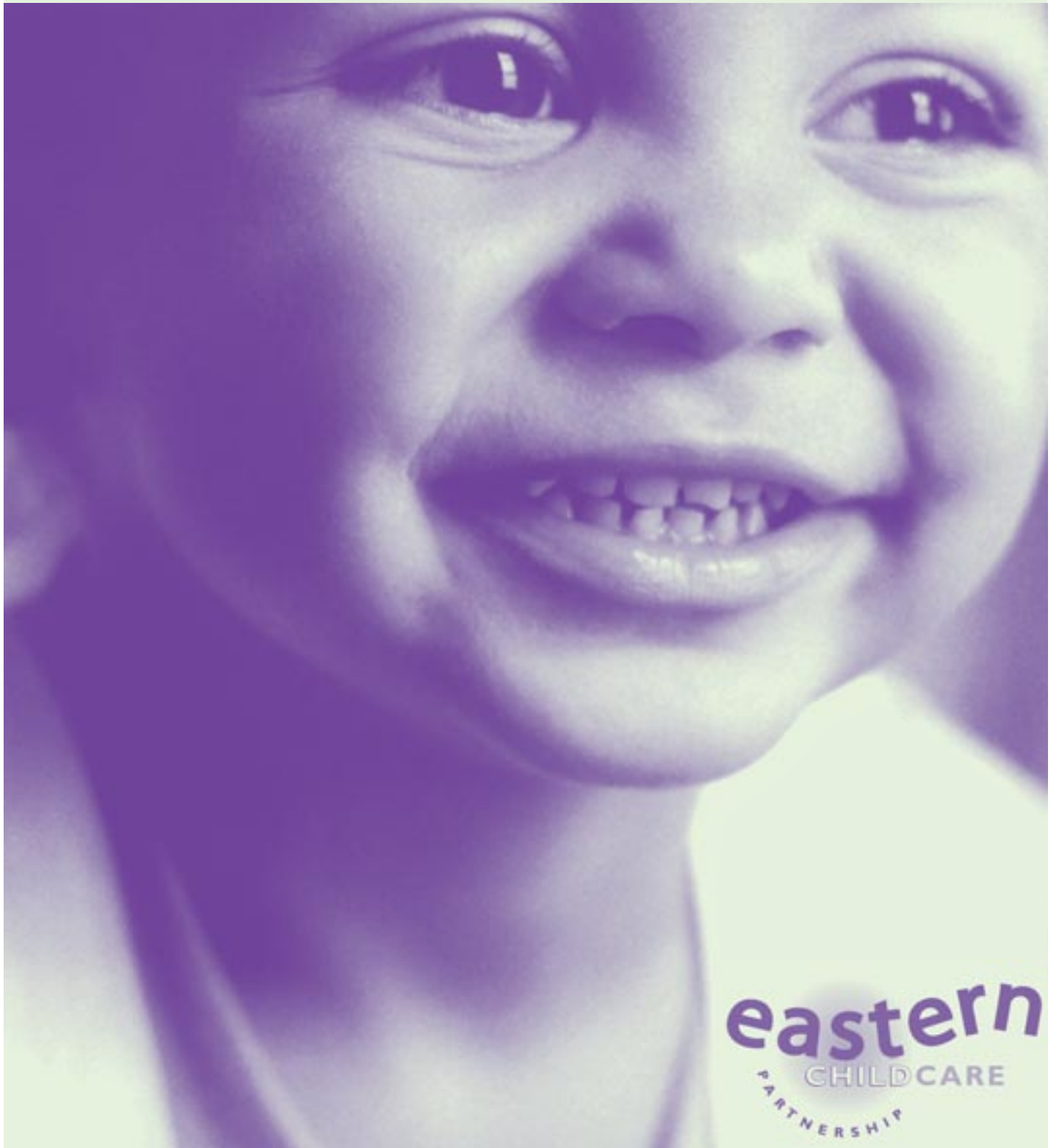


Second Annual Review of the Eastern Childcare Plan 2002/2005



Published: Spring 2005

Foreword

I am pleased to present the Second Annual Review of the Eastern Childcare Partnership Plan for 2002-2005. This Review covers the work of the Eastern Childcare Partnership for the period 2003-2004.

Considerable progress has been made by the Partnership during 2003-2004. This document highlights the achievements, initiatives and developments undertaken, and sets out the planned priorities for action during 2004-2005.

Inevitably, the issue of funding is high on the list of priorities for the Partnership. With many of the short-term funding streams coming to an end, there is a danger that the impact of some of the achievements made over the past few years may be lost. The Partnership is seeking to quantify in more specific detail the funding required and lobby for additional funds to sustain and develop good quality Early Years services.

The Eastern Childcare Partnership looks forward to contributing to the review of the current 'Children First Policy' by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSS&PS), which will commence in the Autumn 2004. This Review, and the forthcoming Children and Young People's Strategy, should inform the Partnership about their future strategic planning requirements for the 2005-2008 Childcare Plan.

I am delighted to announce that our ninth Sure Start Project has recently opened in North Belfast. This will assist in providing further access to services for children (0-3yrs) and their carers. The Partnership looks forward to receiving additional funding for the expansion of Sure Start services in 2005. The development of a robust Family Support Strategy remains a key priority for action in 2004/05 and considerable work is ongoing in this area at present.

I hope you find this Review interesting and informative and I would like to acknowledge the contribution made by all members of the Partnership who have been involved and assisted in the delivery of our 2003/04 objectives. I would also like to thank Evelyn Curran, Co-ordinator, and John O'Neill, Information Officer, for their assistance in the compilation of this report.

Theresa Nixon, Chair.

Contents



Contents	Page
Foreword	1
Section 1: Policy Context	5
Section 2: Funding and Resources	11
Section 3: Demography and Provision	15
Section 4: Key Result Areas Achievements 2003/04 Priority Actions 2004/05	19
Section 5: Sure Start and Further Investment 2004/05	35
Appendix 1: Membership	40
Appendix 2: Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations	42

Section 1: Policy Context



1.1 Policy Context

A number of Departments of State have differing responsibilities in relation to the provision of Early Years services. Chief amongst these are the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSS&PS), Department of Employment and Learning (DEL), and the Department of Education (DE).

