

**Children's Services Scrutiny Committee**  
**29 January 2009**

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**THE DEVELOPMENT OF SURE START CHILDREN'S CENTRES IN WILTSHIRE**  
**2008 - 2010**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide an update on the development of Phase Three Sure Start Children's Centres in Wiltshire

**Background**

2. It is the Government's strategy to have 3,500 Sure Start Children's Centres by 2010, one for every community. Wiltshire had a target to deliver 20 Sure Start Children's Centres by March 2008 and this was achieved.
3. The aim of Sure Start Children's Centres for children under five and their parents is for them to become a gateway to transformation by:
  - Reducing inequalities and narrowing the gap between the most and least disadvantaged children.
  - Supporting vulnerable groups.
  - Gaining parental and community engagement.
  - Forming multi-agency teams around the child.
  - Integrating the delivery of shared initiatives, e.g reducing childhood obesity.
  - Making better use of human and capital resources.
4. In April 2008, Wiltshire Local Authority received a further target to deliver an additional 10 Sure Start Children's Centres, making 30 in total. The services must be designated by March 2010 with the capital programme complete by March 2011.

**The operation of Phase Two Children's Centres**

5. Presently 22 children's centres are in operation. They are managed by a number of providers; 14 by voluntary sector organisations, 6 by school governing bodies and 2 by Wiltshire County Council. Details about their location, contact details, management and linked childcare are attached at **Appendix A**.
6. Each children's centre is staffed by a Children's Centre Leader, Outreach Worker and Administrator. In children's centres with a nursery, an Early Years Foundation Stage Advisory Teacher employed by the Local Authority works alongside the nursery team for 2.5 days a week.

**Measuring success**

7. The Department for Children, Schools and Families amended the performance indicators in October 2008. These are included in the core offer document attached at **Appendix B**. Leaders of children's centres gather data about the service users to ensure that they are targeting services appropriately. Children's centres gather their own statistical data about the impact of their services, how many children and families they reach and parental satisfaction.

8. In March 2008 each children's centre team took part in an annual conversation, which is a performance management meeting between representatives from the Local Authority and the governance and partners working with the children's centre. This meeting monitored impact and informed action planning for the next year. Involving delivery partners such as Jobcentre Plus in the quarterly monitoring meetings has proved to be particularly successful by including challenge from an outside perspective.
9. In July 2008, the Joint Area Review (JAR) inspection team visited three children's centres. The annual performance management process for one of the visited centres was scrutinised by the inspection team. A range of supporting documents were submitted including; the contract documents, quarterly monitoring notes, budget management spreadsheets, Extended Services and Children's Centres Board (ExCCeS) , District Board and steering group minutes, newsletters and on-going promotional information for parents. The inspection report noted that, "The Council has made significant and rapid progress in its development of children's centres and extended schools facilities".
10. The Local Authority receive support and challenge from Together for Children, who are the Government appointed body to ensure delivery of the children's centre targets. Their assessment of the level of support that Wiltshire Local Authority needs is judged to be low priority

### **Development of Phase Three Sure Start Children's Centres**

11. The number of phase three children's centres for Wiltshire was determined by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. It is based on the number of children under five in the county. Each children's centre should reach, on average, 800 children. This gives Wiltshire a total allocation of 30 children's centres.
12. The Local Authority received specific criteria for deciding on the placement of Phase Three Children's Centres.
  - Local authorities should provide a children's centre in areas of deprivation not presently supported by a centre as identified by the Index of Multiple Deprivation.
  - In areas where the reach to 800 children under five is exceeded an additional centre should be considered.
  - Each community area should be covered by a children's centre, recognising in Phase Three that these may be in areas of lesser disadvantage and with a reach to fewer children particularly in rural areas.
13. To fulfil these criteria, the 10 Phase Three areas were chosen and a table is attached at **Appendix C** with the Index of Multiple Deprivation Super Output Scores.

*In 2004 England was divided into 32,482 **Super Output Areas** comprising of, on average 1,000 households. Each SOA was given scores for a range of domains; crime, housing, income etc and ranked from 1 as the most disadvantaged area to 32,482 the least disadvantaged area in England. These scores were updated in 2007. However these scores are based on 2005-2006 data.*

