

# Children's Information Service CIS Strategy 2003-2006



**SureStart**

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# Children's Information Service CIS Strategy 2003-2006

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## Children's Information Services - CIS Strategy 2003-2006

This document sets out the Strategy for the continuing development of Children's Information Services (CISs)

### 1 Background and Relevant Legislation

1.1 Part 9 of the Education Act 2002 requires Local Education Authorities to establish and maintain a service providing information to the public relating to the provision of childcare and related services in their area. Part XA of the Children Act 1989, introduced 1 September 2001, says: 'Each local authority, in accordance with Regulations, shall: 'secure the provision :

(a) of information and advice about childminding and day care; and

(b) of training for persons who provide or assist in providing child minding or day care.'

1.2 In 2002, Price Waterhouse Coopers undertook an evaluation of CISs which found that CISs had "generally been performing well, with satisfaction and recommendation levels reasonably high among parents and providers". However, this study found that there was a need for better marketing and publicity of CISs, and the Inter Departmental Review of Childcare published in November 2002, drawing on the Parent's Demand Survey published in May 2002, noted that only 3% of parents surveyed had used their CIS as a source of information on childcare and only 1% had used the ChildcareLink Website. The report stated that parents know little about childcare or where to find information on it.

1.3 The low percentage usage of CISs and ChildcareLink has prompted a Sure Start Unit Service Delivery Agreement to be achieved by March 2006:

"To at least double the number of users of the ChildcareLink website and local Children's Information Services".

1.4 This paper draws on discussions which have taken place with a large number of CISs in recent months as well as with those organisations contracted with the Sure Start Unit to provide CIS support services: Opportunity Links (OL), the National Association of Children's information Services (NACIS), Families First (FF) and Meggs, Costoya Atfield (MCA).

1.5 Set out below are areas for further development following discussion with the field over the past months and taking into consideration feedback on the original draft.

### 2 Improved Marketing

2.1 Currently there is a range of media through which the Unit promotes the national services. These include: Bounty Packs, Parents and Schools magazine, Emma's Diary, Choosing Childcare (Via Prima magazine), Parent's and School's magazine. The DfES leaflet *Your child's education – want to find out more?* was sent to parents alongside their Child Benefit. The Choosing Childcare booklet, which prominently features the ChildcareLink freephone telephone number, will be included in all Bounty Packs from December 2003.

- 2.2 The focus of any national marketing, hitherto, has been on the ChildcareLink website and the telephone helpline. PWC recommended that “the Unit develops its marketing strategy to ensure its childcare services are better promoted.” Whilst resources for major national campaigns are limited, the Unit is considering what further support can be given to improve the marketing and publicity of CISs. This is being taken forward in the context of an overarching Strategic Communications Board which will consider how Sure Start as a whole should be promoted, with CISs and ChildcareLink having an important part to play. The Communications strategy will set out activities designed to boost local communications. These will include a Sure Start News e-bulletin which will be sent to CISs and other key partners on a monthly basis, regular meetings for LA marketing people and CISs developed through Sure Start Regional Offices, and other related initiatives.
- 2.3 As well as national publicity, it is vital for CISs to communicate their services as widely and accurately as possible to providers, partners and enquirers. As a minimum, the CIS should have a marketing and publicity strategy that targets the whole community and provides a full range of information in support of the Children and Families agenda.
- 2.4 The Unit is considering the development of good practice tools which CISs can use to promote their services, and requiring CISs both to demonstrate that they have used them and to evaluate their effectiveness. Local marketing strategies should form part of a new set of CIS standards (see paragraph 4.2 below).
- 3 Better access to funding
- 3.1 The grant funding letter issued to local authorities for 2003-04 made clear what funding had been earmarked for CISs. It made clear that there is a presumption that local authorities will spend this funding on CISs and required Authorities to seek approval from the Unit for any reduction in the amount that they proposed to spend. The Unit intends to closely monitor expenditure on CISs from the Grant allocations. Details on funding allocations for 2004-06 were sent out under cover of Naomi Eisenstadt’s letter of 25 July 2003.
- 4 Service delivery targets for CISs
- 4.1 CISs need to adhere to a set of minimum standards. To date, these have been:
- Detailed/Core Information – This is information that will give enquirers enough detail to make informed decisions without further signposting.
- Supporting Information – This is supporting and explanatory information covering areas outlined in the National Childcare Strategy
- Signposting – Referring enquirers to bodies or organisations that can directly provide the level of information they need
- Information Management – The CIS should have and implement an information strategy that fulfils all the criteria set down in the protocol between Ofsted, the Sure Start Unit and CISs.
- Delivery – The CIS should deliver information in the way or ways most appropriate to the area. This should include evaluating how the service is used to find the best ways of delivering information.
- Accessibility – Making information accessible to all the public is the overall aim of the CIS.

