed.

A) PROGRESS AND RESULTS 1999/2000; 2000/2001

Describe your progress to date under this objective, including evidence of improved outcomes for children.

Inter-agency assessment project in two local areas has led to streamlined and co-ordinated approach between health, education and SSD for newly diagnosing under 5's with severe and complex needs, and parent held joint report/action plan; 25 interagency assessments completed to date.

Residential respite units – increased staffing levels in existing services (Carers Grant) ensures improved levels of care, particularly for children with complex needs. Phase 1 of new service just opened at Lonsdale School, Stevenage using school's residential accommodation at weekends and holidays, offers more local provision to North quadrant, and includes some nursing input/joint approach with health.

Shared Care. Additional Shared Care staffing has led to 15 new carers recruited, trained and approved. 7 assessment ongoing and 9 prospective carers completing training. Waiting lists now reduced from 152 in October 1999 to 117 in October 2000.

Long term care unit – planning consent now obtained for new 7 bed unit in Stevenage, which will reduce numbers of young people placed at great distances from their families and local communities.

Playscheme places – 571 new places funded through Carers Grant including new integrated scheme and innovative music making project for physically disabled children, broadening range of activities offered.

Education - In-County developments planned in conjunction with social care developments:

- 8 place Autism & MLD unit;
- Training in schools with Autistic/Asperger children;
- East Herts has 6 'Dyslexia friendly' secondary schools; specialist training of staff extended to West;
- Improved funding/support for disabled in 6 schools;
- Access Initiative funding develops facilities in targeted schools;
- Opportunity Classes consistent with agreed county framework; 4 training sessions to pre-school providers.

Consultation

We have commissioned training from the Children's Society on their "I'll Go First " pack which is designed to aid disabled young people's participation in their planning and review meetings.

Objective 6

B) PLANS 2001/2 AND BEYOND

Set out what you will achieve for children under this objective in 2001/2 and beyond, and how you will achieve it.

Inter-agency project – plans about the most effective way to roll out this approach for under 5's in other areas of the County will be reviewed in the light of new structures within Children, Schools and Families and the evaluation of the New Assessment Framework pilot. Need to implement revised model in the 2 new Child Development Centres scheduled to open in Watford and St. Albans in 2001, and to work with paediatricians and other health professionals in the East and North of county to agree best way forward. Also need to examine the feasibility of extending this approach to older children.

Residential respite – Social work practice will be improved to ensure that up to date care plans and regular reviews are completed for all children having stays of 24 hours or more – grant to be used for additional SW staff to carry out these tasks in each of the new quadrant disability teams.

Shared Care. Aim to increase level of recruitment building on good start made, and raise profile of service still higher through repeating successful publicity e.g., leaflets and posters, local media, talks to community groups. Targets are to recruit a minimum of 24 more carers in 2001/02 - 6 households per quadrant. Will tackle large numbers on waiting list and length of time young people wait to receive a service, by having more realistic criteria for children accepted for this service, and ensuring that waiting lists are regularly reviewed. Equal Opportunities Action Plan will address shortage of black/ ethnic minority Shared Carers.

Community based services – Complete feasibility study re improved support services for children with complex behavioural problems, and develop additional services in identified areas of the county. Develop the new countywide network for providers to encourage common standards, advise on recruitment and training and share expertise. Need to build on this in 2001/02, targeting recruitment difficulties by encouraging providers to consider a joint approach to sharing staff and building up an employment portfolio for part time/session workers.

Long term residential unit at Ripon Road will open Summer 2001, increasing number of in county beds from 4 to 11.

Transition – Ensure that effective multi-agency planning is implemented for young people aged 15 – 21 so they are supported in transition to adulthood. 2 new Specialist posts in will be funded in Children, Schools and Families, through quality protects grant, to ensure this area of work is given high priority.

Objective 6

C) SPECIFIC IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES 2001/2002 – AND BEYOND

Please say what you will do to:

i) work with partners, including disabled children and their families, to assess needs and commission/provide services with partner agencies.

New Children, Schools and Families Dept will integrate assessments and co-ordinate service provision between Education and SSD, in new quadrant teams, and will facilitate joint work with health.

Services for ethnic minority families – need to update CWD Register to improve information, with a particular focus on ethnic origin, for planning purposes. This data will then be used as the basis for targeted, local strategies in the 4 new disability teams.

Roll out new training programme to improve specialist skills in communication, child protection etc.

Further use of specialist advocacy worker to seek the views of young disabled people, individually and through new focus group (LAC). Develop consultation groups to seek views of other young people re: service developments.

County wide Carers Conference will be repeated next year to report on use of Carers Grant and seek parents' views on how best to develop range of support services, plus local consultation groups re: specific services.

Set up new joint respite panels to improve decision making about placements and improve equity in county.

Use County Parent Advisory Group (parent reps of SEN children) to consult on QP priorities and targets.

School provision for secondary pupils with MLD and Autism will be developed.

ii) provide increased family support services (including any linked use of Carers Grants monies)

Additional respite places have been provided through Carers Grant but increased occupancy has led to reduced flexibility for families. Looking at feasibility of “swop shop” system for short notice breaks.