In 1999, a cross-Department Strategy for childcare entitled 'Children First' was published. This Strategy recognised that Early Years provision was erratic, of variable quality and poorly co-ordinated. It set as a task that the range of provision within the Board's area should be significantly increased, standards raised and that a diverse group of services be produced.

To support the implementation of 'Children First', a number of structures were identified to realise the wide-ranging recommendations made within it. These were:

- a. The creation of an inter-departmental group for Early Years with representatives from the three lead Departments;
- b. The creation of an advisory forum with representatives from each Department, the Childcare Partnership Chairs and voluntary sector nominees;
- c. The development of four Area Childcare Partnerships, within Northern Ireland, responsible for the local delivery of the Strategy.

Throughout 2003-2004, the four Area Childcare Partnerships have successfully lobbied for an independent review of 'Children First', which will commence in the Autumn 2004.

The forthcoming Children and Young People's Strategy will provide a pivotal context for the future development of Early Years services.

1.2 Roles of the Eastern Childcare Partnership, Eastern Health and Social Services Board and Partner Organisations

The 'Children First' guidance clarifies the roles of both the Childcare Partnerships and the Board.

The Eastern Childcare Partnership (ECP) is responsible for:

- a) Drawing up and agreeing a Plan which meets the needs of children and parents;
- b) Referring the Plan to the Board for approval;
- c) Implementing the Plan and monitoring progress;
- d) Bringing statutory, community and voluntary sectors together in a spirit of co-operation and partnership;
- e) Agreeing how needs can be met and ensuring that the diverse needs of local children and their parents are recognised and influence the planning process.

The Eastern Health and Social Services Board (EHSSB) is responsible for providing a range of supports to enable the Partnership to function. These include:

- Nominating the Partnership Chair, in consultation, with the members and providing a Co-ordinator;
- Convening meetings of the Partnership;
- Providing guidance on the operation of relevant procedures;
- Liaising with District Early Years Fora;
- Providing underpinning information essential to the development of the Childcare Plan;
- Facilitating consultation with local people.

The Board is expected to approve the Childcare Plan and then forward this to the DHSS&PS. This three-year plan should be to the same timetable as the Children's Services Plan. The Plan may not be amended without the Partnership's knowledge and approval.

The Board, working with the Partnership, providers and others, ensures the Plan is implemented.

Partnership members are responsible for:

- a) Representing the views of the interest group, or constituency they represent;
- b) Promoting the best interest of children and families in the area and not the interests of their own group;
- c) Ensuring the organisation or group they represent is kept up to date with developments within the Partnership.

1.3 Eastern Childcare Partnership

The Eastern Childcare Partnership has a membership of 33 people representing 24 agencies, sectors and groups (Appendix 1).

The Partnership has defined the following **mission statement** which is consistent with the overall target of 'Children First' and which is included in its constitution:

*"The Eastern Childcare Partnership will champion the cause of children and childcare throughout the area and will take responsibility for local action to ensure high quality, affordable childcare for **all** children aged 0 - 14 in every neighbourhood."*

1.4 Structures

Within the Eastern Area there are four District Childcare Partnerships (DCP's) coterminous with Trust boundaries. Although each District Childcare Partnership is unique in structure and membership, they all endeavour to reflect the priorities, issues and good practice within the Early Years sector in their respective locality.

Two members from each of the District Partnerships attend the Area Partnership. This link between the District Partnerships and the Area Partnership ensures openness between the strategic and operational levels of the Partnership's structure.

1.5 The Partnership Team

The Partnership provides funding for the following posts:

- **Co-ordinator, Information Officer and Administrative Support** based at EHSSB;
- **District Childcare Partnership Co-ordinator posts** (4x0.5 Whole Time Equivalent 'WTE') based within each Trust;
- **Training Co-ordinator** based at NIPPA the Early Years Organisation;
- **Childminding Development Officers** (2x0.5 WTE) based at the Northern Ireland Childminding Association (NICMA).

Each of these posts is supported by the **Early Years Development Fund (EYDF)** which is made available, non-recurrently, to the four Area Childcare Partnerships by the DHSS&PS.

The ECP had supported two **Partnership Development Officers** earlier this year. Their role was to take forward the development of After School Clubs and deliver two New Opportunities Fund (NOF) initiatives; Out of School Hours Childcare (OOSHC) and Building Quality Childcare (BQC).

The EYDF funding for both of these posts has been discontinued by the DHSS&PS. The loss of these posts has had an impact upon the ECP's capacity to meet the development needs of existing Out of School groups, which require support to become financially sustainable. This has also inhibited the capacity for local groups to develop further Out of School Hours services. The ECP, however, remains committed to the needs of school age children and their families and will seek opportunities to address these.

1.6 Decision Making

The Eastern Childcare Partnership operates as a multi-agency collective, where decisions are made in consultation with all key stakeholders. All members have the same status. The Partnership strives to seek consensus in reaching decisions, but where this is not possible a vote is taken. Although the EHSSB is the lead agency, it has equal influence within the decision making process.

Due to the diverse nature of Early Years, the ECP requires additional expertise and guidance in relation to specific items. To facilitate this, the Partnership operates a sub-group structure. Each sub-group is responsible for progressing a specific agenda, in consultation with the Partnership.

Current Partnership Sub-Groups are:

Training and Quality;

Strategic Funding Panel;

Joint Strategic Planning Group for Early Years;

Finance;

Disability Grant Scheme;

Play for All Project Group;

Sure Start Managers Network;

District Partnership Co-ordinators Network;

Social Inclusion;

Development Officers Network.

Section 2: Funding and Resources



2.1 Background

The drive for the development of Early Years services largely came from the community sector; for many years local parents and activists organised services based on their understanding of their children's needs. There were limited resources available to support these services and enable good quality standards to be met. Most services survived on small-scale fundraising, grants from voluntary organisations and small grants from Trusts. Many services relied upon volunteer staff and had no management structures.