Communication – The CIS should aim to communicate its aims and its information as clearly and as accurately as possible. This should include communication with providers, partners and enquirers.

- 4.2 At the heart of the new Strategy is a set of delivery standards, revised to ensure they are clearer and more specific, in order to enable CISs more clearly to measure their performance in each of these key areas. Where appropriate, the annexes attached give a more detailed breakdown of the criteria expected for the delivery standards (some of these criteria have been carried forward or modified from the previous standards). LAs/CISs should aim to ensure that all minimum standards that are not already in place are implemented by April 2004. The new standards are:

**Core Information** (Annex 1) All types of nursery education and childcare provision in the area, by provider including numbers of vacancies. Contact information available to parents and given out to them in the form agreed with providers.

**Updating Core Information** (Annex 2) A system needs to be in place to record updated vacancy information as supplied by providers.

**Additional information** (Annex 3) Relating to services for children e.g. on health, family support, parenting, leisure sport etc. Information should be held at the CIS or effective sign posting arrangements should be in place.

**Access** (Annex 4)  
The three key areas are:

- Service should normally be available to enquirers from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday but also take into

**Publicity and Marketing** (Annex 5) Each CIS to have a marketing and publicity strategy setting out how they will raise awareness and usage of their services.

CISs and LAs should be prepared to report on each element of their marketing and publicity strategies and show how plans have been changed to reflect monitoring of initiatives undertaken.

**Well trained and supported staff**, including the requirement for regular performance reviews of all staff and the requirement that each CIS has at least one person who has achieved a qualification (minimum NVQ Level 3 or equivalent), appropriate to the skills and knowledge required to deliver children's information, by March 2006.

**Communication and liaison with key partners** (Annex 6) for example Ofsted, Jobcentre Plus (including Childcare Partnership Managers), Local Sure Start Programmes, and Children's Centres.

**Review and Evaluation** CISs should have in place systematic arrangements to review and evaluate the service being provided, at least on an annual basis, and to make adjustments to provision to respond to changing demands and needs of parents and other issues arising locally. This should include looking into public awareness and usage of the CIS. All comments, compliments and complaints received should be used to evaluate and improve the service and to assist for future planning. The CIS should have an effective complaints procedure in place that is freely available, and that treats complaints seriously and constructively. It is good practice for CISs to use LAs' procedures, where appropriate, rather than establishing separate systems.

**LA to provide strategic oversight of CISs** and to produce a strategy showing how the delivery standards will be achieved and progress toward elements of the delivery standards and "model CIS". LAs should use the information held by the CISs to inform their strategic planning and involve their CISs in developing local plans. (Where CISs are operating other information systems on behalf of authorities, e.g. tracking recruitment and training information, the costs should be met from sources other than the CIS core funding)

**Overarching principles** (Annex 7) This Annex sets out a number of fundamental principles which should be adopted by CISs.

#### *Model CIS*

- 4.3 Many CISs tell us that they offer a broad range of services – much more than simply directing parents to childcare. It is important to ensure that CIS development is in tune with the broad aims of the Unit, and that funding the Department provides to local authorities for their CISs is spent on achieving our shared goals. Any further funding CISs can attract – from the local authority or elsewhere – could allow CISs to develop in different directions over and above the core Sure Start service.
- 4.4 Local Authorities will want to consider how they can further develop the core services their CISs offer. As well as criteria for the basic delivery standards, the Annexes attached also set out a number of standards which CISs should be achieving or moving toward in order to become "model CISs". Some of these criteria have been carried forward or modified from the previous standards.
- 4.5 We would wish to see all CISs moving towards this model by March 2006.

