



Executive
17 January 2011

**Report from the Director of Children
and Families**

For Action

Wards Affected:
ALL

Report Title: Restructuring of Children's Centre buildings and provision in Brent

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This paper sets out a proposal regarding Children's Centre capital projects which will contribute to Children's Centre savings in the context of budgetary reductions for 2011/12.
- 1.2 Brent Council had planned to operate 20 Children's Centres across the local authority to provide universal access to services that address the needs of families with children up to their 5th birthday. The centres were being established in distinct phases (Phases 1 to 3) largely relating to prioritising the areas of greatest deprivation in the initial rounds of development.
- 1.3 The proposals are to:
 - a) not to progress with building three new centres where the capital developments are not sufficiently advanced, and;
 - b) have three schools take responsibility for the recurrent operating costs of three children's centres that are attached to their schools. This will provide recurrent savings of approximately £305k per annum.
- 1.4 Whilst universal access will be possible, geographical reach areas of centres will be extended and services will be targeted to the most vulnerable. The proposed map of Children's Centres, Maintained Nursery Schools and Service Delivery Points can be found attached at Appendix 2.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 To agree not to build 3 phase three children's centres; Sudbury, Cricklewood and Kingsbury Intergenerational Centre.
- 2.2 To agree to explore the proposal that a further 3 phase three Children's Centres; Wykeham, Preston Park and Mount Stewart be designated as service delivery points instead of full Children's Centres, and become, via a formal agreement, the responsibility of schools on whose sites they are being developed.

3.0 Introduction and Background

- 3.1 Three Sure Start local programmes were established in Brent between 1999 and 2002 and they were followed by the introduction of the children's centres programme. Introduced into Brent in three phases, with phase 1's built mostly to meet the needs of those living in the most deprived 20% LSOA (lower super output areas) Children's centres represented a new model of working with children aged under 5 and their families. Multi-agency integrated services are provided to a catchment area of approximately 800-1200 families. The universal core offer of services that included:
- a) child and family health;
 - b) family support (including preventative work);
 - c) advice to parents on training and entering/returning to work;
 - d) integrated early learning;
 - e) community involvement - reaching out to those hardest to reach families.

In the 30% most disadvantaged areas, childcare and early education are provided on site for children from birth to 5 years, 8am-6pm for at least forty eight weeks per year. In addition to the 'core offer' funding has also been made available for community development work specific to the locality aimed at engaging hard to reach families. Currently, each centre has a distinct team that delivers services to local children and families and in many cases this includes a full time manager. A phase 3 centre only has to offer 5 x 1/2 day activities to meet the grant conditions.

- 3.2 Brent Council originally intended to operate 20 Children's Centres (see Appendix 1 for a full list of centres and their current and proposed status) across the local authority to provide universal access to services that address the needs of families with children up to their fifth birthday. Notwithstanding the significant reductions to the grants to local authorities and the end of ring-fencing of funds to Children's Centres, the Department for Education Business Plan currently emphasises:

'Retain a national network of SureStart Children's Centres with a core universal offer, while also ensuring delivery of proven early interventions to support families in the greatest need.'

- 3.3 The focus on ensuring a core universal offer, while also ensuring delivery of proven early interventions to support families in the greatest need is driving Brent Council's strategic approach to addressing the need to reduce costs.
- 3.4 The first proposal is to agree not to proceed with proposed capital developments of Sudbury, Cricklewood and Kingsbury Intergenerational Centre. These will offer a way of reducing costs without any significant impact on service delivery as we will continue to offer universal services on an ongoing basis to families, with additional services and support to those more vulnerable families. The original catchment areas for these three centres will be captured by the existing centre provision. In this way, agreeing not to build 3 phase three children's centres; Sudbury, Cricklewood and Kingsbury Intergenerational Centre will save approximately £200k per annum in ongoing revenue costs.
- 3.5 The second proposal relates to the three phase 3 Children's Centres; Wykeham, Preston Park and Mount Stewart, all of which operate from school sites. Initial discussions with Head Teachers and governing bodies have indicated the schools would be interested in taking over managerial and financial responsibility for the centres, subject to further consultation and agreement. This approach would save approximately £105k per annum in ongoing revenue costs.
- 3.6 To avoid the risk of capital clawback, minimal Children's Centres activities would take place in these centres as outreach activities using a hub and spoke model from another Children's Centre in the locality. These activities would be funded from the Early Intervention Grant. Further, we would seek to designate the centre as part of a hub and spoke model rather than a full Children's Centre (so these would no longer be designated as children's centres per se, but service delivery points). Schools are then better able to offer more extended services for children, young people and their families, as well as to explore ways of raising additional revenue through the use of the