Final phase of Lonsdale School respite service targeted to open May 2001 increases unit from 3 bed to 4-bed service, during weekends and school holidays.

Shared Care. To increase recruitment of ethnic minority carers by targeting these communities with publicity, and also using kinship networks.

Care at home –Monitor use of Carers Grant to increase range and flexibility of services. Work with providers to resolve recruitment issues, by supporting more robust infrastructures for voluntary sector services, developing specialist training programmes and developing flexible, rapid response service for families in crisis.

Special Needs Playscheme places – fund additional places in priority areas, and expand integrated services, through Carers Grant/Early Years Childcare Grant.

Objective 6

iii) provide inclusive play and leisure facilities

Build on links with the 10 District and Borough Councils and out of school providers to advise on training and support issues to increase integration of special needs young people into mainstream provision.

Improve choice of age appropriate activities through closer working with County and District Arts Development Officers, as well as national charities, (e.g. Chicken Shed Theatre Company, Drake Music Project) to create local inclusive theatre, arts and music projects.

Closer work with sports Development Officers to improve sporting opportunities for disabled children.

Complete feasibility study of developing befriending schemes for young people over the age of 14, using young volunteers to support individuals into specific community activities in additional areas of county.

iv) provide joint information services for service users

New Children, School and Families Dept is commissioning new set of documents for Service users updating referral routes, eligibility criteria, etc.

Work closely with Early Years Children's Information Service to maintain up to date information on services for disabled children and publish resource directory for parents.

Disseminate information to users through members of new countywide providers' network.

Formalise use of quarterly newsletter (JIGSAW) to all families on CWD register through partnership agreement with Disability Information Services Herts (DISH).

Objective 7

Objective 7 - To ensure that referral and assessment processes discriminate effectively between different types and levels of need and produce a timely response

A) PROGRESS AND RESULTS 1999/2000; 2000/2001

Describe your progress to date under this objective, including evidence of improved outcomes for children.

From April 2001 Children's Social Services & the LEA in Hertfordshire will merge to form a new Children Schools & Families Department. The purpose of this is to ensure an integrated approach to a child's social care and educational needs. The goal is to develop and maximise the potential of each child in Hertfordshire. Health Colleagues have been fully engaged in the process.

- A duty system has been developed following SSI inspection and this has reduced the numbers of cases on the assessment waiting list from 1034 in February 2000 to 375 in September 2001. Children who have been assessed as a result now receive appropriate services.
- Children's Social Services have implemented the New Assessment Framework on 1.September 2000, ahead of the required date of 1.April.2001.
- 100% of referrals are considered within 24 hours.
- Currently 71% of Initial Assessments are completed within 7 working days. Our planned position for March 2001 is 80%.
- 18% of Core Assessments have been completed within 35 working days, although this is based on small numbers. Our planned position for March 2001 is 50%.
- 317 staff including 61 from partner agencies have received training. The training incorporates issues of race, culture, language, and religion.
- All teams have received NAF Practice Guidance, which covers the particular needs of black children and their families.
- Senior managers audit that children's care plans address issues of race, culture, language, and religion
- NAF Practice Guidance includes section on working with disabled children and their families.
- 2 multi professional assessment teams for young children with complex disabilities have had a positive impact on both the children and parents. This is evidenced by feedback from parents.
- To ensure we have suitably experienced and qualified staff to carry out these tasks a recruitment and retention strategy including the creation of 25 Senior Practitioner posts, and a fast track to level 3 has been instituted. Additionally newly qualified social workers will be appointed on level 2 and suitably experienced and supervised professional assistants will taken on case responsibility for Looked After Children in stable placements as agreed with the SSI.

Objective 7

B) PLANS 2001/2 AND BEYOND

Set out what you will achieve for children under this objective in 2001/2 and beyond, and how you will achieve it.

Planned Assessment targets are:

- Maintain the position of 100% of referrals considered within 24 hours.
- 90% of Initial Assessments completed within 7 working days by March 2002, and 100% by March 2003.
- 75% of Core Assessments completed within 35 working days by March 2002, and 100% by March 2003.

New Assessment Framework has been integrated into assessment, care planning and review processes for the new Children's, Schools and families Service planned for April 2001. This will be a new department with new ways of working rather than a simple merger. The objectives of the CSF service are to:

- Provide a unified casework service to children and families whose problems cannot be dealt with within universal services and require more specialist support
- Develop local preventative strategies to stop children failing in schools or living in an unsupportive family environment
- Build capability in schools so that we, together with parents, communities and others ensure that all children succeed.

Integrated Local Services will consist of teams of social workers, educational psychologists, education welfare officers, and preventative teams, providing an integrated and holistic assessment and casework service. Links will be built up with local schools and health teams who provide a universal service to children and families, to ensure that appropriate services are offered as early and effectively as possible.

A separate Operations Division will be responsible for child protection, LAC and Adoption Services. It will co-ordinate the work of Special schools and monitor care and school placements outside the County. This division also has a key function in monitoring standards of practice and ensuring consistency and common standards for assessment, care planning, child protection and statutory review processes.

