



**Children's Centres – a gateway to  
services**

**By Catherine MacGruer**

# Why children's centres?

- We want to improve outcomes for children and
- Support parents' aspirations.

# How we are developing Children's centres

By 2006

Reach 650,000 children in 20% most disadvantaged wards

By 2008

Create up to 2500 children's centres

By 2010

Create 3500 children's centres – one for every community

How many so far ?

210

# What is the Core Offer?

- All children's centres in disadvantaged areas must deliver a core offer of services:
  - Integrated childcare and early learning (open for a minimum of 10 hours a day, 5 days a week, 48 weeks a year)
  - Child and family health services, including ante-natal
  - Parental outreach and family support services
  - Links with Jobcentre Plus for training and employment advice
  - Base for childminder network
  - Good quality teacher input
  - Support for children and parents with special educational needs

There will be some flexibility as centres rolled out in more affluent areas.

# Building on existing

- Community and voluntary provision
- Local Sure Start programmes
- Early Excellence Centres
- Neighbourhood Nurseries
- Private provision
- Nursery schools and schools generally

# Parents and Carers are critically important to child outcomes

- Are mostly successful in preventing poor outcomes
- And, as EPPE shows: it is not who parents are but what they do that makes the difference
- Parental conflict impacts on children's outcomes

# Presentational Issues

- Current levels of support for parents are so low they regard it as stigmatising to ask for help.
- Research suggests Government should give parents the message that its OK to ask for help.

# It's OK to ask for help

- **All parents:** may need some information/advice/support at some stage (probably best delivered at key transition points for their children).
- **A group of parents** who may need some support in providing a positive environment for their children to give them every chance of reaching their full potential across all 5 ECM outcomes.
- **A minority of parents** using harsh/neglectful parenting styles whose children are vulnerable and at risk of exclusion/emotional damage without early intervention and support.

# Services according to need

- Parenting support
- Relationship support
- Act as contact centres
  - £3.5m already invested in 14 centres
  - Further £7.5m to be invested