facilities. Further work will be done by officers to develop this proposal to ensure that there is no capital clawback from DfE.

- 3.7 Primary and Secondary schools cannot use their delegated budget to subsidise or cover costs that do not relate to school age education. However, with this proposal any services delivered for pre-school age children would be fully funded from the Early Intervention Grant budget. When Children's centre activities are not being delivered the buildings would be used by schools to deliver extended services to school age children and their families or to generate income for the school.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Not building three centres would mean the Council would be unable to draw down capital funds from the DfE of:

- Kingsbury - £1,457,804
- Cricklewood - £272,085
- Sudbury - £424,345

This funding would have been available via Sure Start capital grants. Furthermore, not building the three centres would provide annual net revenue savings of £200k resulting from the following:

- Cricklewood: £55K
- Sudbury: £55K
- Kingsbury: £90K

- 4.2 As outlined in Section 5, there is a risk of capital clawback if the responsibility of the buildings is passed to schools. This risk will be managed by developing a network of Children's Centres staff working across the locality to deliver the required sessions to meet grant conditions. The financial implications if this risk was to materialise is as follows:

- Wykeham - £562,992
- Preston Park - £739,415
- Mount Stewart - £804,963

The above amounts represent the capital grant funding that would have to be paid back to the DfE because the use of the buildings had changed from the purposes for which the grant had been provided. Should there be a requirement to repay capital grant, there is no budgetary provision for this and would require savings to be found elsewhere in the Integrated and Extended Services budget. A phase 3 centre only has to offer 5 x 1/2 day activities to meet the grant conditions

- 4.3 At this present time, we have contacted Together for Children for guidance on grant conditions for children's centres in relation to a possible change of status of the children centres in Brent to Service Delivery Points. They believe our proposed model is likely to be acceptable. We have attempted to contact the DfE directly to confirm that Brent's proposed model will not likely raise issues in clawback of grant funding, but at this time, we continue to await further guidance from them.

