

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: August 20 2009	Decision Maker: Executive Member for Children's Services
Report title:		Sure Start Early Years Capital Grant Programme	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Mike Smith – Assistant Director 0-5 Services and Community	

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That the Executive Member approve the Sure Start Early Years Capital Grant (SSEYCG) funding programme for 2008-2011.
2. That the Executive Member approves the round 1, 2009-10 SSEYCG funding allocated to the providers by the Project Groups' assessment panel. The allocations are outlined in appendix 1.
3. That the Executive member approve the carrying over of any unspent capital funds from 2008- 9 into 2009/10 and 2010/11 and notes that a significant portion (£950,000) of the 2008-09 allocation has been transferred to the SureStart Children's Centre programme phase 3.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4. The Sure Start Early Years Capital Grant (SSEYCG) is a specific grant to Local Authorities to support the delivery of the 10 year Childcare Strategy and the duties outlined in the Childcare Act 2006. The Childcare Act 2006 gives local Authorities duties to improve the well being of children under five through the provision of integrated services and by improving the quality of the learning environment within early year's provision.
5. Southwark Council was allocated capital funding totaling £5,046,621 (£1,682,207 per year over 3 years), for 2008 - 2011 from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), to extend the government programme of providing free early education entitlement to all 3 and 4 year olds. The capital grant has been allocated based on the number of children under five and the number of private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector early years settings. The DCSF in its letter dated 30 November 2007 outlined the three main aims of the grant:
 - a. To improve the quality of the learning environment in early years settings to support the delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), with a particular emphasis on improving play and physical activities; and ICT resources.
 - b. To ensure all children, including disabled children, are able to access provision.

- c. To enable private, voluntary and independent (PVI) providers to deliver the extension to the free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds, including increasing the flexibility for take up of the offer by meeting needs for additional space or facilities.
6. The expectation is that the majority of the Sure Start capital grant is used to improve the quality of the environment in PVI early years and childcare settings, both to support higher quality experiences for young children and to ensure that all children can access services and benefit fully from them. It is also intended that the capital grant will:
 - Improve outcomes for children and young people
 - Ensure quality of provision and safeguarding of children
 - Develop environments that can cater flexibly for the integrated delivery of children services within community focused local delivery sites.
7. It is important to emphasise that spending on the maintained sector has not been precluded from the programme.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

8. The proposed grant set out in this report is recommended in accordance with the Council's agreed grant to voluntary organisations policies and procedures.
9. This grant will allow Southwark to invest strategically to ensure that the PVI sector is able to deliver high quality learning and development for all children. It is recognised that this can only be achieved by creating the right built environment and providing adequate and appropriate resources alongside adopting the best of professional practice for working with young children. This means providing enough space for larger group sizes which can also be used flexibly, up-to-date facilities and equipment to support learning and development. In addition the grant will support Southwark to meet its childcare sufficiency duty to ensure as far as is reasonably practicable that all children of working parents are able to access provision.

Policy Implications

10. In accordance with Part 3D: Matters reserved to individual executive members for decision (Southwark Constitution) only individual executive members can consider decisions on the following.
 - Approving Grants to Voluntary Organisations over £2,500, apart from those under the Community Support Programme.

Consultation

11. Consultation and discussion took place with the PVI and maintained sector prior to the launching of the programme. All agreed that this funding offered an excellent opportunity for the sector(s) to provide a quality, more inclusive and effective service. In addition, this would also enable the council to fill the gaps

between demand and supply as identified in its childcare sufficiency assessment.

12. All providers were offered an opportunity to attend a further information session at which the bidding process was explained. The recommendations in this report follow from the bids made by providers.

