

Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium



Feasibility Study

November 2005

The Newcastle West Early Years Creative Resource Centre

Contents

Page

- 4. Executive Summary
- 7. Background and context
- 9. Case Study: Reggio Emilia Pre-schools
- 10. The Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium: The Vision
- 12. Case Study: The Fantastic Attic
- 13. The Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium: Programme
- 14. Training & Professional Development
- 15. Relationships and links with the local community
- 17. The Geographical Area & Regeneration Plans for Benwell and Scotswood
- 19. The Physical Environment and Architect's Brief
- 20. National & Regional Early Years Strategies & Priorities

Page

23.	Strategic Fit with National & Regional Policies & Priorities
25.	The Market
26.	Regional Early Arts Activity
29.	Comparable Initiatives
31.	Operational Management
	Legal Structure
	Location
	Premises
	The Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium Plan
	Opening Times
	Staffing
37.	Funding & Finance
	Capital Costs
	Profit & Loss Account
41.	Potential Sources of Funding
50.	Summary & Recommendations
51.	Appendix 1: Breakdown of Building Refurbishment Costs

Executive Summary

The Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium will provide a permanent focus for exploration and imagination, working with and for, primarily pre-school age children, their educators and their families¹.

This report has been produced by Susan Priestley of Cultural Partnerships Limited, working closely with Sightlines Initiative and architect Bill Ainsworth of Ainsworth Spark Associates. The aim of the document is to assess the feasibility of establishing an Early Years Exploratorium for children and their families within the existing Valley View Nursery building (soon to become vacant) in the West End of Newcastle.

The elements of work involved in producing this report have included:

- ∞ Research and consultation carried out by Cultural Partnerships Limited and Sightlines Initiative.
- ∞ A full architectural survey and production of design drawings by Ainsworth Spark Associates, Newcastle.
- ∞ A structural survey undertaken by Greener Whitehouse.
- ∞ A topographical survey of the land around the building by RBA Ltd
- ∞ An indication of the capital costs associated with the project prepared by Quantity Surveyor, RH Duns.
- ∞ An indication of the revenue costs associated with the Exploratorium project, prepared by Cultural Partnerships Limited.

The Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium is an exciting initiative which will:

- ∞ provide a permanent focus for exploration and imagination, working with and for, primarily pre-school age children, their educators and their families;
- ∞ change the perception of children as receivers and to value them as creative innovators and independent thinkers;
- ∞ be a focus for and a generator of ideas.

The aim of the project is to create a permanent base or *Exploratorium* for creative early years projects, with an emphasis on

¹ The Big Onion Proposal: An early childhood centre promoting young children's creativity, Sightlines Initiative, September 2001.

partnership working to enable and facilitate play, exploration and creative learning with young children. Ainsworth Spark Associates, the architects engaged to produce the plans for this report, have envisaged an exciting and inspirational space in which artists and other creative people can work in partnership with families, carers and early years educators *on a regular basis*, to facilitate curiosity, learning and exploration in young children. The word *Exploratorium* has been identified as the most accurate description for the project, in that it will provide opportunities for young children to learn through exploration, imagination, creativity and the sharing of views and ideas with others. The proposed plans for the building can be seen in Section 14.

The project has come about as a result of Sightlines Initiative's long-term research into the development of an Early Years Creative Resource Centre or *Exploratorium* in the North East of England. Sightlines Initiative has been instrumental in developing the project thus far and will continue to be a major stakeholder, although it's likely that the Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium would have its own identity and legal structure at some point in the future.

The choice of Valley View Nursery School as a base for the initiative came about as a result of informal discussions between Sightlines Initiative and Newcastle City Council around three years ago. Area regeneration plans were in the early stages at that time and although no formal offers or agreements were made, the City Council agreed that the Exploratorium idea had a strategic fit with its early years and education priorities.

The regeneration of the area is now underway, with work on Delaval Road Primary School due for completion in August 2006, and Valley View Nursery scheduled to relocate the following month. Sightlines Initiative has been in contact with Newcastle City Council's Property Services Department over much of the past year and an expression of interest regarding the takeover of the building once it becomes vacant has been submitted.

In researching this report, Cultural Partnerships and Sightlines Initiative have considered both national and regional policies, priorities and frameworks associated with early years. The report recognises the importance of linking with and being relevant to national frameworks, such as Every Child Matters and the DfES 5 Year Strategy for Children and Learners. Consultation with a number of regional early years professionals, including personnel within GONE and Newcastle City Council, suggests that the programme and overall ethos of the Exploratorium has a good

strategic fit with the relevant early years policy documents and frameworks.

The final section of the report, *Funding and Finance*, outlines the capital and revenue costs associated with the project, which have been arrived at in full consultation with the relevant specialists. Capital costs associated with the redevelopment of the Valley View Nursery building have been prepared by Quantity Surveyors, RH Duns and total £407,326. This amount takes into account costs projected to the second quarter of 2006.

Fit-out and equipment costs have been estimated (with assistance from specialist children's furniture and equipment company, Studio UK) at £51,652, bringing the total capital costs to £458,978. Revenue costs have been estimated at just over £111,000 in Year 1, rising to just over £123,000 in Year 3.

The Funding and Finance section also includes an outline of potential sources of funding to enable the project to progress.

In summary, the Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium is an exciting and unique concept that would add significant value to creative learning programmes for young children within the North East. The project advocates partnership working and integrated services, which sits well with national and regional policy frameworks. It would be a valuable early years creative learning resource both in itself, as well as a complement to other early years, education, arts and cultural agencies, organisations, projects and programmes. Financially, the project has been designed to draw in a significant amount of earned income, although research suggests that it also meets many of the priorities of trusts, foundations and other funders.



1. Background and Context

The Newcastle West Creative Resource Centre project has been initiated by Sightlines Initiative, working in partnership with Sure Start Armstrong in the West End of Newcastle. The project has come about as a result of Sightlines Initiative's long-term research into the development of an Early Years Creative Resource Centre or *Exploratorium* in the North East of England. Valley View Nursery School in the West End of Newcastle is being explored as a potential venue because of plans to relocate the nursery to Delaval Road Primary School in September 2006, as part of the redevelopment of Benwell and Scotswood.

Sightlines Initiative was founded in 1996 by Director Robin Duckett, to support creative thinking and practice in early childhood services in the North East of England and throughout the UK. The organisation became a registered charity in 2001 and will become an Arts Council Regularly Funded Organisation in April 2006. In addition to its own programme of projects and other activities, the organisation line manages two more important resources within early years:

- ∞ Refocus is a UK early childhood network which supports information exchanges, networking and development activities in the UK which have reference to the experience of Reggio Emilia preschools.
- ∞ EarlyArts**NorthEast** is a new regional agency for arts and foundation stage learning, which has been established by Sightlines Initiative and Arts Council England, North East.

In 1997, in partnership with Newcastle City Council, Sightlines Initiative hosted the first showing in Britain of the Reggio Emilia *Hundred Languages of Children Exhibition*. The organisation has since taken on the role of UK reference point for the Reggio Children's Network in Italy.

"Our goal (in Reggio) is to build an amiable school (and also a hard-working, inventive, liveable, documentable, and communicable school; a place of research, learning, reflection and revisiting), where children, teachers and families feel at home..... It must embody ways of getting along together, of intensifying relationships among the three central protagonists."

LORIS MALAGUZZI, 'THE HUNDRED LANGUAGES OF CHILDREN', 1995.

As such, the organisation incorporates many of the principles and values of the Reggio pre-schools within its work and programming. It is these values and principles that will underpin the work and programming within the Newcastle West Creative Resource Centre.