## Sources of funding

14. The total amount of capital available to the Local Authority to develop 10 Children's Centres between 2008 and 2011 is £3,695,414. (This does not include the annual allocation for maintenance). It is intended to combine additional Sure Start capital with the children's centre allocation to provide greater value for money where it is planned to include existing childcare within the build.
15. The revenue budget allocation is based on :
  - Cost of running the centre @ £25,000 per year
  - Salary of Leader plus on-costs full time in 30% areas, 21 hours in 70% areas
  - 2 workers x 21 hours in 30% areas, 1 Outreach Worker x 21 hours in 70% areas
  - Allocation per child under 5
    - 30% Super Output Areas £35 per child under 5
    - 50% Super Output Areas £25 per child under 5
    - 70% Super Output Areas £15 per child under 5

*Super Output Areas are based on smaller numbers of households than ward level data. Guidance distinguishes between 30% most deprived areas of England and the other 70% of areas. 30% most deprived areas should receive targeted and more intensive support. In more advantaged areas local authorities have greater flexibility about which services they provide to meet local need*

## Working with partners

16. The strategy for children's centres and services in and around schools share many aspects of the core offer. Extended Schools' Co-ordinators are on the community forums of individual centres. Children's Centre Outreach Workers will be able to work with the recently appointed Family Link Workers attached to clusters of schools to provide support for families with children across a wider age range. Close liaison and co-ordination will ensure families are not subjected to a host of different support workers.
17. The Parenting Strategy Co-ordinator is line managed by the Improvement and Innovations Manager for Early Years and Childcare, who also manages the children's centre programme. Liaison between the services is therefore particularly strong. Clusters of children's centres are providing Webster Stratton: The Incredible Years programme and Family Caring Trust 0-6 years programme.
18. Children's Centres play a major role in the strategy to support children with difficulties and disabilities in their local area. Each children's centre hosts the Local Inclusion Support Meetings that ensure parents and professionals provide appropriate support, and plan for the needs of children together. To cement this further, the four District Specialist Centres will become linked sites with the developing Phase Three Children's Centres in their areas. The District Specialist Centres in Trowbridge and Chippenham are in the early stages of planning to move into the new children's centre buildings in 2010. Social care teams are included in the invitations to attend each children's centre steering group.

## Challenges to the overall project

19. In October 2008, steps were taken to strengthen the arrangements for partnership working through Children's Trusts. Part of this proposal was to place Sure Start Children's Centres on a statutory footing. A public consultation was carried out and the key findings were released in December. The DCSF released the results of a consultation document in December 2008. The key findings are :
  - Sure Start Children's Centres are established, however their legal basis will be prescribed as part of the forthcoming Children, Skills and Learning Act which is currently in bill form.
  - Funding for children's centres beyond 2011 and the arrangements for ring-fencing grants will be discussed as part of the 2009 Spending Review.
  - Arrangements for partnership working through Children's Trusts will be strengthened.
  - Children's centre leaders will be expected to undertake the National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership. Presently this is only recommended in the Sure Start Guidance December 2006.
  - The DCSF will work with Ofsted to define an efficient and effective model of inspection for children's centres.
20. Ensuring that data is captured through the registration system and entered onto the database is an enormous task. If data is to be useful in identifying exactly where priority families live then as many of the approximately 25,000 children under five needs to be registered. The children who would most benefit from integrated services are those whose parents are currently difficult to engage with and this presents the greatest challenge for capturing reliable data. One particularly effective activity was photographing portraits of fathers and their children, on a midweek morning just before Christmas which attracted great interest. Outreach Workers were then able to engage with the families when they personally delivered the photographs.
21. Qualifications of the workforce – Children's Centre Leaders will be expected to undertake the National Professional Qualification for Integrated Centre Leadership. The full day-care must be graduate led by March 2010, with a second graduate in the most disadvantaged areas. Each children's centre with childcare must have a qualified teacher in post for at least 50% of the week.
22. Presently the local decision making about the range and intensity of services is determined through a community forum or steering group for each children's centre. With the introduction of Community Boards under Wiltshire Council, consideration must be given about appropriate representation by children's centres. Close and supportive liaison must be established whilst still maintaining a forum for each centre in order to discuss operational issues and plans for action. The arrangement of developing at least one children's centre in each of Wiltshire's 20 community areas means that they are well placed to work together with Community Boards to cement community cohesion.
23. Greater liaison between the children's centres and Wiltshire's health services is improving. However it is still proving difficult to access NHS data in enough detail to be meaningful. Data is presented in a variety of formats. For example, breastfeeding data is gathered at GP surgery level, which then needs to be linked into super output areas in order to target services effectively. We are

working to overcome this. Health Visitors are working with children's centre staff to ensure as many parents as possible know about the range of services on offer. They carry cards with them on visits to record written permission from parents to be contacted by children's centre staff. At registration they receive a child safety bag with a bath thermometer and other useful material.

### **Action Required**

24. The Committee is requested to consider and comment on this report.
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