Project Group

13. A project group headed by the Assistant Director, 0-5 Services and Community has been established to steer the development of the SSEYCG programme and act in an advisory capacity to oversee its implementation in accordance with the eligibility criteria. All applications are assessed against criteria and key priorities. Critically, the project group assesses value for money and monitors to ensure the process is fair and transparent. Once an award has been agreed, settings will be required to enter into a contractual agreement with the council to ensure that funds are appropriately used.
14. Two types of projects are managed through the grant process:
 - Projects with a value of £5,000 and under (which have a single stage application process), and
 - Projects with a value in excess of £5,000 (which have a two stage process).
15. The Project Group met on 15th June 2009, to consider applications submitted for funding in the 2009-10 first round. A total of 55 applications were received, of which 30 were recommended for approval under the single stage process and 9 were recommended for approval to move on to the 2nd stage process. The recommendations are detailed in appendix 1. A second bidding round is scheduled to be announced in October 2009.

Monitoring

16. All settings supported under the Sure Start Early Years Capital Grant Programme will be required to submit monitoring reports and complete periodic checks. Settings will also be required to provide additional information on e.g. the impact the programme is having on its service, the number of new places created/secured, and what assets have been purchased and works carried out.
17. Financial monitoring will ensure that organisations utilise their funding allocation in line with the guidelines and contractual conditions. This process will also ensure that greater accountability and transparency is maintained.
18. Approval is now being sought to award the grants as outlined in appendix 1.

Resource implications

19. The Sure Start Early Years Grant 2008-11 is profiled over a three year period as follows:

2008/9	£1,682,207

2009/10	£1,682,207
2010/11	£1,682,207
Total	£5,046,621

The DCSF have confirmed that capital funding may be carried forward from 2008-09 into 2009-10 and 2010-11. It is important to note that £950,000 (from the 2008-09 allocation) has been earmarked for SureStart Children centres phase 3 programme to ensure the Council meets its obligations in respect of the creation of 21 Children's Centres

Community Impact Statement

20. The grant requirements also state that local authorities should invest to provide key facilities wherever they are required and work with as many PVI settings as possible to ensure that their environment and facilities are welcoming and inclusive.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Strategic Director for Communities, Law & Governance

21. The Strategic Director for Communities Law & Governance (acting through the Contracts Section) notes the content of this report and, in particular the recommendations contained within paragraphs 1 to 3. Paragraph 10 confirms the Constitutional power reserved to the Executive Member. The report confirms the extent and sources of the grant funding and the providers that will benefit from grant allocation during the current financial year. The distribution of this funding is consistent with both national and corporate policy and objectives.

Finance Director

22. As set out above the proposed allocations detailed in the Appendix to this report will be funded from capital resources provided to the Council through the Sure Start programme.
23. Total Sure start resources of £5,046,621 have been made available to fund capital works in PVI settings over a 3 year period (2008-11). Resources of £4,096,621 are now available for allocation over that period (i.e. £5,046,621 - £950,000 allocated for premises occupied by Gumboots Community Nursery, which is part the Children's Centre programme phase 3).
24. The proposals set out in this report total £828,571. This will leave resources of £3,268,050 to be allocated and spent over the remaining life of the programme (i.e. 2009-11).
25. DCSF has confirmed that unspent allocations can be carried forward from 2008-9 to 2009-10 and from 2009-10 to 2010-11. No commitment has been made, however, to agree any carry over beyond 31st March 2011.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Department for Children, Schools and families letter dated 30 November 2007	Children's Services Department Tooley Street SE1 2TZ	Jennifer Jackson 0207 525 5314
Department for Children, Schools and Families Letter dated 14 th February 2008		
Department for Children, Schools and Families letter dated 30 th November 2008		
SSEYCG application pack – including information and guidance notes		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Table 1	List of grant allocations requiring approval

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Mike Smith, Assistant Director, 0-5 Services and Community	
Report Author	Jennifer Jackson, Head of Communities, Extended Services & Partnerships	
Version	Final	
Dated	06 August 2009	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director for Communities, Law & Governance	Yes	Yes
Finance Director	Yes	Yes
List other officers here		
Executive Member	Yes	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Officer		19/08/09