It is widely acknowledged within Health, Social Care and Education that early play and learning opportunities for children enhance their future developmental opportunities. Politically, this has been endorsed by the Government's initiative to develop a range of Sure Start Projects in areas of social and economic disadvantage. As a consequence, local networks of services have developed in recent years.

Financial Support

The financial landscape of the Early Years sector is complex. Funding is available from three main sources:

- External funding is provided by the Peace and Reconciliation Programme, through the Childhood Fund and PlayCare initiatives and the New Opportunities Fund Out Of School Hours Childcare Initiative and Building Quality Childcare capital programme. Each of these is time-limited and short term.
- Government funding is in the form of the Pre-School Education and Expansion Programme, and the Sure Start Programme.
- Board and Trust funding supports services for vulnerable children and children in need provided by all sectors; statutory, voluntary and community.

A) The Childhood Fund

The Childhood Fund has as its focus the rebuilding of communities which suffered most from the conflict, and developing cross-community co-operation, which addresses the legacy of conflict. Available since 1997, the Fund has been accessible to groups within the 25% of wards within the Robson and Noble Index. It distributed resources through the Peace I and II Programmes.

The investment through the Childhood Fund (Peace II) in 2003-04 has been £982,138 providing up to 2,337 places. The Childhood Fund ends in 2004.

B) PlayCare

PlayBoard administers the PlayCare Initiative as part of the Peace II Programme Measure 1.5 Positive Action for Women. This Measure is consistent with the Key Result Area - with a focus on economic regeneration by supporting parents in work and those who wish to return to work, education or training through providing childcare services. This fund is allocated through the Eastern Childcare Partnership's Funding Panel and has invested £276,285 across 38 Out of School Projects, Breakfast Clubs and Childminding Networks. The PlayCare Initiative is currently funded until 2006 and may be subject to continuation funding.

C) The New Opportunities Fund

The New Opportunities Fund Out of School Hours Childcare (OOSHC) has provided £324,553 to support to the After School sector in 2003-04. This investment has enabled a range of services to develop where previously they did not exist, supporting 418 places over this period.

All of these funding schemes are short term and will cease from June 2004 onwards, coming to an end in March 2006. The Sure Start Programme, however, is Government funded (see Section 5).

Children First Allocations Eastern Childcare Partnership Awards in 03/04	
Childhood Fund Peace II	£ 982,138
New Opportunities Fund / Out of School Hours Childcare Initiative	£ 324,553
PlayCare Peace II	£ 276,285
Sure Start	£ 2,720,229
Total	£ 4,303,205

2.2 Funding by Education and Library Boards

In relation to education, considerable investment has been made through the Pre-School Education Expansion Programme (PEEP), targeting children in their pre-school year and making available free places to parents who want them. This funding, paid directly to providers, has been significant within the Pre-School sector.

Allocation through the PEEP Programme 2003/04

ELB Area	Places	Value
BELB	627	£ 815,100
SEELB	1,571	£ 2,042,380

In June, the Department of Education (DE) launched a consultation document on the future of the Pre-School Education Expansion Programme. Clarification is required from DE as to the likelihood of this Programme being continued.

2.3 New Funding 04/05 – DHSS&PS

In June 2004, the DHSS&PS made available, recurrently, £1million (approx) regionally, to support Early Years services currently funded under the Childhood Fund and whose funding was to cease in June 2004. It is likely that the Board will receive just over £400k (approx) of this money, which includes the indicative allocation for the area and unspent resources from other areas within the region. This money will be largely targeted upon the Pre-School sector, as most of the groups within the Childhood Fund support services for this age range. After-school groups will not benefit from these recurrent resources having not previously been beneficiaries of the Childhood Fund. A number will therefore face closure this year.

The Partnership is aware that the DHSS&PS is also bidding for a further allocation of approximately £1million for the Sure Start Programme for the period 2005-06.

Section 3: Demography and Provision



3.1 The Eastern Area

The Eastern Area has a population of 689,683¹, which accounts for 40% of the total population of Northern Ireland.

The area that the Eastern Childcare Partnership operates within is coterminous with the boundaries of the Eastern Health and Social Services Board. Whilst Government and external funding have been skewed to address the impact of social and economic deprivation, the ECP seeks to ensure the needs of families living in rural areas are also met.

3.2 Child Population (Children Aged 0-14)

Within the Eastern Area there are approximately 131,388 children aged 0 to 14 yrs; 19% of the total population in the Eastern Board. Within the child population there are 38,947 who are of pre-school age, 72,379 are of primary school age and 20,062 are in their early teens.

Table One gives a breakdown of the age of children and young people and where they are living in the Eastern Area according to the Health and Social Service Trust area.

Table One

Eastern Area - CHILD POPULATION (0-14 YEARS)					
Child Population, by Trust and by Age Band					
TRUST	0-3	4	5-12	13-14	TOTAL
DLT	8986	2419	21055	5636	38,096
NWBT	7304	1874	17478	5050	31,706
SEBT	7962	2012	18796	5250	34,020
UCHT	6594	1796	15050	4126	27,566
TOTAL	30,846	8,101	72,379	20,062	131,388

¹Source: Child Health System, March 2004.

These figures include approx 3,694 0-14 yr olds whose postcode was missing or could not be mapped to a ward. These numbers were distributed proportionately among the Trusts.

3.3 Current Range of Provision (Children 0-14)

'Children First: The Northern Ireland Childcare Strategy' placed a responsibility on the Childcare Partnerships to identify the current range of childcare provision in their area, and to increase the supply of childcare places to meet the needs of the child population. This section gives a synopsis of the number and type of childcare places that exist within the Eastern Area, and highlights some of the issues that affect service provision within this sector.

