

SCRUTINY REPORT

MEETING: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 5th December 2012

SUBJECT: Children Centre Charging

REPORT FROM: Mark Carriline
Director of Children's Services

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1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 A report was brought to scrutiny on 25th January 2011, detailing the decision to introduce a standardised framework for charging in children's centres in Bury. This report outlined the core services that centres must provide, and some of the additional (non core offer) services that are offered universally to attract all local parents. At that time, most centres were charging for some of the additional services, but rates and criteria differed across the authority. A scale of charges had been developed, along with criteria for fee waiver based on economic disadvantage.
- 1.2 At an update meeting on 27th March 2012, Scrutiny requested that:
- a cost benefit analysis report be submitted to Scrutiny monitoring the impact of charging, particularly with the possible effect on the uptake of core activities
 - a full cost breakdown of the full cost of non core activities is provided

2.0 Update:

- 2.1 The charging policy for complementary activities has now been implemented in all centres.
- 2.2 Total income for 2011 – 2012 was £32,910.95, total income for the period April – October 2012 was £19,367.33. A breakdown by centre is attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.3 Income from charging represents a very small proportion of the total cost of service delivery. The following examples illustrate this:

Session	Centre	Full year cost	Income received
Baby Massage	Besses	£6285	£229
	Coronation Road	£5440	£358
Stay and Play	Woodbank with Elton	£28128	£990
	High Meadow	£19,587	£378

2.4 Attendances in the period April – October 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 have continued to grow.

	2011-2012	2012-2013
April	7812	8750
May	10699	12618
June	11327	9885
July	9880	11109
August	8375	9317
September	10587	9747
October	10368	11983

2.5 In July 2012 a full childcare sufficiency assessment was carried out by QA research on behalf of the local authority (there is a duty to carry this out every 2 years). Specific questions were asked in relation to charging for children’s centre services and the summary tables indicate that:

- of 1,128 parents interviewed, approximately 35% confirmed they had used a children’s centre.
- 197 of these parents (approximately half) mentioned paying for activities at a Children’s Centre.
- Of those, 98% (193) were satisfied with the arrangements.

2.6 4 Children, a national charity, carried out a children’s centre census between 14th and 30th March 2012: this covered a range of issues pertaining to the delivery of services, including charging activity. 16% of centres nationally, representing 133 local authorities, responded to the census. Of these, 40% are charging for some services, indicating an upward trend.

3.0 CONCLUSION

3.1 There is no evidence that charging for complementary services run through children’s centres presents a barrier to access.

3.2 The income that centres receive from charging represents a very small proportion of the actual cost of delivering activities. Centres still fully fund their programme of activities using their allocated budget but the income provides them with a small additional, non allocated fund that they can draw on for enhancements to their programme.

List of Background Papers:-

Appendix 1: Income from charging

Contact Details:-

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Appendix 1: Income from charging

Children's Centre Income Records - 2011-2012 and 2012-2013

(as at 16.11.12)

	2011-2012	2012 - 2013
Besses	£ 4,798.21	£ 2,394.19
Butterstile	£ 2,687.00	£ 1,792.00
Coronation Rd	£ 2,282.40	£ 1,068.92
Daisyfield	£ 2,938.70	£ 2,065.90
High Meadow	£ 1,594.50	£ 713.55
Little Oaks	£ 681.67	£ 696.60
Moorside	-	£ 594.11
Ramsbottom and Tottington	£ 3,082.27	£ 2,331.06
Redvales	£ 4,023.00	£ 1,565.00
Sedgley	£ 4,803.60	£ 2,072.46
Stepping Stones	£ 2,515.73	£ 948.37
Toodle Hill	£ 1,180.00	£ 1,260.90
Woodbank	£ 2,323.87	£ 1,864.27
Total	£ 32,910.95	£ 19,367.33

Income in 2012-2013 is considerably less than that of the previous year for a number of reasons:

- The period does not cover the full financial year
- The charging policy is focused on universal extra services rather targeted services and in this current year centres have increased their focus on reaching targeted families and providing them with services
- This financial year has seen a reduction in the one off events that centres ran and charged for, particularly summer activities and trips to venues