



Community Access to Schools

A report by the Overview Task Group

March 2006

Prepared by:

Councillor Mary Arnold (Chair)

**Councillor Sandra Kabir
Councillor Helga Gladbaum
Councillor Robert Wharton
Mr Ray Lorenzato**

Index

Foreword by the Chair	3
Executive Summary	5
Recommendations	7
Introduction	9
➤ Scope of the task group	9
➤ Membership	10
➤ Methodology	10
Context	11
➤ Extended Schools	11
➤ Every Child Matters	12
➤ Brent Context	12
➤ Children & Young People's Plan	13
➤ Neighbourhood Learning Communities	13
Key Findings	16
➤ Cluster Arrangements	16
➤ Working with Partners	18
➤ Enabling Community Access	20
➤ Involving the Local Community	22
➤ Funding & Sustainability	23
➤ Monitoring & Evaluation	24

Foreword

Councillor Mary Arnold
Chair of the Task Group



We all recognise the need to make the best use of existing resources within the borough. Many of our local communities lack local facilities, with appropriate services and activities, while at the same time, school buildings and their facilities are an under-utilised resource, typically used at less than a third of their potential. This task group was set up to examine this issue. By helping to shape the Extended Services Strategy, we aim to ensure that community use of the facilities, with associated services and activities developed as a result of the strategy, are maximised.

Our report is particularly pertinent at a time when concerns with social exclusion are in the forefront and there is an increasing commitment to achieve community cohesion. National policy is encouraging the delivery of services to meet neighbourhood needs and increasingly the provision of community-based health, child-care and family services.

One of the challenges we face is to ensure agencies work together not only to ensure that the outcomes of Every Child and Youth Matters are met, but that the partnerships that develop include a lead role for representatives from the community and voluntary sector. These organisations are closest to their communities, understand them and can ensure that everyone has access to the services whether it's sport, health, arts-based, adult and family learning, ESOL, ICT, leisure and other activities that are needed. We look forward to the new work embodied in the Local Area Agreements to support these partnerships effectively.

It is with great anticipation about the opportunities we will create for our communities that I introduce the task group's report. In developing our recommendations we have focused on local issues; we aim to build on existing best practice while taking into account the national agenda.

My colleagues and I held a number of our meetings in the field and would like to thank all those who freely gave of their time and contributed to our discussions and findings. I would particularly like to thank:

- Susan Mackenzie – Head of Planning & Development, Children & Families
- Sue Alton – ContinYou
- Mike Hulme – Head Queens Park Community School
- Barrie Birch – Deputy Head Queens Park Community School
- Mekhola Ray – Neighbourhood Manager
- Meghan Doyle – Project Lead Neighbourhood Renewal
- Theresa Landreth – Head Mitchell Brook School
- Adrian Kelly – Extended Schools Co-ordinator Mitchell Brook

In addition, although too numerous to mention by name, I would like to thank the community workers and members of the community who attended our meeting at Mitchell Brook school.

I would like to thank my fellow task group members, each of who had specific expertise and significant contributions to make:

Councillor Helga Gladbaum
Councillor Sandra Kabir
Councillor Robert Wharton
Mr Ray Lorenzato

Finally I would like to thank Jacqueline Casson, Policy and Performance officer, Policy & Regeneration Unit for her excellent support, guidance and expertise in researching, organising and reporting on our findings.

Executive Summary

This report outlines the work, findings and recommendations of the overview task group's investigation in to community access to schools.

Out of school hours, school buildings and facilities frequently become isolated places within their communities. Typically they are used at less than a third of their potential, operating six or seven hours a day, five day a week, nine months of the year, while their maintenance, debt service, and other costs continue year round. At the same time many communities within Brent lack facilities that can be used by the community within the local area, a fact that is raised time and again by residents; this is particularly true for our most deprived wards.

The task group was set up to explore how the extended services agenda could be used to expand existing good practice and increase the availability of services, activities and facilities to local communities.

The task group has already influenced the development of the extended schools strategy and hopes to influence its implementation. In undertaking this work the task group focused on Brent specific issues while taking into account the national agenda. We learnt from experience in the borough and in doing so focused on a number of key issues:

Cluster Arrangements

The task group examined the pilot cluster arrangement, identified a number of issues and has recommended that these should be reviewed in line with suggested criteria.

Working with Partners

Schools will need to work with each other, agencies and partners to find out what local communities need and provide services, activities and facilities to meet those needs. A holistic approach is needed to identify and map partners and facilities, develop partner relationships and support the management of partnerships.

Enabling Community Access

The task group wanted to ensure that there were as few barriers as possible to enabling local communities to access school facilities. For the purposes of this report we have focused on the physical environment, child protection, lettings policies particularly cost, community confidence and health and safety issues.

