

Early Years Capital Grants 2008 -2011

June 2008



This briefing note provides background information, and seeks to inform Elected Members on the capital funding allocations for 08 -11 that will support the implementation of the 10 Year Strategy for Childcare and the statutory duties under the subsequent Childcare Act 2006.

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Background Information

In December 2004 the Chancellor of the Exchequer published a pre budget report "Choice for parents; the best start for children. A ten year strategy for childcare". The Ten Year Strategy represents a significant change to welfare state services and is a key plank in the Every Child Matters: Change for Children agenda. The Childcare Act 2006 gave statutory force to the proposals in the ten year strategy and placed four new statutory responsibilities on Local Authorities (LA):

- To secure sufficient childcare for children up to the September after the child turns 14
- To improve the wellbeing of children aged 0 to 5 and establish a proactive, accessible Early Years Service (EYS) focused on the under 5s.
- To secure the development of a children's centre in every locality by 2010
- To provide parents with access to the full range of information they need as parents of children aged 0 to 19

The implications of the pre budget report and the Childcare Act were subjects of Executive Board reports in January 2005 and 2006

The Comprehensive Spending review for 2008 - 11 identifies ring fenced or hypothecated revenue and capital funding to support Local Authorities in delivering these statutory functions. A report to Executive Board in May 2008 outlined the delivery plan for the final phase of the children's centre programme which will provide for 58 centres across the city. This briefing note provides details of the capital funding to support quality, inclusion and sufficiency and presents proposals on the allocation of grants in support of these functions

The Local Authority has the statutory responsibility to improve the well being of children under the age of five. Research clearly shows that children will only benefit from early education and care if it is of high quality. Alongside adopting the best of professional practice for working with young children, a high quality setting also needs the right built environment and adequate and appropriate resources. This means providing enough space for larger group sizes which can also be used flexibly and up-to-date facilities and equipment to support children's learning and development. These capital allocations will support the development of high quality early years services across all sectors.

In meeting the Sufficiency Duty from April 2008 Local Authorities will need to ensure that - so far as is reasonably practicable - *all* children of working parents are able to access the childcare provision they need. All funding allocated to this duty should be used in accordance with the findings of the childcare sufficiency assessments completed successfully in April 2008. The statutory guidance: *Securing Sufficient Childcare* indicates that Local Authority's may wish to support providers through one-off capital payments, particularly in relation to groups or areas where there is unmet demand. These capital funding streams will support Leeds in meeting the sufficiency duty

It is a priority of the Children and Young People's Plan and the Council Plan that all children are able to access good quality early years services, and that every child can benefit fully from early education and care. Every setting must have an inclusion policy setting out how it will meet the needs of all children, in line with delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage. This grant will allow Leeds to invest to provide key facilities wherever they are required, and work with as many settings as possible to ensure that their built environment and facilities are welcoming and fully inclusive.

This Comprehensive Spending Review period 2008 - 11 sees significant investment to extend the free nursery education entitlement by offering all 3 and 4 year-olds 15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year from September 2010, delivered more flexibly. A longer and more flexible offer will give parents greater choice in balancing work and family life as well as helping children get a better start to school. There is an identified need in Leeds to invest in the necessary facilities in PVI and school settings to enable them to deliver that extended free offer. This capital funding allocation will enable the city as a pathfinder to deliver that offer by September 2009 and will complement the revenue funding already available to providers to support the additional 2.5 hours and more flexible access.

Grant Allocations to Leeds

The Quality and Access for all Young Children capital grant is £8.2 million over 3 years and represents a significant investment in early years provision in Leeds. The grant has three aims:

- To improve the quality of the learning environment in early years settings to support delivery of the EYFS, with a particular emphasis on improving play and physical activities; and ICT resources
- To ensure all children, including disabled children, are able to access provision
- To enable PVI providers to deliver the extension to the free offer for 3 and 4 year olds and to do so flexibly

The DCSF expectation is that the majority of this capital grant is used to improve the quality of the environment in private, voluntary and independent (PVI) early years and childcare settings both to support higher quality experiences for young children and to ensure that all children can access services and benefit fully from them. However spending on the maintained sector is not precluded.

The capital grant must be used for the three broad purposes set out above but it is for the Local Authority to decide how best to deploy the grant for maximum impact and value for money. The funding allocation received into the LA is based on numbers of under-fives and the number of PVI settings, weighted to take account of regional pricing differentials for construction and levels of deprivation.

The Extended Services Capital funding is £3.1 million over three years. The grant aims to support the delivery of the Government's Ten Year Strategy for Childcare, *Choice for parents: the best start for children*. This capital funding must support the duties set out in the Childcare Act 2006 and underpin the key role of Local Authorities as strategic leaders for childcare and children's services. The guidance indicates that capital grants should be used to support the authority's strategy for developing access to the core offer of extended services through all schools by 2010. All elements of the core offer for extended schools are eligible but funding priority should ensure that the provision of 8am-6pm year round childcare and flexible services for 3 and 4 year olds can be achieved within each cluster. Further information on extended schools can also be found at: www.teachernet.gov.uk/extendedschools

Authorities are expected to strategically link all Sure Start, Standards Fund and Area Based Grant funding, revenue and capital, to support the development of extended schools. The newly established Extended Service Partnership Board is well placed to secure that strategic connectivity and ensure consistency and quality improvement in the Extended Services agenda

Process For Accessing The Quality and Access for all Young Children Capital Grant

The Quality and Access for all Young Children capital grant will be allocated through Sure Start Out Of School Panel. Applications will be welcomed on a rolling programme with set deadline dates throughout each year. Each application will be considered by the panel against the appropriate criteria. Any previous allocations to the provider will be taken into consideration to ensure parity of distribution across the city.

Large capital grants will be limited to a maximum of £100,000. A small grant programme will be available to support equipment and small works and limited to £2,500 excluding VAT. Paperwork will be proportionate to the size of the grant. All grants will be awarded using the principles outlined in the developing Leeds City Council framework for the allocation of grants to the voluntary and private sector.

Guidance notes to providers and application form are included in the briefing for your information

Development Officers and Business Support Officers will work with the private and voluntary sector to ensure they are enabled to access this grant and take the full opportunity to improve the quality and accessibility of their settings.

The Childcare Strategy Implementation Manager will brief Area Management Committees at a themed meeting during the summer with the criteria and the process for grant allocation so that they may play a part in identifying and publicising the availability of grant to improve quality and access.

Process For Accessing The Extended Services Capital Grant

The Extended Services Capital Grant will be allocated through the funding panel of the Extended Services Partnership Board. This funding panel is working towards amalgamating the Sure Start out of school panel in the coming year and already has a common membership. Applications will be welcomed and processed on a rolling programme with set deadline dates throughout each year. Each application will be considered by the panel against the appropriate criteria. Any previous allocations to the cluster will be taken into consideration to ensure parity of distribution across the city. Grant size will be limited to a maximum £100,000 investment per project.

Extended Schools Advisors will work with Cluster co-ordinators and Leadership teams to identify those capital programs that are required within the cluster to ensure that flexible services can be provided for all children aged 3 and 4, that out of school activities including childcare can be delivered and that community spaces within clusters can be used for family support and other wider community purposes.

The Childcare Strategy Implementation Manager and Extended Service Manager will brief Area Management Committees with the criteria and process for grant spend in a themed meeting during the summer so that they may influence the development of wider community based services from school sites. The programme documentation will be the same as noted above and will be available to all clusters of extended schools and their advisers on the internet and in paper copy.