

LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

EXECUTIVE MEETING

13.10.03

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, ARTS & LIBRARIES

NAME OF WARD(S)
Pre RE-ORGANISATION
Stonebridge, St
Raphaels, Roundwood,
Harlesden, Carlton, St
Andrews, Church End

REPORT TITLE: Children's Centres Strategic Proposal

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1** This report sets out the strategic proposal to develop Children's Centres and seeks Members' approval for its submission to the Sure Start Unit on October 15th 2003. The Sure Start Unit is a new government unit. Its aims are to ensure delivery of free early education for all three and four year olds, affordable, quality childcare and after school activities in every area, and Children's Centres, health and family support in disadvantaged areas. The Sure Start Unit also works with parents to build aspirations for employment and for their children's education. Children's Centres will combine education, care, health and outreach services for children aged 0-5 and their families. Children's Centres are to be developed by local authorities in line with Sure Start Unit guidance, and within the Unit's capital and revenue allocation.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1** That the Executive endorse and approve the strategic proposal for Children's Centres.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1** The Council has been provisionally allocated the following sums by the Sure Start Unit as a contribution towards their targets set out in the report.

Capital: £2,337,864

Revenue: £941,065

This will be paid as a grant based on agreed outputs being achieved between 2003/04–2005/06. The proposals set out at Appendix 1 assume the following phasing for the various projects:

	2003/4 (£)	2004/5 (£)	2005/6 (£)	Total (£)
Revenue	84,000	330,500	526,565	941,065
Capital	221,850	1,230,772	651,440	2,104,062
Contingency for capital projects				233,802
Total Capital				2,337,864

3.2 Funding has been allocated to ensure that 5,186 children aged 0-5 and their families will benefit from Children’s Centres services. Funding has also been allocated to facilitate the creation of 347 childcare places.

3.3 Funding relates to the first phase of the Children’s Centres programme, 2004-06. Whilst the Sure Start Unit cannot guarantee funding for the second phase of this programme, 2006-10, local authorities are advised to plan provision for the long term.

3.4 Capital

Six main capital projects are planned as set out in Appendix 1. The figures are provisional and subject to fluctuation as tenders for the work have yet to be let. Approval for each project will be required from the Sure Start Unit reflecting the latest costs. Children’s Centres proposed for opening in the first phase (04-06) have been selected to take advantage of funding available from other sources, some of which is time limited. This is potentially available as follows subject to the appropriate conditions being met:

Children’s Centre	Amount (£)	Funding Source
Evan Davies	200k	Education Art and Libraries Capital Programme
	210k	Neighbourhood Nursery Initiative
	1,000k	Stonebridge Housing Action Trust
TOTAL	1,410k	
This scheme was subject to a report to Executive on March 2003 and a further report before the scheme commences.		
Carlton Nursery	600k	Sure Start South Kilburn
	500k	South Kilburn New Deal for Communities
	150k	South Kilburn Single Regeneration Budget
	100k	Neighbourhood Nursery Initiative
TOTAL	1,350k	
This is subject to a report entitled “Granville Plus” coming to a future meeting of the Executive.		

Curzon Crescent	106k 480k 100k	Neighbourhood Nursery Initiative Sure Start Roundwood Neighbourhood Renewal Fund
TOTAL	686k	

3.5 Revenue

The table below outlines the forecasted revenue spend for the six Children's Centres:

	03/04	04/05	05/06	Total
Revenue forecast	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)
Data Collection	20,000	20,000	20,000	60,000
Centre Managers	0	46,500	93,000	139,500
Project Manager	44,000	44,000	44,000	132,000
Operational Staff	0	150,000	300,000	450,000
Consultation	20,000	10,000	5,000	35,000
Miscellaneous	0	60,000	64,565	124,565
			Total (£)	941,065

Miscellaneous items are included to take into consideration promotional and publicity activities, community projects and conferences to ensure that residents are informed of the range of services available. Utilities and caretaking costs are also included as services will be available to working parents outside the hours of 8-6pm when daycare facilities are provided. Operational staff covers additional cleaning, administration and reception duties, which will be created in the centre.

