



Executive Board

**Thursday, 16 November 2006 2.00 p.m.
Marketing Suite, Municipal Building**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David W. R.'

Chief Executive

**ITEMS TO BE DEALT WITH
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

PART 1

Item	Page No
1. MINUTES	
2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any personal or personal and prejudicial interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda no later than when that item is reached and (subject to certain exceptions in the Code of Conduct for Members) to leave the meeting prior to discussion and voting on the item.	
3. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO	
(A) IMPLEMENTATION OF CHILDREN IN NEED (CIN) STRATEGY, POLICY AND PROCEDURES	1 - 6

Item	Page No
(B) ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S DIRECTORATE)	7 - 10
4. COMMUNITY PORTFOLIO	
(A) HALTON HOUSING TRUST UPDATE	11 - 29
5. CORPORATE PORTFOLIO	
(A) PROPOSED CHANGES TO MAGISTRATES' COURT ARRANGEMENTS IN HALTON	30 - 44
(B) DEFAULT RETIREMENT AGE	45 - 46
6. HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO	
(A) CARERS STRATEGY 2006 -2008	47 - 94

In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.

Report to: Executive Board

Date: 16th November 2006

Presented by: Strategic Director (Children & Young People)

Subject: Implementation of Children In Need (CIN) Strategy, Policy and Procedures

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek agreement of the Executive Board to the implementation of the Multi-agency Children in Need (CIN) Strategy, Policy and Procedures across the Borough.
- 1.2 To inform the Executive Board that the implementation of the Children In Need Strategy; Policy and Procedures, will be overseen by the development of a Children In Need (CIN) Mini Trust, and Halton's Local Safeguarding Children's Board.

2.0 RECOMMENDED That:

- 2.1 The Children In Need Strategy, Policy and Procedures are implemented by all agencies, including those that relate to the CIN Trust.
- 2.2 The Children In Need Strategy, Policy and Procedures will form the basis of the service delivery model for the Children In Need Mini Trust.
- 2.3 The Children In Need Mini Trust action plan will focus on; commissioning, aligned budgets, co-location of staff, multi-agency assessments and will be at the forefront of the development of Children and Young People Area Networks
- 2.4 The Children In Need In Strategy, Policy and Procedures will be overseen by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board.
- 2.5 The Children In Need Strategy, Policy and Procedures will establish a continuum of Children In Need, linking preventive, promotional and safeguarding Children In Need services together.
- 2.5 The Children In Need Strategy, Policy and Procedures are formally launched to all agencies.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 This report should be read in conjunction with the two documents; Halton

Children In Need Strategy, and Multi-Agency Procedures for the Promotion of Welfare of Children In Need. Due to the size of both these documents, they are not attached to this report but are available in the member's room at Municipal Buildings.

3.2 The objective of services to Children in Need as stated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is to strive to ensure that all children should:

- Grow up healthily from conception to adulthood.
- Gain full advantage from education.
- Behave well and keep out of trouble with the law.
- Have a strong sense of personal identity and self esteem.
- Be safe from harm.
- Acquire essential personal and social skills.

3.3 These values and aspirations underpin all planning, development and delivery of children in need services in Halton and the rest of the United Kingdom.

Halton's Vision

3.4

Halton's Children and Young People is one of the five priorities of the Halton Community Strategy. Halton's vision for children and young people is:

'To ensure that in Halton children and young people are safeguarded, healthy and happy, and receive their entitlement of high quality services that are sensitive to need, inclusive and accessible to all.'

3.5 The promotion of welfare is the key aim of work with children in need and their families. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined within the key document, published by HM Government - Working Together To Safeguard Children 2006 as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of children's health and development
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care

3.6 This definition clearly defines safeguarding in holistic terms. Effective child protection is defined as essential to the wider work of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children but sets this work in the context of agencies and individuals being proactive in safeguarding and promoting the

welfare of children so the need to protect children from harm is reduced.

- 3.7 The Child in Need Strategy is properly located within safeguarding services and forms part of the continuum between universal and child protection services following on from the strategies for services providing general support to families, and for targeted services to prevent further problems developing in the family.
- 3.8 A multi agency approach to implementing the Halton Vision and meeting the needs of children and young people in Halton was initially developed in 2003 through the Children and Young Peoples Partnership. The strategic role of the Children & Young Peoples Strategic Partnership is now being developed incrementally through six mini-trusts which in 2008 will become integrated into a single Children's Trust. The Children and Young Peoples Partnership has been re-constituted as the Children and Young Peoples Alliance Board to which the six mini trusts will report. Since 1 April 2006 there have been mini trusts for CAMHS, Looked After Children, Children with Disabilities and Preventive Services. During 2006/07 mini trusts will be established for Children's Centres and Children in Need (including child protection).
- 3.9 The vision for such trusts in Halton is based on a model of pooled or aligned budgets, joint commissioning, inter-agency governance arrangements which agree the overall vision together with the joint management and co-location of staff where this makes sense to children, young people and their families. They will support those who work every day with children, young people and their families to deliver better outcomes – with children and young people experiencing more integrated and responsive services, and specialist support embedded in and accessed through universal services. People will work in effective multi-disciplinary teams, be trained jointly to tackle cultural and professional divides and use a lead professional model where many disciplines are involved
- 3.10 The identification of children in need and delivering services to meet those needs is the responsibility of all agencies.

4.0 THE CHILDREN IN NEED STRATEGY

- 4.1 The overall aim of the Strategy is that through the timely provision of co-ordinated multi agency support services to children and families, the needs of children and families will be met at an early stage, reducing the risks to children and the need for them to be removed from home. This will allow services to refocus towards an increased range of high quality support services provided to families at their point of need, which promote the welfare of children and the achievement of high level outcomes for children. It locates the protection of children within family support and family support within child protection based on the principals that the protection of children

is a shared responsibility, that the welfare of the child is paramount and that family support services are integral to the protection of children.

The definition of a Child In Need therefore used within the Child In Need Strategy is:

“A child with complex needs who has experienced compromised parenting and who is at risk of family breakdown or of being harmed and who requires a multi agency plan for the provision of services”

4.2 The Child in Need Strategy is interdependent with strategies at the lower levels of need - services which provide general support to children and families at Levels 1 and 2 are contributing to the safeguarding of children by preventing problems escalating to the point where a child is in need of protection. Open access services are crucial in the safeguarding of children as the most vulnerable children and families often need to be supported to make the best use of universal services that exist for all families and to deal with issues that less vulnerable children and families may respond to within their family and social networks without outside support. Such support builds the personal skills and parenting capacity, which is significant in the safeguarding of children.

5.0 CHILDREN IN NEED POLICY AND PROCEDURES

5.1 The above policies and procedures are based on Halton Children's Planning Model, which focuses on the early identification of need and provision of services. The model is outlined below. It includes the assessment of need and provision of services before children and young people reach the threshold for Children's Social Care intervention as well as the assessment and planning which is led by Children's Social Care. These procedures outline how all agencies should identify and assess children in need within the Children's Planning Model leading to the development and delivery of multi agency plans to meet assessed needs.

5.2 The **Children's Planning Model** outlines 4 level of need/intervention:

Level 1 – Universal

These are services provided to all children and families e.g. health visitor, G.P., schools, and are usually the responsibility of a single agency.

Level 2 - Prevention

Increased concerns because:

- Concerns have been identified by more than 2 agencies
- Initial concerns have escalated

- Interventions made by a single agency have been unsuccessful

Levels 3a and 3b Targeted/Specialist

Concerns at Level 2 have escalated and assessments have confirmed the child may be at risk of significant harm. However although there may have been substantiated concerns of significant harm the nature/level of risk can be managed on a multi agency basis within Child in Need Plans rather than a Child Protection Plan.

These plans may be at Level 3a (Targeted/Specialist Services) and may be a Child Care Plan or a Statement of Need or at Level 3b (Children in Need) requiring a Child in Need Plan.

Level 4 Safeguarding

Concerns at Levels 3a and 3b have escalated and the child is assessed as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm and to be in need of safeguarding because:

- There has been a clear incident of abuse
- The child is vulnerable by virtue of age or circumstances
- There is poor /no co-operation from the parents/carers
- The capacity of the parents/carers to effect and sustain change has been demonstrated to be limited
- Emergency action has been required to protect the child

In most of these circumstances a Child Protection Case Conference will be called.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 The Children In Need Strategy, Policy and Procedures link together, on a continuum of family support, all services and processes, which are aimed at meeting the needs of children and young people across the Borough. The definition of children in need within the strategy places an emphasis on those children and young people who have complex needs, compromised parenting and are in need of a multi-agency plan and as such require a level of safeguarding. If we are to really improve outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people in the Borough, our success in part, will be measured by the effective implementation of the strategy, policy and procedures.

7.0 CONSULTATION

The Children In Need Strategy, Policy and Procedures have been widely

circulated to the relevant boards, consultative forums and the comments and feedback have been incorporated into the current documents.

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 16th November 2006

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director - Children and Young People

SUBJECT: Annual Performance Assessment (Children & Young People's Directorate)

WARD: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To report the outcome of the Children & Young People's Directorate Annual Performance Assessment 2005/06 undertaken by OfSTED, CSCI, GONW and DfES.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION:

- That the report is received and the contents noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1. The Annual Performance Assessment (APA) of services for children focuses mainly on the operational responsibilities of the Children & Young People's Directorate and how it achieves the 5 outcomes for children set out in Every Child Matters:

- Be Healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy and Achieve
- Make a Positive Contribution
- Achieve Economic Wellbeing

It looks at how the outcomes for children are achieved by working together with other council Directorates and with all agencies working with children in Halton and determines a grade for each of the 5 outcomes.

- 3.2 The APA of the Children & Young People's Directorate also makes 3 judgements in relation to:

- The council's Children's Social Care Services
- The council's services for children and the specific contributions they make to improving outcomes for children and young people; and
- The council's management of its services for children and young people and its capacity to further improve those services.

In previous years a separate judgement has been made for Education Services, but this is no longer required. 2006 is the final year for a separate Children's Social Care Judgement.

- 3.3 The judgements are graded on a scale 1 to 4:

Grade	Service descriptors	Capacity to improve descriptors
4	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	Excellent / outstanding
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Good
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Inadequate

3.4 The judgements made in respect of outcomes for children in the Annual Performance Assessment 2005/06 were:

- **Being Healthy** – **Good** with a co-ordinated approach to promoting the health of children and young people. This level of performance was maintained from 2004/05.
- **Staying Safe** – **Outstanding** with the council making an excellent contribution to promoting and securing the safety of children and young people, demonstrating that services continue to be effectively and efficiently targeted. This was an improvement from a judgement of good in 2004/05.
- **Enjoying and Achieving** – **Good** with the council ensuring that children and young people achieve at school and enjoy their education and leisure activities. This was an improvement from a judgement of satisfactory in 2004/05.
- **Making a Positive Contribution** – **Good** with strong consultation processes with young people. This is a maintained position from 2004/05.
- **Achieving Economic Wellbeing** – **Good** with effective partnership working and families being well supported. This level of performance was maintained from 2004/05.

3.5 These judgements resulted in the following overall judgement:

Areas for judgement	2005/06	2004/05
The contribution of the local authority's children's services in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	3 (2 star)	3
The council's overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people	3	3
The contribution of the local authority's social care services in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	4 (3 star)	3

3.6 This means that **Children's Social Care Services** have been assessed as **outstanding** which will result in the award of an additional star taking Halton's Social Care Services to a top performing 3 star status in this years star ratings

announcement. This is a very significant achievement and equates to the service gaining an additional star every year since the Joint Review in 2002.

- 3.7 Local Authority **Children's Services** have been assessed overall as **good** with this judgement forming a 2 star rating for Children's Services overall which feeds into Halton's CPA rating. This judgement relates to the range of services including education; social care and other children's council services. Again this is a significant achievement with a harder test being applied by Ofsted this year. This demonstrates improvement in the councils education services
- 3.8 The judgement made in respect of the council's **management** of its services for children and young people, including its capacity to improve them further, was **Good**, which is a maintained position from 2004/05. Key points in the assessment included:
 - the management of services is strong
 - the council and its partners champion the needs of children and young people in the area
 - there is sustained corporate and political support with the children's agenda being the top priority
 - there is a commitment to resource future development
- 3.9 Areas identified for improvement which will be a focus for Inspectors in the forthcoming Joint Area Review are:-
 - **Being Healthy:**
 - ✓ Implementation of a comprehensive CAMHS Service
 - **Staying Safe:**
 - ✓ No specific issues
 - **Enjoying and Achieving:**
 - ✓ Reduction of high number of permanent exclusions in secondary schools and unauthorised absence of secondary school pupils;
 - ✓ Improvement of achievements at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 4.
 - **Making a Positive Contribution:**
 - ✓ Reduction of high offending rates of looked-after children
 - **Achieving Economic Wellbeing:**
 - ✓ Improve post-16 attainment
 - ✓ Reduce number of young people not in employment, education or training in Runcorn.
 - **Management of children's services**
 - ✓ Improve educational outcomes in relation to permanent exclusions and unauthorised absence
 - ✓ Embed outcome focused commissioning/contracting
 - ✓ Progress good working on the local safeguarding children board (LSCB)
 - ✓ Progress preventative strategy work.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The judgements formed by Inspectors during the APA will contribute to the areas selected for particular scrutiny in next year's Joint Area Review (to take place for 2 weeks commencing 31/03/06), which will look at how all council Directorates and all agencies delivering services for children within Halton promote positive outcomes for children.

5.0 RISK ANALYSIS

5.1 The outcome of the APA was good for Halton but will require considerable activity to sustain this high level of performance and progress performance to an outstanding Grade 4 for Children's Services as a whole in future Inspections and Performance Assessments.

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

6.1 Equality and diversity is a particular focus within the APA with the Directorate having to demonstrate how strategies and initiatives enhanced equality of opportunity and ensured a proactive approach to diversity.

7.0 REASONS FOR DECISIONS

7.1 It is a requirement for the finding of the Annual Performance Assessment in relation to services for children and young people to be presented to the Executive Board.

8.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

8.1 None.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

DOCUMENT	PLACE OF INSPECTION	CONTROL OFFICER
Every Child Matters	Grosvenor House	Kath O'Dwyer
Arrangements for the APA of Children's Services 2006	Grosvenor House	Kath O'Dwyer

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 16 November 2006

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Health & Community

SUBJECT: Halton Housing Trust Update

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Board with a position statement following the transfer of the Council's housing stock to Halton Housing Trust and to provide an overview of progress made since the last progress report was presented to the Executive Board on 20 April 2006 as in accordance with the monitoring framework agreed prior to transfer
- 1.2 The report identifies progress made in the establishment of both the Trust and the delivery of its key service areas.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION:

- i) That the attached report be noted;
- ii) That the members of the Executive Board receive a presentation of the attached report from the Chief Executive of Halton Housing Trust.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Attached is a very detailed report on the key developments within the Trust.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This progress report is in line with the agreement to report progress on policy implications and the attached information appears to meet the requirements set out by ODPM.

