

18 January 2016**Agenda Item: 5**

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE EARLY YEARS IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2015-2017

Purpose of the Report

1. To update the Committee on the performance of the Nottinghamshire Early Years Improvement Plan 2013 - 2015.
2. To invite the Committee to note the proposed Early Years Improvement Plan 2015-17 (attached as **Appendix 1**) and recommend it to Policy Committee for approval at its meeting on 10 February 2016.

Information and Advice

3. Education is central to improving life chances for children and young people. Nottinghamshire County Council works with a range of partners to ensure that children receive an outstanding education from the earliest ages.
4. Securing a successful start for the youngest children, and particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, is crucial. It can mean the difference between gaining seven B grades at GCSE compared with seven C grades and is estimated to be worth £27,000 more in an individual's salary over the course of their career.
5. By the age of three years, children from poorer background will have heard on average 30 million fewer words than children in high income families. 61% of these children have no books at home.
6. Early education can make a fundamental difference to life chances, but only if the child receives high quality early education at a young enough age.
7. School readiness is a concept of how prepared a child is to succeed in statutory education. With no clear consensus on a definition, it is widely recognised that all those who have contact with a child in their early years has an impact on their readiness for learning, including midwives, health professionals, children centres and early years providers. Parents and carers have the greatest impact as primary carers and educators.
8. Currently the good level of development (GLD) is used to assess a child's readiness to access formal learning and children are defined as having reached a GLD at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage if they have achieved at least the expected level in the early learning goals in the prime areas of learning (personal, social and emotional

development, physical development and communication and language) and in the specific areas of mathematics and literacy.

National Context

9. Early Years education and childcare has traditionally received a considerably lower profile in the media and in political debate than education for school-age children. However, early education and increased access to high quality early education and care are now key priorities, in order to improve educational outcomes for young children and to remove barriers for parents accessing work.
10. Government Early Years statutory duties are as follows:
 - a) 15 hours of free childcare for all 3 and 4 year olds
 - b) 15 hours of free childcare for eligible 2 year olds (Free School Meal (FSM) eligible)
 - c) Early Years Pupil Premium for children aged 3 and 4 years eligible for FSM
 - d) Looked After Children (LAC) Pupil Premium for all LAC of pre-school age.
11. As a result of the recent spending review, the Government has confirmed that they will continue to fund the 2 year childcare entitlement for disadvantaged children. The Government also announced the introduction of a new national funding formula for schools, high needs and early years. A detailed consultation will be launched in 2016 with the intention to implement the new formulae in 2017-18. It is not yet known what the impact of this will be for the 2017-18 Early Years local funding formula.
12. Central Government will be introducing 30 hours of free childcare for 3 and 4 year olds from September 2017. This will be offered in some local authority areas from September 2016 through the Early Implementer Programme to which the Council has applied.
13. All 3 and 4 year olds will continue to benefit from 15 hours a week of early education. The additional 15 hours will be available to families where both parents are working (or the sole parent is working in a lone parent family), and each parent earns a weekly minimum equivalent to 16 hours at national minimum wage or living wage, and less than £100,000 per year. 'Working' will include employed and self-employed people. Families where one parent does not work (or neither parent works) will not be eligible for these additional hours.

Impact of the Nottinghamshire Early Years Plan 2013 – 2015

14. All early education providers have sharply focussed on early education and school readiness. As a result, Nottinghamshire children making a good level of development (GLD) by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage profile has steadily increased from 56.8% in 2010 to 65.3% in 2015.
15. Nationally, 94% of 3 and 4 year olds benefited in 2010 from the 15 hour entitlement which has risen to 96% in 2015. In Nottinghamshire, the take up of the free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds increased from 96.4% in 2010 to 99.6% in 2015.
16. In Nottinghamshire at the end of the autumn term, 72.84% of eligible 2 year olds took up their free entitlement of 15 hours of free early education out of a cohort of 3,082 eligible children. This is in line with national, regional and statistical neighbour take up data. District level data indicates greater variation, with Rushcliffe having the highest take up and

Bassetlaw having the lowest; this can be seen in the table below. This can stem from the availability of childcare places and the reluctance of some families to take up their child's free place.

	Population August DWP list	Autumn Term Take up	% take up
Ashfield District	673	435	64.64%
Bassetlaw District	454	273	60.13%
Broxtowe District	345	275	79.71%
Gedling District	392	335	85.46%
Mansfield District	549	394	71.77%
Newark and Sherwood District	457	324	70.90%
Rushcliffe District	212	214	100.94%
Total (County)	3082	2245	72.84%