Involving the Local Community

The task group see schools as the hub of the community. To achieve this we believe that it is key that local communities are given a role in influencing how clusters operate and in developing the menu of activities within each cluster area.

Funding & Sustainability

The task group identified a number of issues that could result from a lack of funding. These include facilities and services not being available out of school hours because of extra costs incurred, maintenance cost for instance, or additional insurance costs.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Although there is currently a national debate on how to evaluate the link between what is provided via extended services and the benefits identified nationally the task group recognises the need to assess the level of community access to schools. We would also like to see measures that identify those sections of the community that are using services, activities and facilities and those that are not, as well as the level of satisfaction with what is provided.

DRAFT

Recommendations

The task group recommends that the Extended Services Strategy and the way it is implemented be influenced by the following key requirements:

1. The Neighbourhood Learning Communities (NCL) cluster arrangements are reviewed to take into account the following criteria:

- Geographical rational and coherence taking into account neighbourhood working
- Inclusive embracing the diversity of the borough
- Existing partnerships and networks
- Distance and transport links between schools in each cluster
- Even distribution and complementarity of facilities between and within cluster groups
- Links to feeder schools
- Avoiding large cluster areas

2. A co-ordinator, funded from the Schools Standards Fund, is attached to each cluster of schools to help identify and map partners, facilities and activities in the cluster area. The coordinator will provide support in developing partner relationships, support with management of partnerships and business planning, and will take a lead in consulting and working with local communities.

3. Each cluster of schools develops a lettings policy that enables and encourages community use of facilities. The policy should include concessionary and free use funded from commercial lettings. Free use should be considered for community groups who do not receive any grant funding and would like to develop public education and community activities.

4. A small capital budget is identified, from existing budgets, to enable schools to make modifications to school buildings and equipment for better access to school facilities. Modifications may include security adaptations, zoning and purchase of adult furniture such as chairs.

5. Clusters are encouraged to market their facilities, services and activities to the wider community. A resource pack should be developed and made available on a number of media including the website and on DVD and video. The pack should provide information about the services, activities and facilities available within the cluster with clear information on how to use and apply to use school facilities.

6. A steering group is established in each cluster. The steering group will provide a prominent role for the local community and the voluntary sector and ensure monitoring systems are in place which assess and continuously improve access to school facilities for the community. The Children and Families department should use this information when reviewing the implementation of the Extended Services Strategy.

7. Children, young people, and the wider community are consulted and participate in the development of services and activities in each cluster area.

8. School cluster steering groups work with the council and the voluntary sector to use facilities to celebrate significant events at a local level

9. The Children & Families department identifies the component of the Schools Standards Grant that is intended to finance Extended Services programmes and promote this for use on projects agreed by each cluster. In addition clusters should investigate other sources of income to ensure that income is maximised

10. Clusters seek to achieve best value for money using a portion of the money identified from the Schools Standards Grant and funding obtained from other sources to make existing facilities more widely available by funding:

- Maintenance of facilities
- Additional caretaking
- Any additional insurance costs

11. The cluster and extended schools experience should be documented for learning and sharing of good practice. Also criteria are developed to measure the following:

- How many community lets there are in each cluster area.
- Which sections of the community are using services, activities and facilities and which are not.
- The level of satisfaction with services, activities and facilities provided.

Introduction

Scope of the Task Group's Work

This task group was set up to work with the Extended Schools Officer in developing the Council's vision for increasing community access to schools and to ensure that Brent's extended services initiative – 'Neighbourhood Learning Communities' delivers the best outcomes for local communities in Brent.

In undertaking this work, the Task Group:

- Reviewed the national agenda identifying the latest policies and developments that impact on increasing community access to schools.
- Explored the proposed 'Neighbourhood Learning Community' model in relation to needs and resources within Brent. This included facilities that are already available within the pilot area, funding that is available to the project, needs of the local community within which the cluster is based, constraints there might be and impact those constraints might have.
- Established how the needs of the local communities in the pilot area can be identified, identified the desired outcomes for the pilot, and suggested ways in which increased community access can be achieved.
- Investigated how schools can best work with partners to deliver services and outcomes.

On completion of the investigation the task group will have:

- Shaped the policy for Neighbourhood Learning Communities
- Contributed to the development of the pilot
- Made recommendations for working with partners
- Recommended a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the pilot.

Membership

The Task Group was chaired by Councillor Mary Arnold and the membership consisted of:

Councillor Sandra Kabir
Councillor Helga Gladbaum
Councillor Robert Wharton
Mr Ray Lorenzato

The Task Group was supported by Jacqueline Casson, Policy & Performance Officer, Policy & Regeneration Unit.