5.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 5.1 Regular meetings between the Chief and Deputy Chief Executive of Halton Housing Trust, the Strategic Director of Health and Community and officers of Halton Borough Council meet on a regular basis to discuss a range of issues and to explore risks.

6.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

6.1 The Trust has established a range of policies in accordance with the regulations identified by the OPDM.

7.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Halton Housing Trust Progress Report – Executive Board 20.04.06	Municipal Building Widnes	Dwayne Johnson



**Halton Housing Trust Report to Halton Borough Council
Progress Assessment & Position Statement at 31st October 2006**

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This report is presented to provide a position statement almost 12 months following the transfer of the Council's housing stock to Halton Housing Trust (HHT). It provides an update on progress following the earlier position statement given to the Council in April 2006 as in accordance with the monitoring framework agreed prior to transfer.
- 1.2 The report identifies progress made in the establishment of both the Trust and the delivery of its key service areas.

2 Pledges to customers

- 2.1 A comprehensive list of the 100 pledges made in the 'Offer Document to Tenants' has been established. Progress is monitored against each pledge with a designated manager identified to ensure each pledge is delivered and progress to date recorded.
- 2.2 The pledges range from those that were achieved at transfer (such as security of tenure and the maintenance of rights including the Right to Buy) as well as others which relate to investment which can potentially be across a 30 year period.
- 2.3 A summary of progress will be reported in the customer newsletter "Haltonhousing" and a detailed monitoring report is being made available to the Strategic Director (Health and Community). Progress is also formally reported to the Trust's Board, the Housing Corporation and internally through the Trust's management team.



2.4 The current position is:

- 42 pledges have been met
- 42 pledges are in progress
- 16 pledges have yet to be commenced

3 Investment Programme

3.1 Work commenced initially with the in-house Construction Services team delivering window renewal and some limited kitchen and Bathroom renewals. To date this has resulted in 4,142 new windows being installed.

3.2 Following a detailed tendering and selection process three partners have been appointed to deliver the bulk of the investment programme. They are:

- Bramall
- Bullock
- Connaught

3.3 All three partners have conducted initial surveys. In addition both Bramall and Connaught have completed pilot properties for internal works. These internal work programmes together with the external works being delivered by Bullock Construction are now gearing up to deliver the main programme. This is likely to be working at full capacity by January 2007 which will result in the following outcomes:

- 4,000 kitchens at an average rate of 16 per week
- 1,900 bathrooms at an average rate of 8 per week

3.4 Work has also commenced on central heating installations through Sure Maintenance. Their work to date has included the following:

- New heating systems (numbering 164)



- 3.5 Discussions have taken place with Groundwork Mersey Valley leading to a proposal for that organisation to undertake a major consultation exercise with customers relating to the delivery of the Environmental Improvement Programme. Once this process has commenced we should be in a position to commence this work as scheduled in April 2007
- 3.6 The Trust is confident that the programme will deliver all the promises within the 5 and 10 years timescales. Furthermore the Trust will ensure it meets not only the Decent Homes Standard but more importantly exceeds this through the delivery of the Halton Standard as specified by our customers.
- 3.7 In addition the Trust has taken the decision to demolish Clarke Gardens. The scheme has long been considered to be inappropriate for use as a Sheltered Housing Scheme. The existing design meant there was no viable alternative use for the existing structures. Only one customer, a former employee, remains at the scheme and priority is being given to find alternative accommodation. Alternative uses for the site are being considered prior to the demolition process commencing.

4 Corporate Plan

- 4.1 The first Corporate Plan for the Trust has been agreed by Board and is now in the final stages of development. The Plan clearly focuses on the first 2 years of the Trust and identifies five key priorities. Within this it also recognises that some other activities will be put on hold until such time as the key priorities are met.



- 4.2 This Corporate Plan has been developed through discussions at Board, Board/ Executive Management Team (EMT) facilitated Awayday sessions, consultation with other housing associations and the Housing Corporation, and 'Our New Future' sessions held with every member of staff within the Trust.
- 4.3 Despite this it is acknowledged that this Plan has been developed in less than ideal circumstances. The necessity to move forward quickly following the successful transfer process has meant there has been insufficient time to consult more widely on its contents. Future Corporate Plans will be developed with an increased emphasis upon wider consultation with a cross section of our customers and stakeholders.
- 4.4 One of the key changes reflected in this Corporate Plan are the challenges and opportunities offered by the transfer process. Key to this is a cultural shift away from regarding the people we provide services to as being tenants and residents, instead having a clear emphasis upon their position as **customers** to whom our purpose as both an organisation and individuals is to provide high quality services. We will also look to develop contracts with our customers, recognising their rights but also acknowledging their responsibilities.
- 4.5 A copy of the Plan will be circulated to all key stakeholders when available in the next few weeks. It will also be posted to the Trust's website and a copy will be made available in summary form and distributed to all employees and customers.

5 Housing Corporation Regulatory Compliance

- 5.1 The Housing Corporation as Lead Regulator for Housing Associations is taking a keen interest in the development of the Trust. The first



regulatory visit took place before Christmas 2005 and the second visit occurred on 5th and 6th April 2006.

5.2 The Corporation automatically consider stock transfer organisations as "high risk". However, the Trust believes it's strong business plan, coupled with strong governance arrangements when the formal review is undertaken in 2007, will result in the Trust receiving a positive assessment in the key areas of:

- Properly Governed
- Properly Managed
- Viable (Financially Sound)

5.3 The third Housing Corporation regulatory compliance visit is due to take place in early November. As part of the preparation for this the Trust has been undertaking a thorough review against the Corporation's Self Assessment Compliance Statement (SACS). The SACS will be a compulsory process in future years but the Trust decided to adopt the review now to ensure that it is working to achieve compliance with the Housing Corporations Regulatory Code in all areas.

6 Year of Improvement (YoI)

6.1 A detailed programme of review which will reflect the Audit Commission's Housing Key Lines of Enquiry (KLoEs) has been commenced. The purpose of this is to ensure that all aspects of service delivery are reviewed within the next 12 months. This programme is adopting a methodology that involves customers, staff and other stakeholders. Integral to the process is a Project Board which includes employees, board members and customers.



- 6.2 The Review has already completed an assessment of the Homelessness Service and reviews of Repairs, Cash Collection and Allocations are ongoing
- 6.3 In order to establish a baseline position for this work a 'mock' inspection was completed by independent inspectors. The Trust is now working to ensure that the Service Improvement Plan is delivered. Our customers were notified of progress against the Plan at our Annual Customer Conference in September. This will be supplemented by posters in our newly refurbished Area Offices plus regular updates in our Customer newsletter.
- 6.4 Key to delivering our improvements is the involvement of a cross section of customers. As part of this approach we have also recently introduced a system of Customer Inspectors to help mystery shop our services.
- 6.5 The Trust recognises that this is a major opportunity for us to listen to an independent assessment, reflect on what needs to be changed and plan for the future. The messages are challenging. However we intend to use the results positively to assist with the development of our services and to assist with the practical delivery of these improvements.

7 Enquiries and Complaints Process

- 7.1 This process was introduced at the point of transfer. Its purpose is to ensure that there is transparency and consistency in the way that complaints are dealt with.
- 7.2 Whilst initially taking a few weeks for the procedures to bed down, the Trust believes that the system is now working well. By regularly



reviewing response times the Trust is able to ensure that complaints are being dealt with equitably and key data on trends is reported to both senior managers and Board.

7.3 Concerns have been raised by some councillors that they want to be able to maintain contact at a local level with housing officers. This is encouraged so that problems are not allowed to escalate. However, in order to monitor our responses, some of these local enquiries will simultaneously be fed into the recording system. In addition, where the response is one that will require the disclosure of confidential information, we may only be able to reply direct to our customer. A letter summarising the outcomes from the meeting held on 22nd March 2006 was emailed to all Councillors on 5th April 2006.

8 Joint Working

8.1 The Trust welcomes the opportunity to work with the new Neighbourhood Management team to co-ordinate services in the Widnes Neighbourhood Management Area.

8.2 The Trust is also keen to work alongside the Council to develop approaches to both Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) and to Choice Based Lettings. Both these initiatives will bring substantial benefits to both the Council and the other social landlords working in the borough.

8.3 There have been further notable successes in the area of Anti Social Behaviour with further ASBO's obtained and an injunction against a customer with an untidy garden. The Trust was pleased to be able to support the development of the leaflet advertising the imposition of the ASBO in Ditton and continues to work closely with the Police and council staff on combined operations.



8.4 The national drive for the adoption of Choice Based Lettings (CBL) systems is reflected in the target from the Housing Corporation for all RSLs to have fully explored this option by 2008. From the Council's perspective the move towards a CBL Scheme enhances the level of choice that can be achieved, can lead to increased stability of communities and longer term cohesion. The Trust has agreed to work with the Council as the lead RSL in exploring options adopted in neighbouring authorities and identifying the feasibility of using a model in Halton.

9 Equalities and Diversity

9.1 The Trust has attached a high degree of importance to the establishment of clear policies and procedures in this area. As part of the work being done on Yol, an Action Plan is being drawn up to identify training needs amongst employees and to review current policies.

9.2 The Trust's draft Equality and Diversity Strategy was presented to the Board on 5th April 2006. Following further work, and to ensure the recently published CRE¹ Code of Practice in Rented Housing could be incorporated, the Strategy and Action Plan is due to be formally signed off by Board at their meeting on 15th November 2006.

10 Recruitment

10.1 The original structure post transfer has been reviewed and adjustments made to reflect the needs of the business. There is likely to be further adjustments to the structure early in 2007 but this should see the end

¹ Commission for Racial Equality



of the process, resulting in customer focussed team structures which are there to deliver high quality services.

11 Audit Commission Housing Inspection

- 11.1 As well as the Housing Corporation having a regulatory role for RSLs, the Trust is also subject to inspection by the Audit Commission's Housing Inspectorate. Normally such an inspection would take place some two to three years after transfer.
- 11.2 It is anticipated that any inspection report regardless of when this is undertaken, will still contain some challenging messages and the score will be reflective of this. This is in part reflective of the significant improvements required to a number of service areas, coupled with the substantial amount of other activities that are associated with setting up a new organisation. However the process will be a useful further indication of the Trust's position and reflect the improvements starting to emerge from the Year of Improvement.

12 Accommodation

- 12.1 The Trust has recently opened its key customer facing access points at Grange House (Runcorn), Simms Cross (Shop in Widnes Town Centre) and Grangeway Court (Runcorn). These buildings now give a much more welcoming bright and professional image to our customers. The final self contained office at Daresbury Point in Manor Park is also now in operation, providing the head office and support services to our core business operations and Board.
- 12.2 The relocation of Construction Services from Lowerhouse Lane has proven to be problematic due to a paucity of suitable sites in the Widnes area. However, two possible new build options have recently



become available and agents are negotiating on behalf of the Trust to establish the best option.

13 Corporate Identity

- 13.1 The Trust has recently developed a new logo. This is substantially different from what we had in place previously. The new logo seeks to represent what we do as an organisation – people, homes and diversity.
- 13.2 This was developed as a direct outcome from our recent selection process for a communications partner. During the process a recurring theme raised by all the prospective partners was the Trust's logo. All commented that it was dated and did not portray what the Trust was actually in business to deliver.
- 13.3 As the Trust prepares to move into new premises and is about to embark on a communications drive with a range of stakeholders the Board felt that the time was right to develop a new logo. This was seen as being pivotal to enabling the Trust to move on and further develop its corporate identity.
- 13.4 Any cost implications have been minimised as new stationary, staff ID badges etc needed to be purchased anyway as part of our office relocation. The new logo is now being rolled out as part of our office relocation process and subsequent 1st anniversary celebrations.

14 One Year On

- 14.1 The Trust is required to produce an Annual Report. This includes a combination of financial and performance information as well as setting out its longer term aims and objectives. These are outlined within the



Corporate Plan and as such are likely to form the main basis of the document.

- 14.2 The timing of the production of the document should ideally allow for reporting our performance information from the previous financial year. However this does not tie in neatly with the Trust's development as an organisation.
- 14.3 The Trust needs to ensure it maintains and develops its arrangements for communicating its key achievements as well as being clear about what challenges lay ahead and how it intends to address these. These are key to the successful delivery of our core business objectives.
- 14.4 A number of housing associations produce their annual reports immediately following the closing of the financial accounts. This is normally in July/August immediately following the end of the previous financial year.
- 14.5 The Trust has therefore decided to produce its first formal Annual Report immediately following the closing of the accounts for the current financial year (2006-07). This would in effect be June/ July 2007 and as such be 18 months following transfer. However this would enable the Trust to report a full year's financial performance as well as also reporting on the part year in 2005-06. This decision has been reached in conjunction with our funders, the Housing Corporation and the Charity Commission.
- 14.6 The requirement for the production of an Annual Report is a key opportunity for the Trust to effectively communicate to a wide audience and is a key document against which our performance as an organisation will be measured by our customers and stakeholders. As such a decision has been taken to produce an interim report entitled



'One Year On'. This will include a summary of the following and a copy of the presentation to Board indicating the early items for inclusion is included as Appendix 1 to this report:

- To reflect upon the key achievements to date for:
 - Customers
 - Employees
 - Organisation
- To identify areas where progress was not as extensive as anticipated
- Identify any key trends and learning points
- Outline a series of future action points



Adobe Acrobat 7.0
Document

15 Service Level Agreements

15.1 The Trust has been reviewing its Service Level Agreements held with the council since the point of transfer. There is a clear expectation upon the Trust to demonstrate value for money in all its procurement decisions.

15.2 Following an extensive review of current arrangements the Trust has now given notice or been in discussions with council departments about the termination of the following agreements:

- ITC network
- Telephony
- Payroll
- Cleaning



15.3 There remain a number of SLA's that will need further discussions or negotiations if they are to continue. These include:

- Cash collection (via cashiers)
- HDL general services
- Warden alarm system and mobile wardens

15.4 Other services which are expected to continue to be delivered by the Council but with regular value for money reviews, include:

- Grounds Maintenance
- Street Lighting
- Out of hours telephony

15.5 The recent move by the council away from employing cashiers and the introduction of fixed cash machines is not one which was felt to offer best value for the Trust's customers. However further discussions are ongoing in an attempt to find a way forward that enables demonstrable value for money to be achieved.

