



Executive
9th October 2006

**Report from the Director of
Policy and Regeneration**

For Action

Wards Affected:
ALL

Community Access to Schools

Forward Plan Ref: PRU-06/07-009

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines the work, findings and recommendations of the Overview task group's investigation into community access to schools. The task group membership comprised of Cllr Arnold (chair), Cllr Kabir, Cllr Galdbaum, Cllr Wharton and Mr Lorenzato (Education co-optee). The group met on six occasions between September 2005 and February 2006 and their final report was agreed by the Overview Committee on 23rd March 2006.
- 1.2 The task group was set up to explore what was seen as the critical issue of how the extended services agenda could be used to connect with local communities and contribute to the complex issue of providing facilities for local communities. They wanted to ensure that the extended services strategy expanded on existing good practice and increased the availability of services, activities and facilities to local communities.
- 1.3 One of the task group's main tasks was to influence the development of the Extended Schools Strategy. In order to complete this work the task group undertook 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 the parents and children who use the facilities offered at these schools. They wanted to learn from experience within the borough and, in doing so, focused 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

1.4 The task group met with the Extended Schools officer formally on two occasions to gather evidence. A further meeting was organised in order express the task groups emerging findings and influence the strategy prior to it being agreed by the Executive.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 To note the recommendations made in this review and to thank the task group for their work.

2.2 That officers bring a separate report to the Executive detailing progress on and outcomes of the Extended Schools project.

2.3 That officers report back to the Executive on progress towards ensuring that school buildings are available for public use.

3.0 Recommendations from the Task Group

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

3.2. 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

3.3. 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.

- 3.4. 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.
- 3.5. 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.
- 3.6. 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.
- 3.7. 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.
- 3.8. Children, young people, and the wider community are consulted and participate in the development of services and activities in each cluster area.
- 3.9. School cluster steering groups work with the council and the voluntary sector to use facilities to celebrate significant events at a local level
- 3.10. 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
- 3.11. 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

3.12. 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.

4. **Service Department's Response**

The Children and Families department have considered the recommendations outlined in this report.

Neighbourhood Learning Communities: Cluster Arrangements

The recently published Extended Services Strategy has amended the original cluster arrangements proposed in the pilot project. The clusters are now aligned with the Primary Care Trust localities to strengthen partnership working with our health colleagues. The localities are geographically based to take into account neighbourhood working and this will aim to reduce the distance between services and activities within a locality. Each locality embraces the diversity in the borough. Many partnerships and networks exist to support a number of needs and support a range of programmes, and the Extended Services agenda aims to compliment these. For example the newly aligned clusters will support the Integrated Services Programme that is currently being piloted as a mechanism to support the swift and easy referral systems for vulnerable children and families. The clusters are of a near equal size, but as they are neighbourhood based this does not automatically mean that there is an even distribution of facilities, but the increase in size does allow for an increase in the number of facilities. Many of our secondary schools do not have formal feeder schools and the size of the clusters is now larger. How this will be managed operationally is currently being discussed at cluster level.

Cluster Co-ordination

The draft Extended Services Strategy asked schools whether the allocated Standards Funding should be used to provide services to children and families or contribute towards co-ordination costs. Our consultation clearly supported funding to be used to support direct delivery of services. However the Children and Families department agree that cluster co-ordination is essential in developing extended services. Therefore, the centrally retained portion of the Standards Fund will be re-aligned to fund a cluster co-ordinator, and funding available from our Prevention Services budget will fund two further co-ordinator posts. In addition two localities are participating in the Integrated Services Programme which funds a co-ordinator and a number of lead professionals. Overall strategic responsibility for the development of Extended Services will be incorporated in a new post of 'Head of Children's Partnerships'.

Consultation

Incorporated into the job description for the Cluster Co-ordinators is consultation and participation of children, young people and the wider community. We are committed to responding to the needs of children and families.

Funding

The Extended Services Strategy outlines the various funding streams available to schools which can be used to support extended activities. In addition the new DfES guidance on 'Planning and Funding' will be distributed to schools, and followed up by a workshop exploring different funding models and examples of good practice. We will also be using funding from the Local Area Agreement to appoint a 'Funding Officer' who will support schools and agencies in accessing external funding streams.