- 4.4 An agreement between Brent Council and schools will need to be drawn up and established. This will require the schools to fund the full running costs of the centre from within their own budgets, and the Council will fund the activities needed to run the day-to-day Children's Centre activities delivered from the Service Delivery Points. Schools will have the freedom to use the space outside of its capacity as a service delivery site for five half day sessions of children's centre activity for their own use. This usage would offer the opportunity for schools to raise income to subsidise the costs of running the building. Discussions with schools are currently ongoing, and final agreements should be in place by March 2011 to allow implementation by April 2011. Schools plan to use the buildings during schools hours for additional services for school age children and their families. If school governing bodies reject the terms of the agreement, savings will be found elsewhere in the Integrated and Extended Services budget.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 S3 Childcare Act 2006 requires local authorities to make arrangements to secure that early childhood services are provided in an integrated manner in order to facilitate access to those services, and maximise the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children. Section 5A of the Childcare Act 2006 requires that as part of meeting their duties under section 3, local authorities must, so far as is reasonably practicable, include arrangements for sufficient provision of children's centres to meet local need. This means local authorities are now under a duty to secure sufficient children's centres provision for their area.
- 5.2 The Statutory Guidance on Sure Start Children's Centres provides guidance on what is sufficient to meet local need (page 10) and can take into account children's centres provided, or to be provided, outside their area. Determining local provision is a decision for local authorities but the Guidance makes clear that this decision is to be taken in full consultation with Primary Care Trusts and Jobcentre Plus and other Children's Trust partners and local families and communities. According to the Guidance "Local authorities should ensure that universal access to children's centres is achieved, with children's centres configured to meet the needs of local families especially the most deprived."
- 5.3 In the past, major decisions about Children's Centres have been taken by the Executive which means that a decision not to proceed with, some Children's Centres needs to be taken by the Executive.
- 5.4 In addition to the Statutory Guidance referred to above, there is also Capital Guidance for Children's Centres issued by the then DCSF for Sure Start, Early Years and Childcare Grant, compliance with which is a condition of the capital funding received. Members should be aware that clawback of capital funding is triggered where an asset funded wholly or partly by the Department is disposed of, or the asset is no longer used to meet the aims and objectives consistent with the grant. The Guidance states: "Accountable bodies should make provision on the assumption that clawback will be enforceable by the Department if a capital asset it funded fully or in part is sold or otherwise disposed of. The only exception is where a specific written consent has been obtained from the Department prior to the disposal, for the clawback to be waived or deferred.
- 5.5 It is being proposed that the Wykeham, Preston Park and Mount Stewart Children's Centres become satellite centres of a main Children Centre nearby (the hub and spoke model). While other Children's Centres do use other buildings as satellites, this new approach whereby the buildings are mainly used by the schools for their own extended services provision carries the risk that the clawback will apply and further development work needs to be done as to how this relationship will be structured. Otherwise there is a risk that the funding department will say that each building will no longer be used in full to meet the aims and objectives consistent with the grant, which is stated in the Capital Guidance to be a situation which can give rise to the clawback."
- 5.6 The Council, as accountable body, is under an obligation to notify and consult with the Department about any proposal to dispose of a property funded by the capital grant. The clawback will apply for any property disposed of before 25 years' use of a Children's Centre. Although it is not stated in the Guidance, it is implied that such a clawback would also apply where a Centre was closed and the building used by the Council for a different purpose. Members should also be aware that a part-time use of a Children's Centre for other purposes may also trigger a clawback, however this is not clear from the Capital Guidance. Where the asset being disposed of is valued at the same level or less than the initial grant, the Capital Guidance states that the clawback will be the full value obtained from the disposal of the asset, but reduced if only a proportion of the building costs were funded from the Department's grant. There is no tapering of the clawback as time goes by (other capital grants received by the Council sometimes specify that only a proportion of the capital funding is to be repaid once e.g. 10 years have expired, and so on). As indicated in paragraph 3.1, a phase 3 Childrens Centre has to offer a minimum of five 1/2 day sessions per week. As indicated in the Financial Implication section, contact is being made with the DfE to ascertain whether the current proposal will be acceptable

without triggering clawback. It is therefore to be hoped that, subject to satisfactory resolution of arrangements with the three schools, that capital clawback will not apply.

5.7 In relation to Kingsbury Intergenerational Centre, a tender process has already been run to build this, and tenders evaluated. However, the contract has not yet been awarded and as the tender documents stated that the Council reserved the right not to award a contract at all, there is no liability to tenderers for wasted costs in tendering etc.

5.8 As a public authority, the Council has general duties to promote equal opportunities relating to race, disability and gender and to remove discrimination. These duties are set out in the:

- Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA 2005);
- Equality Act 2006;
- Equal Pay Act 1970;
- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 (RRAA 2000);and
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975.

5.9 The DDA 2005 requires public authorities, when considering disabled people, to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and take positive steps, even if that involves treating disabled people more favourably than others.

5.10 To provide guidance on the duty there is a Statutory Code of Practice. The general duty is not absolute but it does require authorities in respect of all their functions to give due regard to disability equality. The core general duties are similar for race and gender i.e.:

- To promote equality of opportunity; and
- To eliminate harassment and unlawful discrimination.

5.11 The Race Relations Act 1976 (as amended) places a statutory duty on public authorities to work to eliminate unlawful discrimination, and to promote race equality in all its functions. There are three complementary parts to the general duty:

- Eliminating unlawful racial discrimination
- Promoting equal opportunities
- Promoting good relations between people from different racial groups

5.12 The Code of Practice issued under s71C Race Relations Act 1976 (as amended) is relevant and the council must have regard to it.

