

REPORT OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMISSION

PROVISION OF 0-5 YEARS SERVICES IN HACKNEY Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission, 23rd February 2009.	Classification Public	Enclosures Appendix 1 Funding Streams for Children's Centre Services
	Ward(s) affected All	

1. CHAIR'S FOREWORD

- 1.1 'What needs to be written in neon letters lit up against a night sky is that the orbitofrontal cortex [of the brain], which is so much about being human, develops almost entirely post-natally. This part of the brain develops after birth and doesn't begin to mature until toddlerhood. ... Nor is it just a matter of waiting patiently for your baby to develop an orbitofrontal cortex as a matter of course. There is nothing automatic about it. Instead, the kind of brain that each baby develops is the brain that comes out of his or her particular experiences with people. ... In a sense, the human baby has to be invited to participate in human culture. The first step in the process is to get the baby hooked on social interaction itself by making it highly pleasurable.'
- 1.2 These words are quoted from the highly influential 2004 book *Why Love Matters: how affection shapes a baby's brain* by the psychotherapist Sue Gerhardt, co-founder of the Oxford Parent Infant Project.¹ They state very clearly but also authoritatively why society needs to ensure that the parents of babies and toddlers have every encouragement and the necessary facilities to help them invite their children to 'participate in human culture.' Over recent years the Government has demonstrated that it understands the critical social importance of services for the 0-5s and their parents by providing focus, direction and finance for them. The role of the Commission in this review has been to see whether the spirit as well as the structure of the Government's intentions is being implemented in Hackney.
- 1.3 It is not all that long since 0-5 services were seen in quite a different light. Nurseries existed simply to enable mothers to go to work. Other services were intended to ensure that babies' and toddlers' physical needs were provided for and any obvious problems tackled. The socialisation of babies and toddlers was left almost wholly to their parents. Many parents of course carried out this vital role very successfully, sometimes against huge odds. Others struggled with this

¹ Gerhardt, S., Pages 37-39 "*Why Love Matters: how affection shapes a baby's brain*"

task, often because they found themselves isolated, lacking the support, advice and fellowship of a network of families and friends. As our earlier report² suggested, the difficulties they faced underlie some of the social issues we face today. Action was urgently needed.

- 1.4 The danger of the Government stepping in with SureStart programmes and children's centres is that the impression could be given that, just as schools provide teaching that parents generally cannot be expected to deliver, so these institutions are intended to provide parenting that parents generally cannot be expected to deliver. This is emphatically **not** what is needed, nor indeed is it what the Government intended. What is needed is the mix of professional support, experienced advice and the fellowship of other parents that will encourage, enable and empower parents to be good enough in discharging their role as their children's overwhelmingly most significant carers, not least in developing their children's brains through their daily loving interactions.
- 1.5 It was perhaps inevitable that when opportunities for accessing this mix started to become more widely available, the first families to make use of them tended to be those who were not in most need of them. That is certainly not to say that the wrong people were using the new facilities; children's centres are for **all** families. But precisely because they *are* for all families, it is vital that those families that do not make use of them at first or second or third invitation continue to be invited and have the potential benefits of participation explained to them. In Hackney, only about three-fifths of the under-5s are in sustained contact with our Children's Services; we look forward to seeing this proportion rise so that involvement of young children and their families in the activities of children's centres is accepted as routine by the whole community.
- 1.6 Much is heard these days of 'community cohesion', and of the steps being taken by the authorities to promote it. When parents and perhaps particularly mothers meet each other over their children, networks may develop that can be of critical significance to the whole community, in formal and in informal ways. These natural, organic networks cannot be replaced by any steps the authorities may take. Consequently it is important that the opportunities for creating them are nurtured by the authorities, and indeed by other organisations. Children's centres need to think of themselves as, among other things, the place where these vital connections may be made and developed.
- 1.7 The new system of services for the 0-5s is still very much work-in-progress, in Hackney as elsewhere. The buildings and structures are in place, services and systems are slowly becoming integrated, and a richer understanding of the social role of the 0-5 services is emerging.

² Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission (2008), "Youth and Crime: prevention and early intervention", (London Borough of Hackney).

No doubt we will return to the subject. It is too important to the future of Hackney to be left alone for long.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Geoff Taylor'.

Cllr Geoff Taylor
Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 On the 7th April 2008 this Commission published its report “Youth and Crime: Prevention and Early Intervention”. An important conclusion drawn from that review was the critical importance of parenting and support for parents and carers through the first five years of a child’s life. It was found that this early input can contribute greatly in preventing a child’s susceptibility to crime and disorder later in life. This knowledge inspired the Commission to review more specifically how early years services are provided in Hackney, with a particular focus on how those in most need are reached.
- 2.2 The decision to review early years services at this point was also relevant to the developing legislative framework at a national level. Since April 2008 local authorities have been under a duty to improve the five ‘Every Child Matters’ outcomes for all young children in their area, and to reduce inequalities between them, through integrated early childhood services. The Childcare Act 2006, which brings in this duty, specifies exactly what ‘integrated services’ must include, how they must be planned and delivered, and what must be achieved. Government guidance accompanying this legislative framework places a clear emphasis on strong partnership working and co-operation in order to realise the desired improvements.
- 2.3 Integrated service provision should enable an holistic approach to supporting parents and families. This might, for example, include working with Jobcentre Plus to help new parents return to work, and doing so by providing training and advice, alongside more access to childcare places. Challenges such as this are reflected in the new Hackney Children and Young People’s Strategic Plan 2008-11. Indeed, the Plan refers to this scrutiny review specifically as making a key contribution to the Borough’s future development for early years services. To that end, throughout this review the Commission has paid particular attention to the ‘integration’ of services and how effectively this is being achieved, as was highlighted in its terms of reference.
- 2.4 In addition to ‘outreach’ and ‘integration’ the terms of reference for this review set out to understand and assess the ‘quality’ of service provision in the borough. The Commission tackled this aspect in two ways: firstly by visiting a number of settings across the Borough, speaking to parents and staff; and secondly by examining how Children’s Centres and their commissioning bodies assess ‘quality’ through their own performance management arrangements. This qualitative approach to gathering information has provided the Commission with a useful point of contrast to the limited amount of quantitative data that exists to date within the Borough. The report examines this contrast in further detail throughout.
- 2.5 The Commission also undertook, as part of its terms of reference, to consider the suitability of signposting and awareness raising for early

years services. In particular Members were interested to find out how the services are promoted to those not currently accessing them. The Commission heard from a number of practitioners and partners involved in this work at its public meetings, including members of Children's Centre Advisory Boards and Area Steering Committees, and representatives of related service providers such as housing, general medical practice and primary schools.

- 2.6 Evidence gathered for this review was collected over a period of four months at four formal meetings. The Commission heard from officers working in the Children and Young Peoples Services, representatives of key partner agencies and community representatives and stakeholders. Members also heard from parents and carers themselves in attending six early years settings on four separate occasions.
- 2.7 The Commission is grateful to everyone who gave up their time to help make the review a success and hopes that the recommendations put forward will serve to enhance the support provided to young people in the borough and to assist all those who work with them.

3. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 In compiling the findings and recommendations of this review, evidence gathered has been grouped into key themes under the original terms of reference. These themes encompass all the relevant evidence presented to and heard by Members throughout the review. Brief descriptions of the major themes can be found below. A more detailed discussion of their source and implications can be found in Section 6, where recommendations are presented alongside relevant findings to provide context.
- 3.1.1 A major theme identified through this review is the absence of robust, unified data in relation to the quality, use and cost of 0-5 years services. The absence of figures, tables and charts in this report is partly a reflection of the limited evidence-base that was available to Members throughout the review. The Commission's concern is not primarily about Members' access to this data, but a recognition that all partners and fund holders will need swift access to such information if the Children's Centre model is to receive the ongoing support it so clearly warrants. Members were reassured to learn that a new IT system is being implemented which will, in the future, enable a comprehensive picture of usage to be drawn up.
- 3.1.2 While this indicates the potential for progress in the future, the Commission remains concerned at this stage regarding the overall picture of performance and the responsiveness of Children's Centres Services to their local communities. The findings in this report detail many examples where parental feedback has been sought by service providers. This was seen at first hand by Members in their visits to six separate early years settings. However, it is not clear to the Commission that it is possible to show how this rich seam of qualitative data is used specifically to inform the planning of Children's Centre services. Indeed the Commission's own evidence, elicited from parents during its site visits, shows a number of services that parents were either unaware of, would like to see more of or would like to have introduced. These examples are discussed in the findings of this report and feature in the relevant recommendations below.
- 3.1.3 A second theme which emerged strongly from the evidence, particularly through the site visits, was that of integrated service provision from various public, voluntary and private providers. The 'hub and spoke' model for Children's Centres, based on six strategic areas, offers parents easy access to a number of universal services. However, during its review the Commission identified several key partners, such as GPs and Housing Services, which could benefit from better awareness of and involvement in Children's Centres. Also, there were felt to be some specific services that parents would appreciate more of (such as English as a Second Language courses) or more consistent provision of (such as drop-in sessions).