Guidance for the Children's Centre programme issued by the Sure Start Unit in February 2003 advised that Local Authorities should ensure strong support for teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage. The guidance was later supplemented by a directive from Sure Start stating that teaching and learning offered by children's centres must be provided initially from at least a half time teacher with relevant early years training or experience, working towards a fulltime teacher per centre. Teachers salaries have not been included in the forecasted revenue spend but would come to a projected total of £315,000 to the end of the financial year 2006. This is subject to a growth bid set out below.

3.6 Three revenue growth bids have been made for 2004/2005 for Council funding, which if agreed, would be utilised to support the programme.

- (i) An Early Years Finance Officer who would manage the resourcing issues related to Centres and ensure that, as central government funding ceases, income from charges will meet costs. £40k from 2004/2005.
- (ii) A post to oversee Early Years and Childcare (see paragraph 4.1) £80k from 2004/2005.
- (iii) Qualified Teachers for Children's Centres (see paragraph 4.2). Around £200k in a full year rising to £315k for a full time teacher per centre.

If this growth is not agreed it is likely that the required outputs would not be met and these would have to be re-negotiated with the Sure Start Unit. As a result of these lower outputs the level of grant available would probably be reduced. There may be

some scope to fund a proportion of these bids from the revenue grant. This is subject to further investigation.

3.7 If Members agree the recommendation in the report there are a number of financial risks to the Council.

- (i) If the projects outputs are not delivered grant may be repayable. This is considered a low risk because of the monitoring and intervention regime imposed by the Sure Start Unit.
- (ii) Cost overruns on a capital project may fall on the Council or grant diverted from other schemes. It will be important that all such schemes are realistically costed and closely monitored to minimise risk.
- (iii) No commitment has been provided by the Sure Start Unit that further funding will be available after 31st March 2006. If this does continue higher outputs will be required as capacity will have increased. It is hoped that the level of income from partners and charges to individuals will be sufficient to meet on-going revenue costs but this cannot be stated with any certainty at this early stage. There may be costs that the Council must fund therefore relating to continuing running costs and/or redundancy and close down costs from 2006.

4.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Sure Start Unit has set out the requirement that accountability for the Children's Centres programme should be clearly identified at senior officer and Member level (*Sure Start Guidance 2004-06* July 2003). The Chief Executive Officer was asked to nominate a 'Strategic Officer' in February. This officer should:

- Be of sufficient seniority to contribute to strategic planning at a corporate level and report regularly to the Chief Executive.
- Be able to act as an advocate for early years and child care across the local authority and with senior partners in external organisations.
- Take an oversight of local authority performance in respect of the Sure Start agenda.
- Have a strategic overview of other policy agendas (Preventative Strategy, Children's Trusts, Children's Fund, Leisure Services, Planning and Community Regeneration Initiatives, for example)
- Liase with both regional and central government Sure Start teams.
- Ensure equality policies are implemented.

The Head of Early Years was nominated as a temporary measure. The successful implementation of the first phase of the Children's Centres programme, and planning for the second phase (2006-10) now requires the appointment of a senior officer. The creation of a post to oversee early years and childcare across education and social services is in line with government thinking. The green paper, *Every Child Matters*, sets out the governments' intention to legislate in favour of combining responsibility for education and children's social services under a Director of Children's Services. The proposed senior officer post could carry responsibility for early years working to the proposed new statutory post of Director of Children's Services. The Education Arts and Libraries growth bids for 2004-05 include provision for this post.

- 4.2** In February the Sure Start Unit set out the requirement that fully functioning Children's Centres should have a qualified teacher attached at a minimum of 0.5 per Centre. The Unit is currently considering raising the minimum requirement to a full-time teacher per Children's Centre. Similarly, the Education Arts and Libraries growth bids, for 2004-05 includes a proposal for this provision.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** As the Children's Centres are developed there will be legal issues relating to each centre upon which Legal Services will need to advise. Changes to the use of council owned nursery buildings may require planning consent and there will be procurement issues arising from development works at the centres. There will be other contract issues arising out of the arrangements to be made between the lead authority at each centre and the other organisations and agencies which are to provide services there. Management structure changes that take place as new Children's Centres are established at existing sites may mean changes to the contracts of some current staff. Changes which, affect staff, will need to be dealt with in line with the appropriate council procedure for managing change. The relevant staff and unions will need to be fully consulted regarding any proposed changes. Data collection and the sharing of information on children and families between services will also have legal implications

