

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 12

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Provision of free childcare places for two year olds in the most disadvantaged communities
Date of Meeting:	6 July 2009
Report of:	Director of Children's Services
Contact Officer:	Name: Vicky Jenkins Tel: 296110
	E-mail: vicky.jenkins@brighton-hove.gov.uk
Key Decision:	Yes Forward Plan No. CYP11275
Wards Affected:	East Brighton, Moulsecoomb and Bevendean, Hollingbury and Stanmer, Hanover and Elm Grove, St Peter's and North Laine, Queen's Park, Hangleton and Knoll

FOR GENERAL RELEASE/ EXEMPTIONS

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 Brighton & Hove has received ring fenced funding from the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) as part of its Sure Start early years revenue grant to offer free childcare places to 15 per cent of the most disadvantaged two year olds in the city from September 2009. The funding allocation is currently until March 2011. This paper asks for agreement to proceeding with the offer and for approval the eligibility criteria for parents and providers.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 Agree to offering free childcare places to the most disadvantaged two year olds in Brighton & Hove from September 2009.
- 2.2 Agree the following eligibility criteria for children's participation in the scheme:
- (i) Lives in one of the 10% most disadvantaged areas according to the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), and
 - (ii) Lives in a family dependent on workless benefits, and
 - (iii) Is targeted to receive additional health visiting support, and
 - (iv) There is a suitable place available in the scheme
- 2.3 Agree that providers participating in the scheme must meet appropriate quality standards, including having a good or outstanding Ofsted grading.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The government has recently updated its 2004 Ten Year Childcare Strategy in a document entitled “Next Steps for Early Learning and Childcare, Building on the Ten Year Strategy”. This document commits the government to “offering free early learning and childcare places to the most disadvantaged two year olds in every Local Authority by September 2009, and extend this offer to all two year olds stage by stage”.¹
- 3.2 The new national offer, which will reach 23,000 children per year, offers: ten hours of free care per week in the best quality settings; is available for 38 weeks per year but can be stretched over more weeks if this suits parents; and includes funding for outreach and family support.
- 3.3 The “Next Steps” document states that “evidence suggests that extending a level of free provision to the most disadvantaged two year olds is likely to have a greater positive impact on child outcomes than extending the number of free hours available to three and four year olds ... research shows good quality part time early learning and childcare [at age two] ... brings particular gains in cognitive and early language development. And that children from disadvantaged backgrounds stand to gain most.”²
- 3.4 The offer has a focus on families as well as children in that it also funds outreach and family support in order to “bring the most disadvantaged families on board and support them to remain engaged”.³ Whilst the emphasis is on the benefit for the child, it is intended that it should also benefit parents through giving them more choice about employment and training and thereby contribute to the government’s social mobility and child poverty objectives. Children’s centres are integral to the offer because of their role in provision of outreach and family support.
- 3.5 DCSF guidance is clear that the offer must target children who are economically disadvantaged, that is those living in disadvantaged areas according to the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI). Those who benefit must also be families in receipt of workless benefits. Local authorities can add additional eligibility criteria in order to target provision within their area.
- 3.6 The total amount of funding for this financial year for Brighton & Hove is £201,144 and for next financial year £266,672. This covers the cost of 26 weeks of childcare from September 2009 and 38 weeks of childcare in financial year 2010/11, as well as an amount for family support, outreach and project management. The funding is intended to make the offer available to 104 two year olds from September 2009. This approximates to a little less than one quarter of all two year olds living in workless households.

¹ *Next Steps for Early Learning and Childcare* HM Government 2009 Page 5

² *Ibid.* Page 27

³ *Ibid.* Page 27

- 3.7 It is likely that the 104 eligible two year olds will live in the most 10 to 15% deprived areas according to the IDACI. In order to determine the cut off point for eligibility, an analysis is currently being carried out to discover the number of two year olds living in these areas.
- 3.8 Initial research shows that eligible children are likely to live within one of the following children's centre reach areas: Moulsecoomb, Bevendean and Coldean; City View East and Central; Roundabout; Hollingdean; Tarner; Goldstone, and Knoll and Stanford. The funding does not cover all children living in these areas but only those who have a postcode identified as highly disadvantaged.
- 3.9 The funding does not cover all two year olds living in disadvantaged postcodes and in households on workless benefits; doing so will be a necessary but not sufficient condition. Children are likely to have to meet other eligibility criteria, for example having speech and language needs including English as an additional language, or a disability or special need. Further eligibility criteria will be considered once figures on the likely numbers of eligible children are available. It may be that eligibility criteria can be reduced once the scheme is established, depending on take-up.
- 3.10 It is therefore proposed that in order to meet DCSF guidance the following eligibility criteria be adopted:
- Children living in one of the most disadvantaged postcodes, that is within the 10 per cent most disadvantaged according to the IDACI, **and**
 - Children living in a family in receipt of one or more of
 - Income Support
 - Income-based Job Seeker's Allowance
 - Child Tax Credit at a rather higher than the family element
 - Extra Working Tax Credit relating to a disability, or
 - Pension Credit, **and**
 - Where the child is receiving targeted services and the health visitor considers that the child will particularly benefit from a free childcare place, **and**
 - There is a place available in the scheme
- 3.11 It is proposed to offer free nursery places to children as soon as possible after they reach their second birthday. It may be that in some cases a free nursery place is not immediately available at a time and place where a parent wants it and therefore necessary to operate a waiting list.
- 3.12 Parents who would like to receive the free childcare sessions will not be required to take up all ten hours immediately, but children participating should attend for a least two sessions a week. Parents will be encouraged to take up the full offer.