15.6 To further improve the range and availability of payment options the Trust is implementing an alternative method of cash payment via the Post Office and PayPoint. This will provide the Trust's customers with options to make payments at over 60 locations across Halton.

16 Children & Young Peoples Action Plan

16.1 The Trust has established a project group to consider how we can positively contribute and assist the practical delivery of the Council's Children and Young Peoples Plan. This is in recognition of the significant impact and linkages between housing and wider quality of life for all groups, but especially younger persons. This Plan has been



shared with the Council and the Children and Young People's Alliance Board.

17 Right to Buy Receipts & Trends

- 17.1 Having not completed any Right to Buy sales for some months prior to transfer a significant backlog had built up. The Trust and its new solicitors started working through the backlog from early January 2006. The catch up process saw a dramatic reduction in the number of outstanding cases.
- 17.2 Now that this backlog has been cleared it is apparent that there has been a considerable slow down in true RTB applications and consequently the number of completions. The actual number of applications is inflated by doorstep cold callers pressurising customers to sign RTB application forms but who have no real intention of buying the property.
- 17.3 The table below shows the current trends:

Month	Applications	RTB acknowledged	Withdrawals	Completions
Feb	31	15	32	6
April	9	10	10	10
July	12	12	10	9
Oct	12	5	6	12

- 17.4 The current position means that budget projections are currently being met. However with actual acceptances decreasing, it is difficult to predict if this will be sustained.



18 Governance Update

- 18.1 There have been some changes to the make up of the Board since the last report. Both John Swain and Rob Orme have stood down from the Board. Shaun Osborne has now been inducted onto the Board and the recruitment process to replace Rob Orme as the independent Board Member has produced a good response and is well advanced. In addition the Board is looking to broaden its skills and knowledge base by also recruiting for a number of 'specialist advisors'. These individuals will not be board members but are prepared to work with the board and offer their expertise and knowledge where it can best be applied.
- 18.2 During the course of these changes to the board membership it was recognised that the Trust needed to do more to effectively introduce new board members to their role. In addition the Memorandum and Articles of the company place certain requirements on all Board Members which are now fully explained to new members. This means that in future before a new board member from any of the three constituencies can take up their position a thorough induction process must be completed.
- 18.3 The Board now has a well established Committee structure which allows devolution of the more detailed governance reviews to an Operations Committee and a Resources Committee. Separately there is an Audit, Performance and Quality Committee which receives reports from Internal and External Auditors.
- 18.4 The establishment of the Halton Housing Community Voices (HHCVs) was intended to give the three management areas a method of engaging with their respective communities and customer bases and be a method of communication to and from the Board. However as



previously reported only one HHCV has been established to date in Widnes East. This group is struggling to attract a substantial interest (the last meeting was abandoned as so few members attended). Unless there is an increase in interest generated by the New Year it is likely that some rethinking of the operation of these structures will be undertaken.

18.5 The possibility for Board Member remuneration is a relatively new option. While it is left to the discretion of each Housing Association how it proceeds on this matter the Housing Corporation expects that the issue is properly debated and considered by each organisation. Clearly if there are difficulties in recruiting or retaining skilled and experienced Board members there might be a case for introducing such payments. However, there can be a range of other factors which need to be considered. These include the impact upon those receiving state benefits, the practicality of board members attending training or other activities on top of a range of Board and committee meetings.

18.6 A key consideration is the competition for such skills as a number of other Boards (PCT etc) offer remuneration. The Trust has indicated that a thorough review of the merits or otherwise of remunerating Board members is to be undertaken and is due to report to Board in the early New Year.

19 Summary

19.1 The Trust has already made good progress in delivering a number of the key promises made prior to transfer. The organisation is about to enter a new phase in its development which will see the major investment programme having a much more visible impact on our estates. This will be underpinned through the Trust developing a stronger customer orientated culture throughout the business.



20 Contact

Nick Atkin

Chief Executive



nick.atkin@haltonhousing.org



0151 510 5101 (new direct dial wef 15th November 2006)



07903 594827

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 16th November 2006

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy

SUBJECT: Proposed Changes to Magistrates' Court Arrangements in Halton

WARDS: Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to recommend an appropriate response from the Council in relation to proposed changes to the Court arrangements in Halton. The Council became aware of potential changes in Magistrates' Courts arrangements in the Borough from information provided by local Members and local Magistrates over recent weeks. However, no formal contact had been made with the Council until a letter was received from the Area Director of Her Majesty's Courts Service on 31st October 2006.
- 1.2 In the absence of such a letter, the Chief Executive had written to the Area Director on 23rd October 2006 expressing the concerns of the Council in relation to what it was believed was being proposed.
- 1.3 A copy of both those letters is attached to the report, together with a further letter which the Chief Executive has received in response to his letter of 23rd October 2006.

2.0 RECOMMENDED that:

- (1) **the Council expresses its concern and disappointment that HMCS has asked for the Council's views after its decision appears to have been made and seeks further clarification in relation to the points raised in this report;**
- (2) **the action of the Chief Executive in expressing the Council's concerns be endorsed;**
- (3) **HMCS be asked to reconsider its decision in the light of the concerns of the Council and other stakeholders;**
- (4) **HMCS be asked to work with the local Bench and other stakeholders to thoroughly examine other options to improving the performance of the Courts service in Halton, including looking at the alternate use of Courts in Halton and Warrington;**

(5) **HMCS be requested to consider Halton as the location for the hearing of road traffic cases given the road and public transport infrastructure in and around the Borough.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Council was formally told of changes to the Magistrates' Courts arrangements in a letter received from the Area Manager, Her Majesty's Courts Service, on 31st October 2006. The principal changes are as follows:

There are three main changes to listing arrangements:

- Cases involving custody will be concentrated at Warrington, Crewe and Chester. This means that any defendants brought to court in custody on an overnight arrest, remanded in custody on an adjournment, arrested on a no bail warrant or likely to be sentenced to a custodial sentence will be dealt with at the three locations mentioned above. Therefore custody cases currently heard at Halton (Runcorn) will be heard at Warrington; those currently heard at Vale Royal (Northwich) will be heard at Chester and those currently heard at Macclesfield will be heard at South Cheshire (Crewe).
- All road traffic cases will be heard in one location in Cheshire, probably Vale Royal.
- Pre-trial reviews will be removed from the courtroom and will be dealt with administratively.

All non-custody criminal cases and non-road traffic will continue to be heard in the local courts. All youth cases and family cases which do not involve custody will also continue to be heard in the local courts.

It is intended that these changes will take effect from 1st January 2007.

3.2 The Council has effectively been told that these new arrangements are being put in place. The letter from the Area Manager stated "The listing of cases in all Courts is a judicial function. This means that any changes to listing practices are a matter for the judiciary, supported by HMCS".

3.3 The attached letter from the Chief Executive makes a number of points as to the detrimental effect these new arrangements will have on the administration of justice within Halton. They essentially relate to four key points:

1. Accessibility – to Warrington and Vale Royal to Halton residents by public transport, given Halton's low car ownership. It is felt this will have a detrimental effect on Court attendance, not just

from defendants, but also witnesses and supporting family members.

2. Cost – additional costs to any individuals wishing to, or being required to, attend Court.
3. Attracting new Magistrates – difficulties already existing in attracting new Magistrates. This is likely to make it more difficult.
4. The long-term future of the Courts in Halton – it is felt that when the next review of Court activity takes place, the spotlight will further be placed on Halton's Courts as business is reduced.

3.4 It is suggested that the Council expresses its concern and disappointment that it has not been consulted in these important changes to the justice arrangements in the Borough and seeks clarification on a number of points, as follows:

- The HMCS letter informs the Council that there is a backlog of Court cases, with the worst problem being in Warrington, Halton and Chester, but does not say why Warrington and Chester have been chosen ahead of Halton as venues for hearing cases. It would be helpful to understand why.
- The HMCS letter suggests that all road traffic cases will be heard at one location ("probably" Vale Royal). It should be clarified why this has been chosen and, if it is 'probably', when will a final decision be made, and could Halton be considered for that location given its good transport infrastructure.
- It would be useful to understand if the location of the Custody Suite in Runcorn had been taken into consideration when selecting the Warrington location.
- It would also be interesting to know if HMCS had considered the environmental impacts of this decision, given the national and international concerns around Climate Change. These changes will increase vehicle movements and journey times.

3.5 It is suggested that the Council makes further representations as outlined in this report, together with any further concerns the Executive Board may wish to make.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There is clearly a concern that a reduction on Court activity in Halton could threaten the future viability of Halton's Courts.

5.0 RISK ANALYSIS

5.1 There are no risks to the Council contained in this report, but there is a risk of Court attendance being affected if these changes go ahead.

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

6.1 In an area where income and car ownership is low, moving the Court activity out of Halton will reduce access to the Court for local residents.

**7.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D
OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
None, other than those attached.	I. Leivesley's Office, 6th Floor, Municipal Building	I. Leivesley

Miss J. M. Eeles,
Justices' Chief Executive,
Cheshire Magistrates' Courts,
PWB House,
Middlewich Road,
Sandbach,
Cheshire.
CW11 1HY

DWP/IL/AC
Mr. D. W. Parr
23 October 2006
david.parr@halton.gov.uk

Dear Julia,

**PROPOSED CHANGES TO MAGISTRATES' COURT
ARRANGEMENTS IN HALTON**

As you know I have been approached by a number of local Magistrates, including the Chair of the Halton Bench, local councillors and members of the local legal profession who have raised with me concerns in respect of proposals to re-organise the Magistrates Courts arrangements across Cheshire

I am writing to you on behalf of these concerned parties and in particular Halton Borough Council to express their concerns in relation to these proposed changes.

In the first instance, it is disappointing that the Council has only become aware of the discussions and debates that are ongoing within Cheshire around changes to this important service through various sources, and has not, as yet, been informed or consulted formally by The Courts Service on what is proposed.

Local Elected Members and members of the Halton Bench continue to express serious concerns about what is proposed, which would appear on the face of it to be a reduction in the status of Halton's Courts.

The Council is concerned that these changes will take place without full consultation with all stakeholders, of which the Council is one. We would also like to understand the rationale behind the proposed changes and work with other partners to look at alternative models of increasing the availability of trial space and the most effective use of the courts in Halton.

We understand the key proposals are to:

- move all custody cases to the courts at Warrington, Chester and Crewe; and

23 October 2006

Miss J. M. Eeles

- to hold all motoring offence cases at Northwich.

The Council is aware of the need to improve the throughput of cases, but is concerned of the impact it will have in Halton and on the Halton community if these proposals go ahead.

There are four issues that are of particular concern to the Council as to the impact these proposals will have in Halton, they are as follows:

- Car Ownership – 32% of households within Halton have no access to a car. Nearly half the residents in Windmill Hill do not have access to a vehicle.
- Income Levels – Halton ranks, by some way, highest on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (21st, with the next nearest Cheshire District being Ellesmere Port at 141). Income deprivation is one of the most important domains in the IMD. Of the 10 areas in Cheshire which rank highest for income deprivation seven are in Halton. Adding additional transport costs to those who wish, or need, to attend court is likely to add further barriers to attendance.
- Attracting Local Magistrates – one of the very drivers for those joining the bench is that they will be administering local justice in the area where they live. There are great advantages in the courts being in close proximity to local magistrates as it reduces the amount of their valuable time in travelling to fulfil their functions. We need to do all we can to attract people to the Bench, and the Council feels that these new arrangements will deter Halton people from coming forward.
- The Future of Court Provision – the Council is clearly concerned that these reductions in activity will lead eventually to the withdrawal of all Court activity in Halton. The Council would want reassurance that this is not the case.

These issues are further developed upon in the attached paper. We would particularly wish to draw your attention to the issue of travel by public transport from Halton to Northwich. The journey by bus from Halton to Northwich is a tortuous one, with a return journey from Runcorn costing £9.10, and more if travelling from Widnes. This will deny many people the opportunity to attend court hearings.

The Council understands that one of the reasons for Northwich's selection as the place to hear traffic offences is its central location within Cheshire. However, looking forward Northwich is not a central location within the new Merseyside/Cheshire arrangements. In fact, the Halton Courts, either Runcorn or Widnes, would provide a more central location. Both have the capacity, are on occasions under-utilised, and have good access and free parking facilities. The highway network is excellent in the area, which is not the case in relation to Northwich. We would ask that this proposal be re-examined.

23 October 2006

Miss J. M. Eeles

We would welcome the opportunity for further dialogue before any decision is taken and for the opportunity to consider the proposals in detail, together with any alternatives which are equally aimed at improving the performance of the justice system in Halton.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

David Parr
Chief Executive

Encl.



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HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE & POLICY

RECEIVED 31 OCT 2006

Miss Julia M Eeles
Solicitor
Area Director

Our ref: JME/SAL
Your ref:

30 October 2006

Dear colleague

Re: Changes to listing arrangements in Cheshire Magistrates' Courts

I am writing to notify you formally of changes to listing arrangements which are being made in Cheshire Magistrates' Courts, with the support of the Criminal Justice Board and the judiciary.

You may already have heard about the proposals, but probably not in detail and you may not have been informed of the full reasons behind the changes.

Background

As a result of the successful efforts of the Cheshire Police, over the course of the last twelve months the number of offenders brought to justice in Cheshire has increased by 22%. Directly as a result of this success, the volume of trials in Cheshire has increased over the same period by 20%. None of the criminal justice agencies has received any additional resources to meet this increased workload and one of the effects has been a steady increase in delays in finalising trials in the Magistrates' Courts. As at the end of August 2006, there were over 1,400 trials listed in the system which usually can cope with around 700. That figure has now risen to over 1,900 trials so the position is getting worse daily. The problems are worst in Warrington, Halton and Chester. The impact of these delays is most serious for victims, witnesses and defendants who often have their cases adjourned two or three times because of lack of trial time and it can take over twelve months for a contested case to be completed. This is not a satisfactory service for users of the courts and accordingly, Her Majesty's Courts Service (HMCS) with the full support of the Cheshire Criminal Justice Board and the judiciary has devised changes to the listing system to create more trial spaces which will assist in reducing delays.

Listing changes

There are three main changes to listing arrangements.