Provision by Type and Volume within each Trust Area (March 2004)

Table Two

Childcare Provision - Eastern Area										
Provision	Down Lisburn HSST		North and West HSST		South and East HSST		Ulster Community and Hospitals HSST		EHSSB	
	No	Places	No	Places	No	Places	No	Places	No	Places
Childminders	435	2031	375	1875	460	2148	543	2535	1813	8589
Crèche	6	73	27	442	32	422	4	72	69	1009
Playgroups	72	1520	50	1159	59	1334	54	1291	235	5304
Day-care	20	703	9	366	41	1740	15	592	85	3401
Out of School	18	379	48	1139	26	629	10	238	102	2385
Parent/Toddler		N/a		N/a		N/a		N/a		
Total	551	4706	509	4981	618	6273	626	4728	2304	20688

Source: ECP Database, March 2004.

The vast majority of childcare provision identified in the above table is supported by short term funding streams, with the exception of childminders and private daycare.

The lack of mainstream funding currently available will have the greatest impact upon Playgroups within Down Lisburn and Ulster Community and Hospitals Trust areas. Crèche and After-Schools services in the Greater Belfast area will be most affected.

Within both the Down Lisburn and Ulster Community and Hospitals Trust areas there are a limited number of Out of School Hours services. Down Lisburn area has the highest number of children aged between 5-12 years in the Eastern Area, alongside UCHT it experiences difficulties in developing services due to a range of issues. The absence of community infrastructures; the use of the Robson and Noble indices of deprivation as a focus for funding decision; and limited recognition that there are pockets of deprivation within affluent areas, have together served to restrict funding to the more rural Trusts.

Within each Trust area in the ECP, many service providers struggle to generate income which would sufficiently support quality services that may need to include transport costs.

Although it appears there are a large number of childminding places available, the figures identify registered places rather than available places.

Childminders can be registered for a maximum of six children but may choose to take a lesser number. The ECP have invested in Development Officers at NICMA to support the development of the uptake of registration in each Trust area.

Section 4: Key Result Areas Achievements 2003/04 and Priority Actions 2004/05



4.1 Introduction

The Joint Strategic Planning Group for Early Years (JSPGEY) is a sub committee of both the Children and Young People's Committee and the Eastern Childcare Partnership.

The JSPGEY has identified three high-level objectives for providing Early Years services. These are to:

- enhance the personal, physical, social, emotional, educational and cultural development of children and young people aged 0-14 years;
- promote social inclusion in terms of disadvantaged communities, individual children, and their families;
- support parents in work and those who wish to return to work, education or training.

This Review report for the period 2003-04:

- a. demonstrates the outcomes achieved against these key aims for the 2003/04 period in a Traffic Light Format (see explanation of format in Section 4.2);
- b. provides supplementary commentary to support the Traffic Light Format (Section 4.3);
- c. highlights the priority areas of work agreed for the 2004-05 period within the context of the following themes (Section 4.4);
 - A. Information
 - B. Training and Quality
 - C. Inclusion and Equality
 - D. Funding and Sustainability
 - E. Family Support
 - F. Sure Start
 - G. Local Partnership structures

4.2 Traffic Light Format

The Traffic Light Format is a tool used by the Partnership to identify completed tasks, areas of work that have been progressed but have not been completed, and outstanding work still to be addressed.

Green - indicates tasks which have been completed.

Amber - indicates tasks which are ongoing and are still relevant within the lifetime of the Eastern Childcare Plan 2002-05.

Red - indicates tasks which have not been achieved. These will be carried forward into the 2004-05 period unless no longer relevant within the lifetime of the Plan.

The **Key Result Areas** identified in the table relate to the high-level aims as identified by the Joint Strategic Planning Group for Early Years (JSPGEY). These aims were stated in the Eastern Childcare Plan 2003-05 and the Children's Services Plan 2002-05 and remain unchanged.

The **Objectives** identify the sub-sets of action required to achieve these high-level aims.

The **Action** column highlights work undertaken to date, or planned. These action points were identified in last year's Plan.

NB The Action column has been taken directly from last year's Plan.
The Traffic Light coding highlights progress made during this year.


Progress Against Priorities 2003/04

Traffic Light Report - March 2004			
Key Result Area: Supporting parents in work & those Year who wish to return to work, education or training.			End of 2003/04
Objective	Action Number	Actions	Outcome
To provide comprehensive information to parents, service providers and service users.	1	(1) The Partnership will recruit an Information Officer. (2) The ECP team will develop an up to date and accurate database in liaison with all partner organisations. (3) The Partnership will progress a database which will be accessible, in conjunction with the Regional Strategy. (4) A website will be developed which will provide a range of information resources to colleagues and the public. (5) An area wide newsletter will be published.	
To promote good practice, e.g. improving staff qualifications and terms and conditions.	2	(1) Complete an area wide Workforce Audit and share findings and recommendations with all partner agencies. (2) The Partnership will establish priority areas for training and support within available resources. (3) The Peace II Training Project will be implemented. (4) The ECP will continue to promote good practice in relation to terms and conditions of employment for Early Years staff. (5) The Partnership will ensure good practice by influencing compliance conditions in PlayCare Letters of Offer.	
To promote a positive response by employers to the childcare needs of their employees through continued liaison with the Employers for Childcare organisation.	3	(1) The Partnership will continue to participate as a member of Employers for Childcare Advisory Group. (2) A further co-working relationship will be developed with Opportunity Now to promote the Work Life Balance agenda. (3) Employers will be helped to explore a range of childcare options for their employees.	

