

Policy into Practice

Childcare and extended services – briefing for new and existing childcare providers

Issue 3. 2007

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Partnership working

... childcare providers putting policy into practice

Welcome to Issue 3 of *Policy into Practice*.

Extended services are already being offered through over 5,000 schools, well on the way to meeting the Childcare Act requirement for local authorities to ensure 'sufficient access' to childcare, with a target of 50% of schools offering access by 2008 – and 100% by 2010. More than 1,000 children's centres have opened – ahead of the government's target of 2,500 children's centres by 2008, and 3,500 by 2010. It is expected that most of the childcare offered in and around schools and children's centres will be provided by the voluntary and private sectors.

"For new childcare services in children's centres, in line with the Childcare Act, we will expect local authorities to determine whether it is appropriate for private or voluntary providers to deliver the service, before they do so themselves,"¹ advises Sure Start.

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A recent Ofsted survey of extended services in schools and children's centres in 16 local authorities found that the benefits to children, young people and adults included enhanced self-confidence, improved relationships, raised aspirations and better attitudes to learning.²

Private and voluntary sector childcare partners are already offering the childcare places and services that lead to these benefits in many areas. Many voluntary and private sector organisations are also involved in health and healthy schools initiatives, specialist intervention and support, and parenting programmes.

How can we develop and maintain the partnerships with schools that will ensure voluntary and private sector childcare providers continue to play a key role in delivering high quality, sustainable, and integrated services; best outcomes for children; and choice for parents?

The Childcare Act has now become law. For the first time ever, Government has given local authorities the responsibility to ensure that parents and children access the childcare they need, children receive coordinated services and, importantly, inequalities between younger children are reduced.

The emphasis is on providing local solutions to meet local need, so every area will be working at a different speed and with a different emphasis and starting point. With such a bright spotlight on childcare, there has never been a better time to consolidate and potentially expand the support you offer.

[1] Sure Start Children's Centres Practice Guidance, 2006

[2] Extended services in schools and children's centres, OfSTED July 2006, Ref HMI 2609

Practical partnerships with schools

Many voluntary and private sector childcare providers are already working in partnership with schools and children's centres, offering breakfast and after school clubs, holiday playschemes, full day care for children under 5, or linked childminding places. If you are not already working in partnership with your nearest school(s), or offering them services – now is the time to act!

Some partnerships have developed slowly and informally over time, and others are emerging more rapidly as schools extend their services. Some schools and childcare providers have agreed **Lease** arrangements, some have **Transfer of Control Agreements** (see *Policy into Practice Issue 1*), and many are now developing **Service Level Agreements**.

In Kent, for example, the county council is helping community schools to support parents and children to

access childcare from 8am–6pm by offering signposting to partner childcare providers through partnership and service level agreements. The county council has drafted two agreements – a Service Level Agreement for schools and childcare providers where childcare is provided at the school, and a Partnership Agreement where the childcare is provided off the school site. The agreements were drafted in consultation with schools and voluntary and private sector providers, and are intended to act as working documents that can be amended by each partnership to meet their particular needs.

The draft agreements outline the roles and responsibilities of the school and its partners in delivering childcare services, with the aim of maintaining and developing a full and effective partnership between the school and its childcare service partners.

Frequently asked questions

Who will have overall responsibility if services are on a school site?

This needs to be agreed via a Service Level Agreement, Transfer of Control Agreement, etc.

Who will be responsible for maintenance?

Again – this depends on the lease or agreement arrangements.

Who will be responsible for site safety?

The childcare provider is usually responsible for site safety on the site that they operate from – but shared use will require an agreement.

Who will take the overall financial risk?

If the childcare is commissioned by a school or local authority from a private or voluntary sector provider, then that provider would usually take the financial risk, for example if the childcare places are not filled.