Systems, processes and protocols have been devised to ensure that:

- Referrals are quickly dealt with;
- Assessments are targeted and proportional.
- One assessment process for all children and their families
- Service provision is outcome focused.
- All service provision will be reviewed against targets set.
- Where a child is known to several professionals there will be one case co-ordinator and all reviews of the case will be combined unless legislation prevents this.
- New IT system will alert line managers if the assessment will not be completed within the required timescales so appropriate action can be taken.
- IT system will capture ethnicity (including mixed heritage) plus religion, first language, fluency (and if interpreter required)

Objective 7

C) SPECIFIC IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES 2001/2002 AND BEYOND

Please say what you will do to ensure that services provided to children following assessments are producing beneficial outcomes.

- A reference group of front line staff and their managers has been established to ensure that any problems or issues in the implementation of the New Assessment Framework are quickly understood and addressed.
- The CSF department will have a new ICT system, which will be an electronic case file. Each service that is provided will have a minimum standard of review each 12 months. LAC, CP, and Statements of Special educational need for pre school children have much more rigorous reviewing requirements.
- The CSF requirement is that each person receiving a service should have a Case Plan which defines the outcomes of the intervention and by when these targets should be achieved. The case plan will be reviewed and the compliance with defined outcomes will be monitored.
- Royal Holloway College, University of London, will undertake an audit of the effective use of the Assessments forms and their impact on families. This will involve meeting with clients who have been assessed. The recommendations from this will help ensure that assessments are outcome-focussed and meet the needs of children and their families.

Objective 8

Objective 8 - To actively involved users and carers in planning services and in tailoring individual packages of care; and to ensure effective mechanisms are in place to handle complaints

A) PROGRESS AND RESULTS 1999/2000; 2000/2001

Describe your progress to date under this objective, including evidence of improved outcomes for children.

Looked After Children

CROA conducted consultation with LAC, including questionnaires and focus groups for residential, foster and care leavers. Topics were based on the findings of 1999 Viewpoint survey. All LAC over 5 years were invited to take part (compared to MAP2 commitment of 50%).

Following consultation, CROA helped young people make interim proposals to Members on Corporate Parenting Panel, using drama, video, discussion and a report. CPP responses were given at the Hertfordshire Voice LAC Event Day. All LAC will receive a Promise Card covering reviews, confidentiality, contact with social workers, residential rules and training staff.

Young people on the Teenagers to Work programme helped plan the Event day and some will be trained by CROA to help run focus groups and events in the future. MAP was discussed with young people and a version for them will be prepared.

Voice of the Child in care (VCC) have set up an Advocacy Service for LAC and care leavers. Young people formed part of the interview process for staff. The service has a specialist worker for disabled children.

Children's homes have all held weekly unit meetings as part of the ISO registration. Topics have covered menus, visitors, bullying and police liaison.

We have completed focus groups and training sessions for staff who care for black/ethnic minority LAC.

Residential units for disabled children now have weekly residents meetings using non-verbal communication methods.

Care Leavers

A group of care leavers were consulted about leaving care and Connexions services. They suggested the need for 'drop-in' services with child care and laundry facilities, and help with access to education (see Objective 5).

Care leavers helped write job descriptions for NCH leaving care workers and took part in training events for designated teachers.

Family Centres, Under Tens

We consulted 55% of users re service planning (MAP2 commitment 25%) through questionnaires (e.g. for adults re the value of Parenting Courses, & for children re Groupwork). 37% of families using the service responded. Most users (children and

Objective 8

adults) were strongly appreciative of centre services. Suggestions for improving services and our responses are outlined under Objective 3.

Family Support Over Tens (NCH)

User's views are surveyed at close of interventions. Survey forms for parents & carers are user-friendly. Users particularly appreciated:

- negotiation (between youngsters & parents):
- direct work undertaken by independent staff:
- staff approachability for youngsters:
- staff working simultaneously with youngsters & parents.

B) PLANS 2001/2 AND BEYOND

Set out what you will achieve for children under this objective in 2001/2 and beyond, and how you will achieve it.

Looked After Children

We will set up Hertfordshire Voice forum to cover residential, family placement, care leavers, disabled young people and those from ethnic minorities. Representatives will be invited to facilitate groups, train staff, and be available to advise staff and Members. These young people will be employed on the Teenager to Work scheme.

REU, CROA and VCC will run individual and group participation for LAC and care leavers from ethnic minorities in 2001.

We plan to hold a focus group for young disabled people and extend Viewpoint to them in 2001.

We will develop direct work with children. We have piloted Total Respect course and will be running it three times in 2001/2. Teenager to Work care leavers will be involved as facilitators. Some content will also be included in child protection, residential workers and foster carers training, and in presentations by staff, young people, CROA, and VCC to highlight the importance of direct work.

We will be implementing the Promise Cards using a strategy to ensure delivery, monitoring and evaluation.

Care Leavers

We aim to develop the Teenager to Work programme, offering vacation and casual work in many departments of the County Council. We will involve the NCH Leaving Care Service, Connexions, the voluntary sector and the Kick-Start programme to achieve this.

Family Centres

We will consult with black/ethnic minority families so that we can target activities towards these families, and also adapt mainstream services to better meet their needs (see Objective 3).