- 3.1.4 Members were particularly interested in the issue of parental involvement. The Children's Act 2006 requires their specific input in the planning and delivery of services. Councillors heard mixed reports on the extent to which that is being achieved successfully. This has made it difficult to draw precise conclusions, particularly as the evidence from this review is qualitative and based on responses from a relatively small sample of service users. In some localities the evidence pointed to a residual feeling of disempowerment amongst mothers who had experienced a more direct role in running the earlier Sure Start Local Programmes. This is not to suggest that parents have reported dissatisfaction with existing services, in fact the contrary is true. It does, however, raise some questions about how the wider cohort of parents, outwith Children's Centre Advisory Boards, are included in service planning.
- 3.1.5 Other themes identified included the progress made in reaching out to disadvantaged groups who are typically less likely to use services. There is still progress to be made in outreach work but the Commission was pleased to hear that The Learning Trust has secured more funding for this important role and is in the process of employing more Outreach Workers to support it. The evidence also prompted interest from Members regarding: the awareness within early years services of a Councillor's role; the implications of the "Healthcare for London" proposals and the establishment of 'polyclinics'; and the importance of retaining and nurturing the early years workforce. Each of these areas is reflected in the recommendations and in further detail throughout the report.

3.2 **Recommendations**

Members request that a report be submitted to the Commission in September 2009, providing an interim update on progress made on the following recommendations. A further update is requested in January 2010.

The recommendations are listed below in relation to the Commission's original terms of reference. They appear throughout the report in the context of the Commission's findings.

Recommendation one

The Commission recognises that progress has been made in delivering the Children's Centre model for Hackney. The vision of providing universal, integrated services for young children is beginning to be realised. Members are, however, concerned at the current inability to demonstrate this through the collection and presentation of robust data. This data includes performance measures, the demographic breakdown of usage, and funding streams. In order to secure the future

stability of the Children's Centre model, all partners will require swift access to this data.

The Commission recommends that a full report be provided to them detailing this information on the dates specified above, using the new IT system currently being customised for use in the Borough.

Recommendation two

Children's Centre managers have emphasised the importance of workforce development as both an indicator of quality provision and as a means of achieving integrated service provision. Members recognise the effective approaches used to date, such as joint training sessions for staff from separate disciplines. The Government has also acknowledged the importance of this issue in its recent progress report for the "Children's Plan One Year On".

The Commission requests a report from The Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Children and Young People's Partnership Board, explaining the strategy for workforce development, with particular reference to the emphasis placed on "promoting parental engagement" in the Government's "The Children's Plan One Year On: a progress report".

Recommendation three

During its interviews with parents Members received positive reports regarding the provision of English as a Second Language (ESOL) training. Parents were enthusiastic about these sessions and frequently requested wider availability, with the option of higher level training. Members believe that supporting English language acquisition by parents is an important though indirect way of helping their children.

The Commission requests a report from The Learning Trust on the extent of ESOL training provision via Children's Centres and options for how this might be extended. Such a report will consider options open to The Learning Trust but also opportunities any for greater input from all partner bodies and Directorates of the council.

Recommendation four

Members consider that Children's Centres should be thought of as places for parents to meet, in which a range of universal, integrated services are provided; rather than a place where a range of universal, integrated services are provided, which is also a place to meet.

Regularity of basic daily service provision, such as drop-in and toy library sessions, are crucial for new parents.

The Commission recommends that The Learning Trust works with strategic Children's Centres to review previous and current activity calendars, identify gaps in this basic provision throughout the week, and propose ways in which those gaps might be filled or provided in alongside more specialist activities.

Recommendation five

The Commission was encouraged to hear about the success of the Bump Buddies programmes. Members endorse strongly the principle that building a community of parents helps to build a strong local community more widely, and that parents are likely to welcome support and encouragement from other parents as well as professionals.

The Commission requests a report from the Director of Children's Services that explains how such 'Buddies' programmes will develop and be funded in the future, including the leading role of Homerton University Hospital the PCT, as part of a suite of sustainable programmes.

Recommendation six

During site visits to Children's Centres and early years settings Members noted that there was little knowledge of the Councillors' roles in providing advocacy and advice for local residents.

The Commission recommends that all Children's Centres be added to the distribution list for "Hackney Today".

The Commission further recommends that Children's Centres add relevant local Councillors to their contact lists and encourage the Centres to invite Councillors to drop-in sessions so that they can explain to parents their role as advocates and democratic representatives.

The Commission also concludes that Children's Centres should be encouraged strongly to market themselves in all relevant local publications which should include both paid for and free forms of local media e.g. Hackney Today.

Recommendation seven

Representatives of the City and Hackney Local Medical Committee drew Members' attention to the low level awareness amongst GPs of the services offered through Children's Centres.

The Commission recommends that the City and Hackney Teaching Primary Care Trust, in conjunction with The Learning Trust and the Children and Young People's Partnership Board, plans and delivers a marketing campaign that will increase GPs' knowledge of:

- **the Children's Centre model;**
- **the universal services it provides; and**
- **the current contacts for making and receiving referrals within relevant strategic areas**

The Commission requests an update from the Director of Children's Services, following consultation with the Children and Young People's Partnership Board, both during the planning and after the delivery of this campaign.

Recommendation eight

The Commission encountered consistent messages about the importance of practical and frequent interaction between Children's Centre services and Hackney Homes. At formal public meetings and during interviews with parents the current weakness of this link were described by partner agencies and parents alike.

The Commission recommends that a representative of Hackney Homes is invited onto each of the six Area Steering Groups for Early Years Services in order to foster mutually beneficial working relationships.

The Commission also recommends that Housing Management Services lead and undertake analysis of where and when a housing advice surgery might be offered to parents as part of the universal services provided at Children's Centres.

The Commission anticipates that The Learning Trust will both participate and support partners in such analysis and will use the results to form part of the 'activity calendar' review mentioned in recommendation two.

Recommendation nine

Members were concerned by the apparent lack of awareness of the “Healthcare for London” strategy, its implications for Hackney, and the potential for duplication and confusion between Polyclinics (including any future arrangements for GP services) and Children’s Centres as single locations of universal service provision.

The Commission requests that The Learning Trust, in conjunction with the Children and Young People’s Partnership Board, conducts a risk analysis of the “Healthcare for London” proposals, no doubt including discussions with the PCT, particularly in relation to the establishment of Polyclinics, and presents its findings, with planned mitigation, to the Commission in September 2009.

4. FINANCIAL COMMENTS

- 4.1 The recommendations included in this report do not require additional financial resource from Hackney.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 5.1 The Childcare Act 2006 sets out clear expectations about what local partnerships should focus on to improve children's outcomes, while providing the flexibility for local solutions and encouraging local innovation.
- 5.2 Since 1 April 2008, local authorities have had a duty to provide information, advice and assistance to parents and prospective parents of children and young people up to age 20 pursuant to Section 12 of the Childcare Act 2006.
- 5.3 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places a new requirement on the Local Authority and PCT to carry out a joint strategic needs assessment of its local population.
- 5.4 The Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) will describe the future health and wellbeing needs of and will help the local authority and PCT decide how best to meet those needs and provide those services through their Local Area Agreements.

6. FINDINGS

6.1 What is the 0-5 years service?

6.1.1 The national picture

The Government has set out a vision “for parents, from the time they know they are expecting a baby, to see a coherent pattern of accessible child health, early years provision and family support services ahead of them, some free at the point of delivery”³.

Realising this vision has required a change in approach at the local level and new legislation to enable it. Since April 2008 local authorities have been under a duty to improve the five ‘Every Child Matters’ outcomes for all young children in their area, and to reduce inequalities between them, through the provision of integrated early childhood services. The Childcare Act 2006, which brings in this duty, determines exactly what ‘integrated services’ must include, how they must be planned and delivered, and what must be achieved.

Statutory guidance accompanying this legislative framework places a clear emphasis on strong partnership working and co-operation in order to realise the desired improvements. This requires having in place arrangements to:

- collect, pool and analyse data and research from across the partnership to build up a single, shared, needs assessment that can inform planning, commissioning and delivery of services and aid better decision-making
- use the joint commissioning framework - involving parents and all providers - to reshape services, making the best use of existing provision where this is working well, and avoiding duplication
- listen to the voices of young children and take account of their views when planning and commissioning services
- maximise access through pro-active outreach to identify and encourage parents who would otherwise be unlikely to take up services, providing information and promoting the free entitlement to early learning
- actively drive continuous quality improvement, and to have in place robust mechanisms for on-going support and challenge to early years providers

