

CORE OFFER FOR SURE START CHILDREN'S CENTRES

Sure Start Children's Centres must provide access to a Core Offer of Services specified by DCSF. Phase 3 Guidance (page 5) states:

The intensity of services offered by children's centres will vary according to the level of disadvantage in the area. For example, children's centres in areas close in terms of deprivation to the 30% most deprived areas would be expected to deliver children's centres with a similar level of services.

All centres must provide a universal range of services including:

- Outreach services for isolated parents/carers and children at risk of social exclusion, including health visitors linked with the centre, underpinned with good information and data about families in the local area;
- Information and advice to fathers and mothers /carers on a range of subjects including: local childcare, looking after babies and young children and local education services for three- and four-year olds;
- Support to childminders via a quality assured, coordinated network, but also to other childminders in the area, for example by providing shared training opportunities, loan of toys and equipment and by hosting drop-in sessions;
- Activities for children and mothers and fathers/carers at the centre, e.g.: play groups, stay and play, parent groups, drop-in sessions, crèches in the centre itself, these could be existing services which the children's centre is being built around;
- Links with Jobcentre Plus, to encourage and support labour market participation by parents/carers who wish to consider training and employment. The nature of the links will be negotiated locally in light of community needs and local circumstances but could consist of, one or more of the following: up to date vacancy boards in the centre, internet access, warm phones, Jobcentre Plus advisers offering one to one or group support, drop-in or regular opportunities to consult personal advisers for advice on the financial impact of starting work, a named 'link adviser' at the Jobcentre providing a direct contact point for parents, leaflets and posters advertising Jobcentre Plus services;
- Access to community health services; including antenatal services and the Child Health Promotion Programme, led and delivered by health visiting teams tailored to meet different levels of risk and need, and access to specialist services – in particular for children with special needs and disabilities.

More detailed guidance on these areas can be found in the Sure Start Children's Centres Practice Guidance November 2006.

The provision of services to children under 5 and their families is underpinned by the Early Years Outcomes Duty (Childcare Act 2006) and are the collective responsibility of the Local Authority and its key partners, the Strategic Health

Authority, Primary Care Trust and Jobcentre Plus. Children's Centres receive core funding to support delivery.

Page 16 of the Guidance states:

Family and community health services, such as the delivery of the Child Health Promotion Programme, and employment and training advice for parents are not funded through children's centre revenue. We expect these services to be provided by the NHS and Jobcentre Plus, reshaping existing resources where necessary, and working in partnership with local authorities within children's trust arrangements.

Early Years Provision (integrated early learning and daycare), which is a key part of the offer in centres serving the most disadvantaged communities and is optional elsewhere, is intended to be self-sustaining and run on business lines once it is fully established. There is no expectation that children's centres revenue will be used to subsidise places in children's centres.

Early Years Provision

- Integrated early learning and childcare for babies and children until they are five years old
- Integrated learning and care suitable for working mothers & fathers/carers for a minimum of 5 days a week, 48 weeks a year and for 10 hours a day
- Childcare places will be open to all, with a priority for disadvantaged families, but not just families in the immediate area, (admission and fee policy to be determined locally)
- Support for child minders including a network
- Early identification of children with special needs and disabilities with inclusive services and support for their families
- Links to local school (extended school and Healthy Schools) and out of school activities (holiday play schemes, before/after school play & learning)

Qualified Teacher Input

- *Where a centre is serving an area where the majority of children live in a 30% most disadvantaged area, access to full daycare must be provided onsite or through a formal agreement with a nearby registered provider. Qualified early years specialist teacher input must be provided by the Children's Centre to support quality in the early years provision.*
- *Where full daycare provision is formally linked to a Children's Centre serving a reach area in which the majority of children do not live in a 30% most disadvantaged area, qualified early years specialist teacher*

- *Where a centre serves an area where the majority of children do not live in a 30% most disadvantaged area and where there is no existing full daycare provision formally linked to the centre the centre does not need to ensure qualified early years specialist teacher input.*

Outreach

- Visits to all families in the reach area within 2 months of the child's birth (through the Child Health Promotion Programme or agreed local arrangements)
- Activities to raise community awareness, particularly among disadvantaged groups
- Coordinated programme of home visits
- Systems for referring/signposting families to further services
- Systems for monitoring services usage by particular families or groups
- Where possible key worker system