Methodology

In order to complete the work identified in the scope and produce practical recommendations that will enable and increase community access to schools, the task group adopted a number of methods. This included case studies at two schools within Brent: Queens Park Community School and Mitchell Brook School, both of which offer services, activities and use of facilities outside of school hours. The task group heard evidence from council officers, head teachers, community groups and individuals including, parents and children, who use the facilities offered at these schools. The task group focused on Brent specific issues while taking into account the national agenda. We wanted to learn from experience within the borough and, in doing so, focus on what we identified as the key issues:

- Cluster Arrangements
- Working with Partners
- Enabling Community Access – physical environment, lettings policy, health & safety
- Involving the Local Community
- Funding & Sustainability
- Monitoring, Evaluation & Sharing Good Practice

One of our main tasks is to influence the draft Extended Services Strategy. We have met with the extended schools officer formally on two occasions to gather evidence. We have also used the opportunity to express our emerging findings and recommendations.

We learnt at the end of January 2006 that the draft strategy will be discussed at the Executive meeting in March, 2006, prior to our report being finalised. We have influenced the development of the strategy, in particular our recommendation on cluster arrangements. Our recommendations should also influence how the strategy will be implemented.

Context

Out of school hours, school buildings and facilities frequently become isolated places within their communities. Typically they are used at less than a third of their potential, operating six or seven hours a day, five days a week, nine months of the year, while their maintenance, debt service, and other costs continue year round. At the same time many communities within Brent lack facilities that can be used by the community within the local area, a fact that is raised time and again by residents; this is particularly true for our most deprived wards.

Increasing community access to school facilities is a key part of the government's agenda in contributing to neighbourhood renewal, improving educational attainment and improving outcomes for children, young people and families. The government's 'Extended Schools' initiative aims to offer services and activities to pupils, their families and local communities over and above the schools 'core business'.

Extended Schools

The Education Act 2002 and the related policy guidance 'Extended Schools: Providing Opportunities and Services for all', is aimed at encouraging governing bodies to increase use of school premises and provide a range of services and activities to help meet the needs of pupils, families and the wider community. It gives governing bodies the flexibility to enter into agreements with other partners to provide service on school premises and enables governing bodies to charge for some services. There are also a number of safeguards to protect pupils' education and to ensure effective delivery of services.

The government's five year strategy for 'Children and Learners' sets out their vision to provide at least a minimum core offer of extended services. Schools need not be the sole provider of extended services, but should work with partners to deliver them. The core offer consists of:

- Quality Childcare from 8am – 6pm
- A varied menu of activities
- Parenting support including family learning
- Swift and easy referral to specialised support services
- Providing wider community access to ICT, sports and arts facilities, including adult learning

The government's target is that this will be available in at least half of all primary, and a third of all secondary, schools by 2008 and in all schools by 2010. There are a number of benefits of extended schools identified by the government and these include:

- A contribution to neighbourhood renewal and a positive effect on educational standards;
- Activities aimed particularly at vulnerable groups, in areas of deprivation and/or where services are limited;

-
- The promotion of community cohesion by building links between schools and the wider community;
 - The provision of services to communities
 - Increased access to schools that are open to pupils, families and the wider community during and beyond the school day, before and after school hours, at weekends and during school holidays;

Every Child Matters

The Every Child Matters 'Change for Children Programme' is designed to ensure that children's services work together and with parents and carers to help give children more opportunities and better support. It focuses on five outcomes for children and young people. The government believes that opening up schools to provide specialist and targeted services as well as general services and activities for the wider community will help achieve these outcomes.

The Every Child Matters outcomes are:

- **Be Healthy:** Enjoy good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle.
- **Stay Safe:** Being protected from harm, neglect and growing up, able to look after themselves
- **Enjoy & Achieve:** Getting the most out of life and developing broad skills for adulthood.
- **Make a positive contribution:** To the community and to society and not engaging in anti-social behaviour.
- **Achieve economic well being:** Overcoming socio-economic disadvantage to achieve their full potential in life.

Brent Context

Brent Council has, for many years, been committed to providing activities outside of school hours. These have included: learning, family learning, specialist schools programmes, and school sport co-ordinator programmes. Focused work has also taken place in Brent's priority neighbourhoods, through Neighbourhood Renewal and New Deal for Communities programmes. These programmes have developed good practice in ensuring local communities are involved in developing projects that deliver benefits for the local community.

At the same time it is recognised that there is a lack of good quality facilities available for community use in Brent. The recent Ofsted inspection of Brent Youth Services confirmed this by identifying the standard of accommodation and learning resources available to young people as an issue.

