
**SURE START CHILDREN'S CENTRES, EXTENDED SERVICES AND CHILDCARE
CAPITAL STRATEGY**

Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Chris McEwan, Children's Services Portfolio

Responsible Director – Murray Rose, Director of Children's Services

Purpose of Report

1. To provide Members with an update regarding the capital projects already approved under this scheme and to seek further approval for the development of projects to be undertaken in 2007/08 as outlined in this report.

Background

2. SureStart Children's Centres are a key delivery mechanism to achieving the objectives set out in the Government's Every Child Matters programme and the Government's commitment to end child poverty. The aim is to improve outcomes for all young children, and in particular to close the gap between the outcomes for the most disadvantaged children and others.
3. The introduction of the Childcare Act 2006 places a statutory duty on Local Authorities from 2008 to work together with NHS and Job Centre Plus partners, to reduce inequalities and improve outcomes through the planning and delivery of early childhood services which are integrated in order to maximise access and benefits to service users and involve parents and private, voluntary and independent childcare providers.
4. SureStart Children's Centres will provide a range of services depending on local need and parental choice. The aim is for a network of centres across the country, offering information, advice and support to fathers and mothers/carers, as well as early years provision (i.e. integrated childcare and early learning), health services, family support, parental outreach, and employment advice for disadvantaged families. Services offered will not be the same everywhere, because needs and communities vary greatly, but the greatest resource for children's centres will go to those children most in need.
5. The Government's Ten Year Childcare Strategy and the Childcare Act 2006, places a duty on Local Authorities to ensure that by 2010:
 - (a) There will be 3,500 Sure Start Children's Centres nationally
 - (b) All Primary and Secondary schools will be offering access to a range of extended services

- (c) All three and four year olds will be able to access flexible free early years provision for 15 hours a week, over a minimum of 38 weeks a year; and
 - (d) All early years childminders will be part of a network linked to a school or to a Children's Centre.
6. Darlington has developed these principles further to ensure that the local strategy specifically provides:
- (a) A Children's Centre in each of the 30% most disadvantaged super-output areas providing easy access to services for young children and their families, including health and employment support, by 2010.
 - (b) Support and advice to all schools in Darlington to enable them to deliver the core offer of Extended Services by 2010.
 - (c) A partnership with the private, voluntary and independent sector to identify opportunities to meet gaps in the childcare market and ensure that there is sufficient, high quality provision of childcare and flexible early years education; and
 - (d) Integrated, locality teams working in each of the five clusters across the town by 2008. The provision of these targeted services, working in conjunction with Children's Centres and Extended Schools, will afford improved equality of access to good quality early education, childcare, youth activities, adult and family learning and specialist services leading to improved life chances for Darlington's children and families

Information and Analysis

- 7. In April 2005 the national Sure Start Unit announced the Ten Year Strategy for Childcare: Round 2 funding allocation' for Local Authorities (2006-2008). This provided the Local Authority with £1,298,953 to develop a capital strategy to deliver the targets outlined above.
- 8. This funding was released by Cabinet on 7th February 2006 and 20th March 2007. Cabinet also approved the partial financing (£163,398) of the Coleridge Centre on 7th November 2006 from this funding stream.
- 9. Extensive work has developed on this portfolio of projects since February 2006. **Appendix A** provides a detailed description of the progress of each scheme.
- 10. Table 1 provides a summary of the current situation for each scheme. In some instances it has been necessary to alter the funding allocation for individual projects and the case for seeking approval to these variations is detailed in the Appendix. However, it should be noted that all funding variations can be contained within the overall funding allocation provided.

(Table 1 overleaf)

Table 1: Summary of current projects

Project Description	Original Allocation	Projected Spend	Variance	Comments / Issues
Round 1 - project overspend (Red Hall, Maidendale House and Mount Pleasant)	0	39,120	39,120	Minor overspend on phase 1 projects including Red Hall (£8,881), Maidendale House (£12,574), Mount Pleasant (£16,946), and other minor variances. (£719)
Dodmire Children's Centre including Outdoor play area and Childminder hub	120,000	198,430	78,430	Project recently approved by DfES. Full description of why the budget has increased and timescale for the project is detailed at Appendix A.
Harewood House Children's Centre – Outreach	100,000	126,716	26,716	This project is now complete. Full description of why the budget has increased is detailed at Appendix A.
Middleton St George Children's Centre – Outreach	10,000	10,913	913	This project is now complete. Full description of project is detailed at Appendix A.
<i>Sadberge Children's Centre - Outreach</i>	<i>50,000</i>	<i>50,000</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>Uncertainty around viability of project. Full details provided in Appendix A.</i>
<i>Haughton Children's Centre</i>	<i>224,090</i>	<i>521,000</i>	<i>296,910</i>	<i>Approval required for increase in projected spend. Full details provided in Appendix A.</i>
Coleridge Centre – Contribution	163,398	163,398	-	This allocation of Sure Start Capital to the Coleridge Centre was approved by Cabinet on 7th Nov 2006
Playing for Success – Contribution	0	34,000	34,000	As part of the extended schools agenda a playing for success centre has been created at Darlington Football Club. This funding contributed towards the rebuild cost of the centre.
Outdoor Play Areas	0	5,000	5,000	Additional developments required to enhance the outdoor play areas to enable extended activities to take place. Full details provided in Appendix A.
• Redhall Children's Centre	0	37,000	37,000	
• McNay Street	0	40,000	40,000	
• The Coleridge Centre		27,000	27,000	
• Maidendale				

