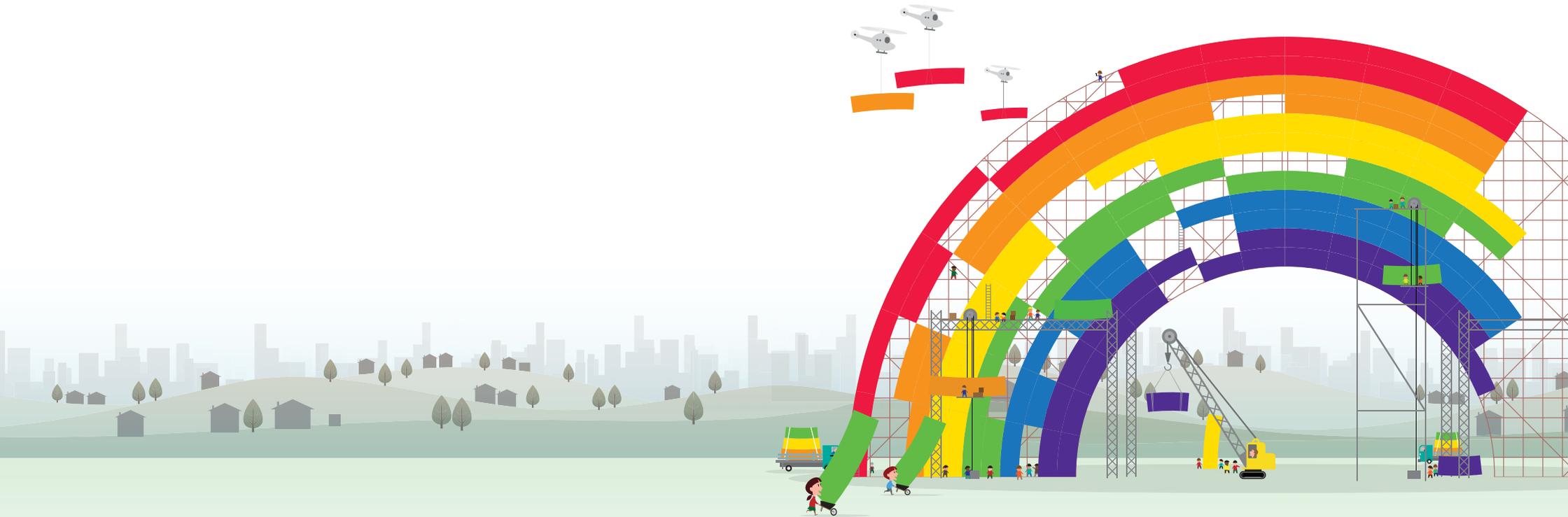




Delivering environmentally sustainable Sure Start Children's Centres

Part A – Operation





Acknowledgement

The Department would like to thank NPS Group and Atkins for their input to this document.

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Introduction



The Government would like all Sure Start Children's Centres to work towards improved environmental sustainability. This guidance has been prepared to support this ambition, by providing advice, recommendations and suggestions on how:

- **children's centre leaders** can make improvements in the sustainable operation of their children's centres on a day to day basis, and engage communities, children and their families in activities to encourage healthy and sustainable behaviours; and
- **local authorities and their Children's Trust partners, and children's centre leaders** can promote environmental sustainability in the future design and development of their children's centre buildings.

Sustainable Sure Start Children's Centres – setting the scene

The Government's strategy for children and young people, *The Children's Plan*, aims to "make this country the best place in the world for our children and young people to grow up".¹ This powerful vision sits alongside another visionary strategy, the UK's 2005 Sustainable Development Strategy, *Securing the Future*, which aims to "enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life, without compromising the quality of life of future generations".²

Of course, the two visions are complementary: children cannot grow up into a stable and secure world unless we, as a country and as an international partner, find ways to improve our wellbeing without destroying our most precious resource, the planet.

The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) is a powerful force in helping realise these ambitions. In drawing up their CYPP, Children's Trust Boards must consult with their children's centre advisory boards in the local authority's area, and there should also be a children's centre representative on the Children's Trust Board.

Through engagement with the Children's Trust, children's centres have an important opportunity to contribute to strategic planning in the local area and to support and influence wider plans that impact upon their sustainability – for example transport and built environment planning, carbon reduction, and climate change adaptation planning.

The Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has its own Sustainable Development Action Plan, to support three key aims of 1) leading change in the system 2) leading by example 3) to empower and educate children and young people for life in a sustainable world. For further details, see: www.dcsf.gov.uk/aboutus/sd/departments.shtml

1 DCSF (2007), *The Children's Plan; Building Brighter Futures*, TSO. London

2 HM Government 2005, *Securing the Future: Delivering the UK Sustainable Development Strategy*, TSO. London

Children’s centres have a special role to play in preparing young children and their families to build a brighter future

Children’s centres are part of the universal services available for young children and their families, just like schools, hospitals, etc, that also have responsibilities in respect of sustainability. The role of children’s centres is paramount, as they are at the heart of the communities in which they serve, similar to schools, and are well placed to encourage positive attitudes. They can also act as a catalyst for change for the sustainable behaviour required to secure our futures, and particularly those of both our children, and children in communities across the globe.

The Government would like all children’s centres to work towards environmental sustainability

This will be achieved by integrating service provision with the goals of healthy living, environmental awareness, community engagement and citizenship – many of the aspirations set out in *Every Child Matters*.

There is a framework in place to guide schools towards environmental sustainability and this has been customised for children’s centres through this guidance. Ofsted’s approach to sustainable development makes reference to this framework, as well as S3+, which helps local partners identify how a sustainable approach contributes to a range of local targets (www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse-all-by/Education-and-skills/Schools/Supplementary-guidance-and-resources).

The framework includes eight sustainable themes, referred to as ‘doorways’. These are entry points, or places where children’s centre leaders, local authorities and Children’s Trust partners can establish or develop their sustainability practices. Each of the doorways draws its inspiration from a range of national priorities around sustainable development.

There is evidence to suggest that many children’s centres have started developing and improving their practices in relation to sustainable development and that we all have more work to do. This guidance helps to bring all the current and planned actions together and, by using the doorways as a structure, ensure an all encompassing approach.

The eight doorways:

- 1 Food and drink
- 2 Energy and water
- 3 Travel and traffic
- 4 Purchasing and waste
- 5 Buildings and grounds
- 6 Inclusion and participation
- 7 Local wellbeing
- 8 Global dimension

The doorways, interlocked with the following two principles³, underpin environmentally sustainable children’s centres:

³ See the Sustainable School area of teachernet, www.teachernet.gov.uk/sustainableschool

1 A commitment to care

Children's centres who work towards environmental sustainability have a caring ethos – care for oneself, for each other (across cultures, distances and generations), and for the environment (far and near). Children's centres are already caring places, but they can extend this commitment into new areas. They can care about the energy and water they consume, the waste they produce, the food they serve, the traffic they attract, and the difficulties faced by people living in their community and in other parts of the world.

2 An integrated approach

A sustainable children's centre recognises that buildings, grounds, operations, service delivery and relationships with service users and the broader community all impact on the lives of children, now and in the future. By considering all of these elements, children's centres have the opportunity to improve the lives of children and their communities and help them all to prepare for a sustainable future.

Sustainable development can build coherence among a range of initiatives and children's centre practices

It offers children's centres a bigger picture in which to join up their work on a range of policies and initiatives, such as Every Child Matters, energy use, healthy living and community inclusion.

The purpose of this document

How local authorities are responding to the environmental agenda

In 2009 DCSF conducted a survey of all local authorities in England to establish how they were responding to the Government's environmental agenda in the development of their Sure Start Children's Centres. 87 per cent of local authorities responded.

The key findings from the survey were:

- there is extensive evidence of well established links between local authority sustainable community strategies and their services to children. Three key themes demonstrate how this strategic link is manifested in the children's centre programme – accessibility, use of existing community facilities, and co-location of services;
- 62 per cent of local authorities gave specific examples of good practice in improving environmental sustainability through planning, design and specification, construction and building usage;
- sustainable features included in children's centre programmes fall under five main headings – efficient lighting, water efficiency, energy efficiency, sustainable construction and sustainable finishes – energy efficiency was the most common, with 55 per cent of authorities including this in their programmes;

8 Delivering environmentally sustainable Sure Start Children's Centres Part A – Operation

- local authorities showed a strong commitment to encouraging sustainable travel choices for children's centre users; and
- opportunities for the creative use of external spaces, including natural play, and food growing are being maximised.

Local authorities were asked what support or guidance would be most helpful in delivering more environmentally sustainable children's centres. The key responses were:

- guidance on the sustainable operation of children's centres; and
- sustainable design guidance that reflects the specific nature of children's centre projects (particularly smaller scale and refurbishment schemes) including case studies and best practice examples.

Local authorities, their Children's Trust partners, and children's centre leaders have made considerable progress towards sustainability in their children's centres. As expected this is more evident in phases 2 and 3 of the Sure Start Children's Centre programme. There is, however, room for improvement. This guidance aims to build on progress made to date; provide guidance on how existing centres could be operated more sustainably; and detail how they can be further improved and adapted to be more sustainable.

Children's centres from all three phases may also need to be adapted in the future, may need extending or replacing. New children's centres may be required to serve new community developments. This guidance aims to support this future development of the children's centre estate by responding to local authority requests for further guidance in this area, and to enable children's centre leaders, local authorities and their children's trust partners to be better informed clients.

BREEAM

The 2009 survey of how local authorities are responding to the government's environmental agenda included a question about the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology (BREEAM). BREEAM takes a holistic view of a development's environmental impact, including aspects covered in all of the eight doorways. 94 per cent of the local authorities who responded confirmed their awareness of BREEAM, but just 23 per cent confirmed its formal application. Local authorities felt that it was inappropriate for many children's centre projects – there are no standard children's centres, each is unique with a brief based on area, site specifics and provision. Many of those in the latter stages of the Sure Start capital programme, are smaller scale, lighter refurbishment schemes, with lower levels of investment, and are unlikely to achieve the higher overall ratings of the BREEAM assessment.

A BREEAM assessment specifically for children's centres is not currently in place, although they can be assessed using BREEAM Education if they are located on a wider education development.

A stand-alone children's centre may need to be assessed through a bespoke service, although it is hoped that BREEAM Education will shortly be extended to cover all Sure Start children's centres.

The BREEAM manual can be downloaded for free (subject to registration) at: www.breeam.org/education

Page 22-24 of the current version of the manual gives details about the scope of the scheme.

How this guidance responds to the survey

This document brings together guidance on sustainable design, sustainable operation of children's centres and sustainable service delivery. We want to encourage children's centres to become beacons for healthy and sustainable behaviours for their service users and the local community. To do this, we need to ensure that buildings, policy and operations and service delivery work hand in hand. For example, new buildings can encourage more sustainable ways of travel through their location, and by incorporating pram parks and covered entrances in the design. Walking and cycling can be further encouraged by children's centre leaders developing a Travel Plan for staff and service users and by incorporating activities to encourage walking and cycling to the centre.

Not all aspects of the guidance will be relevant to all children's centres, i.e. guidance that relates to facilities for children may not always be relevant to a centre without fully integrated childcare provision. The guidance allows you to select which information is most relevant and to shape plans accordingly.

Many children's centres are already taking steps towards being sustainable and are reaping the rewards that this can bring. For example, preparing raised beds for growing food can improve the look and feel of children's centre grounds, encourage children and families to eat fresh vegetables and get children and parents involved. For those children's centres that feel they have yet to get started, this document will assist that process.

Will this help us with other policies, plans and targets?

As part of the UK's progression to a low carbon economy, local authorities need to reduce their carbon emissions from energy use across all their buildings, and this includes the energy used by children's centres.

Using resources and utilities wisely and efficiently within a building can also reduce costs substantially.

Where appropriate, the guide also includes links to Every Child Matters, Ofsted and health (see paragraph under Local help below). This is to assist the integration with other targets, policies and priorities.

Guidance at a glance

Who should read this?

- children's centre Leaders, to assist with improving the sustainable operation of their centres (Part A); and
- local authorities and their Children's Trust partners, and children's centre leaders, on the sustainable future design and development of children's centre buildings (Part B).

What does this guidance cover?

- guidance, good practice, ideas and suggestions, against the eight themes of sustainability – the eight doorways: Sure Start Children's Centres have the potential...

Doorway 1: food and drink

...to be model suppliers of healthy, sustainable food and drink, showing strong commitments to the environment, social responsibility and animal welfare in their food and drink provision and maximising their use of local suppliers.

Doorway 2: energy and water

...to be models of energy efficiency, renewable energy and water conservation, showcasing opportunities such as wind, solar and biomass energy, insulation and rainwater harvesting to everyone who uses the centre.

Doorway 3: travel and traffic

...to be models of sustainable travel, vehicles are used only where absolutely necessary and there are exemplary facilities for healthier, less polluting or less dangerous modes of transport such as walking and cycling.

Doorway 4: purchasing and waste

...to be models of waste minimisation and sustainable procurement. Goods and services of high environmental and ethical standards, from local sources where practicable, should be used. Opportunities for reducing consumption, reusing, repairing and recycling should be maximised.

Doorway 5: buildings and grounds

...to manage and, where possible, design their buildings in ways that visibly demonstrate sustainable development to everyone who uses the centre. Through their grounds, children's centres can bring children closer to the natural world, capture their imaginations in outdoor play, and help them learn about sustainable living.

Doorway 6: inclusion and participation

...to be models of social inclusion, enabling all children to participate fully in children's centre activities while instilling a long-lasting respect for human rights, freedoms, cultures, creative expression and the environment.

Doorway 7: local wellbeing

...to be models of corporate citizenship within their local areas, enriching their educational mission with activities that improve the environment and quality of life of local people.

Doorway 8: global dimension

...to be models of global citizenship within their local areas, enriching their educational mission with activities that improve the lives of people living in other parts of the world.