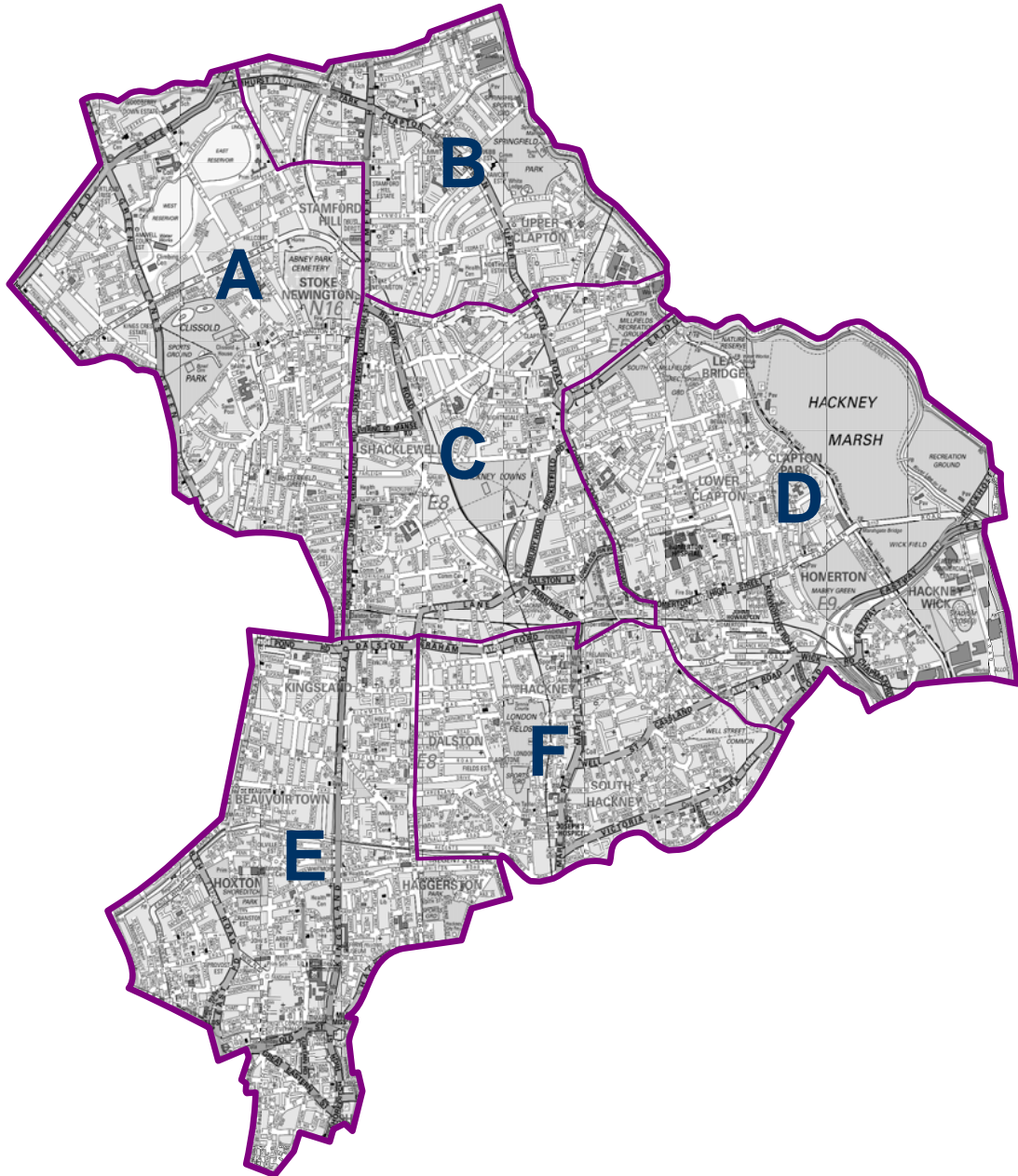
³ HM Government, “Raising Standards, Improving Outcomes” (2008).

- support parents, fathers as well as mothers, as partners in their child's early learning
- establish effective performance management systems with self-evaluation and review, across local partnerships and at provider level in Children's Centres, extended schools and other settings
- maximise the opportunities provided by Children's Centres and extended schools to deliver integrated services, using them as hubs of excellence in driving up standards and outcomes, particularly in areas of disadvantage

6.1.2 The Local approach

Hackney's "Children and Young People's Plan 2006" set out how services would be reorganised so as to focus on particular areas of the Borough, rather than the authority as a whole. Implementing this new model for service delivery involved creating six 'clusters' covering Hackney. Each cluster is currently led by a steering group, which brings together professionals from Children's Centres, extended schools, social care and health services. The cluster steering groups are designed to deliver locally developed and organised services to families.

Below is a map of the borough which shows cluster boundaries for the six strategic areas.



Each Children's Centre provides a range of services for children under 5 years old and their families. Most of the services available in a Children's Centre are free at the point of use, the exception to this is daycare provision. The core offer of services provided in the Centres includes:

- antenatal advice and support for parents/carers
- visits to all families in the area within two months of birth
- outreach work to actively engage and involve parents and carers, and to target hard to reach families and work in partnership with community providers

- information and guidance on breastfeeding, hygiene, nutrition and safety
- training for parents/carers, including English as an additional language where relevant, basic skills or parenting classes
- benefits advice including maternity benefits
- specific strategies and activities increasing the involvement of fathers
- speech and language and other specialist support
- toy libraries
- a child health promotion programme

6.1.3 Child care

Full daycare is available from all Children's Centres from 08:00 – 18:00, five days a week, for a minimum of 48 weeks a year. All children aged between 12 weeks and 5 years, whose parents live or work in Hackney, are eligible for a place. In order to access daycare parents or carers are required to complete a form and are given information about fees and any tax credits that are available. Prospective users are contacted by staff at the Centre to discuss their needs and are then added to the admissions register.

Hackney's most recent Children and Young People's Plan (2008-11) explains how, over the past couple of years, the Borough has worked to increase and improve childcare availability in Hackney. This should mean that more parents are able to find or return to work once they have children. According to the Plan, since 2003, Hackney has increased the number of places available for children under 5 by 713 to 3,926.

In addition, as part of the Childcare Affordability Project, the Borough continues to work on "Transition to Employment". This service provides childcare so that parents can take up training, look for employment, and access childcare until they receive tax credits. This work supports the Sustainable Community Strategy's aim of promoting employment in Hackney.

6.2 What's being done and by whom?

6.2.1 Disempowerment

In 2005 the Government announced its intention to change Sure Start Local Programmes into Children's Centres. As demonstrated by Melhuish and Hall⁴, this move was prompted by a combination of factors including:

- The findings of two research programmes covering the area: National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS) and the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project. The early findings of NESS "indicated that Sure Start was not having the impact that had been hoped for"⁵. Meanwhile the EPPE research had shown that "a particular type of provision, integrated Children's Centres, was particularly beneficial to children's development"⁶.
- The recommendations of the Laming Inquiry, following the murder of Victoria Climbié, again stressed the importance of inter-agency working. This resulted in the Children's Act 2004 which transferred responsibility and accountability for safeguarding from national to local level and placed a duty on health agencies and local authorities to co-operate in improving the wellbeing and promoting the welfare of children.
- In 2004 the Government finalised the National Service Framework (NSF). This is a 10 year programme to stimulate the long-term and sustained improvement in children's health and became the responsibility of both the Department of Health and the then Department for Education Families and Schools.

Melhuish and Hall conclude that these changes led to local authorities becoming "the accountable body for the whole Children's Centre programme in their areas, and health agencies were legally obliged to cooperate in the provision of services within Children's Centres"⁷.

In considering the evidence, Commissioners reflected that some service users feel disempowered as a result of this transition and that they are in less of a leading role relative to professional staff. At a meeting with parents from the Shoreditch Trust, Members were informed of a number of factors that contributed to this view, including:

- the loss of informality

⁴ E. Melhuish and D. Hall (2007) "The Policy Background to Sure Start", in "National Evaluation of Sure Start", ed. Belsky et al.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

- the service no longer being run for mothers by mothers
- the finite space available in which to meet other mothers
- the lack of investment in training mothers as group facilitators
- the limited amount of crèche facilities available to use

Some attendees at the Commission's meetings proposed that this view is not widely held and that it is not supported by the majority of quantitative and qualitative information collected from service users at Children's Centres. For example, the "Strategic Children's Centre Parental Involvement & User Feedback Report"⁸ contains numerous examples from each of the strategic Children's Centre areas whereby parents have been consulted and involved in service planning. These included:

- A Father's Forum event held in August 2008 attracted 45 fathers and 93 children held at the Zoomaround children's indoor adventure playcentre. The event contributed to an increase fathers' involvement and contribution to parenting.
- In April 2007, Sebright Children's Centre carried out a user consultation in Haggerston & Hoxton areas. An outing was facilitated when two coaches with 103 parents/carers and children were taken on a day trip to Kew Gardens. The purpose of the trip was to talk with parents and children in relaxed and enjoyable surroundings and find out their views sought on the types of services that they would like to see.
- Ann Tayler Children's Centre reported that 227 parents and children were seen in the last quarter. 28 session evaluation forms completed for a session in May 2008. All 28 parents said that their child enjoyed the activities. When asked 'Give an example of something your child has learnt at Art Club' the following responses were given: "Sharing & interaction", "Learning to use different materials", "Singing in a group. Lots of songs"

Recommendation five

The Commission was encouraged to hear about the success of the Bump Buddies programmes. Members endorse strongly the principle that building a community of parents helps to build a strong local community more widely, and that parents are likely to welcome support and encouragement from other parents in addition to that provided by professionals.

⁸ The Learning Trust (October 2008), "Strategic Children's Centre Parental Involvement & User Feedback Report".

The Commission requests a report from the Director of Children’s Services that explains how such ‘Buddies’ programmes will develop and be funded in the future, including the leading role of Homerton University Hospital the PCT, as part of a suite of sustainable programmes.

6.2.2 Localised service planning

The Commission considered that it is not necessarily clear how parents can exert their influence on strategic planning nor in delivering services themselves. In considering the a copy of the “Hackney Children’s Centres’ Core Offer Objectives”, listed above, Members reflected that it would be useful for the Commission to know:

- how these objectives were agreed
- the degree of parental involvement in setting them
- the extent to which they can be refined according to local circumstances and identified need

The Commission was informed that there are now data books for each of the six strategic areas. Part of the purpose for this data is to help with detailed service planning. In addition each Centre has an Advisory Board composed of local representatives to guide its planning.

