



## APPG on Sure Start Children's Centres joint meeting with the APPG on Childcare



Houses of Parliament, Committee Room 11, 16:00-17:00, 8  
December 2010

### Attendees

Annette Brooke MP, Caroline Flint MP, Sharon Hodgson MP, Baroness Hughes of Stretford, Baroness Howe of Idlicote, Andrea Leadsom, MP, Earl of Listowel, Baroness Walmsley

### Also in attendance

Pamela Coldy (Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network), Maggie Darling (Chair Daycare Trust), Lou Harrington (NLH Partnership), Emily Harcombe (SW Student with Marsham Street Children's Centre), Annamarie Hassall (Together for Children), Ruth Hydon (Action for Children), Veronica King (Daycare Trust), Neil Leitch (PSLA), Nigel Lloyd (NLH Partnership), Karen Mackey (Busy Bees Childcare), Sue Martin (Smith Martin Partnership/Daycare Trust), Melian Mansfield (Early Childhood Forum), Claire McCarthy (4Children), John Metcalfe (BASW), Deborah Meyes (Barnardo's), Anne Nelson (NAPE), June O'Sullivan (London EYF), Victoria Parker (NDNA), Wendy Scott (TACTYC), Andrew Sharp (NCT), Alexis Starkey (NCMA), Eleanor Thompson (4Children), Karen Walker (London Early Years Foundation), Cain Waterman (Investors in Families), Eleanor Winpenny (2020health)

**1) Welcome from Annette Brooke MP (Chair).** Apologies on behalf of the Minister for Children and Families Sarah Teather MP and confirmation of the new agenda for the meeting. Questions for the Minister were to be recorded and delivered on behalf of the group.

New agenda as follows

- Recent announcements on Sure Start from the Daycare Trust conference
- The Frank Field Review
- Ending ring-fencing within local councils and what this might mean for Sure Start budgets

### **2) Daycare Trust announcements**

Claire McCarthy outlined the changes to Sure Start announced at the Daycare Trust conference on the 16<sup>th</sup> November:

- Putting the 15 hours of free early education a week for disadvantaged two year olds into law from 2013;
- removing the requirement to offer full day care for Sure Start Children's Centres in the most deprived areas;
- removing the requirement to hire someone with both qualified teacher and early years professional status

Discussion:

Speakers expressed concern that the transfer of powers from the CWDC to the Department for Education would lead to a loss of expertise leading this work. It was proposed that someone from a practice background rather than a career civil servant should continue to lead the work after the transfer has taken place.

Question for the Minister: *What will the transfer of functions from the CWDC to the DfE mean in practice and will the work continue to be led by someone who comes from a practice background rather than the civil service?*

Concern was also expressed over the end of graduate leadership in Sure Start centres because the sector has worked hard to increase the pay and status of the early years and this move risks unpicking the good work which has been done. Graduate leadership was also highlighted as important because it gives Sure Start centre senior staff the clout to operate on a similar level to those they are working with such as headteachers and social workers. It was speculated that this might be consistent with the government's general approach to teaching policy – just as teachers in free schools will not be required to be qualified teachers and teacher training is moving from universities into schools. One speaker asked if this was “the end of pedagogy as we know it”.

*Question for the Minister: What is the rationale behind the end of graduate leadership in Sure Start Children's Centres? The group understands there may be differences in the qualifications for those leading full-time care and sessional leaders. If this is the case, what are the changes in required qualifications and what is the reasoning for this?*

*Question for the Minister: Those teaching in free schools will not be required to have QTS and the schools white paper advocates moving teacher training from universities to schools – is the end of the requirement to have a qualified teacher in Sure Start Children's Centres part of a change in the way we view pedagogy?*

Many speakers also felt that that the majority of Sure Start Children's Centres do need to offer some sort of childcare, if only to have someone present to look after the children while parents are attending classes and enable those parents in disadvantaged areas who are unemployed to go back into work. It was suggested that Sure Start Children's Centres should try and build closer links with adult education centres to ensure that childcare is provided while parents are able to expand their skills and improve their employability.

The group welcomed the national roll-out of the pilot programmes to provide 15 hours of free childcare for disadvantaged two-year-olds.

*Question for the Minister: What will the criteria be to qualify for the free childcare for disadvantaged two-year-olds? How will the roll-out of the childcare be monitored and how will the government ensure that councils provide enough places?*

Concern was raised over the future of maintained nurseries and whether Local Authorities would continue to fund this more expensive form of childcare when they have to make cuts elsewhere. It was suggested that maintained nurseries could become institutions like teaching hospitals where early years workers learn their trade.

### **3) Frank Field Report**

The report was broadly welcomed by the group although there was some hesitance over its insistence that services need to be more targeted. Some members were worried that there was the implication that Sure Start services are not already targeted and that it should be made clearer that the universal umbrella service gives professionals “permission to target”. However, there was debate as to how funds should be allocated – with some members saying that as funds are limited, resources should be reserved for the most disadvantaged.

*Question for the Minister: Future plans for Sure Start talk about an increased targeting of services. As a significant proportion of Sure Start Children's Centres' activities are targeted already, what does the department envisage as being different in the future?*

The government was praised for its introduction of more health visitors as it was widely acknowledged that greater cooperation with health services can increase the effectiveness of Sure Start Children's Centres, both by increasing access to services and by ensuring those services are not stigmatised.

June O'Sullivan from the London Early Years Foundation raised the possibility of expanding Sure Start Children's Centres to cater for the different generations by rebranding Sure Start around what we want for all members of society – the old as well as the young.

**4) Ending ring-fencing within local councils and what this might mean for Sure Start budgets**

Because Sure Start funding is no longer ring-fenced, and local authorities are facing funding pressures elsewhere, there was some worry that budgets put aside by central government for early intervention schemes would be spent on other services.

Question for the Minister: *What happens if local authorities do not use Sure Start budgets for Sure Start services? Has the department considered incentivising good practice in the early years, for example by offering a kitemark for early years-friendly councils?*