

News Release

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CHILDCARE IN DOCKLANDS: MAKING IT HAPPEN

REPORT PUBLISHED TODAY

A report, commissioned by the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) to show the way forward in meeting local demand for childcare, has been published today.

The report, entitled "Childcare in Docklands: making it happen" has been produced, following a three month study, by management consultants Peat Marwick McLintock, in association with Workplace Nurseries Ltd.

John Fielden, of Peat Marwick McLintock said: "The LDDC is concerned that it ensures the very best childcare in the Docklands of the future. The report shows that there is currently a gap between supply and demand for childcare in London Docklands. This is no surprise, as this is the case in most, if not all, urban areas within Britain. What is encouraging is that the LDDC has had the courage and foresight to commission a full and frank report which highlights the gap, so that they can help to bridge it."

Elizabeth Filkin, LDDC Director of Community Services, said: "The LDDC is determined to help provide effective childcare throughout London Docklands to ensure local

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children get the best possible start in life and parents can take up study and employment opportunities if they so wish.

"This report, detailing the current childcare situation, has enabled us to assess the precise nature and extent of childcare provision. Armed with the understanding of the childcare picture in Docklands, we can now work with the other providers to tackle the gaps in provision, build on achievements to date, and help bring about an exemplary level of childcare within London Docklands.

"We have already made major contributions to the provision of nurseries in Wapping, Limehouse, the Royal Docks, Bermondsey and Surrey Docks. We know that we need to do more, however, to cope with the ever-increasing need for childcare and we recognise that it is essential for us to work with all other existing and potential childcare providers in London Docklands, including local authorities, employers and developers, to meet this need."

The report is being sent to a number of local organisations for consultation.

For further information and copies of the report please contact:

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Notes to Editors

1. EXAMPLES OF RECENT LDDC FUNDED/FACILITATED CHILDCARE PROVISION

WAPPING

Stephen and Matilda Day Nursery - Wapping. The LDDC contributed approximately £100,000 towards building the nursery, which can hold up to thirty children. It is also funding some staffing costs.

A Montessori style nursery - at St Paul's Church, Shadwell. The LDDC contributed £120,000 to convert the crypt of St Paul's, including the installation of a new heating system. It also acted as agent between the church and the nursery, putting the two in touch.

ROYAL DOCKS

Newham Parents Centre - The LDDC has committed £104,000 over two years (£50,000 in the current year) to fund training courses in childcare and keyboard skills, following the successful pilot scheme last year in which 59 local people achieved employment and 13 further training.

SURREY DOCKS

Bermondsey Community Nursery - at Butler's Wharf. The LDDC facilitated brand new premises for the nursery and has contributed £15,000 towards costs of equipment and staffing.

Holy Trinity Nursery - Holy Trinity Church, Bryan Road, Rotherhithe. The LDDC contributed £181,000 to refurbish the church hall, which now houses a nursery capable of holding 25 children.

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2. SUMMARY OF REPORT'S MAIN FINDINGS

- there is a widespread need and demand for childcare in almost all its forms, which is likely to increase for the foreseeable future;
- there is a growing shortage of qualified carers and candidates for training;
- the cost of good quality provision is high and it is difficult to make a simple economic case to attract funding;
- there is an apparent lack of suitable premises and high potential costs to provide them in new developments;
- there is a lack of accessible guidance and information about facilities and services that are available.

3. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Support for childminders - Local authorities and community groups should consider improved support services for childminders, in the form of training, seminars with creche facilities, and established meeting places where they can get together for support, relaxation and to share information and experience.

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Childcare as a career - Local authorities and the LDDC should conduct further research to establish types of childcare training available in Docklands, training routes and any gaps in these routes. The aim should be to produce better information on childcare as a valid career choice and publicise this to schools and careers advisers in the Docklands area.

Pump-priming funds - The LDDC and employers should consider setting up a pump-priming fund to help new initiatives get under way - eg. to cover initial working capital requirements for equipment, furniture, conversion of premises. Funds would be provided against a well-prepared business and financial plan.

A model of excellence - The LDDC should lead the process of setting up a working model of good practice in child-care.

Educating employers - The LDDC should lead an education programme for employers to advise on and quantify the economic and other benefits of assisting employees with childcare and to discuss the options for employers in Docklands.

Partnership nurseries - Employers, developers and statutory bodies should consider partnership nurseries offering free places in exchange for sites. Statutory bodies are more likely to have available premises or sites, which can be bartered for financial sponsorship of facilities by the private sector.