

The future of Children's Centres: Sustainability, funding and quality provision

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Context

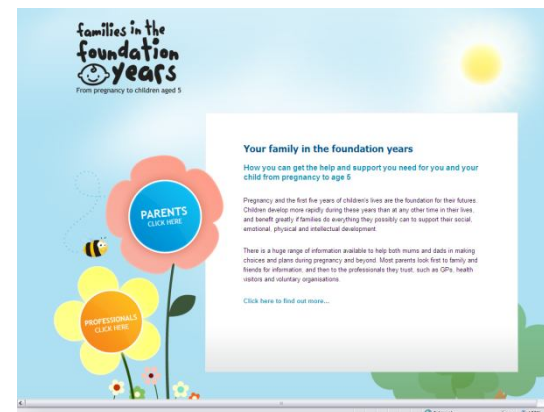
- **Difficult financial climate and a challenging environment**
- **Many local authorities reorganising provision**
- **Importance of the services that children's centres provide not just the number of centres...**
- **...but there is still a clear statutory duty to ensure sufficient children's centres to meet local need**
- **Changes to Ofsted's inspection framework**
- **Revised statutory guidance currently out for consultation**



In July DfE and DH published:

- **Families in the Foundation Years** – the Government's vision
- **Supporting Families in the Foundation Years** – about how commissioners and the workforce can deliver on the vision
- **Evidence Pack**
- A **parent friendly website** with resources and links on 4Children's companion website

www.foundationyears.org.uk



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The Government's priorities for children's centres are to:

- **Retain a vibrant network of high quality children's centres, accessible to all families but focused on those in greatest need.**
- **Maintain and strengthen collaborative working, so that children's centres work in an integrated way with other services (and with each other) to identify and support families in greatest need.**
- **Enable more organisations with a track record of supporting families to get more involved in children's centres, so they can use their expertise and innovation to help families thrive and children to learn and develop.**



The Government's priorities for children's centres are to:

- **Increase the professional autonomy and responsibility that children's centre leaders and all staff have, so they can play a transformational role in their children's centre and across early years provision.**
- **Find new ways to involve families and communities themselves in children's centres, so that people come together to improve their lives and are co-educators in their child's learning and development.**
- **Strengthen accountability arrangements for children's centres (including through trialling payment by results and publishing local authority data on expenditure on children's centres), in order to drive improvement in services particularly for families in greatest need. – with greater local transparency.**



Core Purpose – Key Points

The Government believes that children's centres should have a clear core purpose, focused on:

- **Improving outcomes for young children and their families, with a particular focus on the most disadvantaged families, in order to reduce inequalities in:**
 - **child development and school readiness;**
- **Supported by improved:**
 - **parenting aspirations, self esteem and parenting skills;**
 - **child and family health and life chances.**



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Core Purpose – Key Points

The Government has worked with sector leaders to consider what children's centres can do to achieve the core purpose, including:

- **Assessing need across the local community;**
- **Providing access to universal early years services in the local area including high quality and affordable early years education and childcare;**
- **Providing access to targeted evidence based, family-centred support;**
- **Acting as a hub for the local community, building social capital and cohesion;**
- **Sharing expertise with other early years settings to improve quality.**



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Children's Centres PbR Trial

Incentivise a local focus on the core purpose of children's centres to:

