

Swindon Children's Centre Strategy

Our Vision for children's Services

Children and Young People in Swindon deserve the best start in life and we want them to enjoy life, to achieve, to stay safe from harm, to be healthy and to grow up to be successful adults in a loving caring environment.

Children's experience in their early years has a major impact on their life chances. In Swindon we will enhance this experience by increasing the availability of high quality early years provision, integrated with health and family support services through the delivery of Sure Start Children's Centres.

At the heart of our strategy is the drive to improve outcomes for young children as set out in Every Child Matters, reducing inequalities between children growing up in disadvantage and the wider population.

Context

To achieve our vision of improved outcomes for every child, we need to move from the current position of local initiatives, working in discrete areas, to a model of universal delivery of services to under fives, through a borough wide development of Children's Centres.

To make this vision a reality, several factors are key

1. The development of Children's Centres is a shared vision, owned and driven by all the agencies including the voluntary sector working with under fives in Swindon.
2. The model is sustainable and based on the mainstreaming of existing services.
3. The strategy looks forward to 2010 and with a clear plan to deliver a Children's Centre in every community.
4. The Children's Centre development is an intrinsic part of the borough's wider implementation of a Children's Trust, with clear links to the multi-agency teams.
5. The Children's Centre development is linked to other developments in Children's Services, specifically the developments of Extended Schools, Disabled children's Team and the Child Development Centre.

Phased Delivery in Swindon

The Children's Centre development in Swindon will take place in three phases.

Phase One (to March 2006)

In April 2004 Swindon Borough Council received confirmation from the Department for Education and Skills of approval for its Children's Centre Delivery Plan. The delivery plan included details of the creation of 85 new childcare places through the development of 3 Children's Centres. Each centre has the responsibility to undertake the delivery of a 'Core Offer' of early years education and childcare, health and family support services, links with schools, the Children's Information Service and Job Centre Plus. Full details of the Core Offer are attached in Appendix 1.

Following guidance from central government that centres were to be located in the 20% most disadvantaged wards in the borough and built on existing initiatives. The following three centres were identified for phase one.

- Sure Start Children's Centre Penhill and Pinehurst – which is being developed from the existing Sure Start Local Programme.
- Parks and East Walcot Children's Centre – which is being developed from the Goddard Park early Excellence Centre.
- Robert le Kyng Children's Centre – which is in the grounds of Robert le Kyng Primary School in Central Ward.

Phase Two (April 2006 – March 2008)

The Ten Year Strategy for Childcare and the Childcare Bill currently before parliament have clarified government policy. The stated intention is to provide universal services through a Children's Centre in every community, with 3,500 centres nationally by 2010.

For Swindon, the Sure Start Unit at the Department for Education and Skills and the Department for Work and Pensions have allocated revenue funding of £1,819,870 and capital funding of £1,074,825 to develop seven new Children's Centres within the borough by 31st March 2008. Each centre needs to have a reach of approximately 800 children under 5. Additionally centres must cover the 30% most disadvantaged super output areas.

The 30% most disadvantaged super outputs areas in Swindon are

- Stratton
- Gorse Hill and Pinehurst
- Moredon
- Freshbrook and Toothill
- Eldene and Liden

The Grange Park/Middleleaze and Eastcott and East Walcot areas, were identified as being in the 30% most disadvantaged in Swindon. It was therefore proposed that the remaining two Children's Centres should be situated in these areas.

Phase Three (April 2008 – March 2010)

Based on current estimates of population, the borough's remaining Children's Centres will need to reach a further 3726 children.

Based on a reach target of 800 children, this will require the development of 4 – 5 Children's Centres in Phase 3.

The areas that these will cover will be

- Highworth and Blunsdon
- Wroughton, Chiseldon and Ridgeway, Old Town
- Haydon Wick and Greenmeadow
- Abbey Meads

The current expansion of the town will play a part in determining whether a fifth centre is necessary, and if so, where it should be located.

Childcare and Early Education

The Swindon Children's Centre Model will be a campus based delivery, where the childcare and early education will be delivered by the existing providers who are based in the Children's Centres geographical area. This is in line with government guidance to develop and incorporate existing providers, maximising their potential and enhancing their sustainability.