Lettings Policy / Marketing of Facilities

The cluster co-ordinators will work closely with schools and agencies, providing advice, support and guidance with regards to letting policies and will encourage schools to consider concessionary and free use of facilities. Co-ordinators will also support schools in publicising their facilities to the wider community. The Children and Families department is currently developing guidance materials for schools which will also include examples of good practice and example policies for providing facilities for community use.

Capital Budget

The Council has approved c. £57 million to Children and families over the next three years starting in 2006/07 (including Devolved Formula Capital and other grants) aimed at improving the teaching and learning environment and targeted at improving school and other buildings. Resources are earmarked for improving access. Wherever possible schools, where there are planned remodelling and major refurbishment schemes, are encouraged to include measures to enhance community access to the building facilities. The Asset Management Plan Service will continue to support schools particularly in developing school development plans and master plans in advance of major capital investment either under Building Schools for the Future or the recently announced Primary Capital Programme. Such plans would incorporate elements aimed at enhancing community use and access.

Steering Group

Setting up a steering group will be encouraged in all clusters to monitor and evaluate access to extended services and activities. A range of opportunities are being provided for schools and agencies, both statutory and voluntary and community, to work together – workshops during the Summer and Autumn term 2006, 'good practice' seminars each half term, and Spring term 'trade fair'. Workshops will cover topics such as: funding and sustainability, inclusion and engaging communities.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 Funding available to support the Extended Services Strategy is within the Standards Fund: Grant 106. The funding is to support the Local Authority's Extended Services Strategy. The Strategy is proposing:

Total grant 2006 – 2008: £709,686

	2006 - 2007	2007 - 2008
Allocated to clusters	£275,000 (£55,000 per cluster)	£285,000 (£57,000 per cluster)
Centrally retained	£79,843	£69,843
Total	£354,843	£354,843

- 5.2 Cluster allocations will be used to deliver direct services in line with the 'core offer', for example breakfast clubs, after-school activities, and parenting support workshops. The centrally retained amount will fund the Extended Schools Co-ordinator and the delivery of multi-agency workshops.
- 5.3 By virtue of section 50 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, the governing body of a school with a delegated budget may deploy the resources provided through the school's budget share as it thinks fit, subject only to restrictions as may be imposed by the maintaining LEA's scheme for financing schools, and to the overriding requirement that the budget share is spent only "for any purposes of the school". This requirement is generally taken to mean that the budget share must be spent to the educational advantage of the pupils in the school. This requirement therefore precludes the use of funds from the budget share to support non-school activities, even where those take place on school premises and the governors and head have overall responsibility for their management.
- 5.4 Additional funding has been put into the Schools Standards Grant to help schools meet the challenge of providing access to extended services. From 2006 – 07 schools will have the flexibility to spend their School Standards Grant on community facilities to support extended services that are not eligible for funding through their main delegated budget. Additional funding has also been allocated through the Dedicated School Grant to enable schools to develop a more personalised programme of study support. Schools will be able to use this money to develop study support opportunities.
- 5.5 The DfES believe it is likely that charging will be the main source of ongoing funding for many extended services that are delivered using the schools' power to provide community facilities. As this service cannot be subsidised from the delegated budget, income from charging must be sufficient to cover any appropriate apportionment of, for example, staffing and premises costs.
- 5.6 In order to support the Local Area Agreement stretch targets for Extended Services, additional funding of £80,000 has become available to employ a Funding Officer who will be able to support schools in accessing external

funding streams to enable a wider range of activities and services to be delivered in and through schools.

- 5.7 In addition to these funds the Council, schools and other agencies are committed to exploring how existing services and other funding streams can be aligned to maximize the benefit to children and families in Brent. As the DfES has only outlined the Standards Fund allocation to 2008, the Strategy will be reviewed during 2007/2008 when the financial position beyond that year will be clearer.

6.0 Legal Implications

- 6.1 The Education Act 2002 section 27 gives a power to the governing body of a maintained school to provide services for the benefit of people who live or work in the locality in which the school is situated. The governing body may charge for those services.

7.0 Diversity Implications

- 7.1 Recommendations from task groups are incorporated within service department's delivery or development plans and as such will be subject to the equalities impact assessments carried out by services as part of their work program. In addition, the annual review of Overview & Scrutiny activities includes an equalities impact assessment.
- 7.2 This report hopes to address equalities issues to help make services fairer and more easily accessible to all.

8.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

Background Papers

The Community Access to Schools Task Group Report

Contact Officers

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