

# WIRRAL CHILDREN'S CENTRES – PROGRESS REPORT

## 1.0 Background

The strategic aims and objectives for Children's Centres are detailed in the revised Children's Centres Plan approved by Cabinet on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2004. The plan contained definite proposals for developments in the following five wards:

Bidston and St James (re-named in ward boundary changes May 04), Birkenhead, Bromborough, Leasowe and Moreton East (re-named in ward boundary changes May 04) and Upton. The Strategic Plan received approval from Government Office, which led to the next stage of drawing up Implementation Plans.

## 2.0 Implementation plans

Draft plans have been submitted to Government Office North West for:

Leasowe & Moreton East

Upton

Bidston & St James

Birkenhead

Bromborough

Key extracts are provided from each plan.

### 2.1 Leasowe and Moreton East Ward

#### Centre description

This centre is an established Early Excellence Centre, which incorporates an LEA Nursery School and a 20 place Neighbourhood Nursery. It is an integrated service in a single building. The Centre is enhanced by the co-location of Wirral Lifelong Learning Centre in the building and a close working relationship exists between the Early Excellence Centre and the Adult Education facility. The Head of Centre works collaboratively with staff based in the nearby Health Centre. The Centre is open 48 weeks a year and all core services will be offered in the single building. The Centre is very close to Leasowe Primary School and Wallasey School, which is a Full Service Extended School, and the Head of Centre is a member of the Management Board. The Centre currently provides integrated care and education for children 0-5 years, and early identification of children with special needs and disabilities offering inclusive services and support for their families. Child and family health services include an on site Health Visitor one day per week offering support and advice on a wide range of child and family health issues. Other activities include practitioner training, workshops, and family learning activities and parenting groups with crèche provision.

#### Location and satellite centres

Leasowe Early Years and Adult Learning Centre

No proposed satellites

Proposed date by which full core offer will be met

01/03/05

## **2.2 Upton Ward**

### Centre description

This centre is an established Early Excellence Centre, which incorporates an LEA Nursery School and a 20 place Neighbourhood Nursery. The centre is open 48 weeks per year and all core services will be available in the single building. The centre adjoins a primary school and a local branch library. Good working relations exist between the centre, the school and the library with many joint activities taking place throughout the year. The Centre presently offers integrated care and education for children 0-5 years, I and early identification of children with special needs and disabilities and inclusive services and support for their families made available. The Centre promotes and provides a wide range of child and family health services through an on site Specialist Health Visitor. A Jobcentre Plus 'Action Team' is based in the Centre providing guidance and support to parents wishing to access training or employment. Adult courses, workshops, family learning activities and parenting groups with crèche provision, practitioner training – NVQ and Foundation Degree are further services delivered at the centre. The Centre services are supplemented by the provision of a 24 place all year round Out of School Club that serves the adjoining Fender Primary School.

### Location and satellite centres

Ganneys Meadow Early Years Centre

No proposed satellites

Proposed date by which full core offer will be met

01/03/05

## **2.3 Bidston and St James Ward**

Centre Description This centre is a Round 2 Sure Start Local programme incorporating a 35 place Neighbourhood Nursery. The main centre will be a new build as part of the multi-use community facility in the North End of Birkenhead - the St James Centre. The centre will also house the St James Library, North Birkenhead Community College, a community cafe, community meeting and function rooms and will be a hub for local information and advice. Outreach services are currently provided at two satellite locations; Gautby Road Play and Community Centre and the newly built Brasseley Gardens. An in principle agreement has been reached to explore the potential of satelliting the services of Beechwood Early Days - a Neighbourhood Renewal Programme funded initiative that serves an isolated estate in the ward. The main site is located close to Portland Primary School and good relations exist. The centre will be open 50 weeks a year. The core offer will be met in a flexible way through the main and satellite centres, all of which are within pram pushing distance of each other. Skilled staff teams offer a comprehensive range of child and family focussed services, which reach or exceed most of the Sure Start local programme targets. The Programme Manager leads four teams Family Mental Health, Health, Early Years and Admin.

### Location and satellite centres

St James Centre/Birkenhead North SSLP

Satellites at Brasseley Gardens and Gautby Road Play and Community Centre

In principle agreement has been reached to satellite the Beechwood Early Days project.

Proposed date by which full core offer will be met

31/03/05

## **2.4 Bromborough Ward**

### Centre description

This is a Social Services Family Centre and a Neighbourhood Nursery operating in a single building with a Health Centre on the adjoining site. Three primary schools are within pram pushing distance. A Family Support Team is based at the centre and a team of Health Visitors based at the neighbouring Health Centre. These teams work collaboratively to deliver services on both sites. The development of a children's centre on this site will bring the teams together in a more focussed way and will link to the Neighbourhood Nursery in order to provide a seamless service to families in the area.

