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## Meeting of Executive Members and Children's Services Advisory Panel

12 June 2007

Report of the Director of Learning, Culture & Children's Services

### Children's Centres Programme: Progress Update

#### Summary

1. This report informs the Executive Member and Advisory Panel of progress to date on the development of the eight Children's Centres in York under Phase 2 of the national programme.

#### Background

2. The Government's aim is to establish a network of 3500 Sure Start Children's Centres across the country by 31 March 2010 – "one for every community". The City of York Council was included in Phase 2 of the national programme and has received £1.683m for capital works, and £1.546m in revenue funding, to establish eight Children's Centres across the City by 31 March 2008. The eight Centres will serve a population of just under 6,200 children from birth to five years. It is anticipated that the Council may be asked to develop a further 3-4 Centres under the third and final phase of the national programme (2008/2010), enabling a network of 11 or 12 Sure Start Children's Centres to provide services to all 9,000 of the City's under fives population. The announcement of Phase 3 is expected towards the Autumn of this year, along with information about the longer-term funding of the programme.
3. Sure Start Children's Centres are at the heart of the Government's strategy to tackle child poverty and social exclusion and to deliver better outcomes for children and families. They have become a primary means of delivering a range of integrated and localised services to children aged 0-5 years and their parents/carers, building on the successes of Sure Start local programmes, early excellence centres and neighbourhood nurseries.
4. It was always intended that Sure Start local programmes should serve as a catalyst for the re-shaping of key statutory services for children from birth to five years. The children's centre programme has now become the Government's main vehicle for "mainstreaming" the progress that has been made through the 524 Sure Start local programmes. This approach aims to ensure that the lessons learned through local programmes about "what works" for children and families are carried forward into the planning, design and delivery of mainstream services; and that Sure Start values and principles should underpin an approach and style of working that is made available to all children under the age of five and their parents/carers across the country. A particular emphasis has been placed on the importance of actively involving

parents/carers and the local community in the planning and delivery of services provided by and through Sure Start Children's Centres.

5. Children's centre services address the five objectives set out in *Every Child Matters* and should be responsive to locally identified need and parental choice. Services will be offered to parents-to-be, parents/carers and children under the age of five years, to promote the physical, intellectual and social development of babies and young children so that they can flourish at home and when they get to school.
6. Sure Start Children's Centres will offer information, advice and support to parents/carers, as well as integrated early years provision, access to health care services, family support, outreach visiting, adult learning opportunities and access to employment advice. The mix of services on offer will differ between Centres, reflecting the particular make-up and needs of individual communities. However, there will be an expectation that resources, whilst remaining available to all, should be particularly targeted on those children who are in greatest need of additional help to achieve their fullest potential – what has been termed “progressive universalism”.
7. Sure Start Children's Centres are underpinned by legislation. The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities and their NHS and Jobcentre Plus partners to work together to improve outcomes for all children up to the age of 5 years and to reduce the inequalities between them. The Act also makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage, a new integrated education and care quality framework for children from birth to five, which must be in place by September 2008, and which will support providers in delivering high quality integrated early education and care.
8. At the time of the Government's very first announcement of its children's centre programme in July 2002, the Council was already in the process of taking its own decision to work towards the establishment of Children's Centres in three areas of the city, making use of locally available resources including Sure Start and Neighbourhood Nursery funding. The aim at that time was to re-locate the three Family Centres to primary school sites at Hob Moor, Clifton Green and Tang Hall. The additional resources made available to the Council under Phase 2 have provided much needed support and have helped to address the significant funding problems that had made it difficult to progress plans as rapidly as was originally hoped.
9. However, the requirement to develop a total of eight Sure Start Children's Centres across the City forced new thinking about the overall approach to service delivery. The concept of “locality” emerged as an organisational and strategic planning framework that would support the consolidation of resources on three main sites (or “service hubs”) at Hob Moor in the west, Clifton Green in the north-east and Tang Hall in the south-east of the City, whilst developing partnerships with other Children's Centres in each locality in order to ensure that the core offer of services is delivered from all eight Centres – see **Background Paper No.2** for full details of the service delivery framework.
10. Clusters of 2/3 Children's Centres in each of the three localities will be managed by a Locality Children's Centres Manager. A central responsibility of

this post will the strategic planning and operational co-ordination and delivery of the core offer of services through a “virtual” multi-agency Locality Team – see **Background Paper No.3** and the organisational chart attached as **ANNEX 1**. These three virtual teams will be accountable to the governing bodies of each of the eight Children’s Centres for developing services in line with locally determined needs and priorities, within the framework of the core offer of services. The three Locality Manager posts are seen as critical to the success of the overall approach and to the management and effective delivery of services in accordance with the core offer.