Objective 8**Over Tens**

NCH will develop involvement of users through user-friendly questionnaires, and will feedback analysis into biannual partnership meetings and service reviews.

Children's Schools and Families

CSF Service has involvement of young people as a key principle. We are developing a strategic approach which will involve young people, and be extended to children in schools and further education by running participation events and setting up schools councils. The new Service will have Deputy Director as Board lead, and a Listening to Children Project Officer post, to promote young people's participation at all levels in the department.

CAMHS

Proposal developed for improving involvement of users/carers.

Young Citizens Programme (Youth Justice Preventive arm)

Will consult with all users through introduction of 'Viewpoint' exit questionnaires for young people worked with by Youth Offenders Teams.

Disabled Children

We already have a joint SSD/ Education Parents Advisory Group, who were consulted about the MAP, and we plan to develop this.

C) SPECIFIC IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES 2001/2002 AND BEYOND**How are you ensuring that children & young people and their families and carers are enabled to participate effectively in discussions and decision making about their own care?****Looked After Children**

Viewpoint computer consultation package is being piloted as an alternative to the DoH LAC Review Consultation forms. Young people will complete the questionnaire with the support of an independent person. The questions have been designed involving SSI, Teenager to Work LAC, and National Voice. Teenager to Work young people helped make a booklet which explains Viewpoint to young people.

Family Placement Service is planning a carer profile pack so that young people have some details and a photograph of family before they move in.

The Promise Cards state that staff will always listen to young people's views, involve them in reviews, discussions about education and other aspects of their care, and that they will be able to meet the chair of the review before the meeting, to discuss and plan it. Social workers will mark birthdays and other special occasions or achievements with a gift or celebration.

VCC Advocacy Service has been involved in supporting young people have their views taken into account in their care plans and supporting complaints. The service will be extended to care leavers in 2001/2.

Objective 8

We have used the Children's Society 'I'll Go First' package for staff, to train them to enable disabled young people's participation in reviews and increase their involvement in care planning. We plan to ask their views on purchasing the new Viewpoint package for disabled young people.

By using Total Respect and some of its content in other training courses, we will highlight the importance and quality of children's involvement in decisions about their care. Viewpoint and the focus groups will check that this is happening.

Family Centres & Over Tens

To ensure parent's/carer's/children's involvement in decisions about their care, they are included in reviews/case discussions. Reviews are not held without parents/carers participation. Parents/carers/youngsters involvement & views in planning meetings/reviews are evidenced from minutes, where their views are recorded. Family Centres and NCH will implement file checks to ensure meaningful user participation in planning/review.

How are you involving children and young people and their families and carers in service planning? Include details of how you record and analyse the results of consultations with users and their families.

Looked After Children

CROA invited all LAC over five years old the chance to be involved in service planning using questionnaires, focus groups and the Hertfordshire Voice Event Day. CROA and young people presented an interim report in June 2000 to Corporate Parenting Panel. It suggested a variety of changes to the service. The department responses are detailed in the Promise Cards, which will be distributed to all LAC. The cards will state that young people will be listened to; be given more information about the services offered; be involved in decisions about rules in children's homes; have a named social worker; help train staff; have achievements and birthdays marked and be able to play a much larger part in reviews and other decisions about their lives. The final CROA report and our response/ Action Plan will be presented to Members in April 2001.

Viewpoint consultation software can also collate responses into residential / foster, different ages, ability/disability, ethnicity and gender. These reports will be issued quarterly and used to inform service planning.

Family Centres

Centre managers, operational & planning leads have agreed process for analysis of feedback from user survey questionnaires. Closer links with Planning, and development of the CSF service are leading to greater integration with other programmes and services.

Over Tens

Analysis of user surveys contributes to user involvement in service design, delivery, review & evaluation, to better meet user needs. Feedback informs future standards.

Objective 8

Analysis is done 6 monthly; this informs business planning and supports proposals/development in contract negotiations. Evidence of involvement of users, parents & carers are noted in changes recorded in year plans, strategic plans & plans for improvement.

Young Citizens Programme

Hertfordshire University will be analysing the results of their use of 'Viewpoint' consultation programme.

How are you ensuring more effective and quicker complaints procedures?

Two Teenager to Work LAC put together a questionnaire, gained 25 responses and fed this information to the DoH and the Complaints Manager. Responses included the need to speed up to the process for LAC, make the system more independent at stage 2 level, and offer advocates to help support complaints from young people.

The Client Relations Group has run workshops for first line managers (districts and services) to improve practice in handling stage 1 complaints. This includes identifying concerns at an early stage, speedy responses and techniques for resolving issues at an early stage.

Complaints Manager has met with VCC Advocacy Service to ensure clear lines of communication for advocates with complaints team.

Delays in processing stage 2 complaints due to difficulties in getting Independent People have led to our Complaints Manager leading an initiative with regional group of complaints officers to develop a regional resource. VCC will also be involved in this process.

We are working with young people to identify best means of informing them about complaints procedures. They have asked for literature to include 'cartoon' formats. This will be used when new forms are printed.

