

## Appendix One

### Children and Young People's Trust City Early Years and Childcare

#### Childcare Sufficiency Strategy for Brighton & Hove 2008 – 2011

##### 1. Introduction – Securing Sufficient Childcare

1.1 Under Section 6 the Childcare Act 2006 local authorities have a duty “to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the provision of childcare (whether or not by them) is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their areas in order to enable them to work or undertake education or training leading to work”.<sup>1</sup> Under Section 7 there is a related duty to secure early years provision, free of charge, for three and four year olds.<sup>2</sup> The Section 6 duty came into effect from April 2008.

1.2 The duty is specific that in determining whether childcare is sufficient the local authority “must have regard to the needs of parents for the provision of childcare for which the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit can be claimed, and childcare suitable for disabled children.”<sup>3</sup> Childcare for which the childcare element of the WTC can be claimed is that registered by Ofsted, (whether on the compulsory or voluntary registers), and where the cost is within the upper limit of £175 per week. Disabled children are defined as children who have a disability for the purposes of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

1.3 The government is committed to halving child poverty by 2010 and eradicating it by 2020. In its Children's Plan the Department for Children, Schools and Families states: “For children today parental employment provides the best sustainable route out of poverty. Families are better off in work than on benefits, both financially and in terms of health and well-being. And because the attitudes and expectations parents directly shape the aspirations of their children, the benefits of being in work pass on to the next generation.”<sup>4</sup> The Children's Plan is clear that the extension of the free entitlement to early education to 15 hours per week for all three and four year

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<sup>1</sup> *Securing Sufficient Childcare: Guidance for Local Authorities Childcare Act 2006* DCSF 2007, Page 2

<sup>2</sup> This duty replaces the current duty under Section 118 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and Section 153 of the Education Act 2002 to ensure that all parents of three and four year olds are able to access the minimum free entitlement for up to two years before the child reaches compulsory school age

<sup>3</sup> *Securing Sufficient Childcare: Guidance for Local Authorities Childcare Act 2006* DCSF 2007 Paragraph 2.9, Page 10

<sup>4</sup> *Children's Plan*, Paragraph 1.80, Page 35 DCSF, 2007

olds by 2010 and the childcare sufficiency duty are key policies in tackling child poverty.<sup>5</sup>

1.4 The government has also published new arrangements whereby lone parents will be required actively to seek work and will no longer be able to claim income support solely on the grounds of being a lone parent.<sup>6</sup> This will be introduced for lone parents with a youngest child aged 12 or over from November 2008, a youngest child aged 10 or over from October 2009 and a youngest child aged seven or over from October 2010. Whilst some lone parents may be able to claim other benefits, others will as a result join the labour market and require childcare provision in order to enable their working.

1.5 The guidance is clear that childcare sufficiency is about childcare which is sustainable and that the focus is on parents working or training. It is also clear that securing sufficiency does not mean local authorities providing childcare themselves, but rather acting as “market facilitators”. There is also an emphasis on quality and flexibility in provision.

1.6 Appendix Two summarises DCSF’s “Benchmarks of Sufficiency” according to the guidance.

## **2. Childcare as defined by the 2006 Act**

2.1 The 2006 Act is clear that the sufficiency duty concerns childcare which is available to enable parents to work or train. In Brighton & Hove some childcare is used by parents as a short break – this can particularly be the case where childcare is used by parents of disabled children. Childcare as family support is also funded through children’s centres, and some out of school provision charges very low fees so that it is affordable to non-working parents (who would not be eligible for the childcare element of WTC).

2.2 The value of childcare as a form of family support is widely acknowledged and fits with the holistic nature of services developed by the Children and Young People’s Trust. Where families receive this support it can relieve pressure on other potentially more expensive social care and disability services. It can also support parents who are in the first stages of engaging with other services or seeking training which will eventually enable them to work.

