

Foreword

Sure Start is our framework for bringing together early education, childcare, health and family support. It encompasses targeted services in disadvantaged areas and universal services for all children aged 0 – 16, early education and out of school provision.

Sure Start's overall aim is to help provide the best possible start in life for all children. It plays a part in the Government's ambition to halve child poverty by 2010. It is also a significant contributor to the Government's aim of delivering opportunity and security for all. The programme will support aims to increase individual security and prosperity by enabling parents to work, as well as tackling educational and health inequalities by supporting children's healthy development and early education. Sure Start should be a key element in local preventative strategies and Community Plans.

We have reviewed the progress made since 1997 (Inter-Departmental Review of Childcare). The review confirmed that enormous progress had been made and highlighted the need for increased investment with even better delivery so that more children and families, including those from under-represented groups, can benefit.

The key challenge over the coming period is to focus on delivery. We have secured substantial additional investment for children's services in their early years. We have a strong commitment across Government to the programme. Our task is to work in partnership to translate that commitment and those resources into new high quality local services for children.

Sure Start should now be seen as a development of previous programmes and a move towards mainstreaming the Sure Start approach across children's services. The significant level of Government investment acknowledges the contribution that has already been made by local authorities, Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships and Sure Start local programmes. The challenge of the next few years is to build on these early successes and ensure that quality services are delivered that can demonstrably make a positive difference to children and their families.



Catherine Ashton
Minister for Sure Start

Sure Start guidance key features: summary for local authorities

What's new	What's the same	What's gone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Local authorities can develop partnership working and planning in a way that makes sense locally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Local authorities have lead responsibility for planning and coordinating delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ EYDC plans submitted annually to Government
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Transparent performance management framework giving feedback, facilitating focussed support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Financial accountability and need to monitor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Prescribed arrangements for partnership working
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Simplified direct grant: the General Sure Start Grant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Need to work in partnership to deliver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Detailed targets for developing different types of new childcare places
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Allocation of targets and funding at a local level up until 2006 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Arrangements for securing early education for three and four year olds and SEN requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ NOF funding for out of school and neighbourhood nurseries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Capital funding for Children's Centres and out of school in disadvantaged areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Targets to create more new childcare places 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Prescriptive arrangements for establishing new childcare places
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ New elements of the programme: Children's Centres, extended schools, childcare for students, Jobcentre Plus childcare partnership managers, sustainability grant, LA out of school scheme, home childcarers, Support Childminders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Responsibilities for supporting children's learning through the Foundation Stage and Quality Assurance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Separate funding streams for creating childcare places, training, nursery school development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Funding for nursery education for three year olds routed through local authority EFS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Need to develop workforce including recruitment and retention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Prescription over certain forms of funding
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Arrangements for Sure Start local programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Submission of monitoring information without feedback
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Need to support good local CIS 	

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Overview and context

1.1 Introduction

This guidance builds on previous advice issued in respect of Early Years Development and Childcare and Sure Start local programmes. Whilst some of it will be familiar to local authorities and their partners, some aspects of the strategy are new. The guidance is aimed specifically at local authorities as the bodies with responsibility for strategic planning and coordinating local delivery. It will also be relevant to other agencies and organisations, especially Children's Trusts (where these exist), Health Trusts, voluntary and community groups, and the private sector.

The purpose of this guidance is to:

- ▶ advise local authorities and other local partners about Government policy in respect of Sure Start;
- ▶ set out aims, objectives and targets;
- ▶ clarify local delivery arrangements;
- ▶ provide information about delivery areas, planning, funding and monitoring arrangements.

1.2 The Sure Start vision

Our vision is to achieve:

A Sure Start for all children by providing integrated and high quality services, so they can grow up to contribute positively to their communities and society as a whole.

- ▶ Better outcomes for all **children**, and particularly, closing the gap in outcomes between children living in poverty and the wider child population.

- ▶ Better outcomes for all **parents**, increased opportunity to effectively participate in the labour market, ensuring pathways out of poverty and strengthened families and communities.
- ▶ Better outcomes for **communities**, including less crime, higher productivity, a stronger labour market and the building of a civic society.
- ▶ **Objectives and targets are set out in Appendix 1.**

1.3 Sure Start principles

The Sure Start Unit has developed a set of principles drawing on best practice learnt from delivering childcare, early education and Sure Start local programmes. At a local level these principles should inform service delivery across all service areas; by adopting these principles local authorities and others can begin to mainstream the Sure Start approach.

Working with parents and children

Every family should get access to a range of high quality services that will deliver better outcomes for both children and parents, meeting their needs and stretching their aspirations.

Services for everyone

But not the same level of service for everyone. Families have distinctly different needs, both between different families, in different locations and across time in the same family. Services should recognise and respond to these varying needs.

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Flexible at point of delivery

All services should be designed to encourage access. Where possible we must enable families to get the health and family support services they need through a single point of contact.