There is now an opportunity through the extended services agenda, to expand on existing good practice and increase community access to schools. Resolving many of the problems, relating to availability of services, activities and facilities within local communities, will contribute to the delivery of the vision and values outlined in Brent's Community Strategy: to deliver efficient, accessible and sustainable services to an

excellent standard; to develop tailored solutions to meet the needs of individuals and families; and to nurture successful community cohesion.

Increasing community access to schools and achieving the benefits identified nationally will also help to deliver Brent's corporate priorities:

- To ensure all children and young people have access to the best possible life chances;
- To improve the quality of the local environment and facilities for all residents;
- To create a sustainable and prosperous borough through our Regeneration Strategy and reduce the gaps between Brent's most deprived communities and the rest of London through the priority neighbourhoods programme;
- To make Brent a safer place for local residents, visitors and businesses by combating crime and the fear of crime;
- To provide excellent public services at a price people are willing to pay.

Children and Young People's Plan

Brent's Children and Young People's Plan sets out the vision for Children and Young People's services that is shared across partner agencies. The plan applies to both statutory and voluntary agencies whose work impacts on children and young people. Extended services will be one of the key mechanisms used to deliver on the priorities identified in the plan.

Neighbourhood Learning Communities

The task group learnt that to deliver the benefits of extended services and meet government targets Brent Council has been developing a strategy, Neighbourhood Learning Communities, which will enable clusters of schools to work together, with partners and their local communities to provide extended services. The cluster approach, which is favoured by many LEA's, has a number of advantages. These are:

- Schools can offer activities and services that best reflect their capacity, strengths and enthusiasms.
- Effective use of resources.
- Supports the inclusion of other community venues to contribute to the menu of activities available to local community.
- Invites all families to participate not just those attending a particular school.
- Supports neighbourhood based multi-agency working.

There were seven proposed cluster groups in Brent, three of which were taking part in the pilot. A full list of the originally proposed clusters can be found at appendix 1 and a map showing cluster groups is at appendix 2. The schools forming the three pilot clusters are shown in the table below.

Cluster E	Cluster F	Cluster G
Park Lane Primary	Wembley High Technology College	St Mary RC Primary
Harlesden Primary	Byron Court Primary	Our Lady of Lourdes
St Mary C of E Primary	Sudbury Primary	St Mary Magdalene RC Junior
Elsley Primary	Barham Priamry	Convent of Jesus & Mary RC Infants
Stonebridge School	Wembley Manor Juniors	Cardinal Hinsley RC High
Vernon House	Preston Park Primary	St Joseph RC Priamry
Furness Primary	Preston Manor High	Our Lady of Grace RC infants
John Keble C of E Primary	Oakington Manor Primary	Our Lady of Grace RC Juniors
Copland Community School and Technology College	Alperton Community School	St Gregory's RC Schools
Leopold Primary	Lyon Park Infants	St Margaret Clitherow
Mitchell Brook	Lyon Park Juniors	St Robert Southwell RC Primary
		St Joseph RC Infants
		St Josephs RCJuniors
Total 12 Schools + Fawood Children's Centre Curson Crescent Nursery	Total 12 Schools	Total 14 Schools

All of the pilot clusters differed in nature. One was geographically based; one was influenced by a local bus route; and the third shared a faith perspective. The desired outcomes from the pilot were:

- Consultation & Participation
- Partnership working
- Engagement in workforce remodelling
- Sustainable practice

The task group learnt that there have been difficulties, successes and challenges faced by all of the pilot clusters. Some of the issues they have raised include:

- How to use start up funding
- How to promote inter-school projects so children and adults will use facilities based at other schools
- How to overcome large geographical distribution of cluster
- Capacity of schools
- How to avoid overlap with other agencies and partners
- Sustainability

Some of the challenges identified were:

- Knowing who their communities are: who is in it, what are their needs and how are they engaged, who are the local providers, are they safe, can the school signpost?
- Knowing what impact they are making, evaluating impact, capacity and funding

Key Findings

Introduction

A number of schools within Brent are already providing some extended services for their local communities. Case studies were undertaken at two of these schools and the evidence gathered was used to identify and develop the key findings and recommendations contained in this report.

Queens Park Community School (QPCS) is Brent's designated 'Full-Service Extended School', which means that the school provides all of the services within the core offer on site. The School is encouraged to link with as many community groups and partners as possible, to build on existing provision and bring about improved availability of sports, arts and other facilities. The intention is that communities will benefit from better access to services, local career development and opportunities and better supervision of children outside of school. Working in this way also facilitates close relationships with other schools.