Key Result Area: The personal, physical, social, emotional, educational and cultural development of children and young people aged 0-14 years.			End of Year 2003/04
Objective	Action Number	Actions	Outcome
To develop the Eastern Childcare Partnership Quality Standards.	1	(1) The Partnership will work alongside the Trust Early Years Teams to progress policies, procedures and guidance in relation to Common Standards across the sector. (2) Participate in the Review of Play undertaken by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). (3) Create a model for best value play provision. (4) Support an event to promote policy and strategy in relation to good practice and quality showcases, linking with the implementation of Common Standards. (5) Monitor and review the uptake of Quality Assurance Schemes within the sector.	
Support Government Strategy in relation to Healthy Communities.	2	(1) Support and evaluate the Play for All initiative. (2) The Partnership will support Out 2 Play and Fit 4 Play projects.	
To ensure available resources are targeted appropriately at areas of highest need, as evidenced by Partnership information.	3	(1) The maintenance of baseline data systems. (2) Commission research and capacity building on the needs of under-represented communities, e.g. rural areas.	
Supporting District Councils' Cultural Strategies and ensure that Early Years and the Eastern Childcare Partnership is represented.	4	Create stronger links with local Councils ensuring the Early Years agenda is considered within Cultural Strategies.	
Support a holistic approach to community safety, including child safety and child protection. This also includes encouraging urban regeneration and anti-pollution initiatives.	5	(1) Capture statistical evidence of the impact of these initiatives. (2) Identify good practice initiatives in relation to child safety linking to relevant forums, i.e. BCC Child Safety Forum. (3) Continue to engage with OFMDFM in relation to the development of a Children's Strategy. (4) Link with a range of regeneration initiatives, i.e. Neighbourhood Renewal, Community Empowerment Partnerships.	

Key Result Area: The personal, physical, social, emotional, educational and cultural development of children and young people aged 0-14 years.			End of Year 2003/04
Objective	Action Number	Actions	Outcome
To support Service Providers in specific priority areas.	6	(1) Develop information capacity to support service providers. (2) Continue to engage with relevant Departments in relation to mainstream funding. (3) Support Health and Social Services Trusts to implement the Voluntary Grant Aid Policy. (4) Ensure the views of local providers are represented in the ECP through the four District Partnerships. (5) Provide Development Officer support for Childminders. (6) The Partnership will provide a Development Officer for the Out of School sector.	
Address issues of short/long term viability and self-sufficiency.	7	(1) Progress the finding of the Sustainability Audit and engage with DHSS&PS as to requirements of the sector in respect of mainstreaming. (2) Organise and implement a Strategy which will engage the Partnership with key Government Departments and begin to profile issues such as the sustainability of the sector. (3) Ensure issues of sustainability and mainstreaming are progressed on a regional basis and in partnership with all Area Childcare Partnerships.	
To identify the barriers which prevent mainstream services being accessed by children with a disability, special needs and children with challenging behaviour and progress action to promote Best Practice in relation to Inclusion.	8	(1) Ensure ongoing commitment to provide Financial Support to the Disability Grant Scheme. (2) Ensure ongoing commissioning and review of training requirements through the Workforce Audit and Training Sub Committee. (3) To take responsive action to the outcomes of the Workforce Audit by providing a range of appropriate training. (4) Complete a comprehensive consultation with parents, providers and professionals in relation to the barriers to accessing services disabled children and their family's experience.	

Key Result Area: Social inclusion in respect of communities or individual children and their families.			End of Year 2003/04
Objective	Action Number	Actions	Outcome
To ensure the recommendations of the Research Project, 'Childcare Needs of the Chinese Community', are supported.	1	(1) The Social Inclusion Sub Group will convene a task group to progress the recommendations of the Research Project, 'Childcare Needs of the Chinese Community'. (2) This task group will have multi agency representation, and will complete their work within a specific time line.	
To ensure that Early Years provision meets the needs of Minority Ethnic Communities and takes into account the cultural diversity of Chinese, Irish Traveller, Indian, Philippine communities et al.	2	(1) The Social Inclusion Task Group will strengthen existing networking and consultation mechanisms to ensure a clear understanding of need and barriers to accessing services. (2) Identified needs of Ethnic Minority communities will be addressed by making connections with key Partnership structures such as the Strategic Funding Panel, Training Sub Committee and District Childcare Partnerships. (3) The consultation findings will also contribute to the development of a Family Support Strategy and be shared with the Children and Young People's Committee.	
To begin to respond to the needs of Refugees and Asylum Seekers, flexibly and creatively.	3	(1) Strengthen existing networks and extend Partnership relationships to include advisory and support groups working with people seeking asylum or who are Refugees. (2) Establish an overview of existing research and commission research where none exists. (3) Progress a consultation exercise with people seeking asylum or who are Refugees; the recommendations for which will be progressed into the Family Support Strategy.	
To ensure that Early Years provision is responsive to the needs of parents.	4	(1) Build upon the learning and recommendations of the evaluation of the Pilot Project 'Engaging Parents in the Childcare Partnerships'. (2) Create new opportunities to engage with parents. (3) Ensure the consultation messages are progressed and included in the Family Support Strategy. (4) The Partnership will target PlayCare provision towards disadvantaged groups and Ethnic Minorities.	

Key Result Area: Social inclusion in respect of communities or individual children and their families.			End of Year 2003/04
Objective	Action Number	Actions	Outcome
Evidence the impact of the Sure Start initiative on young children, their families and communities.	5	<p>(1) To continue the appraisal and evaluation of the Sure Start Programme and support the development of Sure Start Guidance documents in partnership with the DHSS&PS.</p> <p>(2) To ensure the effective animation of further Sure Start resources, within the Social Inclusion agenda.</p> <p>(3) To continue to build upon best practice models within the Sure Start Programme and gather evidence of this for dissemination to the Partnership.</p> <p>(4) Ensure an Information System suitable for monitoring purposes and data collection methods are available.</p> <p>(5) Participate in regional structures relevant to Sure Start such as Financial Accountability Working Group, Sure Start Information Group.</p> <p>(6) Work with PlayBoard to develop an Out of School database.</p>	

4.3 Supplementary Commentary for the Period 2003 - 2004

4.3.1 Information

- i. The Partnership has developed a comprehensive area wide database, accessible to the four Trust Early Years teams. This database contains details of all registered services including childminders, number of places and type of services, provided, qualifications of the staff, and current funding arrangements.
- ii. The Partnership will shortly complete the development of its own website www.easternchildcarepartnership.org.uk. The website will contain a range of general information about Early Years services and available resources and is aimed at the general public, especially parents and individuals working within the sector.
- iii. The ECP will be providing information support for the Article 20 Reviews, due for submission by the Trusts to the Board in April 2005. The comprehensive nature of the database has also had beneficial impact on both the Training and Quality Agenda and the policy development work of the Partnership. This will be referred to later.
- iv. The Partnership has agreed to jointly progress an area wide newsletter with the four District Childcare Partnerships. The first issue is due in September 2004.
- v. An area wide database and information system has been developed to support the Sure Start Programme (9 Projects). This system provides a uniform method of data collection and will support Projects with the quarterly monitoring submission required by the Partnership. The Partnership, in co-operation with the EHSSB, has also established information protocols for the Sure Start Programme, which includes good practice guidance in relation to data protection.

