

REPORT TO: Children & Young People's Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 19 June 2006

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Children & Young People

SUBJECT: Sure Start Children's Centres Development

WARDS: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform members of the arrangements for the transition of Sure Start Local Programmes to Children's Centres and update on the developments for the roll out of Phase 2 of the Children's Centre programme 2006-08.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- i. The contents of the report are noted;**
- ii. Progress towards the proposed transfer of NCH led Sure Start local programmes to the Local Authority is noted (Para 3.5); and**
- iii. The next phase of children centre developments (Para 3.19) is noted.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Sure Start services and Children's Centre developments are central to the Government's Ten Year Strategy for Childcare. Sure Start resources have created accessible services for young children and their families and the Children's Centre model is taking this on to the next level. Setting out the key elements of this service in legislation through the forthcoming Childcare Bill, and supporting this with statutory guidance will ensure that integrated services delivered through the Children's Centre model will be embedded in statute.

3.2 From 2006, the grant for Sure Start local programmes have been paid through the Local Authority instead of directly to specific programmes from central Government. This is part of the Government's plan to put responsibility for delivering better outcomes for children at a local level. However, as part of the Spending Review settlement funding for children's centres that were Sure Start Local Programmes will remain ring fenced within the General Sure Start Grant 2006-07. The Government aim is to provide some certainty that the level of early years services will be sustained as the core offer for Children's

Centres. This is particularly relevant to Halton where, from the outset Children's Centres have been established to provide services for children, families and young people aged up to 19 years.

- 3.3 There are 5 Sure Start local Programmes in Halton. The Local Authority acts as accountable body for three of the programmes and NCH North West has acted as accountable body for two of the programmes. All five Sure Start programmes currently provide core offer Children's Centre services of:
- Integrated Early education and childcare
 - Support for children with special needs and disabilities
 - Family support
 - Parental outreach and support
 - Child and family health services
 - Links with job centre plus
 - Support for childminders
- 3.4 Staff across the five programmes generally are on temporary contracts with the exception of the Coordinators for the NCH led Sure Start Programmes, Those personnel on temporary contracts due to end in March 2006 have had their contracts extended to 30th September 2006. Full review of the delivery of core offer services from core team staff has commenced and such posts, with any commissioned services will be reviewed alongside the needs identified in Halton's recently launched Children & Young People's Plan.
- 3.5 It had previously been agreed by Executive Board that the Local Authority would seek the transfer of accountable body for the NCH led Sure Start Local Programmes to the Local Authority. As a consequence, negotiations and planning are ongoing with NCH to secure the TUPE transfer of core staff from the 1st July 2006.
- 3.6 The Sure Start Programme Managers across all 5 programmes have been acting as Children's Centre Co-ordinators on an informal basis during the inception of the programme. The programme is now progressing to develop clusters of children's centres and outreach services through Extended Schools and Children & Young People Area Networks. Strategic planning for children's centres will merge to include extended schools. Additionally, the Children's Centre strategy in Halton is aimed at children, families and young people and crosses the 0-19 age range. A new job description is being drawn up to cover these areas, and in the first instance the existing coordinators across the 5 programmes will be invited to apply.
- 3.7 Sure Start geographic boundaries ceased to exist from April 2006 as the children centre model increases to a wider universal programme. Local programmes are now treating requests from outside of the Sure Start areas with flexibility, particularly with regard to commissioned services. Current Service Level Agreements for commissioned services have been extended until September 2006 pending further review.