Mitchell Brook primary school is situated within a Neighbourhood Renewal area and has worked very closely with the Neighbourhood Renewal team and the local community to identify needs and the best way of meeting them.

The extended school project at Mitchell Brook has developed out of the Neighbourhood Renewal Project (NRP). The NRP works with people from three estates and aims to develop a neighbourhood of which residents can be proud, be fully involved in on-going regeneration and are equipped with the skills to effect change themselves¹. The NRP approach is to work with residents and partners, build capacity and encourage wider participation.

The neighbourhood which is served by Mitchell Brook has unemployment that is double the borough average, public transport that is inadequate and the presence of the North Circular Road forms a physical barrier to residents, which has a negative impact on their health and quality of life. Brent's 1 in 5 survey provides the baseline information and justification for the projects.

1. Cluster Arrangements

As outlined earlier in this report there were a number of different rationales used to develop the pilot cluster areas. One was geographically based; one influenced by a local bus route; and one had a shared faith perspective.

Mitchell Brook is one of the pilot clusters, cluster E. The school is currently developing close working relationships with Brentfield School, and Oakington Manor, schools that are within the same neighbourhood renewal area and are geographically close. These three schools are in three different clusters in the pilot arrangements.

¹ Neighbourhood Renewal Vision

Queens Park Community School is not in one of the pilot clusters, but forms part of cluster D in the proposed structure, which is geographically smaller than most of the other clusters and contains many of the QPCS's feeder schools. As a result QPCS already has strong links with the other schools in the proposed cluster, and so feels better able to work in partnership.

A number of issues were raised by members of the community interviewed by the task group. In particular they were concerned that having clusters that spread across the borough could prove difficult as young people can be territorial, travelling long distances to other cluster partners could have financial implications for families and travelling in the evenings was undesirable.

The task group also identified a number of concerns about the proposed cluster groups. The main concern is around cluster G, a cluster of same faith schools. We believe that grouping schools together in faith groups could be divisive and would like to see this changed. The size of cluster and the distribution of facilities between cluster groupings will also impact on the local community's ability to access facilities and obtain the benefits that cluster groupings should bring. As stated earlier in this report, some of the clusters have had difficulty in identifying their community and in mapping facilities and services available in their area. We therefore believe that when reconsidering the cluster areas the council's move toward neighbourhood working, through ward working needs to be taken into account. One of the reasons for this is that there are no distinct boundaries to the cluster grouping, another may be the time and support needed to complete this work and this is discussed later in this report.

The task group recommends that the cluster grouping are reviewed, taking into account the following criteria:

- Geographically rational and coherence, taking into account neighbourhood working
- Inclusive embracing the diversity of the borough
- Existing partnerships and networks
- Distance and transport links between schools in each cluster
- Even distribution and complementarity of facilities between and within cluster groups
- Links to feeder schools
- Avoiding large cluster areas

Recommendation:

1. That the Neighbourhood Learning Communities (NCL) cluster arrangements be reviewed to take into account the following criteria.

- Geographically rational and coherence, taking into account neighbourhood working
- Inclusive embracing the diversity of the borough
- Existing partnerships and networks
- Distance and transport links between schools in each cluster
- Even distribution and complementarity of facilities between and within cluster groups
- Links to feeder schools
- Avoiding large cluster areas

2. Working with partners

Schools will be working with each other, agencies and partners to find out what local communities need and deliver services and activities that reflect those needs. The task group was keen to learn how both case study schools worked with partners.

Queens Park Community Schools (QPCS) uses its extended status to bring together a number of initiatives. These include:

- Brent Behaviour Programme.
- Business Advisory Board – involving business community partners.
- Healthy Schools.
- Adult Education with Brent Adult and Community Education Service (BACES).
- Widening Community Access to Facilities

New Deal for Communities, South Kilburn is a major partner and has funding for 10 years. This facilitates a local provider's network and funds:

- Out of Hours Study Centre at the Community Learning Centre (CLC).
- Out of Hours Study Centre in the NDC area
- Key stage 3 raising attainment project

The school makes a contribution to regeneration by providing use of job search facilities, ICT and adult classes.

There are many activities offered on the schools premises delivered by a number of partners. There are also a number of lets to local groups. Partners and community use include:

- Baladia Youth Group – 4 evenings per week
- BACES – 3 evening per week
- Brent Music Service
- London Wado Ryu Karate School
- Residents Associations
- Private Lettings for weddings and cultural events
- South Kilburn New Deal for Communities
- boys2MEN
- Adult computer Classes
- Brent Youth Offending team
- Brent Looked After Children

The extended schools project at Mitchell Brook is one of the Neighbourhood Renewal Projects and is aimed at building communities through a holistic approach and puts the schools at the heart of the community. It does this by focusing on the needs of children,

families and the community and contributes to the projects, jobs, training and learning outputs. The Neighbourhood Renewal Project's annual action plan, which is evidence-based and funded from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and Single Regeneration Budget, is approved by the Local Strategic Partnership. Projects are then commissioned through an Appraisal Panel made up of residents and board members of the funding bodies.