Starting very early

Services for young children and parents should start at the first antenatal visit. This means not only advice on health in pregnancy, but preparation for parenthood, decisions about returning to work, advice on childcare options and on support services available.

Respectful and transparent

Services should be customer driven, whether or not the service is free.

Community driven and professionally coordinated

All professionals with an interest in children and families should be sharing expertise and listening to local people on service priorities. This should be done through consultation and day-to-day listening to parents.

Outcome driven

All services for children and parents need to have as their core purpose better outcomes for children.

1.4. Delivering Sure Start

The Sure Start Unit will continue to support both universal and targeted services to ensure that its work has an impact on the experience of all children and families, as well as young children living in disadvantaged areas. Work will focus on securing early education, increasingly as part of an integrated service for young children and their families, and increasing and sustaining childcare provision to enable parents to work. The programme has universal application, although the Unit has a number of specific interventions designed to impact particularly in disadvantaged areas and support under-represented groups, thereby reducing inequalities and discrimination. Developing the workforce, promoting the quality of services and ensuring key elements of the Sure Start programme from 2004 – 6.

- ▶ **The Sure Start programme is set out in section 1.5 below.**

1.5 The Sure Start Programme

Early education for all, more and better childcare

Promoting integrated services.

Free part-time early education for three and four year olds.

At least 250,000 new childcare places by March 2006.

- ▶ Helping children learn through the Foundation Stage.
- ▶ Raising the quality of early education provision.
- ▶ Making childcare happen – childcare places with start-up grants for childminders, nurseries and after school activities.

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- ▶ Making childcare better quality – working with Ofsted to inspect and approve early education and childcare, recruiting and training people to work with children.
- ▶ Making childcare more affordable – providing help with childcare costs through Working Tax Credit and other schemes.
- ▶ Helping parents to know what's available – through local Children's Information Services and a national information service for parents.
- ▶ Linking employment advice to information on childcare.
- ▶ Supporting new or prospective childcare providers.

Local programmes making a difference

Children's Centres where they are needed most.

- ▶ Establishing Children's Centres in disadvantaged areas offering families early education, childcare, health and family support with advice on employment opportunities.

Ongoing Sure Start local programmes.

- ▶ Sure Start local programmes will continue to deliver community-based services in disadvantaged areas. 400,000 children will have access to 524 Sure Start local programmes by March 2004.

Local delivery arrangements

2.1 Introduction

The arrangements proposed in this section reflect both the Government's key principles for public sector reform and the requirements of the Spending Review 2002. This guidance supersedes all previous guidance in respect of Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership planning, significantly reducing Government requirements.

2.2 Context

The four key principles of public sector reform are:

- ▶ high national standards and full accountability;
- ▶ devolution to the local level to encourage diversity and creativity;
- ▶ flexibility at the front line to support modern public services;
- ▶ the promotion of greater choice and alternative providers.

Following the White Paper on Local Government Reform, the Government is now developing a new relationship with local authorities. The Comprehensive Performance Assessment framework places the emphasis on assuring outcomes rather than controlling inputs.

2.3 Roles and responsibilities of local authorities

The local authority role will be to provide leadership and join up agendas by bringing local partners together in order to move Sure Start delivery forward. Local authorities must ensure additional services are delivered as a result of Government funding; this includes vigorous management of funding, including the

capital programme. Local authorities should ensure they take account of the broad range of issues when planning for delivery, including health, education, social services, planning, neighbourhood renewal, employment and the local labour market. The LEA has a key contribution to make and in many places may be best placed to lead – but this will not and should not automatically be the case. In some areas Children’s Trusts may be responsible for delivering all or part of the Sure Start agenda. Wherever lead responsibility is located, the strong partnership and participative approach developed in early years and childcare and in Sure Start local programmes must be retained and built upon.

Specific responsibilities:

Strategic planning for delivery

- ▶ Establishing an articulated vision for early years and childcare at a local level.
- ▶ Reviewing with key partners existing patterns of provision and planning for development and sustainability, reshaping services to better meet needs.
- ▶ Ensuring the development of integrated services and childcare contributes to other Government targets/objectives.
- ▶ Workforce planning.
- ▶ Ensuring service development reflects the needs of the local population and is sensitive to cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic difference, taking account of issues of disability and special needs.

Consultation and partnership

- ▶ Consulting parents and other local partners about the pattern of delivery of local services.
- ▶ Ensuring that parents and children are consulted, informed and involved in local service delivery.
- ▶ Ensuring the engagement of key partners such as schools, private and voluntary sectors, Health Trusts, Jobcentre Plus (often through EYDCPs – see below).
- ▶ Ensuring effective communication across the range of partners.

Supporting delivery

- ▶ Active project management approach of capital programme.
- ▶ Ensuring advice, guidance and support to individuals, organisations and agencies involved in development of provision – practical support re: buildings, capital and business planning, pre-registration advice.
- ▶ Commissioning processes that ensure accountability and delivery across the sectors.
- ▶ Provision of business planning advice.
- ▶ Coordinating recruitment.