The concern amongst some of the parents spoken to during site visits and interviews was a perception of inconsistency in service provision compared to what had been available under the earlier Sure Start Local Programmes. One example of this was provided during an interview with a parent at Sebright Children’s Centre:

One mother with an 8 year old child, as well as a younger one who attends drop in sessions at the Children’s Centre, commented that the services her younger child currently enjoys did not exist in the same way when her 8 year old was small. Services such as the breastfeeding clinic, nursery, and drop-in facility are currently excellent. However, a contrast with services available when her 8 year old son was younger is the consistency of provision at a single location. The mother reflected that there had previously been a One O’clock Club which, while in a “slightly ramshackle” building, was open Monday to Friday from 1pm-4pm. While Children’s Centres are open for similar, indeed, longer periods of time the mother explained that the drop-in sessions are only on certain days or at different venues. Consistency of drop-in availability would be preferable as it can reduce pram-pushing distance.

The Commission recognises a tension on this point. Public funds must be managed to promote the wider public good, but parents must be

clearly seen as having the primary responsibility for their children's welfare. This tension has to be lived through and worked with; it cannot simply be 'resolved' one way or another.

Members consider that Children's Centres should be thought of as places for parents to meet, in which a range of universal, integrated services are provided; rather than a place where a range of universal, integrated services are provided, which is also a place to meet. Regularity of basic daily service provision, such as drop-in and toy library sessions, are crucial for new parents.

There are two reasons why this matters:

- (i) parents learn a great deal from each other, as well as from professionals, and*
- (ii) networking among the parents of young children is a vital element in the cement that holds society together.*

Recommendation four

The Commission recommends that The Learning Trust works with strategic Children's Centres to review previous and current activity calendars, identify gaps in this basic provision throughout the week, and propose ways in which those gaps might be filled or provided in alongside more specialist activities

6.2.3 Partnership and referrals between organisations

Each of the six cluster areas is centered on a building called a Children's Centre, but the Commission understands it is not expected that all services will be provided in that one building. Each operates a 'hub-and-spoke' model and the focus is on quality services that improve the outcome for the child through integrated multi-agency services. This includes health, family support, early years provision, and supporting parents into employment. Children's Centres commission and provide services through a range of different providers, along with guiding people to related services such as housing support. If a particular Centre does not provide a service itself, it will redirect families to the appropriate service provider.

Evidence suggests that it is very helpful to have staff from different sectors available at the Children's Centre setting for a number of reasons, including:

- making decisions (particularly about building layout design at the early stage)
- reducing 'pram pushing distance' for parents and carers

- cross-referencing identified need and using the Common Assessment Framework
- meeting universal needs (e.g. immunisation)

Others service providers who attend drop-in sessions or run services, such as dieticians, counsellors, and psychologists, receive very positive responses from service users. Further integration along these lines was requested by parents during the interviews with Members, particularly in relation to housing advice.

A representative from the Interlink Foundation, which works to strengthen the Orthodox Jewish voluntary sector, informed the Commission that it was in the Children's Centre model where the Orthodox Jewish community has been reached to best effect, and that by working in partnership with the voluntary and community sector this has created a ripple effect, gradually increasing the involvement of the community despite continuing caution about the integrated setting.

One issue noted by Members during the interviews was that none of the mothers nor staff present were aware of times and dates of Councillor surgeries, nor that they could attend them to ask for assistance and advocacy support.

The Commission takes the view that parents and children should sense that that are being 'held' or supported by a web of social support rather than simply being able to access disparate services.

Recommendation six

During site visits to Children's Centres and early years settings Members noted that there was little knowledge of the Councillors' roles in providing advocacy and advice for local residents.

The Commission recommends that all Children's Centres be added to the distribution list for "Hackney Today".

The Commission further recommends that Children's Centres add relevant local Councillors to their contact lists and encourages the Centres to invite Councillors to drop-in sessions so that they can explain to parents their role as democratic representatives.

The Commission also concludes that Children's Centres should be encouraged strongly to market themselves in all relevant local publications which should include both paid for and free forms of local media e.g. Hackney Today.

6.2.4 Schools

A Children's Centre Manager explained to the Commission some of the advantages found in close partnership working with the primary school and community groups. These included:

- pre-existing and robust governance structures
- existing positive relationships between parents and the school

It is important for the Children's Centres and other providers to have a link with primary schools in order to transfer the record of the work they have completed with children and to promote continuing parental involvement. However some private and voluntary sector nursing providers informed the Commission that, in pursuing this idea with local primary schools, they have with resistance. When initially developing this idea, one particular nursery thought its staff would go to the schools, but upon reflection it was felt it would be more beneficial if the schools visited the nursery to see the child in their comfort environment. However the primary school has been unable or unwilling to engage to date. Members heard that The Learning Trust is aware of this important link and is setting up a pilot scheme in the borough to facilitate greater co-ordination between primary schools and nursery providers that are not based within a Children's Centre setting, and therefore not directly attached to a particular school.

The Commission encourages the work proposed above and looks forward to hearing of the schemes success and wider roll-out across the Borough.

6.2.5 General Practitioners

The Commission was informed by a representative of the Local Medical Committee that "it can be difficult for General Practitioners to engage with Children's Centres as there are a lot of demands on their time. It was suggested that an example of an initial reaction from GPs to Children's Centres was of caution over immunisation services being provided in Centres as it was already done in Practices."⁹ Another example of this was the proposal to base health visitors in Children's Centres rather than local practices where they had traditionally been situated. This example was cited to demonstrate how the relationship between local surgeries and Children's Centres may not have had the smoothest of starts.

It was also stressed that a social marketing campaign for GPs would be beneficial, particularly if it focused on explaining the valuable

⁹ Minutes of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission, 6th October 2008 (LB Hackney).

improvements brought about by Children's Centres." In addition, it was suggested that being able to exemplify a good integrated service package might be very helpful for getting other service providers on board. For example, if a GP were consulting with a family facing common problems, exemplars of what services are available at a Children's Centre would be helpful. As would assurance that, once referred, updates would be shared about progress.

The Commission recognises the crucial role of GPs and believes that the support they give parents and children will be even more effective if provided in a way that is fully co-ordinated with other services.

Recommendation seven

Representatives of the City and Hackney Local Medical Committee drew Members' attention to the low level awareness amongst GPs of the services offered through Children's Centres.

The Commission recommends that the City and Hackney Teaching Primary Care Trust, in conjunction with The Learning Trust and the Children and Young People's Partnership Board, plans and delivers a marketing campaign that will increase GPs' knowledge of:

- **the Children's Centre model**
- **the universal services it provides; and**
- **the current contacts for making and receiving referrals within relevant strategic areas**

The Commission requests an update from the Director of Children's Services, following consultation with the Children and Young People's Partnership Board, both during the planning and after the delivery of this campaign.

6.2.6 Housing

There are both formal and informal ways in which the Housing Service interacts with Children's Services. In gathering its evidence the Commission found three examples which demonstrate this:

- (i) Hackney has the third lowest employment rate of the 33 London Boroughs and has correspondingly high levels of unemployment. There are also high levels of worklessness, with approximately a third of people in that situation have no previous employment experience. The Council is working with a number of providers, including Jobcentre Plus, to tackle this issue. An example of this is the One City Partnership through which packages are being tailored to people in need of training and employment, rather than waiting for individuals to present themselves.

- (ii) Domestic violence has a hugely destructive impact on families. The Neighbourhoods and Regeneration Directorate is supporting colleagues and partners in identifying families at risk at an early stage and this includes sharing knowledge with early years services. The Directorate works to ensure those at risk are signposted to additional packages of support once they are identified.
- (iii) In addressing homelessness the Neighbourhoods and Regeneration Directorate and the Community Services Directorate work closely together. The impact on young people of living in temporary accommodation and moving frequently can be extremely detrimental. Home services have been running workshops recently in two Children's Centres for 20-30 parents to help them cope with these issues. It is hoped that this programme will be extended further to other Children's Centres.

Examples were also provided from representatives of Hackney Homes which demonstrate the interaction with early years services. These included provision of access to community halls for use by Tenants and Residents Associations. The Commission was informed that some of these host nursery groups, breakfast groups and pre-school activities.”

During interviews with parents in Children's Centre settings Members heard frequent requests for more input and advice on housing related matters. One mother explained how housing continues to be a problem but interaction with the housing service via the Children's Centre has been able to help:

“The mother's current home, which is quite small, is not suitable given her health problems as she needs access to fresh air. A Turkish speaking housing officer has attended the group before but she was not able to attend on that occasion due to a visit from housing services at home. She has, however, been introduced the officer subsequently and has made a connection.”¹⁰

Partners from the housing sector, including Hackney Homes, acknowledged that there is much the ALMO can do to encourage Children's Centres to make use of Tenants Halls, adding that it should be possible to disseminate messages using current outreach work with the community. It was deemed likely that they would find a correlation of people and families who require services.

Members felt strongly that the Commission should recommend that someone from Housing Services could hold a regular surgery as part of a Children's Centre programme.