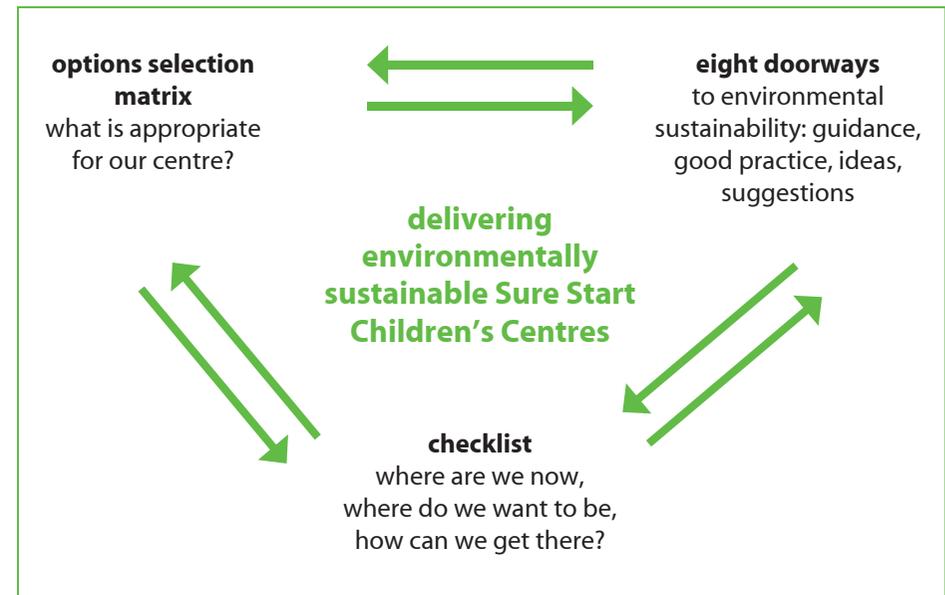
Checklist

To appraise children's centres against the sustainability guidance in the eight doorways – identify what has been achieved to date, what may still be achievable.

Options selection matrix

To assist in selecting sustainable options appropriate for an individual children's centre.

How?



Next?

Incorporate findings from the checklist and options selection matrix into an action plan for delivering an environmentally sustainable Sure Start Children's Centre.

How to use this part of the guidance

Who is this part of the guidance for:

This part of the guidance is aimed primarily at Sure Start Children's Centre Leaders, to assist with improving the environmentally sustainable operation of their centres.

What is included in this part:

- guidance, good practice, ideas and suggestions, against each of the eight doorways, for how children's centre leaders can further develop the environmentally sustainable operation of their centres, and start to make changes;
- where appropriate, top tips are included, along with a case study section at the end of each doorway, detailing good practices that are operating in some centres;

 this symbol is to draw readers' attention to specific points

- – these may be ideas for consideration, or key awareness raising, e.g. health and safety issues, regulations, etc;

- a checklist that children's centre leaders can use to appraise their children's centres against the sustainability guidance included in each of the doorways. This tool can be used to help identify what has been achieved to date in delivering an environmentally sustainable children's centre, and what may

still be achievable. The tool provides space for comments and actions to be recorded, which can then form part of an environmental sustainability action plan for a children's centre. Please note that some guidance points may not be appropriate for a particular children's centre, e.g. guidance that is more suited to new build may be less relevant to refurbishment projects. These can be identified and recorded in the checklist;

- an options selection matrix to assist children's centre leaders in selecting sustainable options that may be appropriate for their particular setting;
- the matrix helps to identify which options are best suited to new build children's centres and refurbishment projects, an indication of their cost ranging from no cost to high cost, and a measure of impact on benefits for the environment, for education, and the community. The measure of the beneficial impact is indicated by:

★ good

★★ very good

★★★ excellent

- the information can be used to prioritise areas in which children's centre leaders feel they can progress, and form part of a centre's sustainability action plan;
- the matrix also identifies which of the five Every Child Matters outcomes can be supported through the selection of individual options; and

- number referencing is consistent throughout the doorways, the checklist and the options selection matrix, i.e. point 3.5 in the travel and traffic doorway corresponds to 3.5 in the checklist and the options selection matrix. The doorway guidance, checklist and options selection matrix can be used in any sequence, for example the checklist could be used first to highlight an area that a children's centre wants to make progress in, the options selection matrix can then help to identify whether it is appropriate for that particular centre, and the doorway guidance can be referred to for ideas on how progress in that area can practically be achieved.

Next steps

Having looked at options for consideration in each doorway it is probable that you can already identify actions you are undertaking, or would like to undertake. You may well have other ideas and examples of your own that have not been mentioned, but fit equally well into this structure.

For children's centres that have already made some headway into environmentally sustainable initiatives, this structure should help you to bring all these initiatives together. Now is a good time to take stock of what you have done and how it fits into the eight doorways.

Getting started

Before embarking on any actions, use your findings from the checklist and options selection matrix to determine the areas in which to make a start. Think about a time frame and, instead of writing a new plan, you can incorporate it into your existing annual plan, strategic plan or a document that works best for you. Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes have been included in the options selection matrix, and you may wish to choose options from the doorways that support particular ECM outcomes. It is very likely that with some small changes or applying fresh ideas to your current activities, they will fit very well into the doorways, if they don't already.

Eco Schools – Early Years

This guidance does not include templates for action plans, audits etc. This is because there is a wealth of material already available – in particular, an international scheme called Eco-Schools. This scheme has been in operation for many years, has recently been adapted to suit children's centres and nurseries, and launched as Eco-Schools Early Years. It is free to take part in, you can work at your own pace, and there are different levels of awards to achieve, culminating in the prestigious Green Flag. There are lots of case studies, resources and ideas to look at, as well as news on grants, awards and national schemes from which you may benefit. See www.eco-schools.org.uk/early-years

BREEAM in-use

BREEAM has now been extended to cover not only the original design of the building, but also the operation, as many buildings are designed to an excellent environmental standard but are not operated to one, for a number of reasons.

BREEAM in-use is a scheme to assess how the operation of the building performs in ten areas, which are similar to the eight doorways in this guidance. There are credits to be obtained under each of the areas, with those relating to carbon emissions weighted the highest.

The BREEAM in-use scheme is in three parts:

- asset performance;
- building management; and
- organisational effectiveness.

The scheme is used to assess how the building performs against the original design intentions, how the building is managed by children's centre leaders and how operational policies are disseminated and ingrained.

A key reason for pursuing this scheme is to tackle and drive down operational costs – particularly those relating to energy. If your building was designed to be energy efficient it should operate as such, if not it will waste money and contribute unnecessarily to climate change.

No children's centre is too small to qualify – an asset can be a room in a building, a wing, one floor of a building, the whole building, etc.

The BREEAM in-use scheme is self assessed by building managers. The assessment can take several hours to complete, and there is a charge to use this on-line facility. Certificates can be obtained if the evidence used to obtain credits is verified by an independent auditor.

Local help

Your local authority and their partner organisations can provide help as you work towards the doorways, for example, School Travel Plan Advisors or other third sector environmental organisations. See www.muckin4life.direct.gov.uk for some ideas.

Local authorities can consider ways to help children's centres through the doorways. They may have display materials and resources that can be sent out to children's centre leaders. Local authority communications teams can get involved – examples of what has worked elsewhere is a great resource and knowledge base.

Local authorities can consider including links to sustainable children's centres on their intranet pages that are accessed by children's centres and directing children's centre leaders to officers who can help.

There is also much cross over with Healthy Schools, and local coordinators may be able to assist.

For children's centres run by PCTs or health services, The Good Corporate Citizenship model may be relevant. It is an online toolkit to help NHS organisations assess their progress on sustainable development, find inspiration and share ideas.

The tool includes:

- a self assessment test to monitor progress on sustainable development across six key areas (procurement, workforce, facilities management, travel, community engagement and buildings), compare performance with others, and highlight areas for improvement;
- guidance on how to develop good corporate citizenship in NHS organisations, and how organisations should be performing now and in the future; and
- case studies, resources and a networking forum.

It can be accessed at **www.corporatecitizen.nhs.uk**



Operation and the eight doorways

Doorway 1: Food and drink



Sure Start Children's Centres have the potential to be model suppliers of healthy, sustainable food and drink, showing strong commitments to the environment, social responsibility and animal welfare in their food and drink provision, and maximising their use of local suppliers.

Introducing the first, basic principles of sustainable food production and eating habits starts from birth – breastfeeding is the most sustainable nutrition for the first six months of a child's life. Sure Start Children's Centres are well placed to encourage positive attitudes to healthy eating.

The guidance below offers advice, recommendations and suggestions on the sustainable operation of children's centres, to assist in developing existing strategies, or start to make changes in working towards sustainability in this area.

Operation

Working towards the Food and Drink doorway may require some consideration about how to incorporate changes in promoting healthy lifestyles and food and drink in your children's centre. There are statutory requirements and guidance on the provision of food and drink to be complied with. Questions for consideration may include, does your children's centre have a food policy or growing space? Do you have groups or structured activity sessions where you could focus on a food growing project

and/or talk about nutrition? Are you aware of professionals locally within your PCT, or Children's Trust Partners who can give help and advice on both childhood and adult nutrition to families, staff, and centre chefs?

Options to consider:

1.1 Try growing food inside as part of a workshop or activity

Seed sprouting or seed labs do not require much room – seed sprouting can be done with a jam jar and sprouted seeds are highly nutritious. A seed lab could be set up on a sunny window sill. Involving children in growing food can help encourage healthy eating.

Top Tip!

Witney Children's Centre grew beans to complement story time reading *Jack and the Beanstalk*.



-
- ! Mustard and cress seeds can be sown on damp cotton wool in
 - old yoghurt pots or even brightly coloured stacking cups.
-

This activity is very easy to replicate at home. Children love watching mustard and cress seeds grow. The seeds can look like hair or grass if sown onto a picture. Why not create a growing picture?

1.2 Provide fresh chilled water

The availability of fresh drinking water is required at all times. Chilled water dispensers can be hired from local sources. Mains water is preferable to bottled water.

At home, drinking water is not only the cheapest option to families but the healthiest too, and prevents high calorie intake from fizzy drinks or cordials.

1.3 Provide fairly traded and ethically sourced tea and coffee

Whatever the size of your children's centre, most leaders provide tea and coffee for staff and adults attending classes and activities. Why not choose a fairly traded, ethically sourced option?

Why not check your beverage stocks to see where your coffee and tea come from, and your sugar too. Is your sugar locally produced here in the UK?

You don't have to stop at tea, coffee and sugar. Perhaps think about other food stuffs that are brought in. Do you have a food sourcing policy? If not, think about creating one and concentrate on changing one thing at a time if you need to make this more manageable.



1.4 Provide healthy menus and arrange food tasting or workshops with local suppliers

Children should be provided with meals, snacks and drinks, as appropriate, and these must be healthy, balanced and nutritious. Information from parents about a child's dietary needs should be obtained, recorded and acted upon. If you provide meals on site, menus should be assessed for healthy eating options, and those responsible for the preparation and handling of food must be competent to do so. There are food hygiene regulations that providers should be aware of, including registration with the relevant local authority environmental health department. Food hygiene matters should also be included in the induction and on-the-job training for all staff involved in the preparation and handling of food.

If parents provide packed lunches, they should be informed about what can be stored safely in the children's centre and about appropriate food content. Packed lunches may require refrigeration, as harmful bacteria can multiply when food is stored at room temperature.

If you provide meals on site, is food sourced locally, is it seasonal, organic, fairly traded and ethically sourced? Focus on one of these areas to get started or more if you feel confident.

Local producers and suppliers often have food groups and associations. Groups may like to come in and offer food tasting sessions. This need not be limited to food, perhaps there is a local apple juice producer, for example.

-
- ! You may have a local green vegetable box supplier who can
 - provide your children's centre with fresh, organic and seasonal fruit and vegetables – some suppliers offer a saving on box prices where there is a central drop-off point – consider asking families if they would like to order a vegetable box and be a central drop-off point if you feel space allows this.
-

See Somercotes Children's Centre Vegtastic scheme in the case study at the end of this doorway.

1.5 Offer healthy eating workshops

Healthy eating workshops could be tailored to your different service users e.g. nutrition in pregnancy.

-
- ! Make it fun – children can create a healthy eating rainbow
 - by grouping fruit and vegetables into colours – real fruit and vegetables can be used or pictures cut out from old food magazines.
-

1.6 Take on an allotment project and run it through one of your groups

If you don't have any space for growing food at the children's centre consider using an allotment as a focused activity for a group of children's centre users.

Food grown at the allotment can be used in the children's centre kitchen. Some children's centres have set up their own vegetable box schemes or sell vegetables to centre users to raise funds for more equipment, plants and seeds.

1.7 Grow food at your children's centre

If there is space, use the children's centre grounds to grow vegetables and herbs for demonstration cooking or to include in menus.

-
- ! Plants can be grown in any sort of a container, old buckets,
 - barrels, grow bags or even old wellies; ask children to recycle their wellies into a herb garden and paint beneficial insects such as bees and ladybirds onto them.
 - ! Try growing heritage or heirloom varieties to keep the species
 - viable – vegetables can come in lots of different shapes and sizes other than the commercially available variety seen in the shops – children may be very excited to see purple carrots, red brussel sprouts and black potatoes – purple podded french beans or dwarf beans do not retain their colour but, as if by magic, turn green when cooked – adults and children alike may find this interesting to observe.
 - ! Home-grown vegetables contain many more vitamins and
 - nutrients due to their freshness, and not being stored and transported – they are better for you.
 - ! Ask families to join in a taste challenge to see if they can guess
 - which item was grown at the children's centre and which was purchased from a shop – they may be surprised by the freshness and taste of home grown produce and it may inspire some families to have a go themselves.
 - ! Launch some competitions as to who can grow the tallest or
 - the largest item – sunflowers and pumpkins are traditionally best placed for such competitions.
-



See Spring Meadows Children's Centre in the case study section at the end of this doorway.

1.8 Provide child-size garden equipment

Handling tools is good for children's dexterity. Children may be put off growing food due to cumbersome and heavy tools that may even be dangerous for them to use, due to their size. There are lots of child-size versions of gardening tools now available in bright colours.