All projects need to demonstrate in measurable terms the impact of the funds on achieving the national floor targets. The project themes are:

- Community Safety
- Income & Employment
- Quality of Life incorporating health, education and community development

These themes are chosen to contribute to some key priorities within the neighbourhood, and comply with the strategic priorities aimed at closing the gaps.

Mitchell Brook has an extended schools co-ordinator who is funded by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and works 4 days per week and, through consultation with parents and community groups, he develops the project timetable, manages the projects, works with partners, monitors the budget and produces monthly reports. Many of the partners who work on the projects are locally based; usually they are existing voluntary or community groups that have already been providing services and activities in the area.

To help to develop partnership working within the cluster areas Brent Council is working with the National Extended Schools Remodelling Team. A series of workshops are being developed to provide a forum to share good practice, to identify capacity and impact issues, create opportunities to develop extended services and bring in others who have successfully managed partnerships. Those invited to attend will include a wide range of school officers, partners, health and social care, and the voluntary sector.

The task group learnt that the pilot clusters have experienced difficulty mapping partners and providers within their cluster area, partly due to the nature of the clusters as discussed earlier in the report, and partly due to workload. It is important that there is clarity about which partners and providers are involved in each cluster area. In particular we would like to ensure that those who currently deliver important services in the area, BACES for instance, still have a prominent role in the delivery of services and activities within cluster areas. A holistic approach is needed to bring together community needs, internal partners and external partners, including the Primary Care Trust (PCT) to ensure that extended services was not just about schools but really achieves the best outcomes for local people.

We recognise that the workshops mentioned above are part of the solution, but we also recognise that head teachers, and cluster groups will need strong support to develop partnership working. We believe that a coordinator should be attached to each cluster or group of clusters to help identify and map partners and facilities, provide support in

developing partner relationships and support with the management of those partnerships. The co-ordinator will also be key in helping to identify local need and developing strong links to the local community as outlined later in this report.

Recommendation:

2. A co-ordinator, funded from the Schools Standards Fund, is attached to each cluster of schools to help identify and map partners, facilities and activities in the cluster area. The co-ordinator will provide support in developing partner relationships, support with management of partnerships and business planning, and will take a lead in consulting and working with local communities.

3. Enabling Community Access

The task group believes that there needs to be as few barriers as possible to enabling local communities to access school facilities. For the purposes of this report we have focused on the physical environment, child protection, lettings policies (and particularly cost), community confidence and health & safety issues.

Mitchell Brook always has a caretaker on site, neighbourhood wardens patrol the area and lighting issues are being addressed. There are also very definite child protection safeguards. For instance all project leads are employed by the school and so are checked in the same way as other school employees and adhere to the council's health and safety policies. Most of the adult sessions are scheduled to take place after 6.30pm when after-school clubs end and there are no children on site. The ESOL classes, which take place earlier in the day, are supervised within an enclosed space.

The council's equality impact assessment is always used to assess whether projects commissioned by the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme impact negatively on the residents living in the 3 estates covered by the programme. In the case of Mitchell Brook, where disabled access to upper floors is difficult, all activities are held on the ground floor.

The insurance policy at Queens Park Community School covers children and other users, but they informed us that insurance companies have concerns about security, particularly when providing greater community access in the evenings. User level agreements have been used for Queens Park's City Learning Centre and these could be expanded on. Queens Park School were concerned that schools are expected to cover the extra cost of insurance out of their overall budget.

Zoning areas to separate young people from adults in school buildings can help to overcome many health and safety and child protection issues. This technique is used when planning and designing new school buildings to maximise their use and should be used to maximise community use of existing school buildings. This means that adaptations may need to be made to some buildings to zone areas and increase security. Other schools may not have equipment that is suitable for adults or have security issues that may hinder accessibility to facilities. We heard that the local authority does have a capital fund available to which governing bodies can submit proposals for capital works and these works can include enhancing their community

facilities. To overcome many of these issues outlined earlier the task group recommends that this fund is promoted to schools to provide solutions that will enable school buildings to be better utilised.

