

## **CHILDREN & FAMILIES CHIEF OFFICERS GROUP – 24<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER**

### **LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP STEERING GROUP - 25<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER**

#### **CHILDREN'S FUND**

#### **REPORT BY HEAD OF POLICY AND PARTNERSHIPS UNIT**

1. This report gives brief details of the invitation received from the Government's Children and Young People's Unit to apply for up to £300k from the new Children's Fund. It recommends that an expression of interest be submitted and that the Children and Families Chief Officer Group is expanded to take responsibility for this new initiative.
2. The funding is a long way off – Kensington and Chelsea is in the third wave and the main tranche of money will not become available until the financial year 2003/04.
3. The Children and Young People's Unit is located within the Department for Education and Skills but it does carry a cross-Government brief for children and young people.
4. The aim of the Fund is to “address the gap in preventive services for young people at risk of social exclusion by providing increased and better co-ordinated preventive services for 5-13 year olds and their families”. The guidance notes for the Fund state that the overarching objective is to

“Provide additional resources over and above those provided through mainstream statutory funding, specific programmes and through specific earmarked funding streams. It should engage and support voluntary and community organisations in playing an active part and should enable the full range of services to work together to help children overcome poverty and disadvantage”.

The Fund will fill the gap between the other special government initiatives aimed at children and young people – Sure Start (0 to 4) and Connexions (13-19).

5. The allocation of up to £300k is based on the number of children in households receiving means tested benefits in the area. At this stage it is for one year only. Funding for further years will be considered next year as the Government moves into its new spending round. The guidance does however indicate that a 4-5 year plan needs to be developed and Officers within GOL are confident that funding will be provided for more than one year.
6. There are some key points made in the detail of the guidance which are important to note at this stage:

- “the Children’s Fund is new money, which should not replace existing funding but must provide additional services”;
- “the Final Plan must contain a commitment from the statutory and other local service providers to continue spending at least the same amount of money on relevant preventative services over the life time of the programme”; and
- “we expect a gradual shift in mainstream funding away from crisis services into preventative services”.

This is very similar to the guidance for the Sure Start initiative.

7. Development funding of £20k is being made available and can be used to:

- develop a robust consultation process;
- support the development of ongoing dialogue with young people;
- resource the mapping of services;
- support local voluntary and community groups in getting involved in the programme.

In addition funding will be made available for a Programme Manager – from £35k to £45k (including on-costs and advertising).

8. The timetable is as follows:-

- an interest in applying needs to be submitted by 1<sup>st</sup> October 2001;
- requests for development funding (including the Programme Manager) can be submitted anytime after 15<sup>th</sup> November 2001 but funding will not be released until April 2002;
- regional seminars will be held in January 2002;
- the plan will be developed during the course of 2002 and there will be a series of “health checks” with civil servants in February, June and October;
- the final plan is due on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2002 prior to assessment in January and February 2003; and
- the funding will available from April 2003.

9. The guidance indicates that early work should begin on:

- mapping risk factors, auditing existing investment and prevention work for 5-13 year olds and their parents, that builds, where appropriate, on current mapping work undertaken for other plans;
  - consider the views of children, young people and their families/carers who will benefit from the Fund; and
  - outline the gaps in support and services in the area particularly in neighbourhoods where there is a high proportion of children at risk of social exclusion and where, as a result, Children's Fund resources should be targeted.
10. The Town Clerk has been asked to undertake some initial facilitation work to:-
- identify which existing partnership in the area is best able to take this forward. The Government has made it very clear that it will need a very strong case to persuade it that a new partnership is needed;
  - negotiate with the chosen partnership the adoption of responsibility for the Children's Fund;
  - consider how the development funding may be used; and
  - build capacity in the partnership to identify service gaps.
11. The guidance note indicates that an existing partnership can be adapted to take forward the development of a Children's Fund programme and the examples it gives are the Early Years Development and Child Care Partnership and the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. The latter does not currently exist in RBKC.
12. The guidance goes on to say that partnerships must include representatives of:-
- voluntary organisations, local community and faith groups working with children and young people at risk of social exclusion and their families;
  - statutory services including the local authority (Education, Social Services, Leisure and Youth Services), Primary Care Trust, schools and the Police;
  - children, young people and their families or carers and local people that both reflect the make up of the local community or use services. It was indicated this might be supplemented by a local forum or other arrangements which ensure that children and young people and their families are fully involved; and
  - local communities – including those groups traditionally excluded from mainstream provision, e.g. black and minority ethnic communities and disabled people.

The guidance is very strong in indicating that the partners should be equal and that the overall mix should not result in statutory services dominating or controlling the partnership.

13. The guidance is also very clear that the Children's Fund Partnership should link in closely with:
  - Connexions;
  - Drug Action Teams;
  - Neighbourhood Renewal strategies;
  - Quality Protects;
  - SRB programmes;
  - Sure Start; and
  - Youth Offending Teams.
14. At this early stage the key issues to determine are whether to express an interest in applying and, if so, which existing partnership should be encouraged to take forward the Children's Fund programme. The amount of funding to be made available suggests that an expression of interest should be submitted, although the statutory services may wish to reflect on the implications of the undertaking that needs to be given about maintaining existing levels of spending – see para. 6 above. Within the Council a 'key decision' will need to be made, in due course, on giving such an undertaking.
15. Paragraph 11 above suggests which partnerships might be adapted to take forward this initiative. There are other options, e.g. the local Connexions Management Committee or the Youth Offending Team Management Committee in line with the new emphasis on preventive work. Whichever partnership is chosen it is important that it is linked in with other local partnerships and the best way to do this would be to include it within the new "family" of partnerships, which are being pulled together as part of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).
16. The Town Clerk has been asked to facilitate the process for deciding on which partnership should take this forward and it would be in the spirit of the new approach to community planning for the LSP Steering Group to make a decision on this matter. The Executive Directors of Education, Libraries and Arts and Housing and Social Services have discussed all the options for an existing partnership to take this forward. They are both of the view that there is a major opportunity to expand the membership and scope of the Children and Families Chief Officers Group not only to take responsibility for the Children's Fund but also to assume strategic oversight for other local services for children and young people. This would help to 'join up' services locally and assist in the process of making sure that the 3 main government initiatives for children and young people (Sure Start, Children's Fund and Connexions) link well together in RBKC.
17. The existing Children and Families Chief Officers Group could become the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership envisaged in the guidelines

on LSPs. The membership would need to be expanded to include the police and voluntary and community sector representation. The chair could rotate as at present.

18. Within the Council it is proposed that Director for Community Education takes the lead in reporting to the proposed Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership on Children's Fund matters and in commissioning the development work that needs to be undertaken prior to submitting the bid for this funding.
19. The Children and Families Chief Officers Group and the Steering Group of the LSP are **recommended** to agree that an expression of interest should be submitted and that the former should be expanded to become the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership as envisaged in this report.

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