- Cases involving custody will be concentrated in Warrington, Crewe and Chester. This means that any defendants brought to court in custody on an overnight arrest, remanded in custody on an adjournment, arrested on a no bail warrant or likely to be sentenced to a custodial sentence will be dealt with at the three locations mentioned above. Therefore custody cases currently heard at Halton (Runcorn) will be heard at Warrington; those currently heard at Vale Royal (Northwich) will be heard at Chester and those currently heard at Macclesfield will be heard at South Cheshire (Crewe).
- All road traffic cases will be heard in one location in Cheshire, probably Vale Royal.
- Pre-trial reviews will be removed from the courtroom and will be dealt with administratively.

All non-custody criminal cases and non-road traffic will continue to be heard in the local courts. All youth cases and family cases which do not involve custody will also continue to be heard in the local courts.

It is intended that these changes will take effect from 1 January 2007

Trials Blitz

During the course of November, extra trials courts will be heard in Halton and Chester. Two additional District Judges (Magistrates' Courts) will be sitting in these courts. Extra prosecutors have been funded by the Criminal Justice Board. It is hoped that these additional courts will clear at least 10% of the trials backlog.

Second District Judge (Magistrates' Court)

Cheshire already has the benefit of one District Judge (Magistrates' Court), but it is generally acknowledged that the increase in workload, particularly in the north of the Area, justifies the appointment of a second professional judge. A business case is being prepared and following consultation with the Justices' Issues Group and the Cheshire Advisory Committee, it will be submitted to the Judicial Appointments Commission for consideration. The appointments process takes some time, so even if approved, any appointment may not happen for some months.

The decision making process

The listing of cases in all courts is a judicial function. That means that any changes to listing practices are a matter for the judiciary, supported by HMCS. In this case, the listing proposals were put to the Cheshire Justices' Issues Group (JIG), which comprises the Chairmen of the six Benches, two representatives of the Magistrates' Association and the current District Judge (Magistrates' Court), Judge Knight. The members of the JIG consulted their Bench Committees, and in turn their Benches and the representatives of the Magistrates' Association consulted the Branch Executive Committee. The JIG was unable to reach a consensus and in accordance with the

guidelines established by Lord Justice Thomas, Senior Presiding Judge for England & Wales, the issues were referred to the Area Judicial Forum (AJF), which comprises the same members as the JIG but is chaired by His Honour Judge Elgan Edwards. The decision of the AJF was that these changes should be implemented.

There are practical issues which need to be identified and resolved, both on an Area and on a local basis. To this end, I would be grateful to receive comments on how HMCS can best accommodate your needs in implementing these changes. The four Legal Managers, Peter Jones for Warrington and Halton, John Kozierski for Vale Royal and Macclesfield, David Magrath for Chester, Ellesmere Port & Neston and Richard Holland for South Cheshire, will be convening local meetings to discuss issues and solutions.

These measures have not been taken lightly and it is understood that they will cause inconvenience and additional cost for some court users. However, HMCS, the judiciary and the Cheshire Criminal Justice Board consider that it is more important to meet the needs of the victims and witnesses of crime, together with defendants, than to maintain a system which is having such a detrimental effect on these key people. I have attached a position statement written by Steve Collett, chair of the Criminal Justice Board, to that effect.

Please forward any comments either to me or to your local Legal Manager. Thank you for your understanding and co-operation.

Yours faithfully



Julia M Eeles
Area Director



Cheshire Criminal Justice Board

Draft 3.0

HMCS Decision re: Listings Changes within the Cheshire Magistrates' Courts

The Cheshire Criminal Justice Board fully supports the decision taken by Her Majesty's Court Service (HMCS) to improve the way in which the Magistrates' Courts structure their business.

All Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs) are charged with the following responsibilities:

- Bringing more offences to justice
- Maximising the timeliness and effectiveness of the local criminal justice system
- Enhancing public confidence in the local criminal justice system
- Ensuring that victims and witnesses receive a consistently high level of service from all criminal justice agencies

In Cheshire we have been very successful over the past three years in bringing more offenders to justice with 24,375 offences brought to justice over the last 12 months – a 50% improvement compared to the 12 months ending August 2003. This has not only created more work flowing through the local criminal justice system, with a 20% increase in the number of trials listed for hearing in the last year, but has also produced significant pressures on the resources of all the agencies.

These pressures were brought to the attention of the Board through an independent review of the three Witness Care Units established in Cheshire in February 2005. The review, commissioned by the Office for Criminal Justice Reform, showed that good progress had been made by the Witness Care Units in their first year but also identified the following problems:

- Many cases are taking a substantial time to be finalised, with some Magistrates' Court cases taking over 12 months from the date of the commission of the offence to the date of trial;
- This is affecting victims and witnesses at a time when they often feel vulnerable and intimidated;
- Local listing practices are resulting in Witness Care Officers having to warn and de-warn witnesses because of the number of listed trials that cannot be heard;
- This backlog of cases is resulting in substantial contact being needed to remain engaged with witnesses and keep them informed, but some get fed up of waiting

and refuse to give evidence forcing the Crown Prosecution Service to drop the case;

- The demand on the Witness Care Officers is impacting on their capacity to fully meet their 'Victims Code of Practice' obligations – a legal duty to provide the crucial information and advice to victims and witnesses.

The Board recognised that the problems did not lie solely with the Magistrates' Courts and commissioned research to examine what further action all agencies needed to take to reduce the increasing problem within the Area of delays in criminal case trials being concluded. This research, to be formally presented to the Board in November, identifies a further range of actions required by the CJ agencies to begin to tackle the grave problem of some 1,431 trials being outstanding on the 31st August 2006.

Key to the reduction in trial delays has been the proposal to create more trial sessions in all the Magistrates' Courts in Cheshire through changes to the listing of cases and the use of Crown Prosecutors and Designated Case Workers. The consolidation of custody cases in three locations and the centralising of road traffic cases in a single location will create six additional trial courts per week. It is acknowledged that this could cause some inconvenience for victims and witnesses due to extra travelling costs but they are entitled to seek assistance to cover this cost. Further measures being taken forward by HMCS and supported or sponsored by the Cheshire Criminal Justice Board include:

- Taking Pre-trial Reviews out of the court system
- Deployment of additional Designated Case Workers by the CPS
- A trial 'blitz' in November supported by £20K of Board resources and including the involvement of additional District Judges (Magistrates' Courts)
- Further changes in CPS, Police and Probation practices
- An application for a further permanent District Judge (Magistrates' Courts) for HMCS Cheshire

All these changes will be required to enhance the efficiency with which all Criminal Justice agencies can deploy their resources and significantly increase the capacity of the local criminal justice system to reduce the time taken to deal with trials.

Steve Collett
Chair
Cheshire Criminal Justice Board



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Mr David Parr
Chief Executive
Halton Borough Council
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www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk

Miss Julia M Eeles
Solicitor
Area Director

2 November 2006

Our ref: JME/SAL
Your ref: DWP/IL/AC

Dear David

Re: Proposed changes to Magistrates' Court arrangements in Halton

Thank you for your letter of 23 October, together with the attached paper.

By now you will have received a copy of the letter sent to all the Magistrates' Courts stakeholders in Cheshire, Halton and Warrington which sets out the rationale behind the planned changes and the route taken to arrive at the decisions.

I am aware that the Council was concerned to have found out about the planned changes through indirect routes. As I explained at our recent meeting, the listing of cases in the courts is considered to be a judicial function and one which can only be exercised by the judiciary – which for these purposes includes the lay magistracy. Since the establishment of Her Majesty's Courts Service in April 2005, very strict guidance has been issued on how changes to listing practices should be achieved. Proposals have to be submitted by HMCS managers to the local Justices' Issues Group (JIG), which in Cheshire comprises the six Bench Chairmen, two representatives of the Magistrates' association, the District Judge, the Justices' Clerk and finally, the Area Director. If a consensus can not be reached by the JIG, as happened in this case, the issues have to be referred to the Area Judicial Forum, which comprises exactly the same membership, but with the additional of the Liaison Judge (HHJ Elgan Edwards) and the exclusion of the Area Director. Although a consensus could not be reached in the AJF, the Chairman determined that the planned changes to listing arrangements would proceed and he wrote to all magistrates informing them of this decision on 30 October.

It was only at this point, once the decision had been made, that I could inform stakeholders and ask for their views on implementation of the changes. As I explained at our meeting, this is not a matter for consultation as such because the decision is one for the judiciary, although as I have stated in my recent letter, my colleagues and I are very keen to hear from stakeholders about practical and local implications and how potential problems might be overcome.

These changes are in no way a reduction in the status of the Halton Magistrates' Courts or the others affected in a similar manner. This is the way in which HMCS, supported by the Local Criminal Justice Board, is dealing with a particularly serious problem in the summary justice system in Cheshire, Halton and Warrington. HMCS needs the co-operation of all the magistrates, staff and the stakeholders involved in the system to resolve the problems.

Turning to the specific issues you have raised, I accept that it could be difficult for some court users to get from Halton to Northwich by public transport. However, it is road traffic cases which are to be heard in Northwich, which presupposes that offenders have access to a vehicle. Also, relatively few road traffic trials involve civilian witnesses. Those which might result in a custodial sentence (driving while disqualified, excess alcohol and death by careless or dangerous driving) would be heard in Warrington in any event. Defendants already in custody will be transported to court by the Police or GSL.

The removal of custody road traffic cases from Halton will free up more trial spaces and also allow the CPS to concentrate their Designated Case Workers (DCWs) and qualified lawyers in a much more effective manner. Far from reducing the status of the Halton courts, these changes will increase their importance in the delivery of simple, speedy, summary justice.

My colleagues and I have considered your suggestion that Halton be used as the central point for dealing with road traffic cases. While your argument is persuasive from the view of the merger of HMCS Cheshire & Merseyside, it does not fit in with either the Police or the CPS current arrangements. Therefore, while the Police and CPS continue to operate within Cheshire, Halton & Warrington boundaries, it makes more sense administratively for the cases to be heard in Northwich.

Turning to the recruitment of magistrates, all magistrates are now appointed to a national Commission of the Peace which means that they can sit anywhere in England & Wales. In future recruitment exercises, prospective candidates will be told that although they will be allocated to a particular Bench, they can expect to sit at court locations other than their local courthouse. In fact, this already happens with Halton and Warrington magistrates helping each other out in family and youth courts. All new magistrates will be fully trained and will be given the relevant experience in all types of adult criminal cases.

I can confirm that these changes are in no way linked to any plans to close courthouses in Cheshire, Halton & Warrington. In fact, we need all the courtrooms we have in order to deal with the increasing workload and trial volumes. Of course, I can not predict the future and how my successor, Shaun McNally, will manage the workload and court estate in this Area, but I have discussed these changes with Shaun and I can assure you that he also has no plans to close courthouses here.

His Honour Judge Elgan Edwards, as the Chairman of the Area Judicial Forum, is taking the judicial lead on these changes and has already stated publicly that they will be kept under review. That does not mean that everything will be reversed in a few months time, nor does it mean that there might not be a need for even more changes, but I am sure that Shaun McNally will keep you and the other stakeholders informed of progress in the future.

I hope this information goes some way to allaying the fears of your members.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julia Eeles".

Julia Eeles

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	16th November, 2006
REPORTING OFFICER:	Strategic Director Corporate & Policy
SUBJECT:	Default Retirement Age
WARD(S):	Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to ask the Executive Board to decide whether the Council should set a default retirement age.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **That the Executive Board adopt a no default retirement age policy with immediate effect.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board considered the implications of the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations at its meeting on the 27th September 2006. The principal effect of these regulations is to prohibit unjustified direct and indirect age discrimination, and the regulations came into effect on the 1st October this year.
- 3.2 As a result of the regime, dismissal on grounds of a person's age is likely to be unfair. However, the regulations contain an exception in the case of persons who are at or over the age of 65 and where the reason for dismissal is retirement. As a result, employers have the option of continuing to have a retirement age of 65 or above, but, if they do, they must have procedures in place to consider and determine requests to work beyond retirement age. The alternative for Employers is not to have a default retirement age and to simply allow employees to continue to work until they wish to retire.
- 3.3 The Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board considered this issue at their meeting on the 27th September 2006 and passed the following resolution:

"That the Executive Board be asked to consider whether the Council should set a default retirement age in the light of the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006."

- 3.4 The Council currently has a default retirement age of 65. It has the following options under the new rules:
 - To keep the default retirement age of 65

- To raise the default retirement age
- To opt not to have a default retirement age.

3.5 The options have been discussed with the Trade Unions, and the view of both Senior Management and the Trade Unions is that the best option would be for the Council not to have a default retirement age. It is therefore recommend that the Executive Board adopt this as the Council's policy with immediate effect.

4.0 POLICY, FINANCIAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The decision not to have a default retirement age should not result in any significant financial implications for the Council. Depending on the degree of take-up, there may be some slight reduction in staff turnover and a consequent reduction in recruitment costs.

5.0 RISK ANALYSIS

5.1 The adoption of a no default retirement age policy would seem to be the option most consistent with the new age discrimination regime. The Council will not have to put a procedure in place for considering requests from those wishing to work beyond retirement age. The risks of legal challenges are therefore minimised.

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

6.1 Not having a default retirement age is the option that sits most comfortably with the Council's commitment to equality, demonstrating that it does not confuse age with capability.

7.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

7.1 None.

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 16 November 2006

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Health & Community

SUBJECT: Carers Strategy 2006 -2008

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To provide the draft Carers Strategy 2006/2008 to the Executive Board for approval.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

- i) The Executive Board notes and comments on the Carers Strategy.
- ii) The Executive Board approves the Strategy.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 All Local Authorities are required to provide a Carers Strategy, which identifies the aims for delivering services to carers.

3.2 The Council will receive an annual ring-fenced grant 2006/07 and 2007/08 to support carers services. In 2006/07 the grant was £490,000 this is set to increase to £503,000 for 2007/08.

3.3 The annual increase in carers grant reflects a growing importance placed by the Department of Health in supporting carers. The Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) in their recent publication 'A New Outcomes Framework for Performance Assessment of Adult Social Care 2006/07' have indicated that the profile of carers and services provided for carers will be raised. It is proposed that 15% of the overall scoring in assessing the performance of adult social care within the Council will be against services for carers.

3.4 It is clear the profile of carers has risen up the national agenda. It is reflected in the measures adopted by CSCI and the Audit Commission Key Lines of Enquiry linked to the Corporate Performance Assessment. Stronger corporate approach to carers is required to meet these requirements and provide a Council wide response to the needs of 13,528 carers in Halton.

3.5 There is an expectation that a wide consultation will take place with

all partner agencies, stakeholders and particularly carers about the content of the Carers Strategy. During the last few months a number of consultations have taken place including a carers consultation event held earlier this year. A draft of the Carers Strategy was presented to Healthy Halton Policy and Performance Board on 12th September, 2006 for comment and discussion.