Financial accountability

- ▶ Providing financial information to the Sure Start Unit as required.
- ▶ Ensuring funding is made available to providers of services.
- ▶ Monitoring expenditure and ensuring proper value for money.

Monitoring performance

- ▶ Ensuring systems are in place for providing comprehensive monitoring data.
- ▶ Giving support to local providers/service deliverers to enable them to monitor services effectively.
- ▶ Setting local targets and monitoring progress against them.
- ▶ Ensuring participation in evaluation processes.

Promoting children's development

- ▶ Improving the quality of provision so as to secure better outcomes for children.
- ▶ Promoting understanding of young children's development through training and other support for the 'Birth to Three Matters' framework.
- ▶ Providing professional support services to help providers in effective delivery of the Foundation Stage.
- ▶ Ensuring services are in place to support early identification and intervention so as to better meet the needs of disabled children and those with SEN.
- ▶ Promoting participation in Investors in Children-endorsed quality assurance schemes.
- ▶ Promoting children's access to play, in particular outdoor play.
- ▶ Supporting training and development for sector workers, working with the Learning and Skills Council.

2.4 Equality and inclusion

All local authorities are already required to have policies for equality that apply to service provision and internal organisation. In addition, many Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships will have produced specific strategies to support their activities. LAs will also need to ensure that they take steps to adhere to recent key legislation including the Race Relations (Amendments) Act and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Discrimination Act 2001. Article 13 of the EC Treaty of Amsterdam that combats discrimination on grounds of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation came into effect from July 2003. The combined effect of this legislation is to ensure every family or carer gets appropriate, relevant and accessible services. This means that all funded provision should adhere to and implement equality and inclusion policies. Local authorities will need to continue to work in partnership with other sectors in order to influence practice more generally. They will also need to ensure that partnerships reflect the ethnic composition of the local community as accurately as possible.

2.5 Partnership working

Local authorities will want to consider how best to organise partnership working to ensure that early years and childcare is part of wider considerations about children's services and the local economy. Ensuring strong partnership with children, young people and parents will be crucial if services are to be delivered that they want and need. Local authorities will also want to ensure that significant agencies, such as Health Trusts, are sufficiently engaged. In many cases local authorities may decide to continue to work through their existing Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. EYDCPs have successfully developed skills in supporting the planning and delivery of services and all have valuable contributions to make. Local authorities may wish to consider using another existing partnership forum e.g. the Local Strategic Partnership or a Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership as the 'host' partnership for the EYDCP.

The Sure Start Unit will not prescribe membership of any partnership forum or make any other requirements. However, in the first instance the Sure Start Unit expects all local authorities to consult their existing EYDCP about future working arrangements. Local authorities cannot 'set aside' their existing EYDCP without making other transparent arrangements for partnership working.

At a local community level there are a range of partnerships that may have an interest in the Sure Start agenda. Local authorities will need to consult with Sure Start local programme partnerships about more strategic issues in order to actively engage with and support them.

The performance management framework will reflect the need for partnership working. Sure Start regional teams will need to see evidence of effective partnership working.

Contributions of local partners

Children, parents and communities

Children and young people, their parents, carers and local communities are all vital partners for Sure Start. Their involvement at all stages in planning and delivering services is crucial if outcomes are to be achieved. Local authorities need to find creative ways of involving families in their work, both providing feedback and early participation in setting up new services. Children and young people should be encouraged to work with local providers, and at a more strategic level, to assist in developing services that they want and need. In working with families and communities, local authorities will need to ensure that the perspectives of minority ethnic groups and hard to reach groups are taken on board; this requires specific efforts to involve representatives of black and other minority ethnic groups, as well as disabled people and their families.

Voluntary sector

The voluntary sector has a vital contribution to make in providing services as well as representing the interests of groups such as childminders, pre-schools and out of school clubs and day nurseries. This sector also has considerable expertise in delivering locally accessible services to hard to reach families. It is currently playing a key role in delivering Sure Start local programmes. Commissioning arrangements within local authorities need to ensure that they encourage this key sector to participate in delivery. Local authorities may need to work strategically to ensure the voluntary sector has the capacity to

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contribute to partnership working and delivery. Strong links through the Local Strategic Partnership may assist this.

Private sector

This sector is particularly important in delivering childcare to working parents, with a number of small businesses that need support. In addition, local employers need to be encouraged to support parents in employment. The private sector now has considerable experience of working in partnership to improve the availability of childcare and this engagement also needs to be maintained to encourage local employers towards work-life balance policies.

Maintained sector/schools

Schools are a vital part of a community's infrastructure and can often house services such as out of school clubs and integrated early years provision. Their participation in expanded services should be encouraged. Recent changes in legislation will enable schools to become more directly involved in expanding the range of services they provide. Schools provide a natural focus for local communities and parents are already familiar with them. They often provide the most suitable sites for development in a local area. Extended schools may be particularly well placed to support the development of childcare and Children's Centres. In addition, nursery schools and schools with nursery classes often provide an excellent basis for developing day care and family support services.

