

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 9th April 2009

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Children and Young People

SUBJECT: Phase 3 Children’s Centre Capital

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report identifies the availability of Phase 3 capital funding for children’s centres and proposes deployment of this resource to maximise access to children’s centre services.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- (1) Approval is given to the proposal to request that the Phase 3 capital funding is made available to Halton for the enhancement and maintenance of current children centre stock; and
- (2) Members note the positive developments at Windmill Hill Children’s Centre and Primary School and approve a lease for up to 5 years to the Primary Care Trust to establish a temporary health facility on the school site.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Since April 2006, local authorities have had strategic responsibility for delivering children’s centres, to reflect the mainstreaming of children’s centres as a universal, national programme. Children’s centre services are planned and delivered in partnership with the NHS, Jobcentre Plus and a wide range of voluntary, private and community organisations based on local need.

3.2 Children’s centres are not currently recognised in legislation, although the integrated services which they offer to children and families have a statutory basis in the local authority duties under the Childcare Act 2006 to provide integrated early childhood services. However, the Government’s current proposals contained within The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill, to establish children’s centres as a recognised part of children’s services infrastructure has direct bearing on the future developments of the centres.

3.3 The proposed legislation would mean that in future, whether or not an establishment is described as a children’s centre would be a matter of law. The Government propose to use the Act to establish that all children’s centres in existence at the date of the Royal Assent are

captured as children's centres for the purpose of the statutory requirements.

- 3.4 Local authorities, working with their statutory partners, would be required to assess the need for children's centres in their area, and to establish and maintain sufficient children's centres to meet that need. The purpose of the proposed legislation is to provide children's centres with a statutory footing, so that their provision is not seen as the outcome of time-limited funding regime, but becomes a long term statutory commitment and part of the established landscape of early years provision.
- 3.5 The intention is to reflect in the legislation and associated statutory guidance practice in localities:
- As statutory partners LA's along with PCT's and Job Centre Plus would need to consider whether to provide their early childhood services through Children's Centres
 - The Children's Trust when reviewing their Children and Young People's Plan should consider the case for providing early childhood services through Children's Centres
 - Advisory boards for every Children's Centre to be established representing parents and carers of young children, service providers and the local community
 - Arrangements for consulting with parents and the whole community
 - All staff working in Children's Centres to be checked under the new vetting and barring scheme
 - OFSTED inspection of children's Centres
- 3.6 Under phase 1 and 2 of the programme, twelve children's centres have been established in Halton. Each children's centre is intended to serve a "reach" of between 800 and 1200 children under 5 years within the locality. All twelve centres have been formally designated as children's centres by Government.
- 3.7 Government requires Phase 3 children's centres (2008-11) to be situated outside the most disadvantaged areas and will therefore offer a less intensive level of support than those phase 1 and 2 centres serving families in the 30% most disadvantaged areas. Local authorities have greater flexibility in deciding what services should be provided in the more affluent areas based on assessment of local need.
- 3.8 The current stock of children's centres in Halton is sufficient to meet the target "reach" figure of 0-5 year olds. On a local level, families may access the children's centre of their choice and accurate data is kept concerning registrations and access across the borough. Additionally, there is no need to create any further full day child care places in Halton. It is proposed that the case for non-development of any further

children's centres is made to government. The rationale for this proposal is:

- The overall "reach" figure for Halton set as 7,610 children under 5 years is currently being met.
- The current stock of children's centres across the borough is sufficient to meet the supply of services required to meet the needs of the target reach figures of 800-1200.
- Current data indicates that families are already accessing services in the existing centres.
- There is a lack of need for any further full day care in some "reach" areas as detailed in the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2008.

3.9 Halton will suffer no decrease in the amount of funding currently available to establish phase 3 centres, but capital funding may be used to enhance existing children's centres rather than create new buildings. Guidance concerning the capital approval process for children's centres as from April 2008 has recently been received. For non-building capital spend, projects under £250,000 will be self approved by the local authority.