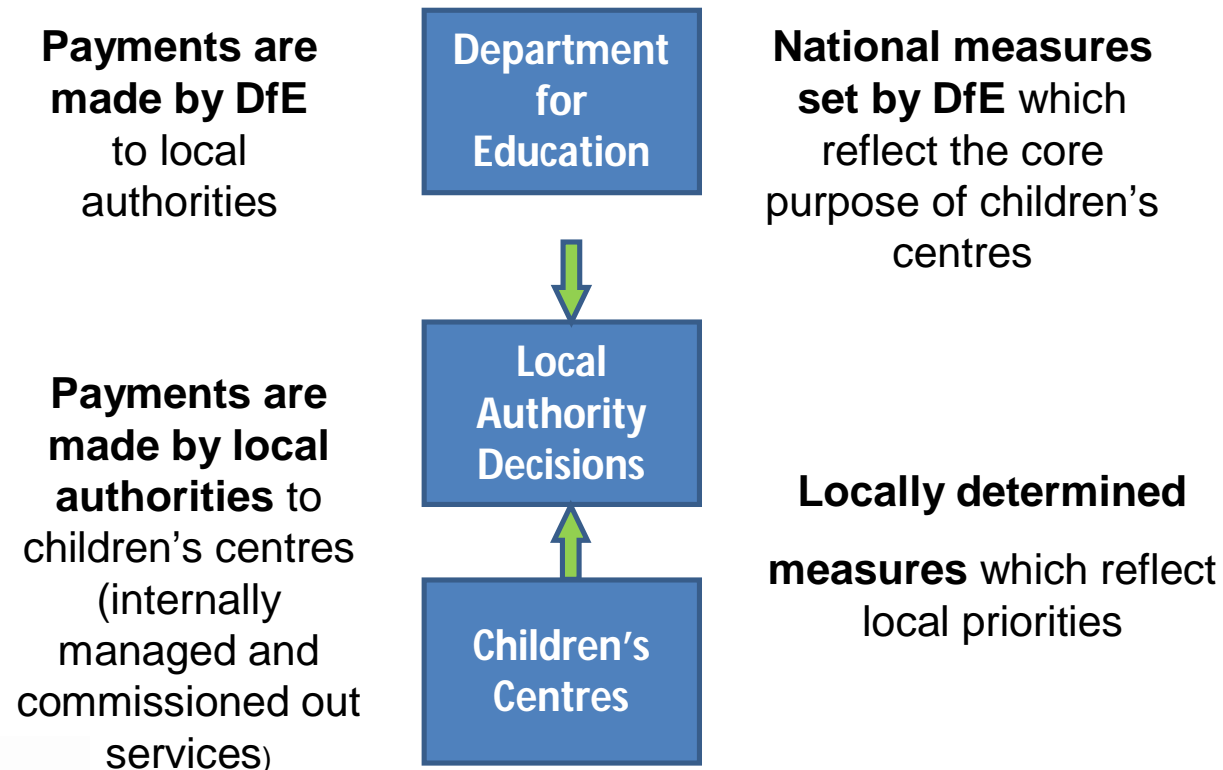
- **Encourage a local focus on the importance of early intervention and the role of children's centres**
- **Encourage local investment in early intervention and children's centres**
- **Encourage evidence based decision making**



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What are we testing?

Does payment by results incentivise a local focus on the core purpose of children's centres?



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The Measures

Narrowing of the gap in the proportion of children in households eligible for free school meals achieving a good level of development and the rest

Increasing the prevalence of breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks

Increasing take up of the two year old entitlement

Take up of early education for disadvantaged three year olds

Proportion of parents from families in greatest need completing evidence based parenting programmes

Proportion of parents with children under 5 in greatest need having sustained contact with children's centre services in the local authority area



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Evaluation

Does PbR result in a local focus on the core purpose of children's centres?

- **National and local schemes**
- **Payments**
- **Measures**
- **Implementation**



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What else is happening in the Foundation Years?



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Early Years Foundation Stage

- In 2011 Dame Clare Tickell was asked to review the EYFS and advise on how it might be improved. The recommendations of Dame Clare's independent review are reflected in this new Early Years Foundation Stage (which will be effective from September 2012) that:
 - reduces paperwork and bureaucracy;
 - has a stronger focus on the three prime areas of learning most essential for children's healthy development and future learning;
 - simplifies assessment at age five, reducing the early learning goals from 69 to 17; and
 - provides for earlier intervention for those children who need extra help, through the introduction of a progress check when children are age two.
- The new, simpler and clearer EYFS framework, published on 27 March 2012, is an integral part of the Government's wider vision for families in the foundation years. It demonstrates our commitment to freeing professionals from bureaucracy to focus on supporting children.
- Together with a more flexible free early education entitlement and new streamlined inspection arrangements, this is a major step towards a lighter touch regulatory regime.



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Nutbrown Review

- Last summer, the Government asked Professor Cathy Nutbrown to consider how the early years workforce could be strengthened.
- Her report is due in June, and the Government will carefully consider her recommendations – along with international evidence on staffing levels and qualifications – as we continue to promote early years provision that is high quality and cost effective to parents.
- Continuing to invest to improve the quality of the early years workforce. £17m of funding (to CWDC) in 2011-12 for the Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) and New Leaders in Early Years programmes.



Free Entitlement

- Extending free early education to around 40% (260,000) of 2 year olds from 2014 - part of the Fairness Premium, to drive up social mobility and improve life chances.
- The free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds has already been extended from 12.5 to 15 hours a week (September 2010).



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