

<p>Develop a range of local placements for Looked After Children</p>	<p>Control estimated shortfall of £2 million in placements budget during 2001-02 by :</p> <p>Developing a detailed service and financial implementation plan to achieve the following targets and net savings on external placements' expenditure</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. increase local foster care placements by 30, with a net saving of £250,000 with a diversion from external placements @£300 per week net from September 2001 2. support 10 children currently looked after, in placements at home, with direct saving of £200,000 on placement budget @ £500 per week from July 2001 3. refocus Woodlands to provide a service for LAC with high care needs and with reduction in placement expenditure costs of £50,000 4. establish a placement finding service (using Q.P. funding), within a commissioning framework, targeting efficiency savings of £100,000 5. increase the number of children adopted to 18, saving £50,000 from the placements costs 6. increase the number of LAC placed with relative carers, saving additional spend on external placements, the target to be agreed 	<p>April 2001</p> <p>Head of Service</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. + 2. Marketing and recruitment strategy now in place to increase fostering base and placement options. There are now currently 84 foster carers approved providing 161 places. 3. Woodlands was closed in October 2001 and the premises used to create the Adolescent Resource Team with a service priority to support families and divert young people from local care. 4. A Placement Finding Unit has been in operation since October 2001 to improve the use of internal resources and more robust commissioning of P&V Providers. There is a projected underspend of £300K in the Placements budget for 2004/05. 5. Number of adoption orders increased to 15 for 2003/04 and we currently have 25 children in adoptive placements. 6. A Kinship Care worker post has been created within the Fostering Service to regularise and support our Kinship Care arrangements. Greater use is being made of Supported Residence Orders where appropriate.
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	<p>7 ensure joint-funding of all appropriate placements through a more robust multi-agency partnership, with a target reduction in net costs to SSD of £100,000</p> <p>8 transfer to leaving care budget, funded separately by central government grant from 2001-02, 16 LAC aged 15 with a saving to the placement budget of £250,000</p> <p>9 enhance the present budget by £800,000, using the accumulated efficiency savings within the Department.</p>		<p>7 Achieved. Senior Management representation on SENMAM.</p> <p>8 Achieved.</p> <p>9 Achieved.</p>
	<p>Review and simplify the payments to foster carers (costs are included in net savings above).</p>	<p>April 2001 Head of Service</p>	<p>Achieved. New schedule introduced April 2001</p>
	<p>Improve the recruitment, training and support to local foster carers. This should include additional specialist support for Looked After Children with behavioural problems and a 24-hour advice service. Develop a longer-term plan to continue to improve these support services. Cost should be met from Q.P. funding or by other specific resource identified in the Service Plan.</p>	<p>April 2002 On going Service Manager, Looked After Children</p>	<p>Achieved Active recruitment process now in place and number of local carers is increasing.</p>
	<p>Increase the number of local foster care placements for children from ethnic minorities, and ensure a training and developing programme on issues of identity for Looked After Children, particularly those of mixed race and asylum seekers.</p>	<p>April 2003 Senior Manager, Looked After Children</p>	<p>Achieved Number of BME Carers is now proportionate to number of BME LAC. Training and Development programme in place.</p>

	Ensure the competitiveness of in-house residential provision by the year 2003-2004. This will involve developing a clear specification during 2001 and market testing during 2002.	April 2003 Senior Manager, Looked After Children	Woodlands now closed. Contract for respite care (Banardos) from November 2003 No plans to reopen in house residential provision.
Improve workforce planning and care management systems	Agree a plan to reduce the average caseloads of social work staff and to improve the consistency of long term care planning as reported by the regular audit and the reports of the Independent Review Officers. The plan should consider the structure of present teams (including the Leaving Care Team), the numbers of social work staff and their training and support. It should also consider the development of better work force planning including a review of the present skills mix. Monitor the overall effectiveness by ensuring a decrease in the average duration that children are looked after. The plan should be fundable within the enhanced central government Quality Protects grants.	October 2001 CMAS Service Manager	Achieved Additional social work staff have been recruited, and the creation of a third long term team is complete. The Leaving Care Team and ART now carries full caseload responsibility. The pressure upon services, however, remains great. The number of referrals with high levels of need continues to increase, as has the number of children looked after. This, coupled with the difficulties of staff recruitment and retention, has meant there has been no significant reduction in caseloads. There has been no significant change in the average duration of children looked after.
	Review the existing eligibility criteria, and ensure a clear and common definition of need at which a child becomes looked after.	April 2003 CMAS Service Manager	Achieved Protocols for the process by which children become looked after have been introduced. Placement Panel now in place.
	Review the geographical access to the social work service	October 2001 Head of Service	Achieved. Fit for purpose strategies in place re premises