2.3 There are practical difficulties in separating childcare which is for people who work with that which is used as family support or as a short break – some parents may not work but will nevertheless be able to afford childcare provision. Others may be in and out of work but still seek continuity for their child – for example in early years provision.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid p.25

<sup>6</sup> *Ready for Work: full employment in our generation*, DWP, 2007

2.4 It is therefore proposed that whilst City Early Years and Childcare's focus is on registered childcare for working parents it continues to recognise and support the availability of childcare as family support or a short break. However, as funds are limited, the out of school inclusion fund will be primarily focused on supporting the additional costs of including disabled children of working parents in registered childcare (see 4.2 below). In addition, with the exception of the limited number of free places in Children's Centres, the Sure Start Early Years and Childcare Grant will not be used to fund free places for individual children.

### 3. Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

3.1 In accordance with Section 11 of the Childcare Act 2006 City Early Years and Childcare (CEYC) undertook a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment which was published in March 2008. Whilst the assessment found that there was, in general terms, sufficient childcare across the city, key gaps were identified.

- 3.2 **Affordability** – parents thought that childcare was expensive, particularly for children aged 0 to 5 and for older children in disadvantaged areas
- 3.3 **Choice** – particularly for school-aged children. This includes activities which are not traditionally thought of as childcare
- 3.4 **Childcare for disabled children** – the focus group with Amaze<sup>7</sup> highlighted this as parents thought there was scant provision. There is no childcare provision for disabled children aged 11 to 18 in the city
- 3.5 **Flexibility** – parents indicated that they wanted ad hoc care, to be able to use part sessions, or wanted childcare for irregular use
- 3.6 **Provision outside office hours** – this also emerged as a gap, though not as strongly as the need for flexibility
- 3.7 **Provision for children aged 11 to 14** – particularly activities which are attractive to children of this age but may not be formal registered childcare
- 3.8 **Supply and demand for childcare in disadvantaged areas** – parents in these areas are less likely to use childcare and less likely to be planning to use childcare in the future, which is significant in terms of a child poverty strategy

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<sup>7</sup> Amaze in Brighton & Hove provides information, advice and support to parents of children with special needs

## **4. Strategies to address gaps**

### **4.1 Affordability**

Focus on extending and developing work with partners to outreach to families in order to understand the benefits of childcare and increase take-up of the childcare element of WTC, with the recognition that many families are at the very early stages of considering returning to work/training. Ensure that childcare sufficiency is embedded within the child poverty and children's centre programme.

#### **4.1.1 Focus on funding for childcare**

- Refocus Family Information Service work on outreach, particularly to parents of school-aged children through schools, building on the FIS links service. The aim will be to support parents returning to work or training who are unlikely to contact the FIS helpline or use the Family Services Directory
- Extend training of FIS advisors to develop specialist skills in signposting to sources of funding for childcare and other family finance services
- Extend relationships within Brighton & Hove City Council (for example housing and welfare rights) and with other partners (for example the Citizens' Advice Bureau, Amaze) to build on knowledge and skills with the aim of increasing parents' awareness of the childcare element of WTC
- Increase training and support for childcare providers to encourage parents to take up childcare element of WTC, particularly for play schemes
- Consider a system of underwriting deposits/fees for parents new to childcare in specific circumstances – for example returning to work for the first time
- Provide capital (and any other) grants only to providers whose fees come within the maximum amount allowed for the childcare element of the WTC
- Continue to fund free childcare places in children's centre nurseries and in partnership with childminders

#### **4.1.2 Widen the definition of childcare**

- Continue with strategies that encourage providers to register on the voluntary childcare register in order to expand the range of provision for which the childcare element of the WTC is payable, particularly activities for older children

#### **4.1.3 Improve information for parents**

- Provide more information for parents in the publication *Childcare Choices* about retainers and holding fees

#### **4.1.4 Deliver the free entitlement flexibly**

- Introduce flexibility for the free entitlement so that from September 2008 providers can offer parents the choice of accessing their free entitlement in hours rather than in 2.5 hour sessions
- Assist early years sessional providers to increase hours so that working parents with a three/four year old can maximise the number of hours of their free entitlement they use in one day. Support providers to offer a lunch time session to link morning and afternoon sessions
- Use childcare capital<sup>8</sup> to enable voluntary sector providers to increase hours so that the free entitlement to early years provision can be used by working parents
- Ensure that the extension to 15 hours by 2010 does not increase the costs of early years provision