### Location and satellite centres

Bromborough Family Centre

No proposed satellites

Proposed date by which full core offer will be met

31/03/06

## **2.5 Birkenhead Ward**

### Centre description

This centre is a Round 5 Sure Start Local Programme. It is an integrated service comprising a main building on St Werburgh's Primary School site and two satellite centres. The first satellite base is within the Laurie's Centre, a multi-use community facility in the centre of town offering office accommodation, parent and toddler drop in and crèche sessions and training. A further satellite will be available at the nearby St Laurence's Primary School where one multi-function room will be used to deliver outreach services to families in the area. St Werburgh's site will house a 50 place day nursery and the full core offer will be delivered from this site. The centre will be open 50 weeks of the year. The proposed satellites are within pram pushing distance of each other. The Programme Manager leads a staff team to deliver a wide range of child and family focussed services.

### Location and satellite centres

St Werburgh's Primary School

Satellites at The Laurie's Centre and St Laurence's Primary School

Proposed date by which full core offer will be met

31.03.06

## **3.0 Proposed Designations**

The Strategic Plan highlighted the need for developments in Liscard, New Brighton, Rock Ferry and Seacombe wards and indicated the possible sites arising from local consultation. No firm proposals for sites were made at that stage.

The strengths and weaknesses of each site are stated on a ward by ward basis.

### 3.1 Claughton Ward

The Strategic Plan identified Hillside Primary School as the possible site in this ward and also recommended providing financial support to The Sixth Form College Crèche development.

#### Strengths

- Would serve approximately 50% of families.
- Both sites are located in the areas of greatest disadvantage within the ward.
- Land available to extend the existing foundation stage unit at Hillside.

#### Weaknesses

- Some degree of stigma attached to the surrounding estate.

**Recommendation: To develop a Children's Centre at Hillside Primary School because the strengths significantly outweigh the weaknesses of the location and it meets the criteria set out in the Children's Centre Strategic Plan.**

### 4.0 Liscard, New Brighton and Seacombe Wards

After considering ward boundaries in the Wallasey area and the needs of the developing Sure Start Wallasey Local Programme, three wards have been grouped together. It was agreed this would give a far more balanced view of provision and service delivery. Sure Start Wallasey Local Programme covers most of the Seacombe ward, a small part of Liscard and the immediate area around Liscard Primary School in New Brighton ward.

**4.1 Liscard Primary School** is located on the border of Liscard and New Brighton wards and therefore serves a significant number of families in both wards.

#### Strengths

- Would serve approximately 50% of families living in Liscard and New Brighton wards.
- Space available at rear of school building with proposed separate entrance in Manor Lane and can be combined with existing capital developments for foundation unit.

#### Weaknesses

- Not within reasonable pram pushing distance for families living in the west of the Liscard ward (Mill Lane / Poulton Rd area).
- Not within reasonable pram pushing distance for families living in the north of New Brighton ward (Rowson St – Victoria Road area).

**See recommendation at 4.3**

### 4.2 St Peter and St Paul's Primary School

#### Strengths

- Would serve approximately 50% of families living in New Brighton ward.
- Church building has potential for conversion.

#### Weaknesses

- Restricted space available.
- Not within reasonable pram pushing distance for families living in the south eastern area of the New Brighton ward.

**See recommendation at 4.3**

### **4.3 Mount Primary School**

#### Strengths

- Would serve approximately 50% of families living in New Brighton ward.
- Land and caretaker's house available to develop.
- Within reasonable pram pushing distance from New Brighton Primary School.

#### Weaknesses

- New location (moving to former Weatherhead middle site in autumn) places the school just outside the New Brighton boundary in Wallasey ward.
- Not within reasonable pram pushing distance for families living in the north eastern area of New Brighton ward.

**Recommendation: To develop Children's Centres at Liscard and Mount Primary Schools because the strengths significantly outweigh the weaknesses of each location. Both locations meet the criteria set out in the Children's Centre Strategic Plan. St Peter and St Paul's Catholic Primary is not recommended due to the geographical location and restricted space available on site.**

### **5.0 Seacombe ward**

In accordance with government guidelines this centre will be developed with the Sure Start Local Programme – Sure Start Wallasey. The programme has an existing capital allocation of £1m directly from Government office. The Children's Centres Strategic Plan made reference to a parent consultation exercise commissioned by Sure Start Wallasey to be fed into this final report. Parents were asked to comment on their preference for a site. They were given four options.

Site	Ranking
Brentwood Nursery School	second
Seacombe Library	first
Seacombe Family Centre	third
St Joseph's Primary school	fourth

**5.1 Seacombe Library** – it has been recognised by Wallasey Sure Start Board and the Department of Education and Cultural Services that this site is not a viable option as It cannot accommodate the requirements of the local programme.

**5.2 Brentwood Nursery School** – it has been recognised by Wallasey Sure Start Board, Education and Cultural Services and the school that this site is not a viable option at present, as it cannot accommodate the requirements of the local programme.

**5.3** In May 2004 Dr Martin Carey of Urban Hope Liverpool presented a paper to the Wallasey Sure Start Partnership Board and outlined the two potential sites remaining. St Joseph's Primary School and Seacombe Family Centre. After extended discussion the majority of the Partnership Board expressed a preference for a new build on St Joseph's Primary School site.