Areas covered by a Partnership Agreement include:

Description of service

- Type of service (e.g. pre-school/ after school/holiday provision)
- Description (e.g. premises)
- Days open
- Weeks open
- Opening hours
- Beginning (start date) 2006 to
- Target age group (e.g. 0–4 year olds / 4–11 / 11+)
- Minimum and maximum numbers

School responsibilities

- Information and publicity
- Quality assurance
- Reporting to Governors
- Safe handover of children

Childcare Provider responsibilities

- Staffing
- Quality assurance
- Safeguarding children
- Health and safety
- Insurance
- Complaints
- Safe collection
- Healthy outcomes for children

Sharing effective practice

Share policies and procedures to make sure that they are consistent in Safeguarding Children, Health and Safety, Equal Opportunities, Healthy Eating, etc.

Evaluation

How will the partnership be evaluated? By parent satisfaction surveys, regular meetings, School Governor visits, etc.

Where childcare is provided on a school site by a voluntary or private sector provider, the Service Level Agreement also includes:

Premises

Providing exclusive use of appropriate premises for the childcare at the times agreed, including storage, cleaning and utilities, as specified

Site management

Including caretaking/locking up

Intervention policy

Agreed procedure for dealing with any difficulties or disputes

Developing a charging structure

Working in partnership to develop a charging structure for childcare places can be challenging. For schools it may be the first time they have had to consider charging for services. Private and voluntary sector providers know that they must at least break even and a clear business plan will help to explain that fees need to be set at the local 'market' level. Setting childcare fees that are affordable for parents living in disadvantaged areas, and at the same time cover the cost of salaries that will attract and retain the best staff, is the biggest challenge of all.

In some areas, a small amount of start-up funding may be available for new childcare places linked to extended schools, and some places may be subsidised for children with special needs or seen as 'in need' by the local authority.

Supporting parents

But in the long term, sustainability will depend on helping parents to claim the childcare element of Working Tax Credit, by providing leaflets, and helping parents to fill in forms. Jobcentre Plus is also working with

children's centres and extended services in and around schools to run sessions with parents about claiming tax credits.

Students should also be able to get help with childcare fees from their college or training provider, and an increasing number of working parents are getting childcare vouchers worth £55 a week (the tax free amount) from their employers. Many NHS employees, for example – the biggest employer in Europe – are now getting childcare vouchers as part of their salary.

Sharing policies and procedures

Partnerships between schools and voluntary, private and independent sector organisations can make a significant contribution to achieving the five outcomes which are at the core of the Every Child Matters agenda. Relevant policies and procedures, including safeguarding children, curriculum and play values, equal opportunities, and health and safety policies should be shared by all partners to ensure consistency and best outcomes for children and families.

4Children publishes a set of draft policies for out of school childcare – *Getting it Right!* – available in hard copy and CD ROM. Order online at www.4Children.org.uk or call 020 7512 2100.

The childcare element of the Working Tax Credit can cover up to 80% of registered childcare costs paid by eligible families. The maximum amount that parents can get is 80% of costs of up to £175 per week for one child and up to £300 per week for two or more children.

While the average amount received by families is much less (£51.79 a week in 2005), this is in part because many parents in the most disadvantaged areas don't know how to claim, or are anxious that the amount will be miscalculated and they will have to pay it back. Childcare providers play an important role in informing and supporting parents to claim the childcare tax credits they are entitled to.

Extended services and partnership working

As well as accommodating a private nursery that offers a holiday playscheme for 5-14 year olds, Hengrove Community Arts College organises year round holiday programmes for 8-16 year olds, delivered in partnership with a range of local partners.

Partnership working is a school priority and has been one key to the success of Hengrove's holiday activity programme, which is now in its third year. The scheme is funded through joint bids to awards schemes such as Awards For All (which awarded £5,000 towards the summer programme), and delivered in partnership by the school and a range of organisations including Connexions, Positive Futures, School-Family Link Workers, Hengrove Play Park and the Safer Schools Partnership. The scheme runs in parallel with the 8am to 6pm holiday daycare service for 5-14 year olds run by a private nursery provider using the school's facilities.

The holiday scheme at Hengrove came out of a local survey – the Young Person's Quality of Life Survey revealed 'low satisfaction with facilities for teenagers in Hengrove' and a strong apparent link between lack of youth facilities and nuisance behaviour as reported by local residents. The content and organisation of

the summer activity programme was developed in consultation with parents and carers, local councillors, school heads of year, partner organisations and particularly the young people.