#### **4.1.5 Early years funding reform**

- Reform early years funding so that maintained and PVI providers are funded on the same factors

#### **4.1.6 Improve audit information of childcare costs in Brighton & Hove**

- FIS will attempt to obtain standardised information from providers about the charge for a full time place

### **4.2. Choice**

Focus on improving information to and choices for parents, particularly those of school-aged children

- Improve information on ICHIS<sup>9</sup> about the 8 to 6 offer in extended schools so that this can be provided to parents
- Develop more childcare in schools so that all schools meet the extended schools core offer by 2010, including revenue funding where there are gaps. This includes developing and promoting childminding as an option for parents of school aged children
- Develop the @ Home Childcare Service to provide home-based childcare (see 4.4 below)
- Encourage providers to register on the voluntary childcare register (see 4.1.2 above)

### **4.2 Childcare for disabled children**

- Use the out of school inclusion fund to support the additional cost of including disabled children of working parents using registered childcare

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<sup>8</sup> The Sure Start, Early Years and Childcare Grant main capital block offers £1,062,287 capital in 2008/09 – a paper is due to go to cabinet in September 2008

<sup>9</sup> ICHIS is the online system used by FIS to provide information to parents about childcare provision

- Continue to fund the additional costs of including disabled pre-school children in early years settings whose parents wish to use wraparound care which is additional to the free early years entitlement
- Increase inclusion grant from up to £1,200 to up to £1,800 per child per year for both out of school and early years providers
- Work to maximise take-up of inclusion grant through additional publicity to out of school providers
- Provide upfront funding for summer holiday play schemes (total of £10,000) for summer 2008 to include more disabled children, with the out of school development officers brokering this with providers. Monitor use of funding to look at needs of children who use the scheme, how much it costs to meet them, how many additional children can be accommodated, and the situation of parents who benefit (in particular to find out whether or not they are working parents)
- Extended schools revenue of £20,000 to continue inclusion work, including additional resources and training
- Working with Amaze to encourage them to promote childcare and refer to the Extra Support Service<sup>10</sup>
- Produce *Choosing Childcare* booklet targeted at parents of disabled children aged 0 to 5
- Work with the Aiming High for Disabled Children development manager to link short breaks and childcare
- Develop brokerage role of childminding coordinator working with parents of disabled children, increasing the capacity of childminders to care for disabled children
- Improve and extend the range of training offered to childcare workers regarding disability and inclusion

#### **4.4 Flexibility and provision outside office hours**

- FIS to provide more information and guidance to parents about what they can reasonably expect in terms of flexible provision
- FIS to provide more information to parents about right to flexible working and maternity leave entitlements
- FIS to increase accuracy of information from providers about which ones are really able to offer flexible sessions (particularly childminders)
- Develop the @ Home Childcare Service to provide home-based childcare targeted at families with older children, disabled children, or those particularly vulnerable who need extra support, or those working outside office hours. Details are set out in Appendix Three.
- Recognise the tension in the DCSF guidance between the provision of flexible childcare and that which is sustainable, and focus on sustainability in business support for childcare providers

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<sup>10</sup> The FIS Extra Support Service provides parents of children with special needs additional help finding childcare

#### **4.5 Provision for children aged 11 to 14**

- Develop the @ Home Childcare Service (see 4.4 above)
- Provide extended schools revenue funding to support secondary schools to develop “Safe Place to Be” (£10,000)
- FIS to provide information about activities for 11 to 14 year olds
- Encourage provider registration on voluntary childcare register (see 4.1.2 above)

#### **4.6 Supply and demand for childcare in disadvantaged areas**

- Develop new nursery in Moulsecoomb (Jump Start)
- Continue to fund free places in children’s centre nurseries (see 4.1.1 above)
- Implement the child poverty and children’s centres programme
- Develop the @ Home Childcare Service (see 4.4 above)
- Provide extended schools revenue sustainability funding to providers in disadvantaged areas
- Consider a system of underwriting deposits/fees for parents (see 4.1.1. above)
- Review and develop grant and monitoring forms for sustainability grants to early years providers to include sufficiency and quality issues

