



**Executive**  
8<sup>th</sup> October 2007

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

Wards Affected:  
ALL

**The transfer of Anansi Nursery staff, children and  
resources to the Willow Children's Centre**

Forward Plan Ref: C&F-07/08-006

**1.0 Summary**

The Willow Children's Centre was opened in November 2006, it includes a Nursery with places for 90 children aged from birth to 5 years, as well as a range of services delivered from the Centre to support health, child development and employability for families in its catchment area.

1.2 Anansi Nursery is located within the Knowles House complex on Longstone Avenue. The building is owned by Adult Social Care and is coming to the end of its lifespan. Physical constraints prevent the development of the building to provide full day-care and integrated services in line with the Children's Centre model.

1.3 It is proposed that the children, staff and resources of Anansi Nursery permanently transfer to the Willow Children's Centre. This has a number of positive outcomes including, locating specialist provision to the north and south of the borough making travel easier for families whilst maintaining the level of provision needed; ensuring that the children and parents of Anansi nursery can benefit from the full Children's Centre core offer from a purpose built Children's Centre and the transfer will release funds for the Council's use through more efficient use of resources.

## 2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Executive are recommended to approve the permanent transfer of Anansi Nursery staff, children and resources from Longstone Avenue NW10 3UN to the Willow Children's Centre Barnhill Road HA9 9YP

## 3.0 Detail

- 3.1 Anansi is an OFSTED registered nursery with places for 40 children aged from 2 – 5 years. Anansi Nursery is staffed by highly experienced practitioners who are particularly skilled in working with children who have learning difficulties and disabilities. Children aged 2-5 are placed at Anansi and Treetops Nurseries by the Children and Families Department through the Under 5's Panel. These children are referred from all parts of the borough, and some families receive funded transport for their children, dependent on family circumstances and individual children's needs.
- 3.2 Anansi and Treetops Nurseries are geographically close; within 10 minutes walking distance of each other, and are positioned in the south of the borough (**NW10 3UN and NW10 3SQ**).
- 3.3 The purpose built Willow Children's Centre opened in November 2006 and replaced Barnhill Nursery. Willow has an OFSTED registered Nursery with places for 90 children aged from birth to 5 years. 42 children were registered at the Willow in August 2007, with capacity for an additional 48 children. The Willow provides a range of services delivered from the Centre to support health, child development and employability for families in the catchment area. Childcare and early education is provided at the Willow for 48 weeks of the year, between 8am and 6pm. In line with Children's Centre requirements early education at the Willow is led by a qualified teacher.
- 3.4 The continuation of service delivery from the Anansi building (ground floor premises within Knowles House on Longstone Avenue) is not sustainable. The building has a limited lifespan, and is unsuitable for expansion. Anansi was a site option for a Children's Centre in phase 1, however, it could not be progressed due to structural limitations and site constraints.
- 3.5 Staff and children from Anansi Nursery spent a short period located at the Willow Children's Centre between April and May 2007 whilst essential works were carried out to Knowles House. Children and staff became familiar with the building and systems in operation at the Willow and positive feedback was received from parents and staff during the stay.
- 3.6 The Brent Children and Young People's Plan sets out the Council's commitment to integrated service provision, and the Early Years and Childcare Strategy highlights Brent's commitment to accessible, flexible and high quality early education and childcare provision. The Children's Centre model of working fully addresses these aspects, and embodies the government's approach to working holistically with communities and excluded groups.

3.7 In implementing the borough's strategy for under 5's provision, the transfer of Anansi staff and resources to the Willow will enable specialist under 5's provision to be more equally spread across the borough. In addition, the children and families transferring to the Willows will have access to the full Children's Centre core offer.

3.8 Benefits of transfer for all children, families and staff

The transfer of operations, staff and children from Anansi to Willow provides a number of positive outcomes. There will be minimal disruption to children's learning because staff already allocated to children as key-workers will continue in the role, record keeping systems will be continued as they are and children's records will be transferred as part of the process. Health and other Professionals who work with specific children will be informed of the transfer and will continue their therapeutic input at the Willow.

Anansi staff are already familiar with the environment and facilities at the Willow and are therefore able to make accurate plans for their own and the children's transfer. Resources which are not needed at the Willow will be re-cycled within the phase 2 Children's Centres programme, notably to provide stay and play and crèche sessions for families and childminders at hired venues in advance of phase 2 buildings being completed.