## 5. Central Support for CISs

### *CIS Regional Project*

- 5.1 The CIS Regional Project (previously CIS Support Initiative) provides each CIS with a named individual who can provide individual consultation, regional networking and events and support materials and advice as appropriate. The Project, has ensured that every CIS was given the opportunity to be consulted about the sort of resource they would find most helpful. The Project Officers each work with one region, and are currently drawn from – Opportunity Links (OL), the National Association of Children's Information Services (NACIS), Families First (FF) and Meggs Costoya Attfield (MCA).
- 5.2 Benefits of the Regional Project identified so far include:
- CISs having one point of contact, who can then, if necessary, signpost them on to more expert sources of support.
  - Project Officers acting as a route to share good practice between CISs
  - Project Officers identifying where CISs are in need of support and, in a few cases, referring them to emergency support.
  - Project Officers acting as a vehicle for relaying concerns to the Sure Start Unit.
  - Project Officers providing the CIS with a "health check" against the delivery standards.

### *NVQ in Children's Information.*

- 5.3 Following the work undertaken by The Partnership Initiative (a not-for-profit company made up of representatives from each of FF, MCA and OL) to pilot with six CISs an NVQ (levels 3 and 4) in advice and guidance, the Sure Start Unit wrote to LAs and CISs on 30 October 2003 giving guidance on qualifications appropriate to the skills and knowledge required to deliver children's information, and details of the funding that the Sure Start Unit will be making available to enable CISs to meet this requirement.
- 5.4 Having undertaken research into the qualifications available, the Sure Start Unit believes that the qualifications most relevant to the skills and knowledge required to deliver children's information are:
- The Level 3 NVQ in Advice and Guidance.
  - The Level 3 Certificate in Information, Advice and Guidance offered by the National Open College Network
- 5.5. The following qualifications contain many elements of significant relevance to work in a CIS, although they tend to deal less with the issue of the provision of information than the advice and guidance qualifications:

- The Level 3 NVQ in Customer Service
  - The City and Guilds Level 3 Certificate in Customer Service
  - The London Chamber of Commerce and Industry Examination Board Level 3 Certificate in Customer Service
  - The OCR Level 3 Certificate in Customer Service
  - The BTEC Level 3 Award in Customer Service
- 5.6 CISs with personnel holding any of the above qualifications will be considered to have met the requirement in the CIS Strategy, although this may not be an exhaustive list of appropriate qualifications. It is for Local Authorities to decide which qualifications are acceptable in their areas and to discuss with training providers any arrangements for the accreditation of relevant prior learning. However, only qualifications accredited by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) are appropriate for funding.
- 5.7 The Sure Start Unit is making £2,450 available to each local authority, (in either 2003-04 or 2004-05) to enable them to meet the requirement that at least one member of their staff in each CIS holds a level 3 qualification by March 2006.

*Better communication with other stakeholders*

- 5.8 We have ensured that national services – particularly the ChildcareLink helpline – signpost people to their local CISs (unless the queries are fairly basic). We need also to ensure that others – such as the Jobcentre Plus Childcare Partnership Managers; and NHS childcare co-ordinators – are clear both what the role of the CIS is and how each can complement and support the others work. We are in close touch with Jobcentre Plus and the NHS. We have in the past developed inter-website links and continue to develop these, and we are reviewing our work on other delivery channels (particularly how to engage employers more effectively in promoting national and local services). The majority of CISs already have good links with their key delivery partners. The delivery standards and the annexes to this document set out the Sure Start Unit's expectations of CISs in this area.

6. Better data quality

- 6.1 Following concerns from CISs about the accuracy of childcare data being supplied to them, Ofsted has been cleansing its data. The Sure Start Unit, Ofsted and Opportunity Links have set out a clear strategy for an automated data transfer system which will be in place early in the New Year. At that time, both because of improved data accuracy and automated systems, CISs should spend significantly less time in dealing with parental complaints and in challenging data they receive from Ofsted.

