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BUCKINGHAMSHIRE EARLY YEARS DEVELOPMENT AND CHILDCARE PARTNERSHIP

Foreword

During the past year the Buckinghamshire Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership has continued to make significant progress. Challenging targets were set in the 2000-01 development plan. The great majority have been met and, in some cases, exceeded.

Over the last twelve months there has been a considerable increase in the provision of childcare services in Buckinghamshire, particularly in out of school places. The Children's Information Service is providing a wide range of information to parents and is actively engaged in the county's childcare recruitment drive. In selected areas free early education places for three year olds have been made available for the first time in the non-maintained sector, through government grant. The Partnership envisages this provision being available to all parents who want it, within four years. The training programme, open to all engaged in providing early years and childcare services, has expanded and continues to be well received and supported. Next year will see a further substantial increase in early education and childcare places available, to meet government targets.

The structure and working methods of the Partnership itself are now firmly established. A multi-agency approach to childcare support and development is in place and policy development is achieved through the work of the Partnership's various sub-groups. The cluster group structure, which brings together providers of early years and childcare services from all sectors in small groups for regular meetings, is proving a valuable vehicle for training and development.

The new development plan is in two parts. Firstly, the Strategic Plan for 2001-04 shows the Partnership's starting point and where it expects to be in three years time. This section of the plan sets out strategic goals and specific targets for each of its main areas of operation, showing the rate at which it intends progress should be made.

Secondly, the Implementation Plan for the year 2001-02 reviews the progress of the Partnership during the past twelve months in meeting the targets it set a year ago. It then sets out objectives and priorities for the coming year showing how these will contribute to the targets in the Partnership's Strategic Plan.

Taken together, these plans represent an enormous challenge for the Partnership and all those who work to meet its aims and objectives. A common purpose and a collaborative approach has been developed amongst those who provide early years and childcare services and those who support them which will stand the Partnership in good stead in the future.

The importance of the work of Partnerships, and the far-reaching effects of good quality early years education and childcare, is now increasingly recognised at national and local level. Much has been achieved; much also remains to be done. Through its development plan, the Partnership has charted a clear course for the further expansion and improved quality of the services it offers the children of Buckinghamshire over the next three years.

Margaret Dewar

*Chairman, Buckinghamshire Early Years Development
and Childcare Partnership*

The Partnership and its strategic vision

- The central aim of the Partnership, with the Local Authority, is to draw up and agree a Strategic and an Implementation Plan, for the development of early years and childcare, which meet the needs of the children and parents of Buckinghamshire, and to monitor progress in implementing the Plans.
- The Buckinghamshire Partnership meets its statutory obligation to ensure that all eligible four year olds have access to a free, part-time early education place for three terms beginning with the term in which their fourth birthday falls.

The Partnership represents a broad and balanced range of early years and childcare interests, including those who provide early education and childcare (0-14 years) in the maintained, private, voluntary and independent sectors, parents, and other bodies and interests within the local community. It has established a genuinely collaborative approach, drawing on a wide range of expertise and creative thinking. Plans are securely based upon an annual audit of needs and provision.

The Partnership seeks to

:

- *ensure sufficient early years and childcare places to meet local need*
- *promote quality in early education and childcare provision, through setting clear quality criteria, and monitoring performance*
- *recognise the diverse needs of children, including children with special educational needs and disabilities, and those of parents*
- *regard parents as important partners in the process of developing and improving services, valuing their views and the views of children*
- *be aware of the particular needs of working parents and employers in the local context*
- *ensure diversity of provision to meet a variety of need and maintain parental choice, recognising the strengths of the private and voluntary sector as well as the maintained sector, and seeking to sustain such settings in need of support*
- *provide comprehensive, accessible and widely available information about the range of services for children, and about career opportunities in childcare*
- *develop an expanding, trained and competent workforce in early education and childcare settings, through a varied training programme based on an audit of need, which includes access to qualifications*

Strategic goals

A period of massive expansion of early education and childcare services is underway nationally. In setting its own targets for 2001-04 the Buckinghamshire Partnership's Strategic Plan 2001-04 takes account of national strategic goals. There are some local priorities, however, for Buckinghamshire. They are:

- *to make available nursery education places for all three year-olds whose parents want one by September 2004*
- *to increase the number of childcare places of the type and in the location to meet identified need, with particular reference to ethnic communities, families on low incomes and rural areas,*
- *to boost the recruitment drive for childcare workers to enable this expansion to take place*
- *to raise the quality of early education and of childcare services, through the introduction of an accredited quality assurance scheme and by increasing accreditation opportunities*

Early Education and Childcare Places

Early Education

1. Early education places for 3 year olds

Please note: throughout the Strategic Plan the DfEE's national target is given in the first box in each section.

Target 1 – To provide a free part-time early education place for all 3 year olds whose parents want one by September 2004.

Buckinghamshire's target		Funding source	Contribution to national target
2001-02	1,670 places 635 places Total: 2,305 <i>Estimated 60% of 3 year olds in provision</i>	Nursery Education Grant LEA	The target over 3 years of 85% of three year olds in provision is considered to be a challenging but realisable target and meets the national expectation. <i>Note: Estimated % age of 3 year olds in provision is greater than the number of funded places. (see background narrative below.</i>
2002-03	2,284 places 635 Total: 2,919 <i>Estimated 75% of 3 year olds in provision</i>	Nursery Education Grant LEA	
2003-04	2,931 635 Total: 3,566 <i>Estimated 85% of 3 year olds in provision</i>	Nursery Education Grant LEA	

Background narrative

The DfEE estimates that its target of 85% of 3 year olds taking up early education places over 3 years represents universal provision. Buckinghamshire's socio-economic profile and traditional working patterns make it unlikely that demand for 3 year old provision would ever exceed this figure.

Significantly, the experience of the expansion of early education places for 3 year olds in 2000-01 in Buckinghamshire shows that, although all the parents in the targeted settings have been offered the full 5 sessions per week, many have opted to take up only 2 or 3 sessions for their child. Of the 368 places funded through the Nursery Education Grant, only 241 part-time places, (based on 5 sessions) were actually claimed.

This means that, although the total number of grant funded places to be achieved by 2004 is lower than the Partnership's target of 85% of the estimated 3 year old population at that time, the target is likely to be achieved because it is based on a calculation of the number of places that will actually be taken up by the 3 year old population.

Funded places will be spread across all sectors, the majority being in private, voluntary and independent settings. They will include settings providing integrated early years and childcare places.

Activity summary

- Target all new places first at categories of greatest need in urban areas, extending to include the surrounding areas where there are pockets of urban deprivation.
- Extend the scheme into Buckinghamshire's more sparsely populated rural areas where settings are experiencing financial difficulties and existing places may be lost.