Top Tip!

Organise a 'seed swap' – many gardeners have packets of surplus seeds they would be willing to swap – why not charge a small entrance fee to raise funds to purchase garden equipment for the children's centre.

- ! Children love digging about in the earth and looking for worms – at the same time as planting seeds, do a mini-beast or insect hunt.
- ! The simplest everyday objects could be used by children for digging, such as old spoons – they are an ideal size and weight and, instead of a dibber, holes for seeds can be made in the soil by wooden spoon handles.

1.9 Join a national programme

There are many national schemes for both children's centres and schools to get involved in sowing and growing vegetables. See www.growingschools.org.uk for details of schemes that children's centres can get involved in. Registering with the Eco Schools Early Years Programme will keep you informed of such schemes suitable for those who work with children.

1.10 Show the diversity and versatility of cooking with vegetables

This could be done by choosing one vegetable and cooking it in lots of different ways to reflect national dishes from around the world that have the vegetable as a core ingredient. For example, using potatoes to make gnocchi from Italy, Bombay potatoes from India, rösti from Switzerland, etc.

Some of your children's centre users may have some favourite recipes of their own.

1.11 Develop a children's centre cookbook

Many of your children's centre users may have a favourite healthy options recipe. A good way to share information between families and staff could be to ask children's centre users to provide recipes to make a centre cookbook. Those who donate recipes could get involved in a cookery demonstration of their chosen recipes.



Why not collate recipes to make a cookbook for children's meals too?

- ! A local dietician may be able to assist with writing some
- nutritional information for the recipes, e.g. the main vitamins, minerals and trace elements that the dish would contain and if it is high in protein, for example.

See Northlands Park Children's Centre in the case study section at the bottom of this doorway.

1.12 Consider becoming a local supporter of Start4Life and Change4Life

This allows your children's centre to access materials to encourage families in healthy eating and physical activity. Registration is free and the materials are a brand recognised by almost all mothers. You may also find information about free environmental activities from the Muck In4Life website which can be accessed at: www.muckin4life.direct.gov.uk

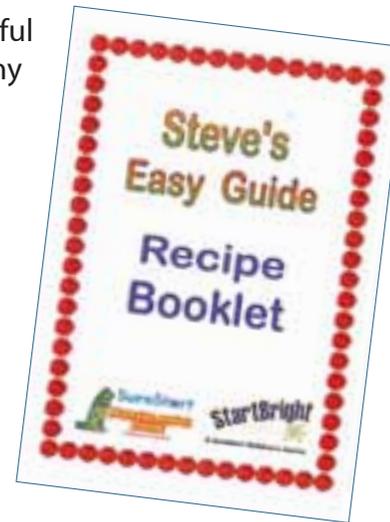
Case studies

For 3½ years, **Somercotes Children's Centre, Derbyshire**, ran Vegtastic, a non-profit community project run by six volunteers to source value for money vegetables and fruit for local people. The scheme was hosted by the children's centre for one hour a week on a Wednesday afternoon. A wide choice of fruit and vegetables was offered at good prices so children and families could get their five portions a day. In the summer months, produce was sourced direct from local suppliers. In the Winter, produce was sourced from wholesalers, but sold at great prices due to it being a non-profit organisation.

A key consideration in the design of the outdoor play space at **Spring Meadows Children's Centre, Oldham**, was the desire for it to compliment the building as an outside classroom. This included having an area for growing herbs and vegetables which could then be used for active learning. The resource is regularly used as children are involved in planting seeds or young plants and help to care for and nurture them. Vegetables grown include carrots, cabbage, radish and potatoes which have all been washed, prepared, cooked and eaten by the children. Herbs are used in sensory play and to provide calming aromas in a variety of activities.



At **Northlands Park Children's Centre, Essex**, a successful community café has been established that models healthy eating every day and provides fresh food to centre users. The kitchen manager has devised a cookery book in conjunction with a dietician and this compliments the cookery classes that are run for parents. These classes can be adapted for teenage parents and other groups. The children's centre also offers accredited food hygiene training that gives parents a qualification to help them find work.



Doorway 2: Energy and water



Sure Start Children's Centres have the potential to be models of energy efficiency, renewable energy and water conservation, showcasing opportunities such as wind, solar and biomass energy, insulation and rainwater harvesting to everyone who uses the centre.

Energy and water conservation is at the heart of sustainability. Misuse is both costly and damaging to the environment. Efficient use of these resources in Sure Start Children's Centres conveys key messages to children and families and demonstrates the importance of sustainable behaviour to the wider community.

Any investment of capital monies in energy and water reduction measures must be complemented by appropriate operational awareness, management and behaviour, otherwise the effect will be to devalue the investment. Awareness and behaviour with regard to energy practice can account for 20 per cent and as much as 30 per cent of the energy and water consumption of an educational establishment, and children's centres are potentially just as susceptible as other children's services buildings in this regard.

The guidance below offers advice, recommendations and suggestions on the sustainable operation of children's centres, to assist in developing existing strategies, or start to make changes in working towards sustainability in this area.

Operation

Energy use in buildings is the single biggest contributor to climate change and, however small a contribution it may seem, making a difference in your children's centre will help to combat this. From April 2010, local authorities must participate in the Carbon Reduction Commitment Energy Efficiency Scheme and they will either be rewarded or penalised financially depending on the extent to which they are able to manage and reduce energy consumption. As part of the local authority building stock, children's centres must play their part along with schools and other public buildings. Local authorities must also report their carbon emissions performance under National Indicator 185 (NI 185).

As well as 'switch off' stickers, there are many simple things that can be done to cut cost and reduce use – saving the children's centre both carbon and money.

Even if you are not the sole occupier of the building in which your children's centre operates, many of these measures will be relevant to you.

Cleaning and purifying water for domestic use is an energy intensive process. Every litre not used, saves energy.



Below are some ideas to get you started, or help you develop an energy and water policy.

2.1 Appoint a member of staff to be responsible for energy

A staff member with responsibility for energy can help to ensure a co-ordinated approach across all staff and service users. It is helpful if an interested and motivated staff member can be designated as the children's centre energy champion. This is not complicated or onerous, free support and advice will almost certainly be available from your local authority.

As well as billing (and if applicable, procurement), activities in the children's centre must compliment an overarching strategy as part of an energy policy. If you have regular team meetings include energy as an agenda item and use the opportunity to discuss:

- comfort levels in the centre (too hot, too cold, children's centre users complaining);
- progress towards targets;
- feedback from users;
- small electrical items not operating efficiently – e.g. freezer needs defrosting, kettle needs descaling;
- updated information for the noticeboard;
- changes to operational hours that may affect energy use; and
- good ideas from staff for reducing use (your staff know their building and how to operate within it, the best ideas will come from them).



2.2 Read the meter and verify against your bills

Energy bills which are estimated can result in the children's centre being over-charged, or worse, a big catch up bill when the meter is officially read by the utility company. Accurate bills mean you pay for what you use at the price you use it. If you have underpaid, when you have your catch up bill it may be at a higher price per unit than in previous months. It costs nothing for you to read the meter and pass it on to your supplier.

Meter readings should be taken and recorded on a regular basis. It is a good idea to read all the meters on the last day of each calendar month, all through the year so usage patterns can be compared from one year to the next.

Reading the water meter regularly means you could detect an underground leak early. This could save a lot of money in the long run.

-
- ! If you have a dial meter or you don't know which digits to include, then ask your supplier for a meter reading sheet.
-

2.3 Set up an energy and water notice-board

All children's centre visitors will pay energy and water bills at home. Lead the way by taking control of your utility use by going public with your actions, targets and energy policy.

-
- ! An energy notice-board could contain information such as
 - leaflets from your local energy advice centre about grants available for loft insulation or a free home energy check;
 - targets for reduction of energy at the children's centre; if you are on a green tariff, shout about it!
-

2.4 Are you on a green tariff?

Lots of local authorities are on a green tariff for their energy. This means that the supplier commits to generating the amount you use from renewable sources such as wind turbines. If your children's centre is on a green tariff, publicise it, and put it on your energy noticeboard. Remind householders that they can change to a green tariff too, often at no extra cost.

You may have little ability to change your own tariff if your energy is procured centrally, however, if you are not on a green tariff, why not make your thoughts known to the local authority energy manager, who may consider a change when the energy contract is ready for renewal.

2.5 Check that boiler settings are correct

Most boilers and heating systems are controlled automatically by a time switch and various thermostats, including room thermostats. When the clocks go back or forward the time setting will need to be changed, if it does not do so automatically. If the children's centre is closed at any time, e.g. over Christmas and New Year, the boiler may also need resetting.

As a children's centre leader, you will know if there are times in the day when staff complain that it is too hot or too cold, and this could require a resetting of the heating system time switch.

Check the room thermostat temperature settings. Can you turn them down by 1 °C?

-
- 💡 Your building will have had an Operation and Maintenance Manual
 - – this should include a Building User Guide which is a simple to use and understand, non-technical guide to how the building controls work, such as the boiler, radiator valves, blinds, etc.
 - 💡 The Building User Guide should include details of how to set
 - the time switch – if not, make a note of the make and model and search on the web, or contact the manufacturer.
 - 💡 If your centre does not open over the weekend, check that you
 - are not running the boiler over this time when it is not needed.
-

2.6 Energy Display Meters

Energy Display Meters record and display energy and water use in real time, as well as comparing trends over a longer time period. In a very short while, patterns of typical use become clear. This is a good starting point for trying to reduce usage or, if usage is unusually high, to check if anything has been left on.

-
- 💡 Householders who change their supplier at home may
 - receive an energy display meter for free; by drawing attention to energy display meters at the children's centre, it may encourage more interest in their domestic use.
 - 💡 Effective management of energy is a quick win to reducing use
 - and saving money – this is the same for the children's centre, and centre users in their own homes.
 - 💡 If your children's centre is co-located with a maintained state
 - school, they can apply for a free energy display meter – if you are co-located with a school, you should contact the estate or energy management in your local authority.
-



2.7 Optimise the use of zoned areas

Light and heat levels within your centre may well be zoned. This provides an ideal opportunity to use less electricity, gas, oil etc in certain areas, as well as providing better environmental control for users. Lights that are zoned enable artificial light levels to be adapted to meet individual needs (see Chalvey Grove Children's Centre in the case study section at the end of this section). Thermostatic radiator valves and zone control valves also mean that temperature control can be changed to suit specific requirements.

2.8 Set a target for energy reduction

If your children's centre is over 1000m² and has been operational for 12 months, you will have had a Display Energy Certificate (DEC). This will have your annual energy use on it. For smaller children's centres, use readings you have taken yourself, or take them from energy bills, to work out your annual use. Set a target for reduction, e.g. five per cent or 10 per cent, display this on a poster for the notice-board and put in place some steps to help achieve this.

Your local authority may have a corporate target for energy reduction that you could endorse in your children's centre.

- ! If you know your floor area and your annual use, divide
- your annual consumption by the floor area to get your energy benchmark – The Carbon Trust has details of benchmarks, so you can compare how you perform against other similar buildings.



DECs are a legal requirement and, as a children's centre leader, you may be legally responsible as the occupier for ensuring a DEC is produced, as required. This should not be confused with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) – this would have been issued when your building was completed. It shows the theoretical energy performance of the building compared to a typical new building of the same type.

For more information please see: **www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/resourcesfinanceandbuildings/schoolbuildings/energyefficiency/certificates**

2.9 Run an energy saving campaign

The amount of energy that can be saved from simple good housekeeping practices should not be underestimated. Are the lights always switched off after a room is vacated? Do you know for sure? Try a quick walk round survey and check at random points over a week.

Top Tip!

Invite your local Energy Efficiency Advice Centre to come in and hold an event or energy day – they will provide lots of free advice to your community.

Stickers and posters asking people to switch off can be downloaded or obtained for free from the Carbon Trust and their website.

Consider having a dedicated charging point for mobile phones, cameras and staff laptops. Chargers left on consume energy.

Appoint an energy champion to check appliances and lights at the end of the day to make sure that they are turned off.

Children and parents can really get involved, particularly if your centre has fully integrated childcare. Ask the children to remind staff about turning off lights.

Doors may be constantly opening at certain times for children to access outside play areas and, during winter months, a common sense approach is required to manage heat loss from the building. Avoid the temptation to compensate by turning up radiators close to doors, and ensure doors are closed properly at the end of the day.

Calculate any savings that may have been made from the energy saving campaign. They can quickly mount up and children's centre visitors can see that they too can tackle energy waste at home and save money.

2.10 Use energy efficient light bulbs

Consider changing light bulbs with low energy ones. There are many on the market for all manner of fittings.

2.11 Turn off small power appliances when not in use

This includes monitors, PCs, and other small power appliances.

2.12 Reduce drying time of tumble driers

If you have a tumble drier in your children's centre, the drying cycle time can be greatly reduced by the addition of a small, dry, clean hand towel in with the damp washing.

2.13 Fit water saving devices to toilet cisterns

If you have quite old toilets in your children's centre, the chances are they are not dual-flush and the cistern will have a large capacity. A water-saving device displaces some of the water used in a flush, usually about a litre. The resulting flush should normally still be adequate, but a litre of water would be saved on each use.

- 💡 Contact your water company and they will send you water saving devices for your cisterns – they may send you some extras that you could give to children's centre users to try at home, this will be particularly effective to householders on a water meter.

2.14 Fit rainwater butts with child safe lids and use for watering plants

Collecting rain water for planting areas, vegetable plots or house plants inside your children's centre helps to save tap water. Plants prefer soft rain water to tap water.

- 💡 Tap water should be used, however, to water seeds to prevent damping off – a fungus which affects young seedlings and can be exacerbated by rain water.
- 💡 Children love water – small lightweight plastic watering cans in novelty shapes and bright colours are available and will appeal to children to use to water plants and vegetables – some children's watering cans are much easier to use than others, check how easy they are to handle and pour.
- 💡 It is important to ensure that rain butts have child safe lids that lock.