3.6 The attached Carers Strategy 2006/08 at Appendix 1 reflects the outcome of these consultations and particularly seeks to build on and develop those aspects of services most valued by carers. An Action Plan has been drawn up to implement the Carers Strategy and will be subject to a review in March 2007. The Strategy reflects a collaborative and multi-agency approach to deliver and improve services to carers. The Key agencies involved in this improvement are the Primary Care Trust, 5boroughs Partnership Trust, key voluntary sector organisations, Health & Community Directorate and Children & Young People Directorate.

3.7 The Strategy clearly identifies priorities and the intentions of agencies to improve the services provided to carers in Halton.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 These are set out in paragraph 3.2 of this report.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

6.1 At this stage it is not possible to confirm future funding beyond 1 April 2008 until the comprehensive spending review is announced. Clearly any future continuation of funding beyond 2008 would need to be considered by the Council. All contracts and services are currently reviewed and, where appropriate, reviewed on an annual basis and the funding issues will be taken into consideration in 2007.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 A section on equal opportunities has been added to the Carers Strategy 2006 - 2008. The statement says ' carers will have equal access to services, advice and information and support regardless of gender, age, race, disability, religious beliefs and sexual orientation. Carers will be respected and valued including those in same sex relationships.'

**8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

8.1 None.

FOREWORD

I am pleased to present this strategy for carers' services 2006 –2008. The strategy is the product of consultation and discussion with our partner organisations in health, the voluntary sector and, most importantly, with carers themselves.

Carers Strategy 2006 –2008 outlines a framework for the continued development of services for carers in Halton, and details the proposals for action over the next two years.

The main objectives of this strategy include the need to identify hidden carers, recognise and respond to carers needs, and improve information and access to support services. Carers, through participation at a consultation event, have indicated those actions they would like to take place to enable us to improve services. We have listened to what carers have told us about the help and support they need and responded by addressing the issues throughout the strategy.

We are proud of what we have achieved for carers since the last Carers Strategy. New services for children with disabilities have been developed. Services for carers of people with dementia have been significantly improved and more social and leisure breaks have been provided. Carers' Centres in Widnes and Runcorn have been opened and provide a wide range of services including counselling, complementary therapies and a place for support groups to meet. Working in partnership with voluntary agencies and the Primary Care Trust we intend to build on these improvements to continue to provide real support to carers.

There are as many as 13,500 carers in the borough who provide help and support for their partners, children, relatives and friends. We know that many carers are not in touch with services that could improve the quality of their lives. We want to change that and raise the profile of carers in Halton.

We recognise and value the essential role that carers play in supporting some of the most vulnerable people in our community. We believe that this strategy demonstrates our commitment to recognising, valuing and working with local carers.

Dwayne Johnson
Strategic Director

Cllr Ann Gerrard

CONTENTS

	Page
Foreword	
Contents Page	
Introduction	1
Carers legislation and quality standards	2
Quality standards	4
Carers UK Report	4
Equality opportunities	4
White Paper: Our Health, Our Care, Our Say Since 2003	4
Carers grant	5
Halton Carers Strategy Group	6
Vision, values and aims	7
Carers Strategy and Action Plan 2006 –2008	8
Recognition	10
Information	12
Emotional support and support services	14
Assessment and assessing carers needs	17
Having a voice	20
Providing a break	22
Support that helps carers care and maintain their own health	24
Young carers	27
Parents of children with a disability	30
Financial security/carers in employment	32
Complaints and compliments	35
Useful addresses and telephone numbers	36 –38
Appendix 1 Implementing Carers Strategy 2006-2008	39

CARERS STRATEGY 2006 – 2008

Introduction

Halton Council's Social Services Department produced a three-year Carers Strategy in 1999 and another in 2003. Each strategy was the product of consultation and discussion with our partners in health, the voluntary sector and with carers themselves. During the last six years many of the actions in these strategies have been implemented and has led to significant improvements in services for carers.

The Carers Development Team, in consultation with the Carers Strategy Group and local carers, has developed this new Carers Strategy for 2006 –2008. The Carers Strategy Group includes members of staff from Health and Community and Children and Young People Directorate's, the Primary Care Trust, local voluntary organisations and members of Halton Carers Forum. We aim to build on the firm foundations of the former Carers Strategies and respond to the increasing local and national focus on carers.

Who is a carer?

A carer is someone who cares, unpaid, for a relative or friend who is unable to manage on their own because of illness, disability or frailty. The majority are unpaid **family carers**. Carers can be any age and come from all walks of life and backgrounds. More women are carers than men and they are more likely than male carers to care for someone with very demanding care needs and to care for a wider range of relatives.

A parent carer is a parent or guardian who is likely to provide more support than other parents because their child is ill or disabled. Parent carers will probably support their child for many months or years and this is likely to have a significant affect on the other children in the family.

A young carer is someone under the age of 18 years who looks after another member of the family or close friend who is ill or disabled. They may be taking on the kind of responsibility that an adult would usually have. This may affect their education or social opportunities.

Caring relationships can be complex and family members may provide different types of care for each other in order to live independently in the community.

What do carers do?

- Carers give practical, physical and emotional support to vulnerable people. They help the person they care for to deal with problems caused by short term or long-

term illness or disability, mental distress or problems resulting from alcohol or substance misuse.

- Carers may supervise someone to keep them safe.
- Caring responsibilities may vary over time and may be difficult to predict from day to day.
- Anybody can become a carer, as a result of a sudden event such as an accident or this may be a gradual process when someone's physical or mental health slowly deteriorates.

Carers in Britain

Princess Royal Trust for Carers estimate that Britain has:

- 6 million carers. 1 in 8 people are carers
- Men are almost as likely to care as women. 42% of carers are men
- 21% of carers look after someone for more than 50 hours per week
- 25% of carers have been looking after someone for more than 10 years
- Women have a 50% chance of being a carer by the age of 59
- Half of all carers look after someone over the age of 75
- 70% of all carers are of working age
- Britain has an estimated 50,000 young carers under the age of 18 years
- 49% of all carers combine paid employment with caring responsibilities
- In 2001 11.44% of the population of Halton were carers.

(Source: www.caringbritain.org.uk/facts.html)

Profile of carers in Halton

Census 2001 found there were 13,528 carers in Halton.

- 7,942 individuals provide unpaid care for 1 -19 hours per week
- 1,887 individuals in Halton provide unpaid care for 20-49 hours per week
- 3,699 individuals provide unpaid care for 50 or more hours per week
- It also showed that 3,083 unpaid carers were aged 60 and over
- It is estimated that there are between 900 parent carers of children with a disability
- It is estimated there are 474 young carers in Halton.

Carers Legislation and National Strategy for Carers

1. The Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995

The Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995 was implemented in April 1995. Under this legislation:

- All carers of any age are given the right to request their own carers assessment
- The carers assessment looks at the ways in which the carer can be supported in their caring role

- The information from the carers assessment can be used to increase the services to the cared for person

2. The National Strategy for Carers 1999

In February 1999, the Government released the national strategy for carers 'Caring for Carers'. The strategy recognised the important role that carers play in supporting the people they care for. It emphasised that all social and health care organisations must focus not only on the client, patient or service user, but also the carer.

The National Carers Strategy has three key messages:

- Carers should be informed and supported, and receive better care to improve their health and well-being.
- Carers should be involved at local level in policy and service development.
- Carers should be treated as partners by all agencies.

It also emphasised the need for local authorities to develop their own local carers strategy.

3. The Carers and Disabled Children's Act 2000

The Carers and Disabled Children's Act 2000 was introduced in April 2001. Under this legislation:

- Unpaid carers over the age of 16 years who are caring for an adult have the right to request a separate assessment of their own needs. A carer may request his or her own carers assessment, even when the person they care for refuses their own assessment or support services
- People with parental responsibility for disabled children may also request a carers assessment
- Children's views are taken into account with the provision of service
- Local authorities have the power to provide services directly to carers to help maintain their health and safety and support them in their caring role
- Services to carers may be provided in a variety of ways, such as Direct Payments to carers

4. The Carers Equal Opportunities Act 2004

This Act became law from 1st April 2005. The new law has numerous positive effects for carers in Halton. It means that carers will:

- Be told about their rights to their own carers assessment
- Have their wishes to remain in, or return to work and education, taken into account when decisions are made about support given to the person they care for
- Have better information about opportunities for work, education, training and leisure
- Benefit from more emphasis on joint working between statutory services such Halton Social Services, the Primary Care Trusts and 5 Boroughs Partnership NHS Trust

Benefits of the new legislation include:

- More carers being able to continue in work or study whilst caring
- Increase the employability of carers who wish to return to work or study
- More opportunities for carers to have access to education, training and leisure services and lead to a more fulfilled life

Quality Standards

The King's Fund, after extensive consultation with voluntary organisations, statutory bodies, social service departments and health authorities, published **Quality Standards for Local Carer Support Services** in 2002. There are five quality standards. They are;

- Information
- Providing a break
- Emotional support
- Support that helps carers to care and maintain their own health
- Having a voice

Carers UK Report

In August 2005 Carers UK published a report 'Carers in Halton'. This report makes a number of recommendations which have been incorporated into this Carers Strategy.

Halton Carers Strategy 2003 – 2006, incorporated the King's Fund five quality standards and added five additional aims. The Action Plan for 2006 -2008 has been developed using the same aims used in 2003 –2006.

Equal Opportunities

Carers will have equal access to services, advice and information and support regardless of gender, age, race, disability, religious beliefs and sexual orientation. Carers will be respected and valued including those in same sex relationships.

White Paper: Our Health, Our Care, Our Say

The White Paper, published in January 2006, sets out the reforms intended to develop modern and convenient health and social care services. The White Paper acknowledges the vital role carers play. They provide a valued preventative service and it is imperative they and their families receive good quality, flexible and tailored support services in order to work and live their lives. The White Paper recommends;

- Establishing an information service/helpline for carers
- Establishing short-term, home – based respite support to carers in crisis or emergency in each area
- Allocating funding to train carers

- Encouraging councils and Primary Care Trusts to nominate leads for carers services.

The local authority will be working with the Primary Care Trust to implement the recommendations related to establishing a short term, home based respite service; providing more training for carers and collaborating with local health care services.

Since 2003

In Halton there has been a considerable improvement in local services for carers since the last Carers Strategy 2003 – 2006 was produced.

A significant contribution to the improved services have been provided by the Carers' Centres in Runcorn and Widnes. They opened in April and June 2004. They have continued to add new services for carers. During 2005/06 a total of 338 carers were provided with information and advice. 159 carers benefited from day trips which provided a valued break.

Now the Carers' Centres have been fully established, it is the intention to transfer the management to the voluntary sector with acceptance into the Princess Royal Trust for Carers Network. This will further strengthen the role of the Carers' Centres and ensure they will be able to access external funding and develop additional services to support local carers.

Each Local authority receives Carers Grant to primarily fund carers breaks and implement legislation, such as the Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004. Halton Borough Council uses this grant in accordance to guidance provided by the Department of Health. In 2003, 615 carers of adults aged 18 and over received a carers break funded from Carers Grant. At the end of 2005/06 this has increased to 1,392 carers receiving a break. In 2003 Children Services provided 238 carers with a carers break. This has increased to 409 carers in 2005/06 receiving a break.

Halton Carers Umbrella Group was established in October 2003 to give carers a voice in service planning and design. This group, comprising of carers from a range of backgrounds, continued to meet until December 2005. Halton Carers Forum has now taken over the role of Halton Carers Umbrella Group. The Forum held their inaugural meeting in March 2006 and has elected a Chairperson and an Executive Board. It is hoped that Halton Carers Forum will play a constructive role in supporting the continued development and improvement in services for carers as well providing a much needed carers perspective on life in Halton.

The Children's Disability Partnership Board (CWDPB) was established in 2004 to oversee the implementation of the 'Building Bridges', Multi Agency Strategy for Children with Disabilities. The Children Act 2004 has required local authorities to lead on the implementation of Children's Trusts and in Halton, this is being taken forward by the Children and Young People's Alliance Board. As part of these developments the

CWDPB has evolved into the Children's Disability Mini Trust and includes representation from the Halton Carers Forum.

Carers Grant

Funding support for carers

In addition to publishing in 1999 the national strategy 'Caring about Carers' the Government allocated local authorities with funding to support carers. Carers Grant is provided each year to increase the amount and frequency of breaks available to carers who are providing regular and substantial amounts of care. The Department of Heath has notified each local authority that Carers Grant will continue until 31st March 2008.

Runcorn Carers' Centre and Widnes Carers' Centre were opened in spring and early summer 2004. The Carers' Centres are currently managed by Halton Borough Council and provide the following services;

- Advice and information about local services available to carers
- Complementary therapies
- Pampering sessions
- A base for carer support groups to meet
- Welfare Rights advice
- Counselling
- Carer breaks and day trips
- Training courses for carers
- Referral for a carers assessment and other Council services
- A base for the Alzheimer's Society

Carers Grant has been provided to ensure Halton has two Carers' Centres. These Centres remain open throughout the year 10.00am – 4.00pm Monday to Friday.

Many local organisations received Carers Grant funding to provide carers breaks to carers during 2005/06. These were:

- Scope
- Halton Young Carers Project
- NCH Butterfly Project
- Halton Crossroads
- Barnardo's Wider Horizons Project
- Halton Autistic Family Support Group
- PSS Ltd
- Alzheimer's Society
- Halton Healthy Living Programme

In addition, small grants were provided to the following organisations:

- Mencap
- Halton Independent Living Trust (HILT)
- Let's Go Club
- Widnes and Runcorn Cancer Support Group
- Parkinson Society
- Halton Disability Service and Shopmobility
- Bridgewater and Astmoor Day Centres
- Halton Haven

Funding is provided to two Directorates in Halton Borough Council to provide additional support and carers breaks. These are

- The Children and Young People's Directorate – specifically to provide services to parent carers of children with a disability.
- The Health and Community Directorate who provide services to carers who support Adults with a Learning Disability, Adults with a Physical or Sensory Disability, Carers of people with Mental Health Needs and Carers of Older People.

Halton Carers Strategy Group

This is a multi agency partnership group who meet every three months to oversee the Carers Strategy in Halton. Since the group first came together in 1999 there have been many changes in legislation and Government service directives aimed at improving the lives of vulnerable people and their carers.

Members of the Carers Strategy Group are representatives from;

- Social Care (Health and Community Directorate and Children and Young People Directorate)
- Halton Primary Care Trust
- Other voluntary sector providers
- The Chair of Halton Carers Forum
- Carers
- Halton Children's Alliance-Children with Disabilities Mini Trust

It is planned to extend the membership of this group to include representatives from Education, Housing and Employment.