Feasibility constraints

Success depends upon:

- spare capacity in settings being available
- funding from government grant
- rising demand at the expected rate from parents for three year early education places
- sufficient transport being available in rural areas

2. New out of school childcare places

Target 2 – To have set up at least 360,000 new out of school childcare places for 720,000 children by 2003

Buckinghamshire's target		Funding source	Contribution to national target
	Bids will be submitted to the Fund to enable the following new childcare places to be set up:		
2001-02	600	New Opportunities Fund (NOF) and Childcare Grant	Buckinghamshire's forecast position will be slightly lower than the DfEE target for Buckinghamshire of 2787 places to be bid for by 2003
2002-03	900		
2003-04	<u>932</u>		
	<u>2432</u> places		
	Type of place to be created: (approximate)		
After school	23%		
Before school	12%		
Both	24%		
Holiday club	15%		
All year	26%		

Background activity

To date the Partnership has exceeded its targets for the expansion of out of school childcare. The new indicative NOF allocation from the DfEE sets targets for Buckinghamshire, however, that are significantly higher than in the past. The targets set by the Partnership, shown above, fall a little short of the national expectation but are the highest which the Partnership believes it can meet. They are nonetheless well above the levels of the previous year.

Calculations have been made, based on the likely local increase in demand and the capacity of the childcare development team to take on the additional workload associated with a steep increase in numbers.

The 2432 places bid for will be in place by 2004. All bidding will have to have been completed before the final round of the Fund in 2003.

It is expected that a large proportion of new places will be created in 2002-03 because additional development staff, to be appointed in 2001-02, will need training to become effective, and training will be required also, for new and existing staff, in meeting the requirements of the new consortium bid structure.

From 2001-02 the Partnership will encourage the childcare development team and potential providers to work through the new consortium bidding process to maximise funding, maintain quality of provision and support the increase of places for children with identified special educational needs.

The focus will be upon those areas which the Partnership has prioritised as most in need of childcare development. The rural areas will be the most difficult and the Partnership will be looking primarily at expansion of childminder provision to fill the gap here.

Activity summary

- Increase the childcare development officer workforce.
- Strategic focus on development in the 4 areas of disadvantage, the 2 areas of the county with a high ethnic minority population, and rural areas.

Feasibility constraints

Success depends upon:

- continued funding for an intensive recruitment campaign
- success in attracting sufficient people to staff the clubs
- successful recruitment of development officers
- securing staff to manage the consortium administration

3. Viability of NOF sponsored out of school childcare places

Target 3 – To ensure that a minimum of 80% NOF sponsored out of school childcare places remain viable five years after being established.

Buckinghamshire's target	Funding source	Contribution to national target
After 5 years 80% of NOF sponsored childcare places will remain viable	Childcare Grant	It is anticipated that Buckinghamshire's target will meet the national expectation

Background narrative

So far, less than 20% of NOF sponsored out of school childcare places have been lost in Buckinghamshire. An important factor in achieving this success has been the detailed and thorough preparation undertaken before clubs have opened and the offer of support from development workers when difficulties have been identified once the clubs are up and running. The expansion of the childcare development officer team, including a new post of Business Officer for Childcare Providers, will enable the strategy to continue as this type of provision increases.

In making use of the NOF out of school hours childcare funding programme for 2001-2003, priority will be given to establishing new voluntary provision in areas of greatest social and economic disadvantage. The most recent audit, undertaken in 1999, shows that childcare is very limited in the most deprived areas. These areas include some of highest concentration of ethnic minorities. Other parts of the county which are showing a low level of childcare provision of all types are rural areas and towns with a high percentage of families from the ethnic minorities.

The main focus will be developing after school clubs on school sites, with a view to their becoming self sustaining within the first year. Schools will need to be persuaded of the value of this strategy and encouraged to set rents for their premises at an affordable level. Where after school clubs have already been set up, encouragement and support will be given to extend provision to include holiday clubs and before school clubs. Provision for childcare for the 12+ age group is extremely sparse; to date only one club catering for older children has been set up, indicating a significant gap to be filled.

Activity summary

- Work with schools and communities to develop out of school, holiday and before school provision, starting with rural and disadvantaged areas.
- Continue to ensure groups are viable before bids are submitted.
- Monitor progress to identify potential difficulties at an early stage.

Feasibility constraints

Success depends upon:

- successfully recruiting and training effective development officers
- finding the right people willing to staff the new provision

4. Maintaining a positive balance between childcare places created and lost

Target 4 – To ensure that, on average, new childcare places created between April 2001 and March 2004 add significantly to the local level of stock for the relevant category:

- For every 10 new out of school childcare places that open, no more than 1 should close
- For every 10 new childcare places for pre-school age children created no more than 3 should close
- On childminding, from the current position of on average 10.5 places closing for every 10 that open, Partnerships should ensure that there is an improvement to at least a 10% positive turnover.

Buckinghamshire's target	Funding source	Contribution to national target
90% out-of-school childcare places sustained 70% pre-school places sustained 90% childminder places sustained	Childcare Grant	Buckinghamshire's target is consistent with the national expectation

Background narrative

Current viability of all these categories is within the target figure.

Activity summary

- Effective monitoring systems to ensure the fall-off band is kept within 20%.
- Re-negotiation of local Service Level Agreements with the Pre-school Learning Alliance (PsLA) and the National Childminders Association (NCMA) to increase support.
- Maximum effective use of the Partnership's Sustainability Fund (see Target 23).

Feasibility constraints

Success depends upon:

- continuation of the Childminder Start-up Grant
- continuation of funding for pre-registration courses
- the new standards required not discouraging providers and affecting viability in each sector
- the trend for 4 year olds admitted early into school levelling off

5. New childcare places with childminders (other than in areas of disadvantage)

Target 5 -To have set up by 2004, a minimum of 120,000 new childcare places with childminders in areas other than those of disadvantage.

Buckinghamshire's target	Funding source	Contribution to national target
2001-02 144 Childminding places 192 Childminding places	Childminders Start-up Grant Non-grant	Buckinghamshire's target is consistent with the national target
2002-03 203 Childminding Places 294 Childminding places	Childminders Start-up Grant Non-grant	
2003-04 97 Childminding places 300 Childminding places	Childminders Start-up Grant Non-grant	

Background narrative

In 2000/2001 there was a net loss of 83 childminders in Buckinghamshire. They decided to leave the profession for a variety of reasons, but changes to the regulatory process was a significant contributory factor. Because of the uncertainty amongst childminders the Partnership has decided to limit the growth ambition, for non-disadvantaged areas, in 2001-02 to accelerate in 2002/2003 and 2003/2004. The Childminder Start-up Grant will be used flexibly for maximum effectiveness.

Activity summary

- Promotion of the Childminder Start-up Grant
- Establish criteria in order to give variable amounts.