It must be stressed, however, that the aim is not to replicate a Reggio Preschool within the West End of Newcastle, but rather to examine the ideas and ways of working and apply the values and principles within a new and unique early years creative resource. The Centre will complement existing early childhood services by initiating and developing partnership programmes of work linking creativity and learning for, primarily, children aged 3 to 6 years. The programme will be developed and facilitated by a team of professionals and specialists working within the arts, culture and early years sectors and will include and involve children, their parents and carers, artists and other creative professionals and early years educators. The aim is to develop a programme that encourages and facilitates long-term projects and regular community and family visits, as opposed to one-off and 'drop-in' sessions. Partnership and collaboration will be key to this way of working and crucial to the success and sustainability of the initiative.



3452 Newcastle West Creative Resource Centre Plan (nts), 1.07.05

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2. Case Study: Reggio Emilia Pre-schools

Reggio Emilia, a small town in prosperous Northern Italy, has become an international focus of interest for educationalists working with young children. Reggio Emilia pre-schools cater for almost 100% of three to six year olds and 37% of under threes, offering full-day provision for children and families from all sectors of the community. The education of all children, including those with disabilities, is continually explored and developed by the staff, who always include an artist – an atelierista. The Reggio approach is not just about practice, it is underpinned by a philosophy which continually grows and develops. Reggio educators learn from children by focusing on listening to children's theories, observe how children represent their understanding of the world and discover ways of supporting children's explorations. The key principles of the Reggio approach, some of which are set out below, will form the cornerstone of the Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium and its work with young children.

All children have potential: From birth the child has the need and the right to communicate and interact with others. Through energy and curiosity the child conducts her own learning.

Children are connected: The child learns through interaction with peers, adults, objects and symbols.

The reciprocity of children: "Children are very open to exchanges and reciprocity as deeds and acts of love which they not only want to receive, but also to offer. These form the basis of their ability to experience authentic growth, dependent on the elements listed above, as well as on conflict and error" (Carlina Rinaldi).

Children are communicators: Children have the right to use many forms of symbolic representation – words, movement, drawing, painting, building, sculpture, shadow play, collage, dramatic play, music (the hundred languages of children).

The environment is the 'third' teacher: Space is designed to encourage encounters, communication and relationships.

Educators are partners, nurturers and guides: Educators and artists (atelierista) facilitate children's exploration of themes, whether within short or long-term projects, and guide experiences of open-ended discovery and problem solving. They know how to plan, observe and listen closely to children; how to ask questions, discover children's ideas, hypotheses and theories and provide occasions for discovery and learning.

Documentation as communication: Careful consideration and attention is given to the presentation of the thinking of the children and the adults who work with them. Transcriptions of children's words and dialogues, photographs, drawings – many different media are used.

Parents as partners: Parents play an active part in the children's learning experience.

Education is about asking questions

3. The Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium: The Vision

The Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium is an exciting initiative which will:

- ∞ provide a permanent focus for exploration and imagination, working with and for, primarily pre-school age children, their educators and their families;
- ∞ change the perception of children as receivers and to value them as creative innovators and independent thinkers;
- ∞ be a focus for and a generator of ideas.

The centre will provide a permanent base or *exploratorium* for creative early years projects, with an emphasis on partnership working to enable and facilitate play, exploration and creative learning with young children. The Exploratorium will provide a safe creative learning environment for young children, staffed by creative professionals experienced in early years work, but it will not be a playgroup or nursery primarily concerned with childcare. The main aim of the project is to establish an exciting and inspirational space in which artists and other creative people can work in partnership with families, carers and early years educators *on a regular basis*, to facilitate curiosity, learning and exploration in young children. The word *exploratorium* has been identified as the most accurate description for the project, in that it will provide opportunities for young children to learn through exploration, imagination, creativity and the sharing of views and ideas with others.

The aims of the project are:

- ∞ To recognise and nurture creativity
- ∞ To develop creative initiatives with pre-school and Foundation Stage children.
- ∞ To bring together and facilitate the sharing of good practice between children, their parents, families and carers, artists and early years educators.
- ∞ To provide advocacy for creative learning
- ∞ To value individuality and difference
- ∞ To develop self esteem and respect for others
- ∞ To offer training and professional development to creative professionals and early years educators



The centre will employ two full time creative professionals with significant experience within early years, an administrator and a housekeeper/caretaker. Exploratorium staff will work with other artists and creative freelancers, as well as with parents, carers, families, teachers and early years educators and professionals, on projects and programmes which facilitate the exploration of children's ideas. Programmes of work will address pre-school and foundation stage learning on many levels, particularly within areas around confidence and self-esteem, language and communication, and interaction.

Although the Centre has been developed with the benefits to young children in mind, it will be of equal importance to adults caring for and/or working with pre-school age children. For example, the centre will:

- ∞ provide professional development for **teachers**, through training and active participation with artists focusing on the child as inventor and creative thinker.
- ∞ provide professional development for **artists**, focusing on the role of the artist as facilitator and enabler, working with teachers to encourage children to think and work creatively.
- ∞ help and facilitate **parents** to understand the reflective approach which values the child's viewpoint.
- ∞ develop opportunities for **partnership working** and **networking** across all three of the above adult groups.

4. Case Study: The Fantastic Attic

The interest generated from the first showing of *The Hundred Languages of Children Exhibition* in 1997 led to Sightlines Initiative developing *The Fantastic Attic* in June 2000. This event, which was held at The Discovery Museum in Newcastle was, in effect, a temporary *Exploratorium*. Sightlines Initiative worked with a team of artists to transform the Great Hall in the Discovery Museum into a Fantastic Attic – a warren of interconnected spaces of varying sizes. The division of the Great Hall created an art studio, a construction area, a dressing up area, a mirror room, a shadow space and performance area, a community space, light boxes and a projection area. The idea was to create an environment for under 5's, which allowed for encounters, observation, reflection, relationships and the sharing of ideas. As well as addressing the key aim of encouraging and challenging children to explore their experiences through group reflection and record them through many different representational languages, the project addressed capacity building. The learning process for adults, whether artists, educators, staff, parents or other carers, was seen as equally important as that of the children, in order that the ideas, understanding and experiences gained could be developed within future projects.



The four-week long project involved a number of local early years settings, including nursery schools, playgroups, primary schools and day nurseries. Participants made more than one visit to the project, where artists and guides were on hand to facilitate the experience for both children and adults.

After the event, each participating group was visited by an artist in their own setting, to continue the development of the relationships and to assist the groups in follow up work inspired by the project.

5. The Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium: Programming

“Children.....are not seen as isolated and egocentric individuals; they are envisaged as members of families and communities, who in turn are connected with the preschool as part of that community.”

The Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium will work with early years specialists, parents, carers, artists and creative professionals to offer creative learning programmes within a permanent, purpose-designed space, to include:

- ∞ Participatory services for children (predominantly under 5's), which are booked in advance.
- ∞ Tailor-made projects designed in consultation with a range of nursery schools, groups, organisations and individuals.
- ∞ Weekend and/or themed events and one-off projects.
- ∞ Training courses and professional development for artists, early years educators, group leaders and others working with young children
- ∞ Support in developing project ideas and in project planning for those involved in arts and early years settings.

The Centre will provide an open and welcoming space that actively encourages involvement from parents, carers and the local community, as well as early years educators and other professionals.

“Parents are children's first and most enduring educators”²

There will be an emphasis on programming that involves participants, whether children or adults, over significant periods of time, thus building true working and social relationships with children and their carers and educators.

² Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage, DfEE, 2000.

6. Training and Professional Development

Consultation across a range of early years arts and education providers has highlighted training within creative learning as a current gap in existing provision. Many agencies working with young children, including local authority departments, Sure Starts and others, provide practical training associated with parenting skills and childcare, etc. However, although there are specialist early years training agencies elsewhere in the country, there is a lack of quality training for arts and early years professionals linking creativity and early learning within the North East region.

The Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium will work with schools, nurseries, early years educators, artists and other creative professionals to identify and address skills gaps across the arts, cultural and early years sectors. Examples of training courses within the first year of operation could cover areas including:

- ∞ How creative learning programmes can complement and add value to early years programmes addressing the priority areas within *Every Child Matters* and other national policy documents.
- ∞ An exploration of reflective practice and ways in which children and their educators may work together more effectively and creatively.
- ∞ Ways in which artists and educators may work together and collaborate on practical issues around planning and running a joint project.
- ∞ Exploring and developing an understanding of materials within early arts projects.
- ∞ An introduction to Reggio Emilia pre-schools and Reggio techniques.
- ∞ Understanding artform areas and the role they play in creative learning.

Earned income for these and other courses, conferences and events forms a significant element of the Exploratorium's annual income. Charges for training have been based on delivery costs, as well as charges made by other specialist early years training organisations, such as Early Excellence in Huddersfield, Play Train in Birmingham and Children In Scotland.

7. Relationships and Links with the Local Community

Although the timing of this report has not allowed for local community consultation, (the proposed closure of the nursery is only becoming local knowledge now, as this report is being completed) it is possible to make some assumptions as to potential users of the Oasis Centre within the locality.

At an initial meeting regarding this report, Kath Hearnden, the existing Head Teacher at Valley View Nursery, was positive about the potential for a good working relationship between the Exploratorium and the new nursery after relocation to Delaval Road Primary School. The new early years centre at Delaval Road will cater for 116 children aged 2 to 5 years, plus 18 babies. As the new centre is within walking distance of the Valley View building, it's possible that an ongoing link could be established to address creative elements of early years education at Delaval Road.

There is also potential to link with the Delaval Road School Breakfast, After School and Holiday Clubs. It was recognised by the Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium Feasibility Steering Group that strong links with the local community are both necessary and desirable. To this end, it was agreed that although the Centre will predominantly focus on 3 to 5 year olds, programming will take into account the needs of children aged up to around 9 years, to encourage involvement by families and the community. A regular link into after school provision would therefore be an opportunity worth exploring.

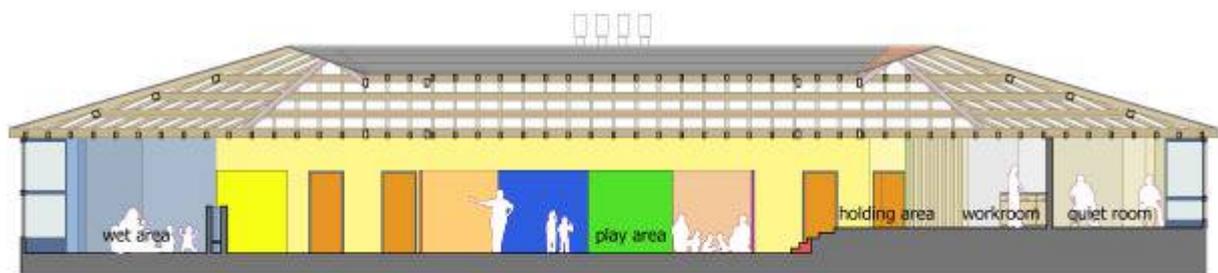
7.1 Other potential users of the building

Although the geographical focus of the Exploratorium is centred on the West End of Newcastle, the Centre clearly has potential to attract usage from further afield. Consultation with Carol Barnes, ? for Newcastle City Council's Children Information Services, identified 42 day nurseries, 53 out-of-school clubs, 54 playgroups and crèches and 378 childminders within the City of Newcastle. In addition, all of the city's first schools all have one or more staff with responsibility for teaching at foundation stage. There is, therefore, clearly potential for developing training and other programmes of work for both children and adults throughout the city of Newcastle. In order to identify skills gaps and ascertain demand, it will be necessary for the centre to undertake an in depth mapping exercise, initially across the city and in the long term further afield, to carry out training needs analysis work across the arts and early years sectors.

As this is likely to be a significant piece of work, this report recommends that the Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium links in with an existing organisation, such as Sightlines Initiative or Early Arts North East, to access funding and carry out the research.



French theatre performance *Gribouille* for children, parents and educators at the Riverside Centre, North Tyneside, November 2005.



8. The Geographical Area & Regeneration Plans Benwell and Scotswood

The Valley View Nursery is an open plan nursery with places for 54 children, situated in the heart of Old Benwell, within the Benwell and Scotswood Ward. Most children attending the nursery come from the immediate area. The Ward has a total population of 13,759 (5.3% of the total population of the city), 3,011 of which are under 16 years of age. The area is predominantly white, with ethnic minorities making up only 4.2% of the population, 2.9% of which are South Asian. Benwell and Scotswood is characterised by high unemployment, high crime rates and severe social and cultural disadvantage.

A proposal to amalgamate the nursery with Delaval Road Primary School has now been agreed by Newcastle City Council. Building work at Delaval Road Primary School is due for completion in August 2006 and Valley View Nursery School will transfer to the new site in September 2006.

The scheme is being developed as part of the Benwell Scotswood Action Plan, which is being produced by Newcastle City Council, working with external consultants. Work on the Action Plan, which will be the key regeneration framework for the area, started in June 2005 and is due for completion in June/July 2006. The study will review the Benwell Scotswood area, taking into account issues and elements that are important to residents, including any new developments, housing and tackling crime, etc. Any plans for the existing Valley View Nursery building are clearly very relevant to the Action Plan and Sightlines Initiative has been in full consultation with Steve Metcalfe within Property Services during the production of this report.

At the time of completing this document, the City Council was just about to start the statutory consultation process, which involves a notice in the local press. Local consultation has, therefore, been limited to nursery school staff and the appropriate local authority departments. We recommend that a local consultation exercise is undertaken once the scheme is 'common knowledge'.

In the meantime, Sightlines Initiative has submitted a formal expression of interest in taking over the building when it becomes vacant in August 2006. Although Steve Metcalfe and Andy Bloomfield of Newcastle City Council's Property Services

Department have stressed that there will be a requirement to market the building publicly, they have responded positively to Sightlines Initiative's proposal for an Early Years Exploratorium. Indeed, the original approach regarding the possibility of Valley View Nursery School becoming vacant came from Newcastle City Council around 3 years ago. At that time, informal discussions were held regarding Sightlines Initiative taking over the use of and responsibility for the building on a peppercorn rent. Those discussions were not formalised and any 'deal' regarding the use of the building and the associated financial implications would need to be fully explored should Sightlines Initiatives' proposal be accepted. At the time of writing this report, the building's market value had not been assessed, although Steve Metcalfe pointed out that any assessment will need to take into account financial projections to the autumn of 2006.



3452 Newcastle West Creative Resource Centre Elevation (nts), 4.07.05

AINSWORTH SPARK ASSOCIATES

9. The Physical Environment and Architect's Brief

In order to assess the building's potential against the aims of the project, Sightlines Initiative appointed architect Bill Ainsworth of Ainsworth Spark Associates to produce design drawings based on consultation with the project steering group. The brief was to suggest changes to the existing space to create a flexible environment, which invites exploration and discovery, whilst addressing the statutory requirements associated with access and health and safety. In addition, the brief requested that the potential for a materials resource store be taken into account. An important aspect of the Centre is that it does not rely on 'toys' to involve children in learning and play, but that children are given access to a rich supply of materials and objects to encourage exploration and creativity.

An important element of the brief for Ainsworth Spark Associates was to explore ways in which the internal and external spaces can work together. The existing building has quite an extensive and very attractive garden area. Although this was highlighted by Kath Hearnden, the current Valley View Nursery Head Teacher as an important facility, its use to date has inevitably been limited by the weather. To address this issue, Ainsworth Spark have extended and glazed the terraced area to 'bring the outside in' and vice versa.



