

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES

A STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN'S CENTRES

DRAFT

EARLY YEARS, CHILDCARE AND PARENTING  
SERVICES

2006-2008

**SureStart**



*Harrow***COUNCIL**  
LONDON

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## **1. The Purpose of a Children's Centre Strategy**

This strategy for Children's Centre is Harrow's response to the Government's aspiration set out in their 10 Year Childcare Strategy "To have a Children's Centre in Every Community". The Policy Statement for Children's Centres, accompanying the strategy, brings together, into one document, the best practice and legislative requirements around Children's Centres. The policy sets the principles by which Children's Centres services should be provided and the procedures which should be followed. It is this policy framework on which the Children's Centre strategy is based.

The purpose of the strategy is to build on this policy and to:

- i. Create clarity around outcomes for children;
- ii. Set strategic aims and direction for the next two years;
- iii. Set strategy targets to improve practice;
- iv. Set targets to match priorities with resources.

## **2. Children's Centres Policy – its links to the strategy**

The importance of the policy to the strategy cannot be overstated. The policy stresses the necessity of:

- Providing community based centres which meet the individual needs of children and their families;
- Promoting National Sure Start Principles;
- Establishing core services which are achievement and prevention focused;
- Ensuring access to pre-school education so that children can achieve their learning potential;
- Providing effective management boards for centres;
- Promoting healthy living – physical, mental and emotional wellbeing;
- Providing maximum accessibility to Children's Centres;
- Ensuring equality of access to Children's Centres.

## **3. Outcomes for Children**

This strategy is focussed on outcomes for children. An outcomes based approach is at the heart of the Children Bill and in 'Every Child Matters – Next Steps'. Five outcomes for all children are set out. They have been welcomed and endorsed by Harrow Council. They already fit well with the mission statements for Children's Services. The five outcomes are:

- Being Healthy – enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle;
- Staying Safe – being protected from harm including seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of others, neglect and growing up able to look after themselves;
- Enjoying and Achieving – getting the most out of life and developing broad skills to adulthood;
- Making a Positive Contribution – to the community and to society and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour;
- Achieving Economic Wellbeing.

## **4. Links to other strategies**

In addition to the above outcomes, the following strategies are identified as contributing to the success of this Children's Centre Strategy:

- i. The Government's 10 Year Childcare Strategy which builds on 'Every Child Matters – Next Steps' and sets a clear target of having a Children's Centre in every community. Each centre will offer a range of information and integrated services according to local needs, including early education and childcare, health and support services including family and parenting support.
- ii. The Health Visitor strategy which outlines the direction in which the Harrow Health Visiting Service will develop this includes:
  1. To restructure the health visiting service to strengthen the community focus.
  2. To encompass the population approach of public health and integrate this with individual and family work.
  3. Developing strategic partnerships with pre-school establishments.
  4. Work with the community to identify needs and find solutions.
  5. Developing Health Visiting teams with the skills to meet local need
  6. Developing team approaches to caseload management and targeting health needs
  7. Teams of Health Visitors working in geographical areas whose boundaries are co-terminus with education and social services.
- iii. The Extended Schools Agenda whose focus is to develop a range of services and activities beyond the school day including:
  - Study Support
  - Family learning
  - Parenting Support services
  - Behaviour support
  - Sexual health service for young people
- iv. The Children's Centre Strategy will also link with other strategies to maximise benefits to children and families. These strategies include:
  - Shaping Schools for the Future Strategy
  - Special Need Transport Policy
  - Catering Review
  - Business Transformation Project – First Contact
  - Strategy for People

## **5. Children's Centres – The Current Situation**

Harrow has high performing Early Years, Childcare and Parenting Services which have led the development of partnership with other agencies to provide integrated service delivery for children and families. In addition, there are two other initiatives supporting the delivery of integrated services to children and families in Harrow:

## **5.1 Extended Schools**

Harrow has one full service Extended School which provides a range of support services to children and families from the local community the school serves.

## **5.2 School Clusters**

Harrow has seven school clusters all at various stages of development which bring together schools and other services to meet the local needs of children and families through a range of targeted activities including:

- Adult learning;
- Family learning;
- Parenting support;
- Sport and arts;
- Childcare

## **5.3 Early Years and Childcare Centres**

Harrow has three Children's Centres which are currently undesignated. (This is because Harrow has no wards in the bottom 20% as defined by the indices of deprivation):

- Hillview Centre in the west of the Borough;
- Stanmore Park Centre in the east of the Borough;
- Gange Nursery Centre in the centre of the Borough.

All three centres are registered to provide early care and education for children 2 to 5 years and currently all are working at maximum capacity to meet the needs of high criteria vulnerable families and their children.

### ***Hillview Centre***

Hillview was designated as an Early Excellence Centre in 2001. The centre provides care and early education and other services to children and families in need throughout Harrow.

The Centre has a strong partnership with Roxeth First and Middle School. The Roxeth First and Middle School Nursery Class is integrated into the Hillview Centre. The children attending Hillview through the Roxeth Nursery Class route come from the local community.

The staff employed by Children's Services and the staff employed by Roxeth First and Middle School work in an integrated way. The staff team is diverse in skills and qualifications with people employed from a number of different backgrounds to provide wide ranging services to the local community.

