

D REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Recruitment

- 1 We are continuing to experience difficulties in recruiting staff. Wycombe continues to be the most difficult area for recruitment with 40% of Social Worker posts vacant. A market premium (an additional payment on top of normal pay) is being paid to child care social workers and other measures being considered are an improved Housing and Relocation Scheme, a Mortgage Subsidy scheme, an extension of the car leasing scheme for high mileage users and developing strong links with relevant colleges and universities.

Special Educational Needs

- 2 As part of the Council's strategy for raising the standards of achievement of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), mainstream and special schools are encouraged to work together. In order to facilitate this two consortia of special schools have been established. They are tasked with co-ordinating provision to meet the needs of all children in their area who have special needs unless those children require a specialist national or regional provision. The consortia will also plan for the movement of pupils into mainstream settings and support mainstream school staff to enable the pupils to be integrated.
- 3 Funding for children with Moderate Learning Disabilities (MLD) and Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) has been delegated to schools so that there will no longer be a need to seek a statement to unlock funding. This is particularly important because it will enable earlier action to take place thus providing a better chance of a successful intervention.

Working Together

- 4 The Area Child Protection Committee completed work on "Working Together". This is a multi-agency code of practice aimed at improving child protection working practices and strengthening the way in which all agencies work together. Among a number of key issues in the code of practice is the role of the

Corporate Parent; that is Members taking responsibility for the children in the Council's care.

"Quality Protects" Management Action Plan (MAP)

- 5 The "Quality Protects" MAP is the document that explains the Council's plans to improve services for children and young people, particularly those children looked after by the Council. The MAP is an annual plan submitted to the Department of Health so that it can gauge the County Council's performance in relation to services for children and young people and evaluate the programme for the coming year. MAP 3 was submitted to the Department of Health at the end of January. While no formal feedback has yet been received, the County Council has been informally notified that the plan has been accepted.
- 6 Formal approval means that the Council will receive £850,721 from Central Government to help implement the "Quality Protects" Action Plan. This will enable the developmental objectives set out in the plan to be met.
- 7 One important feature of this year's plan is the expansion of a service for children and young people leaving care.

ECPC Launch

- 8 Education of Children and Young People in the Public Care (ECPC) is a joint Education and Social Services team set up to improve the education of children who are in the care of the Council. The service was launched formally in March. The aims of the ECPC Team are to support all children in public care by ensuring that:
 - key staff across Buckinghamshire are well-informed about the guidance on the Education of Children in Public Care
 - each child has a Personal Education Plan
 - there is a Designated Teacher in every school who is informed and supported
 - there is a clear understanding throughout the Council of the role of corporate parent

- children's interests are represented in all key County Council policy documents
- the team has an overview of each child's educational provision and progress

Teenage Pregnancy Strategy

- 9 Health Authorities were required to submit a strategy to the Department of Health aimed at reducing teenage pregnancies. The County Council is a key partner in the creation and implementation of the strategy. A 10 year strategy has been developed for Buckinghamshire and this was signed off by the Health Authority and the County Council at the end of March. The Department of Health will provide funding to help implement the strategy.
- 10 This was a good example of partnership working in action with a number of stakeholders; Health, Social Services, Education, Housing, the Church, Districts Councils and Voluntary Organisations involved in producing the strategy.

Exclusions

- 11 In the last year the number of exclusions from school has exceeded the Council's target as set by the DfEE. The target for the calendar year ending April 2001 was 46 permanent exclusions. The actual figure was 90. A number of actions is being undertaken to try to improve this situation. An action plan has been produced, in consultation with District Audit, aimed at limiting exclusions. This will be linked to the Behaviour Support Plan. Schools, governing bodies, voluntary agencies and other statutory groups have been consulted about the plan. Consultation is due to have been completed by the end of March. Following the consultation process the Plan will be amended and published.

Joint Assessment Framework

- 12 An integrated assessment framework has been produced to enable co-ordinated action to take place between agencies. This should enable more rapid action to take place in identifying the needs of children and young people across the whole range of County Council provided services.

The Youth Justice Plan

- 13 The plan for 2001/2002 has been completed and submitted to the Youth Justice Board. The plan outlines the work that has been completed in the last year and sets out the future programme. The 75 page document will be distilled into an executive summary to be distributed as widely as possible and placed on the Intranet.
- 14 The Youth Justice Board has responded to the draft plans with concerns around the funding for the Youth Offending Team (YOT) and the extent to which partners are able to contribute. A meeting with a representative of the Board is being sought.
- 15 There are a number of major projects within the Portfolio that are in hand currently and will come to fruition in the coming months. It is impossible within the space of this report to include everything so just some of the more imminent ones are identified below.

Collaborative working to improve the management of services to Special Schools

- 16 A number of planned actions are aimed at developing closer collaboration between services provided by the County Council to protect children more effectively. The most immediate actions are:
- i A post of Consortia Co-ordinator will be created to provide a single point of contact to facilitate the effective and efficient liaison between the County Council and Special Schools. This would involve the co-ordination of information and liaison on all matters including finance, maintenance, staffing, child protection, pupil cases etc.

- ii a conference will be organised in June around the theme of ensuring that children are educated in a safe and secure environment and protected from harm.

Specialist SEN Departments in Mainstream Schools

- 17 Major changes in the provision of SEN funding to mainstream schools for MLD and SpLD pupils have been referred to in paragraph 2 above. In addition a County-wide review of other SEN needs across the County is being undertaken. It is anticipated that this will increase the number of mainstream specialist departments.

School Clusters

- 18 Similarly to the Special Schools Consortia, a series of “clusters” of mainstream schools will be established to ensure mainstream support for pupils with SEN. The clusters will enable the skills and facilities available in one school to be used for the benefit of pupils in another.

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