Objective 9

Objective 9 - To ensure through regulatory powers and duties that children in regulated services are protected from harm and poor care standards.

A) PROGRESS AND RESULTS 1999/2000, 2000/2001

Describe your progress to date under this objective, including evidence of improved outcomes for children.

100% of the required inspections of children's homes were carried out in 99/ 2000. Inspection Unit are on schedule to complete 100% inspection of children's homes in 2000/1. Unfortunately during this year they have lost our Children's Homes Inspector and have not been able to replace from the applicants received so far. Therefore inspection of children s homes have been distributed amongst the team of very experienced inspectors, none of whom however are directly experienced in childcare.

Inspection Unit endeavour to consult children and young people in a variety of ways:

- As many children as wish to speak are spoken to at each inspection, but Inspection reports do not identify their input specifically so that they feel that they can comment freely.
- Inspection Unit have also tried to meet with children in settings where they feel most comfortable (e.g. at their 'Friday Club', away from the home).
- All the children and young people receive a letter from the Inspection Unit explaining where they are and how to contact them.
- If any child discloses something of individual concern to them, child protection procedures are followed, or if the matter is of a different nature, the social worker would be advised.

Inspection Unit have also set up a publicity system, advertising in the local press that (announced) inspections are to take place. The address of the home is not given, just name and town, but anyone who has contact with the home would recognise it and be able to feed into the inspection process if they so wish. In this way it is hoped to make the inspection process more transparent and inclusive.

Boarding Schools are inspected, but only once every four years.

Unannounced Regulation 22 visits take place every month. Reports are copied to members and the Assistant Director and senior children's services managers have regular meetings with Members linked to children's homes, to discuss issues.

All Under 8's assessments and inspections have been carried out within the required timescales, despite some staffing vacancies.

Objective 9

B) PLANS 2001/2 AND BEYOND

Set out what you will achieve for children under this objective in 2001/2 and beyond, and how you will achieve it.

Will continue to achieve 100% inspection of children's homes.

Aim to recruit childcare expertise to the Inspection Unit.

Inspection Unit will link in more closely to HCC's looked after children group to ensure the work they do is understood and issues are progressed.

Unit are currently exploring a "lighter touch" Boarding School inspection process for the intervening years and looking at the Independent Schools Inspection Service format to this end.

Under 8's registration and inspection staff are moving to Ofsted in September 2001, whilst development workers will be placed in CSF Integrated Local Services. This process is being project managed and transition plans are well advanced.

C) SPECIFIC IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES 2001/2 AND BEYOND

What action have you taken to implement the Chief Inspector's letter on Private Fostering?

Hertfordshire has procedures on private fostering, which comply with the statutory regulation. Following receipt of the Chief Inspector's letter, private fostering was included in the remit of the Kinship Placement Project to ascertain: -

- How well practitioners understand the procedures
- The extent to which private fostering is used
- Any changes necessary

The findings show likely under-reporting and also confusion about use of Private Fostering, particularly in relation to Kinship Placements and simultaneous use of S17 support. As a result, the following action has been taken:

- Clarification within the drafting of specific Kinship procedures
- Quadrant departmental workshops

Action proposed for 2001/2002

- To bring assessment of private fostering households within the remit of the additional Kinship Placement social workers
- To develop publicity materials in line with Signposts recommendations
- To ensure that the new CSF IT System produces reports on children privately fostered and approved households.

Objective 9

What action are you taking to implement the new provisions to regulate small private children's homes (LAC (2000) 21)?

Inspection Unit have joined with colleagues in the Eastern Region to ensure consistent application of registration requirements across the region.

So far we have had two enquiries, but no applications.

HCC do not use 3 bed homes, but Inspection Unit keep a register when they are alerted by external purchasers, or by someone making a complaint. No authority can make a placement in one of these small homes after Dec 31st with someone who has not applied to be registered (so placing officers should check with the appropriate IU that this is the case).

Objective 10

Objective 10 - To ensure that social care workers are appropriately skilled, trained and qualified, and to promote the uptake of training at all levels.

A) PROGRESS AND RESULTS 1999/2000; 2000/2001

Describe your progress to date under this objective, including evidence of improved outcomes for children.

PQ Award in Childcare

Percentage achieving PQ 1(QP 15) will rise from nil in March 2000 to 9.6% in March 2001:

- 28 Candidates have achieved PQ1 Award.
- We have supported ADVANCE Consortium who have gained approval (DOH/CCETSW) to provide Award (validated at Degree level by University of Hertfordshire).

NVQ3/ Caring for Children & Young People

Percentage achieving NVQ 3(QP 14) will rise from 1% in March 2000 to 15% in March 2001:

- 33 staff doing NVQ3 plus another 12 from Feb 2001;
- 5 Foster Carers and 1 RSW have achieved Award.
- 10 RSW are scheduled to complete award by March 2001.

Award has a key learning element on direct practice e.g., ADP, Health and Educational needs of Children and managing behaviour. This contributes significantly to meeting QP objectives in workers' respective service areas.

Dip.SW:

- All residential managers and deputies have Dip.SW;
- 4 staff achieved DipSW in 2000/1; 8 staff on course.