(including Pram Shed)				
<i>Heathfield Afterschool and Holiday Provision</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>7,000</i>	<i>7,000</i>	<i>Refurbishment and remodelling work to provide suitable accommodation for an after school and holiday club. Full details provided in Appendix A.</i>
<i>Locality Team base in the Eastbourne area</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>35,000</i>	<i>35,000</i>	<i>Adaptations and refurbishment to provide for multi-agency use by the Locality Base Teams. Full details provided in Appendix A.</i>
Unallocated	631,465	4,376	(627,089)	
TOTAL	1,298,953	1,298,953	0	

Future Capital Projects

11. Members are asked to approve the following alterations to projects and the additional proposed projects to be undertaken within the remaining funding allocation (those projects highlighted in *italics* in Table 1).
12. As outlined in **Appendix A** the requirements for a Children’s Centre and Locality Base in Haughton, on the site of the Education Village, have exceeded the financial allocation previously indicated (£224,090). Revised costs are now in the region of £521,000. Approval of the funding for this project will provide the Haughton area with extensive facilities for children and their families.
13. It is further proposed that Members approve the addition of two new projects for the development of facilities for the Locality Teams to be based in the Eastbourne area of the town and for afterschool and holiday provision at Heathfield Primary School.
14. Members should also note that should the Outreach Centre scheme at Sadberge become unviable (**Appendix A** contains further information) an alternative scheme will be put forward for consideration.
15. Further information and updates will be reported by Children’s Services as part of the regular Capital Budget Management Reports presented to Cabinet.
16. In line with the key aims of the Ten Year Childcare Strategy and the Childcare Act 2006, approval of these projects will support Darlington’s ambition in delivering the key priorities of the local strategy, ensuring that by the end of 2008 there will be:
 - (a) Six children’s centres and three outreach centres located across the Borough, but predominantly in the 30% most disadvantaged areas. These proposals will also ensure that 4,675 pre-school children and their families will be able to access children’s centre services by 2008, exceeding the minimum government “reach” target by 296 children;

- (b) The majority of schools will be offering some level of extended services to their community, with plans in place to develop this offer further by 2010;
- (c) A childcare sufficiency assessment will have been completed, the findings of which will enable strategic decisions to be made about the development of the childcare market in Darlington; and
- (d) Locality Teams will be fully operational from at least three separate locations across the Borough. Plans will be in place to secure accommodation for the remaining teams.

Outcome of Consultation

- 17. Consultation has taken place with a wide range of different groups for each individual project. The Children's Centre projects have been developed in consultation with the relevant Strategic Steering Groups (including representatives from the PCT, Health Visitor, Acute Trust, Job-Centre Plus, Darlington College, and Family Learning). Where appropriate, consultation has also taken place with Schools, parents and children.

Legal Implications

- 18. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

- 19. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Council Policy Framework

- 20. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework.

Decision Deadline

- 21. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.

Key Decision

- 22. This report affects all wards within the Borough and as such represents a key decision.

Recommendations

- 23. It is recommended that Members:-

- (a) Note the progress of schemes already underway;
- (b) Approve the alterations to projects and additional proposed projects as listed in paragraphs 12 – 14; and
- (c) Approve the amendments to the financial breakdown of schemes as listed in Table 1.

Reason

- 24. To enable necessary capital projects to take place to support the requirements placed on the Local Authority by the Government's 10 Year Childcare Strategy and Childcare Act 2006.

Murray Rose
Director of Children's Services

Background Papers

10 Year Childcare Strategy "Choice for parents, the best start for Children"
Childcare Act 2006.

Rachel Jones: Extension 2026

PROGRESS REPORT

Dodmire Children's Centre

Facilities at Dodmire Infant and Junior Schools were developed as part of the Sure Start: Round 1 funding allocation to enable 'outreach' services to be delivered from the site from March 2006. With the Round 2 funding allocation, the opportunity has now been taken to further develop this provision into a full Children's Centre. The design for the facilities, incorporating an extension that provides increased floor area for the main public room, an additional multi-purpose room and increased toilet and storage provision, has recently been approved by the DfES and work is due to commence on site in July 2007. The anticipated completion date is December 2007. It has been necessary to increase the funding allocation for this project to £192,430, as the original project objective to provide day care provision from the Infant School site became invalid and building works associated with the updated project brief are more ambitious and extensive.