### **Progress to date**

11. The Executive Member for Education and Children’s Services, meeting with the Advisory Panel on 18 October 2005, agreed proposals to site the eight Children’s Centre at Hob Moor, Westfield, Carr (West locality), Clifton Green, Haxby Road, New Earswick (North East locality), Tang Hall and St. Lawrence’s Schools (South East locality) – see **Background Paper No.1**.
12. A Project Manager was appointed to co-ordinate the development of the eight Centres, reporting to a multi-agency Project Board chaired by the Director of Learning, Culture & Children’s Services. The Project Manager took up post in February 2006 and has since worked very closely with the manager of the Sure Start local programme to co-ordinate the contributions of a wide range of specialist practitioners, to provide direction and support to the eight Local Leadership Groups, and to work towards a smooth and safe transition from the Sure Start local programme to the children’s centre programme.

### **Partnership working**

13. Local Leadership Groups (LLGs) were established for all eight Children’s Centres at an early stage in the process, with Head Teachers being asked to take a prominent role in providing the necessary local leadership. The LLGs were always intended to be small, short-life executive groups, comprising representative of the three key partners (education, health and social care), that would drive initial progress, before giving way to wider and more representative governance arrangements, which will include strong parent representation.
14. All LLGs have continued to meet regularly over the past twelve months, and each Group has now held between nine and eleven full meetings, with additional meetings to progress specific issues, principally the capital programme. Generally, LLGs have been well supported by the key statutory sector partners and are proving to be effective vehicles for progressing early planning and development. They are now working steadily towards the establishment of partnership governance arrangements for each of the eight Centres by the Autumn of this year (or possibly earlier in some cases), followed by the submission of applications to the DfES for formal Children’s Centre designation.

### **Public involvement**

15. The first phase of a stakeholder consultation exercise has now been completed. Individual reports on the emerging messages have been

presented to each Local Leadership Group. The consultation was undertaken on behalf of LLGs by a group of Sure Start parent researchers and has elicited views from over 250 parents and 130 young children, as well as from a wide range of local practitioners and other stakeholders. These views will inform current work towards the development of Implementation Plans for each of the Centres. Through the consultation process there has been a very positive engagement with significant numbers of local parents, many of whom have expressed a firm interest in becoming more involved in the governance arrangements. These parents are likely candidates to serve as some of the first parent representatives on the governing bodies of the Children's Centres.

16. The significance of this early work cannot be over-emphasised. The active involvement of parents in the design, delivery and planning of local services has been seen as a key factor contributing to the success of Sure Start local programmes, a fact that has been strongly underlined by Beverley Hughes, the Minister for Children, Young People and Families. The challenges for the future will be to support parents/carers in playing a full and active part in governance arrangements, and to ensure that an on-going dialogue with parents/carers and other stakeholders becomes embedded in the practice of the Children's Centre teams and is used to continuously improve services.

### **Governance and management arrangements**

17. Guidance on governance and management arrangements for Sure Start Children's Centres is still awaited from the Department for Education & Skills. Meantime, a representative working group has developed a statement of principles and local guidelines to inform decisions about the most appropriate governance arrangement for each of the eight Children's Centres. This work was recently reported to the Children's Centre Project Board and is now being shared with Local Leadership Groups – see **Background Paper No.5**.
18. Research to date has pointed to two broad models of partnership governance – either as an extension of the responsibilities of a school's governing body, or as a separate governing body developed along the lines of a Sure Start Partnership Board but with strong links to the school's governing body. The research indicates that both models can work successfully, provided they have the full support and commitment of local stakeholders. The Project Board has endorsed the principle that, within the local guidelines, there must be freedom to choose either model, based on local circumstances and preferences.

### **Capital planning**

19. New build and/or refurbishment work has been required on all eight Children's Centre sites to create the necessary additional facilities. As indicated above, the development of the Children's Centres at Hob Moor and Clifton was agreed before the Council's inclusion in Phase 2 of the national programme. The Hob Moor site, which has been funded through the Private Finance Initiative, opened in late April 2006. The Clifton site, which has been developed through a mix of funding sources, including Sure Start York's capital budget, opened in November 2006.