The demand for places has grown from 35 young people for the first summer in 2004 to 100 in summer 2006. The summer programme has now recruited and trained a group of former Hengrove pupils who had taken part in previous summer programmes to help run the sessions.

Complementary provision

For the last 18 months, the Hengrove scheme has run in parallel with full-time holiday daycare provision, a service run by Mama Bear's day nursery. The private nursery has a dedicated space on the school site where it offers year-round daycare, as well as breakfast and after school clubs during term time. The Bristol Bears holiday playscheme caters for 5-14 year olds and uses the school facilities – including sessions in the school swimming pool three times a week.

A full 8am to 6pm day costs parents £20 including three meals; a shorter day (9.30am to 4.30pm) is charged at £15.50 with one full meal. "We are not competing with Hengrove's summer programme, we work together in many ways," says Emma Aves, manager of Mama Bear's daycare.



Launched in early 2006, Play England is a five year £15 million project supporting children's play across England. Run by the Children's Play Council and part of the Big Lottery Fund's strategic initiative, the programme is supporting local authorities to develop area-wide strategies for play and access funding. It supplies resources for strategic development of play provision and has already created a good practice guide for local authorities offering expertise to make a difference for families. Combining these funds with other budgets to create broader programmes for children will be an important role for local authorities.

Positive experience of leisure and play supports outcomes for children in all aspects of their development. Developing creative and innovative approaches to children's development will be an essential challenge for local authorities over coming years. Ensuring that strategic approaches to leisure and play are built into the children and young people planning process and are combined and rolled out as a core element of all aspects of the integrated agenda will be crucial. Childcare and play service providers in the private, voluntary and independent sectors have a key role to play in supporting access to and development of responsive services.

Benefits of play

Play adds value to school's health related programmes – children are engaged in stimulating physical activities beyond the school day.

Play has a fundamental role in enabling children and young people to engage positively with the complexities of the world around them. Learning through play also supports and enriches learning through formal education.

All children need time to play freely each day – time when they are free to choose what they do, how they do it, when they stop and why.

Remember...

The expertise existing providers have in delivering quality and stimulating provision is valuable for extended schools to tap into. Ensure local schools and the local authority are aware of your specialist policies and procedures such as health and safety policies and risk assessment procedures linked to the play environment delivered.

Creating the right environment is essential – this is children's leisure time where they could be spending over 1,000 hours a year, including much of their holiday time, so it is important that it is a good place to be!

Get ready to get active

Over the coming years extended schools will be at the forefront of promoting sport and activity in our communities. If Government aspirations are met, all children and young people will be taking part in four to five hours of sport and physical activity weekly by 2010. And while many great sport and physical activity projects already exist, extended schools are being seen by many as a solution to joining up and developing sports participation. This opens up endless opportunities for childcare providers creating stimulating play and leisure environments to link in and develop their services.

Responsive services

Whikirk Primary School has a successful wrap-around childcare service called Whikidz. It is based in a former middle school and provides high quality before and after school childcare to the local community, 50 weeks a year. The club is Ofsted registered and the annual turnover of the club is in excess of £50,000. Whikidz was originally licensed to provide 24 places for children aged 4 to 14, but this has now been increased to 36 places.

Recognising needs

Broad consultation with parents, childcare providers, the local community and other schools before the provision was set up revealed strong evidence of need for year-round childcare services. Ongoing consultation means that the club continues to evolve to meet users' needs. When staff started to find children waiting outside at 8am, a questionnaire to parents showed that some needed to leave for work before 8am. The club now opens at 7.30am and closes at 6pm.

The club is full every night after school and has a group of regular attendees at its pre-school sessions. Whikidz provides transport to take children who attend other schools to and from the club in the morning and afternoon.

