

3. Progress towards Childcare Sufficiency (April 08 – March 11)

3.1 Introduction

The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2008 action plan identified a number of development areas where action could be taken by Swindon Borough Council to support the childcare market in Swindon. These recommendations were fed into Swindon Sure Start Partnership's annual business planning process.

Below are the main developments that Swindon Sure Start Partnership has supported to improve the supply of and demand for childcare in Swindon 2008 – 11.

3.2 Improvements to the availability of childcare and early education

- Start up funding and support has been provided for sixteen new breakfast clubs and eight new after school clubs in localities where additional demand was identified.
- Funding and support has been provided for two new full daycare nurseries to open in phase two Children's Centres.
- Fourteen group childcare providers and four childminders have been supported with sustainability funding, ensuring their ability to operate through and beyond the recession.
- Equipment grants have been provided to 25 preschools. This helped them to reconfigure their services to be more flexible so that children can attend two funded sessions in one day. As part of this reconfiguration the majority of these preschools were also able to open longer, offering additional early education sessions locally and increasing the availability of funded early education places across Swindon.
- The childminder start up grant was discontinued and the funding redirected to support registered childminders to develop more flexible and higher quality services to meet the needs of parents.
- The sustainability of three preschools was supported by helping to secure their co location in children's centre developments. Five preschools located in SBC buildings received sufficient capital funding to make improvements to assist with security of tenure.
- The development of four new preschools was supported in areas where demand is higher than supply.
- Swindon Sure Start Partnership and the School Transport Service have worked together so that arrangements can be made for a disabled child using school transport to return to a childminder or after school group.

- A number of schemes have been considered and trialled to address the needs of older children (11 – 14 year olds) in working families in the school holidays with limited success.

3.3 Improvements to information about childcare

- Childcare and early education records have been brought into one database at the Council to provide better information for parents, improve management information and facilitate communication with settings.
- The Family Information Service has been brought into Swindon Direct at Swindon Borough Council at the One Stop Shop and Contact Centre. Parents are able to find information about registered childcare and family services by phone, in person or online.
- More information about childcare and family services is available to parents online at www.swindon.gov.uk including information about choosing childcare, how to make a childcare related complaint and where to find sources of funding for childcare
- Information about childcare and family services is available and is being developed further in the community through outreach services and at Children's Centres and in schools (for example staff at Children's Centres have received training to improve their knowledge of the tax credit system).
- Additional help (brokerage) is provided by Swindon Sure Start Partnership for parents who are struggling to find childcare or early education.