20. Of the remaining six sites, building work started on the New Earswick site at the beginning of this year and is progressing well. Completion is expected during September 2007. Design proposals for the Haxby Road site were finally approved by the DfES consultant architect on 23 March 2007, following protracted discussions, and the tendering process is now well advanced. Design plans for the St. Lawrence's, Tang Hall and Carr sites have been agreed by the respective Local Leadership Groups and will be submitted for DfES approval by the end of May 2007. There have been significant delays at the design and planning stages on these four sites, associated in part with the age and condition of the buildings; in part with the particular challenge of meeting the rigorous standards that have been laid down to ensure the quality of play and learning environments for young children; and in part with the need to identify additional capital to augment the DfES capital grant. Despite these delays, there remains a confidence that building work will be completed on all four sites by early in 2008, although these timescales may be subject to change as work progresses. The final site, at Westfield, requires a modest injection of capital to re-provision two rooms as facilities for visiting practitioners to deliver individual and small group sessions.

### **Revenue planning**

21. A revenue budget for 2007/08 that will support the proposed service delivery framework, was agreed by the Project Board at its meeting on 18 February 2007. Information from Government on the revenue funding available for the programme from 1 April 2008 onwards is expected in the Autumn of 2007, when longer-term financial and service planning will be required.

### **Recruitment to the Locality Children's Centres Manager posts**

22. The national advertising campaign for the three posts attracted up to 40 enquiries and resulted in 26 applications from a range of complementary backgrounds. Interviews were held over the two days 16 & 19 March and involved stakeholder representatives and parents. Three strong appointments have been made, two of whom are local practitioners, the third of whom is currently working for a neighbouring Authority. Two of the three will take up post on 21 May. The third postholder will transfer across from her existing post within the Council by the end of August and possibly much sooner.

### **Recruitment to the Children's Centre Locality Teams**

23. Children's Centres will be expected to offer, directly or indirectly, a mix of universal and targeted services, with easy access to more specialist services. Particular elements of the universal services will be developed from the mix of multi-disciplinary services currently provided by the Sure Start local programme, as these services are drawn into mainstream provision through the Children's Centres. Since York has benefited from only one dispersed Sure Start programme, it is imperative that sufficient capability is developed to ensure that the universal and targeted elements of the core offer of services can be effectively delivered across all eight Children's Centres. Accordingly, the Children's Centres service delivery framework invests a significant proportion of the dedicated revenue budget in strengthening, extending and re-shaping Sure Start York's current organisational and service delivery framework in order to effectively deliver the core offer of services across the City.

In addition to their responsibilities for multi-agency co-ordination and the planning and design of increasingly integrated services, the three Locality Children's Centres Managers will each be responsible for a Locality Integrated Services Team (occupying the organisational "space" previously occupied by Sure Start York's two patch teams). The Integrated Services Teams will be established over the Summer period through a mix of recruitment to new and/or additional posts and the assimilation of existing Sure Start York staff, where appropriate and in accordance with the Council's Human Resources procedures.

### **Organising to deliver the core offer of services**

24. As described above, the Children's Centres Programme is a vehicle for greater investment in early preventative services at Levels 1 and 2 of the local Preventative Strategy. The service delivery framework seeks to build on the role and achievements of the Sure Start Local Programme over the past five years. However, it is important to remember that key elements of the core offer of services will continue to be delivered by staff of the key partner agencies. For example, midwives and health visitors will play a central role in delivering the range of required health care services, including those crucial first contacts with beginning parents. Good progress is being made towards the location of the Health Visitor and eventually the Midwifery Team Leaders and some of their staff within each of the three "service hubs" at Hob Moor, Clifton & Tang Hall Children's Centres. In addition, specially equipped clinical rooms are being (or will be) developed at each of these three Centres, with similar but more limited facilities available at the other five Centres, to facilitate the increased delivery of core community nursing and other health care services within local communities.

### **Sure Start Local Programme**

25. Work is now well advanced to address a range of issues associated with the transition from a dispersed SSLP to eight Children's Centres, primarily: HR issues; planning to ensure a safe and orderly transition of services; and the transfer of parental involvement into the emerging Children's Centres governance framework. The 2002/06 Sure Start local evaluation report has now been published (see **Background Paper No.7**) and offers, amongst other things, a valuable evidence-base for the local Children's Centres Programme on the strengths, limitations and costs of a range of services and initiatives that have been delivered over the past four years.