- 3.8 In phase 1 of Children's Centre developments, 9 centres are being developed to service families living in the 20% most disadvantaged wards – 4 centres in Widnes and 5 centres in Runcorn. Specific targets were set for the number of children to be "reached" by centres. The "reach" targets relate to the number of children under 5 years old living within the Children's Centre area, i.e. those who can potentially access the health, family support and outreach services provided. It is expected that on average a Children's Centre will serve a community with about 800 children under 5 years old. Targets were also set for the number of new childcare places to be created in line with the allocated level of funding.
- 3.9 In phase 2, the 30% most disadvantaged areas (as defined by the ODPM Super Output areas) will be targeted, and there is also flexibility to develop centres outside of the most disadvantaged areas. The "reach" figures for 0-5 year olds still apply to phase 2, but no specific targets have been set for the creation of new childcare places.
- 3.10 A Needs Analysis has been prepared to inform the phase 2 planning and provide a breakdown of the population of 0-19 year olds across all wards. Data concerning unemployment figures, long-term illness, looked after children, children with identified special educational needs and drug and substance misuse and other factors which may impact upon the need for children centre services has also been compiled. Data relating to the supply and demand for childcare for 0-7 year olds, and the estimated occurrence of informal childcare in relation to ward-based super output areas is also a core component of this analysis.
- 3.11 To achieve good outcomes for children, there is a need to ensure that childcare is properly joined up with other services and that, as local needs change and develop, the childcare market responds. The Needs Analysis demonstrates that within most areas of Halton there are sufficient childcare places already in existence. Much of the existing childcare provision in Halton belongs to the private and voluntary sector. The sector is expected to reshape around children's centres and extended schools, with private and voluntary settings providing the childcare in many of these settings.
- 3.12 It is also more cost effective and better for managing the children's services market for children's centres to be designed around existing provision including family support centres, day nurseries and pre-school groups, maintained nursery schools and learning facilities. The strong community base and local support for these groups provides a sound base for development into children's centres or outreach service. The opportunities for schools with particular emphasis on primary schools to co-locate with children's centres and offer integrated services will be explored as part of joint Children's Centre and extended school planning. With these factors in mind, the Needs

Analysis provides the basis for the creation of three new children's centres covering the following areas:

- 3.13** Within Runcorn **Castlefields** is identified as a ward with 4 super output areas, with one rated as the second most deprived area in the borough. The ward is currently covered by Sure Start Seals and there is no evident need to create additional integrated early education and childcare places within the area. Existing provision includes a community nursery located next to an Adult and Community Learning Centre and within the grounds of primary school. The nearby Inglefields centre provides services for children with SEN. Sure Start funding has recently been used to partially refurbish these facilities and provide an outdoor play area. The Woodlands Play Centre and the Braemar centre are also situated within close proximity.
- 3.14 A new Children's Centre in this area would need to link to the Extended School strategy. Four other primary schools are located within the area. One primary school receives funding for extended school services and NHS Live pilot services. Some local schools have faced consistently falling numbers of pupils and would benefit from linking with local strategies in terms of improving their long-term futures. To help facilitate these partnership arrangements, funding for children's centres, including capital funds, can be linked with that available for extended school services. Castlefields is an area designated for inclusion in Halton's Regeneration Strategy and this may offer further opportunities to explore additional funding routes.
- 3.15 The original Phase 1 Plan included 6 children's centres in Runcorn, with the possibility of a Children's Centre at Grange Secondary School, Halton Brook ward. However, the Grange is now part of the successful Big Lottery Bid for extended school developments. There is already a Children's Centre development in the Halton Brook ward, and the Halton Lodge Children's Centre is situated in close proximity to the Grange. A third proposed development at Castlefields would affect the level of potential "reach" for each children's centre. Taking the population of under fives within the area into account, the three children's centres at Halton Brook, Halton Lodge and potentially Castlefields will each serve around 600 under fives. It is therefore not proposed to include Grange in this second phase of planning.
- 3.16 Within the Widnes area, **Hough Green** and **Birchfield** have no community-based children's centre. Hough Green has three super output areas within the ward; Birchfield has no super output areas. However, it is not necessary to create children's centres only within the 30% most deprived areas during the second phase of planning. New housing developments within the Hough Green area will increase the demand for integrated childcare and education, family support and health related services. There is an identified gap in childcare provision

in both wards. A number of potential developments with local schools may affect the provision and location of primary school places in this area. There may be some opportunities for exploring joint funding arrangements through school developments and Health Services in this area.