3.10 Phase 3 is supported by capital funding of £521,866. It is proposed that this funding is used to enhance the facilities at existing children's centres, specifically, the following:

- Windmill Hill Children's Centre – make internal modifications to Windmill Hill Play Centre and formally incorporate this facility within Windmill Hill Children's Centre. This will require Phase 3 children's centre capital deployment £. £260,933
- Upton All Saints Children's Centre. The school will be part of Halton's Phase 1 Primary Capital Programme and the existing Children's Centre facilities will be enhanced and extended. It will require Phase 3 children's centre capital deployment £260,933

Further modifications will be made to Palacefields Children's Centre. These modifications can be funded from extended school's capital and will draw upon investment of approximately £60,000 - £100,000.

3.11 Finally, developments at Windmill Hill Children's Centre and Primary School now include the potential delivery of a new 'Darzi' GP practice on the share site. HBC in partnership with the PCT are exploring the potential co-location of the practice on the shared site, initially on a temporary basis but with a view to a permanent build in the longer term. To support the temporary development discussions are underway to explore a 3 year lease with the PCT with the option to extend for a further 2 years. This provides a significant opportunity to create a 'campus' of service provision at the heart of the community and to join up service delivery to maximise access to a range of services and support.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The local authority and its statutory partners in the Children's Trust , in the context of preparing or reviewing the Children and Young People's Plan, should consider in their plans for early childhood services, which of those services to provide in or through current children's centres.
- 4.2 Delivery of services through children's centres will help contribute to outcomes for children, families and young people in the LAA. Statutory partners in the Local strategic Partnership, including Primary Care Trusts and Job Centre Plus, will be under a legal duty to co-operate on establishing the priorities in the LAA and to work together in delivering them.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Phase 3 is supported by capital funding of £521,866.
- 5.2 Within the Sure Start, Early Years and Childcare Grant allocations for 2008-2011, the children's centre revenue together with the ring fenced grant for ex-Sure Start local programmes that are now children's centres provides resource for an overall "reach" figure of around 7,610 children under 5 years.
- 5.3 Additional funding for the maintenance of centres developed under phase 1 and 2 has been allocated as £27,323 (08-09); £47,194 (09-10); £49,661(10-11).

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

Children's Centres are key facilities for securing the early identification of additional needs in young children and their families and harnessing, with partner agencies within the Children's Trust appropriate interventions to address those needs early.

Coverage of children's centres in Halton has enabled these to become part of a universal offer to all families, with the facility to target some of the resources to greater social need where appropriate

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

Children's centres play a key role in targeting services to lone parents, promoting and securing adult learning, and providing advice and support to families in need through it's commissioned work with the Citizen's Advice Bureau. Children's centres work closely with Job Centre Plus as a statutory partner within this agenda.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Children's centres work closely with the Primary Care Trust in delivering health services and wider health advice and support to children and families from their settings.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Co-ordination of services to young children via children's centres has provided opportunities to identify needs of young children and their parents/carers early.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The development of 12 children's centres in the Borough has secured significant investment in facilities including schools, libraries, and other community facilities.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

Capital spend is required to be completed by 31st March 2011.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

Consideration to access is given in all projects

9.0 REASON FOR DECISION

The Local Authority had been notified that it would receive capital funding to develop two further children's centres in the Borough. Subsequent advice received has indicated that the capital provision could be used to enhance existing stock if locally it is determined that further centres are not required.

10.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Consideration was given to developing further children's centres, however, following analysis of reach figures it was recognised that further centres were not necessary.

11.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

This should be confirmed immediately with Together for Children. Work can then progress on developing the existing provisions at Windmill Hill Children's Centre and Upton All Saints Children's Centre and Primary School.

12.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Phase 3 Planning and Delivery Guidance 2007	www.surestart.gov.uk or Grosvenor House, Runcorn	Eileen Stein
Sure Start Children's Centres Performance Management Framework and SEF Update July 2008	www.surestart.gov.uk or Grosvenor House, Runcorn	Eileen Stein