

Report to: **Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services**

Date: **20 June 2007**

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

Title of report: **East Sussex Children's Centres – Progress Report**

Purpose of report: **To provide the Committee with contextual information in relation to Children's Centres, detailing progress to date in East Sussex.**

RECOMMENDATION: The Committee is recommended to note the continued progress of the Children's Centre Programme

1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 The capital allocations for Phase One and Two developments of the Children's Centre were £5,616k and £5,359k respectively.

1.2 Phase 1 was completed with an over spend of £150K (3%). The Sure Start Unit has confirmed that this can be funded from the phase 2 capital allocation. After meeting the additional cost of Phase 1, Phase 2 costs are within budget with a 10% contingency fund remaining in place to cover any unanticipated expenditure. The locations of all Children's Centres are set out in Appendix 1.

2. Supporting Information

Introduction

2.1 Choice for Parents, The Best Start for Children: A Ten Year Strategy For Childcare, published in December 2004 set out the Government's strategy to ensure that:

- every child has the best possible start in life
- all parents, especially mothers, can take up opportunities for work (including training for employment)
- families are better able to take control of the choices they make in balancing work and family life

2.2 Local Authorities have a duty to improve the well being of all young children and to reduce inequalities between those achieving the poorest outcomes and the rest; this relates to the five Every Child Matters Outcomes of being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and achieving economic well being.

2.3 There is a requirement to deliver improved outcomes by ensuring that early childhood services are delivered in an integrated way, facilitating access to services and maximising the benefits to children, parents and prospective parents. Early Childhood Services comprise:

- early years provision, i.e. integrated early education and childcare
- family support services relating to young children, e.g. supervised contact and early intervention for families identified as needing support
- health services relevant to young children and their parents, e.g. health visitors, ante-natal and post-natal care
- services provided under the Employment and Training Act 1973 assisting or encouraging parents (and prospective parents) to obtain or retain employment, as delivered through Jobcentre Plus
- information services for parents

2.4 In line with East Sussex's target, the strategic direction to create 28 Children's Centres across the County by the end of March 2008 will support and ensure the delivery of the above agenda.

3. Background

3.1 For the period 01/04/04 to 31/03/06 East Sussex County Council was given a target to create 214 new childcare places alongside the development of 10 Children's Centres as part of Phase 1 of the Government's ambition of 'a Children's Centre in every community by 2010'

3.2 In line with the Government's strategic vision, by the end of Phase 1 (which was extended by 6 months because of construction delays) East Sussex had achieved its target of 10 Children's Centres. Each centre is now well established and delivering the full core offer of services, meeting the needs of the local community served. These services include early years provision for children aged 0 to 5 years operating from 8am to 6pm on weekdays, for a minimum of 48 weeks per year, as well as offering access to integrated services such as midwifery, health visiting, parenting, family outreach and Job Centre Plus in the most disadvantaged areas in the county. The childcare place target set for this period was exceeded with approximately 300 new places created.

3.3 We have now moved into Phase 2 which runs from 01/04/06 to 31/03/08. For this phase East Sussex County Council has a target to create an additional 18 centres. Unlike Phase 1, there is no requirement for childcare places to be developed, except where the centre is serving a population which falls within the bottom 30% on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). Currently, all sites are identified and in the majority of cases, work has already begun across the programme of building and refurbishment. We are on target to have most of the Phase 2 centres completed during the autumn term.

3.4 As we move forward into Phase 3 (01/04/08 to 31/03/10) East Sussex County Council will be tasked with ensuring that all communities across the county have access to Children's Centre services. It is anticipated that targets relating to Phase 3, as well as relating budgets will be set following the Comprehensive Spending Review.

4. Progress

4.1 East Sussex is making significant progress towards the delivery of the Children's Centre agenda. This has recently been acknowledged by 'Together for Children' (commissioned agents acting on behalf of the Government Office for the South East), who now 'rate' the programme as 'low risk', which means that they are confident in our ability to deliver and that we only require minimal intervention/support.

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Local members: All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None

Appendix 1

The table below details the location of all Phase 1 and 2 centres.

Area	Children's Centre	Phase
Lewes	Peacehaven (The Havens)	2
Lewes	Newhaven (The Havens)	1
Lewes	Lewes	2
Wealden	Hailsham East	1
Wealden	Dunbar Drive (Hailsham)	2
Wealden	Polegate	2
Eastbourne	Shinewater	1
Eastbourne	Willingdon Trees	1
Eastbourne	Devonshire	2
Eastbourne	Hampden Park	2
Eastbourne	Langney	2
Eastbourne	West Rise	2
Rother	Egerton Park	1
Rother	Sidley	2
Rother	Pebsham	2
Rother	Rural	1
Rother	Battle	2
Rother	Robertsbridge	2
Rother	Thomas Peacocke	2
Hastings	Robsack	1
Hastings	Churchwood	2
Hastings	St Nicholas	2
Hastings	West St Leonard's	2
Hastings	Hastings and St Leonard's	1
Hastings	Silverhill	2
Hastings	Ore Valley	1
Hastings	The Bridge	2
Hastings	Red Lake	2