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## How to involve children's centres in registering births

Below is a list of the key points to consider if local areas wish to explore using children's centres as settings for birth registration.

### 1. Choosing appropriate children's centres

It is important, however, to recognise that there is no 'one size fits all' for local authorities. There are examples in other authorities where register of births at children's centres has been withdrawn as a service due to uptake or costs. Registrars felt strongly it should be left to local areas to determine the locations at which they register births.

- Must have all parties on board with what is trying to be achieved - Register Office, Sure Start (Centre Managers and staff) and IT technicians. The discussion should cover ensuring good coverage across the registration district and value for money.
- The IT provision from the children's centre must be robust, secure and reliable.
- The first centre in an area should be in the most populous area. The number of births registered in a district is an important consideration. If there are only a few then it's probably not viable.
- The children's centre should offer something that the Register Office site doesn't (such as parking).
- Publicity (leaflets) at the hospital baby unit is paramount, so that new parents are aware of the options to register.
- Negotiate a locally appropriate appointment system. This can be through the register office as in York so that staff can promote the service at the children's centre at first contact, or through Sure start staff that book slots and send the information to the registry service as in Manchester and Bury.

### 2. Set up and approving premises

Once a children's centre has been chosen as a potential birth registration setting, the process is fairly straightforward in order to get it to become an "approved premise" so that births can be legally registered.

- Share plans of the children centre buildings with the registration service.
- Establish the availability of a room with privacy for the appointment.
- Ensure reliable broadband or WIFI internet access (to allow access to the registration database through the portal).

- Ensure access to a Laptop and printer are available to use through a dedicated IT system.

### 3. On-going review of coverage

Careful on-going consideration needs to be given to the following areas to ensure the process remains viable:

- Strategic location of chosen children's centres to ensure good coverage across the registration district – the environment of a children's centre may not always be appropriate in all cases for registrars to be based at a centre.
- Cost of locating services and value for money of providing these services.
- Designated and secured office for the process and any storage of valuable materials (such as master registration page and blank birth certificates) and a clear system to ensure all security items are accounted for.
- Accessibility of the building and good transport links – reviewed.
- Develop strategic and efficient system of appointment booking and the process for sharing this with registry service to allow registrars to only take required stock out for the visit.

Important to then ensure:

- Centres are set up to showcase the offer services for babies and new parents. There must be an offer to parents for babies and the 0-2's to reinforce the relevance of the centre.
- Midwifery services are involved and know about the service lead.
- Proper integration of offer in both services – roles agreed and any resources required set aside to ensure buy in from both registration service and children's services.
- Awareness raising and publicity is on-going - the process takes time to build awareness among the local population. Important role for promotion through health teams, hospitals, libraries and the children centres and registration services themselves when parents phone up.
- Registrars establish and rotate the duty to attend.
- Reliability of service – reviewed.

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## Current legal responsibility

The responsibility for the registration service is split between the Registrar General, who is the Head of the General Register Office, and local authorities. The Registrar General administers the law relating to civil registration, and local authorities are responsible for the organisation and delivery of the service in their area, which includes determining the locations where births may be registered. Local authorities are also responsible for appointing the registrars to carry out the duty.

Each local authority in England and Wales is responsible for providing the registration service within its area for the registration of births and deaths. Local authorities are bound by statute to determine the location (and number) of registrar's offices (Registration Service Act 1953).

Although the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953 provides for every child birth to be placed in a register kept for the sub-district in which the child was born, it does not stipulate where the registration should take place. Consequently, a range of settings are used by local authorities such as Town Halls, hospitals and libraries in addition to the local register office. Importantly, local authorities can, and some do, make arrangements for registrars to attend children's centres to register births.