¹⁰ Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission, 12th November 2008) “Note of visit to Ann Tayler Children's Centre” (LB Hackney)

Members take the view that housing and family welfare are intimately linked in a number of ways, and that there should therefore be a regular working relationship between housing providers and children's services.

Recommendation eight

The Commission encountered consistent messages about the importance of practical and frequent interaction between Children's Centre services and Hackney Homes. At formal public meetings and during interviews with parents the current weakness of this link were described by partner agencies and parents alike.

The Commission recommends that a representative of Hackney Homes is invited onto each of the six Area Steering Groups for Early Years Services in order to foster mutually beneficial working relationships.

The Commission also recommends that Housing Management Services lead and undertake analysis of where and when a housing advice surgery might be offered to parents as part of the universal services provided at Children's Centres.

The Commission anticipates that The Leaning Trust will both participate and support partners in such analysis and will use the results to form part of the 'activity calendar' review mentioned in recommendation two.

6.2.7 Health and the PCT

The way in which the City and Hackney Primary Care Trust engages with Children's Centres is vitally important as it is one of the main providers of funding for the services through them. Members were informed that Children's Centres are well integrated with the provider side of the PCT (health visitors, sexual health, etc) but perhaps less so with the Commissioning side. Notable examples were provided of successful integration with the provider side of the PCT such as immunisation services, which have recently been targeting early years settings and community centres where, with the parent, it is possible to review a child's whole health needs (including immunisation).

However the relatively less effective integration with the PCT's Commissioning side should be of concern to all those who support the Children's Centre model. The importance of there being an understanding between the PCT and Children's Centres was emphasised and it was suggested that a review of which PCT services are or aren't engaged, from a commissioning viewpoint, may help. It was suggested that a similar gaps analysis could be needed for

independent contractor services and the PCT could assist with that exercise.

Of equal note for Commissioners was the debate raised by the Local Medical Committee regarding the establishment of 'polyclinics' in London, following the proposals in Professor Darzi's 'Healthcare for London' vision document. Based on the evidence heard, Members are concerned that, with the establishment of 'polyclinics' it might be possible to see Children's Centres, at a future date, as being duplicatory, in the sense that both would be local 'hubs' providing a setting for the provision of universal services. Members and other attendees at the Commission's meeting on 3rd November 2008 reflected on the implications raised by this debate and were keen to ensure that those responsible for the Children's Centre programme remain fully aware of developments resulting from 'Healthcare for London' and are able address any future implications it might have.

Recommendation nine

Members were concerned by the apparent lack of awareness of the "Healthcare for London" strategy, its implications for Hackney, and the potential for duplication and confusion between Polyclinics (including any future arrangements for GP services) and Children's Centres as single locations of universal service provision.

The Commission requests that The Learning Trust, in conjunction with the Children and Young People's Partnership Board, conducts a risk analysis of the "Healthcare for London" proposals, no doubt including discussions with the PCT, particularly in relation to the establishment of Polyclinics, and presents its findings, with planned mitigation, to the Commission in September 2009.

6.3 Who are we reaching out to and what are the barriers?

6.3.1 Reaching those in most need

'Outreach' work is one of the main drivers for the Children's Services programme nationally and locally. In its previous review on "Youth and Crime" the Commission learned that services "should be targeted at the 15 per cent of parents most in need of assistance, as investing in this group typically results in dramatic improvements and therefore represents the best value for money"¹¹. With this in mind, Members were eager to understand how effectively strategic Children's Centres have been able to conduct 'outreach' work to date.

¹¹ Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission (2008), "Youth and Crime in Hackney: prevention and early intervention", (London Borough of Hackney).

At present officers are able to use the child protection register, free childcare register and social services records to target families, but this list is not exhaustive. It is more common for universal services, whether delivered via by early years or others, act as a gateway to parents in need of more targeted services.

It was explained to Members that the critical issue services face is not reaching particular communities, but rather it is reaching families with specific issues that may be common across communities. For example these might include asylum, mental health, or incarceration. It was noted that the integrated service approach helps significantly with outreach work as information is co-ordinated with colleagues in housing, health, schools, social services and others. This knowledge is then used proactively to target potential service users through door-knocking and informing voluntary and community sector partners who can signpost families to services that are available.

Representatives from Children's Social Services informed the Commission that work is ongoing to target specific communities in the borough and an anecdotal account from a family well-known to Social Services that had difficulty finding time for reading to young children. To address this a family network meeting was called to identify a range of service providers interacting with the family who are in a position to reinforce messages about the importance of reading and other needs. This intervention has proved successful to date with attendance at school having increased by 20 per cent (70 per cent in real terms) which suggests the child is receiving more attention in the family setting. Although only a single instance, this example illustrates the importance of outreach from universal settings which leads to consistent collaborative working between agencies and better outcomes for local families.

Members heard other good examples of outreach work from their interviews with parents. While attending a drop in session for Turkish parents at the Ann Tayler Children's Centre it was learned that health visitors and midwives meet new parents in their homes and promote the services available. These visits are often made to new parents with bilingual workers, taking along a present and copies of the "what's on" leaflet. When new parents indicate they will be attending the Centre, the visitor is there to greet them so that there is a familiar face, and sometimes staff will accompany parents to the Centre on their first visit.

One area of concern came from visits to a number of daycare providers from the private, voluntary and public sectors. One nursery explained they did not have contact with as many vulnerable families as they did previously, partly because they have no need to do 'outreach' work as they have a long waiting list, and partly because parents of those families are not accessing the facilities, sometimes for perceived financial reasons.

Members take the view that outreach work is crucial to the success of 0-5 services if they are not to fail to reach the most needy and vulnerable families, and thus add to their relative disadvantage. Outreach is not to be seen as an add-on; it is central to the success of 0-5 Services. The Commission was pleased to hear of the work being done and looks forward to hearing of future success.

6.3.2 Data collection and sharing

The Government's Practice Guidance for Sure Start Children's Centres asserts that "through access to data sources held by other agencies, particularly PCTs, we expect Children's Centres to have a clear understanding of the local population and its needs. This should improve both the planning and delivery of services, for example helping to identify families with new babies so that support can be offered at an earlier stage."¹²

National research frequently cites information sharing as being vital for the identification of vulnerable children and delivery of integrated services. According to the National Audit Office's 2006 report on Sure Start Children's Centres, "organisations that have previously operated independently must share information and resources. This is a significant challenge and will require local authorities and a range of agencies to work more closely."¹³

Members were concerned that some vulnerable families might be deterred from attending early years services due to the perceived bureaucracy and form-filling involved. They were, however, reassured that no parent is turned away for not completing a form and that, for families in this type of case, the Children's Centre approach is to build trust over time. For example, less formal settings, such as birthday parties, can help to build trust and elicit information on an informal basis.

The Commission also posed questions regarding the awareness authorities have of families moving in and out of the Borough and whether there is a system of exchange between Boroughs. In response to these questions it was learned that IT systems do not enable cross-agency collaboration at present but that the new Unique Pupil Number should help and there is hope for a wider shared system in future.

¹² Page 8, "Sure Start Children's Centres Practice Guidance", DfES and DH, 19th December 2006

¹³ Para 1.9, Page 15, "Sure Start Children's Centres", National Audit Office, 19th December 2006

6.3.3 Cultural factors

The Commission has previously encountered divided opinion on the issue of participation in services such as early years. The earlier review of “Youth and Crime” found differing views as to the appropriateness of tailoring parenting programmes to reflect different culturally-based parenting styles. Similarly, in relation to 0-5 services it was found that, for some communities, there remain barriers to be overcome with regard to attending early years services.

During interviews with parents Members heard at first-hand how some communities have a preconception about participating in services but also, once they are overcome, how mothers should be supported in spreading the message within their communities. This point was made at first-hand by a mother attending the Turkish drop-in group at Ann Tayler Children’s Centre: after initially being discouraged by the local community this mother is now encouraging others in her local area to attend the drop-in sessions as they have proved very beneficial.

6.3.4 Finance

Universal services provided via Children’s Centres are free at the point of use. However, based on the evidence, Members reflected that parents can be confused about which services require payment, according to their circumstances. In particular, information received by the Commission shows that the cost of daycare can be problematic, but this needs to be balanced against providing a sustainable service.

A Children’s Centre Manager explained to Members that maintaining low childcare costs was very difficult, as any service provider must remain sustainable, with the real costs considered. The Working Families Tax Credit can help to cover costs, as does London Development Agency’s Childcare Affordability Programme (CAP). The Commission also noted that a barrier to childcare in the past had not been costs but rather a lack of places. The introduction of Children’s Centres has addressed this to a significant degree.

Members heard from some sources how a vicious circle can be created when parents need a job to pay for childcare but need childcare in order to get a job. Services recognise this loop and work with parents on a transition basis. Members heard several examples of how this ‘poverty trap’ can affect parents seeking to balance employment and child care support. One case in particular highlighted the experience of a young mother who informed the Commission that, in order to continue working and develop a career, as she wished to do, it was necessary to obtain child care for her three-year-old daughter. Unfortunately, the price of childcare was so high that it made more financial sense to work shorter hours or leave employment altogether and look after her child herself. This would involve maximising her

access to benefits, which she is reluctant to do as she would rather be in employment, paying her own way. This witness stressed that she was aware of many other parents in a similar situation.