The group discusses matters such as the issues in relation to implementation of Government legislation relating to carers, matters discussed in carers forums, information relating to changes in service delivery and the use of Carers Grant to meet the diverse needs of carers.

Vision, Values and Aims

This strategy builds on the vision, values and aims of the Carers Strategy 2003 – 2006

Vision

- Carers will be recognised and valued
- Carers will be supported and enabled to care as long as they wish to do so
- Carers will be enabled to have some regular time for themselves, free of their caring duties
- All agencies will work in partnership with carers to provide the help and services carers need
- All agencies will work together to plan and develop services for, and with, carers
- Information on issues of relevance to carers will be made available to carers, statutory and voluntary agencies, and the wider community.

Values

The local authority, the Primary Care Trust, local health trusts, voluntary and independent sector agencies will work in partnership to improve support for carers as part of mainstream community care and children's services. Positive steps will be taken to identify, accommodate and support diverse needs.

- The major role played by carers in supporting people in the community who are frail, ill or disabled is recognised and valued
- Carers will be encouraged to identify themselves at the earliest possible stage, and will be empowered to ask for the service they require
- Carers will be involved in decision making about their needs and consulted about their preferences for services
- No carer will be compelled to care or to continue caring if they no longer feel able to do so
- Former carers will be helped to access support to enable them to adjust to their new circumstances
- Service providers will ensure equity in the provision of support to carers, whatever the illness or disability of the person they are caring for

- Carers will be involved in planning and determining the types of services available
- Carers will be invited to take part in the evaluation of services.

Aims

The strategic aims are:

- 1. Recognition** – to identify carers and encourage them to identify themselves.
- 2. Information** – to ensure that carers are provided with the information they need, in an appropriate and accessible form, to enable them to function as carers.
- 3. Emotional support and support services** – to ensure a full range of co-ordinated and flexible services and support are provided for, and planned, with carers in Halton.
- 4. Assessment and assessing carers needs** – to ensure that carers are fully involved as partners in the assessment of the person for whom they care and are always offered their own assessment where appropriate.
- 5. Having voice** – to ensure that carers are actively involved in the planning, development and evaluation of services.
- 6. Provide a break** – develop services that offer a break to local carers.
- 7. Support that helps carers care and maintain their own health** – support carers to care and to maintain their own health and well being by offering training, health promotion and personal development opportunities and is responsive to individual needs.
- 8. Young Carers** – develop ways of identifying and meeting the needs of young carers.
- 9. Parents of children with a disability** – to ensure parents of children with a disability are aware of their rights as carers and are receiving appropriate services.
- 10. Financial support/carers in employment** – provide welfare benefit advice to carers that request it. Employees who are carers will have access to support to help them at times of crisis/emergency.

Monitoring Carers Strategy 2006 –2008 and sustaining the progress

The Carers Strategy Group will monitor the implementation of this Carers Strategy for 2006 –2008 to ensure the targets and priorities have been achieved. The Action Plan contains no specific dates. It is intended the Action Plan will be implemented throughout the two-year period of 2006 –2008.

Consultation takes place with all stakeholders who contribute to delivering the Carers Strategy. This will involve talking to Halton Carers Forum, to monitor the delivery of the targets within this carers strategy. The feedback provided will help with directing future developments and commissioning intentions of Children and Young People Directorate and Health and Community Directorate, the local Primary Care Trust and 5 Borough's Partnership NHS Trust.

A consultation event in late 2006 or early 2007 will be held to review the Carers Strategy. It will consider strategies to sustain the progress made in developing carer support services into 2008 and future years. This is in response to a specific request made at the Halton Carers Strategy Consultation event held in January 2006.

Consultation about the Carers Strategy

Carers were consulted about the Carers Strategy 2003 – 2006 in January 2006 and gave feedback about what they felt was needed to improve performance. Their views have been incorporated into the Halton Carers Strategy and Action Plan 2006- 2008.

Halton Carers Strategy and Action Plan 2006 -2008

1. Recognition

Identifying carers

Many individuals who are carers do not recognise themselves as carers. They are usually family members or close friends. Many carers, including those from ethnic minorities, remain 'hidden' to statutory services. These carers may not be accessing services or receive support from the many local agencies that can assist them. It is important for all agencies to identify carers including parents of disabled children who are required to provide a level of care above what is expected with a child without a disability. This will ensure;

- They can be provided with information about carer support services
- Ensure carers needs are assessed and appropriate action taken
- They can be consulted about services designed to help them
- Carers receive training, practical support and a break from caring
- A rigorous analysis of the numbers of carers and their needs is undertaken

What carers say

- Find and support hidden carers
- Get out and reach carers/get out in the community, e.g. in Children Services Sure Start, extended schools and children centres.
- Involve carers in training events for professionals

- Distribute more publicity about carer support services in GP practices, community centres and libraries

What has been provided so far

- An outreach service in health centres in Widnes and Runcorn commenced in December 2005
- Liaison with Halton Primary Care Trust resulted in initiatives to access hard to reach carers
- Information giving events such as Carers Week and Carers Rights Day. These were attended by over 150 carers
- Consultation events and outreach activities specifically designed to reach hidden carers and carers from ethnic minorities
- Discovery event for children
- Parent support groups, e.g. Halton Autistic Family Support Group, Parent Partnership
- Drop in session and events for carers of disabled children.

Objective	Designated area of responsibility	Method	Evidence of outcome
Develop a strategy to publicise and promote issues concerning carers	All agencies	Carers Events, activities, information to be targeted as widely as possible to try and reach the maximum number of carers, especially 'hidden carers'	Increased number of carers receiving support and accessing services
Work on raising awareness of carers needs with health and social care staff, and in the community	All agencies	Provide briefing sessions to health and social care staff	Raise profile of the needs of carers within the community. Work with Primary Care Trust to encourage GPs to identify carers.
Identify 'hidden carers' to make their lives better	All agencies	Provide access to all services in the statutory and voluntary sector that will support carers	230 'hidden carers' identified by 2007/08

2. Information

Carers can access information in a number of ways. They can telephone or drop into the Widnes Carers' Centre and Runcorn Carers' Centre. They can contact Customer Services Helpline in the Health and Community Directorate, use the Council's web site, or call into Halton Direct Link in Halton Lea, Runcorn and Halton Direct Link, Widnes (near Widnes Market). Halton Information Exchange will provide information to parents of disabled children. Carers can go to other specialist organisations in the borough with a special interest and expertise in dealing with carers. The contact details of these organisations can be found at the back of this strategy.

Information is one of the main needs of carers. Carers need good information to help them carry out their caring role and to have their own support needs met. Carers require information that is:

- Tailored to their needs
- Clear
- Comprehensive
- User friendly
- Up to date
- Accessible
- Age appropriate
- In the carers preferred language
- In a range of formats including the Internet and telephone to signpost them to support and services

The information provided should cover access to services, assessment, the illness/disability/condition of the person they care for, their rights as carers, charges for services, the roles of different agencies and professionals, what to do when things go wrong and how to complain. In addition it should provide details of where carers can access independent support and advocacy services.

What carers say

- They want information that is jargon free, in plain English, up to date, accurate and appropriate
- Access to information is essential
- Information must be available in easily accessible formats
- Use local newspapers – make information simpler
- Involve carers in producing information and material.
- Carers want more opportunities for face-to-face contact and information sharing

- Carers want information about the services provided by independent and voluntary organisations

What has been provided so far

- Carers Information Packs containing information about local services for carers including information about their right to an assessment. This publication has been revised and updated in 2003, 2004 and 2005
- Halton Information Exchange (children) provides information to carers of disabled children through an information pack and regular newsletter.
- Children's Information Service provides a range of information to all parents including parents of disabled children regarding childcare
- Parent Partnership, provides advice and support to carers in relation to special educational needs.
- A Quick Guide to Services for Carers leaflet, distributed at carers events
- A Young Carers Information Pack 'Voice'
- Explaining Carers Assessment leaflet
- Two Carers' Centres providing a drop in information service in Widnes and Runcorn
- A database to identify carers and inform them of carers day trips, pamper sessions, training courses and services available to help them as carers
- Two Carer Information Officers

Objective	Designated area of responsibility	Method	Evidence of Outcome
Keep carers up to date with current information and carers legislation to help them make informed choices about their caring role	All agencies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Care • Primary Care Trust • Voluntary and independent sector • Carer Development Team • Halton Borough Council's Customer Services Division 	Ongoing consultation Provide updated Carer Information Packs Publicity about carers issues Carers web page to be regularly updated	More carers in contact with local organisations and attend Halton Carers Forum meetings Number of carers on Carers' Centre database increased by 20% in 2007/08 Update Council's internet site 2,000 Carers Information Packs issued in 2006/07 and 2007/08

Ensure information is accessible and easy to understand and available, on request, to carers with a disability and to carers from ethnic minorities where English is not the first language	All agencies	Respond to requests and provide information	Carer Information Packs and leaflets translated and provided in other formats on request
Leaflets for carers in GP practices, libraries and made available at community events	All agencies	Inter agency group established to plan carers events and review publicity and publications for carers	More carers accessing information and contacting services
Encourage the creation of databases to identify carers accessing services and requiring support	All agencies	Databases created by all agencies	An increased number of carers, including 'hidden carers' on databases More carers in touch with other local organisations

3. Emotional support and support services

Providing care to another individual can be lonely and demanding. Sometimes carers can become socially isolated. Also a carer may find that when their caring role ends (for example when the person they are caring for dies), they find it difficult to adjust to the change in their life. Different kinds of emotional support may be necessary. Widnes and Runcorn Carers' Centres provide access to appropriate counselling services. Other voluntary organisations including Age Concern Halton, Kings Cross Project, Barnardo's, Scope, HAFS, Halton Young Carers Project and Widnes and Runcorn Cancer Support Group are available to provide emotional support to carers.

Carers want co-ordinated and flexible services that will assist them in their role as carers. They want to be recognised, respected and listened to. They want services, provided by the Primary Care Trust, Social Services, Children & Young People Directorate and voluntary agencies to meet their needs as carers. They want to be able to access an independent advocacy service and dedicated services that are flexible, accessible and meets their needs.

Services for the cared for person have substantial impact on their carer. It is important they receive good quality, reliable and efficient services to enable them to take a break

from caring. All agencies in the statutory and voluntary sector need to ensure they employ well trained, well informed individuals who have had a criminal record bureau check. Carers want access to Direct Payments and a Carer Break Voucher Scheme to provide them with choice about when and where they can receive a service.

What carers say

- Many carers need a break from the emotional demands of caring
- Carers value services provided by many voluntary sector organisations such as Alzheimer's Society, Age Concern Halton, Let's Go Club and Widnes and Runcorn Cancer Support Group
- Carers value the complementary therapies and pamper sessions provided at the Carers' Centres
- They want a more flexible short break service
- Ensure Carers Grant is used to provide carers with services so they can have a break from their caring responsibilities.
- They want more emergency respite services
- They want commissioners of services to listen to carers
- Carers want information about the range of services provided by all agencies offering emotional support in Halton

What has been provided so far

- Access to counselling services at Widnes and Runcorn Carers' Centre provided by two voluntary agencies
- Confidential advice service to carers on a drop in basis at Widnes and Runcorn Carers' Centre and provided by other local voluntary sector organisations
- Referral to social workers and other local agencies providing advice and support
- A range of short breaks services for families of children with disabilities
- Sibling support group for siblings of disabled children
- Specialist support service for children with severe learning difficulties and challenging behaviour
- Keyworkers to provide a co-ordinated package of services to families of disabled children
- A meeting place at the Widnes and Runcorn Carers' Centre for many carer support groups. Some meetings take place in the evenings to accommodate working carers.
- Joint Commissioning Managers appointed in conjunction with the Primary Care Trust
- Complementary therapies specifically for carers
- Pamper sessions for carers, in conjunction, with Halton College.
- Use carers grant to provide carers respite services

Objective	Designated area of responsibility	Method	Evidence of outcomes
Recognise the emotional needs of all carers especially those hard to reach.	All agencies in the Statutory and Voluntary sector	<p>Provide up to date information to enable carers to be signposted to relevant support services</p> <p>Assessments that recognise the need for support</p> <p>Providing access to counselling services for carers</p> <p>Support carers who do not know how to access services</p>	<p>Carers provided with emotional support by a range of agencies in the voluntary and statutory sector</p> <p>Refer carers to specialist support agencies e.g. bereavement and loss services, helplines and support groups</p>
Continue to provide complementary therapy sessions for carers	Halton Healthy Living Programme	Provide a free complementary therapy service to carers who request it	320 carers will receive a complementary therapy, advice and counselling by 2007/08
Ensure staff training includes listening skills training and carer awareness training	Training Managers in PCT and Social Services	Arrange for training sessions for frontline staff dealing with carers	Staff training sessions dealing with carers issues Provided
Carers' Centres to continue to provide a helpline service providing advice, support and information for carers	Carers' Centres	Publicise Carers' Centre services throughout the community	Increased numbers of carers receiving telephone support
Develop a Joint Commissioning Strategy involving Social Services, the Primary Care Trust	Local Implementation Teams and Partnership Boards	Implement, where possible, the recommendations in the Carers UK Report	Services for carers jointly commissioned

and the voluntary sector			
More carers to be provided with control and choice using Direct Payments and the Carer Break Voucher Scheme	Direct Payments Team Service teams in Directorates	Promote Direct Payments and monitor carer's opinion of the service Promote Carer Break Voucher Scheme	Increased take up of Direct Payments and Carer break Voucher Scheme. Monitor carers views of Direct Payments

4. Assessment and assessing carers needs

In Halton there are various agencies that collect information about carers. Halton Borough Council's Health and Community Directorate and Children and Young People Directorate and Widnes and Runcorn Carers' Centres are all in contact with carers. The Primary Care Trust and 5 Boroughs Partnership NHS Trust also have contact with large numbers of carers. Numerous voluntary organisations including Age Concern Halton, Kings Cross Project, Barnardo's, Scope, Halton Young Carers Project, Halton Autistic Families Support Group and Widnes and Runcorn Cancer Support Group work with and provide services that support carers.

Carers can register their details at both Carers' Centres in Halton and can obtain help and support and be referred to have their needs assessed. Carers needs differ in a number of ways depending on factors such as:

- The level of support or personal care they provide to the person they care for
- The relationship to the person they care for
- The illness or disability of the person they care for
- Their cultural needs or those of the person they care for
- Whether the carer is in employment
- If the carer lives a distance from the person they care for.

What is a carers assessment?