7. Enquiry Targets

- 7.1 The Sure Start Unit wrote to LAs and CISs on 16 October 2003 with individual CIS targets for increasing average weekly enquiries by 2006. These targets will contribute to a significant increase in CIS usage, particularly in areas where awareness and take up has been relatively low.

- 7.2 The guidance on definition of enquiries, eligible to be counted toward achieving the target, has been clarified following enquiries from CISs. The amended guidance is set out below:

### **CHILDREN'S INFORMATION SERVICES – ENQUIRIES**

1. It is important that all enquiries dealt with by the CIS, and relating to the whole range of the Sure Start agenda, are recorded i.e. those relating to childcare, nursery education, parenting and family support issues and separate WTC queries.
2. Repeat enquiries from the same person should be counted separately. An enquiry from a person covering more than one issue in one contact can be counted as more than one enquiry providing the topics need to be dealt with separately. For example:
  - a parent enquires about childcare options for one child and is given information on local childminding and day care provision = 1 enquiry
  - a parent enquires about childminding for two children = 1 enquiry
  - a parent enquires about childminding for one child and group care for another child = 2 enquiries
  - enquirer asks about care available for their child and also for advice on how to become a childminder = 2 enquiries.
  - enquirer asks about care available for their child and are signposted to other Sure Start related services for children, e.g. leisure or health provision in the area = 2 enquiries.
3. Enquiries whose source is the LAs/CIS's local website or outreach activity should be included. Website enquiries should be based on the number of hits providing they have been analysed to ensure that only those specifically concerned with childcare and the wider Sure Start agenda are included, and that enquirers have progressed far enough into the site to exclude the possibility of irrelevant or random hits. Hits to the ChildcareLink Website may not be counted.
4. All enquiries on Sure Start issues should be included irrespective of whether they involve straightforward information giving or more in depth guidance.
5. If the CIS deals with Nursery Education Grant or other Sure Start related enquiries such as training or recruitment these should be counted. The exception is where separate units in the authority deal with such enquiries, although we would encourage all local authorities to have one central contact point for children and family issues, namely the CIS, with an appropriate level of funding to support the full range of activities.
6. All visits to "shop front" or "drop in" services should be counted where direct contact is made and the enquiry relates to Sure Start related issues.
7. Enquiries from other professionals, e.g. job centres asking for information on types of childcare vacancies currently available, may be counted. However, enquiries from, for example, the EYDCP for statistical information should not be included.

8. Management Information

- 8.1 Also appended to the letter of 16 October was the management information which CISs will be required to provide on a quarterly basis. Again, following a number of queries and suggestions, this has been slightly amended and clarified and is set out in the box below. Where possible, this information will be collected automatically via the ChIS database or by requesting CISs to complete on line forms which will be made available on the ChISbiz Website. In a very few instances, e.g. reporting of good practice, it will be necessary to ask for written reports, possibly via the regional project officers. This will kept to an absolute minimum and may be collected at less frequent intervals than the other data. All CISs will need to ensure that they have systems in place to capture the required data, and those CISs not using the ChIS database will need to ensure that they have systems available, agreed with the Sure Start Unit, to enable them to submit the data centrally.

**CHILDREN'S INFORMATION SERVICES – QUARTERLY INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS**

CIS databases should be set up to capture the following information as soon as possible and by March 2004 at the latest.

- Number of enquiries - total
- Type of enquiry (phone, e-mail, outreach, LA's/CIS's web site (not ChildcareLink Website see section 7 above), visit from client, e.g. to shop front premises or "drop in", post/fax)
- Enquiry subject (childcare, nursery education, recruitment, training, pathways to registration, parenting and family support, other sure start related enquiry)
- Type of enquirer (parent, intermediary\*, provider, employer)
- If childcare, type of provision sought (day care, childminding or out of school care)
- How the enquirer found out about CIS ie:
  - ChildcareLink phone line
  - ChildcareLink Website,
  - Childcare provider
  - Outreach event
  - Local Authority referral/signposting
  - Other referral/signposting
  - National marketing/advertising
  - Local marketing/advertising
  - Jobcentre Plus
  - Bounty packs
  - Health services (including doctors' surgeries, health visitors etc.)
  - Local Sure Start
  - Employer
  - Word of mouth (e.g. from friend relative or neighbour)
- Service offered to enquirer (Lists/leaflets, in depth advice by telephone, in depth advice face to face, WTC, other Sure Start related)
- CIS opening hours
- Database used
- Good practice examples