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Nursery schools should be retained and developed but offer expanded services to better meet families' needs and offer value for money.

Ofsted

Ofsted has a statutory role in regulating childcare and in monitoring and reporting on the quality of childcare and early education. As well as supporting providers and potential providers through those registration and inspection processes, local authorities can assist by ensuring that Ofsted's requirements for checks with, for example, social services department records (part of the registration process for new providers) are given priority. Local exchange of information with Ofsted can also help determine where best to target resources for quality improvement. Ofsted reports will also provide information to assist local authorities in deciding where to target resources for quality improvement.

Learning and Skills Councils

Local LSCs are key to the delivery of training and qualifications for the Sure Start workforce. Each local authority should have a Memorandum of Understanding in place with its local LSC to plan together to assess and meet the training needs of the local workforce.

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Health

Local authorities must involve Primary Care Trusts and other Health Trusts at a strategic level when planning services, especially to support Children's Centres and Sure Start local programmes.

The health organisations that local authorities will need to work with are:

- ▶ Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) – health visitors and GPs are managed within PCTs, as are many specialist children's services such as Speech and Language Therapy Services. The trusts also manage primary care provision for informing and supporting families around issues such as behavioural problems in young children. They also have lead officers for children and directors of Public Health who provide valuable support to Children's Centres.
- ▶ Hospitals, particularly maternity services.
- ▶ Mental Health Trusts for the identification and treatment of depression and other adult mental health issues that have particular impact on parenting.

Health Trusts need to actively engage with local authorities in developing childcare and services for young families. The programmes delivered through Sure Start will be key to assisting local Health Trusts to achieve mutual targets.

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Jobcentre Plus

Assisting parents into employment, particularly lone parents, is a key priority for Sure Start. Local authorities need to establish positive links with Childcare Partnership Managers whose role is to assist Jobcentre Plus in supporting parents into work and identifying childcare, as well as assisting in recruiting to the childcare workforce.

Working with Sure Start local programmes

Local authorities will need to ensure good partnership working with Sure Start local programmes, offering increased levels of support – especially as many will include Children's Centres. Local programmes should look for ways of disseminating their experience and expertise within their local authority area and ways to cooperate to improve strategic planning for early years services e.g. by sharing monitoring data. Sure Start partnerships will retain prime responsibility for delivering services through their programme. They do need to consider the wider implications across the local authority or PCT area. This will increasingly be the case as the local authority develops its strategic approach to integrated services for young children. Local programmes should see themselves as an integral part of this approach and work closely with the local authority. The integrity of Sure Start local programmes needs to be maintained but cooperation and collaboration at a local level is vital, particularly as Children's Centres develop.

2.6 Next steps for local authorities

The Sure Start Unit expects that most local authorities will wish to review their current delivery and partnership working arrangements in the light of this guidance. To do this they need to ensure that accountability for the programme is clearly identified at senior officer and member level. Local councillors may want to consider how responsibility for Sure Start is allocated – many councillors have been very effective as champions for early years and childcare. All Chief Officers have already received a letter from the Unit asking them to nominate an officer who can take a strategic overview of the programme and is in a position to ensure early years and out of school issues are intrinsic to overall planning across the authority – these are the Nominated Strategic Officers.

The **Nominated Strategic Officer** should:

- ▶ be of sufficient seniority to contribute to strategic planning at a corporate level and report regularly to the Chief Executive;
- ▶ be able to act as an advocate for early years and childcare across the local authority and with senior partners in external organisations;
- ▶ take an oversight of the local authority's performance in respect of the Sure Start agenda, troubleshooting areas of difficulty;
- ▶ have a strategic overview with other policy agendas i.e. Preventative Strategy, Children's Trusts, Children's Fund, Leisure Services, Planning and Community Regeneration Initiatives etc.;
- ▶ liaise with both regional and central government Sure Start teams when necessary;
- ▶ ensure equality policies are being implemented.

The Unit will continue to communicate directly with Lead Officers who are expected to be the people with direct operational responsibility for delivering the Sure Start agenda. Every local authority will make its own arrangements to ensure these responsibilities are discharged. Many Lead Officers will also play a strategic role; there may be operational issues in which Nominated Strategic Officers need to be involved.

Local authorities need to be in a position to deliver the new agenda by April 2004 when new performance management arrangements will come into effect.