Additionally, indications from the Children's Information Service and from providers are that there is currently over capacity in Swindon; nurseries are struggling to fill places.

Existing full day care providers will be offered the opportunity to access funding of up to £10,000 to enable them to develop as Children's Centre daycare providers. Funding will be released to facilitate their marketing within the Children's Centre area, releasing staff to attend multi-agency meetings and joint training and to support any cashflow dip caused by the provision of affordable places. In this context, we have defined affordable as within the level specified as the maximum attracting tax credit subsidy.

To safeguard quality of delivery, providers receiving judgements of inadequate for either care or education will not be included in this offer. The terms of grant will place a requirement on providers to meet qualification levels and to attend training.

Two phase 2 areas do not have any full day care for children aged 0 – 5. In these areas new provision will be commissioned.

Qualified Teacher Input

Research findings, for example from the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education project, have shown that qualified teacher input leads to high quality provision and improved outcomes for children.

In Swindon we are committed to achieving the best for our children, and thus we see it as vital that each centre has a dedicated teacher who will be a key member of the Children's Centre team.

All early years settings within the Children's Centre areas, including maintained and voluntary and private sector sessional providers, accredited childminders and full daycare nurseries will have curriculum planning and development advice from their advisory teach. All advisory teachers, are Early Years Specialists who will work closely with setting staff, challenging and developing their skills, encouraging reflective and self evaluative practice, through the implementation of a validated setting self review.

Cluster meetings, joint training events and shared staff meetings will form an intrinsic part of the development of quality across the Children's Centre area. These will also help to embed the nursery and sessional staff as key members of the Children's Centre team.

Initially there will be one teacher for every two Children's Centres, as a precursor to developing the existing workforce through the opportunities presented by the Transformation Fund.

Professional management for the advisory team will be provided by the Early Years Advisor.

Children's Centre Premises

The model proposed for phase two Children's centres in Swindon is a campus model with a main centre in a primary school whilst utilising existing full day care in the Children's centre area where ever possible.

The rationale behind this is based on government guidance not to develop new places where there is no indication of demand but to build on and sustain existing good quality provision.

Guidance also indicates that there should be strong links between the Children's Centres and primary schools and that consideration should be given both to co-location of centres and schools and to use of surplus capacity in schools.

The other constraining factor is the small capital budget of £1 million, which will not support any totally new build.

The suggestion therefore is that the main sites of Children's Centres are located in refurbished accommodation in primary schools.

In the majority of areas the main site would provide the family support and parenting work, accommodation for health input, although not all health professionals would necessarily be permanently based at the centre and office space for the centre co-ordinator and other staff. Other services such as links with the job centre and adult learning would also take place at the main site.

The main difference from the phase one model is that, where appropriate Early education and childcare is already provided in the children's centre area, there would be no new places provided at the children's centre but the off – site provision would be incorporated into the children's centre through joint training, staff meetings, information sharing and a joint management board and shared teacher input.

As Children's centres serve a large neighbourhood of approximately 800 under fives, the main centre may not be accessible for all families in the area. In this case some services will need to be provided from linked sites. This could mean that accommodation is also needed in other schools for outreach work to take place. Other premise such as health centres where services are already provided would also be incorporated into the centre and could also be used to deliver outreach work.

A Multi – Agency Involvement

Strategic

The strategic lead for the Children's Centre Development in Swindon lies with the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. This is delivered through two subgroups of the Partnership. The first is the Every Child Matters task group. This group is charged with driving the implementation of the Children's Act within Swindon. Membership of the group includes the local authority, the Primary Care Trust, the Swindon and Marlborough Acute Trust, Connexions, Sure Start, Schools, the Children's Fund and the voluntary sector. The leads for the development of a Disabled Children's team and for the development of Children's Centres and Extended Schools are also members of their group.

Alongside this group, there is a multi-agency Children's Centre Implementation group.

Membership of this group includes representatives from the local authority, primary care trust, midwifery, job centre plus, childminding, Children's Information Service and the phase one centres.

The focus for this group has been the implementation of Phase One, but has now been broadening to encompass the operational delivery of phase 2.

Supporting this work, small multi-agency task groups work on specific elements of the development, including service delivery and premises.