3 staff have been awarded the Dip/MA in Managing Practice (NISW) and 5 staff the PG Certificate in Management (University of Herts).

Training Programmes

Childcare Training programmes are designed in close partnerships with Quality Protects lead officers. Although no QP expenditure was planned for 99/2000, slippage has been used to fund training on New Assessment Framework, Towards Safer Care, and Communicating with Children.

Induction

Programme provided for 38 new social workers following a high profile recruitment drive, to ensure all the basic training requirements covered. Mentoring Groups established to meet continuing development needs.

Evidence based practice:

Membership of Research in practice and Making Research Count has raised the profile of evidence based practice and ensured that a 'What Works' approach is integrated in practice. Increasingly, research based initiatives are becoming integral to Quality Protects Developments.

Objective 10

Senior Practitioners

Training & consultation sessions held to develop their QP practice lead role in Districts Teams, supporting the development of team colleagues through supervision, mentoring, assessment and evidence based practice.

Governance

- Cabinet structure set up, with new Children's, Schools and Families Select committee already established in anticipation of new department in April 2001.
- Member Corporate Parenting Panel established 1999 focusses on LAC.
- Policy Committee is actively pursuing the achievement of CRE Standard Level 3. There is a Member Equality Panel and corporate Equality Strategy Group. Aim is to mainstream equality work into services, rather than as an add-on.

B) PLANS 2001/2 AND BEYOND

Set out what you will achieve for children under this objective in 2001/2 and beyond, and how you will achieve it.

PQ Award in Childcare

Target is 20% achieving PQ 1(QP 15) by March 2002.

- 30 Candidates will be eligible to undertake the Full PQ Award by Feb 2001.

NVQ3/ Caring for Children & Young People

Target is 40% achieving NVQ 3(QP 14) by March 2002.

- From 2002 all Residential Asst Managers will have NVQ 3
- Award has been introduced for Family Support Services: 11 Candidates registered

Dip.SW:

- Opportunity extended to Family Support Centre workers alongside RSW's
- 10 Staff currently attending or due to start work-based courses - University of Herts/ Open University
- Number of secondees for 2001/2 increased as part of the staff retention policy

PQ1, PQ Childcare and NVQs, Dip.SW and Management Training will remain an important focus. Positive recruitment & retention drives, realistic learning agreements and meeting staff release costs continue to be key to ensuring an effective qualifications strategy.

Provision of practice assessors to cover 66 Candidates on Qualification programmes in addition to securing 40 Practice Teachers to assess Dip.SW Practice. These roles will increasingly have a built-in incentive (PQ Advance Award & New Assessor Award (CCETSW 2001) and support career advancement in both continuing practice and management fields.

National Occupational Standards for Childcare (TOPSS) to be a focus for approved competencies for childcare staff for Performance Management and Development Purposes and linked to all in-service training courses.

Objective 10

Supporting Quality Protects service development initiatives:

- Kinship Strategy – training for all staff groups planning kinship placements and operating within new policy guidance
- Leaving Care Strategy – training for all staff working with LAC
- Working with black children and families - integrated into training programmes
- Young Carers Strategy – staff briefings on new legislation
- Family Group Conferences – training focus to support specialist workers
- Disabled Children strategy – evaluate pilot modules (7 days) to form part of core childcare training programme
- Family Placement /Carers Training - developed to include new foster carer and assessment standards and post adoption support.

Evaluating outcomes of training in a systematic way and linking this with service reviews is a priority for 2001.

CSF has extensive induction and management development programme with ongoing training and development plans for all staff. We will develop systems for training needs analysis, programme development review and evaluation that cuts across all staff groups. Quadrant training groups linked with the evidence based practice strategy should ensure a holistic and systematic approach.

C) SPECIFIC IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES 2001/2 AND BEYOND

What are you doing to recruit and retain an adequate supply of appropriately skilled staff?

Recruitment

- Reduction in C&F SW vacancies from 23% of establishment in June 2000 to 12% in November. As a result, unallocated cases reduced from 18 CP and 45 LAC in June, to 6 CP and 11 LAC in November.
- Newly qualified SWs: 13 staff recruited; all new SWs recruited to level 2; Districts (20 placements) and Family Placement Teams have prioritised student placements.
- 10 additional QP funded administrators to support social workers in Districts.
- Special recruitment campaign for residential units.

Although percentage of ethnic minority staff is greater than in the community, they are unevenly distributed across teams. The staff recruitment strategy will address this.

Retention

- 25 new level 4 Senior Practitioner posts established, to extend career opportunities, including 10 posts funded from QP money.
- Progression Scheme for unqualified staff introduced for Professional Assistants to acknowledge growing complexity of their work (Objective 1).
- Exit Interviews results are analysed and acted upon.

Objective 10

Performance Management and Development: All staff:

- have individual Performance Agreements linked to competencies and person specifications for their posts.
- receive monthly supervision, and annual appraisals with Personal Development Profiles

Black workers support groups input into staffing/ service strategies

What are the key elements of your inter-agency training strategy to ensure that new guidance and requirements are integrated into joint working practices? You should cover in particular safeguarding children, including utilising Towards Safer Care; undertaking assessments in accordance with the Assessment Framework; and improving the participation of children, young people, their families and carers (including your use of the Total Respect training pack).