- 3.13 Consultation will be carried out with potential providers of nursery places. It is proposed that only those with good or outstanding provision will be included in the scheme. Providers are likely to include those in the private and voluntary sector, childminders, as well as those based in children's centres. It may be possible that we have to support expansion of provision in some areas to ensure sufficient places. Consultation will take place on the level of financial support for providers participating in the offer.
- 3.14 Family support and outreach will be managed through children's centre teams and in conjunction with nursery providers where needed. The aim of family support and outreach is to provide appropriate advice and signposting to other services or wider support which a family might need, as well as helping the parent to offer a good quality home learning environment to their child. There are also links to be made with other initiatives including the Family Pathfinder and the Family Information Service outreach strategy.
- 3.15 At present children's centres already fund some disadvantaged two year old children to access free places in nurseries and with childminders. The two year old offer provides the opportunity to expand this provision and to ensure that children with specific needs who might not be eligible for new scheme can still receive a free place. These will include children with a child protection plan, children who are looked after, children of teenage parents, as well as some children targeted for the highest level of health visitor support who are otherwise ineligible for the offer.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Sure Start area managers, who are key to successful implementation of the scheme, have been consulted on initial proposals.
- 4.2 It is proposed that, where possible, children's centre advisory group(s) should be involved in approving details of the scheme.
- 4.3 Childcare providers will be consulted on the scheme's operation once those eligible have been identified.
- 4.4 Parents will be consulted on an individual basis so that the childcare and associated support can be tailored to each child and family's needs.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are ring fenced allocations within the Sure Start Grant of £201,144 for 2009/10 and £266,672 for 2010/11. The costs of this scheme will need to be contained within these allocations. The scheme will need to be reviewed for 2011/12 depending on the availability of future funding.

Finance Officer Consulted: Jeff Coates

Date: 21/05/2009

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The proposals should assist the Council in meeting their statutory duty towards children in need under the Children Act 1989. It will also assist in meeting our duties under the Childcare Act 2006. The member must be satisfied that the eligibility criteria contained in the paper is demonstrably fair in all the circumstances outlined.

Lawyer Consulted: Natasha Watson

Date: 24/06/2009

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 An equalities impact assessment (EIA) for City Early Years and Childcare (CEYC) was completed in April 2009. The EIA found that CEYC, in general, promotes equal opportunities and its policies, strategies and services are unlikely to result in adverse impact for any group.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Climate change and energy: childcare places will be offered near parents' homes to limit CO2 emissions.

Sustainable communities: the scheme engages parents and develops local partnerships to reduce poverty.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 Research shows access to good quality childcare supports children and young people's learning and achievement later in life.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 The "I DO RM" tool will be used for the scheme.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 The relevant corporate and CYPT objectives are:
- Reduce inequality by increasing opportunity
 - Enjoy and achieve – improving early years outcomes

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 The recommendation follows DCSF guidance. Targeting the funding on children in most disadvantaged communities supports the council's statutory duty under the Childcare Act 2006 (s1) to improve the well-being of young children and reduce inequalities between young children.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 This report seeks approval for implementation of a scheme which will benefit the most disadvantaged two year olds in Brighton & Hove. It will also support the parents of these children in gaining any additional support they might need and improving their children's home learning environment.
- 7.2 Because funding for the scheme is limited it is necessary to establish eligibility criteria so that it is focussed on the most disadvantaged children. Approval of the eligibility criteria will enable children's centre staff to start to identify the first children who will benefit from free childcare provision.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. None.

Documents in Members' Rooms:

1. None

Background Documents

1. DCSF letter: Extension of the 2 Year Old Offer of Free Early Years Education and Childcare: Invitation to participate dated 29th January 2009.