### **Inclusion of disabled children and those with complex health needs in Children's Centres**

26. A short-life multi-agency working group has been established under the auspices of the Project Board to develop a local strategy for ensuring that disabled children and those with complex health needs are able to access the core offer of Children's Centre services at each Centre and/or services of a more specialised nature that may be more effectively delivered on a city-wide basis. The working group's report will inform and shape aspects of the service planning work that is now being undertaken by the Local Leadership Groups.

## **Information for Families**

27. A strong message from parents through the consultation process has been the need to develop more effective and accessible means of providing advice and information services to parents/carers. The Council's Children's Information Service (CIS) is leading a piece of work to develop public information services in each of the eight Children's Centres. "Information Champions" have been identified at the Hob Moor and Clifton Children's Centres as part of a pilot exercise that has seen the use of "warm phones" to put parents in touch with information and advice from JobCentre Plus, the Benefits Agency and other sources, and the use of a personal computer to access the CIS and other information sources over the internet. It is planned to develop this same level of provision across all eight sites, building on the experience of the two pilot sites. It is also planned to offer advice and information sessions staffed by CIS outreach workers, and to offer some level of local access to advisers from JobCentre Plus and Future Prospects.

## **Integrated early years provision**

28. Another short-life working group has produced a strategy for developing integrated early education and childcare provision across each Children's Centre partnership, in line with the challenging requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and the core offer of services – see **Background Paper No.4**. A number of initiatives to explore and develop increased integration of provision and practice will be piloted over the next 12 months. There will also be an investment in dedicated capacity to undertake service development work over the same period.

## **Workforce Development**

29. There are very significant workforce development issues to be addressed as early education and care services are gradually re-shaped in accordance with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. There are other challenges around the greater integration of training and staff development activity in line with the development of a common core of knowledge and skills across the full range of practitioners who work with children and their families. A further working group has been established to report to the Project Board on proposals for a local workforce development strategy.

## **Neighbourhood Policing Service**

30. Following a recent contact with Chief Inspector Nick Warnes, Safer York Partnership, work is underway to explore the potential for Neighbourhood Policing Service officers to develop close links with, and contribute to the work of, the eight Children's Centres. It has now been agreed to pilot this approach at Westfield Children's Centre, with a view to learning lessons and gradually rolling the initiative across the other seven Centres. NPS officers are already regular visitors to the Clifton Children's Centre.

## **Corporate Objectives**

31. The Children's Centres Programme contributes both directly and indirectly to six of the Council's corporate priorities. Further, the programme will deliver improved outcomes for young children in each of the five areas identified by

Every Child Matters. Accordingly, it relates to, and contributes to the targets identified in, the Children & Young People's Plan 2007 – 2010 and the Local Area Agreement 2007 – 2010. It also relates to a range of other partnership strategies, for example, the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy, the Parenting Strategy and the local Preventative Strategy.

## Options

32. This paper is presented for information only.

## Implications

### Financial

33. The Council has been offered a £1.683m capital grant, and £1.546m in revenue funding, to establish the eight Children's Centres over the period 2006/08. In combination with the Sure Start Local Programme revenue budget for 2007/08, this level of funding will be sufficient to support the staffing and service delivery proposals that were approved by the Children's Centres Project Board at its meeting on 18 September 2006. Detailed funding proposals for 2007/08 were approved by the Board on 23 February 2007.

### Human Resources (HR)

34. A significant proportion of the combined Children's Centres and Sure Start revenue budgets will meet the costs of establishing three Children's Centres locality teams over 2007/08, as described at paragraphs 22 and 23 above – see **Background Papers No.2, No.3 and No.8**. In summary:
- Locality Children's Centres Manager (x3 – Locality role)
  - Integrated Services Team Leader (x3 – Locality role)
  - Children's Centre Development Worker (x8 – Centre role)
  - Children's Centre Childcare & Family Worker (x8 – Centre role)
  - Locality Administrator (x3 – Locality role)
  - Toy Bus Development Worker (x1 – city-wide role)
  - Toy Bus Assistant (x1 – city-wide role)
  - Toy Bus Clerical Assistant (x1 – city-wide role)
  - Childcare Project Manager (x1 – city-wide role on 12 months fixed-term contract in the first instance) – see **Background Paper No.4**
35. The newly appointed Locality Children's Centres Managers will begin recruitment to these posts during June 2007, with a view to having the three staff teams in place by September 2007. There are implications for a number of existing staff of the Sure Start Local Programme, for whom there are no directly equivalent posts in the new Children's Centres structure. The position of these staff members will be addressed in accordance with the Council's HR policies and procedures. At this stage, it is not anticipated that redundancies will arise.