Listening to Children

Childcare training programme includes child centred perspectives in all areas of training with specific modules on "Total Respect" (4 days), Communicating with Children (3 days), Communicating with Disabled Children (Children's Society Pilot). From March 2001 Total Respect will be run 3 times a year and include Members and other agencies. Young people will be trained as facilitators for this and other childcare courses.

Towards Safer Care: Training held to promote national strategy messages and ensure staff awareness of revised recruitment policy. Training has been opened out to independent/ voluntary sector providers.

New Assessment Framework: has been integrated into assessment, care planning and review processes for new CSF service. As with all CSF preparation events, training includes SSD, Education, teachers, Health and voluntary organisations.

Other Interagency Training

Provision addresses training needs of childcare staff in contracted out services to promote consistent childcare practice standards across agencies (TSP 2000).

The following have interagency training groups/ joint training remit:

- YOTs
- ACPC (all training on Working Together is multi-agency)
- Domestic Violence Forums
- Drug and Alcohol groups.
- Working with Families and Mental Health post graduate course (Univ. of Herts)

Objective 10**What steps are you taking to engage multi-agency staff in all relevant groups and at all levels in the design, delivery and evaluation of Quality Protects?**

Eight Quality Protects sub-groups and a range of associated groups focus on developing the 11 Objectives. Groups include planning and operational SSD staff, and relevant stakeholders from Education, Health, YOTs, Youth service, Careers Service, Connexions, and voluntary sector.

QP MAP and update reports agreed by Children's Joint Commissioning Board (JCB): includes SSD, Education, and representatives from Health Authorities and Trusts, and PCGs. JCB ensures that QP developments integrated with other strategic plans (HImPs, EDP, BSP, YJ Plan DAT Plan, etc).

District managers have presented QP developments and received feedback from PCGs, and other local multi-agency planning groups (which include District Councils, and user and carer representatives).

MAP 1 was issued to an extensive mailing list of voluntary organisations and other agencies across the County. MAP 2 was circulated for local managers to share with local multi-agency planning groups. It was also put on the "Herts Direct" website.

Two county-wide workshops have been held for voluntary organisations, which looked at what they wanted to see arising from the programme in Year 3. These workshops also considered the Education Development and Early Years Plans, and the CSF Preventative Strategy, and the links between these different initiatives.

Objective 11

Objective 11 - To maximise the benefits to service users from the resources available, and to demonstrate the effectiveness and value for money of the care and support provided, and allow for choice and different responses for different needs and circumstances.

A) PROGRESS & RESULTS 1999/2000; 2000/2001

Describe your progress to date under this objective, including evidence of improved outcomes for children

Best Value: Overall strategy is to increase placement choice and enhance quality of LAC placements, saving on direct costs by using alternative sources of finance wherever possible. Success of strategy evidenced by consistent improvement in placement stability figures (see Objective 1). In 1999/2000 we have further developed wrap-around support services to LAC and their carers:

- extension of specialist Fostering Project to offer 24 hour support to foster carers;
- Corporate Parenting Officer (funded by Education) and dedicated LAC Advisory Teachers;
- dedicated LAC Nurse (funded by Health.);
- CAHMS consultation sessions in every children's home.

Fostering: Strategy has been to meet all LAC increase over last 3 years with foster placements. By March 2000 we had already met our original 2002 target percentage of 77% of LAC in foster placements. This has been achieved through additional foster care recruitment activity and increased support to foster carers to maintain placement stability and aid retention (see Objective 1). Target is 78% of LAC (and 89% of young children) in foster placements by March 2001.

Greater use of independent agencies for mainstream placements whilst in-house recruitment drive was progressed led to higher than inflation rise in unit costs of foster placements in 1999/2000. Success of recruitment campaign in 2000/2001 means that this increase will not continue at the same rate.

Residential: We have enhanced in-County residential resources, and wrap-around support, to maintain links with families and local communities/ schools. This provides multi-agency Best Value services, that are more local but no more expensive than most out-County alternatives:

- Placement stability increased and few children now go out of county from children's homes.
- Opportunities for rehabilitating children home increased.
- Easier to re-settle care leavers in their communities of origin
- Savings made on workers' travelling time and expenses.

Unit cost of children's residential care rose only by inflation level 1999/2000. Previously relative cheapness of some out-County residential resources for disabled children provided a financial incentive to continue using those resources. This year long-anticipated quantum rise in these resources' charges occurred, leading to projected higher than inflation rise in unit costs 2000/2001. However, Bail Support/Remand Scheme has reduced numbers in secure accommodation: 14 avoided secure accommodation/ custody: 176 weeks secure accommodation saved.

Objective 11

Black and Ethnic Minority Children

Strategy is to increase work with CIN whilst reducing proportion of LAC (see Objective 3).

B) PLANS 2001/2002 AND BEYOND

Set out what you will achieve for children under this objective in 2001/2002 and beyond, and how you will achieve it.