The existing terraced area at the rear of Valley View Nursery School

10. National and Regional Early Years Strategies & Priorities

“Creativity is fundamental to successful learning”³

The current Government places a high priority on early education, childcare and nursery provision for young children and, as a result, there has been a significant expansion in services for young children in recent years. This area of work is delivered by a number of agencies, including local authorities, Sure Starts and the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP). Consultation with a number of early years specialists within Newcastle regarding the Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium has been very positive. Consultees, including Sue Miller, Partnerships and Communications Manager and Carol Barnes of Children’s Information Services, both of Newcastle City Council, have responded enthusiastically to the initiative, stressing that in order to be relevant, viable and sustainable, the project must address the five priority areas within the 2003 Government Green Paper, *Every Child Matters*:

- ∞ Being healthy: enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle.
- ∞ Staying safe: being protected from harm and neglect.
- ∞ Enjoying and achieving: getting the most out of life and developing the skills for adulthood.
- ∞ Making a positive contribution: being involved in the community and society and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour.
- ∞ Economic well-being: not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life.

Every Child Matters was followed in 2004 by the national *Change for Children Programme*, which was launched to help realise the vision first presented in the ‘Every Child Matters’ Green Paper – *“to create a joined up system of health, family support, childcare and education services so that all children get the best start possible in the vital early years.”⁴*

In terms of delivering the changes outlined in the above documents, Government Offices link up with other Government Departments,

³ Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage, DfEE, 2000.

⁴ Every Child Matters Government website

regional organisations and local communities to implement the changes in each area. In the Northern Region, Government Office for the North East (GONE), which represents the ten central government departments across the four counties of the region (Northumberland, Tyne & Wear, Durham and Tees Valley), provides the required support to relevant early years agencies and organisations. GONE works in partnership with relevant organisations to meet local needs by improving access to information, and promoting, where possible, multi-agency working for children's services on the ground.

GONE has overall responsibility for the north-east Sure Start local programmes, which are area based initiatives set up to tackle child poverty and social exclusion. Concentrated in areas where a high proportion of children are living in poverty, Sure Start local programmes work with parents-to-be, parents and children to promote the physical, intellectual and social development of babies and young children to prepare them for school. Introduced in waves, starting in 1999, all 524 Sure Start local programmes are now operational and each programme typically serves between 400 and 800 children under four and their families. Within the North East region, the 12 local authorities have strategic responsibility for the delivery of the region's 62 local programmes. They plan their development in consultation with parents and other key partners, including primary care trusts and other health service providers.

Consultation with Heather MacDonald, Sure Start Support Team Manager, identified the current focus of early years work within GONE as being the integration of existing services⁵ within a new Children and Learners Group. A new Director of Children and Learning, Jackie Doughty, was appointed in early August and a re-structure of children's services is currently taking place, with priority areas to be identified and announced by the end of 2005.

Within Newcastle, the City Council's Early Education and Childcare Service is a new service combining the care and early education of young children. The service aims to meet the needs of children in their earliest years and work in partnership with families and the community. The service fulfils the following roles:

- ∞ To offer families information about local childcare and early education facilities to meet their individual needs or personal choice.
- ∞ To provide direct provision of early education for 3-4 year olds via the seven Nursery Schools across the city.

⁵ Sure Start local programmes, The Children's Fund, Connexions, Positive Activities for Young People, Transforming Youth Work & Millennium Volunteers.

- ∞ To provide integrated education and care for 3 and 4 year olds in the 6 Community Nurseries⁶

Every Child Matters, Change for Children and other national policies, such as the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners, published in November 2004 and the Children Act 2004, have and will continue to heavily influence local and regional policies and work programmes associated with children and young people, including early years and foundation stage children. The message that has come through loud and clear from our consultation with GONE, local authorities and other relevant early years agencies, is that the Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium must address the priorities within these documents if it is to develop effective partnerships with statutory early years providers. As partnership working and collaboration will be key to the sustainability of the Exploratorium, this report recommends that ongoing consultation with the relevant agencies, organisations and individuals is maintained throughout the development process and beyond.

⁶ Community Nurseries offer an extended day for pre-school aged children for fifty one weeks of the year.

11. The Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium: Strategic Fit with National and Regional Policies and Plans

The last section gave an overview of regional and national policies and priorities relating to early years provision. The Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium will look to consider and address these policy areas in developing projects and programmes for young children and their educators and families. Early Years specialists consulted regarding the proposed Oasis Early Years Creative Resource Centre were fully supportive of the initiative, but pointed out that if it is to be sustainable, the centre must be directly relevant to the priorities and outcome areas within *Every Child Matters*:

- ∞ Being healthy: enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle.
- ∞ Staying safe: being protected from harm and neglect.
- ∞ **Enjoying and achieving: getting the most out of life and developing the skills for adulthood.**
- ∞ **Making a positive contribution: being involved in the community and society and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour.**
- ∞ Economic well-being: not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life.

The Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium will address many of these priorities by the very nature of its vision and values, but programming will, in particular, fall within the two priorities areas highlighted.

In terms of Sure Start, Sightlines Initiative has worked with a number of local programmes over the past few years and several relationships are ongoing. This report, for example, has been commissioned by Sure Start Armstrong. A consultation meeting with Leisa Smith of Sure Start Armstrong highlighted the need for the proposed Exploratorium be aware of and take into account the targets and outcomes set for Children's Centres.

Children's Centres provide integrated early education and childcare, health services, family support and a base for network childminders. Most Children's Centres will be developed from Sure Start Local Programmes and Extended Schools and will support existing provision in the maintained, voluntary and private sectors. Between

2004 and 2006, 12 Children's Centres will be developed, covering 20 wards in Newcastle, which will reach over 9000 children under 5 and their families. By 2010, there will be a Children's Centre in every area of Newcastle.

The integrated approach adopted by Children's Centres will:

- ∞ provide holistic support for children's development;
- ∞ support families and young children;
- ∞ facilitate the return to work of parents who are currently unemployed;
- ∞ offer a base for childminder networks and link to other daycare provision.

This integrated approach is at the heart of the Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium proposal, which aims to work collaboratively across children's services to develop creative solutions to achieving targets and outcomes within pre-school and foundation stage learning.

12. The Market

Because the Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium is a unique initiative, there is no market research directly relevant to the project. There is, of course, research relating to childcare and private nurseries, and also to indoor and other play facilities for children. Market trends associated with all of these enterprises indicate significant growth across the sector, which is predicted to continue.

*"The UK childcare sector is expanding rapidly, as the Government provides extra funding in an effort to meet targets for increased availability of childcare places by the end of 2004."*⁷

However, the primary aim of the Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium is to build a creative learning space, which encourages and utilises reflective practise for young children *and their families and educators*, rather than to provide childcare. The centre will promote an 'open door' policy in terms of welcoming, including and working alongside parents and carers. The unique nature of the Exploratorium means that it is neither a childcare facility nor an early arts or education setting. The aim is rather to create an early years resource that integrates the experience and specialisms of artists, educators, early years specialists, parents, carers and, of course, the children themselves, in order to develop creative programmes to facilitate play, creativity, learning and social development. Partnership will be a key element of the centre and crucial to its aim to respond creatively to the play and learning needs of pre-school and foundation stage children.

The Exploratorium will take a very pro-active approach to collaboration and partnership with a wide range of agencies, organisations and individuals, with a view to achieving integration of arts, education and early years services through tailor-made programmes. It's target market in terms of providing specialist services and partnership programming will, therefore, be wide ranging and will include:

- Sure Start Local Programmes
- Privately run nursery schools
- Local authority nursery schools and departments within primary schools

⁷ UK Market Synopsis – Childcare – Cobweb Information Ltd, 2004.

- Local authority early years and children’s information services departments
- Local Education Authorities
- Social Services
- Local authority arts officers and arts development teams
- Arts agencies and organisations
- Education departments within galleries and museums
- Libraries
- Special arts and cultural initiatives, such as Culture 10.

12.1 Regional Early Arts Activity

Within the North East, there are a number of creative and cultural agencies and organisations programming event, projects, performances and activities for very young children. Programming falls into four main areas:

- ∞ Large organisations, such as The Sage Gateshead, which have a department dedicated to early years work.
- ∞ Small arts organisations and theatre companies, for example Monster Productions and the Bare Toed Company, whose programming focuses entirely on pre-school and foundation stage children.
- ∞ Arts and education agencies, for example Creative Partnerships, Isis Arts and Custombuilt, whose remit is to work directly within schools on creative learning programmes, some of which are for very young children.
- ∞ Arts and cultural organisations which have an element of arts programming specific to early years.