\* Intermediary – someone calling on behalf of parents for childcare information

8.2 CISs will wish to collect a range of more detailed information under some of the above headings to inform local evaluation and planning. The Sure Start Unit will not need information to this level of detail to be provided as a matter of course. Examples of additional local data are:

LA Referral/Signposting	EYDCP, Social Services, County Council, District Council, Schools Libraries
Other Referral/Signposting	Benefits Agency, voluntary organisations, Ofsted, Citizens Advice Bureau, colleges, universities
National Marketing	Centrally funded advertising, publications
Local Marketing	Locally funded advertising, publications

**SURE START UNIT  
Childcare Places and CIS Team  
November 2003**

## **ANNEX 1 Core Information**

This is information that will give enquirers enough detail to make informed decisions without further signposting

### **Minimum Requirements – Registered Childcare (including nursery education places)**

For each provider CISs should hold the following information and make it available to parents:

The name of the provider and contact details (in the form agreed with the provider).

The type of provision and the number of places catering for children of each age range.

Opening hours, availability during school holidays and ability to provide emergency short-term care.

Fees charged

Experience of catering for children with particular needs e.g. children who do not have English as their first language, children with disabilities or with special educational needs, including accessibility issues, e.g. details of staffs' training to work with specific disabilities, such as staff having been trained in sign language.

Ability to cater for children from particular religious or cultural communities, for example, provision of appropriate food.

Details of local schools from which childminders and other providers can drop off and pick up.

Vacancy information.

Date the information was last updated.

Information on provision in other areas. CISs should liaise with their neighbours to agree which areas are easily accessible across boundaries and exchange information in order to make it available to parents. CISs may wish to run a flagging system to identify provision in other areas in their records, and should inform the "home" CIS of any referrals made or changes identified.

NB All childminders should be given the opportunity for their details to be included on the ChildcareLink Website with their consent.

### **Unregistered Childcare**

Information should be held on the following groups:

Toddler Groups

Nanny Agencies

Youth Groups

Creches

Unregisterable out of school provision, including unregisterable holiday schemes.

## **Model CIS Standards**

In addition to the minimum information required, the CIS should strive to collect as much useful information as possible about childcare services. This could include the following:

Information on additional facilities and activities available.

Information for providers including jobs in childcare, training opportunities and advice on setting up or expanding childcare settings.

## **ANNEX 2 Updating core information**

### **Minimum Requirements**

CISs must have in place or be working towards a system to ensure that information on vacancies is as up to date as possible, taking into account the number of providers in the area.

CISs should work closely with providers to encourage them to notify details of vacancies and turnover rates.

Changes to vacancy information should be updated within one working week of the CIS being notified.

Changes of provider details should be reported by e-mail to the nominated contact at Ofsted by the Thursday after receiving notification through the Weblink, if the CIS requires a response or correction by the time of the next transmission. In the specific case of a provider being de-registered by the Ofsted Early Years Directorate, the database must be updated within one working day of the CIS being notified.

All other information should be monitored and checked regularly to ensure it is complete, accurate and up to date.

### **Model CIS Standards**

The CIS should seek to update provider details, including vacancy information more frequently than the minimum requirements above e.g. provider detail changes and vacancy details notified updated on the same day.

Vacancy changes should be pro-actively updated monthly or more frequently.

## **ANNEX 3 Additional information**

### **Minimum Requirements**

CISs should hold information on the following organisations or be able to signpost enquirers to them:

Ofsted

Local Further Education colleges and training providers. Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs).

Representative bodies such as PLA, NCMA, NDNA, KCN, and Daycare Trust

Organisations that provide advice for parents of children with special needs such as Mencap, Scope, Family Fund Trust.