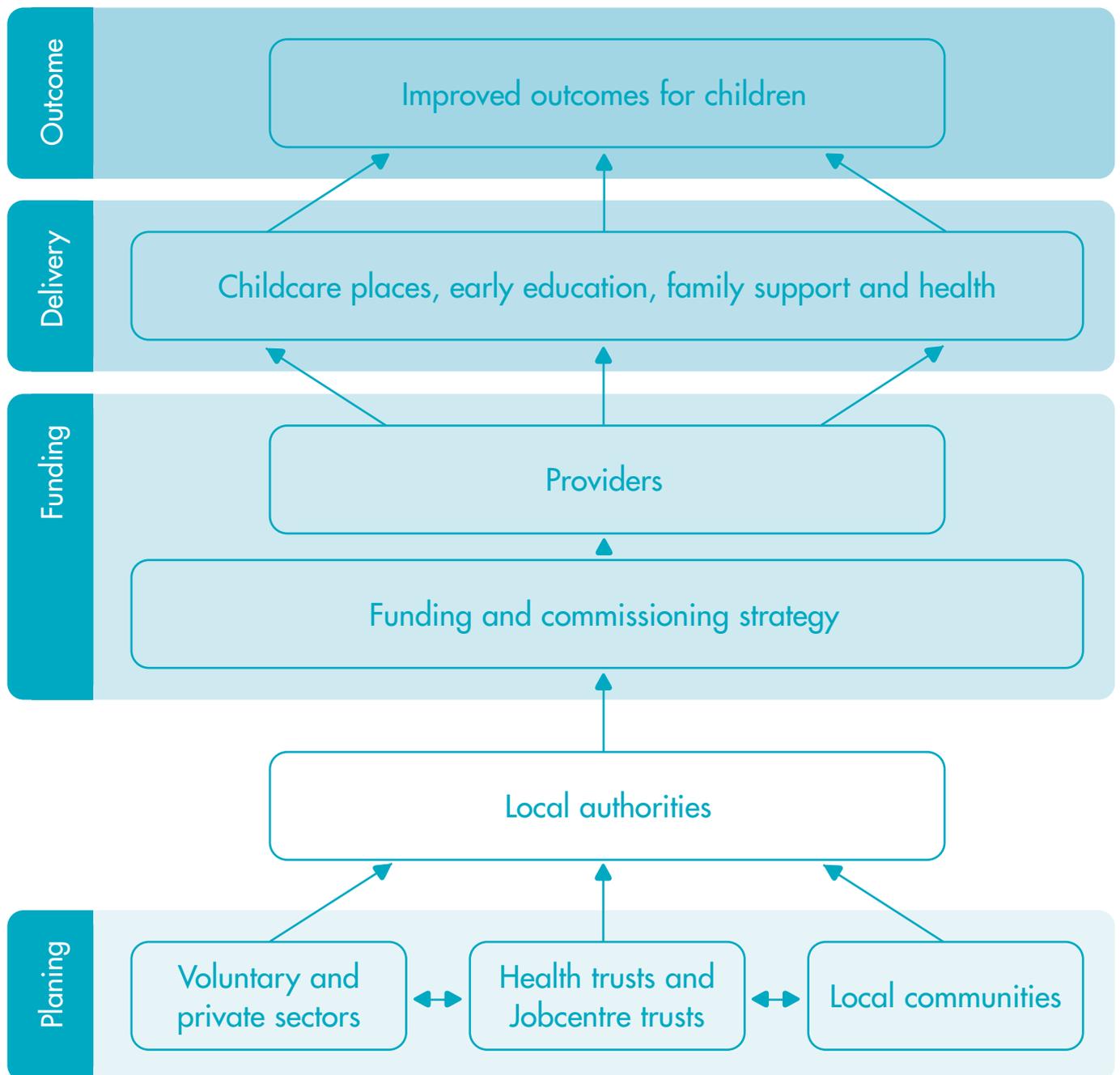
2.7 Local delivery arrangements

Local authorities currently have a number of different organisational arrangements in place to deliver on the Sure Start agenda. As local authorities mainstream the Sure Start principles

they may bring together elements of existing services with those traditionally provided through specific grant funding e.g. training coordinators and LEA curriculum advisors.

- ▶ The Sure Start principles are set out in section 1.3

Local delivery of early years and out of school services



All local authority staff working on the Sure Start agenda, however their posts are funded, should be focused on the same objectives: improving outcomes for children and families in the local area.

The diagram opposite summarises local planning and delivery arrangements.

This delivery guidance outlines a considerably expanded work stream for local authorities; in particular, more funding will be routed through them as NOF funding ceases and Children's Centre funding comes on stream.

Local authorities will need to ensure they have operational staff (either directly employed or contracted) to ensure they can:

- ▶ deliver early education for all three and four year olds;
- ▶ plan and support Children's Centres;
- ▶ set up and maintain a new out of school scheme;
- ▶ ensure continued review, planning and development of childcare places;
- ▶ set up and manage a new childcare sustainability grant;
- ▶ plan locally and review accountability arrangements;
- ▶ maintain existing work streams, including those focused on quality, inclusion, equality and recruitment;
- ▶ expand training activity to support quality and develop the workforce;
- ▶ manage larger funding levels;
- ▶ set up new monitoring systems (including working with others such as health trusts to establish baseline data);
- ▶ provide business support to childcare providers, including childminders;
- ▶ manage the capital programme.