This section gives a brief overview of relevant agencies and organisations within the North East that fall into one or more of the above categories.

The Sage Gateshead’s Early Years programme provides structured ways into musical discovery for pre-school children, including children and the parents, families and/or carers, nurseries and other early years groups. An important element of the Early Years programme is training for Early Years workers and musicians, to enable them to take the work forward independently.

“The Sage Gateshead has a huge commitment to creating early musical opportunities for children, their parents and carers who work with them.”

Music Leader is led and managed by The Sage, Gateshead and exists to provide access to professional development and training for music leaders at every stage of their career. Although the organisation does not work directly with young children, it is relevant in that it provides training and professional development teachers and others working within early years settings.

The Bare Toed Company specialise in movement play and dance for young children and their parents/carers. They provide single sessions, regular classes and short courses for a wide range of early years group and organisations. They also offer training sessions for those working within the early years sector – these sessions aim to build on existing skills and instincts for using movement with children.

The company believes that opportunities to move, dance and play creatively are crucial to the holistic, healthy, thriving development of every child. Whenever possible, they take inspiration from the children, listening to their suggestions and moving with their ideas.

Since September 2004, the Company has been involved in an innovative new project: Bare Toed in the Garden – a magical aerial Dance piece for young children. The performance piece is offered as an inspiration to play – after the show the children have the opportunity to explore the instruments, the props and the trapeze. The project is still developing and has proven to be a springboard for a range of exciting creative ideas and relationships.

Monster Productions “...creates musical theatre, modern myths and visual magic for children, families and communities.”

The company was established in 1999 by Chris Speyer and Ieuan Goch ab Einion and is based within the Buddle Arts Centre in Wallsend.

Creative Partnerships provides school children across England with the opportunity to develop creativity in learning, by animating the national curriculum through ‘creative partnerships’ with some of the best creative professionals in the UK. Creative Partnerships works with children of all ages within school settings and has ‘branches’ across the country. Within the North East, there are CP programmes in Sunderland and Durham, North and South Tyneside, Northumberland and Tees Valley.

Custombuilt, based within the Customs House in South Shields, is the dedicated arts education agency for South Tyneside. The

organisation works with children of all ages, including some within early years settings.

Isis Arts initiates and manages artist residencies, productions and exhibitions and is based within Newcastle's city centre. The organisation became the specialist arts education agency for Northumberland in 2001 and as such, works with schoolchildren of all ages.

Seven Stories opened in the Ouseburn Valley, Newcastle in 2005 and is the first British centre celebrating children's books. The centre exists to celebrate the children's book and has the following core aims:

- ∞ to place children, young people and their books at the heart of our national culture;
- ∞ to recognise and communicate the artistic importance of the work of children's authors and illustrators as part of Britain's mainstream culture;
- ∞ to acknowledge the value of children's books in nourishing intellectual, imaginative and creative development.

The Centre runs a wide-ranging programme of exhibitions, events and workshops, including those for young children, their parents, families and carers. Consideration is currently being given to a specialist early years space, showing the original manuscripts and illustrations from some of our best-loved stories for very young children, such as *The Gruffalo* and *The Owl Babies*.

The Newcastle West Creative Resource Centre will not encroach on any of this existing provision, but will rather provide a focus for creative thinking and innovative practice linking arts and early education. An important distinction to make between the Centre and many existing arts and cultural agencies is that it is not concerned with *programming for* or *entertaining* children, but rather with initiating programmes in consultation *with* children and their educators, parents and carers. Listening and responding to children's views will be an all-important aspect of the initiative.

*".....It begins with curiosity and involves children in exploration and experimentation. As they express their creativity, they draw upon their imagination and originality. They make decisions, take risks and play with ideas. Children's creativity develops over time and takes time. It is best facilitated by adults who sensitively support this process and do not dominate it."*⁸

⁸ Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage, DfEE, 2000.

13. Comparable Initiatives

Although research carried for the production of this report has identified a number of organisations and agencies concerned with programming early years activity, there is currently no comparable initiative, certainly within the region and possible even nationally, to the Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium. Perhaps the closest comparable initiative is the growing network of 'Centres for Curiosity and Imagination', which have stemmed from a report of the same name, produced by John Pearce and commissioned by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in 1998.

Centres for Curiosity and Imagination are community based discovery centres, which bring children, families and others together to learn about the world through playful, hands-on experiences. Although usually linked to existing facilities, such as museums or galleries, for example, anyone can take the initiative to begin the process of setting up a centre. The central Centres for Curiosity & Imagination administration produces a setting-up guide for any group, organisation or individual interested in initiating a Centre.

Remida Creative Recycling Centres have been initiated by the Municipality of Napoli to promote and encourage creative recycling centres throughout Italy and elsewhere in Europe. The city of Reggio Emilia has collaborated very closely with the Remida Centre project, which includes seminars, workshops, meetings and events which contribute to spreading the ecological message of recycling and reusing objects. Remida Centres are particularly relevant to the Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium in that it will actively encourage and make use of creative materials, including those that have been recycled, within its programme for young children. Indeed, an area of the project that has yet to be fully explored, is the inclusion of a recycled materials resource, which could be situated within the existing portacabin in the Valley View Nursery School grounds.

Craftplay, which is housed within Bilston Craft Gallery in Wolverhampton, is an award winning creative play gallery for pre-school children, their parents and carers. The gallery opened in 2001 as a specially designed creative and sensory activity space for under fives, where children are encouraged to explore and have fun with specially made craft pieces, including sensory materials and curious environments. The space is used to support good quality

creative play provision, as well as training and information for practitioners and Early Years workers.

14. Operational Management

14.1 Legal Structure

The Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium project has been initiated by Sightlines Initiative, which has been instrumental in taking the project forward to feasibility stage. It is anticipated that Sightlines Initiatives will continue to be the responsible body in terms of developing the project. However, in the long term, the aim is for the Exploratorium to become an independent entity, with its own legal structure and constitution. Although no in depth discussions have taken place as yet as to which is the most relevant structure, it's likely that the organisation will explore the potential and benefits of the recently introduced CIC (Community Interest Company) structure. This area will be explored more fully should the project be taken forward.

14.2 Location



The choice of Valley View Nursery School as a base for the Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium came about as a result of informal discussions between Sightlines Initiative and Newcastle City Council around three years ago. Area regeneration plans were in the early stages at that time and although no formal offers or agreements were made, the City Council did agree that the exploratorium idea had a strategic fit with its early years and education priorities.

A major regeneration scheme is now underway within the Benwell and Scotswood Ward in the West End of Newcastle. Plans have been approved for the Valley View Nursery School to close in July 2006

and become part of a new early years unit at the nearby Delaval Road Primary School in September of the same year. As the existing Valley View Nursery Building will then become vacant, Sightlines Initiative has submitted an official expression of interest to Newcastle City Council regarding acquiring the building to develop the Exploratorium.

14.3 Premises

The existing Valley View Nursery building has a light and attractive layout, with a number of rooms (office, cloakroom, kitchen, boiler room etc.) off a central open work/play space. Externally, there is a garden area and playground, which has been a valuable asset to the nursery.



The Valley View Nursery School garden, terraced area and playground

The brief for architects Ainsworth Spark Associates, was to review the existing layout and put forward proposals for a flexible and fully accessible building and garden. The design was to particularly take into account the need to maximise space by better linking the internal and external spaces and address practical requirements associated with the children, centre staff and visitors. The design drawings produced have fully met the requirements of the brief and illustrate a safe and exciting environment in which children can access play and creative learning.