Feasibility constraints

Success depends upon:

- the new regulatory arrangements not adversely affecting recruitment and retention

6. New childcare places for pre-school children in areas of disadvantage

Target 6 – To have set up, by 2004, a minimum of 70,000 new childcare places for pre-school children in areas of disadvantage; this figure to broadly comprise 45,000 group-care based places (equivalent to 900 new 50 place nurseries) and 25,000 childminder based places

Buckinghamshire's target			Funding source	Contribution to national target
	Childcare places set up in LEA nurseries in disadvantaged areas	Totals	Applications to the Fund	The Partnership believes that the target it has set itself over 3 years is appropriate for Buckinghamshire and significantly contributes to the national target.
2001-02	-			
2002-03	40			
2003-04	56	96		
	Childcare places set up in private and voluntary pre-schools in disadvantaged areas		Applications to the Fund	
2001-02	20			
2002-03	38			
2003-04	38	96		
	Childminding places in disadvantaged areas		Childminders Start-up Grant	
2001-02	60			
2002-03	50			
2003-04	13	<u>123</u>		
		<u>315</u>		

Background narrative

The degree of disadvantage in Buckinghamshire overall is considerably below the national average. The average unemployment rate is steady at around 1.5%. There are, however, a few pockets of urban deprivation. According to the new DETR deprivation index the most disadvantaged wards are in Aylesbury (1) and Wycombe (4). In one of the Wycombe wards there are only 77 per 1000 day care places for under-fives not in early education per 1000. Surveys show that the preferred type of childcare in these areas is informal care provided by extended families.

A different kind of deprivation is also evident in the largely rural area to the north of the County where the population is very sparse and socially isolated. Local childcare in these rural areas is difficult to develop and sustain. Expansion of the childminder workforce is likely to be the best option here. Maximum activity will take place in 2001-03 as the Childminder Start-up Grant will not be available beyond this period.

In urban areas of deprivation significant additional provision will be created by expanding local authority nursery provision. The places created will not come on stream until the second year of the Plan, because of the considerable preparation time required. The other major strategy for expansion will be to maximise the potential for developing wrap-around care in private and voluntary pre-schools.

It is the intention of the government and the Partnership that there should be a childcare place available for every lone parent entering employment. Home Start and Parents as First Teachers (PAFT) are organisations offering support to this group, among others. They are represented on the Partnership and are supported by Service Level Agreements. The Employment Service is also represented and will be a key body in advising the Partnership and monitoring progress in enabling lone parents to return to work.

Activity summary

- Work with the LEA nursery schools situated in the one of the most deprived areas of the County starting with a feasibility study around expanding childcare.
- Promotion of the Childcare Tax Credit alongside the feasibility work.
- In the other areas of deprivation, where there are more registered private and voluntary pre-schools, work with these settings to maximise the potential to extend the provision to wrap-around care
- Increase childminder places in rural areas.
- Monitor the take-up of childcare places by lone parents

Feasibility constraints

Success depends upon:

- the wishes of parents to use formal childcare as opposed to informal care.
- adequate public transport in rural areas.
- the physical capacity of pre-schools to expand
- high rents for premises throughout Buckinghamshire not deterring providers

7. Childminder networks

Target 7 – To have set up, by 2004, a minimum of 450 additional childminder networks.

Buckinghamshire’s target		Funding source	Contribution to national target
2001-02	Complete 1 network	Childcare Grant	Nationally the target is 450 networks. The national average is 4 networks per Partnership. Some Partnerships already have networks established. The Partnership views the target of 2 networks by 2004 as a viable contribution to the overall target given that Buckinghamshire is starting from scratch.
2002-03	Start 2 nd network		
2003-04	Complete 2 nd network		

Background narrative

Childminder networks have been slow to get off the ground in Buckinghamshire owing to officer recruitment problems and the late appointment of the Childminder Services and Network Development Officer in 1999. However, over the past year much work has taken place to raise interest in the benefits of networking among childminders. The holder of the new post of Childminder Network Co-ordinator will be able to build on the interest already created and allow the Childminder Development Officer to focus on continuing the programme of extensive training and support for childminders.

Activity summary

- Recruitment of a Childminder Network Co-ordinator.

Feasibility constraints

Success depends upon:

- recruiting a suitably skilled person as the Childminder Network Co-ordinator by May 2001.
- level of childminders’ interest in being part of a Childminder Network

8. Conversion of playgroup places to wrap-around provision

Target 8 – To have aided the conversion, by 2004, of at least 21,000 playgroup places to move to day-care/wrap-around care provision.

Buckinghamshire's target		Funding source	Contribution to the national target
2001-02	72 places	The Fund and Parental fees	This is in line with the national target
2002-03	120 places		
2003-04	120 places		
Total	312 places		

Background narrative

Most registered pre-school providers, who are able to, have already expanded to provide extended childcare. The Partnership will concentrate, therefore, on the non-registered pre-schools, of which there are 66, as the most fruitful area for development.

The aim will be to work with these providers towards registration and the expansion of provision into day care and wrap-around care, utilising DfEE capital funds for the conversion of existing playgroup places from 2002-03.

A large number of pre-schools, registered and otherwise, have difficulty in extending their childcare provision because they are located in multi-use venues such as church or community halls. The Service Level Agreement with the PsLA has recently been renegotiated to include working to expand pre-school provision where there is scope to do so.

Activity summary

- Implement a new Service Level Agreement with the PsLA
- Recruit effective childcare development workers

Feasibility constraints

Success depends upon:

- adequate space for settings to expand and develop
- speedy recruitment of development workers

9. Childcare Tax Credit

Target 9 – To keep Childcare Tax Credit under review to ensure it provides affordable, accessible quality childcare for all low income groups and pre-school as well as after school care; and to ensure that take up increases, with inter departmental monitoring to start by December 2000.

Buckinghamshire's target		Funding source	Contribution to national target
2001-04	To continue to disseminate information about the Childcare Tax Credit.	Childcare Grant	This target meets national expectations.

Background narrative

Only 4000 people in Buckinghamshire currently claim the Childcare Tax Credit. This reflects the relatively high levels of pay in the area..

Information about the Childcare Tax Credit has been made widely available to the public through the Children's Information Service and Buckinghamshire's Recruitment Campaign literature. Publicity has also been placed in places of public access. Childcare and Early Years providers have been sent Childcare Tax Credit information to distribute to parents.

The Employment Service in one area of the county has informed the Partnership that the Childcare Tax Credit has been influential in getting lone parents back to work. Efforts will be intensified to ensure that all those entitled to claim are aware of the benefit.

Activity summary

- Significantly increase publicity for the Childcare Tax Credit.
- Ensure the Childcare Development Officers publicise the Childcare Tax Credit to potential childcare providers.
- Establish closer links with the employment services in Buckinghamshire.

Feasibility Constraints

Success depends upon:

- more meaningful data becoming available from central sources

Raising Quality

Recruitment

10. Boosting recruitment

Target 10 – To boost recruitment to national and local level over the next three years so as to expand the workforce for early years, childcare and play workers to meet the demand of expanding services.