Details of funding arrangements for Children's Centre Services and the ways in which assistance is provided for parents, including day care costs, are detailed in Appendix 1.

The Commission is aware of and supports the Community Safety and Social Inclusion Scrutiny Commission's review of 'worklessness' which has a more specific focus on the services available to citizens in returning to work, including those with young children.

6.3.5 Flexibility

Flexibility was raised with Commissioners largely in relation to day care provision, rather than the universal services provided for early years. According to the Hackney Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2007-2008 "21% of the parents consulted stated that they worked shift hours. A number of these shift working parents frequently highlighted 2 particular childcare needs; a need for earlier start times and later opening hours and a need for childcare support during the school holidays which was flexible... Childcare providers also reported that flexibility of provision was the most influential factor in terms of ensuring a buoyant occupancy and the current Childcare Affordability Project (CAP) backs this up by showing a higher take up of the flexible places option."¹⁴

The Commission heard that, based on this knowledge, The Learning Trust encourages providers to offer flexibility of places. During its site visits the Commission found that some settings make this offer available but felt that more needed to be achieved in this regard.

6.3.6 Accessibility

In addition to affordability, and flexibility, accessibility was another common barrier to using services that was queried as part of the review. Commissioners were informed that the Children's Centre programme works to ensure all members of the community can use any of the services according to their preference. For example, the cluster area boundaries do not exclude individual families from using services outwith the borders, so parents and children can continue to attend sessions in settings they are accustomed to, or where specific activities are held which are of interest. An example of this was found by Members who interviewed parents attending a Turkish Mothers Drop-in session at the Ann Tayler Children's Centre. The Centre is in

¹⁴ Section 3 "Our Priorities", Hackney Childcare Sufficiency Statement 2007-08

Area F yet one of the Mothers traveled from Hackney Wick, which is in Area D, because she enjoyed that particular service.

During the course of interviews with parents Members heard other examples of families accessing services in different areas at different settings and nowhere was this found to be problematic. However, 'pram pushing distance' was described as an important consideration by some parents who, whilst happy to attend sessions in various setting depending on which day they were on, some commented that it would be helpful to provide greater consistency, particularly in relation to drop-in sessions, as highlighted in paragraph 6.2.3.3 above.

6.3.7 Socio-economic mix

Research shows that a mix of socio-economic groups using services has positive outcomes on children. The work of Sylva et al demonstrates that, whilst parents' education and social class remain important predictors of intellectual and social development, disadvantaged children in particular can benefit significantly from good quality pre-school experiences, "especially if they attend centres that cater for a mixture of children from different social backgrounds."¹⁵

Members questioned the extent to which this occurs in Hackney and were informed that, despite having anticipated problems being caused by a wide variation of income bands in the Borough, in actuality there is a good mix. It was explained to the Commission that many families have a household income below £25,000 p.a. but there are also some above the £55,000 p.a. bracket.

The Commission did, however, hear a number of examples during its formal meetings and off-site work which challenge the positive overall picture. These included:

- When visiting a toy library session at the Stamford Hill Community Centre, Cllrs Taylor and Siddiqui spoke to two Polish mothers who make regular use of the facilities. As well as their children learning English, the session gives them a chance to practice too. However, they informed Members of the impression that some of the English mums don't choose to mix with them very much.
- Two of the mothers interviewed at the Sebright Children's Centre found that there is a good socio-economic mix at the sessions, although those from lower income households seem less likely to attend sessions such as breastfeeding or baby massage. It was

¹⁵ Kathy Sylva et al (November 2004), "The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project", Sure Start.

suggested that they may need more encouragement, or perhaps they already have a wider local support network.

- A childminder interviewed at the Stamford Hill Community Centre explained that although the socio-economic mix appears to be quite good there is a big Turkish community in the vicinity which doesn't appear to use the services very much. It was suggested that Sure Start should contact them directly, using Turkish speaking advocates to work on their behalf.

Recommendation three

A positive socio-economic mix was very apparent in all universal settings visited by the Commission. Parents spoke positively about this product of the service and made suggestions for how interaction between groups could be improved. Specifically, during its interviews with parents Members received positive reports regarding the provision of English as a Second Language (ESOL) training. Parents were enthusiastic about these sessions and frequently requested wider availability, with the option of higher level training.

The Commission requests a report from The Learning Trust on the extent of ESOL training provision via Children's Centres and options for how this might be extended. Such a report will consider options open to The learning Trust but also opportunities any for greater input from all partner bodies and Directorates of the council.

6.4 Are we delivering the right service?

6.4.1 Measuring Quality

Providing an account of quality and financial performance is crucial for the ongoing viability of any public service. Within the early years context parents and carers, staff and commissioning bodies all rely on this information to make important decisions that will affect the future of children in the borough and its long-term development.

Absence or delay in producing reliable management data has immediate implications for parents, all of whom have a relatively short window for making choices the impact of which will be felt for many years to come. Earlier scrutiny reviews by this Commission and others in Hackney reflect wider findings in social research demonstrating the impact on a child of experiences in its first five years. Whether relating to crime and disorder or health and wellbeing, it is a common conclusion that the early years are where patterns can be set for life. It is crucial therefore that parents have access to information that can help them in making the best decisions for their child at this stage.

Organisations rely on this data too. Authorities responsible for commissioning early years services need to determine use and forecast demand. Both of these activities must be informed by robust data and the result will have serious implications for the future effectiveness and viability of the service.

Throughout this review Members questioned frequently how quality is measured. Responses were received which explained the approach taken in Hackney from several perspectives:

- Representatives of the Learning Trust told the Commission that early years provision is generally assessed through Ofsted reviews and through the Trust's own quality assessment processes
- A Children's Centre Manager gave examples from within the early years setting which included:
 - a constant process of feedback and evaluation from parents and community organisations
 - the views of parent representatives on the Children's Centre advisory board
 - regular meetings of parent forums
 - records of complaints and compliments
 - registration and attendance records
- A Strategic Manager for Children's Centres and Sure Start provided the Commission with examples of performance indicators that are applied to children and young people's services. These covered some from the national indicator (NI) set and others from Hackney's Local Area Agreement (LAA), including:

- NI92 – support children’s progress and development
- LAA – number of parents supported into employment
- NI53 – prevalence of breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks
- NI70 – hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries to children

Many of these findings were backed-up by detailed examples provided to the Commission. When interviewing parents at the Sebright Children’s Centre, Members were shown records of parental feedback which is collected and recorded on a regular basis. Commissioners also heard first-hand the views of parents regarding the quality of provision on offer. This information was gathered during interviews conducted at the Ann Tayler Children’s Centre and the Stamford Hill Community Centre.

It was, however, less clear how this local, qualitative information contributes to management data used at strategic area or borough level. This view was compounded by the limited amount of quantitative data on service use that was available at the time of the review. Members were informed that The Learning Trust is in the process of implementing an electronic performance management system called eStart. This will enable managers to record and interpret performance data across a range of variables.

This finding is not uncommon amongst other local authorities at this stage of the Children’s Centre programme. In May 2008 the Local Authority Research Consortium (LARC) published its Round 1 report on “Evaluating the Early Impact of Integrated Children’s Services”¹⁶. According to their findings only “a small minority of Local Authorities could provide quantitative evidence of improved outcomes for groups of children that they would confidently ascribe to integrated children’s services.” The key concerns identified by partner practitioners include:

- workload implications, especially in relation to Common Assessment Framework
- the logistical arrangements needed to make ‘working together’ work, e.g. convening and attending multi-agency panels
- a reported lack of sign-up from all agencies, e.g. schools, GPs and health

Recommendation one

The Commission recognises that progress has been made in delivering the Children’s Centre model for Hackney. The vision of providing universal, integrated services for young children is beginning to be

¹⁶ Lord, P., Kinder, K., Wilkin, A., Atkinson, M. and Harland, J. (2008). “Evaluating the Early Impact of Integrated Children’s Services: Round 1 Summary Report.” (Slough: NFER).

realised. Members are, however, concerned at the current inability to demonstrate this through the collection and presentation of robust data. This data includes performance measures, the demographic breakdown of usage, and funding streams. In order to secure the future stability of the Children's Centre model, all partners will require swift access to this data.

The Commission recommend a full report be provided to them detailing this information on the dates specified above, using the new IT system currently being customised for use in the Borough.

6.4.2 Developing the workforce

In defining the way in which quality is measured the Head of one Children's Centre included the importance of supporting and developing the workforce and of leadership, particularly within multi-agency, early years settings. This contribution stood-out as unique within the Commission's wider discussions about quality, much of which was focused on parental feedback and performance data. Managing the Early Years workforce, developing their skills and knowledge in tandem with related professions, is an important indicator of quality service provision. Indeed the Government has specific requirements and expectations with regard to the issue.

To improve outcomes for children the Government has committed to raising the proportion of the early years workforce with relevant and appropriate qualifications to work with babies, toddlers and young children. This has been restated in the recent "2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy", published in December 2008, which proposes having a graduate leading practice in every daycare setting by 2015. The Government has also created an Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) qualification which requires all candidates to demonstrate that they meet a set of 39 professional standards, specifically covering child development for 0-5 year olds.

In relation to workforce strategy the Commission was informed that it is a legal requirement for all early years settings to have professional development plans for their staff, and that these are in place for each of the settings in Hackney.