6.0 DETAIL

- 6.1** Building on the success of Sure Start local programmes, Children's Centres are to be established by local authorities to meet Sure Start Unit targets. Local authorities will ensure that each Children Centre provides the full range of core services by March 2006. Sure Start has been successful in working with parents, children and providing services that meet individual and family needs, and reflect community aspirations. Local programmes have been successful in improving child and family health, raising educational attainment and improving participants' life chances.
- 6.2** In line with Sure Start guidance Children's Centres are to be developed in wards identified within the 20% most deprived. The Children's Centres steering group has identified Stonebridge, St Raphaels, Roundwood, Harlesden, Carlton, St Andrews and Church End as wards where planned or existing buildings could be incorporated into Children's Centres development. Brent's three local Sure Start programmes were already well placed to enlarge and consolidate their services in four of these wards. Neighbourhood renewal work in these wards has also provided an opportunity to capitalise on consultation with local residents and investment made, and so to provide a focal point for young children and their families through the Children's Centres programme.
- 6.3** Whilst all Children's Centres will be required to provide a core offer of services, each one should reflect the specific needs of its local community of 0-5 year olds and their families. Following the model developed by local Sure Start programmes, each centre will be developed in consultation with local people. The Sure Start Unit has

acknowledged that making changes to the ways in which education, health and social services are delivered, and ensuring that each centre meets local needs, will be a time consuming process. It is therefore proposed that Children's Centres should open with basic services, a defined catchment area, integrated education and childcare and Jobcentre Plus services. A staged plan, covering the addition of further services to meet the core offer by the deadline of 31st March 2006, would then be implemented over time.

6.4 There are no changes to local authority statutory duties implied by the Children's Centres programme. The Children's Centres strategic proposal acknowledges responsibility for providing the Sure Start Unit's core offer in principle, and sets out the wards and key premises from which services will be delivered. It is likely that legislation will be introduced during the 2004-06 phase that will facilitate the integration of local authority services. The strategic proposal is a statement of broad intent. It sets out management and governance arrangements for proposed centres. Each centre will have one organisation that leads the management and service delivery for that centre. Formal accountability for meeting targets will be through the lead organisations reporting structure. Each centre will have its own management board. The Children's Centres Steering group will act as a commissioning body for all centres, allocating targets and monitoring performance. Steering group members will include the statutory partners, Job Centre Plus, Children's Centre users, and representatives from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership and the Brent Sure Start Re-shaping Services Board. The Steering group will be led by the nominated strategic officer. Work will continue beyond submission of the Children's Centres strategic proposal to ensure that centres fully meet the needs of the community, and that service delivery is in line with legislative requirements and local authority policies. The lead organisation for each centre will continue to develop its plan in preparation for delivery from April 2004 onwards. The statutory partners, education, social services and health, will continue to work together on effective ways to re-shape services to meet the Children's Centre model.

6.5 The Sure Start Unit has set Brent a reach target of 5,186 children and families. To meet this target it is proposed that Children's Centres will be opened in the following wards between April 2004 and March 2006 (pre-ward re-organisation):

- Stonebridge
- St Raphaels
- Roundwood
- Harlesden
- Carlton
- Church End
- St Andrews

6.6 The Sure Start Unit has set October 15th as the deadline for Brent to submit its Children's Centre strategic proposal to the London regional team. The proposal is attached at appendix 1. The Brent Children's Centre Strategic Proposal sets out the management and governance arrangements for proposed centres in broad terms. In light of the recent green paper further work will be required to develop more detailed individual proposals, and to ensure that the core offer proposed by the Sure Start Unit, is sufficient to meet local authority requirements.

7.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The following papers were used in the compilation of this report:

- i) Inter Departmental Child Care Review, November 2002
- ii) Sure Start Guidance, February 2003 and July 2003
- iii) Green Paper, Every Child Matters, September 2003

Any person wishing to inspect the above papers should contact:
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