Rainwater butts are very visual and serve as a reminder to parents and families that rainwater can be collected and stored, and is environmentally more beneficial than using drinking water and hosepipes for outdoor irrigation.

See point 2.10 in Part B – design guidance, for further advice on the management of rainwater butts.

2.15 Descale hot water appliances regularly

Kettles and dishwashers in your children's centre may suffer from lime scale build up. It wastes energy unnecessarily if the heating elements are covered with lime scale. Domestic appliances are big users of energy, although are often only on for short times. However, these times may be doubled, e.g. if a kettle is overfilled and covered in scale.

- 💡 Water softeners are effective at reducing lime scale but
 - softened water should not be used for making up baby milk formula.
- 💡 Rather than using chemicals, vinegar is an excellent
 - de-scaler – it is also very cost effective to purchase.



Case study

Chalvey Grove Children's Centre, Slough have zoned lighting and reminder signs at room exit points.



Doorway 3: Travel and traffic



Sure Start Children's Centres have the potential to be models of sustainable travel, vehicles are used only where absolutely necessary and there are exemplary facilities for healthier, less polluting or less dangerous modes of transport such as walking and cycling.

Vehicle use adds to congestion, road accidents and pollution, including carbon emissions which all impact negatively on the health and wellbeing of children and families, now and in the future. Public transportation and car sharing help to ease these concerns, walking and cycling help to achieve recommended levels of physical activity so reducing risk of obesity.

The guidance below offers advice, recommendations and suggestions on the sustainable operation of Sure Start Children's Centres, to assist in developing existing strategies, or start to make changes in both staff and service user travelling behaviour, working towards sustainability in this area.

Operation

Children's centres should be within pram pushing distance from the community that they serve, although this is not always possible in rural areas. The use of public transport should be encouraged – for families who do not have access to a car, public transport provision is a key enabler to accessing services, employment and improving life chances.

Children who walk regularly with adults learn important road safety skills from their adult carers, such as using pedestrian crossings and looking both ways prior to crossing. Such skills are vital in reducing child road casualties.

Areas where people can walk about freely and safely are more likely to be commercially buoyant as well as having more social interaction, so creating stronger communities. Busy roads dissecting communities severely reduce journeys made on foot and social or retail focused trips.

Support for All: the Families and Relationships Green Paper (www.dcsf.gov.uk/supportforall) encourages the use of walking buses as a travel solution for children's centres. Some children's centres use walking buses to collect children from local schools for after-school activities at the centre. Walking buses should be viewed as a possibility for any journey to and from the children's centre.

Staff can be encouraged to travel sustainably by taking advantage of cycle schemes, car pooling, loans for season tickets, etc. Examples include www.cyclescheme.co.uk, www.liftshare.com, and Oxfordshire County Council who provides interest free loans for staff to purchase season tickets or bicycles (at discounted rates) to use for work.



Changing travel habits can be challenging. However, there is often a window of opportunity at times of transition, for instance, when families start accessing children’s centres. You could make some changes to encourage walking and cycling. Below are some ideas to get you started or help you develop a Travel Policy.

Options to consider:

3.1 Write a Travel Plan

A Travel Plan is a document that sets out the way that people currently travel to the children’s centre, and the measures the centre will take to try and encourage more sustainable forms of travel. These can include encouraging walking, cycling (see Old Moat Children’s Centre in the case study section at the end of this doorway), the use of public transport or, where car use is unavoidable, promoting car sharing opportunities.

Each local authority has a School Travel Advisor and they can help you to write a Travel Plan. Your local authority will probably have a fact sheet or even a template to get you started.

All schools are required to have a School Travel Plan in place and, if you are co-located on a school site, you may wish to author a new Travel Plan together. Initiatives undertaken by your local school may be suitable to extend to your children’s centre, e.g. Walk on Wednesdays.

Top Tip!

At Monksfield Way Children’s Centre, children who attend the nursery record how they travelled to the centre, and green forms of transport are discussed frequently.



3.2 Survey travel patterns

Conduct a survey of how users and staff travel to the children’s centre. This could be a tally chart by the main entrance for users to complete as they enter the building.

As well as surveying children’s centre users making trips to your building, consider surveying and recording the trips made by centre staff out into the community, to visit families and provide outreach. Health visitors and midwives routinely visit families and young children at home – consider how they may travel sustainably. See 3.8 for identifying barriers to walking and cycling.



Also record in your survey deliveries made to the children's centre and visitors who come to see your staff.

- ! All children's centres have a registration form for centre users
- to complete when they first access services – add to the form a question about how users intend to travel as a way of capturing travel patterns.

3.3 Time events to coincide with public transport timetables

If your children's centre is well served by public transport how well does the service fit with your events timetable? Could you slightly adjust times to allow for people to travel by bus and arrive in time for classes/events and sessions?

- ! Most children's centres have a timetable of events at reception for users to take away, consider using the reverse side to provide information about bus routes and cyclist and pedestrian facilities, e.g. cycle parking at the children's centre, or nearby.

3.4 Provide travel information points

Consider a travel information point at the entry and exit point of the building. Include local bus timetables, a local street map showing services like shops, banks, Doctors' surgeries, neighbourhood parks, leisure facilities etc. Include cycle routes and cycle parking if there are any nearby, and the location of pedestrian crossings or underpasses.

Your local authority should be able to help with cycleway leaflets and the local bus company can provide timetables to give to children's centre users.

3.5 Participate in Walk to School Week

If your children's centre is connected to a school or has a good relationship with another local school then consider joining with them to participate in Walk to School Week. October is also International Walk to School Month.

- ! Some local authorities provide free resources for participating schools including badges, stickers and diaries to record who walked that week, and leaflets for parents.

3.6 Ask for low floor buses

If your children's centre is served by a local bus route and it is not a low floor bus (ideal for buggies, prams and wheelchair users), then contact your local authority bus development team and the local bus company and see if they will consider switching to a low floor bus on that route.

3.7 Carry out a site survey

Again, your local School Travel Advisor may be able to help you to undertake a site survey to see how convenient your children's centre is for walkers and cyclists.

Look at lighting, cycle parking, covered waiting areas, railings, walkways – try and identify small scale measures that could enhance existing facilities.



-
- 💡 Conduct a questionnaire for walkers and cyclist who use the children's centre – they will be best placed to highlight good points and areas that could be improved.
-

Sustrans provides information on practical, innovative ways of dealing with transport challenges. Visit www.sustrans.org.uk

3.8 Conduct an area survey

As well as the site itself, consider looking at routes in your local vicinity. Is there good provision for walkers and cyclists such as zebra, pelican and toucan crossings? Are there dropped kerbs for push chairs, prams and wheelchairs? What is the timing on the green man phase of the local pedestrian crossing and is it long enough for children's centre users to cross the road?

Motorcycle gates, and barriers to prevent cyclists cycling on footpaths – are there any of these locally and are they barriers for pushchairs, prams and wheelchairs? Can you identify any unsafe routes – these can be raised with the Children's Trust who can encourage joint working with transport and planning partners to introduce traffic calming measures. Forthcoming guidance will advocate the role of Children's Trusts in addressing road traffic accidents and ensuring children's needs are represented in Local Strategic Planning.

-
- 💡 Your local authority may already provide a Crossing Patrol Officer but if they don't, why not ask them to consider it – it can often depend on casualty rates in the area, contribution to a safe route and ability to fill the post.
-



3.9 Organise a road safety display

Consider asking your local Road Safety Officer to provide or help with a display. They often have lots of display material and leaflets for parents as well as some fun activities for children, such as the egg cycle helmet and cycle helmet fittings for adults and children.

-
- 💡 Why not have a themed day or week when you invite your local Road Safety Officer to the children's centre.
-

3.10 Consider offering an early years pedestrian safety programme

Your local road safety team will be able to advise on what road safety training is available locally. Giving children the skills and understanding to behave safely in traffic gives them the opportunity to develop responsible attitudes to road safety which will last throughout their lives.

Top Tip!

Oxfordshire County Council 'Footsteps' Programme co-ordinators work in Children's Centres and lend mini pedestrian crossings to centres to practice with.

-
- 💡 For activities and resources for parents, staff and young children visit the Department for Transport THINK! campaign website: www.dft.gov.uk/think/education/early-years-and-primary
-

- ! Is high-vis clothing in adult and child sizing available to buy or
- borrow from the children's centre?; consider asking children's centre users if they would like to pre-order high-vis clothing and co-ordinate a bulk buy for reduced costs; children love reflectors which can be clipped to bags, rucksacks, pram and wheelchair wheels and they aid visibility for drivers; do your staff wear high-vis jackets when they make visits in the community – consider printing the children's centre name on staff jackets.

See the Walk Well Initiative in North East Lincolnshire, and other walking activities in the case study section at the end of this doorway.

3.11 Make contact with the local bike shop

Consider approaching your local bike shop to see if they will provide discounts to children's centre users on cycles, helmets, high visibility clothing, cycle lights, etc.

- ! If you have a themed day or week, you could ask your local
- bike shop to come along or sponsor the event – they could bring a selection of the bikes they have which would be suitable for young children and families – some have a collection of older classic bikes such as choppers.

Case studies

Old Moat Children's Centre, Manchester bought their health visitor a butcher's-style bike with a large basket suitable for scales and files. The advantage of the butcher's-style bike is that they were also able to have the middle frame sign-written with the name of the children's centre. The bike has made the health visitor and the children's centre very visible in the community as well as promoting a more healthy form of transport.



North East Lincolnshire – Walk Well Initiative

Children's centre staff are trained as Walk Well leaders. Walks are organised from local children's centres to other centres or local amenities. This helps families to find out what local services are available. The distance and terrain are chosen to be suitable for children's centre users, such as young children and their families.

Participation in the walks is free of charge. The main aim is to encourage participants to consider walking as an option instead of the car, also to stay healthy by taking part in the activity. Walks are weekly in the summer months but do run all year round. The walks are very popular and are promoted in children's centre newsletters, events dairies and by recommendations.

At **Sure Start Children's Centre Blyth Central**, a local business and the Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service donated child size hi-vis jackets that are worn when the children go on shopping trips to buy ingredients for their cooking projects.

Hillside Children's Centre, Hillingdon and Queen's Park Children's Centre, Bedfordshire each have walking buses from a local school to the children's centre for the after school club.

Action for Children Children's Centres, Barrow-in-Furness – through the summer of 2009, over 100 people from families across Barrow-in-Furness walked with the Ramblers on a series of walking programmes based at Action for Children Children's Centres. Visit www.ramblers.org.uk/Walking/Projects/England/walkingfurness/walkingfurness.htm to find out more.



Sure Start Children's Centre Blyth Central



Doorway 4: Purchasing and waste



Sure Start Children's Centres have the potential to be models of waste minimisation and sustainable procurement. Goods and services of high environmental and ethical standards, from local sources where practicable, should be used. Opportunities for reducing consumption, reusing, repairing and recycling should be maximised.

Waste, and the throw-away culture that encourages it, can be addressed through sustainable consumption. There is a great deal of waste that could be recycled and ends up in landfill sites, which is harmful to the environment. Across the world, huge areas of forests are being destroyed to make paper and wooden products. Indigenous people and endangered species rely on these forests for their livelihoods and homes. Minimising waste and sustainable procurement are excellent ways of saving energy and conserving the environment. There are three key factors to consider when thinking about how to minimise waste, 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle', i.e. better to reduce consumption than to reuse and better to reuse something than to recycle. Further information can be accessed at www.reducereuserecycle.co.uk

Nowadays many things that we buy, from printers and paper, to chairs and desks, have probably travelled many miles, and probably by road or air causing pollution and contributing to climate change.

The guidance below offers advice, recommendations and suggestions on the sustainable operation of children's centres, to assist in developing existing strategies, or start to make changes in working towards sustainability in this area.

Operation

In order to help your children's centre be more aware of the products you or your lead agency or local authority buy and where they go after they have been used, consider some of the options below.

Options to consider:

4.1 Use environmentally friendly products

Recycled paper is now widely available for printers and photocopiers, as well as inks made from vegetable dyes. Pencils, mouse mats and ring binders are all available made from a variety of recycled items such as car tyres and plastic bottles.

If your children's centre has to outsource printing, consider choosing a printing company that is ISO 14001 accredited and ask for vegetable dyes to be used.



Try extending this principle to cleaning products used in your children's centre. Try to buy washing liquids and surface cleaners that are environmentally friendly. You may also want to check the products used by your cleaning contractors or specify the products to be used in your children's centre. Consider using recycled toilet paper, paper towels, kitchen roll, etc.

4.2 Source products locally

Consider buying goods and services locally to reduce travel and support local business communities.

Consider grouping with other children's centres or schools to bulk order to reduce unit costs. This may reduce costs on other contracted services.

Kitchens can source locally grown organic produce delivered in crates to reduce packaging waste.

4.3 Consider the quality and cost of furniture

It can sometimes be false economy to buy cheap items of furniture (see www.schoolfurniture.com). Durability should be one of the main considerations. It may work out cheaper in the long run to purchase a slightly more expensive item initially than to have to replace cheaper products that become worn and defunct early on.

Consider the source of the furniture, where it was made and what it is made from. Also consider the frame and structure. Glues, varnishes and paints can contain VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds) that are harmful to the environment.

If the furniture is made from wood, does it carry the FSC (Forestry Stewardship Council) mark?



4.4 Maximise opportunities for recycling

Consider working with suppliers to reduce packaging waste from deliveries. Think about having different bins to collect recycled materials – this will promote recycling at home.

You may need to check that your refuse collector will take recycling as part of their contract. If not, you may need to set up separate contracts with recycling companies.

-
- ! There are some very colourful and fun animal bins available
 - that make appropriate noises when an item is placed in them to encourage children to recycle.
 - ! Many items can be reused for modelling or art projects (see
 - top tip in point 4.9), or used as a base for papier-mâché etc.
-

Batteries contain toxic chemicals. They should be taken to recycling points and not disposed of with the general refuse.

