



Showcasing Excellence

Nottinghamshire County Council – Children's Centre project



As part of its strategy to encourage regeneration and growth in the local economy, Nottinghamshire County Council has long been involved in a number of initiatives that support low-income families back into work. These include increasing the availability of high quality affordable childcare, improving aspirations and skills levels, and developing quality experiences for children. The latest initiative is the Sure Start Children's Centres Programme and Nottinghamshire has set itself an ambitious target - to create 21 Children's Centres in Round One, representing one of the largest programmes in the country.

Clear direction

To date the County Council and other key stakeholders have built and opened 17 Children's Centres with a target of creating 590 new childcare places in Nottinghamshire, to serve 9000 children. They are now moving into the second construction phase, with plans currently being finalised to create a further 27 Children's Centres, serving a total of over 29,000 children.

This will mean that by April 2008 over 70% of Nottinghamshire children will have easy access to a local Sure Start Children's Centre.

Objectives:

Working in partnership with contractors Skanska, Woodhead, and buildingDirect, Nottinghamshire County Council's objectives are clear:

- To allow young children to play and learn in purpose built facilities that provide a stimulating and safe environment.
- To create child and family friendly spaces that will encourage pride in local communities.
- To work in partnership with an experienced contractor to achieve efficiency savings for the council in terms of design, cost and time.
- To eliminate the sources of waste, including duplication and inefficiencies on all construction projects.

“It is essential to work with a contractor who understands our needs and those of the parents and children who will use these Sure Start Children's Centres. Collaborative working and effective project management are proving central to ensuring high quality buildings, that are delivered on time and to budget.”

**Di Kingaby, Children's Centres Development Manager,
Nottinghamshire County Council**





The Approach

Community access lies at the heart of the Sure Start Children's Centres Programme, and from the outset the team employed innovative techniques to ensure best value for both council and end-user:

➔ **Lean thinking** – this technique was introduced to help minimise waste throughout the design and construction process. Less waste has meant reduced project costs and better value.

➔ **Value Brief** – a briefing exercise was developed, detailing a scored list of priorities and helping to create facilities that both meet and exceed requirements.

➔ **Clearly defined roles** – clearly defined roles allow the skills and experience within the team to be maximised, ensuring a successful outcome.

➔ **Improved communications** – regular meetings and reporting ensures clear objectives and benchmarking.

➔ **Managing risk** – a risk register ensures that all risks are visible and owned by specific individuals and teams, resulting in the early resolution of any issues.

Benefits

- The employment of partnership principles has meant that the programme has been delivered three months ahead of schedule.
- The original project budget of £4.7 million was increased during the programme to £8.9 million, thanks to external funding from the European Regional Development Fund, Sure Start Local Programme funds and Social Services capital funding. This enabled the client to increase delivery from 9 to 17 capital projects.
- Cost savings made during each project were recycled to add value into other schemes in the programme.
- Quality standards across the projects are exceptional, and have resulted in reduced maintenance costs for the Council.
- Child and family friendly spaces have been created which stand at the heart of local communities and instil pride in local residents.
- Using local labour and materials has generated employment opportunities for local people.
- The Sure Start Children's Centres are set to play an important part in the wider regeneration of deprived communities across Nottinghamshire. They will be used as a venue to offer training, money and employment advice.



How does your project measure up?

■ **To share your success please contact:**
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