Throughout its review the Commission spoke to a number of professionals working in early years settings. Members also witnessed a broad range of skill in use during their site visits and parent interviews. At both its formal meetings and during the field work the Commission asked questions about approaches to recruitment, training opportunities and capacity, which received mixed responses from various witnesses.

The Commission learnt that a range of activities are required in order to achieve success, and that these include:

- breaking down old practices
- providing appropriate training
- creating time for reflection on roles and responsibilities

It was also explained that encouraging staff to work across service areas, rather than in silos, was vital for the development of a quality service. For example, there may be benefit in health care workers having an input into nursery services or parenting services. Mrs. Turner added that the cross-fertilization of jobs and mixed training provision has also proved to be very effective in developing the ethos of an integrated service.

A substantial, outstanding issue of concern to the Commission is the reported residual day care workforce in the Borough that can sometimes be hard to encourage. The Commission heard that, for these staff, training is often limited to attendance at day courses, after which there is a tendency to plateau. It was also felt that they can be more resistant to the concept of integrated working.

Recommendation two

Children's Centre managers have emphasised the importance of workforce development as both an indicator of quality provision and as a means of achieving integrated service provision. Members recognise the effective approaches used to date, such as joint training sessions for staff from separate disciplines. The Government has also acknowledged the importance of this issue in its recent progress report for the "Children's Plan One Year On".

The Commission requests a report from The Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Children and Young People's Partnership Board, explaining the strategy for workforce development, with particular reference to the emphasis placed on "promoting parental engagement" in the Government's "The Children's Plan One Year On: a progress report".

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This has been the sixth review of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission. Taking its lead from the Commission's previous review on prevention and intervention as relating to crime, this review has aimed to identify some key issues that have particular relevance to early years services and the implementation of the Children's Centre programme. It puts forward recommendations that will provide support to parents and carers, as well as children and young people, in Hackney.
- 7.2 Children's Services have been in a state of transition since the publication of "Every Child Matters" and acutely so since introduction of the early years outcomes provisions in the Childcare Act 2006 which creates new, additional responsibilities for reducing inequalities through the provision of integrated services. As a consequence, the Commission was keen to focus on the subject of integration and spent a number of its public meetings speaking to individuals who are responsible for delivering services through Children's Centres and their related settings. Related to these are those who operate at the fringes of the early years service currently but might do more so in the future. The findings from these lines of enquiry are reflected in a number of the Commission's recommendations.
- 7.3 Members also focused their attention on the degree to which 0-5 years services can demonstrate to others the quality of provision. The clear intention of questioning this area was to reinforce the importance of being able to explain the benefits of working through the Children's Centre model: both for delivering better outcomes to the community and providing an efficient service that offers value for money. The majority of qualitative information gathered by the Commission throughout its review certainly indicates that delivery of these outcomes is heading in the right direction. However, as the key recommendation from this report shows, the Commission feels it is vital that the service has at its disposal the means to tell this story using a robust set of data, as well as the more anecdotal and narrative evidence reflected in the findings of this report.
- 7.4 The Commission recognises that many of the report's recommendations require partnership working between The Learning Trust, LBH, CHtPCT and a number of other key organisations. It expects that these recommendations will be considered by each of those organisations with regard to the contribution they might make but.
- 7.5 More importantly, the Commission anticipates that the Children and Young People's Partnership Board will want to discuss and act on these findings in reviewing its "Children and Young People's Partnership Plan" during 2009. The current iteration of this plan makes specific reference to learning from and building on the outcomes of this review. To ensure that such discussions take place with due regard to this report, the Commission intends to hold ongoing dialogue with the partnership, agencies and individuals on whom the recommendations have an impact.

- 7.6 Finally, the Commission expresses its thanks to all those who were able to support and assist Members in the process of gathering evidence, including all the parents, childminders, staff, representatives who helped organise and contributed to the six site visits and interview sessions.
- 7.7 In particular the Commission would like to thank Kate Brown from The Learning Trust whose expertise, advice and support was invaluable.
- 7.8 The Commission was also helped immensely by the contribution of its community representatives. At the beginning of this review and towards its concluding stages, the Commission wrote to those who had expressed an interest in submitting their views and joining the debate. Their input was extremely helpful in providing leads for the expanding evidence base, as well as adding to the wider debate on items covered during the formal public meetings.

8. MEMBERSHIP OF THE SCRUTINY COMMISSION

8.1 Elected Members:

- Councillor Akhoon
- Councillor Bell
- Councillor Demirci
- Councillor Icoz (Vice Chair)
- Councillor Kelly
- Councillor F Khan
- Councillor Landau
- Councillor Plouviez
- Councillor Shaikh
- Councillor Siddiqui
- Councillor Taylor (Chair)
- Councillor Unluer

8.2 Co-optees:

- Edith Akinnawonu
- Saleh Ahmed
- Ralph Bergmann
- Vera Edwards
- Mary Ludlow
- Lisa Neidich
- Mohammed Zeena

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission (2008), "Youth and Crime in Hackney: prevention and early intervention", (London Borough of Hackney).
- Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission, "Minutes of the meeting on 4th June 2008" LB Hackney.
- Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission, "Minutes of the meeting on 7th July 2008" LB Hackney.
- Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission, "Minutes of the meeting on 1st September 2008" LB Hackney.
- Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission, (6th October 2008) "Note of Site Visits", LB Hackney.
- Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission, "Minutes of the meeting on 6th October 2008" LB Hackney.
- Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission, "Minutes of the meeting on 3rd November 2008" LB Hackney.
- Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission, "Minutes of the meeting on 1st December 2008" LB Hackney.
- Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission, (1st December 2008) "Parent Interview Notes", LB Hackney.
- Department for Children Schools and Families (December 2007), "The Children's Plan, Building Brighter Futures", HM Government.
- Department for Children Schools and Families (December 2008), "The Children's Plan One Year On: a progress report", HM Government.
- Department for Educations and Skills and Department of Health, "Sure Start Children's Centres Practice Guidance" (19th December 2006), HM Government.
- Gerhardt, S., (June 2004), "Why Love Matters: how affection shapes a baby's brain", Routledge.
- HM Government, "Raising Standards - Improving Outcomes Statutory Guidance, Early Years Outcomes Duty Childcare Act 2006" (2008).
- Hands, A. et al, "Sure Start Children's Centres" (19th December 2006), National Audit Office.

- Homerton University Hospital, "Written submission from Homerton University Hospital NHS Trust regarding Maternity Services" (November 2008), NHS.
- Katz, I., La Placa, V., and Hunter, S. "Barriers to inclusion and successful engagement of parents in mainstream services" (2007), Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- The Learning Trust (July 2008), "Hackney Childcare Sufficiency Statement 2007-08 Summary".
- The Learning Trust (October 2008), "Strategic Children's Centre Parental Involvement & User Feedback Report".
- Lord, P., Kinder, K., Wilkin, A., Atkinson, M. and Harland, J. (2008). "Evaluating the Early Impact of Integrated Children's Services: Round 1 Summary Report." (Slough: NFER).
- Melhuish, E. and Hall, D. (2007) "The Policy Background to Sure Start", in "National Evaluation of Sure Start", ed. Belsky et al.
- Sylva, Kathy et al (November 2004), "The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project", Sure Start.
- Sylva, k. and Melhuish, E. et al (November 2004) "The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: Findings from Pre-school to end of Key Stage 1", SureStart.

APPENDIX 1

Funding Streams for Children’s Centre Services, Childcare and “Free” Nursery Education

The services provided in Children’s Centres, excluding daycare, are funded through

- Children’s Centre Revenue
- Local Sure Start Programmes
- Social Care (staff costs - social workers and the parenting support programme)
- Primary Care Trust (staff costs – health visitors and midwives)

Local Sure Start Programme funding ceases in 2011. The services currently provided through this funding by the PCT are expected to have been “mainstreamed” and included in the health service offer by 2011 so that these services will still be available for children and parents.

The government has shown its long term commitment to Sure Start Children’s Centres through the consultation exercise it is currently undertaking to give the centres a specific statutory basis as part of the forthcoming Education and Skills Bill. The Executive Summary of “Legislating for Sure Start Children’s Centres” is attached as Appendix 1.

There are many different funding streams which contribute to providing daycare provision and help to make daycare affordable for parents; these are outlined on the following diagram. The second diagram shows additional support The Learning Trust offers daycare providers to help ensure sustainability and quality. At the last meeting, members were given excerpts from national research which showed the link between high quality provision and raising children’s achievement in the early years and beyond.