4.5 Organise a community swap shop

Community swap shops are where local residents bring in good quality unwanted items that are free to a good home. Ideas can include nursery equipment, children's clothes, toys, locally grown produce, etc.

-
- ! Your local WI or Council may help you to organise events, they
 - are hugely popular – for an example, see Hillingdon's Free Give website: www.freegive.co.uk/p/hillingdon.htm
 - ! Ask your local real nappy advisor to attend and to provide a
 - display; information about the voucher scheme can also be provided if one operates in your authority.
-

4.6 Collect waste items for charity

Instead of putting used postage stamps into recycling these can be collected and sent to various charities.

Consider collecting old mobile phones at a box in reception. Again these can be turned into cash by charities to support their work. You could choose a charity that aligns with your aims.

4.7 Use a wormery or compost bin

Wormeries are a great way to get rid of food scraps and even thin cardboard and envelopes. Casts produced by the worms (vermicompost) can be used on plants and vegetable plots.

Top Tip!

Compost bins at Elm's Road Children's Centre and Nursery School.



- ! A wormery operating effectively does not produce any smell.

Compost bins can be used for garden waste, leaves, weeds and dead plants at the end of the growing season. Again once broken down the resulting compost can be put on vegetable plots, planters and tubs.

Consider locating compost bins for food waste close to the kitchen for easy access. These must be designed with enclosed bases to prevent rodents.

4.8 Offer unwanted furniture to local groups and charities

Should your children's centre have unwanted surplus furniture, consider passing it on to local groups and charities.

4.9 Maximise the re-use of items

All manner of items can be re-used. This is particularly the case in the outdoor or play environment. Perhaps your children's centre already uses defunct home and office items as props for role play games, e.g. old telephones and saucepans in the home corner.

Top Tip!

The Watford Recycling Arts Project has been set up to advance the education of children and young people in schools, nurseries, youth clubs, community groups and drama groups in the Watford area, by recycling materials that industry and others have thrown away and using them in creative projects, e.g. using ceramic tiles in art projects.

Many items can be re-used with a different, but as useful, purpose:

- ! Plastic bottles are ideal as cloches to protect growing plants from the cold and pests.
- ! Net curtains can be spread over emerging plants such as potato plant growth (haulm) to protect them from frost.
- ! Jam jars can be used for seed sprouting.
- ! Boiled old woollen jumpers turn into felt that can be easily cut up and used for all sorts of craft projects.



- ! Old socks are ideal for use as hand puppets.
- ! Consider approaching DIY or home furnishing stores and asking for their end of season or discontinued wallpaper and fabric to use for projects at your children's centre.

Perhaps one of your regular activities could be to make something new from old?

Reduce the amount of paper waste by using the back, reuse paper that is normally thrown away, and set your printer to print double-sided.

Elms Road Children's Centre used an old sink from its predecessor building as a planter. See this, along with a number of other examples of re-using items in the case study section at the end of this doorway.

4.10 Consider starting a toy library

Consider starting a toy library at your children's centre so families can borrow toys to stimulate new play and to try before they buy. Many toys are made in the Far East and travel hundreds of miles before reaching shop shelves. Perhaps your children's centre could consider only toys that are made from sustainable sources such as wood, cork or cloth, rather than plastic. You could extend this to toys that are ethically and locally produced here in the UK. There are toys available that have been made by social enterprise, for example, providing work to adults with learning disabilities.

A toy library also allows children to have access to many more toys than some families can afford (see the examples in the case study section at the end of this doorway).



Case studies

Oxfordshire County Council, Elms Road Children's Centre, Botley

Elms Road Children's Centre and Nursery School is now operating out of a new building. The children's centre leader wanted to have planters and raised beds in the garden areas. Four Belfast sinks were removed from the old building and, instead of being scrapped, were taken to the new children's centre and re-used for planters.



At **Monksfield Way Children's Centre, Slough**, everything is saved and used for art projects and activities.



When they are finished, the materials go back into the receptacles to be used again, and at **Chalvey Grove Children's Centre**, when books are torn or damaged, they are taken apart, laminated and used as flash cards for story telling or displays.

Howards Street Children's Centre, Rochdale, runs a toy library with a range of over 300 toys for different ages, ranging from art and craft packs to jigsaws and musical toys. Each toy is loaned with a book, free of charge for a week. The toy library is open once a week and the children really look forward to it. It allows children to play with something different each week and is a great way to teach them about looking after things.

At **Hatherleigh Children's Centre**, a toy and book library is available to all, including local families, schools and pre-school groups. There is an annual membership fee of £2.50-£5 depending on whether the borrower is a family or an organisation. The fortnightly fee to borrow any item is 25p and all monies raised go to buy and replace toys. There is a wide range of toys, from jigsaws to toy houses. The most popular items are musical chimes for babies, which can cost around £65 to buy new.



There is also a monthly outreach service to other children's centres in the area.



Doorway 5: Buildings and grounds



Sure Start Children's Centres have the potential to manage and, where possible, design their buildings in ways that visibly demonstrate sustainable development to everyone who uses the centre. Through their grounds, children's centres can bring children closer to the natural world, capture their imaginations in outdoor play, and help them learn about sustainable living.

The outdoor environment provides a wealth of opportunities for enhanced learning and for community involvement. Sure Start children's centres can also contribute to local biodiversity targets with natural planting and habitats for insects, birds and wildlife.

Children's centres occupy the whole spectrum of buildings from old to new and services are even provided from adapted buses. Some children's centres have extensive grounds available to them, others have very little. This provides lots of opportunities as well as challenges. How your building relates to its site and to the community is integral in striving to enhance our natural environment.

Being outdoors is a key element of the Early Years Foundation Stage and stimulating environments are vital for imaginative play and learning. Access to green space promotes good mental and emotional health but some inner city and deprived areas have very little access to the natural world. Play England has developed a guide to assist with creating successful outdoor play spaces. This can be used to assist with planning and designing the outdoor play areas to encourage creative outcomes and a positive relationship with the children's centre building.



The guidance below offers advice, recommendations and suggestions on the sustainable operation of children's centres, to assist in developing existing strategies, or start to make changes in working towards sustainability in this area.

Operation

Options to consider:

5.1 Consider a Community Art Project

Consider a community art project at your children's centre. This could be in the grounds or occupy an external wall or even a window. Projects such as mosaics, murals or stained glass windows can help the community feel a part of the children's centre.

- ! Ask different community groups such as Girl Guide groups, Pensioners' Lunch Clubs, local fire station to decorate different sections of a wall or take part in a project so everyone has the opportunity to contribute.
- ! The art project could have an environmental theme or reflect the landscape or heritage of the local environment and community.

5.2 Create an area of green space

If you do not have any existing green space, consider using planters or containers. If you do not have any grounds at all consider window boxes or hanging baskets.

- 💡 Play or nursery sessions could be centred around a child or
- group of children planting up and/or decorating a planter.
- 💡 Unusual objects can be used as planters too – ask children or
- service users to bring in old wellington boots to plant up and make a display – if you have a nursery or crèche on site each child could be responsible for watering and caring for their boot planter.

5.3 Create a vegetable growing area

If you have the space, consider setting aside a vegetable growing area. You may decide on a policy of organic gardening or companion planting (when you grow additional beneficial plants alongside your main ones). These may attract pollinating insects to the area.

- 💡 Raised beds are an ideal height for children and wheel chair
- users to work at – ensure there is enough space between beds for wheelchairs.

5.4 Develop a sensory garden

There are many plants, particularly herbs, which give off calming scents or have tactile leaf surfaces. A sensory garden is an ideal area for exploration, not only to touch but also to walk on e.g. chamomile and thyme planted into paths (also see point 7.4 of the local wellbeing doorway).

5.5 Consider a community project to design an outdoor space

Consider engaging with a local community group to create an outdoor space. This could range from a local allotment or gardening society to asking students at a sixth form or art college to design a space.

- 💡 Many companies support employees taking part in community
- days – perhaps you have a local architect or landscape gardening company that would give a day for free to design and help with a small project.

5.6 Create mini habitats or a feeding station

From bird or bat boxes to bug hotels there are plenty of mini habitat projects that do not require abundant green space but can still make a difference.

Encouraging wildlife to your children's centre that can be recorded or observed by children's centre users is a learning opportunity as well. See Penn Road Children's Centre in the case study section at the end of this doorway.

Simple bird feeders can attract wildlife to the children's centre. Place feeders where children can observe them.

- 💡 Bug hotels can be made by tying 20cm sections of bamboo
- canes together – hang them outside for overwintering insects or mason bees (which are docile and harmless).



-
- ! Bird boxes that link to web cams are now available – although
 - expensive this may be a cheaper option than, for example, hiring incubators and hatching chickens eggs, it can also be used year after year.
-

5.7 Engage with Forest Schools

Forest Schools give children the opportunity to play and learn in the outdoor environment. Contact Forest Schools to see if there is a Forest School local to you: www.forestschoools.com

5.8 Create rooms outside

With reference to the Early Years Foundation Stage, think about dividing outdoor space into 'rooms' where children can play with musical instruments, enjoy physical activities such as rolling down slopes and climbing over netting, or making dens in willow tunnels.

-
- ! Willow can be woven into many shapes and bent into
 - structures – its summer growth provides shade for those who climb under it.
 - ! Make a bean tunnel – runner bean vines can be grown over
 - any structure or framework – they can also make a tunnel and produce a crop at the same time.
 - ! Consider the use of artificial grass matting to make an instant
 - green space.
-

5.9 Consider using vertical spaces

External walls can be used to grow food or flowers in window boxes or flower pouches.

Sections of drainpipe can be fixed to walls at offset angles, one above another, so that balls or water can be dropped or poured in at one end and run out the other.

5.10 Access green spaces

If your children's centre does not have any green space of its own, consider ways to access other green spaces. Walks to local parks or outdoor spaces with appropriate activities can be just as beneficial.

Top Tip!

Why not organise a walking bus to a local park and promote healthy living at the same time.

5.11 Create a trim trail or a green gym

If you have plenty of space you may consider a trim trail (see Woodlands Children's Centre in the case study section at the end of this doorway) or green gym for all community users. Simple hurdles, press up benches and balance beams can be made from wood and are a great way to encourage physical activity. Everyone in the family will enjoy a trim trail. Young children love to tread or balance on stepping stones made from logs. Consider activities and equipment that is inclusive and can be undertaken from a wheelchair.



5.12 Use natural materials in outdoor spaces

Wood and stone are tactile and each piece is unique, with patterns that children will enjoy tracing with their fingers. Consider buying wooden play structures that are from sustainable farmed sources and have the Forestry Stewardship Council accreditation.

Guidance on choosing natural play equipment, including the assessment of risk versus benefit, is available at:

www.playengland.org.uk/resources/design-for-play.pdf

www.playengland.org.uk/resources/managing-risk-play-safety-forum.pdf

The maintenance implications of choosing natural play equipment also need to be considered from the outset. Procedures should be put in place to support ongoing maintenance requirements, including revenue provision for maintenance, repairs or replacement. See: www.playengland.org.uk/resources/nature-play-maintenance-guide.pdf

The UK school grounds charity, Learning through Landscapes, is very active in education settings – see www.ltl.org.uk

Case studies

At **Penn Road Children's Centre**, pictures of bugs are laminated and attached to fences around log piles so children can help identify the 'minibeasts' that may be seen in and on the logs.



Woodlands Children's Centre, South Croydon has created a trim trail as a result of discussions with parents using the centre. Parents complained about the condition of the playground on the estate, and how they couldn't take young children there. The children's centre contacted the local authority on the parents' behalf and discovered that plans were already in place to improve the area. However, parents felt that the younger children may not be able to access some of the equipment so the possibility of a small outside trim trail was discussed and positively received. It was just funding that was required.

A bid for £5,000 was successfully submitted to Healthy Croydon to run a 'Wellbeing at Woodlands' project. The funding plan included £2,500 to purchase a trim trail, which was installed in February 2010. Parents were consulted and a provider was selected.

The children are keen to use the trim trail, even in the bad weather conditions. The children's centre appealed for wellies and now have two crates of adults' and children's wellies that families can borrow to use on the trail (saves bringing mud into the centre). A risk assessment has been carried out and guidelines on the use of the trail have been written and displayed in the entrance to the children's centre.

The attached maintained nursery and reception classes will also use the trail as this will continue to develop transition plans for the children moving from the children's centre to the school.



Doorway 6: Inclusion and participation



Sure Start Children's Centres have the potential to be models of social inclusion, enabling all children to participate fully in children's centre activities while instilling a long-lasting respect for human rights, freedoms, cultures, creative expression and the environment.

Sure Start Children's Centres can promote community cohesion by providing an inclusive, welcoming atmosphere that values everyone's participation and contributions – irrespective of background, culture, age, religion or ability – and challenges prejudice and injustice in all its forms. Children and families often care about their environment but don't always know how best to look after it. By encouraging cross sections of the community to take part in a range of activities mentioned in previous doorways, children's centres and service users can help improve local places and communities.

The guidance below offers advice, recommendations and suggestions on the sustainable operation of children's centres, to assist in developing existing strategies, or start to make changes in working towards sustainability in this area.

Operation

Children centres have a role to play in helping to widen participation and inclusion in local communities, ensuring that users from all backgrounds are able to access and participate in services.

Under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), local authorities are required, including for the children's centres in their area, to make reasonable adjustments to ensure equal access for visitors and users of the building who have disabilities.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) legislation also needs to be incorporated. Building Bulletin 102 (BB102): Designing for Disabled Children and Children with Special Educational Needs provides advice on how to incorporate requirements into the design to ensure visitors are able to access and use facilities within the building and to not be disadvantaged or excluded. See www.partnershipsforschools.org.uk/documents/Design/BB102.pdf



Children's centres are at the heart of their communities. Our communities are diverse and each person is unique. Our communities are made up of a rich mix of people from different backgrounds and with different abilities. Sustainable children's centres encourage a commitment to care, not only for oneself, but for others too, and to celebrate the uniqueness of the individual and embrace the spectrum of appearance, faith, ability, ethnicity, culture, gender and age.