	Continue to develop the staffing recruitment and retention policy, ensuring that the staffing expenditure remains within budget overall	April 2003 Head of Service	Achieved A competency framework has been developed which will be the basis of induction and training for the staff, and will allow quicker progression. Management staff have been re-graded, a new grade has been introduced for child protection specialists and a market premium for social work staff agreed by the Executive. Overseas recruitment has continued. Despite all these initiatives, however, the pressure on the service remains very high, with significant difficulties to recruit and retain key staff remaining. Further initiatives are planned to enhance recruitment of front line staff.
	Ensure that the recently introduced tier of senior social workers is well integrated within the management structure of the service, and has a clear and well-understood role.	October 2001 CMAS Service Manager	Achieved
	Increase the number of Independent Reviewing Officers to five, including the foster care reviewing officer, using Quality Protects funding..	October 2001 C-QuAS Service Manager	Achieved The IRO service has been successfully reviewed and is now operating more effectively.
	Ensure that providers, including foster carers, are fully involved in the planning and delivery of care. Monitor the performance, of this and the next action, in the Audit.	April 2003 CMAS Service Manager	Achieved
	Ensure that all providers are visited before a placement is made and that Looked After Children are appropriately introduced to the placement.	Immediately CMAS/Service Manager, Looked After Children	Achieved
	Improve contingency planning, to reduce the impact of placement breakdowns. Ensure better record keeping of why placements break down, and use this information to plan better services.	April 2002 C-QuAS Service Manager Revised Timescale Oct 2004 – then ongoing process	Some good progress has been made via quality assurance and audits of children's plans. Introduction of Disruption Meetings.

	Ensure easy access to social workers by both Looked After Children and their families and ensure that social workers continue to work effectively with the families of Looked After Children after the child becomes accommodated. Effectiveness should be measured by a reduction in the number and duration of care episodes; and by the reporting of easier access and better information by both children and their parents.	April 2002 CMAS Service Manager	A process of regular audit of all aspects of Care Management for children's cases has resulted in demonstrable high levels of achievement in respect of Care Management standards.
Develop a network of preventative services	Agree a plan to develop additional family support and preventative services, in the first instance particularly for children with a disability and for adolescents. The services should focus on those areas of need highlighted by the Matching Needs and Services analysis. The number of LAC per 1,000 of children aged 0-18 should be reduced by 2002.	October 2001 Head of Service	Achieved. ART now fully operational and a commissioning strategy in place.
	Develop, with Education, additional services to prevent the exclusion of Looked After Children from school; and better support services to those that are excluded.	September 2001 C-QuAS Service Manager	Achieved. Increase in BEST Service.
	Commence, through the CSSG, a matching needs and services exercise for children with disabilities and develop a register of children that can be used to target resources and plan better services.	October 2001 C-QuAS Service Manager	Achieved. Commenced Spring 2002.
	Increase local respite and support services for children with a disability by £75,000 in the first instance, reviewed from 2002-03 when needs analysis is complete. All revenue increases should be funded from existing family support budgets or Quality Protects.	April 2001 Family Support Service Manager	Achieved. Contract for response care bed with Barnardos in place.
	Agree, through the CSSG, a strategy to develop the voluntary sector to provide preventative services, ensure that this strategy includes the development of black and ethnic minority organisations.	June 2001 Family Support Service Manager	Achieved. Preventative strategy to be in place by December 2004.
Improve multi-agency service planning	Agree a Joint Investment Plan, with Health, Education, Housing, and Leisure Services and the Voluntary Sector.	March 2001 Head of Service	Achieved
	In particular, ensure strategies to improve the health and education of Looked After Children and to reduce their offending, using National Objectives and the Quality Protects Action Plan to set and monitor clear targets. Ensure the strategies are jointly developed. Include YJP.	June 2001 Head of Service	Achieved. Significant improvement in respect of medicals, dental checks and PEP completion. Further work in hand to improve educational achievement of LAC.

	Ensure that all plans have a clear implementation strategy that is clearly monitored	June 2001 C-QuAS Service Manager	Achieved
	Agree the data information set that needs to be shared regularly with Health and Education and ensure systems are in place to deliver this information consistently. Ensure that new IT systems are equipped to facilitate this information sharing.	October 2001 C-QuAS Service Manager	Achieved
	Review public information to ensure that it is appropriate for all service users	April 2002 C-QuAS Service Manager	Achieved Directory of Children's Services is complete. This is being revised for reissue.
Ensure better monitoring of performance	Develop regular quarterly feedback to the Service's Operational Management Team to monitor agreed Best Value targets	October 2001	Achieved. Monthly performance OMT
	Ensure that information of performance is fed back to all staff. Ensure the results of the Best Value Review consultation is fed back to front-line staff. Ensure that the recommendations are fed back to all that participated in the consultation.	June 2001 Head of Service	Achieved. Introduction of monthly staff newsletter.
Ensure appropriate services to LAC from ethnic minorities	Ensure there is a clear implementation plan for the Service's approach to Equal Opportunities, including ethnic monitoring of staff and service users within an agreed corporate framework, and better monitoring of unmet need. Implement the steps agreed in the paper "An Approach to Equal Opportunities".	June 2001 Head of Service	Achieved. Divisional diversity policy is in place. Impact assessments have been progressed.
	Develop a corporate plan for helping refugee children to meet better the whole range of needs of this group. Commission appropriate providers of accommodation.	October 2001 Head of Service	Achieved. Tendering process achieved in 2001. Further work to be undertaken on commissioning of placements for Asylum LAC.