4.3.2 Training and Quality

The Training and Quality Sub Committee have progressed a range of initiatives set out in the 2003-04 Action Plan. Of nineteen tasks, 11 are green, 5 amber and 3 red.

- i. The Partnership completed a Workforce Audit of Early Years staff qualifications; this information has been incorporated in to the ECP database and arrangements are now in place with the Trusts Early Years teams to update this through the inspection process.
- ii. The analysis of the Audit has identified a range of areas, which Early Years staff have stated would benefit their professional development. These outcomes have been incorporated into the Training and Quality Action Plan 2004/06.
- iii. The Training and Quality Sub Committee have completed a Training Strategy which outlines the principles, key objectives and Action Plan for the area. In the absence of a Regional Training Strategy and resources to match, the ECP intends to seek additional resources to support the delivery of the Strategy, possibly through the Early Years Development Fund.
- iv. The Partnership has been successful in an application to the EU Peace and Reconciliation Programme (Measure 2.5) to the value of £240k. The Peace II Training Project will commence in September 2004; it will provide bespoke training to all types of providers within the Early Years sector in the following broad areas:
 - Anti Sectarian and Anti Bias Practice;
 - Inclusive Services for Disabled Children;
 - Capacity Building;
 - Quality Assurance.

The Project will run until 2006 and it is intended that it will provide up to 145 courses (approx) to 2,500 people (approx).

- v. A range of Training has been commissioned by the ECP throughout 03/04. This includes:
- Working with Children who have Special Needs;
 - Meeting the Challenge of Behaviour Management;
 - The Pre-School Child with Autism;
 - The Family View of Disability;
 - First Aid Training (400 places);
 - A pilot project with the Education Training Inspectorate Regional Training Unit and community playgroup staff.
- vi. In relation to promoting increased quality standards within Early Years settings the Partnership has:
- Invested in 20 Quality Assurance Schemes for After-School Clubs;
 - Purchased a 'Good Practice Guide to Effective Management' manual for every community based service;
 - Developed a guidance document to setting up an After-School Club, with accompanying policies and procedures;
 - Contributed to the ongoing workshops developing Minimum Standards in Early Years services.

4.3.3 Inclusion and Equality

The ECP is committed to the development of high quality inclusive services for children and their families and has progressed a number of initiatives which demonstrate this.

- i. The Peace II Training Project will support the roll out of anti-bias and anti-sectarian training to individuals working directly with children.
- ii. The Social Inclusion Task Group has facilitated several consultation events, inviting parents and those working with parents and children from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, and people seeking asylum or who are Refugees, to identify their needs in relation to Family Support. The recommendations from these consultations will inform the development of a joint ECP and EHSSB Family Support Strategy.

- iii. A consultation exercise in the form of a questionnaire has been completed with a wide range of parents currently using Early Years services. Again, it is intended that the recommendations will inform the forthcoming Family Support Strategy.
- iv. The Partnership has continued to provide financial support to a Disability Grant Scheme, supporting the inclusion of disabled children in Early Years settings.
- v. The Play for All Project received an award in the category of 'Participation' within the EHSSB European Year of Disabled People Awards Scheme.

4.3.4 Funding and Sustainability

The Early Years sector has traditionally survived on short-term funding. As a response to the ending of several major funding streams the ECP has completed a range of tasks.

- i. A comprehensive 'Sustainability Audit' was completed in June 2003 and revised in November 2003. This exercise outlined the actual resources available within the sector, the date these cease to be available and the funding required to securely support services to a reasonable standard. This Audit was forwarded to the DHSS&PS.
- ii. The ECP did have two Development Officers, funded from Early Years Development Funding (EYDF), supporting the expansion of the Out of School Hours sector. The DHSS&PS ceased to make funding for these posts available from September 2004, which limits the Partnership from progressing this area of work.
- iii. The Partnership has provided financial support to four District Childcare Partnerships (DCP's), which support the sector at local level. This has enabled the DCP's to hold a range of events and workshops throughout the year, providing information and capacity support to the Early Years sector in each local area.
- iv. The ECP, along with the other Area Childcare Partnerships, has engaged in Regional Forums, such as the Childhood Fund Steering Group, and has highlighted the immediate concerns about the expansion and development of Early Years services.

- v. Representatives from the ECP have, in conjunction with the other Area Partnerships, requested a meeting with the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety to discuss the difficulties for Early Years services in the absence of a long term funding strategy.

4.3.5 Family Support

- i. The Joint Strategic Planning Group for Early Years has produced a draft Family Support Strategy, which will be further debated by both the ECP and the Children and Young People's Committee (CYPC). This is part of a regional overarching strategy by each of the CYPCs and Area Childcare Partnerships, and an action plan to support the development of the strategy will be required, to be agreed by all agencies.

4.3.6 Local Partnership Structures

- i. The four DCP's each progressed a themed piece of work within the period 2003-04. These included a series of events in relation to child safety including child protection organised by North and West Belfast DCP, consultations with parents by South and East Belfast DCP, information booklet for parents by North Down and Ards DCP, and training and quality by Down Lisburn DCP.
- ii. The DCP's will assist the ECP and the Eastern Health and Social Services Board progress a number of substantial and strategic plans such as the Childcare Plan 2005-08 and the Article 20 Reviews due in 2005.

4.4 Priority Tasks for the Period 2004-05

4.4.1 Information

- Progress Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping of Early Years services, including resources, places and training;
- Continue to link with key voluntary and statutory partners in relation to obtaining an accurate sustainability audit 2004-05;
- Continue to develop information resources for members, partner organisations and the public via the website and other mediums.