CISs in neighbouring areas. This is particularly useful for enquiries and providers who live close to LA boundaries.

Relevant community organisations and groups, for example charities that may be able to assist enquirers e.g. special educational needs groups.

Relevant Government bodies and Departments, for example, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to provide enquirers with information on benefits.

Schools, particularly with reference to schools' role as providers of out of school and pre-school childcare including childcare provision in extended schools.

Employment Service District Managers, lone parent advisers and job centre plus including the Childcare Partnership Manager.

NHS Childcare Coordinator.

Health bodies, particularly the health visitor service. In addition the CIS can develop links with Primary Care Groups (PCGs), doctors and health centres and health improvement coordinators.

Links with private companies that hold relevant information e.g. newspapers, jobs websites.

## **ANNEX 4 Access**

### **Minimum Requirements**

Service available to enquirers at least 40 hours per week. An answerphone service available at all other times (and messages checked at least once per working day). The outgoing answerphone message should explain how callers can access the ChildcareLink Website. Work towards greater flexibility of service to cater for working parents by March 2006 eg evening and weekend access.

Response times to enquiries should be within 24 hours, or 48 hours for complex issues. For queries that would take longer than 48 hours to answer, an interim response within 48 hours should be provided.

The CIS should have a presence on the ChildcareLink website.

A clear leaflet setting out the CIS's services and a range of information leaflets about local provision including WTC.

Actively ensure access to the full range of groups including those with disabilities, learning difficulties, minority groups and hard to reach groups.

Ensure availability of appointments services for in depth guidance at the CIS's premises or through outreach surgeries.

When required, CISs should be able to provide information in a range of formats, however the materials available should always reflect local communities. Examples of materials include:

- Large Print/Tape version of materials
- Braille
- Audiocassette
- Community Languages
- Face to face in targeted areas or through trained third party groups
- Language lines
- Translations
- Text phone for hearing impaired enquirers

Availability of in depth advice (through an appointments system where appropriate) on:

What to look for in a childcare service and how to choose a childcare provider.

The service offered by different types of childcare providers.

Help in deciding upon the most suitable arrangements for children. For example, information on the proximity of childcare to work, home and school locations.

The registration process and what to do if the enquirer has concerns about a provider.

Nursery Education options.

Relevant family support, especially financial assistance that may be available.

Information about work-life balance should be made available to employers, staff and people considering a return to work.  
Information on registration and inspection requirements.

Health and Welfare services and contacts.

The full range of Sure Start services including local Sure Start Programmes.

Toy Libraries

### **Model CIS Standards**

A shop front centrally located in the main centre of population (in areas where appropriate)

A telephone helpline open at least 9.00 to 5.00 Monday to Friday with an opportunity to cover local demand and for working parents to make contact outside of these hours and/or at weekends at certain times.

Outreach work enabling the CIS services to be available to all in the community, for example, through targeted surgeries offering appointments to parents who need in depth information, and general outreach services to increase awareness of the CIS.

Public access points, including Internet points and touch screen kiosks.

Information in libraries, supermarkets and other community focal points.

Working with employers so that people can access information via their workplace.

Conducting and acting upon research to establish ways of delivery that suit local trends and needs.

Freephone telephone helpline – this is an area of good practice where appropriate, rather than a formal requirement.

Local website.

Availability of in depth advice (through an appointments system where appropriate) on:

Details of working with children, including information about the different career options. The CIS should provide a breadth of information that helps enquirers make choices that are most suitable for them.

Local demand for childcare and what level of childcare is already provided. This can be useful for people who are interested in becoming childminders or looking to set up other Early Years provision.

Information on

- Parenting Matters
- Family Support Networks
- Family Learning
- Services for Children and Families with Special Needs
- The wider education system

## **ANNEX 5 Publicity and Marketing**

### **Minimum Requirements**

Each CIS should have a marketing and publicity strategy setting out how they will raise awareness and usage of their services, including plans for local marketing initiatives.