To be at the heart of your community, consultation with all community stakeholders is invaluable to determine the services that will most suit the needs of young children, their families and caregivers in your area. An analysis of the local area demographics will help further to determine the needs of the local area.

Gathering feedback is a stimulus for constant changes to deliver better levels of service. Feedback need not be onerous and can be captured in many ways, most of which are simple.

Below are some options to consider for ensuring the principles of inclusion and participation are felt throughout the children's centre.

Options to consider:

6.1 Embrace cultural differences

Our societies are diverse. Embrace different cultures through themed events that celebrate food, dress, art and music.



-
- ! Try everyday activities done in different ways to reflect
 - other cultures or nationalities – choose a country from each continent and replicate a different way of living for a day – for children this could be done through role play, story telling or pictures and media clips e.g. cooking lunch in Europe, Asia, Africa, North and South America.
-

6.2 Embrace all abilities

All the activities that are on offer should be fully inclusive, both indoors and out. Below are just a few examples of ways to adapt activities:

-
- ! For gardening projects, ensure that paths around raised beds
 - are wide, paved and not gravel or chipped.
 - ! Ensure that if outdoor taps are required for irrigation, that they
 - are at an accessible height and of a type that meets the needs of all users.
 - ! Ensure that there are a range of gardening tools available to
 - suit all abilities and ages – for example, tools are available for children, those with arthritis, seated gardeners etc.
 - ! For kitchen and cooking activities, cooking equipment is
 - available that offers good colour contrast and has textured surfaces for good grip.
 - ! Consider placing compost and recycling bins next to paved
 - areas so they are accessible to all.
-

For more information on Early Support – the Government's programme to improve the quality, consistency and co-ordination of services for young disabled children and their families, see: www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/healthandwellbeing/ahdc/earlysupport/home

6.3 Develop an anti-bullying policy

If you do not have a policy in place already, consider developing an anti-bullying strategy. This is for adults as well as any children who regularly visit the children's centre.

Explore and celebrate the differences in our communities so young children do not grow up with fear or prejudice.

- ! Consider a friendship stop or bench in your play space so
- young children know where to go to become involved, if they feel left out or excluded.

Advice on developing an anti-bullying policy is available from the Anti-bullying Alliance: www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk

6.4 Hold a festival of diversity

Consider holding a festival of diversity, to explore and celebrate all the different cultures and traditions within your community, and beyond. It could be themed around food or dress to encourage understanding. See Newbold Children's Centre Bollywood party in the case study section at the end of this doorway.

6.5 Provide welcome signs in community languages

Welcome signs in community languages are often on A4 sheets inside the reception. Consider a larger sign **outside** the building to reach children's centre users who have not yet registered or ventured in.

6.6 Hold question and answer sessions and capture feedback

Consultation with parents and local groups is essential and it can be undertaken at any point throughout the year. Feedback is excellent as it gives an opportunity to improve. Evidence of feedback and your response to it, will help you to demonstrate consultation.

Feedback needs to be captured in a variety of ways, to accommodate the needs of children's centre users, e.g. some users may have language issues.

See Rochdale children's centres example in the case study section at the end of this doorway.

- ! Too often it is thought that feedback needs to be written – consider
- different ways of capturing feedback, perhaps in a short film?
- ! For consultation on minor points, consider displaying the
- options as simple one or two word headings – ask children's centre users to register their vote by putting ticks or post-it notes under the option they would prefer; this is a very quick process and a photograph can be taken at the end as evidence – this is also an ideal way for setting energy reduction targets for inclusion in a children's centres energy policy – parents can be asked to set the target by voting.



-
- 💡 Consider a question and answer session about your children's centre, one evening -why not ask your local MP to come along – he or she is usually available for constituency business on a Friday, and they are always happy to meet their constituents and get involved.
-

Consultation with parents and local groups is required if significant changes are planned to a children's centre, or if a new centre is to open, or an existing one closed. The Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 sets out that a local authority must, as they think appropriate, secure that appropriate consultation is carried out before making arrangements for the provision of a children's centre, before any significant change is made in the services provided through a children's centre, and before anything is done that would result in the cessation of a children's centre.

Further advice on consultation is available at:
www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/research/publications/surestartpublications/1854

6.7 Provide dual language storytimes

Why not ask parents, instead of multi-lingual staff, to attend story time to provide translation into other community languages to include all children.

-
- 💡 Why not try this the other way around – ask for a story to be read from a non-English Language book and translated into English.
-



6.8 Provide activities at different heights

Raised beds are great for children and wheelchair users as they are a good height for working at and enables them to get really involved. If raised beds cannot be provided, try grow bags or other planters on waist-height shelving or staging so that they are fully accessible to all.

-
- 💡 What height are your notice boards? are your displays for children at their height? for children with visual impairment, notice boards at their height are ideal so they can get close to them to view display material.
 - 💡 Hanging baskets can easily be set up on a pulley system to allow seated gardeners to adjust their height for watering and planting.
 - 💡 Bird feeders can also be on a pulley system to ensure they can be refilled by wheelchair users.
-

6.9 Review the timing of events

Often parent and child activities are scheduled during the day, as they are geared to parents at home with children. Consider an early evening event so that working parents can attend with their children after working hours.

Top Tip!

Derby Street Children's Centre started a 'Dad & Me' group on a Friday evening to allow working dads to enjoy activity sessions with their children after the working day.

6.10 Facilitate community change

There are many community groups, all championing local interest issues or global issues but with local elements, such as Community Action Groups. For those local issues with a young child or family focus, consider getting involved to help facilitate change on any local issues that you feel you can contribute to.

Involvement need not be onerous. It may be helping to facilitate the process such as offering the use of a room for a community meeting or canvassing children's centre users for their views to support an evidence pack.

- ! Consider a notice board for local issues and attach newspaper cuttings, group contact details, posters advertising meetings.

6.11 Working to deliver local projects

Consider getting involved with local groups and associations. Allotment and gardening groups may be happy to offer practical help and advice with a grounds or food growing project.

A local environmental or habitat protection group may be able to offer an activity to support service delivery and be beneficial to themselves at the same time. For example, a family activity day where children's centre users help with a tree planting project or erecting bat boxes or developing specialist habitats in children's centre grounds.

Case studies

Newbold Childrens Centre, Rochdale, held a Bollywood themed party called East meets West. There was food, music, dancing and costumes inspired by Bollywood. 28 families attended and there were more than 80 visitors throughout the day. Visitors of all ages joined in the dancing and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the day.

Rochdale Children's Centres have a magazine that is written by parents for parents. All the articles are about parents' own experiences of services at the children's centre or activities they themselves have started up or are looking to run.

Parent's questions are collected and then, together with the answers, they are published in the magazine.



Doorway 7: Local wellbeing



Sure Start Children's Centres have the potential to be models of corporate citizenship within their local areas, enriching their educational mission with activities that improve the environment and quality of life of local people.

Local wellbeing encompasses not only economic prosperity but mental and emotional health too. Measures of success should not be limited to financial indicators but people's levels of happiness too.

For our young children and their families especially, happiness and freedom of expression is important to development and success.

The guidance below offers advice, recommendations and suggestions on the sustainable operation of Sure Start Children's Centres, to assist in developing existing strategies, or start to make changes in working towards sustainability in this area.

Operation

There are many enablers to accessing services and employment. Being confident on using public transport and travelling away from your community for education or employment does not come easily to everyone, especially if there are issues of cost, speech and accessibility.



Below are some options to consider, to try to promote more local wellbeing and empowerment, with an environmental benefit.

Options to consider:

7.1 Promote opportunities for sports and family health

Not only does playing sport keep you fit and healthy but you can meet new people by being part of a team. If you have room at your children's centre, consider a trim trail (see Woodlands Children's Centre in the case study section of doorway 5) or a dads and lads football team.

- ! Why not ask other centres to join in and create
 - a league?
- ! Alternatively consider healthy activities where all the
 - family can join in, such as a family cycle ride – young children can take part by riding on child seats etc.
- ! Other popular activities for all the family include
 - rounders, or silly sports.

For organised activities or ideas that link to the Early Years Foundation Stage see: www.muckin4life.direct.gov.uk

7.2 Provide nutritional information

Nutrition can be key to being well and staying well. You may already have, or be considering, a healthy menu at your children's centre but consider contacting your local Primary Care Trust and asking if their dietician will run a workshop session on nutrition for families.

If your centre provides meals then you will already be aware of healthy eating guidelines. Can you put favourite recipes together and create a centre cookbook so parents can try to eat healthily at home too.

7.3 Involve community groups and volunteering organisations

Does your area have a local community action group? These groups have different focuses – some tackle Global Warming at a local level, advising their neighbourhood on energy efficiency and taking thermal images of houses to show waste heat escaping. Some groups organise swap shops whilst others may become involved in social projects.

Some universities have student-run Community Action Groups who may be willing to help at your children's centre to run a swap shop.

7.4 Provide sensory and calm areas

Sensory gardens do not just have to be areas of exploration for young children, their families can benefit too. Why not consider several sensory gardens based on different benefits, such as a calming garden and an uplifting garden.

- 💡 As well as scents, these could be based on colours too – survey centre users on colours and sounds that make them sleepy or relaxed or bring about other moods -plant a garden based on these colours and sounds e.g. running water, wind chimes, rustling leaves.
- 💡 If you have a budget, you may consider employing a garden designer who can help with all aspects of a sensory garden.

7.5 Organise vocation of the week

Consider choosing the role of a person within your community and organising vocation of the week e.g. School Crossing Patrol Officer. Maybe have some standard interview questions about what they do for the community and why they enjoy it.

Change the role weekly or monthly and showcase local people working in their communities, for their communities.

7.6 Help eradicate fuel poverty

Fuel poverty is where members of our communities are unable to afford to heat and light their homes to a satisfactory level. For those on the lowest incomes, pre- paid meters are the only option and the price per unit is higher than a contract arrangement.

Top Tip!

Some energy advice centres have energy display meters, power down units and low energy light bulbs to give away free to vulnerable households.



Vulnerable members of society, such as those who are ill or elderly, may need help to access a higher level of warmth and comfort in their homes.

There are many grants and schemes that can help people, run by charities or through utility companies.

Consider having an energy fair and asking relevant local charities and an energy advice centre to come along. They can give advice and offer help on free insulation and grants for draft proofing.

This may be something you can do in conjunction with a local sheltered housing group or pensioners' lunch club.

7.7 Be a hub in your Community

Your centre can be a hub *in* your local community and *for* your community.

-
- ! Consider liaising with local authority officers to signpost a range of services that complement wellbeing – teams at your local authority and PCT will have plenty of displays and materials to take away on drug and substance abuse, smoking cessation, debt advice and a wealth of services.
 - ! Consider providing a noticeboard to advertise all local clubs in your community, from the girl guiding association to sports teams, and faith groups.
 - ! Provide details of activities at other local children's centres, particularly if services vary – remember to include the number of any bus routes serving the facility and the approximate cost of a return ticket (adult and child fares).
-



7.8 Support accessibility to public transport

Access to public transport is a key enabler to employment and education.

Publicise information about bus and train fares, and how and where to purchase tickets. Some bus companies no longer take payments on buses but require a pre-paid ticket or travel card. This can be confusing and off putting for first time users and may deter them from using the service. This will prevent access to employment opportunities and education outside of the immediate area.

7.9 Consider hosting an adult careers fair to highlight local employment opportunities

You may have large local employers in your area. Consider hosting a careers fair for local employers who may be looking to recruit.

People with different types of job can be invited to attend, to talk about the skills they needed, or have acquired, and any relevant qualifications that may help in their sector of employment.

See Oakenclough Children's Centre in the case study section at the end of this doorway.

7.10 Out of hours play

Areas of deprivation often have fewer opportunities for quality play provision. Consider offering out of hours play facilities.

Case study

Oakenclough Children's Centre teamed up with Job Centre Plus to hold job fairs that concentrate on employment opportunities in the local area. Advice is given on how to compile a CV, interview techniques, childcare, and financial issues, and local employers attend. The first fair concentrated on employment in the retail sector, as well as social and support care work such as nursing and working with children. It is due to the success of the first fair where centre users secured employment, that the event has become a regular fixture.



Doorway 8: Global dimension



Sure Start Children's Centres have the potential to be models of global citizenship, enriching their educational mission with activities that improve the lives of people living in other parts of the world.

Every one of us is a member of the Global community. No country or community exists in isolation. We rely on people all across the world to grow food and produce goods for us, and we also supply our goods to others around the world.

There are many communities around the world that live on the margins due to natural and/or manmade causes. Our actions in our daily lives can have great impacts elsewhere. It is up to us as individuals to consider the global consequences of our actions, particularly those that contribute to ozone depletion, global warming, deforestation, desertification and acid rain.

Where communities are suffering due to natural disasters or less access to natural resources, we should pull together in the global community and offer support. We should teach our children to do the same.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child call for the provision of specific resources, skills and contributions necessary to ensure the survival and development of children to their maximum capability.



The guidance below offers advice, recommendations and suggestions on the sustainable operation of Sure Start Children's Centres, to assist in developing existing strategies, or start to make changes in working towards sustainability in this area.

Operation

Options to consider:

8.1 Link Schools

Eco-Schools is an international programme. If you are registered under the Eco-Schools Early Years programme you can link with an eco-school somewhere else across the world.

This can offer vast learning opportunities for all ages – how daily lives of others are different, the different environments in which other communities live, how these are changing, and the challenges and positive experiences that people face.

8.2 Take part in the Comenius Project.

The Comenius project links schools across, currently, 31 European countries and can be used as a staff development programme.

Grants are available to allow staff to travel to their link school/nursery to exchange ideas.

The Comenius Programme is named after Jan Amos Comenius (1592-1670), often considered the father of modern education. It has two main objectives:

- to develop knowledge and understanding of the diversity of European cultures and languages, and the value of this diversity; and
- to help young people to acquire basic life skills and competences for their personal development, for future employment and for active European citizenship.