Harewood House

Harwood House has been refurbished and adapted to enable it to become a 'virtual' Children's Centre. The aim of this facility is to deliver specialist services in a universal setting, thus creating a service that is child centred, integrated, accessible and locally responsive. The facility accommodates Darlington's Child Development Centre from which a range of specialist services for disabled children are provided, such as the community paediatrician, the specialist Health Visitor, the Special Education Needs Advisory Teacher, portage workers and the social work team. Since January 2006 it has also been possible to implement the Early Support programme and the 'key workers' model from this Centre. The remodelling and refurbishment works were completed in April 2007. In consultation with the users of this facility, additional funding has been allocated to provide essential sensory equipment, remodelling and refurbishment of the hygiene room and enhancements to the outdoor play provision. The total funding allocation for this project has increased to £126,176.

Middleton St George – Outreach

The proposal to develop 'outreach/satellite' services in Middleton-St-George, aligned to the Children's Centre at Maidendale House, has been met following minor adaptations to the facilities within St George's Primary School which have been adapted to make them appropriate for multi-agency use. This facility offers the opportunity to enhance the outdoor play and learning provision. The work is now complete and the final cost of this project was £10,913.

Sadberge and Whessoe – Outreach

A proposal was put forward to deliver 'outreach/satellite' services in the ward of Sadberge and Whessoe, aligned to a Children's Centre at Haughton. An indicative allocation of £50,000 was

identified to carry out works to develop outdoor play facilities that could be used by a local playgroup that operates from the village hall.

The Village Hall is managed by a Management Committee and discussions have been on going with this Committee for some time. To date it has not been possible to reach an agreement about whether or not the scheme can go ahead. Discussions will continue over the next few weeks, but if the scheme is not viable an alternative project may need to be considered and the funding re-allocated.

Haughton area Children's Centre

Following the creation of a number of Children's Centres in Round 1, Darlington's local strategy identified a remaining need for a Children's Centre in the Haughton area of the town. The proposals outlined in the February 2006 Cabinet paper suggested that there may be an opportunity to integrate this facility within the new Education Village, but that further exploration and discussion was required to identify if this option would be feasible. The remaining balance from the Children's Centre round 2 capital allocation, £224,090, was allocated to this development

In developing the Education Village the Local Authority requested additional space to be provided adjacent to the Foundation Stage Department. The original intention for this space was for the delivery of a childcare facility. Work has since been undertaken to examine the feasibility of developing a Children's Centre within the Education Village utilising the accommodation that was made available through the building contract. In consultation with the Children's Centre Steering Group an outline project brief has been prepared to incorporate services for the delivery of Children's Centre services for families such as:

- Early years provision
- Childminder networks
- Parenting education and family support services
- Education, training and employment services for parents/carers
- Health services and support for children and families with disability and/or special needs
- Locality based service delivery team supporting the delivery of a wider range of services to a wider age range of children.

Consultants were then engaged to undertake a feasibility study to look at what options are available at the Education Village considering cost, programme, interface issues and legal implications. Based on the spatial relationship diagram and indicative room population numbers provided in the design brief, the current Accommodation Schedule suggests that the previous amount of £224,090 is not sufficient to meet the requirements of the brief.

In line with the advice received from the Consultants it is suggested that this funding allocation needs to be increased to £521,000 to enable adequate facilities to be established.

This proposal will require an extension to the existing facilities at the Education Village which is operated under PFI contract arrangements. In line with the requirements of this contract, alterations will need to be made to the existing PFI documentation and payment mechanism, incurring associated legal costs. These additional interface difficulties of building an extension

onto an existing occupied school cannot be fully ascertained at this time, but work will commence over the next few weeks to identify the level of risk associated with this project.

Outdoor Play Areas

Since the Children's Centres at Redhall, McNay Street, The Coleridge Centre and Maidendale House have been established it has become apparent that additional developments are required to enhance the outdoor play areas to enable extended activities to take place.

Plans are now being prepared and consultation is taking place with users to ensure the additional requirements are accommodated within the existing garden areas. The schemes include the provision of additional equipment to enable very young children and children with special needs to use the areas more effectively. Some schemes include the provision of additional canopies or shade areas to protect the children from the summer and additional storage areas for play equipment.

Heathfield Afterschool Club and Holiday Provision

As Darlington has a shortage of childcare provision for children over 8 years old this proposal is to provide appropriate provision for 8-12 year olds. Out of school provision is currently being delivered in existing nursery accommodation by a private provider, Heathfield Funtime out of school club. The settings have excellent relationships with the school and has operated successfully in Darlington for five years. They have demonstrated sound marketing procedures and have a ready client base. The nursery area where the older children are cared for needs reconfiguring and improving to more appropriately meet the needs of older children.

Eastbourne Area Locality Base

Proposals are currently being considered to provide accommodation for a locality team base in this area of the town.

The Locality Teams would require this space for:

- Team base (office space for one or more coordinators)
- Meeting room for multi-agency 'meetings around the child' in response to completed Common Assessment Framework
- Interview room for children/ young people and/or parents/ carers
- Delivery of services for children/young people and/or parents/carers by a range of agencies e.g. DBC, PCT.

A number of refurbishment and adaptation projects are being considered but it is envisaged this work will be in the region of £35,000.