If the carer looks after someone regularly they can have a carers assessment. This assessment looks at the care or support they provide and how it affects their life. The assessment is for the carer, not for the person who needs support or care.

Carers of disabled children should provide 'regular and substantial' care in line with the provisions of the Carers Disabled Children's Act 2000.

Who can have a carer's assessment?

Carers of adults

Under the Carers and Disabled Children's Act 2000, a carer over 16 years of age can request an assessment of her/his needs if:

1. The person being cared for is over the age of 18 years and is eligible for, or has had, a community care needs assessment
and
2. The carer is not providing personal assistance for payment in cash or in kind or is a volunteer or working for a voluntary organisation
and
3. The carer provides, or intends to provide, regular and substantial care

People who are about to take on a caring role are eligible for assessment as long as the above criteria are met and the care they intend to provide to someone looks likely to be regular and substantial.

A carer has a right to an assessment as long as the person they care for is, or would be, eligible for a community care assessment, even if they have refused to have one or have refused any services offered.

Carers of disabled children will have a right to an assessment if the child being cared for is eligible for a child in need assessment.

'Regular and Substantial' care is not defined within the Act. It is the 'impact' of caring on a person's life that is important not necessarily the nature of the caring tasks or how often or how much time is spent caring.

Halton has agreed to an Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) to increase the number of carers assessment it provides for carers. In 2007/08 600 carers will receive a carers assessment.

What carers say

- Carers want to be offered carers assessments regularly
- Carers assessments should be promoted widely to increase take-up
- The take up of carers assessments should be monitored and their outcomes made known
- Carers want an independent advocacy service
- More specialist staff should carry out carers assessments
- The quality of the carers assessment is vital to getting appropriate support services for both carer and cared for person

- Make sure carers know why they are being assessed
- Carers should be offered an assessment of their needs as carers

What is available

- Under the Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995 and the Carers and Disabled Children's Act 2000, all carers providing regular and substantial care have the right to request an assessment of their own needs from Halton Social Services
- All carers on the care programme approach (mental health and learning disability) should be offered a carers assessment
- Since April 2005 the Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act means that identified carers will be told about their right to a carers assessment and have their wishes to remain in or return to work and education taken into account during the assessment.
- New carers assessment forms have been produced to comply with the changes made by the Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004
- New carers assessment forms have been produced to assess the needs of carers of disabled children.

Objectives	Designated area of responsibility	Method	Evidence of Outcome
Carers to be offered an individual assessment of their own needs in accordance to the Carer Act 1995/2000 and Carers (Equal Opportunity) Act 2004	Care Managers Halton Young Carers Project	Care Managers to offer all carers an assessment of need Monitor the take up of carers assessment	Establish a system to record number of carers assessments offered, refused and completed Through Performance Indicator (PI)
Ensure carers are fully involved as partners in the assessment of the person they care for	Care Managers in Health and Community Directorate and Children and Young People Directorate Halton Young Carers Project	Professionals listen to carers and acknowledge their expertise Carers to be fully involved in the assessment process	Provide needs led assessments that takes into account the circumstances and needs of the carer Involvement of carers in planning groups

Promote carers right to an assessment	All agencies	Publicity and specific leaflets Inform carers of their right to an assessment during advice sessions	600 carers assessments completed in 2007/08
Carers to be consulted about the level of care they are able to offer	All agencies	Through carers assessment and care management	Sampling of carers assessments for quality
Provide access to an independent advocacy service	All agencies	Carers will receive support from an advocacy service	More carers supported to access services

5. Having a voice

In 2004 Halton Carers Umbrella Group was established to provide carers, from all backgrounds, with an opportunity to comment on and help shape the development of services. This provided an opportunity for carers to express their views and anxieties about local services developed for carers. In 2006 Halton Carers Forum was established. This new carers forum intends to hold regular meetings with carers. The Halton Carers Forum will have an elected chairperson who will be a carer or someone who has been a former carer.

Other people who may attend the forum are:

- Elected members
- Representatives from Health and Community Directorate
- Representatives from Children and Young People Directorate
- Representatives from Primary Care Trusts
- Representatives from other organisations who help carers

Carers are already involved in commenting on services provided by the local authority and the Primary Care Trust.

The Children Act 2004 required local authorities to lead on the development of Children's Trust. In Halton the Children's Trust is known as the Children's Alliance to reflect the spirit of partnership. The Halton Children and Young People's Alliance Board will provide the appropriate vehicle for the development of the Trust. The development of the Alliance will be informed by the needs of the carers and young people and parent and carer forum has been established that will allow all parents and carers, including

those of disabled children, to influence developments. Carers are also represented within the Children's Disability Mini Trust

The Patient Advice Service (known as) PALS is part of the Government's commitment to ensuring that the NHS listens to patients, resolves their immediate concerns and then uses their views to develop services so they continue to meet the needs of patients, carers and relatives.

PALS officers are based in every Primary Care Trust, in Halton, Warrington and Whiston Hospital and 5 Boroughs Partnership NHS Trust.

What carers say they want

- An effective, robust, well resourced and independently facilitated Carers Forum
- Carer representatives on every planning group with systematic carer involvement in developing services
- Carers expenses met when participating in consultation
- Funding for appropriate respite services so carers can participate in consultation
- Carers to be consulted about services when they are being developed
- To know how their views have shaped services

What has been provided so far

- Assistance for the Halton Carers Umbrella Group to enable them to meet regularly
- Carers representation on Mental Health Carers LIT Sub Group, Valuing People Carers Implementation Group, Partnership Boards and LITS
- Consultation about services and training for carers provided by the Carers' Centres
- Participation in meetings to establish Halton Carers Forum
- Carers representation within all levels of the Children's Disability Mini Trust and carer representation in the allocation of carers grant funding.

Objective	Designated area of responsibility	Method	Evidence of outcomes
Ensure carers are represented on relevant committee's, Boards with agreed support both practical and financial, to enable carers to attend	All agencies	Ensure carers are represented on all decision making groups Agencies to agree on financial support for carers who attend boards on a	Carers actively involved in all decision making Boards and committee's

		regular basis	
Carers are to be provided with training to help them effectively contribute to meetings	Carers Development Team Halton Voluntary Action	Provide carers with committee skills training	Carers actively contribute
Carers to be involved in the Carers Grant allocation	Halton Carers Forum	Three carers to join Carers Grant Accountability Group	Minutes of meetings
Carers encouraged to give their views on services	All agencies	Service User and Carer Involvement arranged with each team in Adult Services and the Children with Disability Team	Feedback to service teams and providers
Support the development of Halton Carers Forum	All agencies	Provide support to Halton Carers Forum	Support provided by appropriate officers
Carers involvement in planning and monitoring of services	All agencies	Service planners and providers to liaise with carers/groups on all aspects of service planning and delivery.	Carers involved in planning and reviewing services
Provide carers with capacity building skills	Halton Voluntary Action	Local carers are encouraged to develop their skills	Carers groups encouraged to be more self sufficient services

6. Providing a break

The 2001 Census showed that 3,699 carers in Halton are looking after someone with an illness or disability for more than 50 hours per week. This may be providing help with personal care such as:

- Washing/bathing
- Dressing
- Walking around the house
- Getting in and out of bed
- Cooking and keeping the house clean

- Communication because of sight or hearing difficulties or difficulty understanding
- Helping with finances or paying bills
- Collecting medication or making sure someone takes prescribed medication

Being a carer can be emotionally and physically very tiring. Carers often do not think enough about their own health and well-being, and find they suffer from exhaustion and stress.

Taking a break from caring is essential for most carers, even if it's only a few hours. It allows them to see friends, relax, sleep, join classes, and meet other people – to do all the things that most people take for granted.

Some carers feel guilty about taking time for themselves. They see it as a sign of failure. However, without regular breaks, carers are putting their own health at risk. Everyone needs time to recharge their batteries.

Ideally, breaks from caring should be planned breaks so that both the carer and the person looked after are happy with the arrangements.

What carers say

- Carers require breaks that are flexible and available at a time that suits them
- Carers need to be sure that agencies providing care are consistent and reliable. This will enable them to take a break from caring
- Carers say breaks should be seen as preventative measure: part of a care plan rather than a response to a crisis

What has been provided so far

- Day trips to Trafford Centre, Southport, Oswaldtwistle Mill, Salford Quays
- Funding to local voluntary organisations and charities to arrange carers breaks for their members
- Increased the number of carers receiving a break each year since 2003.
- A range of carer short breaks for carers of disabled children

In 2006/07 1,531 carers of adults and older people will be provided with at least 11,747 carer breaks.

Objective	Designated area of responsibility	Method	Evidence of outcome
Carers of people who are assessed as being in need of community care services will have an opportunity for a break	Care Managers and service providers	Through assessment provided under the NHS and Community Care Act and other carer legislation	Take up of carers breaks provided by Health and Community Directorate and Children and Young People's Directorate
Continue to develop a range of opportunities for carers to have a break. This may be a few hours, a weekend or longer	All agencies including Halton Carers Forum	Listen to carers and provide carers with a break they want Halton Carers Forum to find out the types of break carers want	1,850 carer breaks provided by 2007/08
Implement a Carer Break Voucher Scheme to enable more flexibility and choice of breaks	Carer Development Team Social Services	Carer Development Team to work with social work teams and provide appropriate publicity	Increased number of carers using Carer Break Vouchers
Promote and raise awareness of Direct Payments amongst carers	All agencies	Publicise in Carer Information Pack and promote, on request, at carers events and forums	Increased number of carers using Direct Payments
Continue developing respite services and monitor and evaluate existing services	All agencies in conjunction with Social Services	Meet with providers every three months to monitor performance	Increased number of carers benefiting from respite services

7. Support that helps carers care and maintain their own health

Caring can be physically and emotionally exhausting. As a result, many carers suffer from physical injury or need treatment for stress related problems.

Carers UK research has found

- Carers are twice as likely to have mental health problems if they provide substantial care
- 316,000 people in the UK who provide care describe themselves as 'permanently sick or disabled'
- Seven out of 10 carers worry about their finances and six out 10 believe this has an effect on their health

(Source: www.carersuk.org.uk)

Some studies show that 52% of carers need treatment for stress related problems and 51% of carers have a physical injury as a result of caring.

Many carers have to give up work and caring because of the effect caring has on their own health. However, with the right information and support, many of the health problems affecting carers are preventable.

Carers should be able to:

- Get enough sleep and rest
- Get regular and planned breaks from caring
- Have time for themselves
- Get enough information about services that could help
- Feel free from financial worry because they have access to financial information on benefits or debt
- Receive advice and training on aspects of caring.

Carers need to:

- Make sure their GP knows they are a carer
- Ask social services for a carers assessment to find out about breaks from caring, receive services to support the carer with caring or get advice on health awareness courses
- Contact Widnes or Runcorn Carers' Centre to ask about complementary therapies, counselling and health awareness courses
- Get financial advice on benefits or debt
- Find out about training courses that can help the carer

What carers say

- Carers felt they needed training in moving and handling and on the effects and how to administer of medication and coping strategies
- Carers wanted regular health checks, pampering, healthy eating
- Training and advice for carers on the issues related to the person they are caring for
- Make health providers aware of carers and their needs
- Increase in number and types of breaks for carers

What has been provided so far

- A comprehensive complementary therapy service for carers
- A training programme for carers
- Pamper sessions, in conjunction with Halton College, to take place at Widnes and Runcorn Carers' Centres
- Support groups use, free of charge, the Carers' Centres to meet and support their members
- Kings Cross Project provide a counselling service at both Carers' Centres
- Drop in information and advice and referral of carers to the Welfare Benefits Service and Citizen Advice Bureau
- Reduced rates at many indoor and outdoor leisure and recreational activities via the Halton Leisure Card.

Objective	Designated area of responsibility	Method	Evidence of outcome
Provide training courses for carers to help them maintain their health Respond to carers requests for training to help them in their caring role.	Health and Community Directorate Children and Young People Directorate Primary Care Trusts 5 Boroughs Partnership NHS Trust Voluntary organisations Halton Borough Council's Adults Learning Team	Provide courses in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving and handling and lifting • Stress management • Wellness • Assertiveness training • Medical conditions and difficult behaviour • Basic First Aid • IT and use of the Internet 	90 carers will attend training courses in 2007/08
Continue to support existing carer support groups and help to develop new ones	All agencies including organisations in the voluntary sector working with carers	Encourage the formation of carer support groups Voluntary organisations provided with assistance to run support groups	More support groups established

Promote caring issues in GP practices, throughout the Primary Care Trust and 5 Boroughs Partnership NHS Trust	Primary Care Trust 5 Boroughs Partnership NHS Trust	Agree an Information Strategy that addresses the health needs of carers	Monitor promotional activities
Ensure that professionals are aware of the health risks to carers and address ways of preventing or treating them	All agencies Training Managers in Social Services and Primary Care Trust	Provide awareness raising sessions for professionals focusing on the health issues faced by carers	More training sessions provided to professionals

8. Young carers

The government document 'Caring about Carers' states:
'the experience of growing up in a family where a parent, relative or sibling is ill or disabled can bring both rewards and difficulties'.

Children and young people under 18 who have caring responsibilities are often referred to as 'young carers'. These are young people whose lives are restricted in some way because they are supporting or taking responsibility for care of a person who is ill, has a disability or mental illness or misuses a substance.

Not every young person who has a parent, sibling or grandparent who is ill or disabled is a young carer, but of those young people who are taking on extra responsibilities, recent research has shown that;

- One quarter are missing school or have difficulties with lateness, no time to do homework or have other problems
- 12% cent of young carers are caring for more than one person
- More than half are providing care for their mother and one third for their brother or sisters

Halton's Children and Young People Directorate fund the **Halton Young Carers Project** through their mainstream budgets and additional funding is provided from Carers Grant for support, activities and short breaks for Young Carers.