3.17 **Appleton** and **Farnworth** wards both have one super output area. However, in order to extend the “reach” of Children’s Centre services across the borough, it may be necessary to consider inclusion of areas where no services have previously been developed. The Needs Analysis highlights a number of significant indices in the Appleton and Farnworth areas for young children and families and a number of indices including teenage pregnancy, NEET and anti-social behaviour indicators across the older age range.

3.18 Birchfield Nursery School provides a possible development site for a Children’s Centre to service these wards. The school is situated between Wade Deacon and St Peter and St Paul Secondary Schools, which would allow for close collaboration between planning strategies for children’s centres and extended schools. Joint working already exists to some extent in this area, with the City Learning Centre at St Peter and St Paul school. Appleton ward is covered by Sure Start New Steps for services for 0-4 year olds and their families and there is already a sufficient supply of childcare within these areas.

3.19 Following approval by Executive Board in November 05, feasibility work is currently being undertaken in relation to these Phase 2 proposals.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Sure Start and Children’s Centre services impact on all aspects of the Council’s wider policies for Social Inclusion and priority objectives, and are central to the “Every Child Matters: Change for Children” programme.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Children’s Centres will be one of the key delivery mechanisms to achieve the objectives set out in the Every Child Matters programme. Consistent with this programme, the delivery of universal services through the centres must include supporting those most in need, and should be tailored to meet the particular needs of individual children, their families, and the communities in which they are based. The strategic plans for children’s centres need to be discussed and agreed with local partners through the Children and Young People’s Alliance arrangements. The total indicative capital funding for this programme for 2006-08 is £477,295; the total revenue funding for 2006-08 is £809,168.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

Sure Start Local programmes are moving from local area boundaries programmes to provide universal programmes for children, families and young people aged up to 19 as part of the Children's Centre mainstream offer. The ring fenced funding for the continuation of services for the core offer of Children's Centres is guaranteed for 2006-07 and 2007-08.

The longer term funding for these services will need to be considered alongside the mainstream core offer for Children's Services.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

A major component of Sure Start programmes is aimed at inclusion of the most vulnerable parents and children. Similarly, reducing health inequalities for all children and families remains essential to all programmes. The services provided on a universal basis through Children's Centres will be community driven and respond to local need. Local parents and communities' involvement will be an essential part of the local programmes.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Changes in the characteristics of Sure Start Local programme areas 2003.	Grosvenor house	Geraldine Derby
The Government's Ten year strategy Choice for parents, the best start for children	Grosvenor House	Geraldine Derby

STANDARD SECTIONS – CHECKLIST

All reports must be submitted together with the following checklist fully completed

	Yes	No
<p>Resource Implications</p> <p>The financial, manpower and land (buying or selling) considerations should be clearly detailed including any corporate implications of following the recommended course of action.</p>	//	
<p>Social Inclusion Implications</p> <p>Any implications relating to social inclusion/anti poverty should be highlighted</p>	/	
<p>Sustainability Checklist</p> <p>Any implications that affect the sustainability themes of economy society and the community and the environment should be included,</p>	/	
<p>Best Value</p> <p>Any Best Value implications should be included.</p>	/	
<p>Legal Implications</p> <p>Any Legal implications should be included.</p>	/	
<p>Crime and Disorder Issues</p> <p>Any crime and disorder implications should be included.</p>	/	
<p><i>Please review these potential effects, within the context set out overleaf, to compose your summary assessment</i></p>		

Summary assessment of Implications:

Sure Start Local Programmes and Children's Centres impact on all aspects of the Councils social Inclusion policies and priority areas and are central to the "Every child Matters: Change for Children" agenda. Revenue funding for these services is ring fenced until 2008. The longer-term sustainability of the Centres as community resources for children, families and young people up to the age of 19, will be considered as part of the future mainstream planning for children's services.