Management arrangements

Whitkirk School has experienced of the pros and cons of two different delivery models since the childcare scheme was set up in 1998: outsourcing to a private provider and running its own provision directly. The school is now setting up a Company Limited by Guarantee to run provision, with plans for the service to be delivered independently of the school in the future. An open dialogue between school and Whikidz staff helps ensure stability and consistency, which is important for children with additional needs.

Success factors

Listening – Whitkirk Primary School listened to and continues to hear the community voice

Leadership – the head teacher's community-focused vision supporting the development of the childcare service since 1998

Learning – the childcare service adapts its approach as it over comes obstacles

Space – suitable accommodation is available on the school site providing dedicated space for community use

Partnership working is especially important in rural areas, where the scarcer population, smaller schools and transport difficulties can make it hard for childcare to be sustainable. In some areas, childminder networks are meeting the needs, while in others, voluntary and private sector providers have developed partnerships with children's centres and schools to bridge the gaps.

Across all areas, groups of schools are increasingly working together in local clusters and there may be opportunities to build on existing relationships with a single school and to work collaboratively with a group of schools.

Do you have existing relationships with school(s) that can be developed?



Do you have relationships with your local children's centre?



Are you aware of increased local need for the services you provide?



Do you have the capacity to increase the amount of work you undertake?



Have you thought how to communicate the benefits of your provision in the context of extended services in and around schools?



Rascals in partnership with Ashington children's centre

Rascals – a not-for-profit social enterprise Community Co-operative – started with one out of school club in Northumberland 11 years ago, and now has six clubs, plus four nurseries. The first five opened in schools, then Rascals was awarded SRB funding to open in more disadvantaged areas.

Since February 2006, the Community Co-operative has been working in partnership with Ashington Sure Start Children's Centre in Northumberland to manage all the childcare, including daycare for children under 5; breakfast, after school and holiday clubs for school aged children; and crèches. Rascals picks children up from eight local schools, providing childcare that meets the needs of children at smaller schools, with the help of Lottery funding.

Linda Henshawe, Rascals Executive Director, says: "Partnership working with Sure Start and Health Visitors has been fantastic. The centre has been a long time in the making, with a lot of planning, and now it's just working really well."

In east Devon, the local authority is piloting a 'school-childcare link' scheme. The aim of the scheme is to ensure there is area-wide coordinated signposting of childcare. Other emerging solutions to issues surrounding the rural childcare offer in Devon include:

- Providers working in partnership with schools to offer affordable, safe and trusted childcare – this helps attract and keep families and children in the area and leads to a positive feedback cycle
- Childminder networks linking with school clusters in delivering appropriate childcare services
- Making contracts with taxi companies which offer a flexible service; tailoring transport solutions to the needs of the child and not the provider
- Taking a more strategic view of transport – look at all the transport operated with the local authority rather than just schools to ensure more synergy
- Engaging in a series of community conversations to aid understanding, working collaboratively and signposting to services
- Coordinating support from the local authority and other agencies so that different services are combined with the schools as focal points of the community
- A creative use of school and community resources to ensure that the educational benefit of activities are paid for by schools
- Through delivering provision for a cluster of schools, the revenue generated by more families using the service enables disadvantaged families to receive a subsidy

Sustainable services

Delaware Primary's extended services have become a focus for a dispersed rural community in Cornwall, drawing adults and children from a wide area. The school has found that charging for services has increased take up – and all the services are now sustainable.

As well as wrap-around childcare, which is now offered year-round, the school offers a wide range of afternoon activities run by specialist coaches and tutors.

Before deciding what to charge for these services, the school consulted on three levels:

- Across a wide area, with the support of the local authority
- Locally through questions included in a parish consultation
- Within the school through a questionnaire to parents.

Annual surveys of parents and the local community make sure the information is up to date and services are responsive to need. As well as finding out what people were prepared to pay, Delaware surveyed other childcare provision in the area to make sure the services supported the existing childcare market. The school ensured its proposed charging levels were in line with other providers and would not undercut them.

All the extended services are now self-sustaining and pay a rent to the school's Extended Services fund, to cover cleaning, bills, and wear and tear.