What carers say

- Identify more young carers
- There should be more publicity for Halton Young Carers Project
- Listen to young carers
- Provide more joined up services

- Ask young carers what they want
- Provide training to professionals to enable them to identify young carers

What has been provided so far

- A Young Carers Information Pack has been produced, in conjunction with young carers
- Additional funding to identify 16 –17 year old young carers
- Support for Halton Young Carers Project to provide additional carers breaks for young carers
- Secured additional funding from Neighbourhood Renewal Funding to focus on 16 –17 year old Young Carers

Objective	Designated area of responsibility	Method	Evidence of Outcome
Support Halton Young Carers Project to identify and work with Young Carers	Halton Young Carers Project Children and Young People Directorate 5 Boroughs Partnership NHS Trust Primary Care Trust	Provide information and briefing sessions about young carers services to other professionals Provide information about the project in the local community	Young carers receive more support sessions 220 Young Carers will be identified and provided with support
Provide young carers with carers breaks and activities they want	Halton Young Carers Project Children and Young People Directorate	Deliver support sessions for young carers after school Provide residential and/or day activity programmes as appropriate	Young Carers benefiting from a break
Ensure that the views of young carers are heard and considered when planning services	Halton Young Carers Project Children and Young People Directorate Health and	Provide age appropriate opportunities for young people to express their views	Increased number of Young Carers accessing these opportunities

	Community Directorate		
Strengthen links with other agencies that may be aware of and/or provide support for young carers	Halton Young Carers Project All statutory and voluntary agencies	Develop processes between agencies Appropriate signposting to relevant support services	Established networks between agencies Young Carers benefiting from appropriate signposting
Recognise the emotional and physical impact that a caring role may have on a young person	All agencies in the statutory and voluntary sector Halton Young Carers Project	Appropriate signposting to relevant support services Assessments that recognise the need for support	Provide emotional support to carers at Halton Young Carers Project and other appropriate services. Refer young carers to specialist support agencies e.g. bereavement and loss services as appropriate

9. Parents of children with a disability

Social Services have the responsibility for assessing the needs of disabled children and their carers, and for co-ordinating services to meet those needs. They will arrange an assessment, a process to identify all the needs of the child and the family. A worker from the team will visit the family and provide them with a 'Care Plan'. This will show the needs of the child and family and the services which will be provided. Carers will also be entitled to a carers assessment that will provide them with a Carer's Action Plan.

Services offered by Children and Young People Directorate may include a home from home family based short break, advice and support to families, after school clubs, Direct Payments, outreach support and a range of social and leisure opportunities.

What carers say

- They need a continuum of services for children
- They need better liaison between children and adult services
- They would like stakeholders days dedicated to parents
- They would like better advertising of services
- Provide more flexible services and Direct Payments
- Ensure there is equity of provision
- More partnership working with carers

What has been provided so far

- Crossroads support services for carers
- Saturday and after school clubs
- Inclusive play and leisure groups
- Sibling support group
- Parent Partnership
- Early Support programme
- Halton Information Exchange
- Children's Information Service
- Youth Clubs
- One to one volunteer links
- School holiday play schemes
- Carer Assessment
- Direct Payments

Objective	Designated area of responsibility	Method	Evidence of outcome
Raise the profile of the needs of carers of disabled children	Children's Carers Development Officer Halton Information Exchange Co-ordinator	Provide Information sessions in schools, children's centres and other child centred venues	Higher profile of needs of carers of disabled children in the community and increase in number of registrations with Halton Information Exchange
Keep carers of disabled children updated on new information	Halton Information Exchange Coordinator	Provide information packs and regular newsletter to carers of disabled children Liaise with Children's Information Service	Increased number of families registered and receiving information
Involve carers in partnership working	Children's Carers Development Officer	Representation in Children with Disabilities Mini Trust Carers stakeholder event	Continued carer representation
Promote the use of Direct Payments	Children's Disability Team Client Finance Team	Provide support to access Direct Payments	Increase in take up of Direct Payments
Develop pathways to ensure a continuum of services that are easy to access	Strategic Manager Children with Disabilities	Implementation of Building Bridges Strategy	A co-ordinated multi agency response to the needs of disabled children and their families
Continue to provide support to parents /carers in relation to Special Educational Needs	Parent Partnership Co-ordinator	Provision of independent support and advice to parents	Through Annual Report

Provide carer breaks	Strategic Manager Children with Disabilities	Commission a range of short break services	Number and quality of carer breaks offered
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10. Financial security/Carers in employment

Carers and working

Many carers find they cannot work because of the amount time they spend caring. Other carers try to 'juggle' work with caring and find themselves doing two jobs, one paid and one unpaid.

Problems faced by carers who are working include:

- Stress and anxiety from constantly juggling work and care
- Tiredness and having to cope with little or broken sleep
- Isolation because they have no time to go out and socialise
- Feeling that their colleagues think they are not committed to their paid work

The support the carer needs to keep working may be very simple. For example, a carer might need to be able to use a telephone and check the person they care for is all right.

Sometimes, however, carers do need to take leave to help them through difficult times.

Financial security

Money matters more than ever when caring for someone. Carers may find they are:

- Unable to work
- Living on less money
- Faced with decisions that will affect money in the future, for example in the area of pensions
- Experiencing poverty because of being a long-term carer
- Needing to sort out debt problems

Many carers do not claim enough benefits or discounts for themselves because the benefit system is complex and they do not know what to claim.

Carers UK research has shown

- One in five carers has to cut back on food
- One in three have trouble paying utility bills
- Four out of ten find the level of charges for services cause financial difficulties
- One in three carers have no savings at all

(Source: www.carersuk.org)

Many carers experience debt and the financial stress affects their health.

What carers say

- Promote carers rights and eligibility to benefits and support in work and education
- Make services available at times that fits working carers needs
- Caring responsibilities affect access to employment opportunities for carers of working age
- Target carers in the workplace and offer them support
- Help carers to return to work
- They want more joint working between services such as Welfare Benefit Team and Jobcentreplus

What has been provided

- Many carers requesting benefit advice have been referred to Halton Borough Council's Welfare Rights Service
- General advice service and debt counselling is available through the Citizen Advice Bureau
- Information for working carers and benefit advice is included in the Carers Information Pack and A Quick Guide to Carer Services leaflet.
- Return to work information is available in the Carers Information Pack. It is provided to each carer when they receive a carers assessment.
- Information about carers rights and their benefit entitlement was available at Carers Week and Carers Rights Day events and other community events for carers.
- Initiatives within Halton Borough Council in place to identify employees who are carers

Objective	Designated area of responsibility	Method	Evidence of outcome
Provide access to information on benefits and finance	Carers' Centre Halton Borough Council's Welfare Rights Team Age Concern Halton Halton Citizen Advice Bureau	Refer more carers to Welfare Rights Service Undertake more outreach work and link with the Benefits Express Bus Carers Information Pack will be provided to each carer during a carers assessment Continue to promote carers rights and entitlements	Carers receiving benefit advice
Carers provided with the opportunity to enter training or employment	All agencies including the Halton Borough Council's Adult Learning Team and Jobcentreplus	Continue to develop training to support carers into employment or education	Carers are supported to access education and employment
Provide support to working carers	All agencies	Encourage employers, including Halton Borough Council, to identify working carers Promote carer friendly employment policies and provide, on request, to local employers	Working carers receive advice and support Personnel Departments made aware of the need to adopt carer friendly employment policies

Comments and complaints about social care services

Your comments, compliments and complaints are important as they help us to improve and develop the services we provide.

Sometimes decisions are made or things may happen that you are unhappy about or disagree with. If this happens we want you to tell us – but we also want you to tell us when you are pleased with the help you have received.

Sometimes it is not possible to resolve a complaint about a service. In these circumstances, when all stages of the procedure have been completed, an individual complainant should contact the Commissioner for Local Administration (York Office).

If you want to write, our Freepost address is:-

Complaints, Freepost (CS/3)
Customer Care Officer
Health and Community Directorate
Halton Borough council
Grosvenor House
Halton Lea
Runcorn
WA7 2ED

Email: ssdcomplaint@halton.gov.uk

If you require more information about how to make a complaint, you can contact Customer Services Advisor Tel; **01928 704406** or visit Halton Direct Link, Halton Lea, Runcorn and Halton Direct Link, 7 Brook Street, Widnes

Useful addresses and telephone numbers

Health and Community/Children and Young People Directorate Customer Services
Tel 01928 704406
Tel 01928 704466

Halton Borough Council Welfare Rights Team
Tel 0151 471 7448

Halton Crossroads Caring for Crossroads
Old Police Station
Mersey Road
Runcorn
Tel 01928 588523

Advocate
Kipling House
2 Kipling Crescent
Widnes
WA8 7BT
Tel 0151 257 9663

Runcorn Carers' Centre
62 Church Street
Runcorn
WA7 1LD
Tel 01928 580182

Halton Carers Forum
c/o Halton Voluntary Action
Sefton House
Public Hall Street
Runcorn
WA7 1NG
Tel 01928 592 405

Widnes Carers' Centre
c/o Age Concern Halton
106 Albert Road
Widnes
WA8 6LG
Tel 0151 257 7767

Halton Young Carers Project
c/o HITS
84 Grangeway
Halton Lodge
Runcorn
WA7 5HZ
Tel 01928 564663

Halton Primary Care Trust
Victoria House
The Holloway
Runcorn
WA7
Tel 01928 593672

Halton Information Exchange
Woodview CDC
Crow Wood Lane
Widnes
WA8 3L2
Tel 0151 424 4454

Halton Direct
7 Brook Street
Widnes
WA8 6NE

Age Concern Halton
44 Church St
Runcorn
WA7 1LR

Halton Direct
Halton Lea

Runcorn
WA7 2ES

Tel 01928 590600

Halton Citizen Advice Bureau
Lugsdale Road
Widnes
WA8 6DJ
Tel 0151 257 7767

Age Concern Halton
106 Albert Road
Widnes
WA8 6LG
Tel 0151 424 9000

5 Boroughs Partnership NHS Trust
Hollins Park House
Hollins Lane
Winwick
Warrington
WA2 8WA
Tel 01925 664000

Widnes and Runcorn Cancer Support Group
21-23 Alford Street
Widnes
WA8 7TR
Tel 0151 423 5730

Barnardo's Wider Horizons Project
Grosvenor House
Halton Lea
Runcorn
WA7 2HF
Tel 01928 719031

MIND
Mental Health Resource Centre
30A Widnes Road
Widnes
WA8 6AD
Tel 0151 495 3991

Scope Family Link Scheme
Old Police Station
Mersey Road
Runcorn
WA7 1DF
Tel 01928 588516

Making Space
c/o Mental Health Resource Centre
30A Widnes Road
Widnes
WA8 6AD
Tel 0151 422 1714

PSS Ltd
18 Seel Street
Liverpool
L1 4BE
Tel 0151 702 5555

Halton Happy Hearts
56 Oxford Road
Widnes
WA8 6DE
Tel 0151 420 5432

Alzheimers Society
c/o Runcorn Carers Centre
62 Church Street
Runcorn
WA7 1LD
Tel 01928 580182

Let's Go Club
46 Thirlmere Close
Frodsham
WA6 7LZ
Tel 01928 731165

Halton Shopmobility and Disability
77 Albert Road
Widnes
WA8
Tel 0151 424 8080

Halton Shopmobility and Disability
102 River Walk
Halton Lea
Runcorn
WA7 2BX
Tel 01928 71722277

Mencap
Acorn Club
Laburnham Grove
Runcorn
Tel 01928 574867

Halton Healthy Living Programme
Suite 1E
Midwood House
Midwood Street
Widnes
WA8 6BH
Tel 0151 495 3293

Halton Autistic Families Support Group (HAFS), Trinity House
78-80 Victoria Road
Widnes
WA8 7RA
Tel 0151 495 3540

Kings Cross Project
c/o Trinity Methodist Church
Peelhouse Lane
Widnes
WA8 6TJ
Tel 0151 420 4905

Halton Independent Living Trust
c/o 1 Henley Court
Runcorn
WA7 5QL
Tel 01928 580987

Stroke Association
Halton General Hospital
Hospital Way
Runcorn
WA7 2DA
Tel 01928 790372

Halton Voluntary Action
Sefton House
Public Hall Street
Runcorn
WA7 1NG
Tel 01928 592 405

The United Carers of Halton (TUCH)
c/o 11 Tennyson Road
Widnes
WA8 7DA
Tel 0151 424 8502

Halton Parkinson's Disease Support Group
23 Park Road
Runcorn

WA7 4SS
Tel 01928 580015

Appendix 1

Implementing Carers Strategy 2006-2008

Aim	Action	Number of carers			How will this be achieved?
		2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	
1. Recognition	Identify 'hidden carers'	210	220	230	Implement an outreach strategy to identify 'hidden carers' and carers of black and ethnic minority individuals. This will involve working closely with statutory and voluntary sector partner organisations
	Identify and support Black and Ethnic Minority carers	18	20	22	
2. Information	Issue Carer Information Packs to provide carers with relevant information	2,000	2,000	2,000	Ensure publicity leaflets and Carers Information Pack is kept up to date and relevant. Leaflets will be widely distributed in the community and 2,000 Carer Information Packs made available each year. Provide a drop-in information service for carers. Develop links with Princess Royal Trust for Carers and consider the long-term future of the Carers' Centres.
	Provide Carers' Centres in Widnes and Runcorn				
3. Emotional support and support services	Provide access to complementary therapies, advice and counselling services to carers	350	360	370	Carers have access to services that provide them with emotional support at the Carers' Centres and to services provided in the voluntary sector.
4. Assessment and assessing carers needs	Provide an increased number of carers assessments	230	350	600	Health and Community Directorate will implement a strategy to ensure 600 carers assessments are completed by 2008.
	Meet LPSA target in 2008				

5. Having a voice	Carers involved in planning and monitoring services Halton Carers Forum receives support				A Service User and Carer Involvement Payment Policy is being developed. This will ensure carers are reimbursed when they are invited to participate in service improvement activities Halton Carers Forum meetings ensure carers have a voice and their views are considered
6. Provide a break	Increase the number of carers enjoying a short break	1,801	1,830	1,850	Carers Grant schemes will be developed by the local authority and voluntary groups to give carers the widest possible access and choice of a carers break.
7. Support that help carers care and maintain their own health	Number of carers attending training courses Promote caring issues in GP Practices, in the Primary Care Trust and 5 Boroughs Partnership NHS Trust	60	75	90	Training courses for carers, aimed at maintaining their health, are planned for 2006 and 2007 Links with GP Practices will be further developed to help carers to be identified and provided with a service.
8. Young Carers	Support Halton Young Carers Project to identify and work with young carers	180	200	220	Assistance will be provided to Halton Young Carers Project to engage with more Young Carers
9. Parents of children with a disability	Support parents and carers of children with a disability				Continue to develop services for parents of children with a disability

10. Financial security/Carers in employment	<p>Provide access for carers to welfare benefit advice</p> <p>Help carers to remain in employment</p> <p>Provide carers wishing to return to employment with appropriate help and support</p>			<p>Carers will be referred to Halton Borough Council's Welfare Rights Team, Halton Citizen Advice Bureau for welfare benefit advice</p> <p>Working carers will receive advice and support from the Carer Development Team and Jobcentreplus</p> <p>The Carers' Centres and Halton Borough Council's Adult Learning Team will provide assistance to carers to access education and employment.</p>
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