



meeting

SOCIAL SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

date

4<sup>th</sup> April 2006

agenda item number

## **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

### **DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN'S CENTRES**

#### **1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide members of the Social Services Select Committee with information in relation to the development of children's centres in Nottinghamshire.

#### **2. Information and Advice**

- 2.1 The government published the document "Every Child Matters" in September 2003 as a response to the enquiry into the circumstances surrounding the death of Victoria Climbié. This document makes explicit the intention of improving outcomes for all children by ensuring that all agencies work to deliver services in a more integrated manner. One of the main ways of co-ordinating services for children under the age of 5 is to create children's centres in areas of high social need. Children's centres are intended to build on the work of the Sure Start local programmes, and will eventually cover every ward in the county.
- 2.2 Each children's centre must provide a carefully planned range of integrated services that delivers the 'Core Offer' of:
- day care integrated with early years education
  - support for registered childminders
  - play and early learning for children under 3 and their families
  - health and family support
  - opportunities to access skills training to increase the potential to achieve paid work and to support parents in seeking employment. This will be offered by Job Centres Plus (part of the Department of Work and Pensions).
- 2.3 These services are for all children under five and their parents/carers and so are universal, but also include services targeted at particular needs.

- 2.4 The government has decided which communities have a children's centre based on indicators of deprivation. This has resulted in Nottinghamshire being required to develop 48 children's centres. This has been split into:
- Round One - 22 Centres by 2006 - **see Appendix 1**
  - Round Two - 26 Centres by 2008 - **see Appendix 2**
- 2.5 The capital budget for Round One was £8 million pounds and new builds have been commissioned at Butlers Hill, Swan Lane, Sandybank, Oaktree Lane, Wynndale, Worksop Kilton, North Leverton, Healdswood, Arnbrook, Netherfield, Warsop and Newgate Lane. Some children's centres will be formed by strong linked partnerships which bring together and enhance services already present in the community. An example of this is Hawtonville in Newark or Ollerton and Boughton. In Round Two the capital budget is £5million, but can be used in partnership with the capital for extending services in and around schools, making a total of £11.5million. This may be used to build four substantial buildings and many local refurbishments to better serve rural areas and to ensure a real local presence and delivery points.
- 2.6 Once complete these children's centres will provide services to about 75% of all pre school children in the County. The geographical distribution will be uneven as they are targeted on areas of relative deprivation.
- 2.7 The Education Department has taken the lead in the development of children's centres. They have a dedicated member of staff who manages and co-ordinates all aspects of the initiative. This is an extremely complex task as it requires that the planning is done in a multi-agency, interdisciplinary context. A Steering Group oversees the work and there are a number of working groups which have been working on the operation detail of the following areas:-
- governance arrangements
  - communication
  - community consultation and participation
  - early years
  - health and family support
  - integrated care and education
  - economic well-being
  - training.
- 2.8 Social Services and Education Departments have been increasingly working together to ensure most effective use of the Authority's resources – especially buildings and staff.
- 2.9 Implications for Family Centre Service
- 2.9.1 The Social Services Department currently has ten family centres which provide services to a wide range of Children in Need. They also provide targeted services to children and families where there are concerns relating to

safeguarding by contributing to core assessments undertaken by social workers and assisting parents to improve their parenting skills. Family centres also provide appropriate venues for children who are looked after to have contact with their birth family.

2.9.2 In the development of children's centres the specific role of family centres in safeguarding of children whose names are on the child protection register will be ensured but the skills of the staff will be crucial to the wider range of family support services that are part of the "Core Offer".

2.9.3 Work has commenced on the staffing structure for children's centres to ensure that family centre staff are appropriately incorporated into the structure. The aim of the revised staffing structures is to ensure that there is not duplication of activity or staff roles in relation to family support services that are offered. Four potential options have been produced and a consultation with Staff and the Trade Unions is currently ongoing. Once an option has been decided this will be subject to a delegated decision to.

### **3. Recommendations**

31 It is recommended that the contents of this report are noted.

### **4. Director of Resources Financial Comments (DW 09/03/06)**

4.1 The revenue costs of these schemes will be met from Government Grants and existing budgets within Social Services and Education.

### **5. Background Papers Available for Inspection**

5.1 None.

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(Comm/SCSS207)