The existing Valley View Nursery School and grounds

14.4 The Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium Plan

The building layout is presented on three levels, with ramped access throughout. The main 'clean' entrance to the building enables children to come into a holding area and combined cloakroom, where they leave their coats and shoes, etc. The idea of the holding area is that once the children have taken off their outdoor things, they congregate within a small, clean space where staff and/or other creative professionals explain what they will be doing that day. This allows the children the chance to listen, consider and feedback from the information they receive, before entering the main space. This encourages greater concentration, as the children will be less distracted than they perhaps would be in the main play space.

Other areas within the entrance area include an office for administration staff, a quiet room and a separate workspace. The quiet room and workspace are predominantly for staff, but are small, flexible spaces that could also accommodate small group work.

The entrance and holding area leads into the main play/work space. In order to achieve disabled access, it has been necessary to incorporate a large central ramp as well as steps. The architect has taken an imaginative approach to this very practical requirement, by designing a combined ramp and play feature, which will provide an exciting but safe play facility for the children, whilst achieving full wheelchair access. Areas within this large central space can be sub-divided by way of retractable screens and dividers, to allow small, intimate spaces for small group work, or to allow anything created to be left undisturbed.

There are a number of other practical spaces leading off the central play/work area, including toilets, a baby change area and disabled toilet, a boiler and utility area, which can house a washing machine and a staff room. The main working area leading off the central space, however, is the kitchen and family room. The aim in incorporating this space was not to create a kitchen for adults to prepare food for children, but rather to create an area where children and adults can explore food and cooking together. In the long term, the possibility of accessing the allotment gardens adjoining the centre garden could be explored, to provide a valuable additional facility whereby children learn how to grow, prepare and cook food.

The far end of the building allows access to a small terrace area and the garden beyond. This 'dirty entrance' will allow children to enter the garden and come back into the building without trailing mud and dirt into other areas, as outdoor shoes/wellies will be put on, taken off and left after use in this area.

At the front of the building, there is stepped access from an existing terrace, which has a roof covering but is open to the front, down into the yard area. The architect proposes that this terrace area has a new roof and is glazed to the front, thereby maximising the internal space by way of a conservatory-like extension.

All in all, the design solutions presented by Ainsworth Spark Associates illustrate a light, spacious and flexible environment in which children can work together and with facilitators to explore, learn and create.

14.5 Opening Times

The Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium will be open for 6 days per week, with four days allocated to programme activities and training, and the remaining two dedicated to family and community programmes. The centre will be open for 48 weeks per year. An example timetable for the week is given below:

The Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium: Weekly timetable example		
DAY	AM	PM
MONDAY	Staff/development meeting	Early arts group session
TUESDAY	Early arts group session	Early arts group session
WEDNESDAY	Full day training event	
THURSDAY	Early arts group session	Half day training event
FRIDAY	Early arts group session	Early arts group session
SATURDAY	Family/community sessions	
SUNDAY	Closed (occasional/special event use only)	

14.6 Staffing

The Oasis Exploratorium will involve a collective team of multi-skilled staff led by a Director, who will be responsible to the Sightlines Initiative Board of Trustees. The core team will consist of the following personnel:

The Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium: Staffing Requirements	
Staff	Roles & responsibilities
Director	Overall day-to-day management of the building; line management of other staff and creative freelancers; programme development; liaison with arts agencies/organisations, early years professionals and educators; responsibility for funding, finance and management accounts; responsibility for centre's promotion and profile; development and maintenance of local community links, e.g. schools, family groups, etc.
Creative Facilitator X 1	Initiation and development of tailor-made creative programmes for early years groups; development and maintenance of ongoing relationships with early years settings, groups and educators;
Freelance Creative Professionals	A pool of freelance creative professionals with expertise across all artforms. Freelancers will be recruited according to the needs and requirements of each individual project or programme of work.
Administrator	All administrative tasks associated with the running of the centre, including incoming and outgoing mail, ordering and invoicing systems, filing and stock control, wages and other payments, word processing
Caretaker/Housekeeper	Tasks associated with the general maintenance of the building and external spaces, including cleaning

15 Funding and Finance

Capital costs associated with the building refurbishment have been estimated by Quantity Surveyor, RH Duns at just over £400,000. The costs include a 5% contingency and have been projected to the second quarter of 2006, which would be the earliest likely start date on site.

Fit-out costs, to include furniture, IT and other equipment has been estimated at around £52,000, bringing the total capital requirement, including a 5% contingency, to around £459,000.

The three-year profit and loss account identifies the core costs associated with the project to be almost £103,000 in Year 1, rising to over £113,000 in Year 3. A mix of earned and grant income has been estimated to achieve break even, with a 5% increase in income and expenditure factored in for Years 2 and 3.

The final section gives an outline of potential funding sources for the capital and revenue (project) costs associated with the Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium. This is not an exhaustive list, as sources of programme funding, in particular, will vary according to the content and focus of Exploratorium projects. However, the nature of the project and the potential for cross sector (arts, early years, education and culture) and partnership working puts the project in a strong position to attract grant income.

15.1 Capital Costs

The Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium: Capital Costs	
Building costs	
New extension to 'play space' area (44sq m)	85,000
Demolition of existing external canopy on south elevation	2750
Alterations to existing building (247 sq m)*	209,750
Alterations to the existing external works and drainage	72,500
Sub total	370,000
5% contingency	18500
Total at 2 nd quarter 2005 prices	388,500
Updated to second quarter 2006 prices	407,326
Total building costs	407,326
Fit-out & equipment costs	
Children's furniture	35,652
Office furniture & equipment	6000
Kitchen furniture & white goods	10,000
Total fit-out & equipment costs	51,652
TOTAL CAPITAL COSTS	458,978

*A full breakdown of the proposed alterations are given in Appendix

15.2 Profit & Loss Account

The Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium: 3 Year Profit and Loss Account			
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Earned Income			
Term time project/programme fees (see note 1)	53,200	55,860	58,653
Holiday period project/programme fees (see note 2)	9000	9450	9923
Training & professional development (see note 3)	20,880	21,924	23,020
Total earned income	83080	87,234	91,596
Grant Income (Arts Council, Local Authorities, trusts & foundations, etc. (see note 4)	30,00	31,500	33,075
Total income	113,080	118,734	124,671
Expenditure			
Staffing (see note 4):			
Director	26,000	27,300	28,665
Arts professional/enabler	22,000	23,100	24,255
Freelance professionals (see note 5)	10,575	11,104	11,659
Administrator (p/t)	9360	9828	10,319
Caretaker/Housekeeper	13,104	13,759	14,447
Employer's NI	8104	8509	8934
Materials	5000	5250	5513
Rent/rates (see note 6)	0	0	0
Telephone/internet	1500	1575	1654
Heat/light/water	2000	2100	2205
Research & Development	5000	5250	5513
Postage & stationery	1000	1050	1103
Professional Fees	1000	1050	1103
Advertising & recruitment	1000	1050	1103
Staff travel & training	5000	5250	5513
Bank Charges	200	210	221
Repairs & renewals	1000	1050	1103
Total expenditure	111,843	117,435	123,310
Profit (loss)	1237	1299	1361

Notes to Profit & Loss

Income

- Note 1: Programme income has been based on 4 days per week x 38 weeks (term time) charged out at £350 per day.
- Note 2: Income for holiday programmes has been based on a total of 30 days per year @ £300 per day.
- Note 3: Training/professional development has been based on 6 two-day training courses for 12 participants (@ £200 per person) and 6 one-day courses for 12 participants (@ £90 per person).
- Note 4: A conservative figure has been estimated for grant income from arts funders, trusts and foundations.

Expenditure

- Note 4: Salaries have been set in line with equivalent local authority arts and cultural posts.
- Note 5: A budget figure of £8550 has been included for input from freelance arts professionals at an average of 1 day per week x 38 weeks @ £225 per day.
- Note 6: No budget figure has been allocated to rent and rates as these are, as yet, unknown.

N.B. 5% inflationary increases have been added to the income and expenditure for Years 2 and 3.