Buckinghamshire's target		Funding Source	Contribution to the national target
	To increase the childcare workforce by:	Childcare Grant	This represents a 10% increase which is sufficient to cover the forecast increase in childcare places over the period
2001-02	170		
2002-03	123		
2003-04	<u>123</u>		
Total	416		

Background narrative

Recruitment and retention is a severe problem generally in Buckinghamshire. The Partnership, after significant consultation is concerned that the recruitment targets will be a very big challenge. The rate of unemployment is well below the national average. In the childcare field problems are exacerbated by the relatively low level of rates of pay for childcare workers.

The first media launch of the Buckinghamshire Partnership's recruitment campaign took place on 29 January 2001, and was followed by 3 open days – one in each District of Buckinghamshire. The 'Making Choices' training programme is now available for those who are interested.

The turnover in the pre-school workforce is currently 18% in pre-schools and 10% overall in childcare. In the maintained sector turnover is extremely low, and thus not an issue for the Partnership.

A variety of strategies are in place to encourage the retention of staff. Playgroups that receive grant funding for 3 year-olds are now in a relatively stronger financial position and some have reviewed their rates of pay as a result. Registration with the Partnership brings increased status for the setting and, for the employees, an entitlement to support and especially to training, with opportunities for acquiring and enhancing qualifications.

The Children's Information Service in 2001-02 will be providing helplines for leaders of pre-schools to gain advice and support on issues of recruitment and retention. Management courses are in preparation for pre-school leaders, in the new training programme.

The recruitment and retention element of childcare grant funding in 2001-02 will support increased activity in the first year of the Plan. An officer with specific responsibility for developing and implementing a comprehensive recruitment programme was appointed in January 2001. The Business Support Officer will also be active in sustaining provision of places, which will have a positive bearing on the retention of staff.

Activity summary

- Recruitment of an effective officer to boost the recruitment campaign
- Use of a wide variety of media to promote working in the early years, childcare and playwork field.
- Establish a relationship with Buckinghamshire's secondary schools to raise the profile of early years, childcare and playwork in career options.

Feasibility constraints

Success depends upon:

- increased recruitment , both of support staff and childcare workers
- meeting on-costs to Partnership in relation to training and support
- increasing the salary level for those employed in the early years and childcare field.
- The Partnership and the District and County Councils working together to address the cost of housing issue in Buckinghamshire.

11. Recruitment of under-represented groups

Target 11 – To increase the recruitment of the following under-represented groups to the level of the following national target by 2004:

Men	6%
People with disabilities	15%
Ethnic minorities	6%
People over 40	40%

Buckinghamshire's target			Funding source	Contribution to national target
<i>Current position</i>	<i>Men</i>	1.5%	Childcare Grant	Buckinghamshire's targets are lower than the national average because of the county's baseline figures.
	<i>People with disabilities</i>	0.5%		
	<i>Ethnic minorities</i>	4.4%		
	<i>People aged 40 and over</i>	42%		
2001-02	Men	1.5%		
	People with disabilities	0.5%		
	Ethnic minorities	4.5%		
	People aged 40 and over	42%		
2002-03	Men	1.5%		
	People with disabilities	0.6%		
	Ethnic minorities	6%		
	People aged 40 and over	40%		
2003-04	Men	2%		
	People with disabilities	0.75%		
	Ethnic minorities	8%		
	People aged 40 and over	40%		

Background narrative

Targets for 2001-2002 are based on approximate data available to the Partnership. The figures also take into account an estimated average turnover in the early years, childcare and playwork sector of 10%. It is expected that the increase in recruitment activity during the first year (see Target 10) will only begin to be reflected in the figures for 2002-03 and beyond. The percentage of people over 40 in the childcare workforce already meets the national target and, as it has been a characteristic of the workforce for some years, this target is likely to be maintained.

The number of men employed in childcare services is currently very low and recruitment of men will continue to be difficult. Buckinghamshire generally is an area of high employment and high wage levels, making a career in childcare where the wages are very low compared to other job opportunities an unattractive option. The target represents the best realistic figure for Buckinghamshire.

The percentage of people with disabilities employed in childcare services is very low. The Partnership anticipates that, despite the planned intensive recruitment campaign a rise in the numbers of disabled people employed will still remain relatively low, reflecting the approximate known numbers of disabled people available for work. Gathering accurate data is problematic for a variety of reasons, mainly because disabled people are not required to register as such, and may not wish to.

Whilst the total percentage of the county's population from ethnic minorities is around 5%, people from these groups are largely concentrated in a few areas in the largest towns, mainly in the centre of the county. In some wards the figure exceeds 40%. Elsewhere the percentage is less than 0.01%. The Partnership aims to target the recruitment of people from ethnic minorities principally in the areas where there are large numbers of children from these groups in early education and using childcare services, where it recognises a serious need to improve on present rates.

The recruitment campaign will therefore work to local targets, meeting the national figure in a few small areas, but falling below in others. Over time the Partnership will aim to employ childcare workers much nearer to a percentage reflecting the ethnicity of the local population, where there are high numbers of families from ethnic minorities.

Activity summary

- Increase the recruitment campaign activity.
- Priority focus for recruitment of ethnic minorities in specific urban areas

Feasibility constraints

Success depends upon:

- recruiting men to work in the early education and childcare field
- breakdown of entrenched traditional patterns of employment in Buckinghamshire
- wages in the early years and childcare sector increasing

Training

12. Level of qualification

Target 12 – To raise the quality of childcare by raising training levels, with specific targets for the level of qualifications to be achieved by 2004 to be set by September 2001. A national indicative target is being set for the LSC of helping 230,000 young people and sector workers to gain qualifications.

Buckinghamshire's target	Funding source	Contribution to national target
To be set by September 2001	Training Grant	

Background narrative

The Partnership's training and development programme over the last 3 years has gradually expanded in terms of types of courses and other development opportunities, topics and issues covered, range of providers and opportunities to achieve qualifications. It has included both short and long courses.

A survey of the qualifications of the current workforce shows that the number of staff who hold appropriate qualifications in the childcare field is steadily rising, with NVQ Level 3 and NNEB being the most widely held. The DfEE will be issuing further guidance on the setting of training targets during the course of the year.

A network of Learning Skills Councils (LSC), replacing the TECs (Training and Enterprise Councils) will be set up across the country. The Buckinghamshire Partnership will be asked to agree local targets with the local LSC.

Over time the aim will be to award all courses in the Partnership's training programme some form of accreditation opportunity.

Activity summary

- Liaise with the new LSC
- Develop links with Continuing Education
- Liaise with the Chiltern Regional Office of the Childcare Network (CROCN) re accreditation

Feasibility constraints

Success depends upon:

- reducing, or at least stabilising, the high staff turnover figure
- reducing the rate of drop-out from courses
- sustained and increasing funding

13. Training for all practitioners in the Foundation Stage

Target 13 – To ensure that all practitioners delivering Foundation Stage education as part of their EYDC plans have access to an average of 4 days training and development per year by 2004.