Family Support

- Information for parents/carers about the range of family support services in the area
- Support and advice on parenting including at significant transition points for the family (e.g. pre-birth, early days, settling into childcare)
- Access to specialist targeted services for those families that need them e.g. support for parents/carers of disabled children
- Activities that increase parents'/carers' understanding of their child's development
- Specific strategies and activities that increase the involvement of fathers

Child and Family Health Services

- Antenatal advice and support for mothers & fathers/carers
- Child Health Promotion Programme
- Information and guidance on breast feeding, hygiene, nutrition and safety
- Promoting positive mental health and emotional well being, including identification, support and care for those suffering from maternal depression, antenatally and post-natally
- Speech and language and other specialist support
- Support for healthy lifestyles

- Help in stopping smoking

Parental Involvement

- Consultation and information sharing with mothers & fathers/carers, on what services are needed and systems to get user feedback on services
- Ongoing arrangements in place to ensure mothers & fathers/ carers have a voice e.g. parents forum, including fathers

Links with Jobcentre Plus

- Centres will link with Jobcentre Plus to encourage and support parents and carers who wish to consider training and employment

The Guidance indicates in Section 3.5 that “Other services that may be provided” It states that “Sure Start Children’s Centres may also offer fathers and mothers/carers help with accessing training, work, advice and information and may well offer a range of other services, although funding may need to be accessed from other sources.”

Services could include

- Effective links with further and higher education institutions, and local training providers
- Training for fathers and mothers/carers, including English as an Additional Language where relevant, basic skills or parenting classes
- Benefits advice, including maternity benefits
- Childcare and other services for older children, e.g. siblings of families receiving services
- Adult relationship support
- Contact centres
- Toy libraries
- Support for delivery of Bookstart baby bags, toddler bags and “My Treasure Boxes”

Services offered in areas where the majority of children do not live in a 30% disadvantaged area (70%)

Sections 3.7 to 3.11 give more flexibility for delivery of services but the following are considered to be a minimum

- The offer of appropriate support and outreach services to parents/carers and children who have been identified as in need of them
- Information and advice to fathers and mothers/carers on a range of subjects including local childcare, looking after babies and young children and local early years provision (childcare and early learning) education services for three and four year olds

- Support to childminders via a coordinated network, but also to other childminders in the area, for example by providing training, loan of toys and equipment and drop-in sessions
- Drop-in sessions and other activities for children and mothers and fathers/carers at the centre, including parent groups, play groups and adult education
- Links to Jobcentre Plus services, to support and encourage labour market participation, in order to combat poverty. The nature of these will however be negotiated locally in the light of circumstances and community requirements
- Community health services including local midwives and health visitors based in the centre or operating from it, that
 - Visit families with newborn babies in the area within the first two months of their babies life with information about services and support
 - Provide access to the Child Health Promotion Programme
 - Provide information and guidance on breastfeeding, nutrition, hygiene and safety, thus reducing the number of children aged 0-3 admitted to hospital
 - Provide antenatal advice and support to all pregnant women and their families in the area
 - Encourage parents who smoke to attend smoking cessation clinics
 - Promote opportunities for physical activities from an early age
 - Identify children with special needs and disabilities and address their needs
 - Identify particularly disadvantaged families that the centre can offer appropriate support

Centres in the 70% most advantaged areas may open at more flexible times to suit the local community if they are not providing early education / childcare provision.

Priorities for all Centres

Outreach and Home Visiting

Even in the most affluent areas there will be families with young children at risk of social exclusion. Outreach to these parents – to ensure they access the services their children need – is a key role for all children's centres.

Supporting Parents

In Phase 3, the intensity of family support offered by Sure Start Children's Centres serving more affluent areas will vary according to the level of need but priority must be given to reaching out to vulnerable and disadvantaged families. This can be achieved by reshaping existing statutory provision to deliver services through the centre, or by contracting with local private, voluntary or independent sector organisations to deliver services. For the majority of centres in more affluent areas that will not offer intensive family support services on site, links with other organisations and services must be established so that parents can access evidence based parenting programmes where particular needs are identified. In particular centres should

link with local health visitors providing the Child Health Promotion Programme and support to parents.