

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 47
Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Early Years Capital Grant
Date of Meeting: 8 September 2008
Report of: Director of Children's Services
Contact Officer: Name: **Caroline Parker** Tel: **293587**
E-mail: caroline.parker@brighton-hove.gov.uk
Key Decision: Yes Forward Plan No: CYP 2676
Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 To agree a Brighton & Hove strategy for allocating the Sure Start Early Years Capital Grant from the Department of Children Schools and Families (DCSF) over the next three years. This is a ring-fenced grant aimed at private, voluntary and independent childcare providers with national aims to:
- improve the quality of the learning environment in early years settings to support delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage, with a particular emphasis on improving play and physical activities; and ICT resources;
 - ensure all children, including disabled children, can access provision;
 - enable private, voluntary and independent providers to deliver the extension to the free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds and to do so flexibly.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the following strategy for the funding be agreed:
- To improve outcomes for young children and to narrow the gap for the most disadvantaged children by targeting funding on those groups with the worst environments identified in a citywide audit of rented premises or where capital alterations are needed to include children with disabilities.
 - To support the Council's childcare sufficiency duty by targeting funding on settings which offer affordable childcare, where childcare places are needed to meet local demand. This will include ensuring that sessional providers can offer the increased entitlement to 15 hours of flexible, free early years provision and could include expanding the number of places where there is clear evidence of unmet demand.
 - To link with the Primary Capital Strategy by aiming to relocate groups in the poorest multi-purpose accommodation into purpose built premises on school sites where possible, taking into account the local demand for

places and the quality of existing provision.

- 2.2 That all landlords and providers allocated funding should agree to funding conditions including opening for a minimum of 15 hours a week, 38 weeks a year to fit with the extension of the free early years entitlement, to commit that the premises will be used for childcare for at least 5 years, and to not raise the rent above inflation as a consequence of the improvements.
- 2.3 That the following initial funding priorities for the first year's funding of £1,062,000 (this can be carried into 2009/10) and that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People should agree individual grants to providers. The initial allocation be agreed as follows:
- a) £312,000 for grants of up to £50,000 for groups identified in the citywide audit as needing improvements to their internal and external areas which can be made with a small grant. The first priority will be for groups in multi-use premises and the second will be for voluntary groups in rented premises.
 - b) £100,000 for adaptations to buildings and special equipment to include children with disabilities (eg. ramps and stair lifts). This would be open to all groups where the need is agreed by the Pre School SEN Service.
 - c) £50,000 to pay for feasibility studies where there are serious defects in buildings which cannot be met with a small grant. The results of these studies will be used to inform funding decisions for subsequent years.
 - d) £100,000 for grants of up to £3,000 a group for equipment for all groups in multi-use premises to help them manage clearing away at the end of each session and for all voluntary run groups.
 - e) £500,000 to fund an extension at Peter Gladwin Primary School to house a local pre-school and to agree to ask both local pre-schools to express an interest in moving in to the new premises.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The local authority has a statutory duty to secure sufficient free early years provision for all three and four year olds and sufficient childcare for children aged 0-14 to allow parents to work or train. At present the early years free entitlement is 12.5 hours a week for 38 weeks a year, usually delivered in 2.5 hour sessions. This is increasing to 15 hours a week for all children by 2010 with increased flexibility so that children will be able to access 15 hours over 3 days. Some providers will need improvements to their premises to deliver this. The local authority also has a duty to improve outcomes for all young children and to narrow the gap for the most disadvantaged. Research has show that children will only benefit fully from early education and care if it is of high quality. A high quality setting needs the right built internal and outside environment and appropriate resources.

- 3.2 The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has allocated Brighton & Hove a capital grant worth £1,062,287 a year for the three years 2008/9, 2009/10 and 2010/11. The DCSF's expectation is that the majority of this capital grant will be used to improve the environment in private, voluntary and independent (PVI) settings to support higher quality experiences for young children.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 An audit of providers in rented accommodation is being completed. Meetings are being held with City Services. Discussions have taken place with Peter Gladwin School and Parish Pre-School.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The capital cost of the recommendations in this report will be met from within the capital grant allocation of £1.062m. It is not anticipated that the expenditure listed in points (a) to (d) of paragraph 2.6 will result in any additional revenue costs. With respect to the extension at Peter Gladwin shown at point (e), the school will need to agree a rent with the pre-school that covers the additional costs of running and maintaining the extension.

Finance Officer Consulted: Jeff Coates and John Timson Date: 31/7/08

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The Childcare Act 2006 introduced a duty on local authorities to both improve all young children's outcomes, and to reduce inequalities between them, through integrated early childhood services. These proposals for the allocation of the early years capital grant will support these duties by ensuring sufficiency of places and improving the quality of the learning environment where most needed.

Lawyer Consulted: Serena Kynaston

Date: 30/07/08

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 Good quality early years education improves outcomes for all children and particularly those who are most disadvantaged.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Provision of childcare in local communities supports the sustainable communities goal, as well as reducing climate change and energy use.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 Research shows access to good quality childcare supports children and young people's learning and achievement in later life.

Risk & Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 The "I DO RM" tool will be used for new projects.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 The relevant corporate and CYPT objective are:
- Reduce inequality by increasing opportunity
 - Enjoy and achieve – improving early years outcomes

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 The recommendations follow the guidance from the Department for Children, Families and Schools. Targeting the funding on the settings in greatest need supports the Council's duty to improve early years outcomes and narrow the gap between the most disadvantaged children and their peers.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The funding aims to improve the quality of the learning environment with a strong emphasis on children accessing a high quality outside environment. There are just over 100 daycare providers in the city in the private, voluntary and independent sector with a wide variation in the standards of premises. In Brighton and Hove the provision with the poorest quality accommodation is based in buildings where either the land or the building is rented. There are two main issues:
- these groups cannot access investment to improve the buildings;
 - many of these buildings are multi-purpose eg. church halls and sports pavilions and have to meet the needs of different users. Groups often have to clear away all their equipment at the end of the day.
- 7.2 An audit is being completed of groups in rented accommodation across the city looking at the state of repair of the building including access to natural light, disability access and children's access to a safe outside space. Many of these buildings and sites are owned by the Council.
- 7.3 The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment identified the need for more affordable childcare in the city for children under 5.

Peter Gladwin Proposal

- 7.5 There is space to build an extension on the side of Peter Gladwin Primary School which would also improve some of the internal layout of the school. There are two local, voluntary run pre-schools in rented, shared use premises with limited outside environments. Both will be asked to express an interest into moving into the new extension and a decision made based on criteria agreed with the school. The group which was not selected would be considered for capital funding to improve their existing premises.
- 7.6 This development would follow the successful model in Coldean Primary School where a voluntary run playgroup moved into an extension in the school. It would allow the Pre-School to improve the quality of their provision by operating from a purpose built building and outdoor space. The Pre-school would also be able to deliver more, longer and more flexible sessions to meet the high level of demand for sessional places in Portslade.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices: None

Documents In Members' Rooms: None

Background Documents

1. DCSF Letter – Quality and Access for All Young Children – Three Year Allocations of Early Years Capital Grant