- LDA – London Development Agency – developed CAP (Childcare Affordability Programme)
- DCSF – Department of Children, Schools and Families
- Core – The Learning Trust funding for Early Years and Play
- SSGG – Sure Start General Grant (comes from DCSF)
- Standards Fund (comes from DCSF)

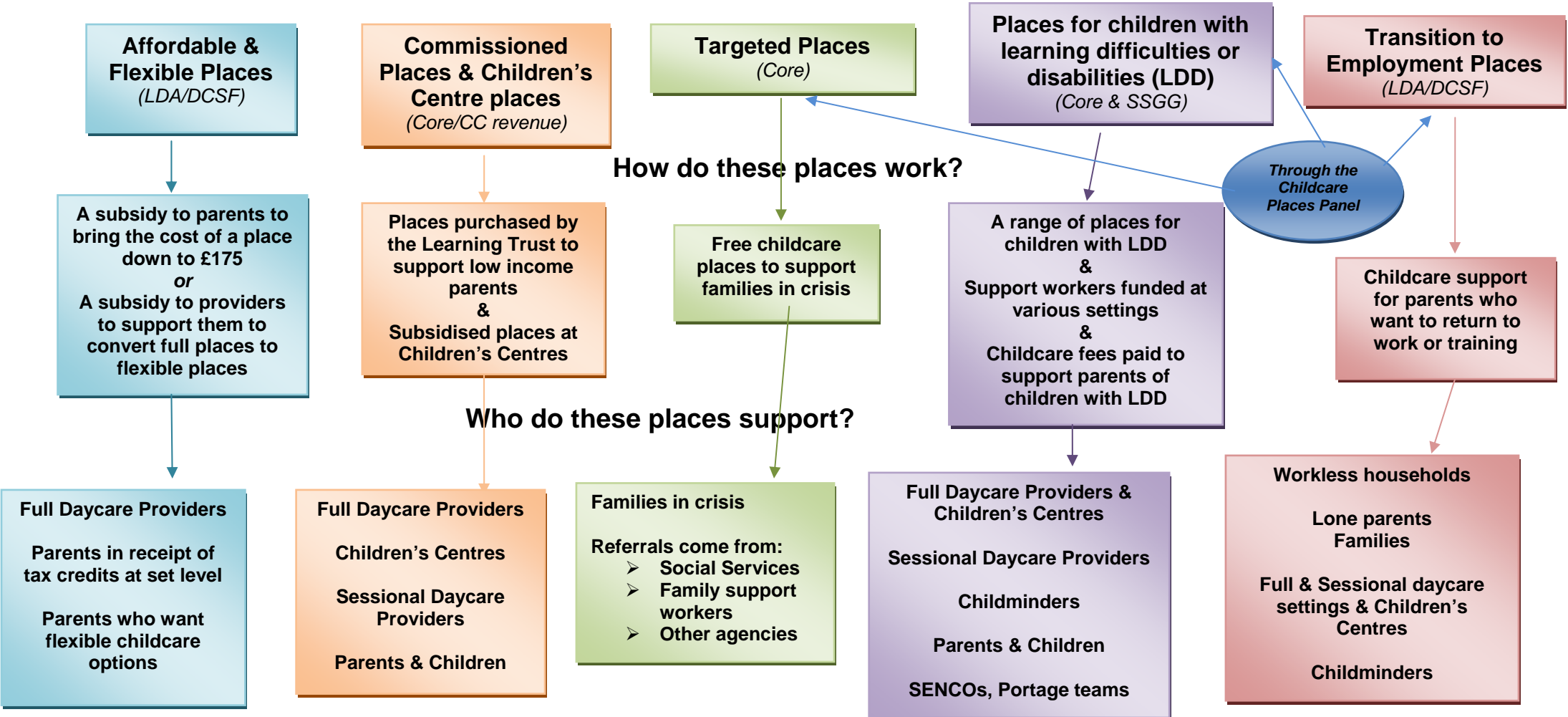
- Children's Centre Revenue (comes via SSGG from DCSF)

All 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to twelve and a half "free" hours of early years provision per week during term times. This has to increase to fifteen hours by 2010 and some providers in Hackney are already doing that and receive additional funding for being in the Pathfinder scheme.

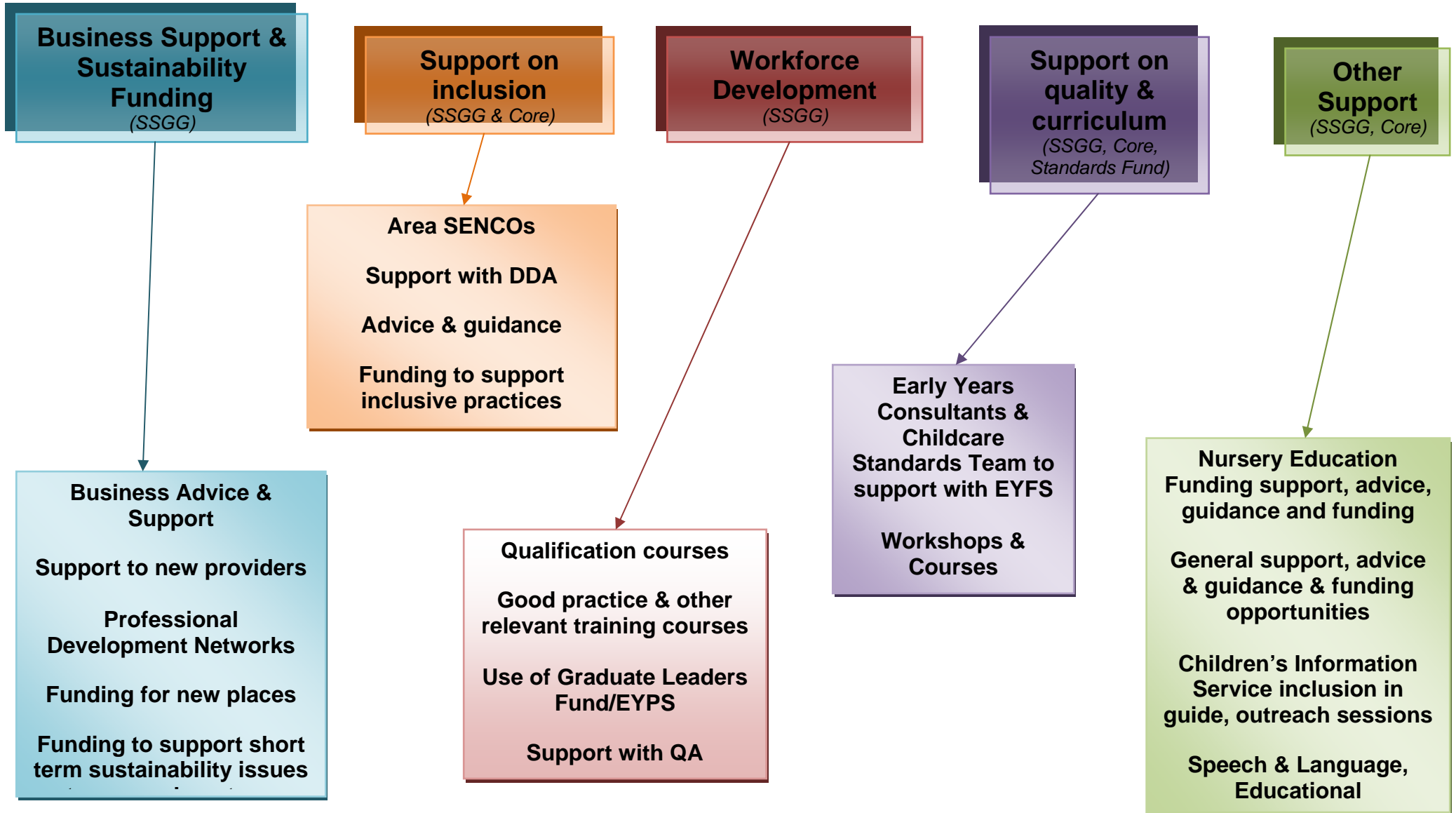
Currently there are different formulas used for funding these "free" hours in schools and in the private , voluntary and independent sector. There is a statutory duty to agree a Single Funding Formula for all providers offering the "free" places to 3 and 4 year olds from 2010 which is a transparent system. While funding levels and funding methodologies do not have to be exactly the same for all providers, any differences must be justifiable and demonstrable.

Parents tell us what is important to them – one of their key requirements is for a range of affordable childcare options to fit their circumstances

So, to meet these needs what does the Learning Trust offer?



What other support does the Learning Trust offer to early years providers?



Legislation for Sure Start Children's Centres: Public Consultation

Executive Summary

The Government's vision, set out most recently in the Children's Plan, is that every child and young person should have the opportunity to fulfil their potential, and that means having the best start in life. Sure Start Children's Centres (SSCCs) are at the forefront of transforming the way services are delivered for young children and their families.

We have almost 3000 SSCCs up and running, and emerging evidence of their success in improving outcomes for children and families. But the centres have no established legal existence- they are currently just one way in which local authorities and their partners can choose to discharge their duty under the Childcare Act 2006 to provide integrated early childhood services.

As we take steps in the forthcoming Education and Skills Bill to strengthen the arrangements for partnership working through Children's Trusts, the time is right also to establish SSCCs as a recognised part of the universal infrastructure for children's services. This would mean that in future whether or not something is a SSCC would be a matter of law, and we propose to use the Bill to establish that all SSCCs in existence at the date of Royal Assent are captured as SSCCs for the purpose of the statutory requirements.

Local authorities, working with their statutory partners, would be required to assess the need for SSCCs in their area, and to establish and maintain sufficient SSCCs to meet that need, as one way of meeting their Childcare Act 2006 duties. A statutory definition will also enable safeguarding and accountability requirements to be formalised.

However, the requirement on local authorities to establish and maintain sufficient SSCCs does not imply that SSCCs or their constituent services should be provided directly by the local authority. Local authorities will continue to be under a statutory duty to determine whether a PVI provider can provide childcare and be encouraged to consider PVI providers as managers of entire SSCCs or as providers of other services within centres.