3.9 The permanent transfer would achieve a number of positive outcomes:

For all children

- Improved socialisation and relationships with a wider group of children
- Consistency of relationships with staff, and minimal disruption to progress overall
- Broader range of experiences through improved staff numbers
- Access to healthier meals that are cooked on the premises
- Reduced travelling time to Nursery ( for current Anansi children)
- Opportunities to join Centre based activities with parents and carers

For all families

- Reduction in agency staff at Willow and more permanent staff in post
- Consistency of relationships with staff which will lead to improved outcomes for children
- Reduced journey time ( for Anansi parents)
- Access to on-site service provision (Citizens Advice, Cook and Eat, Stay and Play sessions, managing children's behaviour, ICT and basic skills training, return to work information, for example)
- Access to extended day provision to meet the needs of working parents
- Opportunity to place siblings at nursery together (regardless of the learning difficulties or disabilities of one sibling)

For all staff

- Staff development through working with a wider range of professionals and members of the community
- Opportunity to use skills in working with children from birth to 2
- Joint training and skills sharing with other professionals working on site
- Further experience of working on children's transition between nursery and school
- Increased understanding of the Children's Centres agenda, and awareness of national developments in early years and childcare
- Experience of fully integrated working including all ages (0-5) and those with complex needs attending the Centre

3.10 As part of the process for the transfer of Anansi nursery to the Willow Children's Centre parents, staff, ward councillors and UNISON have been consulted about the transfer proposal. Both staff and parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the transfer and are of the view that a move to the Willow is in the best interests of the children currently based at Anansi and will lead to better outcomes for those children. Most parents highlighted that the Willow was closer to their home and this would reduce journey time for the children. Others were pleased that they would be able to access additional activities and services such as parenting classes and counselling. The Willow Local Management Board met on 16th August 2007 and approved the Anansi nursery transfer to the Willow, subject to Executive approval in October 2007.

3.11 In order to minimise disruption to the children, the staff, resources and children from Anansi Nursery transferred to the Willow Children's Centre on a temporary basis at the start of this academic year. This enabled those children who moved on to statutory schooling to conclude their time at Anansi in the normal way and children who were due to join Anansi in September started at the Willow. A briefing note was circulated to all Members on 17th August 2007 informing them of this temporary move and that a detailed report will be presented to Executive in October 2007.

3.12 The proposed move of children from Anansi to the Willow has meant that in September 2007 there were a total of 68 children aged 0-5 on the register at the Willow Children's Centre. The temporary transfer of Anansi staff, children and resources was efficiently managed with a period of 4 days (28th - 31st August) when nursery places were not available to Anansi children. This followed the annual graduation ceremony on Friday 24th August which enabled staff, children and parents to celebrate achievements, and to look forward to the temporary transfer period. Places were opened for existing Anansi children on Monday September 3rd, and transport arrangements were in place for all children and families in need of support. Newly registered children at Anansi and at Willow Children's Centre have been inducted and are currently undertaking a settling period.

- 3.13 The Knowles House site has been temporarily cleared and secured in collaboration with Adult Social Care. It is proposed that the space previously occupied by Anansi will be used in late 2007, to relocate the children and staff of Treetops Nursery during refurbishment and extension works at Treetops. This will enable the works to be completed efficiently and will ensure the Council is able to secure best value from the contractor.

#### **4.0 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 The proposed transfer will enable the delivery of more cost efficient early years provision whilst improving the environment in which children currently attending Anansi can play and learn. The transfer will achieve efficiency savings by eliminating overhead costs at Anansi and limiting recruitment of agency staff at the Willow.
- 4.2 It is anticipated that the transfer will result in budget savings of £150,000 per annum from April 2008. Although the costs at Anansi are predominantly staff costs the transfer of staff to the Willow will alleviate the need to recruit further agency staff at the Willow. Further efficiencies will be made from economies of scale resulting from the transfer and minor savings resulting from overheads at Anansi nursery. It should be noted that overhead costs at Anansi are minimal because the nursery did form part of the Knowles House building occupied by Adult Social Care.
- 4.3 In the interim it is projected that £25,000 can be released in each of quarters 3 and 4 of the current financial year. This is a conservative estimate based on the fact that some handover of duties will be required with agency staff and potential training of existing staff. There will also be some outstanding overheads at Anansi. Therefore, full cost savings will not be seen until the new financial year.

#### **5.0 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications resulting from the transfer.

#### **6.0 Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 There are no adverse implications for children, families or staff involved in the transfer.

A sufficient number of places for children aged 2-5 with learning difficulties and disabilities, and for children in need will continue to be available to children in Brent. Accessibility to places at Treetops Nursery in NW10, and Willow Children's Centre in HA9, will continue to be supported by travel assistance in appropriate cases. Places will continue to be available to all Brent residents, interpretation and translation will continue to be available to those families who require it. The Willow Children's Centre building is fully compliant with Disability Discrimination Act requirements, and all areas are fully accessible to disabled staff, parents and children.

## **7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)**

7.1 All staff currently employed by Anansi Nursery are to transfer to the Willow Children's Centre.

### **Background Papers (essential)**

- i) Brent Children and Young People's Plan (2006-09)
- ii) Brent Early Years and Childcare Strategy

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