For further information: www.britishcouncil.org/comenius

8.3 International Education Week

There are themed days and weeks throughout the year that involve international celebration such as International Education Week (IEW). The week, which is celebrated around the world in November each year, is an opportunity to demonstrate and celebrate how your children's centre has embraced global dimension in your activities and services.

For more information on International Education Week, as well as Link Schools and the Comenius Project, go to: www.globalgateway.org.uk

There is also more information, help and signposting for funding and linking possibilities on: www.britishcouncil.org/learning-ie-school-partnerships

8.4 Hold fund raising events for global charities

Why not ask your children's centre users to vote for a global charity to support through the year with fundraising. Select a target amount to raise which will achieve something meaningful in a marginalised community as well as being environmentally sustainable, e.g. a bicycle for a rural midwife or a fresh water well to a school.

8.5 Identify a global problem with a local perspective

Issues such as flooding caused by global warming and de-forestation are global problems. But these do not just manifest in the Amazon or Pakistan. Woodland in our own communities is destroyed and species are lost. Why not contrast and compare global problems with local examples? Why not try to solve a global problem locally? How many trees and new species can you introduce into your children's centre?

Ecologists in local authorities may specialise in indigenous endangered species. Ask them to come in and talk about how to attract endangered species to your site.

8.6 Celebrate international festivals with local community groups

At your children's centre, consider all the global festivals or concentrate on themes such as New Year or carnivals and explore how different communities celebrate similar events at different times throughout the year.

See examples in the case study section at the end of this doorway.



8.7 International Collective celebration days

There are other days throughout the year that celebrate our global history, such as Holocaust Memorial day which is 27th January, the anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

There are usually resources available for events or activities to publicise the day at your centre.

There are also themed days, weeks and months that bring world citizens together in joint activities such as International Walk to school Week. See: www.iwalktoschool.org for more details.

Case Studies

Hare Street Children's Centre, Deepdish, Rochdale

Hare Street Children's Centre has a special events calendar throughout the year and celebrates many multi faith events. The end of Ramadan was marked with a special evening of Asian food, dancing and music.

Orton Childrens Centre, Peterborough

Orton Childrens Centre welcomed in the Year of the Tiger and the Chinese New Year with a variety of activities for the 0-10 age range. Activities were split into age groups and included Chinese themed cookery, arts and crafts, dance and storytime sessions.



Children aged six and over learnt how to cook authentic Chinese food, and children aged two to ten years had a go at making a Chinese lantern or a colorful fan at an art and craft session. The week culminated in children aged 2-10 trying the traditional lion dance in the Chinese themed dance session.



Broadwater Children's Centre held a multi-cultural event which included a stay and play session to celebrate Chinese New Year. The children made Ang Pow (red envelopes containing money, which are given to Chinese children at New Year for good luck). The children also made festival masks for Mardi Gras, Valentine wreaths, fabric painting for Holi, and filled pancakes with a selection of fruits for pancake day.

26 children attended with parents, childminders and other family members with evaluations confirming that a good time was had by all.

Parents and children enjoyed fortune cookies while listening to music from around the world, and had the chance to play with multicultural musical instruments and resources from the toy library.





Checklist

A cartoon illustration of a woman with dark brown hair in a ponytail, wearing a red long-sleeved shirt and a green skirt, pushing a black wheelbarrow. The wheelbarrow is carrying a large, green, rectangular banner that tapers towards the right. The word "Checklist" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font on the banner. The woman is walking to the right, and there is a soft grey shadow on the ground beneath her and the wheelbarrow.

Introduction

All the guidance points from the eight doorways in Part A have been presented in this self-assessment checklist. Completing the checklist will enable children's centre leaders to be positioned in terms of their progress towards environmental sustainability, to identify what has been achieved to date and what may still be achievable. It will help identify areas for development to include in an environmentally sustainable action plan.

The guidance points are numbered in the order they appear in the eight doorways. If the checklist is your starting point for using this guidance, and you want further information on any of the points, this can be found in the doorways, located by the number references. If you want help in choosing whether to work towards any of the points in this checklist, you can refer to the options selection matrix to assess how appropriate these may be for your children's centre.

In order to complete the assessment for some of the more technical guidance points, further information and advice may be needed from, for example, the local authority energy advice team. In such instances, '...further advice needed' could be entered in the comments column, and 'contact energy advice team at...' in the action column.

Finally, remember that sustainable best-practice embraces a wide range of tasks, activities and techniques. It would be unrealistic to think that all children's centres will be able to tick all the 'we have achieved this' boxes. The key thing is to identify what you can reasonably achieve, and to have in place a plan showing how to get there.

Doorway 1: Food and drink



Sure Start Children’s Centres have the potential to be model suppliers of healthy, sustainable food and drink, showing strong commitments to the environment, social responsibility and animal welfare in their food and drink provision, and maximising their use of local suppliers.

Ref.	Guidance Point	We have achieved this	We are working towards this	We want to achieve this	This is not appropriate for our setting	Comments	Actions
1.1	Try growing food inside as part of a workshop or activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
1.2	Provide fresh chilled water	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
1.3	Provide fairly traded and ethically sourced tea and coffee	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
1.4	Provide healthy menus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
1.5	Offer healthy eating workshops	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
1.6	Take on an allotment project and run it through one of your groups	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
1.7	Grow food at your children’s centre	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		



Ref.	Guidance Point	We have achieved this	We are working towards this	We want to achieve this	This is not appropriate for our setting	Comments	Actions
1.8	Provide child-size garden equipment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
1.9	Join a national programme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
1.10	Show the diversity and versatility of cooking with vegetables	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
1.11	Develop a children's centre cookbook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
1.12	Consider becoming a local supporter of Start4Life and Change4Life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		

Doorway 2: Energy and water



Sure Start Children’s Centres have the potential to be models of energy efficiency, renewable energy and water conservation, showcasing opportunities such as wind, solar and biomass energy, insulation and rainwater harvesting to everyone who uses the centre.

Ref.	Guidance Point	We have achieved this	We are working towards this	We want to achieve this	This is not appropriate for our setting	Commentsz	Actions
2.1	Appoint a member of staff to be responsible for energy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
2.2	Read the meter and verify against your bills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
2.3	Set up an energy and water notice-board	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
2.4	Are you on a green tariff?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
2.5	Check that boiler settings are correct	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
2.6	Energy Display Meters	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
2.7	Optimise the use of zoned areas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
2.8	Set a target for energy reduction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		



Ref.	Guidance Point	We have achieved this	We are working towards this	We want to achieve this	This is not appropriate for our setting	Commentsz	Actions
2.9	Run an energy saving campaign	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
2.10	Use energy efficient light bulbs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
2.11	Turn off small power appliances when not in use	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
2.12	Reduce drying time of tumble driers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
2.13	Fit water saving devices to toilet cisterns	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
2.14	Fit rainwater butts with child safe lids and use for watering plants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
2.15	Descalc hot water appliances regularly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		

Doorway 3: Travel and traffic



Sure Start Children’s Centres have the potential to be models of sustainable travel, vehicles are used only where absolutely necessary and there are exemplary facilities for healthier, less polluting or less dangerous modes of transport such as walking and cycling.

Ref.	Guidance Point	We have achieved this	We are working towards this	We want to achieve this	This is not appropriate for our setting	Comments	Actions
3.1	Write a Travel plan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
3.2	Survey travel patterns	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
3.3	Time events to coincide with public transport timetables	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
3.4	Provide travel information points	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
3.5	Participate in Walk to School Week	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
3.6	Ask for low floor buses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		



Ref.	Guidance Point	We have achieved this	We are working towards this	We want to achieve this	This is not appropriate for our setting	Comments	Actions
3.7	Carry out a site survey	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
3.8	Conduct an area survey	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
3.9	Organise a road safety display	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
3.10	Consider offering an early years pedestrian safety programme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
3.11	Make contact with the local bike shop	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		

Doorway 4: Purchasing and waste



Sure Start Children’s Centres have the potential to be models of waste minimisation and sustainable procurement. Goods and services of high environmental and ethical standards, from local sources where practicable, should be used. Opportunities for reducing consumption, reusing, repairing and recycling should be maximised.

Ref.	Guidance Point	We have achieved this	We are working towards this	We want to achieve this	This is not appropriate for our setting	Comments	Actions
4.1	Use environmentally friendly products	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
4.2	Source products locally	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
4.3	Consider the quality and cost of furniture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
4.4	Maximise opportunities for recycling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
4.5	Organise a community swap shop	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
4.6	Collect waste items for charity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		



Ref.	Guidance Point	We have achieved this	We are working towards this	We want to achieve this	This is not appropriate for our setting	Comments	Actions
4.7	Use a wormery or compost bin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
4.8	Offer unwanted furniture to local groups and charities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
4.9	Maximise the re-use of items	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
4.10	Consider starting a toy library	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		

Doorway 5: Buildings and grounds



Sure Start Children’s Centres have the potential to manage and, where possible, design their buildings in ways that visibly demonstrate sustainable development to everyone who uses the centre. Through their grounds, children’s centres can bring children closer to the natural world, capture their imaginations in outdoor play, and help them learn about sustainable living.

Ref.	Guidance Point	We have achieved this	We are working towards this	We want to achieve this	This is not appropriate for our setting	Comments	Actions
5.1	Consider a Community Art Project	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
5.2	Create an area of green space	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
5.3	Create a vegetable growing area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
5.4	Develop a sensory garden	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
5.5	Consider a community project to design an outdoor space	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
5.6	Create mini habitats or a feeding station	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		



Ref.	Guidance Point	We have achieved this	We are working towards this	We want to achieve this	This is not appropriate for our setting	Comments	Actions
5.7	Engage with Forest Schools	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
5.8	Create rooms outside	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
5.9	Consider using vertical spaces	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
5.10	Access green spaces	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
5.11	Create a trim trail or a green gym	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
5.12	Use natural materials in outdoor spaces	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		

Doorway 6: Inclusion and participation



Sure Start Children’s Centres have the potential to be models of social inclusion, enabling all children to participate fully in children’s centre activities while instilling a long-lasting respect for human rights, freedoms, cultures, creative expression and the environment.

Ref.	Guidance Point	We have achieved this	We are working towards this	We want to achieve this	This is not appropriate for our setting	Comments	Actions
6.1	Embrace cultural differences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
6.2	Embrace all abilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
6.3	Develop an anti-bullying policy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
6.4	Hold a festival of diversity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
6.5	Provide welcome signs in community languages	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
6.6	Hold question and answer sessions, and capture feedback	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		



Ref.	Guidance Point	We have achieved this	We are working towards this	We want to achieve this	This is not appropriate for our setting	Comments	Actions
6.7	Provide dual language storytimes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
6.8	Provide activities at different heights	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
6.9	Review the timing of events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
6.10	Facilitate community change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
6.11	Working to deliver local projects	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		

Doorway 7: Local wellbeing



Sure Start Children’s Centres have the potential to be models of corporate citizenship within their local areas, enriching their educational mission with activities that improve the environment and quality of life of local people.

Ref.	Guidance Point	We have achieved this	We are working towards this	We want to achieve this	This is not appropriate for our setting	Comments	Actions
7.1	Promote opportunities for sport as a physical activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
7.2	Provide nutritional information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
7.3	Involve Community Action Groups	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
7.4	Provide sensory and calm areas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
7.5	Organise vocation of the week	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
7.6	Help eradicate fuel poverty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		



Ref.	Guidance Point	We have achieved this	We are working towards this	We want to achieve this	This is not appropriate for our setting	Comments	Actions
7.7	Be a hub in your Community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
7.8	Support accessibility to public transport	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
7.9	Consider hosting a careers fair to highlight local employment opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
7.10	Out of hours play	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		

Doorway 8: Global dimension



Sure Start Children’s Centres have the potential to be models of global citizenship, enriching their educational mission with activities that improve the lives of people living in other parts of the world.

Ref.	Guidance Point	We have achieved this	We are working towards this	We want to achieve this	This is not appropriate for our setting	Comments	Actions
8.1	Link Schools	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
8.2	Take part in the Comenius Project	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
8.3	International Education Week	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
8.4	Hold fund raising events for global charities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		



Ref.	Guidance Point	We have achieved this	We are working towards this	We want to achieve this	This is not appropriate for our setting	Comments	Actions
8.5	Identify a global problem with a local perspective	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
8.6	Celebrate international festivals with local community groups	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
8.7	International collective celebration days	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		

Options selection matrix



Introduction

The options selection matrix is intended to assist Sure Start Children's Centre leaders in selecting sustainable options that may be appropriate for their particular setting.

All the guidance points from the eight doorways in Part A have been included in the matrix. If the matrix is your starting point for using this guidance, and you want further information on any of the points, this can be found in the doorways section, located by the number references. Where some of the points listed in the matrix have already been achieved, or areas to work towards are identified, these can be recorded in the checklist section of this guidance.

The matrix references which of the Every Child Matters outcomes are particularly supported by each guidance point.

The general suitability of each guidance point for either refurbishment projects or new developments is also indicated. However, just because there is no tick, for example, in the 'refurbishment' column does not mean that you cannot incorporate that point in a refurbishment project. The tick indicates general suitability and if it is felt appropriate for a particular setting it should be considered. The information in the doorways may help with this.

Many of the guidance points ticked as suitable for refurbishment projects may also be possible to implement in existing children's centres, even if they are not undergoing major refurbishment work.

The relative cost of implementing the guidance points give a very broad indication of whether they are feasible for your particular children's centre. The cost indication (no cost, low cost, medium cost or high cost) is subjective, relative to the context of the guidance point. It is not necessarily a cost comparison of one guidance point with another.

The sustainable benefits of each option are given a rating of one to three stars (see below), to enable the guidance points to be considered in conjunction with the particular priorities for your children's centre. For example, where a children's centre is already operating at a high level of energy efficiency, emphasis can be placed on exploring sustainable options with a higher education or community relevance.

- ★ good
- ★★ very good
- ★★★ excellent

The information can be used to prioritise areas in which children's centre leaders feel they can progress, and form part of a centre's sustainability action plan.