4.4.2 Training and Quality

- Progress the implementation of the Training Strategy and accompanying Action Plan;
- Finalise a regionally agreed Qualifications Framework for Early Years;
- Management and commissioning of the Peace II Training Project;
- In response to the Workforce Audit completed by the ECP, seek resources to commission training;
- Ensure the Workforce Audit database is updated and maintained and fit for a range of purposes;
- Monitor and review the update of Quality Assurance Schemes;
- Produce a Training Providers Directory;
- Convene a Training Providers Forum;
- Activate agreed joint working arrangements with Women's Aid in relation to raising awareness of the impact of Domestic Violence.

4.4.3 Inclusion and Equality

- The Partnership intends to develop the Play for All Project to reflect the recommendations of a recent independent evaluation;
- A model of consultation will be finalised, ensuring the views of a range of parents are collected. As a priority, the Partnership will progress effective and creative models of consultation with children in relation to their views and wishes for Early Years services;
- In association with Children in Northern Ireland, the Partnership intends to hold an event exploring anti-bias practice with those working directly with children;
- Further to the successful consultation exercises, the Partnership intends to strengthen new relationships with key organisations such as NICEM and the Multi-Cultural Resource Centre.

4.4.4 Funding and Sustainability

- The Partnership will participate in a regional exercise, which will complete a 'Sustainability Audit' for the Early Years sector (0-14 years);
- The Partnership will finalise a Lobbying Strategy which will promote an awareness of the current funding structures to key Stakeholders, Departmental Officials and Political Representatives;
- The Partnership will continue to support the District Childcare Partnerships as Local Early Years Forums through the provision of infrastructure funding.

4.4.5 Family and Support

- The Partnership and CYPC will develop an Action Plan to progress the Family Support Strategy by March 2005;
- The JSPGEY will contribute to the development of 'high level outcomes' for children and young people to be agreed by the CYPC and ECP;

- The ECP will continue to support the JSPGEY in the development of a range of information planning tools, which support the planning process;
- The ECP will design a model of consultation in relation to both children and parents; this will become embedded into the ECP's planning process and inform the development of the Childcare Plan 2005-08.

4.4.6 Local Partnership Structures

- The Eastern Childcare Partnership will continue to support existing structures within the District Childcare Partnerships;
- The ECP will clarify with each DCP their contribution to the priorities 2004-05; an Action Plan to address these will be agreed.

Section 5: Sure Start



5.1 Introduction

Recognising the importance of supporting parents/carers and the long-term benefit of quality experiences to very young children, Sure Start is a Government initiative targeting 0-3 year olds and their families. It represents the Government's belief that a commitment to social inclusion can positively impact upon the lives of the youngest children and their families, and promote equality of opportunity.

The aim of Sure Start is:

"to work with parents and children to promote the physical, intellectual, social and emotional development of pre-school children - particularly those who are disadvantaged - to ensure they can flourish at home and when they get to school".

(DHSS&PS Guidance 2000)

Sure Start Projects are locally based and operate in areas of highest need. Through a holistic range of services and partnerships, Sure Start is committed to the early identification of special needs of children and their parents and provision of specialist support to meet these needs. The Sure Start Programme is supported by key **foundation principles**, which include: co-ordinating, streamlining and adding value to existing services in local communities; the involvement of parents in the planning of services and promoting the participation of all local families.

Within all Sure Start Projects there are **core elements**, which must be evident. These are:

- Outreach and home visiting services, to make contact as early as possible in the child's life and draw families into using other services;
- Family support, including befriending, social support and parenting information, both group and home based;
- Good quality play, learning and child care experiences for children, both group and home based;
- Primary and community healthcare and advice, and
- Support for children with special needs, both within the Sure Start services offered and through signposting to more specialised services where necessary.

The following Sure Start Projects exist:

Project	Full Year Effect 03/04
Downpatrick (0-4 years pop. 1,436) Wards: Ardglass, Audley's Acre, Ballymote, Cathedral, Killough, Quoile, Strangford.	£352,716
Colin Neighbourhood (0-4 years pop. 1,353) Wards: Collin Glen, Kilwee, Poleglass, Twinbrook.	£407,927
Greater Shankill (0-4 years pop. 1,662) Wards: Ballysillan, Crumlin, Glencairn, Highfield, Shankill, Woodvale.	£362,544
Kids' n' Kin (0-4 years pop. 873) Wards: Ardoyne, Cliftonville.	£278,021
S.M.I.L.E. (0-4 years pop. 1,350) Wards: Castleview, Duncairn, New Lodge, Water Works.	Begins April 04
Clan Mor (0-4 years pop. 682) Wards: Falls, Clonard.	£340,705
Inner City East Belfast (0-4 years pop. 1,126) Wards: Ballymacarrett, Island, The Mount, Woodstock.	£320,999
Inner City South Belfast (0-4 years pop. 1,227) Wards: Ballynafeigh, Blackstaff, Botanic, Shaftesbury, Upper Malone.	£444,585
Lower Ards Peninsula (0-4 years pop. 842) Wards: Ballywalter, Kircubbin, Portaferry, Portavogie.	£212,732

In 2003 the ECP conducted a review of the then existing eight Sure Start Projects. The review focussed on a number of areas, including the delivery of core elements, management structures, effective relationships with parents, involvement of health and social care professional services and local community services. The outcomes of the review have enabled the Partnership to identify with Projects key areas for development, adjustment and re-shaping.

It has also been an opportunity to highlight some of the creative and unique services the Sure Start Projects have developed such as:

- Innovative work with fathers;
- Peer support for school age mothers;
- Ante and post-natal support in group settings;
- Speech and language skills for non professional staff working directly with children;
- Parent-led support for families with disabled children;
- A range of parenting training opportunities.