2.8 Measuring progress

The Sure Start Unit is developing a new performance management framework that is transparent and allows local authorities and the Unit to benchmark progress. The intention is to put into place a clear process to measure progress against targets, a rationalisation of information collected, allowing local authorities to compare their progress against others and a framework of incentives that provides more flexibility to those who achieve the most. The Sure Start Unit will need to work alongside local authorities to develop this approach, particularly as the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) framework evolves. The components of the framework are set out below.

Targets

Appendix 1 lists the Sure Start Unit's Public Service Agreement (PSA) and Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) targets for the period to 2006. The Unit will provide further information about how targets will operate at a local level. Local authorities may well develop their own local performance measures in addition to the targets that we set. Some local authorities may wish to negotiate local PSAs in addition.

Planning

Local authorities will now be monitored and measured against outcomes, not plans. This is in line with the overall performance management framework for local authorities being developed following the 2001 Local Government White Paper. There is no requirement for authorities to submit an EYDC Plan for the period 2004 – 2006.

Action is being taken by the government to remove the legal requirement for local authorities to prepare a number of plans, including

EYDC plans. Local authorities should include early years and childcare in other relevant plans, including the Community Plan.

It will remain essential that local authorities plan their actions and prioritise their resources, to ensure that they can meet their Sure Start targets. It will be for each authority to determine appropriate planning arrangements and documentation. The authority's plan for meeting their Sure Start targets must be available to the public, i.e. published. An authority may be asked to prepare and discuss with the Unit an action plan where progress against targets is not being made.

Monitoring returns

The Sure Start Unit must assess progress against its PSA and SDA targets both locally and nationally. Our PSA requires the Unit to discuss progress quarterly with other Government Departments and to publish progress annually. The Unit also needs to be able to identify issues which may require remedial action as early as possible.

Our guiding principle on monitoring is to use central sources wherever possible so as to keep data requests to local authorities at the minimum commensurate with our information needs. We shall, for example, take note of relevant evidence from the CPA and Best Value mechanisms, and of published inspections by Ofsted, the Audit Commission and Social Services Inspectorate. Such information, however, cannot fully meet our needs, as it is available infrequently or gives insufficient coverage of Sure Start issues. For some PSA and SDA targets, numerical information is already available within Government, but for others we shall continue to ask authorities to provide data direct.

LAs will be asked to provide monitoring returns at two frequencies, quarterly and annually.

The quarterly return will cover:

- ▶ changes (opening and closing) in childcare place provision, for which data required is likely to be similar to that in the 2003 – 04 quarterly childcare return;
- ▶ summary information on the activity levels of Children's Centres and Neighbourhood Nurseries in the local authority area.

We shall ask for information relating to a particular quarter to be returned to the Unit by the end of the month following the quarter.

The annual return will report data relating to other PSAs and SDAs. It is likely to include:

- ▶ information on use of Children's Information Services;
- ▶ links made with Jobcentre Plus, and training and education providers;
- ▶ health-related information on smoking in pregnancy and breastfeeding rates in areas covered by Children's Centres.

We shall ask for information on a year ending on 31 March, to be returned to the Unit by 31 May. The report in May 2004 will additionally require information relating to achievement of targets set in 2003 – 04 EYDC plans.

Self-assessment

The Unit is developing a toolkit for use by local authorities to assess their progress in a qualitative way. Our regional teams will wish to discuss with authorities their use of the toolkit, offering support and advice to authorities both on using it and on resolving issues highlighted by its use. The purpose of the toolkit is:

- ▶ to enable local authorities and regional teams to assess current and continuing capacity to sustain delivery against targets in future;

- ▶ to assist local authorities and regional teams to identify key components of successful delivery and lack of progress, and, to assist local authorities in identifying action needed to improve performance and report this to the SSU.

We expect the toolkit will be used annually (or possibly bi-annually if the local authority is having difficulty meeting targets), preferably at or close to the midyear point. Follow up from this will depend on needs and the action plan.

Benchmarking

Our informal consultation with authorities showed that they are willing for information at authority level to be shared with other local authorities. The Unit will increasingly share data we collect for national and regional aggregates and hopefully at locally authority level, to enable local authorities to benchmark their own position and performance against others. We hope that this process of data sharing will also result in improved future data quality and consistency as issues of definition are exposed and addressed.

Follow-up

We are open to suggestions on incentives and rewards for the best performing authorities. Some have sought freedoms and flexibilities within the local PSA framework. Whether inside or outside this framework, the Sure Start Unit is willing to explore the scope for further flexibility with authorities that can demonstrate a strong track record and capacity. This might be in the use of funds, a reduction (subject to meeting the Unit's overall data needs) in the frequency or detail supplied in monitoring returns, or reduced oversight from their regional team. They would of course still be able to access advice and support from the regional team.

Our monitoring data, supported by judgements from external inspections and from our regional teams' discussions with authorities about their use of the self-assessment toolkit, will help the Unit to identify authorities experiencing difficulty delivering the Sure Start agenda. This will provide key information to focus our regional support activity and help us determine whether remedial action is appropriate. Remedial action might include the development and discussion of a recovery action plan, a renegotiation (of targets subject to overall national targets being maintained), or in extreme cases formal intervention by the Secretary of State. We would hope, however, that authorities will wish to approach their regional teams early if they anticipate difficulties, so that advice and support can prevent serious problems from arising.