### Equalities

36. Through the under-pinning philosophy, and through the prominent involvement of local parents in the design, planning and delivery of local



services, Children's Centres will contribute to the greater empowerment of parents and children, will celebrate diversity and counter discrimination, and will offer parents and children greater equality of opportunity.

### **Legal**

37. The Local Authority has specific duties under the Children Act 2004 and the Childcare Act 2006 to improve outcomes for young children, to reduce inequalities in achievement, and to work with key partner agencies to deliver increasingly integrated services.

### **Crime and Disorder**

38. Achieving improved outcomes for young children and their families may have a longer-term impact on levels of anti-social and criminal behaviour across the city.

### **Information Technology (IT)**

39. The development of the Children's Centres will have implications for the IT infrastructure, as well as requiring investment in additional hardware and software for use by staff of the Integrated Services Teams. The capital programme is addressing infrastructure requirements, and the purchase of additional hardware will be covered through the fixtures and fittings budget.

### **Property**

40. Children's Centres are being developed on primary school sites, in the main through the refurbishment of surplus classrooms, but with one new build and two extensions to existing school buildings, to create three larger Centres that will act as "service hubs" in their respective Localities. Capital funding for the Centres has been drawn from a wide range of sources.

### **Risk Management**

41. The principal risk associated with the Children's Centres Programme is uncertainty over the scale of continuation funding beyond 31 March 2008. The revenue budget for the Sure Start Local Programme has started to taper in 2007/08 (a reduction of some £90k over the 2006/07 budget), and from 2008/09 onwards this budget will no longer be ring-fenced to the SSLP, which will, in any event, have been transferred into the Children's Centres Programme by that time. The current Children's Centres Programme has known and guaranteed funding through to 31 March 2008. To date, there has been no indication from Government as to the scale of funding beyond March 2008, other than a broad commitment to meeting the (unspecified) costs of running Children's Centres. Accordingly, there is no certainty that the costs of the proposed staffing structure will be covered in full by the available revenue funding from 2008/09 onwards. The position will not be clarified until the detailed outcome of the current Comprehensive Spending Review is announced later this year.

## Recommendation

42. The Executive Member is recommended to note the contents of this progress report, and to receive a further progress report in 6-9 months time.

Reason: To ensure that Members are informed about the establishment of children's centres in the city.

## Contact Details

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Report Approved  Date 16 May 2007

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**Wards Affected:** *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

## Background Papers (copies available from the author of this report)

1. *A Strategy for Establishing Children's Centres in York*, Report to the Education and Children's Services EMAP, 18 October 2005
2. *Improving Outcomes For All Our Children: A Strategic Framework for the Delivery of Children's Centre Services across the City of York*, Report to Children's Centres Project Board, 18 September 2006 (revised 14 February 2007)
3. *To establish the posts (x3) of Locality Children's Centres Manager on a permanent basis to co-ordinate and manage the delivery of the core offer of services from the eight Children's Centres across the City*, Officer Decision Log, 15 January 2007

4. *A strategy for developing integrated early years provision across the eight Children's Centres in York*, Report to Children's Centres Project Board, 26 April 2007
5. *Arrangements for Governance & Management of Sure Start Children's Centres*, Report to the Children's Centres Project Board, 26 April 2007
6. *Staffing Establishment: Children's Centres*, Report to the LCCS Departmental Management Team, 14 May 2007
7. *Local Programme Evaluation Report, 2002 – 2006: A Legacy of Learning*, Sure Start York, October 2006
8. *To establish a number of posts on a permanent basis (as specified below) to form three Children's Centres locality teams that will lead the delivery of the core offer of services from the eight Children's Centres across the City*, Officer Decision Log, 14 May 2007

## **Annexes**

ANNEX 1    The Locality Leadership Team: An Organisational Chart