Buckinghamshire's target		Funding source	Contribution to national target
2001-02	7000 training days available	Standards Fund, Childcare Grant Education Standard Spending (ESS) and Training Grant	Buckinghamshire's target is consistent with the national target
2002-03	7500 training days available		
2003-04	8400 training days available		

Background narrative

Buckinghamshire currently has 6517 training days available, as against an approximate workforce of 2100 Foundation Stage practitioners. Of these 351 are in the private and independent sector, 1348 in voluntary pre-schools and playgroups, 40 in the first childminder network and the remainder in LEA provision

Some of the courses that are available to practitioners are much longer than 1 day, a very small number offer up to 60 days relevant training. Courses lasting for less than 1 day have been added up to provide an equivalent number of whole days.

The Partnership has many training partners providing courses relating to the Foundation Stage. Duration, location, time of day, learning styles are all factors that the Partnership and its training partners take into consideration to maximise take-up of the opportunities available.

Course evaluation has been consistently good with the vast majority of course attendees rating the courses provided as excellent.

Activity summary

- Expand over three years the training and development opportunities available.
- Continue regular meetings of the the Partnership's Training Sub-group.
- Establish closer working relationships with training partners to support planning and administration of the various training and development programmes

Feasibility constraints

Success depends upon:

- qualified training tutors available to deliver training programmes
- the ongoing availability of Standards Fund, and other monies allocated for the training of Foundation Stage practitioners.
- funding for supply cover being available and enough locum staff available to cover for staff attending training.
- sufficient accommodation being available

14. Involvement of qualified teachers in non-maintained settings

Target 14 -To ensure that, by 2004, all settings that deliver a Foundation Stage curriculum have access to the input and advice from a QTS. The target ratio for involvement is 1 teacher to every 10 non-maintained settings

Buckinghamshire target		Funding source	Contribution to the national target
2001-02	To appoint the Area SENCO Co-ordinator and Early Years Advisory Teacher to develop the strategy for the more formalised involvement of qualified teachers and area SENCOs in non-maintained settings.	ESS	The Partnership considers that the targets are consistent with the national expectation
2002-03	To recruit qualified teachers and Area SENCOs and train them to implement the QT involvement strategy		
2003-04	Complete recruitment of Area SENCOs (Total 12) Delivery of qualified teacher support (including area SENCOs) to the required QT involvement ratio		

Background narrative

All the 265 non-maintained early years settings in Buckinghamshire are organised into 34 cross sector Early years Link Groups. Maintained nursery schools, schools with nursery classes and Reception classes are also represented, making a total membership of 407. The Link Groups are geographically located to facilitate the attendance of one representative from every early years setting at their meetings

Of the total Link Group members, virtually half are qualified teachers, giving a ratio of 2:1. The Partnership has worked to ensure the Link Groups provide an effective support and advice structure for staff from both the maintained and non-maintained sectors. The Partnership Support Officer monitors attendance and meeting content.

In addition to the Link Group Structure the Partnership employs a Quality Assurance Officer. A full time Early Years Advisory Teacher is also employed through the Standards Fund.

Activity Summary

- Build on the existing Link Group structure to provide more formalised qualified teacher involvement in non-maintained settings who do not currently have a qualified teacher on their staff.
- Over the next three years seek to secure monies from the ESS to ensure that arrangements are in place for the recruitment and training of qualified teachers to implement the involvement strategy.
- Provide a training programme to ensure newly recruited teachers and Area SENCOs are given specific early years qualification training.

Feasibility constraints

Success depends upon:

- enough teachers showing willingness to be involved.
- sufficient Headteachers being prepared to release their early years qualified teachers to be involved in the strategy.
- funding to fully implement the involvement strategy.

15. Specialist training for Foundation Stage teachers

Target 15 –To ensure that, by 2004, all qualified teachers involved in delivering the Foundation Stage have undertaken appropriate training and development to improve their specialist knowledge of early education.

Buckinghamshire's Target		Funding source	Contribution to national target
2001-02	To ensure 80% of qualified teachers working in the Foundation Stage have undertaken appropriate training and development	Standards Fund and ESS	Consistent
2002-03	- 90% of qualified teachers have undertaken appropriate training and development		
2003-04	-100% of qualified teachers have undertaken appropriate training and development		

Background narrative

Over the past three years there has been a significant increase in the availability of training and development opportunities relating to the Foundation Stage for qualified teachers in Buckinghamshire. The Partnership has also seen an increasing take-up of these opportunities.

Currently 75% of teachers involved in the Foundation Stage have some form of Early years training and qualification.

Ofsted data shows that provision for the Foundation Stage age group in the majority of Buckinghamshire schools is generally good, indicating the effectiveness of the Early Years Continuing Professional Development programme.

Activity summary

- Provide a continuing professional development programme
- Raise the awareness of Headteachers to the quality issues associated with the Foundation Stage.
- Over 3 years, significantly increase the number of accredited courses available to qualified teachers.

Feasibility constraints

Success depends upon:

- slowdown in staff turnover rates
- securing and funding appropriately qualified trainers to facilitate training

Quality Assurance

16. Quality Assurance scheme

Target 16 -To ensure that at least 40% of providers overall have been accredited by a quality assurance scheme.

Buckinghamshire's target		Funding source	Contribution to national target
2001-02	The Quality Assurance Scheme will be piloted with 20 settings from across all sectors including childminders: 1.4% of settings*	Childcare Grant	It will take Buckinghamshire much longer than 3 years to meet the national target. This is due to a late start and a scheme that takes 2 years to achieve.
2002-03	20 settings: 2.8%		
2003-04	20 settings: 4.2%		
Total	5.6%		
*Percentages are based on a calculation of a total of 1356 settings. <i>This figure includes childminders.</i>			

Background narrative

To date 6 settings have been accredited by the PsLA Quality Assurance Scheme, giving Buckinghamshire a very low starting figure for accreditation. A Buckinghamshire Quality Assurance Scheme open to all settings and providers, has only just been agreed. Plans to develop a scheme in partnership with the first choice organisation, set out in the Partnership's Development Plan 2000-01, were abandoned at a late stage because the scheme proved inappropriate for Buckinghamshire providers.

In February 2001 the Sheffield Quality Kitemark, customised for Buckinghamshire providers, was adopted by the Partnership, after considerable further research into the different schemes available. The Sheffield scheme was selected because it enables providers to use it as a developmental tool alongside working towards the quality mark. The scheme will offer full accreditation with independent assessment.