16. Potential Sources of Funding

An important strength of the Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium is that it brings together the arts, early years and education sectors within creative programmes to enhance learning opportunities for young children. The project is, therefore, relevant to the priorities and criteria of a range of funders across a number of sectors. This section outlines a number of potential funding sources, both in terms of the capital required to refurbish and fit out the building, and the revenue associated with running costs and programming. It is crucial, of course, that the project addresses issues around long term sustainability by maximising its potential in terms of earned income. However, its programme areas and commitment to the education and creative opportunities afforded to young children, will mean that the initiative is likely to be attractive to funders on an ongoing basis, particularly in terms of project funding.

This section does not give an exhaustive list of funders, but rather identifies a selection that have grant programmes particularly relevant to the Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium. Neither does this section give detailed criteria and application processes. We recommend that a more thorough funding strategy is carried out with Sightlines and any other stakeholders should the project be approved.

16.1 Capital Funding

The Big Lottery Fund has just recently announced its England and UK Programmes for the period 2006-2009. The context for all Big Lottery programmes is a mission to improve communities and the lives of people most in need. Each programme has three key themes:

- ∞ Supporting community learning and creative opportunity
- ∞ Promoting community safety and cohesion
- ∞ Promoting well-being

The themes are supported by four outcomes:

- ∞ People having better chances in life, with better access to training and development to improve their life skills.
- ∞ Stronger communities, with more active citizens working together to tackle their problems.

- ∞ Improved rural and urban environments, which communities are better able to access and enjoy.
- ∞ Healthier and more active people and communities.

The programmes are divided into two broad areas: demand-led and strategic. Demand-led programmes will encourage organisations and groups to submit their own ideas and local solutions for funding. The strategic programmes will focus more on the outcomes the programme wants to achieve, although local solutions to local needs will still be encouraged. There are a number of programmes, with varying budgets and launch dates. The table below gives basic details, but more information can be accessed through the website – www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

Programme	Budget	Launch Date
Demand-led	Tbc	December 2005
Voluntary & Community Infrastructure	Up to £150 million	Early pilots end 2005 Full programme June 2006
Children's Play	Up to £155 million	November 2005
Environmental	Up to £354 million	November 2005
Well-being	Up to £165 million	March 2006
International Grants	Up to £60 million	March 2006
People's Millions	£16.5 million	Launched June 2005
Living Landmarks	Up to \$140 million	Launched 2005
Community Learning	Up to £140 million	June 2006
Young People's Fund	Up to £100 million	June 2006
Advice Services	Up to £50 million	June 2006
Research	Up to £25 million	March 2006

The Arts Council England's Grants for the Arts

Programme is funded through the National Lottery and offers funding of up to £100,000 for programmes and activities lasting up to 3 years. It should be noted, however, that although the maximum grant amount is £100,000, the average grant awarded in 2004/05 was £18,000. Grants for the Arts is a continuous programme – there are no deadlines.

Grants are awarded for a number of time-limited arts related activities, including:

- ∞ Projects and events
- ∞ Commissions and productions
- ∞ Research and development
- ∞ Activities for people to take part in

- ∞ Education activities
- ∞ Equipment and vehicles
- ∞ Buying, refurbishing and improving building for arts use
- ∞ Public art
- ∞ Professional development and training
- ∞ Bursaries and fellowships
- ∞ Marketing activities
- ∞ Organisational development
- ∞ Residencies
- ∞ Touring

The Northern Rock Foundation makes grants to organisations across the North East region for projects falling within its priority areas of Prevention; Money and Jobs, Exploration; Basics, Aspiration and Better Sector. The foundation favours applications from self-help organisations and those that are managed by, or can show close involvement of, the intended beneficiaries. This is particularly relevant to the Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium.

At first glance, it would seem that the most relevant programme for the Exploratorium project is Aspiration, which offers assistance to arts, environmental, heritage and sporting charities which raise the profile of the region and “make it a better place in which to live and enjoy life.” The Aspiration programme is unlike the others in that it is for everyone, whatever their circumstances, rather than gfor projects which specifically address disadvantage,

The Esmee Fairbairn Foundation is one of the largest independent grant making foundations in the UK. It makes grants to organisations with charitable purposes, which aim to improve the quality of life for people and communities, both now and in the future. There are four programme areas:

- Arts & Heritage
- Education
- Environment
- Social Change: Enterprise and Independence.

Although there are no minimum or maximum grants, few applications for over £100,000 are approved and in 2004, the average grant was £44,032.

Until 2008, the foundation has a key focus on the contemporary visual arts.

Newcastle City Council

Following consultation with Newcastle City Council's Arts and Culture Division, there are two areas of funding relevant to the Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium:

Capital Programmes

Funding for capital programmes is accessed through a number of sources, including the City Council itself, as well as regional, national and European funding. Although the aims of the scheme vary, funding is generally made to schemes that:

- ∞ Enhance the accessibility of cultural activity
- ∞ Ensure that facilities for artists, performers and the general public are of the highest quality
- ∞ Ensure that the broadest possible range of cultural activity is available in the city
- ∞ Enhance the city's profile and reputation and ensure that it is at the forefront of cultural provision and practice in Britain and further afield
- ∞ Create new or enhanced employment opportunities for artists and arts organisations

16.2 Revenue and Project Funding

Futurebuilders offers loan and grant finance to initiatives that involve the delivery of public services. The definition of public services are those that, once up and running, secure more than 50% of their required income from the public purse, whether directly or indirectly. The public services Futurebuilders invest in must belong to one or more of the following service areas:

- ∞ Community cohesion
- ∞ Crime
- ∞ Education and learning
- ∞ Health and social care
- ∞ Support for children and young people
- ∞ Cross cutting themes

Futurebuilders has four strategic aims:

- ∞ To improve public services significantly, in the longer term, through investing in a range of voluntary and community organisations.
- ∞ To provide an investment model comprising a combination of loans, performance related investments, grants and capacity building through consultancy support.

- ∞ To implement effective investment (outreach, application, assessment, decision-making and management) and administrative processes.
- ∞ To have a wider impact, especially on the voluntary and community sector, other funders and the public sector , by sharing learning gained from Futurebuilders' experiences.

As the Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium will work closely and in partnership with public sector agencies and organisations across a number of the Futurebuilders priority public service areas, this could be an important potential source of both capital and revenue funding.

The description of the [Ragdoll Foundation's](#) main aim given on its website would seem to be particularly relevant to the NWCRC. The Ragdoll Foundation aims to:

“Provide a space for alternative thinking, voices and practices. A factory of creative ideas, that is self confident, not afraid to take risks, where people can innovate, be creative, demonstrate and share ideas.”

The Foundation makes grants to organisations with charitable purposes which:

- ∞ Promote the development of children through children's imaginative thinking.
- ∞ Encourage innovation and innovative thinking and influence good practice elsewhere.
- ∞ Offer creative solutions that deal with the causes of problems in childhood
- ∞ Ensures effective evaluation of projects to promote sharing and learning.
- ∞ Above all, demonstrate how the voices of children can be heard.

The Foundation focuses mainly on applications which involve children in their early years, which:

Seek new creative solutions to problems, promote new approaches to creativity and innovation. Combining perspectives, cultures and disciplines.

Work on all stages in the creative process, generating ideas and following through on implementation.

Collaborate and share knowledge - create connections and maintain the ability to be responsive. Seek partners to help in

achieving their aims and develop meaningful relationships with the funded groups that are based on shared values.

Promote a culture of innovation and creativity, identify exemplary cases of innovation, fund pilot projects, showing how and where it made a difference.

Invest in research, supporting the groups in their learning.

Support co-operative ventures across sectors.

Arts and Cultural Funding

The Paul Hamlyn Foundation offers revenue grants through three grant programmes:

- ∞ The Small Grants Committee handles grant of up to £5000
- ∞ The Grants Committee deals with applications of up to £30,000
- ∞ The Trustees make decisions regarding grants of over £30,000

There are a number of grants programmes, but the most relevant to the Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium is the Arts and Learning Strand, which prioritises:

- ∞ Partnership projects which aim to develop the arts within formal education.
- ∞ Initiatives which offer children who are not well served opportunities to enjoy the arts, within and out of school.
- ∞ Schemes which give teachers access to best practice in the creative arts.