We heard that there was a constant battle between raising income and enabling wider community use as there are extra costs incurred when keeping facilities open, staffing and maintenance for instance, and these need to be met. The sports hall at Queens Park Community School was available for 5 a side, indoor cricket, karate and circuit training etc, but the school is unable to allow regular Saturday morning use of the football pitch, as maintenance costs are an issue. There are also difficulties managing the conflict between day and evening use of the school and at Queens Park Community School we heard that this can frequently rely on the good will of the staff, the site manager for instance. They believe that to enable wider community use the commitment of the staff and governors is imperative and needs to be embedded in the school's action and development plan.

Queens Park Community School's current lettings policy, which will soon be revised, has a two tier structure, private lets and concessionary lets. See Appendix 3. The criteria for concessionary rates are:

- Community Groups working with under 18s
- Community Groups working with adults
- Religious groups
- Education from outside school

Ensuring that lettings policies encourage rather than discourage community use is a key concern of the task group. We believe that the lettings policies developed by schools or clusters of schools should include an element of concessionary use and an element of free use. This can be funded by setting commercial rates for other users. We recommend that free use is focused on community groups who do not receive any grant funding and wish to put on public education events.

We believe that measures need to be taken to increase community confidence and ability to use facilities, services and activities. Each cluster should market facilities to ensure local people are aware of what is available. A resource pack should be developed and made available on a number of medium including the website and on dvd and video. The pack should provide information about the services, activities and facilities available within the cluster, and clear information on how to use schools and how to apply.

Recommendations:

3. Each cluster of schools develops a lettings policy that enables and encourages community use of facilities. The policy should include concessionary and free use funded from commercial lettings. Free use should be considered for community groups who do not receive any grant funding and would like to develop public education and community activities.

4. A small capital budget is identified, from existing budgets, to enable schools to make modifications to school buildings and equipment for better access to school facilities. Modifications may included security adaptations, zoning, and purchase of adult furniture such as chairs.

5. Clusters are encouraged to market their facilities, services and activities to the wider community. A resource pack should be developed and made available on a number of media including the website and on dvd and video. The pack should provide information about the services, activities and facilities available within the cluster and clear information on how to use and apply to use school facilities.

4. Involving the local community

The task group sees schools as the hub of the community. To achieve this we believe that it is key that local communities be given a role in influencing how the clusters operate and in developing the menu of activities within each cluster area.

We learnt that Queens Park Community School has a Business Advisory Board but there was currently no facility for community members to become involved in steering the project. It was felt that provision is predominantly driven by the school, but when the clusters are on stream they hope for a more formal structure to build community involvement.

At Mitchell Brook local people set the priorities and direct resources in the area. Project Cycle Management is used to design, deliver and evaluate projects. This process includes holding focus groups with deliverers, themed groups with residents, using neighbourhood forums and informing the local community through regular newsletters.

The task group heard that at Mitchell Brook residents led consultation events which were held at the start of the Neighbourhood Renewal Project and that the extended schools steering group has community members. The extended school runs from 8am – 6pm 5 days per week and Saturday morning and other community use takes place in the evening. Nearly all of the projects undertaken at the school are full with 25 – 30 children using the youth club every week. This contrasts sharply with the attendance of 3-4 children before the extended schools project started. Other activities included in the project are:

- After School Club
- Play schemes
- Youth Club
- Homework Clubs
- ESOL Classes
- Football programme
- Saturday School
- Counselling and Mediation
- Breakfast Club
- Dance Clubs
- Community Focus Activities

The local community is encouraged to use facilities and become involved in activities through leaflet drops, parents meetings, letters from the school, posters and display boards and more community focused activities are now being developed, for instance fitness classes started in January. A number of community members attended the task group meeting and provided positive feedback about the activities at Mitchell Brook.

The task group recognises that consultation with local communities, including children and young people, underpins the development of extended services and increasing community access to schools. The existing consultation forums should be used,

including area and user consultation forums, to link with local communities. The proposed cluster co-ordinators could take a leading role in building links with the community, consulting on their needs and developing a menu of services and activities. The task group sees a role for the schools, Council and voluntary groups to use school facilities to celebrate significant events, for instance 25th November - elimination of violence against women, 8th March international women's day, and veterans' day.

To ensure that the community has a prominent role, the task group recommends that a steering group established in each cluster area, which will also provide a role for the voluntary sector.

Recommendations:

6. A steering group be established in each cluster. The steering group will provide a prominent role for the local community and the voluntary sector and ensure monitoring systems are in place which assess and continuously improve community access to school facilities for the community. The Children and Families Department use this information when reviewing the implementation of the Extended Services Strategy.

7. Children, young people, and the wider community be consulted and participate in the development of services and activities in each cluster area

8. That school cluster steering groups work with the council and the voluntary sector to use facilities to celebrate significant events at a local level

5. Funding & Sustainability

The task group learnt that at the start of pilot period each cluster was allocated £100,000 to cover start-up costs for extended services. The cluster groups could use this to appoint cluster co-ordinators to plan, develop, manage and maintain extended, or use the funding to directly deliver services. Essentially, however, each cluster has the autonomy to decide how to allocate the funding.