In October 2004, the Centre was relaunched after extensive refurbishment work to the building.

### ***Gange Nursery Centre***

Gange Nursery Centre is situated in Wealdstone Ward which is one of Harrow's areas of disadvantage. The centre is a Children's Services resource providing care and early education

to children aged 2 – 5. All the children attending are in need and many have special educational needs.

Gange Nursery Centre is moving on from its traditional service delivery model and is starting to provide a range of community services which are developing continuously to meet the needs of the local community.

Over the last two years the building has had some interior development work to improve the children's toilets, the front entrance, kitchen and establish a sensory room.

### ***Stanmore Park Children's Centre***

Stanmore Park Centre provides care and education to children aged 2 – 5 years whose parents work for Harrow Council. As a workplace nursery it is dependent on income from the early education and childcare places in order to function. The centre also provides a range of early education and childcare places to the local community.

The centre is extending its community focus by providing, through a partnership with Stanmore College, adult learning opportunities including NVQ courses and basic skills training.

## **6. Aims of the Strategy**

There are three aims and specifications of this strategy, each of which have targets associated with them. These are:

### ***Aims***

- To enable children in all parts of Harrow to have access to a full range of achievement and prevention focussed, integrated services through Children's Centres.
- To link nine centres into school clusters.
- To ensure that each of the nine centres will have developed themes of expertise to incorporate local needs which will be linked to:
  - Local and national data
  - Other strategies and key developments including:
    - Foundation stage data profile information
    - Parenting strategy
    - Health visitors strategy

## **7. Strategy Targets**

Harrow has been set a target of developing nine Children's Centres across Harrow which reach 7,480 children. This target has been set by Government and is based on:

- Harrow having an under fives population of 12,058
- 892 under fives living in Harrow's areas of disadvantage that fall in the bottom 30% wards according to the Indices of Deprivation

Harrow Council has been provided with Children's Centres funding for the period 2006-2008 as follows:

**Capital allocation**                      £1,012.830

**Revenue allocation\***                    £1,818.542

*\* NB this includes continuation funding for the Hillview Centre (Early Excellence)*

## **7.1 Strategy Activity**

Two types of activity will be combined to meet the above targets.

**Activity path A** will see enhancement of the existing centres and gaining designated status by:

- Further modernisation of Gange Nursery Centre
- Further adaptations at Stanmore Park Centre
- Remodelling of the workforce at Stanmore Park Centre and Gange Nursery Centre centres

**Activity path B** will create six additional Children's Centres which will focus on meeting the needs of their immediate communities.

### ***Activity path A - Enhancing the existing centres***

#### **a) Hillview Centre (West 1)**

Hillview is currently an Early Excellence Centre. It is the Government's expectation that this will automatically convert to a Children's Centre.

#### **b) Stanmore Park Children's Centre (East 1)**

Stanmore Park Centre is a new build with excellent potential and located in the heart of the new Stanmore Park Estate. Early designation should be possible.

#### **b) Gange Nursery Centre (Central 2)**

Gange Nursery Centre will be a priority for modernisation so the space contained within the current footprint can be modernised. Again designation to Children's Centre in 2006 will be possible. This Centre has huge opportunities for serving many families and linking with Vernon Lodge Housing Hostel.

### ***Activity path B - Creating six additional Children's Centres***

Six new Children's Centres will be created on school sites. The school sites will be selected using the following rationale:

- School must be in an area of identified need
- School must have a commitment to the Children's Centre agenda
- School must have existing premises that can be remodelled to provide quality space for Children's Centre usage and in some cases for the co-location of staff from a number of different agencies
- School has existing nursery provision

All Children's Centres will be named in a way that identifies them with the community and not just the school location.

## **Agreed sites – 2006-07**

- **Whitefriars First and Middle School**(Central 1)- Whitefriars School Governing Body have formally agreed to the development of a children's centre at the Whitefriars School site. The school has seen falling rolls and has available premises which are ideal with huge potential. A detailed project plan will be developed to realise a Children's Centre attached to Whitefriars School.

## **Other locations**

East 1 – Site to be decided – location to be HA7

Central 3- Site to be decided. Location to be HA3

East 3 – Site to be decided - Location to be HA3

West 2 – Site to be decided – Location to be HA2

West 3 – Site to be decided – Location to be HA5

## **8. Leadership and Management**

All Children's Centres to be developed within activity path b will have leadership and management structures developed which are appropriate to the site and meet the needs of the all partners.

Possible structures for leadership and management are contained within the Children's Centre Operational Paper 1.

## **9. Conclusion**

This strategy for Children's Centres has been placed in the context of clear Government priorities and in relation to other strategies which have the potential to impact on Children's Centres.

The purpose and aims of the strategy have been clearly outlined and the targets are realistic and realisable.

The contents of this strategy will need to be communicated through learning and development activities so that its aims and targets will become a reality. At the same time managers at all levels will need to understand their role, responsibilities and accountabilities in making the whole system work effectively.

This strategy will be reviewed annually to ensure that the outcomes proposed are being achieved and that the targets remain appropriate given the experience during the previous year.