

THE EXECUTIVE

16 DECEMBER 2003

REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

SURE START AND CHILDREN'S CENTRES	FOR DECISION	
<p>The future governance and accountability of the 4 Sure Start Programmes needs to be clarified and confirmed.</p> <p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>This report finalises the location of the Lead Agency for the 4 Sure Start projects with the Department of Education, Arts and Libraries. The Lead Agency role for DEAL will sit alongside the Boroughs role as Accountable body for all four Sure Starts. The report also clarifies the next steps towards the Sure Start Projects developing into Children Centres</p> <p><u>Recommendations</u></p> <p>The Executive is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Confirm the Department of Education, Arts and Libraries as the Lead Agency for all the 4 Sure Start Projects; and2. Agree a new post of Children's Centre Co-ordinator funded from the Sure Start Delivery Plan funding. <p><u>Reason</u></p> <p>The future governance and accountability of the 4 Sure Start Programmes needs to be clarified and confirmed.</p>		
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1. Background

- 1.1 There are now four Sure Starts in Barking and Dagenham each successfully established and at different stages of development. The Marks Gate and Thames View Sure Starts are already managed and lead via the Department of Education, Arts and Libraries (DEAL) and The Director of Social Services (DSS) respectively.

- 1.2 Currently two of the Sure Starts, Gascoigne and Abbey are managed via the PCT, with the PCT as Lead Agency.
- 1.3 Since the implementation of the Marks Gate and Thames View Sure Starts, the borough has acted as the Accountable body for the partnerships. This has been managed by Regeneration and Policy Finance. The Accountable body for the two remaining programmes Abbey and Gascoigne was the PCT up until March 2003, when this was transferred over to the borough.
- 1.4 The national direction of all early years developments, confirmed by the current Green Paper "Every Child Matters" are towards the local authority taking future responsibility for these services. The introduction of Children's Centres, building on the work of Sure Start projects lies with the Education Service within the local authority.

2. Proposals

- 2.1 In order to commence the mainstreaming of the Sure Start programmes, a rationalisation needs to take place for the identification of the future single Lead Agency for all four programmes. This would enhance the continuity established as a result of the borough acting as Accountable Body for each of the programmes.
- 2.2 It is proposed that DEAL take over as Lead Agency for all 4 Sure Starts. Senior Officers in PCT, Social Services and DEAL have recommended together that this is the right way forward.

3. Continuity of Employment

- 3.1 To ensure that continuity of service and management arrangements are maintained, it is recommended that the Sure Start managers report in future to Christine Pryor, EYDCP via the new Co-ordinators post when this is appointed to.
- 3.2 There is no reason to change the location, terms and conditions, employment base or contracts for any of the managers or staff. These will remain the same with secondment and / or accountability agreements put into place as appropriate.

4. Future Co-ordination and mainstreaming of Sure Start

- 4.1 This will best be achieved by the appointment of one individual. This individual will bring together the activity and actions needed to ensure an approach, which builds on what works well whilst allowing the localisation of individual projects to continue to flourish. The role will be to co-ordinate the activities of the local programmes to help them mainstream in line with the Children's Centre Agenda.
- 4.2 It is proposed that a Sure Start Co-ordinator is appointed for 2 years initially, funded from the 4 Sure Start projects and built into the Delivery Plans in terms of future objectives.

5. Role of the Accountable Body

- 5.1 The Accountable body provides financial support and advice to the Management Board. It ensures that allocated funds are spent according to the agreed plan and that systems for monitoring and audit are in place.
- 5.2 The Accountable body does not have a decision making role. It does ensure however that all financial transactions and processed in accordance with its own standing orders.
- 5.3 The Accountable Body takes responsibility for the receipt and use of grant and may be held liable for any repayments resulting from the breach of grant conditions. It therefore has the duty to intervene where the level of financial risk is deemed unacceptable.

Background Papers:

None.