2.9 Sure Start regional teams

Regional teams are established in every Government Office. They are part of the national Sure Start Unit. These teams will maintain their direct relationships with Sure Start local programmes, as well as work with local authorities strategically to ensure the delivery of the Sure Start Unit agenda. They are key to monitoring progress and offering support where necessary to local authorities and their partners. Strategic Development Officers will be available to every local authority with Programme Development Officers working more closely with those delivering services e.g. Sure Start local programmes. Regional teams should generally be the first point of contact for local authorities seeking advice and where specific policy advice is needed they can make direct enquiries with the appropriate centrally-based team. Regional teams will also organise networking and other events to help share practice and experience across a region.

Appendix 1

Sure Start Service Delivery Agreement and Public Service Agreement targets

Objective	Public Service Agreement target for fully operational programmes, by March 2006
<p>Improving the availability, accessibility, affordability and quality of childcare</p>	<p>A 12% reduction in the proportion of young children living in households where no-one is working. Target applies to all Children's Centres and Sure Start local programme areas. We expect all areas to seek to achieve the targeted reduction.</p>
<p>Improving learning</p>	<p>An [x] per cent increase in the proportion of children having normal levels of communication, language and literacy at the end of the Foundation Stage National target level will be set in light of 2003 data – we do not expect to set individual LA target levels. A [y] per cent increase in the proportion of young children with satisfactory speech and language development at age two years. This target applies to SSLPs only.</p>

Aim: Increase the availability of childcare for all children, and work with parents-to-be, parents and children to promote the physical, intellectual and social development of babies and young children – particularly those who are disadvantaged – so that they flourish at home and when they get to school, enabling their parents to work and contributing to the ending of child poverty.

Service Delivery Agreement targets, by March 2006

- 1** To create 250,000 new childcare places for at least 450,000 children, by 2006 (approximately 280,000 children net of turnover) in addition to the new places for 1.6m children to be created between 1997 and 2004.
- 2** To create 180,000 new childcare places in the 20% most disadvantaged wards (and smaller areas of disadvantage).
- 3** To create 95,000 new high quality out of school club childcare places for children of school age between 2004 and 2006.
- 4** To establish Children's Centres in areas of disadvantage, extending core Sure Start services to a further 300,000 children, so that by March 2006, at least 650,000 children have access to Children's Centre services.
- 5** To increase the percentage of childcare providers inspected by Ofsted rated as good or better by 2006.
- 6** To at least double the number of users of the Childcare Link website and local Children's Information Services.
- 7** 95 per cent of Foundation Stage provision inspected by Ofsted rated good or better by 2006.
- 8** To increase the number of children who have their needs identified in line with early years action and early years action plus of the SEN code of practice and who have either a group or individual action plan in place.

Notes for local authorities

Indicative targets will be set by the SSU for each LA.

Indicative targets will be set by the SSU for each LA

LAs can set local targets if they wish.

Indicative targets set by the SSU for each LA area.

National target level will be set in light of 2003 data. We do not expect to set individual LA target levels.

Individual targets may be agreed for each LA.

We expect all LAs to seek to achieve this target level.

National target level will be set in light of 2003 data – we do not expect to set individual LA targets.

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Objective	Public Service Agreement target for fully operational programmes, by March 2006
Improving social and emotional development	
	<p>An [x] per cent increase in the proportion of babies and young children aged 0-5 with normal levels of personal, social and emotional development for their age. Target applies to Children's Centres and SSLP areas. We do not expect to set individual target levels.</p>
Improving children's health	
	<p>A 6 percentage point reduction in the proportion of mothers who continue to smoke during pregnancy. Target applies to all Children's Centres and SSLP areas. We expect all Children's Centre and SSLP areas to seek to achieve this targeted reduction</p>
Strengthening families and communities	
	<p>A 12% reduction in the proportion of young children living in households where no-one is working. Target applies to Children's Centres and SSLP areas. We expect all Children's Centres and SSLPs to seek to achieve the targeted reduction.</p>

Service Delivery Agreement targets, by March 2006

- 9** To increase the use of libraries by families with young children.
- 10** All families with new born babies in Sure Start local programme and Children's Centre areas to be visited in first two months of their babies' life and given information about the services and support available to them.
- 11** Information and guidance on breastfeeding, nutrition, hygiene and safety available to all families with young children in Sure Start local programme and Children's Centre areas.
- 12** Reduce by 10 percent the number of children aged 0-4 living in Sure Start local programme and Children's Centre areas admitted to hospital as an emergency with gastroenteritis, a lower respiratory infection or a severe injury.
- 13** Antenatal advice and support available to all pregnant women and their families living in Sure Start local programme and Children's Centre areas.
- 14** An increase in the proportion of families with young children reporting personal evidence of an improvement in the quality of family support services.
- 15** LAs, Sure Start local programmes and Children's Centres to have effective links with Jobcentre Plus, local training providers and further/higher education institutions.