Exploratorium programming will involve and include young children within formal nursery and foundation stage settings, including children with disabilities and special educational needs. In addition, an important element of the Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium programme is the involvement and training of teachers and other educators within creative learning programmes. It would seem, therefore, that the work and programme of the Exploratorium is highly relevant to the priorities set by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation offers grants of, usually, between £5000 and £15,000 for work within the arts, education and social welfare. Initial proposals need to be submitted 10 weeks before the Trustee meetings held in March, July and November.

The Arts programme supports professional arts organisations in the development of new art making in any artform, but excludes

work in mainstream education. Research and development grants offer early stage support for experimental research, particularly in terms of unconventional or unusual projects.

The Education Programme has two strands:

- ∞ Helping Schools, Helping Parents offers assistance to agencies working with parents and schools to provide educational opportunities for 'hard to reach' parents, with particular regard to parenting skills.
- ∞ The Arts Included: Support for the Arts in Pupil Referral Units and in Learning Support Units is a programme to encourage arts activities at a strategic level in PRUs, including the engagement of artists. In addition a training initiative aims to help teachers in PRUs and LSUs to initiate projects or residencies by professional artists or companies.

European Funding Programmes 2007-13

The European Commission has announced proposals for new funding programmes in the education, youth, culture and audiovisual fields. These will succeed the current programmes, which will finish in 2006, and will cover the period 2007-13. With a budget of 13,600 million euro over seven years, the new programme will look to improve the quality of education and training systems. The programme will comprise four sectors:

- ∞ Comenius will cover school education.
- ∞ Erasmus will address higher education.
- ∞ Leonardo Da Vinci will cover vocational training.
- ∞ Grundtvig will address adult education

The Lloyds TSB Foundation makes grants within a number of priority areas, one of which is to target areas with high levels of social need. The location of the existing Valley View Nursery School within the socially disadvantaged areas of Benwell and Scotswood means that the Exploratorium would be eligible to apply for funding.

The Collaborative Programme may be particularly relevant in that it *"is a specific programme established to facilitate new ways of working and to promote the exchange of ideas, knowledge and good practice."*

The Clore Duffield Foundation concentrates its support on education, arts and museum education, the arts, health and social welfare, and has particular interest in supporting children, young people and society's most vulnerable individuals. Funding is available for projects and programmes within:

- ∞ Museum and gallery education
- ∞ Art and design education
- ∞ Education
- ∞ Performing arts education
- ∞ Health, social welfare and disability

The **Small Grants Programme** funds education programmes covering every aspect of the performing arts and offers funding to registered charities and limited companies. Grants range between £1000 and £10,000 and the total project budget should not exceed £30,000.

The **Main Grants Programme** funds a wide range of applications from across the UK, with amounts ranging from £5000 to in excess of £1 million. However, only a very few substantial amounts are awarded each year.

Funding can match lottery grants, fund capital developments and provide project, programme and revenue costs, but will rarely pay staffing costs.

The Paul Hamlyn Foundation makes grants to organisations which aim to maximise opportunities for individuals to experience a full quality of life, particularly in terms of disadvantaged children and young people. Grants are made within four funding levels:

- ∞ Grants of up to £5000 are handled by a Small Grants Committee which meets monthly.
- ∞ Grants of between £5000 and £30,000 are considered by a second Grants Committee, which meets four times per year – in January, April, July and October. Applications for this strand need to reach the foundation in the first week of the preceding month.
- ∞ Grants of between £30,000 and £100,000 are considered at the quarterly Trustees meetings (in 2005 these were held in February, May, September and November). The closing date is the first week of the preceding month.
- ∞ Applications in excess of £100,000 are considered by the Trustees in two phases – an initial application goes to the first meeting and if approved, a full application is submitted to the second meeting.

The Foundation will consider applications for periods of up to 3 years and staff costs can be included as part of project applications.

In addition to the potential funding sources outlined, there are a number of trusts, foundations and other agencies offering small amounts of funding for one-off projects. Although the level of funding is minimal (often between £1000 and £10,000), the application process often reflects this in that the amount of information required is also minimal. Such sources are often useful 'top up' grants towards smaller programmes of work. There are a number of funders offering grants at these levels, but as applications need to be tightly focused around specific projects or areas of work, research needs to be carried out alongside project or programme development for the Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium.

17. Summary and Recommendations

Research carried out for this report suggests that the Newcastle West Early Years Exploratorium project is highly relevant to current national and regional policies and priorities. The Exploratorium's approach to creative learning addresses many educational and social issues associated with young children and their families and educators. Links with parents and the local community, as well as collaboration and partnership working to achieve truly integrated programming across the early years, education, arts and cultural sectors, is at the heart of the Exploratorium project.

There are a number of issues to take into account in order to progress the project from this stage forward. In terms of timing, the statutory notice of closure for the building has only just been served (November 2005) and Valley View Nursery School will be relocating in less than a year (September 2006). The priority now is for Sightlines Initiative to acquire the vacant building, with a view to commencing refurbishment works in late 2006. If this schedule is to be met, the following steps need to be taken:

- ∞ An initial meeting should take place as soon as possible between Sightlines Initiative, Cultural Partnerships and Sure Start Armstrong to review and discuss this Feasibility Study and the issues arising from it.
- ∞ Any changes arising from the meeting should be agreed and the document finalised.
- ∞ Once finalised, the Feasibility Study should be circulated to all relevant agencies and organisations, including Newcastle City Council's Property Services Department, with a view to setting up follow-up meetings.
- ∞ More in depth business planning should commence as soon as possible, particularly in terms of finalising areas around the operational management of the project.
- ∞ A meeting should take place with architects Ainsworth Spark Associates to re-visit the design drawings and co-ordinate a timescale for refurbishment works.
- ∞ An in depth funding strategy should be undertaken without delay, to identify potential sources of capital and revenue funding and prepare outline bids.

Appendix 1: Breakdown of Building Refurbishment Costs

New extension to the 'play space' (44 sq m)	85,000
Demolition of existing external canopy on south elevation	2,750
Alterations to the existing external building (247 sq m)* please see details below	209,750
Alterations to the existing external works and drainage	72,500
Total (including General Preliminaries)	£370,000
Add contingencies at 5%	18,500
TOTAL (at 2nd quarter 2005 prices – Index 227)	£388,500
Update the above amount to 2nd quarter 2006 prices – Index 238	£407,326
<p>Note: The above amount excludes the following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∞ Renewal of existing windows (i.e. those windows not affected by the alterations). ∞ Catering and extract equipment and white goods in the kitchen. ∞ Loose furniture and equipment. ∞ Curtains and blinds. ∞ Security screens and roller shutters to windows and external doors. ∞ Statutory and professional fees. ∞ Value Added Tax 	
*Breakdown of External Building Costs	
Demolition and alterations	15,750
Suspended floors, steps, ramps and balustrades, etc.	13,250
Roof windows, etc.	11,725
External doors, frames and ironmongery, etc. inc some new windows	10,670
Plastered internal partitions, folding partition and toilet cubicles	9,530
Internal doors, frames and ironmongery, etc.	13,250
Wall tiling	1,865
Floor finishes and skirting	10,921
Ceiling finishes and roof insulation	4,270
Fittings and fixtures	20,065
Sanitary fittings and mirrors	6,270
Soil and waste pipework inc builders work etc.	1,800
Mechanical engineering installation including builders work etc	24,500
Electrical and ventilation installation including builders work etc.	27,400
Security alarm installation, etc.	5,575
Decoration on walls, ceilings and windows, etc.	5,550
TOTAL	£182,391
Add General Preliminaries at 15%	£27,359
TOTAL (including General Preliminaries)	£209,750

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