Operational

To ensure consistency of service delivery across all centres and to prevent duplication of work, the operational delivery of services at the Children's Centres will be supported by Service Level agreements between the borough council and their partners. These agreements will not be identical at all centres as they need to reflect local need. The lead agency at each centre will be a key partner in drawing up the local conditions in these agreements.

Partners in the Children's Centres will include

Parents and Carers

Schools

Swindon Borough Council Children's Services Department

Swindon & Marlborough National Health Service Trust

Job Centre Plus

The Children's Information Service

Trio Childcare Connections

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service

Swindon Primary Care Trust

Local Providers of Early Years Childcare and Education

Community organisations operating in the area

Voluntary Sector operating in the area

Management and Governance

The Lead Agency

At each Children's Centre, the local authority will identify a lead agency.

In phase one, the lead agencies were identified through their involvement in existing initiatives in the area.

Phase One

<u>Centre</u>	<u>Lead Agency</u>
Parks and East Walcot	Goddard Park Primary School
Penhill and Pinehurst	Primary Care Trust
Robert le Kyng	Barnardos

In phase two, the decision of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, the Procurement Advisory Group and Cabinet, was that:-

- Where the 'host' school can demonstrate the capacity and desire to act as lead agency, they would do so.
- In West Swindon (Freshbrook/Toothill/Westlea), the West Swindon Family Centre would be the lead agency.
- In all other cases, the role of lead agency would be the subject of a competitive tender process, giving the opportunity for the voluntary sector to bid.

The Role of the Lead Agency

The key role for the lead agency is to provide the management, organisation and administration of activities within the Children's Centre. They will provide the infrastructure which will facilitate the multi-agency, community based response to children's and family needs. They will act as the crucial conduit between the community and the agencies delivering the service within the centre. They will also be key in ensuring that the local authority's Children's Centre strategy is delivered in their area.

In looking at the Children's Centre core offer in consultation with partners, a clear gap has emerged in the provision of family and parenting support. This work will also form part of the role of the lead agency.

Full details of the role of the lead agency are included in the contract service specification and are attached at Appendix 2.

Procurement

Securing the appropriate lead agency is a crucial success factor in delivering this strategy.

To achieve this

- A service specification for the role of the agency has been drawn up in consultation with partners.

- An open tender process will be followed in accordance with borough procedures with alerts to interested parties.
- Business Support will be offered to schools to enable them to plan for sustainability.
- Contracts for all grants awarded will be in place and monitored quarterly.

Management

Day to day management of the centre will be the responsibility of the lead agency. The lead agency will have a role in facilitating staff meetings, wider team meetings and joint training. Where premises belong to the borough, these will be leased by the lead agency who will be responsible for their interior maintenance.

Governance

At each centre there will be a centre based advisory board which will also act as a steering group.

The role of this group will be to

- Develop and promote the Centre Ethos and values
- To establish the strategic direction of the centre in accordance with the local authority strategy, the Sure Start good practice guidance and local needs
- To support centre sustainability
- To monitor outcomes
- To receive reports
- To champion the work of the centre within own agency.

Membership of this group will include

- The lead agency representative
- Parent representative
- Community representative
- Local Authority Children's Centre representative
- Centre Manager
- Daycare provider
- School representative (where school is not lead agency)
- PCT
- Swindon and Marlborough Acute Trust
- Childminding representative.

Others may also be included as appropriate.

The Role of the Local Authority

There are several key aspects to the role of the local authority:-

- To provide strategic leadership in driving forward change for children
- To engender effective partnerships working together to secure better outcomes for children
- To monitor delivery and report to central government
- To support and challenge local delivery

- To encourage creativity and innovation
- To obtain best value from all resources

To achieve this we will

- Work with partners to review and implement this strategy as outlined under Multi-Agency Involvement
- Facilitate local and borough wide meetings to deal with issues as they arise
- Disseminate information and offer opportunities for discussions
- Value the contributions of all agencies
- Ensure the inclusion of the private and voluntary sectors
- Keep the child and parents at the heart of all we do. Listen to their ideas and concerns and respond.
- Offer Business Officer Support to all settings to support sustainability
- Offer subsidised training for all childcare staff.
- Provide templates to support gathering of data and financial returns
- Provide dedicated project officer and childcare development support for all centres.
- Facilitate sharing of best practice through the implementation group, joint training and network groups.