FOCUS on... Workforce developments

The Championing Children Scheme, announced at 4Children's Conference on the Children's Workforce and Quality Services in October 2006, will provide an integrated skills programme for leaders and managers of children's services, including managers of children's centres, that aims to help partnership working. To find out more please visit www.4Children.org.uk

The scheme complements the Transformation Fund, a £250 million fund to support workforce development in early years settings by establishing training routes, providing financial support and investing in training and development in the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sectors. A key part of the funding is provided to the Children's Workforce Development Council to develop training routes for Early Years Professional Status.

For the PVI sectors, there are four additional aspects of the Transformation Fund (worth a total of £195 million over two years), managed by local authorities, which aim to improve parity between the maintained and PVI sectors with regard to training and qualifications:

Recruitment incentive

The Recruitment Incentive offers £3,000 (more in London) in each of the two years for PVI full daycare settings employing graduate level professionals (Level 5 or 6 degrees relevant to early years) for the first time.

Quality premium

PVI full daycare settings that employ graduate level setting leaders with relevant qualifications can claim the Quality Premium of £5,000 a year (more in London) to help towards the professional development of all staff and other activities leading to quality improvement. At least 51% of the funding must be used to support professional development of staff working with children and families. The remainder can be spent on improvements to the quality of services to children and parents. Settings in receipt of the Quality Premium only (i.e. not getting the Recruitment Incentive) may use up to 49% of the Quality Premium to boost wages of existing staff if by so doing they can demonstrate that they will support retention of the existing workforce and hence stability for children.

A number of local authorities are participating in a pilot allowing some relaxation on the percentages that setting must spend on professional development, improving quality and on salaries.

Training at Level 3 and above

This provides support for full daycare, sessional and childminder settings to help staff improve their qualifications to achieve a full Level 3 and up to Level 5 qualification in relevant subjects. This gives particular support to staff undertaking training relevant to the new Early Years Foundation Stage.

Additional needs training

For PVI full daycare, sessional and childminder settings to provide specific training on issues relating to disability, special educational and also English as an additional language.

There are a number of conditions for providers claiming the Quality Premium and or Recruitment Incentive from the Transformation Fund. For more information visit www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices

The Extended Schools Remodelling Adviser (ESRA) is the strategic lead for developing the extended schools vision within each local authority. The ESRA is supported by the Training and Development Agency (TDA) who are helping local authorities ensure that at school level, teachers are not taking on additional responsibilities and that the most appropriate person is engaged in developing and delivering extended services. There is no expectation that teachers will deliver childcare as part of the core extended school offer. However, it may be appropriate that someone on school staff undertakes a coordination role.

Information point

www.4Children.org.uk
www.businesslink.org
www.childcarelink.gov.uk
www.continyou.org
www.cwdc.org.uk
www.dfes.gov.uk
www.hmce.gov.uk/business/VAT
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www.ndna.org.uk
www.ofsted.org.uk/daycare
www.playengland.org.uk
www.pre-school.org.uk
www.remodelling.org
www.surestart.gov.uk
www.teachernet.gov.uk/extendedschools

Helplines

Tax Credit Helpline: 0845 300 3900
Ofsted Helpline: 0845 601 4771
ChildcareLink: 0800 096 0296
4Children Information Helpline: 020 7512 2100

The Ofsted Childcare Register, expected to become operational in 2008, will enable childcare and out of school activities for over 8s to voluntarily register, enabling working parents to use their Childcare Vouchers and Working Tax Credits to offset costs of these services. Find out more in the next issue of *Policy into Practice*.

Getting Started – out now!



Developing childcare in and around schools – a resource for schools and partners

Order online at www.4Children.org.uk or call 020 7512 2100

Supporting development

4Children's dedicated team of Regional Development Managers and network of specialist consultants offer strategic support and operational advice on developing children's centres, extended school services, youth services and wider support for childcare.

To find out more please contact 4Children on 020 7512 2100. The Regional Development Managers contact details are listed at www.4Children.org.uk/extendedschools

In order to support schools as they develop extended services, 4Children, ContinYou and TDA Development are working together to help support the delivery of high quality, sustainable provision which meets the needs of children, families and the community.