Doorway 1: Food and drink



Sure Start Children’s Centres have the potential to be model suppliers of healthy, sustainable food and drink, showing strong commitments to the environment, social responsibility and animal welfare in their food and drink provision, and maximising their use of local suppliers.

Ref.	Guidance Point	Every Child Matters	Suitable for		Relative cost				Benefits		
			Refurbishment	New build	No cost	Low cost	Medium cost	High cost	Environmental benefit	Educational Value	Community relevance
1.1	Try growing food inside as part of a workshop or activity	1, 3	✓	✓	✓				★	★★★★	★★★
1.2	Provide fresh chilled water	1	✓	✓		✓			★	★★★★	★
1.3	Provide fairly traded and ethically sourced tea and coffee	4	✓	✓		✓			★★★	★★★	★★★
1.4	Provide healthy menus	1	✓	✓		✓			★	★★★★	★
1.5	Offer healthy eating workshops	1	✓	✓		✓			★	★★★★	★★★★
1.6	Take on an allotment project and run it through one of your groups	1, 3	✓	✓		✓			★	★★★	★★★



Ref.	Guidance Point	Every Child Matters	Suitable for		Relative cost				Benefits		
			Refurbishment	New build	No cost	Low cost	Medium cost	High cost	Environmental benefit	Educational Value	Community relevance
1.7	Grow food at your children's centre	1, 3	✓	✓		✓			★	★★★★	★★★
1.8	Provide child-size garden equipment	3	✓	✓		✓			★	★★★★	★
1.9	Join a national programme	3	✓	✓	✓				★	★★★★	★★★
1.10	Show the diversity and versatility of cooking with vegetables	1, 5	✓	✓	✓				★★	★★	★★
1.11	Develop a children's centre cookbook	4	✓	✓		✓			★	★★★★	★★★
1.12	Consider becoming a local supporter of Start4Life and Change4Life	1, 3, 4	✓	✓	✓				★★	★★	★★

Doorway 2: Energy and water



Sure Start Children’s Centres have the potential to be models of energy efficiency, renewable energy and water conservation, showcasing opportunities such as wind, solar and biomass energy, insulation and rainwater harvesting to everyone who uses the centre.

Ref.	Guidance Point	Every Child Matters	Suitable for		Relative cost				Benefits		
			Refurbishment	New build	No cost	Low cost	Medium cost	High cost	Environmental benefit	Educational Value	Community relevance
2.1	Appoint a member of staff to be responsible for energy	4, 5	✓	✓		✓			★★★★	★	★★
2.2	Read the meter and verify against your bills	4, 5	✓	✓	✓				★★	★	★
2.3	Set up an energy and water notice-board	4, 5	✓	✓		✓			★★★★	★	★★
2.4	Are you on a green tariff?	4, 5	✓	✓		✓			★★	★	★
2.5	Check that boiler settings are correct	4, 5	✓	✓	✓				★★★★	★	★★
2.6	Energy Display Meters	4, 5	✓	✓		✓			★★	★★	★★

Ref.	Guidance Point	Every Child Matters	Suitable for		Relative cost				Benefits		
			Refurbishment	New build	No cost	Low cost	Medium cost	High cost	Environmental benefit	Educational Value	Community relevance
2.7	Optimise the use of zoned areas	4, 5	✓	✓	✓				★★	★	★
2.8	Set a target for energy reduction	4, 5	✓	✓	✓				★★	★★	★
2.9	Run an energy saving campaign	3, 4, 5	✓	✓	✓				★★★★	★★	★★
2.10	Use energy efficient light bulbs	4, 5	✓	✓		✓			★★★★	★	★★
2.11	Turn off small power appliances when not in use	4, 5	✓	✓	✓				★★★★	★★	★★
2.12	Reduce drying time of tumble driers	4, 5	✓	✓	✓				★★★★	★	★
2.13	Fit water saving devices to toilet cisterns	4, 5	✓	✓			✓		★★★★	★	★
2.14	Fit rainwater butts with child safe lids and use for watering plants	1, 4	✓	✓		✓			★★	★★	★
2.15	Descale hot water appliances regularly	1	✓	✓		✓			★★	★	★

Doorway 3: Travel and traffic



Sure Start Children’s Centres have the potential to be models of sustainable travel, vehicles are used only where absolutely necessary and there are exemplary facilities for healthier, less polluting or less dangerous modes of transport such as walking and cycling.

Ref.	Guidance Point	Every Child Matters	Suitable for		Relative cost				Benefits		
			Refurbishment	New build	No cost	Low cost	Medium cost	High cost	Environmental benefit	Educational Value	Community relevance
3.1	Write a Travel Plan	1, 2, 4, 5	✓	✓	✓				★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
3.2	Survey travel patterns	4	✓	✓	✓				★★	★★	★★
3.3	Time events to coincide with public transport timetables	3, 4	✓	✓	✓				★★	★★	★★★★
3.4	Provide travel information points	4	✓	✓		✓			★★	★	★★★★
3.5	Participate in Walk to School Week	1, 2	✓	✓	✓				★★	★★★★	★★
3.6	Ask for low floor buses	2	✓	✓	✓				★	★	★★



Ref.	Guidance Point	Every Child Matters	Suitable for		Relative cost				Benefits		
			Refurbishment	New build	No cost	Low cost	Medium cost	High cost	Environmental benefit	Educational Value	Community relevance
3.7	Carry out a site survey	4	✓	✓	✓				★	★★	★★
3.8	Conduct an area survey	4	✓	✓		✓			★★	★★	★★★★
3.9	Organise a road safety display	2	✓	✓	✓				★	★★★★	★★★★
3.10	Consider offering an early years pedestrian safety programme	2	✓	✓		✓			★	★★★★	★★
3.11	Make contact with the local bike shop	3, 4	✓	✓	✓				★★	★★	★★★★

Doorway 4: Purchasing and waste



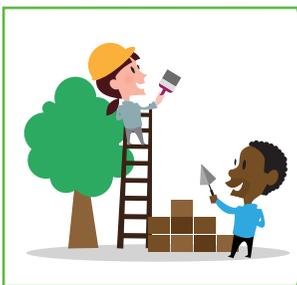
Sure Start Children’s Centres have the potential to be models of waste minimisation and sustainable procurement. Goods and services of high environmental and ethical standards, from local sources where practicable, should be used. Opportunities for reducing consumption, reusing, repairing and recycling should be maximised.

Ref.	Guidance Point	Every Child Matters	Suitable for		Relative cost				Benefits		
			Refurbishment	New build	No cost	Low cost	Medium cost	High cost	Environmental benefit	Educational Value	Community relevance
4.1	Use environmentally friendly products	4	✓	✓		✓			★★★★	★	★★
4.2	Source products locally	4	✓	✓		✓			★★★★	★	★★
4.3	Consider the quality and cost of furniture	4, 5	✓	✓			✓		★★	★	★★
4.4	Maximise opportunities for recycling	4	✓	✓		✓			★★★★	★★★★	★★
4.5	Organise a community ‘swap shop’	4, 5	✓	✓		✓			★	★★	★★



Ref.	Guidance Point	Every Child Matters	Suitable for		Relative cost				Benefits		
			Refurbishment	New build	No cost	Low cost	Medium cost	High cost	Environmental benefit	Educational Value	Community relevance
4.6	Collect waste items for charity	3, 4	✓	✓	✓				★★★	★★★★★	★★★
4.7	Use a wormery or compost bin	3	✓	✓		✓			★	★★★★★	★
4.8	Offer unwanted furniture to local groups and charities	4	✓	✓	✓				★	★★★	★★★★★
4.9	Maximise the re-use of items	4	✓	✓	✓				★★★★★	★★★	★★★
4.10	Consider starting a toy library	3	✓	✓			✓		★	★★★	★★★★★

Doorway 5: Buildings and grounds



Sure Start Children’s Centres have the potential to manage and, where possible, design their buildings in ways that visibly demonstrate sustainable development to everyone who uses the centre. Through their grounds, children’s centres can bring children closer to the natural world, capture their imaginations in outdoor play, and help them learn about sustainable living.

Ref.	Guidance Point	Every Child Matters	Suitable for		Relative cost				Benefits		
			Refurbishment	New build	No cost	Low cost	Medium cost	High cost	Environmental benefit	Educational Value	Community relevance
5.1	Consider a Community Art Project	4	✓	✓		✓			★	★★★	★★★★
5.2	Create an area of green space	1, 3	✓	✓			✓		★	★★★★	★★★
5.3	Create a vegetable growing area	1, 3	✓	✓		✓			★	★★★★	★★★
5.4	Develop a sensory garden	1, 3	✓	✓			✓		★	★★★★	★
5.5	Consider a community project to design an outdoor space	3, 4	✓	✓			✓		★★★	★	★★★★
5.6	Create mini habitats or a feeding station	3	✓	✓		✓			★★		★



Ref.	Guidance Point	Every Child Matters	Suitable for		Relative cost				Benefits		
			Refurbishment	New build	No cost	Low cost	Medium cost	High cost	Environmental benefit	Educational Value	Community relevance
5.7	Engage with Forest Schools	3	✓	✓			✓		★★	★★★★	★★
5.8	Create rooms outside	3	✓	✓			✓		★★	★★★★	★
5.9	Consider using vertical spaces	3	✓	✓			✓		★	★★	★
5.10	Access green spaces	1, 3	✓	✓	✓				★★	★★	★★
5.11	Create a trim trail or a green gym	1, 3	✓	✓			✓		★	★★★★	★★★★
5.12	Use natural materials in outdoor spaces	4	✓	✓			✓		★★★★	★★★★	★

Doorway 6: Inclusion and participation



Sure Start Children’s Centres have the potential to be models of social inclusion, enabling all children to participate fully in children’s centre activities while instilling a long-lasting respect for human rights, freedoms, cultures, creative expression and the environment.

Ref.	Guidance Point	Every Child Matters	Suitable for		Relative cost				Benefits		
			Refurbishment	New build	No cost	Low cost	Medium cost	High cost	Environmental benefit	Educational Value	Community relevance
6.1	Embrace cultural differences	3, 4	✓	✓		✓			★	★★	★★
6.2	Embrace all abilities	3, 4	✓	✓		✓			★	★★	★★★★
6.3	Develop an anti-bullying policy	2	✓	✓		✓			★	★★★★	★★
6.4	Hold a ‘festival of diversity’	3, 4	✓	✓			✓		★	★★	★★★★
6.5	Provide welcome signs in community languages	4	✓	✓			✓		★	★★	★★★★
6.6	Hold ‘question and answer’ sessions, and capture feedback	4	✓	✓	✓				★	★	★★★★



Ref.	Guidance Point	Every Child Matters	Suitable for		Relative cost				Benefits		
			Refurbishment	New build	No cost	Low cost	Medium cost	High cost	Environmental benefit	Educational Value	Community relevance
6.7	Provide dual language storytimes	3, 4	✓	✓		✓			★	★★★	★★★★
6.8	Provide activities at different heights	3	✓	✓	✓				★	★★★★	★★★★
6.9	Review the timing of events	3, 4	✓	✓	✓				★	★	★★★★
6.10	Facilitate community change	4	✓	✓		✓			★	★	★★★★
6.11	Working to deliver local projects	4, 5	✓	✓		✓			★★★	★	★★★★

Doorway 7: Local wellbeing



Sure Start Children’s Centres have the potential to be models of corporate citizenship within their local areas, enriching their educational mission with activities that improve the environment and quality of life of local people.

Ref.	Guidance Point	Every Child Matters	Suitable for		Relative cost				Benefits		
			Refurbishment	New build	No cost	Low cost	Medium cost	High cost	Environmental benefit	Educational Value	Community relevance
7.1	Promote opportunities for sport as a physical activity	1, 3	✓	✓		✓			★	★★	★★★★
7.2	Provide nutritional information	1	✓	✓	✓				★	★★★★	★★
7.3	Involve Community Action Groups	4	✓	✓		✓			★★	★	★★★★
7.4	Provide sensory and calm areas	1, 2	✓	✓			✓		★	★★★★	★★
7.5	Organise ‘vocation of the week’	3, 4	✓	✓		✓			★	★★★★	★★★★
7.6	Help eradicate fuel poverty	5	✓	✓		✓			★	★★	★★★★



Ref.	Guidance Point	Every Child Matters	Suitable for		Relative cost				Benefits		
			Refurbishment	New build	No cost	Low cost	Medium cost	High cost	Environmental benefit	Educational Value	Community relevance
7.7	Be a hub in your Community	4	✓	✓	✓				★	★	★★★★
7.8	Support accessibility to public transport	2, 4	✓	✓	✓				★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
7.9	Consider hosting a careers fair to highlight local employment opportunities	4, 5	✓	✓			✓		★	★	★★★★
7.10	Out of hours play	1, 2, 3, 4	✓	✓		✓			★	★★★★	★★★★

Doorway 8: Global dimension



Sure Start Children’s Centres have the potential to be models of global citizenship, enriching their educational mission with activities that improve the lives of people living in other parts of the world.

Ref.	Guidance Point	Every Child Matters	Suitable for		Relative cost				Benefits		
			Refurbishment	New build	No cost	Low cost	Medium cost	High cost	Environmental benefit	Educational Value	Community relevance
8.1	Link Schools	4	✓	✓		✓			★★	★★★★	★★
8.2	Take part in the Comenius Project	3	✓	✓		✓			★	★★★★	★★
8.3	International Education Week	4	✓	✓		✓			★	★★★★	★
8.4	Hold fund raising events for global charities	4	✓	✓		✓			★	★★	★★★★
8.5	Identify a global problem with a local perspective	4	✓	✓	✓				★★★★	★★	★★
8.6	Celebrate international festivals with local community groups	3, 4	✓	✓	✓				★	★★	★★★★
8.7	International collective celebration days	3, 4	✓	✓	✓				★	★★	★★★★



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Textphone 0845 60 555 60
Please quote ref 00285-2010DOM-EN
ISBN: 978-1-84775-708-1

PPBHP/(4298)/0310

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