

Progressing Strategic Planning in a Time of Change

What were the client's needs?

An Interim assignment was required by an Eastern County Borough Council to cover the Sure Start & Extended Services (SSES) manager's secondment to internal project team, preparing for Joint Area Inspection.

What was done?

The Capita Strategic Children's Services consultant undertook:

- Line management of Early Years, Extended Services to Schools, Parenting Support, and Play
- Progressing strategic planning for all aspects of the service at a time of significant change
- Leading development of the service plan 2008 -10.

Specific outputs covering 16 areas of activity were agreed as part of initial project planning

What was achieved?

Progress was achieved in all the areas agreed, with some agreed outputs further amended and refined to reflect departmental and national changes. In addition to managing a number of teams, the project involved development of a strategic framework to underpin future service planning and support increased integration between service areas, based on local implementation of the early years outcomes duty (EYOD), and some service restructuring to better reflect the more strategic objectives associated with delivery of the Children Act 2004 and Childcare Act 2006.

Specific outputs included:

- Internal and external briefings on early years data requirements, preparation for EYOD, flexible free education entitlement pathfinder implications
- Maintaining service delivery through major office relocation
- Oversight of commissioning and delivery of the LA's statutory Childcare Sufficiency Assessment
- Introducing a stronger emphasis on outcomes-based accountability
- Development of a team Communications Plan: structure and templates
- Template for integrated service planning to underpin production of the strategic plan for 2008-10
- A 3-year planning tool highlighting national and local requirements and timescales
- End of project evaluation report.

Success in maintaining service delivery was acknowledged in the Authority's Joint Area Review (JAR) assessment. The positive outcomes identified by the commissioning service manager were:

- Benefits for the teams in gaining a different managerial perspective
- Personal support for individuals gained from working with an experienced peer
- The contribution of particular skills in relation to high level strategic planning.

The Capita Strategic Children's Services consultant adapted the service plans as required in the light of external requirements to continue the delivery of services at a time of significant departmental change.