Notes for local authorities

National target level will be set in the light of 2003 data – we do not expect to set individual LA target levels.

We expect all Children's Centres and SSLP areas to seek to achieve this target.

We expect all Children's Centres and SSLP areas to seek to achieve this target.

Target applies to all Children's Centres and SSLP areas. We do not expect to set individual targets.

We expect all Children's Centres and SSLP areas to seek to achieve this target.

This target will be measured nationally on a sample basis; LAs need not set a local target unless they wish to do so.

Basis for target to be decided – we do not expect to set individual LA, children's centre or SSLP targets.

Appendix 2

Links between Sure Start and other Government priorities

Children's Fund and local preventative strategies: Sure Start is integral to the Government's aspiration to provide services for children early to prevent adverse outcomes. The Children's Fund provides a range of services to children between five and 13 years designed to support them at an early stage. In many cases childcare services can work closely with Children's Fund services. All local areas should be developing local preventative strategies and Sure Start will be a key element in these – identifying children's needs when they are very young should be key to the success of such strategies.

Children's Trusts: Children's Trust pilots are being developed in some areas – the Sure Start programme provides good models of joined – up working and will be well placed to work with emerging Children's Trusts.

Community Safety: Sure Start programmes in local areas are likely to promote community cohesion whilst also supporting parents. Early identification of needs and intervention, alongside good quality early education are likely to lead to a reduction of crime in the long term.

Education: Sure Start supports targets for educational outcomes, raising standards and narrowing the achievement gap for children at any disadvantage. Sure Start is responsible for the Foundation Stage part of the National Curriculum. Early intervention from birth and early education are key foundations for later learning. Early identification of special

educational needs will also assist children's educational attainment. Childcare is also significant for teenage parents (e.g. through childminding networks) if they are to continue their education and adults who wish to train. Extended schools, including maintained nursery schools, may well prove to be the basis for many Sure Start services.

Employment: Affordable, accessible childcare is key to improving local employment levels and Sure Start aims to create places for more than 450,000 children by 2006, on top of the places for 1.6m children by 2004. Sure Start contributes specifically to the aim of reducing the number of children living in low-income households and the target to have 70% of lone parents in employment by 2010. Work with Jobcentre Plus will assist in growing the childcare workforce as well as assisting parents into work by offering advice on childcare.

Health: Health targets to reduce health inequalities and improve life chances for children are particularly relevant. Sure Start local programmes, and Children's Centres in particular, will address a number of specific health issues likely to promote healthy pregnancy and provide a good foundation in early childhood. Health objectives to support teenage parents are also supported by the Sure Start agenda.

Local Strategic Partnerships: LSPs have now been established in virtually every local authority area to address the wide range of issues facing local communities across traditional organisational boundaries. As well as preparing overarching Community Strategies, LSPs are responsible for Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies in relevant areas. As the key overarching partnership at local authority level, LSPs (where they exist) offer an opportunity for enabling collective working to take place, and for supporting the widest possible community participation in tackling inequalities.

Play and sport: The Government aims to increase children's opportunities to access arts, sport and play, and Sure Start activities can actively support this agenda.

Poverty: The Government sees work as a key route out of poverty. By providing support such as childcare, as well as training and advice through Children's Centres and local programmes, the Sure Start programme supports parents into employment. The Sure Start agenda is key to reducing poverty.

Productivity and business: The Sure Start programme is supporting a significant number of small businesses and making a significant contribution to local economies.

Regeneration: The Government's programme to reduce inequality is supported by a number of regeneration initiatives, in particular Neighbourhood Renewal and New Deal for Communities. Sure Start has a strong contribution to make to these programmes by empowering families and supporting local communities so that services meet their needs. Sure Start can help to ensure that these programmes take into account the needs of children, young people and parents.

Teenage parents' participation in education: The availability of suitable childcare combined with the new Care 2 Learn? Scheme to cover the funding of childcare will be key to enabling many teenage parents to return to education or enter employment.

Voluntary sector: The Government is keen to see the expertise and innovation of voluntary organisations utilised to benefit communities. The Futurebuilders programme is currently being consulted on, identifying options for providing funding to build on the capacity of the voluntary sector.

Working Tax Credits: Sure Start has a direct interest in supporting parents' access to the childcare element of the Working Family Tax Credit as this supports the affordability of childcare. It is also important to help parents not in work to identify the support that is available to them with the cost of childcare.

Every child matters – Green Paper

September 2003: The Government is now consulting on proposals to reform and improve children's services. The Green Paper contains proposals to support parents and carers, ensure early intervention and effective protection, improve accountability and integration, and reform the workforce. Sure Start is a key contributor to these proposals; in particular, the commitment to develop integrated services for young children and their families through Children's Centres.

