

Subject: Childcare Sufficiency Strategy
Date of Meeting: 21 July 2008
Report of: Director of Children's Services
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Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The Childcare Act 2006 requires local authorities to ensure that there is sufficient childcare, as far as is reasonably practicable, to meet the requirements of parents in their areas in order to enable them to work or undertake education or training leading to work.
- 1.2 A Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) was completed in March 2008 and found that whilst there is, in general terms, sufficient childcare in Brighton & Hove, key gaps were identified. These gaps are summarised in the attached document, Appendix One, *Childcare Sufficiency Strategy for Brighton and Hove*, as well as proposals for filling them. Much of this is refocusing and developing the existing work of City Early Years and Childcare (CEYC), but it is also proposed to develop an @ Home Childcare Service.
- 1.3 The government's expectation is that parents should pay for childcare with those on low incomes claiming support from the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. It is not always possible to make a clear distinction between childcare for work and childcare which is used as family support or a short break for disabled children. The strategy focuses on the childcare which supports parents to work or train. However it includes sustainability funding for some settings which are used by parents who work but which also offer cheaper rates for parents who do not work. The value of this approach is outlined in the attached report and it is proposed that this continues.
- 1.4 The strategy does not seek to offer free short breaks for children with disabilities. For pre-school children the inclusion fund covers the additional cost of childcare for disabled children which may be used by parents as wraparound care in addition to the early education free entitlement (or for children who are not yet eligible for the free entitlement), and will continue to be administered by Presens (the Pre-School SEN service). The distinction between childcare for working parents and provision used as a short break is not currently made for these

children because of the importance of meeting the early years outcomes duty and the limited provision for younger children, compared with those of school age. However, the inclusion funding may not be sufficient, for example, to support a child under five who needs one to one support in full time child care.

- 1.5 The out of school inclusion funding is aimed at meeting the additional costs of childcare primarily for working parents using registered childcare. It does not fund the additional cost of short breaks for disabled children of non-working parents which will increasingly be covered by the Aiming High short breaks funding. The funding for out of school inclusion has been increased this year and is being more proactively marketed to parents. The funding is still limited and may not meet the needs of all parents: it will be spent until the money runs out each financial year.
- 1.6 There may come a stage when a decision is needed whether to focus all funding on meeting the sufficiency duty for working parents.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the contents of the attached *Childcare Sufficiency Strategy for Brighton & Hove* (Appendix One) be agreed.
- 2.2 That the development of an @ Home Childcare Service at a full year cost of £45,000 (Appendix Three) be approved.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The attached report outlines the new duties placed on local authorities under the Childcare Act 2006 and actions taken to date to meet these duties. It proposes further actions to be taken by the CEYC and partners to ensure childcare gaps are filled.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Extensive consultation was carried out with parents and childcare providers in order to produce the CSA. The draft CSA was sent to partners within and outside the CYPT for comment, including the Child Development and Disabilities Strategic Partnership Board.
- 4.2 Consultation on the relevant elements of the draft *Childcare Sufficiency Strategy for Brighton & Hove* has taken place with commissioning and partnership managers and colleagues developing in childcare extended schools, as well as other partners within and outside the CYPT.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 All the elements of the *Childcare Sufficiency Strategy for Brighton & Hove* are funded from the existing allocation of the Sure Start Early Years and Childcare Grant. We have been informed of the grant allocation until March 2011 but do not know the position after that date.

Finance officer consulted: Sue Coleman, Accountant, 23/06/08

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 Ensuring that there is sufficient childcare within Brighton & Hove, so far as is reasonably practicable, to enable parents to work or train is a legal duty under the Childcare Act (2006) s6. The report demonstrates how the local authority proposes to meet that duty, having undertaken extensive consultation with relevant stakeholders.

Lawyer consulted: Hilary Priestley Senior Lawyer 26/06/08

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 A Race Equality Impact Assessment was completed by CEYC in 2004. This will be updated with the inclusion of disability and gender equalities by **March 2009**.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Provision of childcare in local communities supports the sustainable communities goal, as well as climate change and energy. Capital developments will take place in accordance with sustainable consumption and production, as well as natural resource protection and environmental impact assessment.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

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

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 "I DO RM" tool will be used for any new projects.

Corporate/Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 The relevant corporate and CYP objectives are:
- Reduce inequality by increasing opportunity
 - Achieving economic well-being – to secure sufficient childcare for parents to work or train/to reduce child poverty.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Childcare Sufficiency Strategy for Brighton & Hove
2. Benchmarks of Childcare Sufficiency
3. @ Home Childcare Service

Background Documents

1. Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (available at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/childcaresufficiency)