The CIS should market its services in the following outlets (as appropriate):

- Doctor's Surgeries and Health Centres
- Schools, HE and FE Colleges; Universities
- Libraries including mobile services
- Chemist Shops
- Community Centres
- Local Authority Contact Centres and Access Points
- Voluntary Organisations
- Jobcentres and New Deal for Lone Parent Advisers in particular Job Clubs
- Health Visitors
- Community Education Tutors
- Local Businesses

CIS usage data must be made available on a quarterly basis as set out above in para 8 of this document.

### **Model CIS Standards**

Increase awareness of the CIS in areas where there is limited usage e.g. by outreach work. NB, the management information requirements above specify that CISs should identify the number of enquiries generated as a result of outreach activity. This is a key area of work and progress in improving numbers of people attracted by outreach will be closely monitored by the Sure Start Unit.

Maximise presence on local radio and media by making links with local community radio stations and issuing regular press releases.

## **ANNEX 6 Communication and liaison with key partners**

### **Minimum Standards**

To enhance the level of service that it provides, the CIS should build effective working relationships with relevant organisations. These should include:

Sure Start Unit (SSU), Ofsted, NACIS, Opportunity Links, other support organisations and other Children's Information Services to promote best practice.

The ChildcareLink website Project (CCL) to ensure the effective communication and accessibility of information via the Internet.

Ofsted; to promote the effective registration and inspection of childcare providers.

Representative bodies such as the Pre-School Learning Alliance, the National Childminding Association the National Day Nurseries Association , Kids Clubs Network and DayCare Trust.

Organisations with specialist knowledge on disability or special needs such as Contact a Family, the Council for Disabled Children, and Kidsactive.

NHS Childcare Co-ordinator.

Jobcentre Plus Childcare Partnership Manager.

Employers; to promote work-life balance policies.

## **ANNEX 7 Overarching Principles**

### **Minimum Standards**

The CIS should provide information on childcare and early years provision and family support including financial assistance.

CISs should have strategies in place for maintaining and improving the accuracy of information (Annex 2 also refers).

All queries should be answered as quickly as possible (see also Annex 4).

The CIS should aim to be impartial in terms of the diversity, equality and consistency of the information and service it provides to both enquirers and providers. In particular the CIS should:

- Not be biased towards particular types of provision available in the area.
- Not be biased towards certain providers.
- Allow parents to make their own choices on the basis of information provided.
- Provide a consistent level of service and information.

The CIS must comply with the Data Protection Act. In particular CISs will have to ensure that they seek appropriate consent from individual providers and enquirers to advertise or release personal information. (NB the Sure Start Unit will shortly be providing guidance on the implications for CISs of the Data Protection Act).

The CIS should adhere to equal opportunities practices in every area of its work.

### **Model CIS Standards**

The CIS should hold or be working toward a nationally recognised quality award e.g. the NACIS Quality Award, the Matrix Award.

The CIS should provide information on working with children, childcare and early years training.

CISs should consider following up a percentage of enquirers in order to establish their satisfaction with the service provided. Ideally, the CIS should hold feedback data on at least 20% of enquirers.

## Children's Information Service CIS Strategy 2003-2006 – Summary

<b>Service Delivery Targets</b>	<b>Minimum Standard</b>	<b>Model Standard</b>
<p>Core Information Available to Parents by Provider (See Annex 1 for more detail)</p>	<p><u>Registered Childcare</u></p> <p>Provider name and contact details            Type of provision            Number of places for children of each age range            Opening hours, school holiday availability, ability to provide emergency short term care            Fees charged            Experience of catering for children with particular needs            Ability to cater for children from particular cultural communities            Schools from which providers can drop off/pick up            Vacancy information            Date information was last updated            Information on provision in other areas</p> <p><u>Unregistered Childcare</u></p> <p>Toddler groups            Nanny agencies            Youth groups            Creches            Unregisterable out of school provision</p>	<p>Information on additional facilities and activities available in the area            Information for providers e.g. jobs in childcare, training opportunities, advice on setting up or expanding settings</p>

