

---

**CHILDREN'S CENTRES STRATEGIC PROPOSAL – ROUND 2, 2006-08**

---

**Responsible Cabinet Member(s) -Councillor Chris McEwan**  
**Responsible Director(s) – Margaret Asquith, Director of Children's Services**

---

**Purpose of Report**

1. To seek Members' approval of the proposed boundary changes of Darlington's round 1 (2004-06) Children's Centres.
2. To seek Members' approval of the proposed locations of Darlington's round 2 (2006-2008) Children's Centres.

**Information and Analysis**

Background

3. In round 1 (2004-06) Children's Centres Darlington had to deliver 4 Children's Centres in wards which are within the 20 per cent most deprived wards nationally, reaching 2,302 children under the age of five, and operational by 31st March 2006. There is an expectation that where possible, Children's Centres are developed from SureStart Local Programmes.
4. Darlington is fortunate in having 3 SureStart Local Programme areas where major capital work has already been funded so enabling the change into Children's Centres. The 4th Children's Centre for Darlington has been identified for the Eastbourne area and agreement was reached that it would be located at Maidendale House on Firthmoor (this was reported to LifeLong Learning Scrutiny Committee on 18th August 2003, Social Affairs and Health Scrutiny Committee on 19th August 2003, and Cabinet on 7th October 2003)
5. Round 1 (2004-06) guidance also encouraged Darlington where possible to pick up smaller pockets of deprivation using a "satellite/outreach" model. Areas identified for this model were Redhall and Banktop/Lascelles with Banktop/Lascelles being developed as satellites through Dodmire School. Table 1 (attached at **Appendix A**) and map 1 (attached at **Appendix B**) show the location of each round 1 Children's Centre, the wards covered by each Centre, and the 'reach' or the number of pre-school children able to access Children's Centre services in each Centre.

Proposals for Children's Centres Round 2

6. In April 2005 the national SureStart Unit released its 'Ten Year Strategy for Childcare: Guidance for Local Authorities'. Accompanying this guidance was a letter setting out Darlington's round 2 (2006-08) Children's Centres targets.

7. The target for Darlington's Round 2 (2006-08) Children's Centres is the creation of 2 Children's Centres, ensuring that an additional 2,077 pre-school children are able to access Children's Centre services by March 2008. SureStart Unit guidance states that in round 2 services must be developed to 'reach' all pre-school children and their families in those areas of the Borough which are within the 30 per cent most disadvantaged 'Super Output Areas' (SOA), as opposed to simply the 20 per cent most disadvantaged wards covered in round 1 (2004-06).
8. The guidance suggests that Local Authorities may wish to review planned round 1 catchment areas when looking at their round 2 plans. Analysis of deprivation shows that the 2 additional centres should be located in the Dodmire and Haughton areas as many of the SOAs are already within round 1 catchment areas or are closely adjacent to them. Facilities at Dodmire Infant and Junior Schools are currently being developed in round 1 to enable 'outreach' services to be delivered there by March 2006. To achieve designation as a Children's Centre in round 2 would be readily achievable.
9. The ideal location for a Centre in Haughton would be integrated on site with the new Education Village, but there may be revenue and PFI implications and therefore this is at an early stage of discussion. If this goes ahead, this Children's Centre would take responsibility for the "outreach/satellite" provision at Redhall. If this is not possible, an alternative site in the Haughton area would need to be identified.
10. By the end of November 2005 initial proposals must be submitted to GONE on the web based capital database system established by the national SureStart Unit. Detailed plans must be submitted to GONE by February 2006. Table 2 (attached at **Appendix C**) and map 2 (attached at **Appendix D**) show the proposed locations of round 2 Children's Centres and the proposed changes to Round 1 catchment areas and 'reach' figures.

#### Numbers of children

11. Although the national SureStart Unit suggests that each Children's Centre serves an average of 800 pre-school children it has been agreed with the Regional SureStart Unit (GONE) that it is important to deliver services within "natural" communities and therefore, some Centres will be either larger (McNay Street) or smaller (Skerne Park) than the average. Parity will be achieved through Children's Centre management arrangements whereby Children's Centre Managers will manage services for around 1200-1400 children i.e. some managers will be responsible for 2 Centres.

#### Rural areas

12. Government Office North East has recently advised an available amount of £140,000 for 2006-08 "rural up-lift" funding available to Darlington to supply services for children under 5 and their families resident in rural wards. The Authority has some flexibility to decide its usage although proposals must be approved by GONE.
13. GONE recognize that such limited funding would be most effectively used in a targeted way in specific areas rather than spread thinly across all the rural wards. Although none of the rural wards have Super Output Areas which are within the 30 per cent poorest Super Output Areas nationally, it is clear that deprivation does exist in some rural Super Output Areas: one of Middleton-St-George's Super Output Areas is within the 50 per cent poorest nationally and the entire ward of Sadberge and Whessoe is ranked within the top 63 per cent poorest nationally. It is proposed to develop "outreach/satellite" services, for example, toy

library, stay and play baby massage, healthy eating and smoking cessation sessions in Middleton-St-George between 2006-08 aligned to the Children's Centre at Maidendale House. A further proposal is to deliver "outreach/satellite" services in the ward of Sadberge and Whessoe between 2006-08 aligned to the Children's Centre at Haughton. Each outreach provision will be monitored and co-ordinated through the aligned Children's Centre.

### **Outcome of Consultation**

14. The round 1 (2004-06) Children's Centre boundary changes and the proposals to develop 2 additional Children's Centres in Round 2 (2006-08) have been discussed with the Children's Centres Strategic Steering group which includes representatives from SureStart Local Programmes, Co. Durham & Darlington Priority Services NHS Trust, Co. Durham & Darlington Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, Darlington Primary Care Trust, Jobcentre Plus, Darlington College of Technology, Firthmoor District & Community Association, Skerne Park Community Enterprise Association, Banktop Community Partnership, Lascelles Community Partnership, Redhall Community Partnership, SureStart Local Programmes Parent Groups, Community Services and Economic Regeneration. These proposals have also been discussed with, and supported by, the regional SureStart Unit and Government Office North East.

### **Legal Implications**

15. 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**

16. 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**

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

### **Decision Deadline**

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

### **Key Decisions**

19. In accordance with the Council's constitution this is classed as a key decision as it affects all wards within the Borough except Mowden, College, Hummersknott and Park West where it is anticipated that Children's Centres Round 3 (2008-2010) plans will be developed.

### **Recommendations**

20. It is recommended that Members:

- (a) Note and approve the round 1 (2004-06) catchment area changes (as detailed in **Appendices A & B**); and
- (b) Note and approve the round 2 (2006-08) Children's Centre proposals for Dodmire and Haughton (as detailed in **Appendices C & D**).

### **Reasons**

21. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:-

- (a) They meet the national and regional Sure Start Units, Government Office North East Round 2 Children's Centres requirements and comply with guidance; and
- (b) They enable the government set minimum 'reach targets' to be met and exceeded in Darlington.

**Margaret Asquith**  
**Director of Children's Services**

### **Background Papers**

SureStart Unit's: 'Ten Year Strategy for Childcare: Guidance for Local Authorities', March 2005  
'Children's Centres – Developing Integrated Services For Young Children and Their Families, SureStart national Start-Up Guidance, First Issued February 2003, Up-dated August 2003'.