Both the schools we visited as part of our case study raised concerns about securing long-term funding to be able to continue to deliver the services currently being delivered and to expand. The task group encountered a number of issues and problems that could result from a lack of funding. For instance facilities and services may not be available in the evenings because of the extra cost incurred, or the charging policy becomes a barrier for some members of the community or community groups accessing school facilities.

We heard that funding for the roll out will come from the Schools Standards Fund allocated from the council and will total £354,843 for 2006/7. Earlier in this report we have made a recommendation about how some of this money can be allocated to

ensure cluster areas are co-ordinated to maximise delivery through the extended schools strategy, increasing community access to school premises and the services and activities delivered in cluster areas

As discussed earlier in the report, there is a constant tension between raising money and enabling community use and we believe identifying some revenue funding would ease this. The Schools Standards Grant, which is a direct grant to schools, includes additional funding that has been allocated for schools to meet the challenge of extended services. The task group recommends some form of encouragement for schools in each cluster group to identify money to use for revenue funding for extended services, in particular for increasing community use of school facilities.

As a means of enhancing accessibility and income, schools should be encouraged and supported to attract the private sector for both lettings and sponsoring of events. In addition monies other than from the Standard Grant should be sourced for extended services, this could include 106 monies.

Recommendation:

9. The Children & Families department identifies the component of the Schools Standards Grant that is intended to finance Extended Services programmes and promote this for use on projects agreed by each cluster. In addition clusters should investigate other sources of income to ensure that income is maximised

10. That clusters seek to achieve best value for money using a portion of the money identified from the Standards Grant and funding obtained from other sources to make existing facilities more widely available by funding:

- Maintenance of facilities
- Additional caretaking
- Any Additional insurance costs

6. Monitoring, Evaluation and Sharing Good Practice

There is currently a national debate on how to evaluate the link between extended services and the benefits that are identified earlier in this report. We heard that the new Ofsted schools inspection framework includes an element of inspection of extended services managed by schools. In particular inspectors are looking at how extended services are raising standards and contributing to the Every Child Matters outcomes. Joint Area Reviews may also evaluate how well local services are contributing to improving outcomes for children.

The task group felt that the pilot cluster arrangement made the monitoring and evaluating the use of extended services, school facilities and the impact this will have on the local community difficult. This is partially because of the nature of the clusters, and partially because of the lack of distinct boundaries. The review of cluster arrangements will resolve these problems.

The task group recognises that there is a need to assess the level of community access to school facilities, which members of the community access them, and what is the impact of increasing access. We also recommend that the cluster and extended schools experience should be documented for learning and sharing of good practice

We have therefore made the following recommendation:

Recommendation:

11. Cluster and extended schools experience should be documented for learning and sharing of good practice. Also that criteria be developed to measure the following:

- How many community lets there are in each cluster area.
- Which sections of the community are using services, activities and facilities and which are not.
- The level of satisfaction with services, activities and facilities provided.

References

The task group referred to a number of reports in the course of its work. Key documents include:

Education Act 2002

Extended Schools – Providing Opportunities & Services for all DfES 2002

Extended Schools – Access & Opportunities & Services for all DfES 2005

Every Child Matters: Changes for Children Programme 2004

Youth Matters DfES 2005

Brent's Community Strategy 2006 – 2010

Brent's Corporate Strategy

Brent's Draft Young People's Plan

Involving and working with the voluntary and community sectors – Teachernet Practical Knowledge 2005

Welcoming the whole Community – Teachernet Practical Knowledge 2005

Evidence & Evaluation – Teachernet Practical Knowledge 2005

The task group heard evidence from a number of people during the course of its work. These include:

Susan Mackenzie – Head of Planning & Development, Children & Families

Sue Alton – ContinYou

Mike Hulme – Head, Queens Park Community School

Barrie Birch – Deputy Head, Queens Park Community School

Meckola Ray – Neighbourhood Manager, St Raphael's & Brentfield NRT

Meghan Doyle – Project Lead, St Raphael's & Brentfield NRT

Theresa Landreth – Head, Mitchell Brook School

Adrian Kelly – Extended Schools Co-ordinator Mitchell Brook

Key Community Workers – Mitchell Brook

Members of the community – Mitchell Brook

The task group used a number of websites in the course of its work. These included:

www.continyou.org.uk

www.dfes.gov.uk

www.ed.gov

www.teachernet.gov.uk

DRAFT