#### **5.4 Key issues relevant to both sites**

- The sites are approximately 600 yards apart and therefore would be accessible to the same number of families in the Seacombe ward.
- In addition to the requirements for all Children's Centres, Wallasey Sure Start needs office accommodation for 20 staff.
- The Sure Start Wallasey Capital Strategy is directly linked to a privately run Neighbourhood Nursery (NNI) 'Jack and Jill'. The nursery is operating in Seacombe Family Centre as a temporary measure.
- Neighbourhood Nursery capital £94,000 from DFES will be lost if the NNI is not operating in its permanent location by March 2005.
- Sure Start Wallasey Capital Funding must be spent by March 2006.
- Initial discussion with Wirral Waterfront indicates potential to bid for £1m from ERDF funds under priority four.

#### **5.5 St Joseph's Primary School**

##### Strengths

- High profile location next to new sports barn development.

##### Weaknesses

- Relies on securing additional £1m ERDF funding.
- Would create another family focussed building within 600 yards of existing Social Services Family Centre.

**See recommendation at 5.6**

## 5.6 Seacombe Family Centre

### Strengths

- Could be achieved within the existing funding profile of £1m.
- Would provide extensive refurbishment and extension work to the interior and exterior of an existing Social Services Family Centre.
- Many local families are existing users of the centre and regularly attend a wide range of family focussed activities.

### Weaknesses

- A significant number of local families hold negative views about the centre due to the high percentage of contact visits that take place there.
- Located towards the edge of the residential area.

**Recommendation: To develop a Children's Centre at Seacombe Family Centre because the strengths of this location significantly outweigh the strengths of the other location and it meets the criteria set out in the Children's Centre Strategic Plan.**

## 6.0 Rock Ferry Ward

In accordance with government guidelines this centre will be developed with the Sure Start Local Programme – Sure Start Ferries. The programme has plans to build a new facility at Railway Road in Rock Ferry.

### **Key Issues**

- Concerns were expressed in the strategic plan that the area around Railway Road may not be the best location for the Children's Centre as Housing Market Renewal has brought major changes to the landscape. The plan stated that "clarification would be sought regarding security of the land and the potential to locate in the grounds of a local primary school explored".
- The Land at Railway Road has not been secured. Discussions with Senior Officers from Housing, Education and Social Services have revealed that there is a proposal to commence a Master Planning and Consultation exercise through Riverside Housing Association to determine the most appropriate response to issues arising from a declining housing market in the area. There is a realistic prospect of some community and environmental disruption in the area which could run for some years, directly opposite the proposed facility which could adversely affect the running of the building through reduced environmental quality or some shifts in population numbers. This needs to be viewed against a desire by the local authority to bring about a comprehensive regeneration of this area for the long term benefit of local people. The potential impact of these changes has been considered at a corporate officer level and there would appear to be significant merit in looking at nearby alternatives for provision which can meet existing funding deadlines and can be delivered with confidence that local communities will benefit in accordance with similar time-tables.
- The Railway Road build relied on £300,000 ERDF funding, which has not been secured.

- Sure Start Ferries £1m Capital Funding must be spent by March 2005. The programme has been advised to seek an extension from Government Office.

**Recommendation: To develop a Children’s Centre on or nearby a local Primary School in order to meet funding deadlines and the criteria set out in the Children’s Centre Strategic Plan.**

## 7.0 Summary of Recommendations

2004-2006 funding allocation to be used as detailed to develop Children’s Centres at the following sites.

Ward	Site
Leasowe and Moreton East	Leasowe Early Excellence and Adult Learning Centre
Upton	Ganneys Meadow Early Excellence Centre
Bidston and St James	St James Centre and identified satellite sites (Sure Start Birkenhead North).
Bromborough	Bromborough Family Centre
Birkenhead	St Werburgh's Primary School and identified satellite sites (Sure Start Birkenhead Central)
Claughton	Hillside Primary School and Birkenhead Sixth Form College
Liscard and New Brighton	Liscard Primary School Mount Primary School
Seacombe	Seacombe Family Centre/ Sure Start Wallasey

Rock Ferry	<p>Recommendation</p> <p>In light of the impact of Housing Market Renewal in the Railway Road area and the lack of secured ERDF funding, to urgently seek a more suitable location that can be realised within the existing funding profile.</p> <p>In line with guidance from The Sure Start Unit to preferably locate Children’s Centres on or near school sites, to work closely with the local Programme Manager and consult with local Primary Schools in order to determine the availability of lands and any spare capacity in the school buildings.</p> <p>To identify a suitable site before the end of September.</p>
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## 8.0 Overarching Issues

There are a number of factors, listed below, impacting on Children Centre developments that raise many questions. With the support of colleagues from the Sure Start Unit at Government Office North West, officers are exploring the range of issues in order to secure answers and guidance.

Governance

Health involvement

Impact of centres on schools with falling rolls

Transition arrangements for Sure Start Local Programmes in becoming Children's Centres

Responsibility for buildings/Service Level Agreements

Housing Market Renewal

Impact on school's current admission arrangements

A Children's Centres Co-ordinators meeting was held on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2004 attended by 13 North West Authorities. The issues listed were common to all authorities.

- \* *Reasonable pram pushing distance is defined as 'walking for a maximum of thirty minutes pushing a pram with a toddler walking alongside'.*

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