The Partnership has decided to provide access to the scheme for all childminders, irrespective of whether they are part of a Childminder Network. This makes calculation of the total percentage of accredited settings over 3 years for Buckinghamshire appear very low. If the only childminders included in the total were to be those who were registered members of a Network, then a target of nearly 20% would be achieved.

In order to make sure the model used is effective in promoting the highest quality, the Partnership has decided to introduce the scheme gradually and monitor the process thoroughly. In the first year 20 settings will be used to pilot the scheme and allow the Partnership an opportunity to evaluate its success. The Partnership is confident that the Sheffield Quality Kitemark will be successful and the scheme will be then be extended as quickly as is compatible with resources for the support and the maintenance of high standards. The figures are based on allocated £10,000 of the Childcare Grant to the scheme in 2001-02 and £15,000 in 2002-03 and 2003-04.

Activity summary

- Introduce the Sheffield Quality Kitemark to all providers

Feasibility constraints

Success depends upon:

- the scheme being successfully marketed
- sufficient mentors being recruited
- the scheme meeting the expectations of providers and improving quality
- the continued availability of Childcare Grant Funding

17. Outcome of Ofsted inspections

Target 17 - 94% of all Foundation Stage settings inspected by Ofsted to be satisfactory or better by 2004.

Buckinghamshire's target		Funding source	Contribution to national target
2001-02	92%	Standards Fund	Buckinghamshire expects to meet the national expectation
2002-03	93%		
2003-04	94%		

Background narrative

Buckinghamshire has a large number of private and voluntary settings. These settings are now enjoying access to training and development courses and to a range of support packages.

Data held in the Early Year and Childcare Team shows that, from April 2000 – December 2000, 92% of private and voluntary settings inspected received a 2 - 4 year Inspection Report which indicates a satisfactory or better standard. The appointment of an Early Years Advisory Teacher to provide on-site support as well as external training programmes will assist in the raising of standards. A Partnership Special Measures Policy will be introduced to allow for an increased level of intervention and support for settings continually failing to improve.

Data from the Ofsted Nursery Education Inspections Report April 99 – March 2000 shows the following outcomes in Buckinghamshire:

Type of setting	Acceptable Inspection %
Independent	100%
Private	88.9%
Private Day Nursery	90%

Activity summary

- Provide training in all the Early Learning Goals across 3 years.
- Appoint a full time advisory teacher to work alongside the Quality Assurance Officer and the Link Group structure to ensure targeted support is provided for identified settings.
- Provide courses which meet identified training needs and increase the number of courses on offer.
- Introduce a Partnership Early Years Special Measures Policy

Feasibility constraints

Success depends upon:

- the continuation of the Standards Fund, with an adequate increase.
- funding for supply cover to enable staff to be released for training.
- availability of supply teachers to cover for staff attending training.

Special Educational Needs

18. Special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs)

Target 18 – To ensure that, by 2001 –2002, all settings delivering the Foundation stage have identified and trained a SEN Co-ordinator, responsible for establishing and implementing the settings SEN policy, with a target that setting based SENCOs should have benefited from an average of 3 days relevant training by 2004.

Buckinghamshire’s target		Funding source	Contribution to national target
2001-02	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All settings to have a nominated SENCO ▪ 30% setting based SENCOs receive 3 days training 	Standards Fund and ESS	Buckinghamshire’s target is consistent with the national target
2002-03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All settings to have an SEN Policy ▪ 30% setting-based SENCOs receive 3 days training 		
2003-04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 40% setting based SENCOs receive 3 days training 		

Background narrative

All Partnership registered private and voluntary settings have been asked to nominate a SENCO. During 2000 – 2001 all such nominated SENCOs have been placed into geographical Cluster Groups. All the Cluster Groups have met; the meetings were facilitated by the Early Years Educational Psychologist and the Early Years Advisory Teacher.

Activity summary

- The initial activity to appoint a SENCO Co-ordinator who will, over the next three years, develop the Cluster group model of support for nominated SENCOs and build a structure within which the Area SENCOs will work.

The Partnership’s SEN Strategy (Appendix SP1) demonstrates the training that SENCOs will receive over the 3 years.

Feasibility constraints

Success depends upon:

- recruiting the person with the right skills to the SENCO Co-ordinator’s post by July 2001.
- successfully accessing SSA Funding for the training activity; failure to do so will significantly affect the activity.

19. Area SENCOs

Target 19 – To put in place a network of Area SENCOs, with a target ratio of 1 Area SENCO to 20 non-maintained settings by 2004.

Buckinghamshire’s target		Funding source	Contribution to national target
2001-02	Recruit Area SENCO Co-ordinator	Revenue Support Grant (RSG)	Employing 12 Area SENCOs by 2004 is consistent with the national expectation
2002-03	Recruit 4 Area SENCOs		
2003-04	Recruit 8 Area SENCOs		

Activity summary

- The primary activity is to appoint the Area SENCO Co-ordinator to develop a working structure for the Area SENCOS

Feasibility constraints

Success depends upon:

- securing funding from the ESS.
- recruiting suitably skilled professionals to undertake the role of Area SENCO will be a significant challenge for the Partnership over the next three years

Equal Opportunities

19. Equal access to early years and childcare services

Target 20 – To ensure all sectors of the community have equal access to childcare and early years services, regardless of their gender, age, special educational needs, disability, background, religion, ethnicity or competence in spoken English.

20. Strategies to ensure equal access

Target 21 – To ensure that Partnerships have effective equal opportunity strategies which are monitored at least annually and that they ensure all settings identify and train someone to take responsibility for establishing and implementing the setting's equal opportunities strategy by 2004.

Buckinghamshire's target	Funding source	Contribution to national target
2001-04 100% of settings have an Equal Opportunities Policy Strategy and monitor it Effectively To continue termly Monitoring of the Partnership's EO Policy And Implementation Plan	Standards Fund and Childcare Grant	Buckinghamshire is likely to exceed the national average

Background narrative

The Partnership agreed its Equal Opportunities Policy and Action Plan in January 2000. Through the Partnerships Equal Opportunities Sub Group both the policy and action plan are monitored on a termly basis. The Partnership's registration criteria will be reviewed to ensure appropriate reference to equal opportunities. The Policy and Action Plan were distributed to all Early Years and Childcare Settings and made available to parents/carers and the public through libraries and local community access points.

Valuing Diversity courses have been available to the person nominated from each setting to write the Equal Opportunities policy.

Activity summary

The Equal Opportunities Strategy Plan (enclosed as Appendix SP2) gives extensive detail about the Partnership's activity.

Feasibility constraints

Success depends upon:

- continuation of the Standards Fund to provide training

22. Employer support for childcare

Target 22 – From 2004, to significantly increase the amount of support employers give their employees on childcare, working through Partnerships and other organisations.