<b>Service Delivery Targets</b>	<b>Minimum Standard</b>	<b>Model Standard</b>
<p>Updating Core Information (See Annex 2 for more detail)</p>	<p>A system to ensure that vacancy information is as up to date as possible            Work closely with providers to encourage them to notify vacancies and turnover rates            Changes to vacancy information to be updated within one working week of notification            Changes of provider details to be reported by e-mail to Ofsted by the Thursday after notification through the Weblink            If provider is de-registered by Ofsted, the database must be updated within one working day of the CIS being notified            All other information checked regularly to ensure it is complete, accurate and up to date</p>	<p>Seek to update provider details more frequently than the times shown in the minimum standard            Vacancy changes should be pro-actively updated monthly or more frequently</p>
<p>Additional Information (See Annex 3 for more detail)</p>	<p><u>Information held on or signposting arrangements to:</u></p> <p>Training providers, LSC, sector representative bodies, organisations providing advice for parents of children with special needs, CISs in neighbouring areas, community organisations and groups, relevant Government bodies, schools, Employment Service and Job Centre Plus, NHS Childcare Co-ordinators and other health bodies, private organisations holding relevant information.</p>	

<b>Service Delivery Targets</b>	<b>Minimum Standard</b>	<b>Model Standard</b>
<p>Access (See Page 4 and Annex 4 for more detail)</p>	<p>Service available to enquirers at least 40 hours per week  Response times to enquiries should normally be within 24 hours  CIS should have a presence on the CCL Website  A clear leaflet setting out the CIS's services  Access to full range of groups in the local area  Ensure availability of appointments service  Provide information in a range of formats to reflect the needs of local communities  Availability of in depth advice for parents on Sure Start related queries</p>	<p>A shop front where appropriate  A telephone helpline service  Outreach work making services available to all in the community  Public access points such as touch screen facilities  Information in community focal points  Making access to information available via employers  Research and implement delivery methods to suit local needs  Local website  Availability of in depth advice on Sure Start related queries for providers and other professionals.  Freephone telephone helpline (an area of good practice)</p>
<p>Publicity and Marketing (See Annex 5 for more detail)</p>	<p>Marketing and publicity strategy, on raising awareness and usage and local marketing initiatives  CIS to market its services in a range of outlets  Quarterly usage data produced  Strategy monitored and adapted to reflect findings</p>	<p>Increase awareness in areas of limited usage by means of outreach  Maximise presence on local radio and in the local press</p>

<b>Service Delivery Targets</b>	<b>Minimum Standard</b>	<b>Model Standard</b>
Well Trained and Supported Staff (See Page 5 and letter of 30 October 2003 for more detail)	Regular performance reviews of all staff Each CIS to have at least one person with appropriate minimum NVQ Level 3 or equivalent qualification	
Communication and Liaison with Key Partners (See Annex 6 for more detail)	CIS should build effective working relationships with:  The Sure Start Unit, Ofsted, Opportunity Links including the ChildcareLink Website project, sector representative bodies, organisations with specialist knowledge on disability or special needs, NHS Childcare Co-ordinators, Jobcentre Plus Childcare Partnership Managers, Employers	
Review and Evaluation (See Page 5 for more detail)	Systematic arrangements in place to review and evaluate the service at least annually Adjustments made to service to reflect findings of annual reviews Effective complaints procedure in place	
Strategic Oversight by LA (See Page 5 for more detail)	LA to produce strategy to show how minimum and model standards are being/will be achieved. LA to use CIS information to inform local strategic planning	LAs encouraged to involve CISs in other Sure Start information tracking e.g. re recruitment and training of providers and their staff (ensuring any additional costs are met from sources other than CIS core funding)

<b>Service Delivery Targets</b>	<b>Minimum Standard</b>	<b>Model Standard</b>
Overarching Principles (See Annex 7 for more detail)	Provide information on childcare and early years provision including financial assistance Strategies for maintaining and improving accuracy of information Prompt responses to queries Impartial service for enquirers and providers Compliance with the Data Protection Act Must adhere to equal opportunities practices in every area of work	CIS should hold or be working toward a nationally recognised quality award The CIS should provide information on working in childcare and early years CISs should follow up a percentage of enquirers and ideally hold information on at least 20% of enquirers

