

Committee: **Cabinet**

Date: **15 December 2004**

Title of Report: **The Children's Fund 2005-2008**

By: **Director of Education and Libraries**

Purpose of Report: **To seek Cabinet approval to the proposed three year plan for the Children's Fund**

Recommendation:

The Cabinet is recommended to approve the proposed three year plan for the Children's Fund for submission to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES)

1 Financial appraisal

1.1 Over the three year period from 2002-2005 East Sussex has had grant of around £1.3m per annum from the Children's Fund for preventative services for children aged 5-13, allocated following submission of a partnership plan in 2002. The county partnership has been invited to submit a further plan for the period 2005-2008 in order to claim further funding of £3.25m in total (a slightly reduced level of funding). After 2008 there are not expected to be further separate Children's Fund allocations, and the plan for 2005-2008 is required to show how preventative services established through the Fund will be "mainstreamed".

1.2 The proposed plan does not commit the County Council to any expenditure not already planned. The main service funded by the Children's Fund in East Sussex has been the Children's Fund Linkworker service. This is a service similar to that of Connexions Personal Advisers, with link workers providing intensive support to individual vulnerable children and families. The plan for 2005-2008 involves a gradual tapering of the support for this service with the expectation that an increasing proportion of the costs are met through partnerships of schools and local children's services pooling resources. This is designed to embed the service within local plans, reducing the dependency on the Children's Fund allocations. There is a risk, of course, that schools and services will not be able/willing to meet their share of the costs by the end of the funding period. The indications are, however, that the service is greatly valued; some schools are already contributing resources to increase the level of service available.

2 Supporting information

2.1 The plan is expected to follow detailed guidance issued by the DfES in October this year. It is required to be approved by the County Council and also by the East Sussex NHS Primary Care Trusts (PCTs). The approval of the PCTs has been secured through the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP), which considered the plan at its meeting on 6 December. A summary of the plan is attached at Annex 1 and a copy of the full plan has been circulated separately.

2.2 Beyond the tapered subsidy for the Children's Fund linkworker service, the three year plan provides for local flexibility over the use of the remaining funding. The plan proposes a change in the formula for allocating funds to areas within the County from the arrangements originally agreed in 2002. Rather than targeting the areas of the local Sure Start programmes (which are, of course, changing slightly as a result of the Children's Centre development), the plan allocates funding to each of the four planning areas for children's services established last

year, using the boundaries of the PCTs. The allocation reflects the most recent census data on levels of deprivation.

2.3 A key requirement for the plan is that it shows how decision making arrangements for the Fund will “migrate” over the plan period into the evolving decision making arrangements for Children’s Trusts. The proposed plan involves decisions transferring from March 2006 from the current local Children’s Fund Partnerships (established in 2002 in each of the areas targeted for the Fund, corresponding to the local Sure Start areas) to the four area children’s services planning groups (consistent with the new basis of allocation of the Fund). This will allow the area planning groups to consider the use of Children’s Fund along with other resources for/policies on preventative services for children and young people. In the presentation to the seminar on 3 November for Councillors and other stakeholders on the Children Act 2004, the Chief Executive emphasised that Children’s Trust arrangements in East Sussex would need a strong local dimension and indicated that the Council would be seeking to build on the current local planning groups. Locating the Children’s Fund decision making with these groups is consistent with this principle. The plan also proposes, however, that the use of the Fund in each area should be subject to the approval of the county level CYPSP at least in the first year.

3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

3.1 The proposed three year plan for the Children’s Fund aims both to embed one of the key services developed to date through the Fund, the successful Children’s Fund linkworker service, and to locate decision making on preventative services for children and young people with the four children’s services area planning groups established last year. In this way the plan is consistent with developing policy on a Children’s Trust for East Sussex.

DENISE STOKOE
Director of Education and Libraries

Contact Officer: Alison Jeffery, Assistant Director, Children’s Services (Planning and Commissioning) Tel: 01273 482163