Buckinghamshire's target		Funding source	Contribution to the national target
2001/02	150 largest employers in Buckinghamshire made aware of the business benefits of work life balance	Childcare Grant	The Partnership believes the targets it has set are realistic and achievable. Given the issues to date the Partnership believes that achieving these targets will make a significant contribution to the national target
2002/03	50% of all employers receive information packs on childcare and support they can give their employees	Childcare Grant	
2003/04	100% of all employers receive childcare information packs	Childcare Grant	

Background narrative

Buckinghamshire has 6000 employers across the county. Of the 6000 only 150 are categorised as large employers. These 150 include the Health Authority and the County Council.

Because of the large predominately rural areas of Buckinghamshire and its close proximity to major centres of employment in London and Birmingham many of the other employers run small or very small businesses; some are farmers. Many people in Buckinghamshire, owing to personal circumstances are not entitled to claim the tax credits.

Over the last 2 years the Partnership has made significant efforts to bring employers on board, however the results of these efforts have to date been disappointing. In Partnership with Luton EYDCP a questionnaire has now been developed. The County Council, as a major employer has moved forward in its understanding of the business benefits or work life balance and offers its employees childcare vouchers. To help bring this about the Partnership worked closely with the Council's Human Resources Department.

The County Council's Strategic Planning and Economic Development Service will be a valuable partner in the task of measuring and monitoring the level of support given by employers.

Activity summary

- Analyse the current level of employer knowledge about work life balance.
- Reconvene the Employers Sub-group to take forward the findings of the questionnaire.
- Build up, over time, a much closer working relationship with established employment and business links including the Strategic Planning and Economic Development Service.
- Develop the strategic role of the Buckinghamshire Children's Information Service in the development and distribution of the Childcare Information packs to employers and employees across the county.

Feasibility constraints

Success depends upon:

- improving the level of employer interest in childcare issues.
- greater take-up of tax credits

Choice and Diversity

23. Information for parents

Target 23 – To ensure Partnerships review information for parents on early years education places so that parents have the information needed to express clear preferences for an early education place from amongst the settings available.

Buckinghamshire's target		Funding source	Contribution to the national Target
2001-02	To publish the updated Early Years Information Booklet and make it widely available to parents and carers. To develop the Partnership Communication Sub-group to ensure representation from all partners who provide information to parents on early education	Childcare Grant and Revenue Support Grant (RSG)	The Partnership believes that the targets it has set will ensure Buckinghamshire is consistent with the national target.
2001-04 (all on-going)	To make the Partnership's website more accessible, accurate and informative to parents. To maintain diversity and choice for parents as services expand, and to ensure support is given to settings in danger of closing when appropriate		

Background narrative

During the life of the 2000/2001 plan the Partnership has reviewed its information for parents, especially information about admissions and the range of settings available in Buckinghamshire. The Partnership's Communication Sub-group has been established and is building up its membership to ensure it has a significant impact on the information that parents can access about early years education and childcare. Additional strategies are needed for reaching ethnic minority communities, such as home visiting, to enable parents to understand the range of childcare services available, and that pre-schools and playgroups have an educational benefit.

The Partnership will continue to give temporary financial support to early education and childcare settings in the non-maintained sector that meet the criteria for future viability. An element of the childcare grant will be set aside for this.

Continued expansion of early education and childcare services will be promoted across the full range of types of provision, and support strategies similarly will be available to all.

Activity summary

- Review all aspects of Partnership strategy to improve access to information by parents.

Feasibility Constraints

- There are no feasibility constraints in meeting this target

24. Integrated education and childcare services

Target 24 To significantly boost integrated services for 0 – 5 year olds by 2004. To set specific targets for 2004 by September 2001 for the number of early education places for 3 and 4 year olds which have (a) wrap-around facilities and (b) fully integrated facilities for 0 – 4 year olds

Buckinghamshire's target	Funding source	Contribution to national target
To be set in September 2001	Childcare Grant	Consistent

Background narrative

Expanding fully integrated facilities for children 0 to 5 will be difficult in Buckinghamshire. This type of provision is currently only provided by private day nurseries. At present there are no early education places that provide wrap-around care for 3 and 4 year-olds only. Buckinghamshire does not enjoy Sure Start funding nor funding for Early Excellence Centres. The Social Services have no maintained provision for children from birth.

By the beginning of March 2001 NFER Nelson will be presenting the results of an audit in Buckinghamshire of the childcare needs of the ethnic communities and families on lower incomes, which will enable new provision to be properly targeted.

Developing wrap-around facilities will be focused in the first instance on the LEA maintained nursery schools, although this will in no way preclude other providers from developing this increased provision.

Provision of additional fully integrated childcare facilities will occur primarily through the development of Childminder Networks unless additional funding is awarded to Buckinghamshire.

Activity summary

- Ensure baseline data is collected and a needs analysis completed as a prelude to target setting
- Expand maintained nursery provision to include wrap-around provision
- Establish 2 Childminder Networks

Feasibility Constraints

Success depends upon:

- adequate funding
- sufficient demand from parents

Information strategy

25. Children's Information Service

Target 25 - By August 2001, all CIS's must meet the 14 minimum service standards which include accuracy and confidentiality and are integrated with the national regulatory system set up by Ofsted's Early Years Directorate by September 2001

Buckinghamshire's Target		Funding Source	Contribution to the National Target
2001-02	To ensure the Buckinghamshire Children's Information Service (BCIS) continues to meet the 14 minimum standards. To ensure the BCIS fully integrates with the national regulatory system by 2001	ESS and Childcare Grant	The targets that the BCIS has set itself far exceed the national target
2002-03	To continue to meet targets for the previous year		
2003-04	To ensure the information targets highlighted in the Equal Opportunities Strategic and Implementation Plan are met.		

Background narrative

Buckinghamshire has a well established Children's Information Service which meets the 14 minimum standards; for details see Implementation Plan. The service has, since 1999, been contracted out to the Reading Children's Information Centre. During 2000/2001 the Partnership has been working on a project plan to bring the BCIS into Buckinghamshire. From April 2001 the BCIS will be located in the Reference Library in Aylesbury and will join the Community Information Service provided by the Library Service to give a comprehensive Information Service to parents/carers, children and citizens of Buckinghamshire.

Activity summary

- Relocate of the BCIS into the Aylesbury Reference Library and ensure it fully integrates with the national regulatory system in 2001.
- Increase access to the BCIS through Saturday Information Shops, in areas of high ethnic minority population.
- Take the lead in the Buckinghamshire recruitment campaign and in increasing employer awareness of work life balance
- Increase parent and carers' access to the BCIS through information technology.

Feasibility Constraints

Success depends upon:

- recruiting additional appropriately skilled staff to expand the service

Better Partnership Working

26. Membership and working practices

Target 26 – To ensure Partnerships keep membership, working practices and progress under review so that they are successful in the delivery and evaluation of their Strategic Plans and key objectives.

Buckinghamshire’s Target		Contribution to National Target
2001-04	To continue to ensure that the Partnership membership is fully representative and effective in carrying out its key tasks, through regular review of working practices.	The Buckinghamshire EYDC Partnership will continue to operate in line with the national expectation.

