

Appendix C

Title of document: Sure Start Children's Centres Guidance

Source: www.dcsf.gov.uk

Key points:

- The **Apprenticeships, Skills, Children, and Learning Act 2009** recognises Sure Start Children's Centres in law for the first time.
- The draft statutory guidance focuses entirely on the new legislation. It is not intended to supersede the existing DCSF guidance on children's centres.
- **Arrangements for the provision of children's centres.** Under the new Act, Local Authorities are required to provide sufficient children's centres 'managed by or on behalf of the LA in order to comply with Section 3 of the Childcare Act 2006, to provide integrated services for children and maximise the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children – the first local port of call when parents need help or advice. Sufficiency is deemed to be an average reach figure of 800 children under five per centre with the recognition that the delivery should be universal with the emphasis on families in greater need.
- **Duty on Local Authorities, Primary Care Trusts and Jobcentre Plus to consider providing services through a children's centre.** Partners should, wherever possible provide their services through children's centres and if not, to document the reason for this decision.
- **Consultation.** As well as using consultation to keep their children's centre provision under review, the Act requires consultation before specific actions are taken; to open a new children's centre beyond those designated under phases one, two and three, before any major changes in service delivery and to make the decision to close an existing children's centre
- **Advisory Boards.** Each children's centre must have an Advisory Board to provide advice and assistance to ensure effective operation of the children's centre. The Chair should be independent, i.e. not the children's centre manager. It does not have the legal powers of a school governing body
- **Inspection:** The Act requires, for the first time, that children's centres will be inspected by Ofsted. The inspection will be outcome focused and will be looking for evidence of the impact of the delivered services and the effectiveness of integrated working.
- **Safeguarding:** From 12 January 2010, a person who is on the children's barred list will commit an offence if they work or seek to work in a children's centre. Children's centres must follow the LSCB guidance and procedures. Partners, such as the Primary Care Trust, with staff working in the children's centres must ensure effective recruitment and vetting checks are carried out.
- **Having regard to the other services available in the local area.** The Act requires LAs to consider existing provision, especially childcare already operating in the local area before developing new or additional services, and consideration must be taken over the involvement of the private and voluntary sector.