17. Despite some improvements in closing the gap at the end of primary and secondary education, the gap is widening for children of pre-school age when assessed against the Early Years Foundation Stage profile. Pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) are 1.3 times less likely to have a GLD compared to those who are not eligible for FSM. In Nottinghamshire in 2015, 41% of children eligible for FSM achieved a good level of development compared with 68.6% who were non-FSM, a gap of 27.6. In 2014, the gap was 27.1 and in 2013 the gap was 23.7. Closing the gap in levels of development is still a clear area of priority in Nottinghamshire.
18. Previous plans have included a focus on joint working arrangements at a local level to ensure children with development delay are identified earlier and appropriate plans are actioned to enable them to make necessary progress. As such, relationships between Children Centres and other Early Years settings have strengthened, as Children Centres have taken a lead on early help and promotion of the free entitlement for eligible 2 year olds.
19. Likewise, the findings from the Integrated Review pilots have highlighted the benefits of the assessment in forging stronger links between Health Visitors and Early Years practitioners, resulting in a shared understanding (with parents) of children's needs.
20. Providers are now tracking more effectively the progress children are making using a variety of tools. This allows them to evidence the impact they are having and how they have used the Early Years Pupil Premium to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable and help to close the GLD gap.
21. The Private, Voluntary and Independent sectors have delivered the majority of Early Years provision thus far. However, with increasing numbers of 3 and 4 year olds in the system, schools have begun to play a major role in providing early education, with more than half of 3 and 4 year-olds taking up funded early education in nursery and reception classes. Further work is required to encourage increased provision for eligible 2 year olds.

22. Disabled Children Access to Childcare (DCATCH) funding criteria has been reviewed to ensure that providers have a clear pathway for accessing Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) support, and that funding is targeted at those children with high level needs.

The Early Years Improvement Plan 2015 - 17

23. The Early Years Improvement Plan 2015-17 builds on previous success and seeks to address some of the issues identified to improve life chances for some of the most vulnerable children in the County.
24. The Plan is attached as **Appendix 1**. The Plan includes the following four priorities with supporting outcome indicators.
25. **Priority 1:** Ensure that early childhood services are working effectively together to provide early help for children and families to meet identified need.
- a. providers are knowledgeable and effective in identifying and assessing needs of the 0-5 years population across Nottinghamshire
 - b. more vulnerable families and children have their needs met through effective engagement with Children Centre Services
 - c. children and families experience seamless interventions and services from Health Visiting and Children Centre services
 - d. more children are identified earlier with development delay and are offered appropriate early support
 - e. more eligible children are identified for early education places
26. **Priority 2:** Ensure there are sufficient, sustainable, high quality, inclusive and safe early education and childcare provision
- a. children and families in disadvantaged areas have access to sufficient and sustainable early education and childcare places
 - b. children and families have access to high quality Early Years provision
 - c. children with additional needs have their needs effectively met through early education support
 - d. children are effectively safeguarded
27. **Priority 3:** Improve school readiness, especially those children most vulnerable
- a. all stakeholders have a shared understanding of School Readiness
 - b. more children achieve a good level of development, including those most vulnerable, i.e. those in receipt of FSM, are LAC, or EAL, SEND, boys and children of teenage parents
 - c. children have a good home learning environment
 - d. children's progress is effectively tracked
 - e. all children, particularly LAC, FSM, and English as an Additional Language (EAL) children are effectively supported upon transition
28. **Priority 4:** Effective Parental engagement
- a. parents are better informed about services available for them and their child/family

- b. parents are supported to prepare their child/ren for learning
- c. parents are effectively supported as their child moves between settings
- d. parents have access to volunteering opportunities that support their child's/own learning
- e. parents have access to opportunities to inform and influence service design and delivery

Other Options Considered

- 29. No other options have been considered as this plan delivers on the statutory duties of the Local Authority; and is developed in partnership with early years providers and advisors.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

- 30. The Early Years Improvement Plan sets out actions required to ensure the Council meets its statutory obligations and continues to improve outcomes for young children and their families.

Statutory and Policy Implications

- 31. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

- 32. The delivery of the Government's initiative to increase access and uptake of childcare provision for 2, 3 and 4 year olds requires additional childcare places. This may result in a requirement for additional funding for one off capital costs; for example, improvements to a classroom to support schools planning on lowering their age range. This will need to be kept under review as there is no local funding available to meet these costs.
- 33. It is currently unclear what resources will be made available by the Government when the increased 30 hours of free childcare for 3 and 4 year olds is launched in September 2017. It is also unclear if local authorities who are successful as an 'early implementer' will receive any additional funding.

Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Implications

- 34. With more children taking up their childcare entitlement, safeguarding practice has become more important for many Early Years providers who have sought additional support. A safeguarding self-evaluation tool has been welcomed widely by the sector, together with stronger links established with the Local Authority Designated Officer and Children Centres.
- 35. Safeguarding training and events will continue to be promoted to all Early Years providers, including the Prevent duty and the new responsibilities placed on all Early Years providers.

Implications for Service Users

36. Service users will be able to access a wider range of high quality childcare provision to enable them to access increased employment opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That:

- 1) the performance of the Early Years Improvement Plan 2013-15 be noted
- 2) the Committee notes the proposed Early Years Improvement Plan 2015-17 (attached as **Appendix 1**) and recommends it to Policy Committee for approval at its meeting on 10 February 2016.

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Constitutional Comments (SMG 29/12/15)

37. The proposals set out in this report fall within the remit of this Committee.

Financial Comments (SS 29/12/15)

38. The financial implications of the report are contained within paragraphs 32 and 33.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Nottinghamshire Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, May 2015.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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