Background narrative

The Buckinghamshire EYDCP Partnership has a membership fully representative of all the relevant bodies or groups as specified by the DfEE. A three tier structure is in place to ensure all those working within the field of early years and childcare have opportunity to participate in its work.

Every early years provider is part of a local Link Group which meets at least termly. Three Early Years District Fora also meet termly with a common agenda reflecting current issues. They comprise a representative from each of the Link Groups in the District, plus representation from groups or organisations working to support early years development. Three Childcare Fora have also been set up. They meet termly and have broad representation from those who work in the field of childcare. The Childcare Fora have a more practical workshop format than the Early Years Fora.

A representative of each Early Years District Forum and Childcare Forum are members of the main Partnership body. The substantial work of the Partnership is achieved through working groups, both standing and ad hoc, reporting back to the main body.

Activity summary

- Continue to review Partnership membership annually.
- Continue regular meetings of working sub-groups with cross-representation.
- Base the Partnership’s Strategic and Implementation Plans upon the work of the sub-groups, feedback from consultation with parents and children and from providers’ Link Groups and District Fora.
- Ensure that monitoring of the Implementation Plan and the evaluation of progress towards key objectives in the Strategic Plan is part of the regular work of the Partnership’s sub-groups.
- Keep open and under review the routes for consultation.

Feasibility constraints

Success depends upon:

- the continued willingness of Partnership members, at all levels, to view Partnership activities as a good use of time
- continued government grant funding to support its key activities

27. Collaboration with other bodies

Target 27. To ensure Partnerships are working closely with other strategic partnerships, including the Local Strategic Partnership where this is appropriate, to ensure consistency, sensible community planning and efficient use of resources. Partnerships should make links with other plans as appropriate, for example, Education Development Plans, Sure Start, and Children's Services Plans.

Buckinghamshire's Target		Contribution to the national target
2001-04	To make maximum use of opportunities for joint working with other departments and organisations to improve coherence and efficiency in local services.	The Partnership is moving in line with national expectations and expects to make further progress over the next three years.

Background narrative

During 2000 the Local Government and County Council structures underwent modernisation during which roles and responsibilities were redefined and reallocated. This has presented an opportunity to reassess and improve interdepartmental working links.

During 2000 the Buckinghamshire Inter-agency Advisory Group was established linking strategic developments in Health, Social Services and Education. The EYDC Partnership is represented through a member of the EYDC Team.

The EYDC Team has been closely involved in the Children's Services Plan. An important part of this work has been the establishing, with Social Services, joint Service Level Agreements with Home-Start and Parents As First teachers as part of a joint family support strategy. Links with the Education Development Plan have been slow to develop. By 2004 there will be improved integration of the Plans. Despite submitting to the Sure Start Unit a document demonstrating how funding could be awarded to pockets of deprivation within affluence Buckinghamshire does not enjoy any Sure Start funding.

In partnership with Social Services the Partnership, as part of the 2000-01 Audit, consulted with children and young people across Buckinghamshire about what made them happy. It is anticipated that the findings from this joint activity will inform the Children's Services Plan as well as this Strategic and Implementation Plan.

Links are maintained, through the EYDC Team, with other local EYDC Partnerships. Regular Networking meetings are held to share ideas and gain support. Joint Partnership working is becoming more possible; for example, Buckinghamshire and Luton are working on a strategy for the greater involvement of employers.

Activity summary

- Close collaboration with the Buckinghamshire Inter-agency Advisory Group.
- Maintain and develop links with other local EYDC Partnerships
- Strive for greater involvement in the Education Development Plan
- Continue close partnership working with other local authority departments

Feasibility constraints

Success depends upon:

- the effectiveness of structures designed to develop collaboration and consistency in planning and use of resources.

28. Best Value Principles

Target 28 – To ensure that Partnerships work with local councils to ensure maximum benefit is derived from Best Value for young children and parents in their communities and apply the principles of Best Value to their own activities and processes.

Buckinghamshire's target		Contribution to national target
2001-04	To ensure the principles of Best Value are applied to the Partnership's activities	Consistent with national expectation

Background narrative

The targets that the Partnership has set itself for the next three years link closely to and contribute to the County Council's Corporate Objectives. Clear performance management systems are in place for the Early Years Development and Childcare Team which services the activities of the Partnership and these come under the scrutiny of the County Council. The activities of the Partnership link closely to the Education Development Plan, Health Improvement Plan, Children's Services Plan and the Lifelong Learning Plan. This has been achieved through joint working practices.

The Partnership has in place a contract bidding system for awarding Grant money to external organisations who will carry out elements of the Partnership's training activity. Service Level Agreements are established and monitored every three months against set objectives.

Activity Summary and Funding Source

- Expand the contract bidding system to cover increased elements of the Partnerships activity
- Establish from the targets robust performance indicators.
- Participate in a Benchmarking club with like authorities e.g. Kent, to establish performance indicators.
- Partnership members to undertake training to understand in detail the principles of Best Value.
- Establish a monitoring and evaluation sub-group to scrutinise the Partnerships activity against the 4Cs criteria; *challenge, compare, consult and competition*

Feasibility Constraints

Success depends upon:

- finding authorities with similar statistical data to work with on benchmarking
- benchmarking clubs being established

29. Protocol for joint working

Target 29. To ensure Partnerships, together with Ofsted's Early Years Directorate, Children's Information Services and appropriate Local Authority staff, develop a clear protocol for working together effectively so as to deliver coherent training, advice and information services that build capacity and strengthen the quality, choice, accessibility and diversity of provision locally.

Buckinghamshire's target		Contribution to National target
2001-04	To ensure the protocol, discussed with Ofsted's Early Years Directorate, is developed and implemented, including close working relationships with Social Services personnel	The Partnership expects to see more coherence in services offered, in line with national expectations within 3 years.

Background narrative

Since the Buckinghamshire EYDC Partnership was established in 1998 significant strategies have been developed to take forward the essential working relationship between the Social Services Day Care Advisors and the Partnership.

Regular liaison meetings have taken place to facilitate a sharing of views and concerns and to develop a working protocol. With the move of the regulatory function to Ofsted in September 2001, Buckinghamshire EYDCP has worked closely with Ofsted to develop and write the protocol and in November 2000 a representative from Ofsted participated in the liaison meeting

Activity summary

- Continue the working relationship with the Social Services Children's Day Care Advisors up to the transfer to the regulatory function to Ofsted in September 2001.
- Seek to continue the dialogue established with Ofsted about the developing protocol.
- Invite representation from Ofsted at all Partnership meetings and, where appropriate, seek input from the regulators at relevant Partnership Sub-group meetings

Feasibility constraints

Success depends upon

- the transition of the regulatory function to Ofsted being completed on time and successfully.