5.2 Further Investment

In 2004-05 the Partnership intends to support the Sure Start Programme by:

- ensuring the recommendations arising from the Strategic Action Plans 2004-05, submitted to the Partnership, are addressed by each Project;
- developing an area wide information system, which will support the collection of quantitative data for monitoring and Project development purposes. This will assist the Projects in the progression of collating qualitative information also. This will be in place by September 2004;
- developing models of good practice within the range of core services currently being provided; profiling these within mainstream services and allowing Projects to exchange examples of good practice.

Additional resources have been made available within the Eastern Area; the Partnership is currently progressing the development of two capital projects from this funding which will provide new purpose built premises for the Downpatrick and Lower Ards Peninsula Projects.

This funding also ensured that the Lower North Belfast area benefited from the Programme. S.M.I.L.E Sure Start will provide a service to 1,350 children in the New Lodge, Duncairn and Mount Vernon areas. A reshaping exercise is underway in the Ardoyne and Cliftonville areas; it is likely a revised service will be developed in response to a recent community consultation exercise commissioned by the Partnership.

Appendices and Glossaries



Appendix 1

Eastern Childcare Partnership Members

Theresa Nixon	EHSSB, Chair ECP
Marguerite Hunter Blair	PlayBoard, Vice Chair ECP
Anne McDermott	South Eastern Education & Library Board
Bria Mongan	Down Lisburn HSS Trust
Bridget Nodder	NICMA
Carol Diffin	South & East Belfast District Childcare Partnership
Colum Conway	NIPPA
David Vance	EHSSB (Training)
Deirdre Webb	EHSSB, Public Health, Medicine and Nursing
Evelyn Curran	ECP Co-ordinator
Irene McCready	North Down & Ards District Childcare Partnership
John Devaney	EHSSB
Joy Poots	South & East Belfast District Childcare Partnership
Kevin McCormick	Barnardos (ECP Disability Advisor)
Maria McGuire	North & West Belfast HSS Trust
Marilyn Warren	Belfast Education & Library Board
Patricia Nicholl	North Down & Ards District Childcare Partnership
Pauline McRory	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Peter Elliott	Department of Employment & Learning
Roisin Marshall	NICIE
Roisin Melly	CCMS
Seamus McElroy	Private Daycare Representative
Siobhan Slavin	Down Lisburn District Childcare Partnership
Sue Pentell	North & West Belfast District Childcare Partnership
Sylvia Moore	Belfast City Council
Una Gilmore	Children in Northern Ireland Rep

Development Team

Evelyn Curran	Co-ordinator ECP
John O'Neill	Information Officer ECP
Joan Blain	Training Co-ordinator - until August 2003
Roberta McLarnon	Training Co-ordinator - since January 2004
Kyra Pauley	Development Officer - until April 2004
Dolores Wilson	Development Officer - until March 2004
Anne Maxwell	Development Worker based at NICMA
Geraldine Stinton	Development Worker based at NICMA
Cahal Hynds	Childhood Fund NIPPA

District Childcare Partnership Co-ordinators

Mary Murphy	North & West Belfast District Childcare Partnership
Judith McLaughlin	North Down & Ards District Childcare Partnership
Linda McConnell	Down Lisburn District Childcare Partnership
Lorraine Brennan	South & East Belfast District Childcare Partnership

Appendix 2

Glossary of Terms

Article 20 Reviews

These are the statutory reviews of Early Years services carried out by Health and Social Services Trusts and Education Boards under the Children (NI) Order (1995).

Pre-School Education Expansion Programme

The Government Strategy to provide universal funded pre-school education.

Children First

The Northern Ireland Childcare Strategy - A Policy Statement.

Sure Start

A Government initiative to support the development of services for children aged 0-3 and their families.

New Opportunities Fund (NOF)

National Lotteries Charity Board funded initiative, which has the responsibility for the Out of Schools Childcare Initiative and Building Quality Childcare.

Eastern Area Childcare Partnership

A partnership of those interested in the development of childcare for children aged 0-14 in the Eastern Region.

Children's Services Plan

A multi-agency Children's Services Plan produced by the Eastern Health and Social Services Board Children and Young People's Committee. The current plan, 'For All Our Children', is for 2002-2005.

Joint Strategic Planning Group (JSPG) Early Years

A sub-group of the Early Years and Children and Young People's Committee, which has responsibility of the strategic planning of Early Years services in line with the Children's Service Planning Process.

District Childcare Partnerships

The four local sub-groups of the Area Childcare Partnership based in Health and Social Service Trust Areas.

Abbreviations

ACPC	Area Child Protection Committee
ACP	Area Childcare Partnership
AEYC	Area Early Years Committee (Predecessor of the ECP)
BCC	Belfast City Council
BELB	Belfast Education and Library Board
BQC	Building Quality Childcare
CiNI	Children in Northern Ireland
CFAF	Children First Advisory Forum
CHF	Childhood Fund (Peace II)
CYPC	Children and Young People's Committee
DCP	District Childcare Partnerships
DE	Department of Education
DEL	Department of Employment and Learning
DHSS&PS	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
DLT	Down Lisburn Trust
ECP	Eastern Childcare Partnership
EHSSB	Eastern Health and Social Services Board
EYDF	Early Years Development Funds
GIS	Geographical Information System
JSPGEY	Joint Strategic Planning Group for Early Years (sub group of CYPC)

KRA	Key Result Areas
MCRC	Multi Cultural Resource Centre
NICEM	Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities
NICIE	Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education
NICMA	Northern Ireland Childminding Association
NICVA	Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action
NIHE	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
NIPPA	Northern Ireland Preschool Playgroup Association
NLCB	National Lotteries Charities Board
NOF	New Opportunities Fund
NWBT	North and West Belfast Trust
OFMDFM	Office of the First Minister & Deputy First Minister
OOSHC	Out of School Hours Childcare
PEAG	Pre-School Education Advisory Group
PEEP	Pre-School Education Expansion Program
SEBT	South and East Belfast Trust
UCHT	Ulster Community and Hospitals Trust

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Upon request it will be translated into Urdu, Bengali, Cantonese, Hindi, Punjabi, Irish, Ulster Scots.

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پر www.easternchildcarepartnership.org.uk

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