

Report to: **Cabinet**

Date: **15 July 2005**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Title of report: **Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership strategy for 0-5 year-olds – to approve the County Council's contribution to the strategy**

Purpose of report: **To seek approval from the Cabinet to publish the Early Years Strategy; and to inform the Cabinet of the next phase of development of Children's Centres and the possible ramifications of proposed changes to Nursery Education Grant requirements**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is recommended to:

- i. recommend the County Council to approve the Early Years Strategy 2004-2007 for publication;**
 - ii. note the Government's announcement of the second wave of Children's Centres (2006-2008) and the specific targets and resource allocation for East Sussex; and**
 - iii. note the Government's new Ten Year Childcare Strategy, and the possible implications for East Sussex.**
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1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 The actions set out in the Early Years Strategy will be delivered within existing resources and the Cabinet has already received several reports regarding phase 1 of the development of Children's Centres. Phase 2 of this development brings with it a new set of financial implications, which will be the subject of further, more detailed reports in the Autumn. These reports will also take into account the tapering of Sure Start funding and the County Council's general financial position (including the two year support funding for Playlink which runs to 31 March 2006).

1.2 The implications of proposed changes to Nursery Education Grant could have a significant impact on the supply of places. The County Council would then need to consider how to secure future provision, which might include developing a higher proportion of maintained provision than is currently the case. A further report will be made to the Cabinet in the Autumn.

2. Supporting Information

Early Years Strategy

2.1 In June 2004 the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership commissioned a multi-agency Early Years Strategy. The aim of the strategy was to set out a joint vision for children aged 0-5 years across East Sussex and priority targets for the period 2005-2007. Following an extensive consultation, the Early Years Strategy has now been formulated and is attached as Annex A.

2.2 The Cabinet will note that the Strategy has been cross-referenced with the Government's five priority outcomes for children and young people and includes reference to phase 2 of the development of Children's Centres.

2.3 East Sussex County Council is the accountable body and thus the Cabinet is recommended to agree the attached draft strategy (Annex A) for publication.

Contribution of Children's Centres to the Strategy

2.4 The Government intends that the provision of good quality integrated services should have a broad and lasting impact on children, their parents and the wider community. Children's Centres

are an important component in making this a reality in East Sussex ensuring the best start in life for every child, better opportunities for parents, affordable, good quality childcare, and stronger, safer communities.

2.5 Building on previous initiatives such as Sure Start Local Programmes, the Children's Centre programme is based on the concept that providing integrated education, care, family support and health services is a key factor in determining good outcomes for children and their parents. Children's Centres are about building on existing good practice, rather than starting afresh. A significant number of families with young children already benefit from good quality integrated services. Children's Centres enhance these services and extend the benefits to more families, bringing an integrated approach to service delivery to areas where it is most needed.

2.6 Children's Centres are designed to deliver services for families with young children up to the age of five. Integrated services are planned around the delivery of a core offer which must include:

- Family health services;
- Early Education integrated with, plus support for, local Childminders;
- Family Support and Outreach services;
- Employment and training opportunities;
- Information for families.

2.7 The targets and resource allocation linked to the second phase of the Children's Centre initiative 2006-2008 are summarised in the table below.

| Local Authority: East Sussex | Total |
|--|------------|
| Total number of under 5s for LA to reach by 2010 (Based on April 2003 LEA Data) | 26,408 |
| Total number of under 5s expected to be 'reached' in 20% most deprived Wards by March 2006 (Based on the 1999 IMD) | 3,205 |
| Total number of new under 5s for LA to reach during 2006-08 | 14,789 |
| Number of new Children's Centres to be created during April 2006-March 2008 | 18 |
| Total indicative Capital funding for 2006-2008 | £3,575,715 |
| Total Revenue funding for 2006-2008 | £2,879,147 |

2.8 In extending the programme's 'reach' so extensively, the Department for Education and Skills is expecting a graduated model for Children's Centres to be developed. Within this model the delivery of the 'core offer' will vary according to local need. For example, the model for the 20% and 30% most deprived wards will differ from the universal provision. Updated guidance is due to be published in June 2005. The definitions and the measures for this graduated model are to be established locally with the involvement of stakeholders.

2.9 Key milestones in developing phase 2 of the Children's Centre programme are:

- Identify geographical areas for the new or extended programmes, focussing initially on the 30% most deprived Super Output Areas and linked with LPCs (June-August);
- Community Consultation – two phases (Sept-Nov and Dec-Feb);
- Develop a capital strategy for the 18 new centre bases (Sept-Dec);
- Stakeholder consultation to develop an East Sussex graduated model (Sept-Nov);
- Agree a model for the allocation of the revenue funding (June-Sept), for agreement by the Cabinet.

2.10 Annex B to this report sets out in more detail the details of the second phase requirements. These pose significant challenges, not least because the revenue funding averages £97 per child, one tenth of that made available to the original Sure Start programmes. The phase 2 programme will be the subject of more detailed reports during the Autumn.

Ten Year Childcare Strategy

2.11 The Government has yet to finalise its Ten Year Strategy "Choice for parents, the best start for children". However, there will almost certainly be significant changes to the minimum free entitlement for three and four year-olds (currently 12.5 hours per week for 33 weeks a year).

2.12 The potential impact of the changes is being researched in preparation for these changes. Annex C sets out a preliminary analysis and draws attention to the potential loss of some existing

providers and the challenge and opportunity this might provide to develop new provision, including within the maintained sector.

2.13 Once the regulations have been finalised a further report will be brought to the Cabinet.

3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendations

3.1 The Cabinet is asked to approve the Early Years Strategy for publication as the culmination of a very wide ranging process of consultation.

3.2 The Cabinet is asked to note the sections of this report related to phase 2 of the development of Children's Centres and proposed changes to Nursery Education Grant.

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