Best Value: Integration of SSD Children's Services and Education into Children's Schools and Families Service in April 2001 will offer an integrated user-friendly service with one professional acting as case co-ordinator. Combing the two services will save on administrative costs and resources will be re-cycled into front-line and preventative/ family support services.

Quality and stability of LAC placements will be further enhanced in 2001/2 by:

- CAMHS LAC support service, funded from Modernisation Fund/ MH Grant (see Objective 3).
- Development of LAC Health Team and extension to care leavers, funded from joint finance

We have held a series of three workshops to involve voluntary organisations in planning for CSF. We are integrating SSD, Education and Youth Service grant funding streams and criteria. We are also participating in a corporate Best Value review of voluntary sector grants, to ensure that:

- grant giving processes are improved
- criteria are more transparent and match County Council objectives
- duplication and complexity reduced
- there is greater sensitivity about voluntary organisations' need to plan ahead and retain staff
- support to attract other funding is enhanced

Fostering: Revised target is 80% of LAC (and 91% of young children) in foster placements by March 2003. In 2001/2 we are proposing to focus on maintaining placement stability through increased recruitment and retention, and enhancing the system to meet demands at the pressure points (see Objective 1).

Support and retention packages for foster carers will increase in-house unit costs but will still be cheaper than independent providers. Consequently unit costs will not increase above inflation levels and may come down.

Residential:

New children's home in 2001/2 will increase local placement choice and placement stability.

New in-house long-term home for disabled children opening Summer 2001 (see Objective 1) will provide local alternative to increasingly expensive out-County providers. Using school premises for new respite unit saves on capital costs. These projects have been planned in conjunction with development of in-County education resources for disabled children (see Objective 6).

Objective 11

Black and Ethnic Minority Children

We will improve accessibility of family support services for children in need, offering more targeted services and making mainstream services more culturally sensitive (see Objective 3).

C) SPECIFIC IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES 2001/2002 AND BEYOND

What are the main elements of your strategy to develop management information to improve service delivery – particularly in relation to adoption, children with disabilities and care leavers?

New information system, 'Oracle' commissioned for Children's Schools and Families Service implementation in April 2001:

- Replaces all existing LEA/SSD information systems/processes
- Designed re DoH/DfEE minimum data sets.

Mainstream Education/Social Services data will include:

- information on disability, indicating disabled child is registered/SEN/LAC/CP
- when care plans/reviews/transition plans due/completed
- parents'/carers' views
- ethnicity, religion, first language, fluency (interpreter required)

Improves management information, monitoring practice and service delivery

'Oracle' will capture all management information Family Placement requires, incorporating DoH Core Data set as a minimum standard & monitoring PAF indicators, internal targets on adoption timescales, fostering recruitment activity. Until 4/01 adoption tracking Access database tracks key milestones from LAC to Adoption Order. The current PSALMS system will continue supplying data.

New NCH Care Leavers Service will develop information system to track care leavers up to age 21 and beyond which will supply all QP information. System will include information about care leavers obtained from LA and other voluntary organisations.

HITS system currently shares data between Education, Careers, Social Services, and Herts TEC databases, to track young people (13-19) at risk of falling out of education/training (including care leavers). In 2001/2 Connexions Service will take over development of HITS database.

Objective 11**What are you doing to exploit the data collected during the census for the Children in Need data collection?**

The data collection from CIN is being used in the following ways:

- To note average outcomes. The proportion of disabled children receiving services was the same as the national average.
- To confirm improved outcomes in the recording of ethnic data. Following previous concerns, there was a marked improvement in the recording of ethnic category.
- To look in detail at the take up of family centre services by black and ethnic minority families (see Objective 3).
- Lessons learnt from the first collection will improve accuracy for the 2001 survey. These proposals will include having “CIN Champions” at a local level and ensuring a clear audit trail.
- To question our practice. CIN results showed a larger gap between the numbers of children in need and those who received a service than in our comparator authorities. In addition, we were spending fewer hours with LAC children than our comparator authorities. However, some individual districts were closer to the comparator authority figures. We are investigating these discrepancies with front line managers and will develop an action plan to address the issues.

What Quality Assurance and audit systems have you put in place?

The department’s QA system - QUIP - links monitoring and auditing of Standards, and user feedback, with service improvement and planning. It is well implemented in Children's Residential and Family Placement teams and becoming more widely embedded in Districts.

In Children's Residential, the award of ISO 9002 has improved the standard and consistency of care in homes, leading to increased stability for LAC.

Standards are in place throughout the service, defining the department’s promises to users. These link directly with staff competencies and NVQ and are a benchmark for investigating complaints.

Internal audits and monitoring checks underpin compliance with the standards, ensuring that services meet key QP objectives.

Increasingly co-ordinated approach to obtaining and actioning feedback from young people and their carers (See Objective 8)

Objective 11

Annual and Service reviews are an integral part of the QUIP system. These link operational with strategic-level management and planning, and inform continuous service improvement.

The Quality Management framework planned for CSF will develop QUIP by:

- Integrating quality systems, business planning and individual performance management
- Enabling teams to use metrics as a performance monitor and to drive service improvement
- Facilitating user participation.
- Creating information systems which support learning and practice.