6.0 Diversity Implications

6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out to identify any diversity implications. The proposals have no adverse direct equalities impact on staff.

6.2 The review of postcodes and reach area for the newly networked centres and teams will take into account deprivation levels. This will ensure that all families in Brent have access to the universal core offer. This review has ensured that there are no adverse impacts on service delivery from these proposed changes.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications

7.1 Currently each centre has its own dedicated team. The current restructure in progress will reduce this to teams of staff working across a network of centres.

7.2 Currently the phase 1 and 2 centres have office space suitable for predominantly office based staff. It is planned to adapt this, at minimal cost, to accommodation more suited to staff who are predominantly community based. This will involve where appropriate hot-desking arrangements. The reduced staff team will be able to be accommodated in the remaining centres.

8.0 Background Papers

8.1 Sure Start Children's Centres Statutory Guidance

8.2 Contact Officers

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Future responsibility for Brent's Children's Centres (dependent on member decision)

Children Centres	Current Status	Proposals	Phase
1. Granville Plus*	Developed from Granville nursery school	Direct responsibility of the maintained nursery school	1
2. Fawood*	Developed from Evan Davies nursery school	Direct responsibility of the maintained nursery school	1
3. Curzon Crescent*	Developed from Curzon Crescent nursery school	Direct responsibility of the maintained nursery school	1
4. Sudbury Primary (proposed)	Proposal is for the new centre not to be built	Reduced services may be delivered at Sudbury Health by agreement with PCT	3
5. Mount Stewart	Built in grounds of Mount Stewart Infant & Junior Schools.	To be designated as a Service Delivery Point	3
6. Preston Park	Built in grounds of Preston Park Primary School.	To be designated as a Service Delivery Point	3
7. Wykeham	Built in grounds of Wykeham Primary School	To be designated as a Service Delivery Point	3
8. Cricklewood	Proposal is for the new centre not to be built. Proposal for services to continue to be offered from Willesden Library. Possible building closure in Dec 2011.	To be designated as a Service Delivery Point	3
9. Alperton	Built in grounds of Alperton Community School	Brent Children's Centre SLA with school for building management/responsibility.	2
10. Three Trees	Built in grounds of Queens Park Community Secondary School	Brent Children's Centre SLA with school for building management/responsibility.	2
11. Wembley	Built in Wembley Primary School – built as part of the school (some shared spaces)	Brent Children's Centre SLA with school for building management/responsibility.	2
12. Church Lane	Built in grounds of Fryent Primary School	Brent Children's Centre SLA with school for building management/responsibility.	2
13. Harmony**	Stand alone Centre (formerly managed by PCT) Includes 30 place full day nursery	Brent Children's Centre Nursery provision to be reviewed in Mar 11	1
14. Willow**	Centre developed from Social Services nursery Includes 103 place full day nursery with special needs facilities	Brent Children's Centre Nursery provision to be reviewed in Mar 11	1
15. Treetops**	Centre developed from Social Services nursery Includes 49 place full day nursery with special needs facilities	Brent Children's Centre Nursery provision to be reviewed in Mar 11	2
16. St Raphael's	Centre developed from St Raphael's' community centre. Now an Intergenerational Centre.	Brent Children's Centre and Intergenerational Centre	2
17. Welcome	Centre on split sites: Wembley Centre for Health & Barham Park Library	Brent Children's Centre. Review Barnham Park site.	2
18. Hope	Children's centres activities delivered on the premises of the Hope Centre charity	Brent Children's Centre	3
19. Challenge House	Shared building. CC wing refurbishment almost complete.	To be managed by Fawood Nursery School Discussions with school governing body are ongoing.	3
20. Kingsbury High (proposed)	Proposal is for the new centre not to be built.	No longer to provide services But families will be able to access services from neighbouring centres.	3

*with day care/**currently includes children in need (placed by social care) and children with disabilities.

