



**2 February 2017**

**Agenda Item: 5**

**Children's Trust Board Sponsor: Colin Pettigrew**

**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE EARLY YEARS IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2015-2017 – PROGRESS REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To update the Children's Trust on progress with the Nottinghamshire Early Years Improvement Plan 2015- 2017.

**Information and Advice**

2. The Early Years Improvement Plan aims to improve the life chances of the most vulnerable young children by ensuring they are prepared for school.
3. A review of the plan has been informed by progress and impact of actions identified last year, learning from elsewhere, and reflections on research commissioned recently by Ofsted<sup>1</sup> to evaluate the effectiveness of local authorities tackling issues faced by disadvantaged children and their families.
4. The Ofsted report made several recommendations for local authorities to consider which are already reflected in the Early Years Improvement Plan, namely, that there should be:
  - effective partnership working, especially between health, social care and early years providers
  - clear definition of 'disadvantage' across all early childhood services and beyond economic indicators
  - agreed definition of 'school readiness' amongst partners
  - coordinated approach to identify needs early, and plan necessary interventions
  - holistic assessment of need
  - access to high quality early years provision
  - systems for tracking children's progress
  - monitor the impact of Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)
  - support effective home learning environments
  - alignment of funding streams to ensure continuity of entitlement.

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<sup>1</sup> Unknown children – destined for disadvantage? Ofsted, July 2016

5. The four key priorities within the Nottinghamshire Early Years Improvement Plan are to:
  - a) Ensure that early childhood services are working effectively together to provide early help for children and families to meet identified need.
  - b) Ensure there are sufficient, sustainable, high quality, inclusive and safe early education and childcare places.
  - c) Improve school readiness, especially for the most vulnerable children.
  - d) Effective parental engagement.

### **Overall impact and future challenges**

6. **Priority one** has focused on strengthening partnership arrangements to ensure vulnerable children are identified and appropriately supported to ensure they reach their full potential.
  - a) Children's Centres have registered all children and families living in the most disadvantaged areas. Children's Centres have reported another increase in the number of disadvantaged children they have had contact with, seeing 77% (2015/16) compared to 71% last year (2014/15).
  - b) The transition for teenage parents from the Family Nurse Partnership to Children's Centre services is now embedded, aided by the integrated management team of Nottinghamshire Healthcare Trust which manages Children's Centres, Family Nurse Partnership and 0-19 Public Health Nursing services. Children's Centres worked with 606 teenage parents with children under 5 years in 2015/16, and all parents were under the age of 20 years when first registered.
  - c) The recommissioned Healthy Child Programme (0-19 Public Health Nursing Service) incorporated a requirement for service alignment between health visiting teams and Children's Centre services, as did the specialist speech and language therapy services to ensure smooth transitions and effective information sharing. Health Visiting teams are often based within Children's Centres.
  - d) The Integrated Review aims to strengthen partnership working between health visiting teams, early years providers and parents to enable a shared understanding and knowledge of any development concerns of two year olds. The integrated review was launched in September 2016. Its implementation has begun to see new relationships being formed and its impact will be closely monitored in the coming months.
  - e) Take up rates for two year olds eligible for 15 hours a week early education have increased as systems become embedded. 72% of those eligible had taken up a place by the end of the summer term 2015/16 compared to 63% at the same time the previous year.

- f) Demand for support to children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) through DCATCH <sup>2</sup>funding has increased so far this year. 195 children have accessed £134,402 funding from April 2016 to August 2016, compared to 146 children who accessed £76,566 during the same period last year. Applications for funding this year highlight not only an increase in the number of children presenting with additional needs but also more complexity in the type of needs presented and therefore, the level of additional support required.

Of the 195 children accessing DCATCH funding, 19 are from working households and 11 have deferred school places. Government are intending to include elements of supplementary funding for children with additional needs in the new early education funding rate. This will then provide an opportunity to review the criteria for DCATCH to ensure children are able to continue to access their entitlement.

7. **Priority 2** focuses on sufficient early education/childcare places. This priority has been prominent this year following the government announcement to extend the current 15 hours of free entitlement to 30 hours for those children of working parents, whilst protecting free childcare places for eligible two year olds.
- a) As an Early Innovator the Council has been working closely with local partners and providers to prepare for full implementation next year and with other local authorities within the East and West Midlands to share learning.
- b) Key strands of the Council's innovation work have been to:
- i. Establish a more comprehensive understanding of the market and their readiness for implementation
  - ii. Engage with parents to better understand their childcare needs
  - iii. Work with all early years providers, including schools, to develop more flexible delivery models
  - iv. Ensure we effectively communicate with parents, providers and partners to inform and share learning
  - v. Ensure we have systems and processes in place that are fit for purpose.
- c) With that in mind, a revised childcare sufficiency process saw a great increase in the number of questionnaires returned. Only 9% of providers submitted their vacancy and occupancy data when asked at the beginning of the calendar year. When reminded of their responsibility to comply with their Provider Agreement and of the associated sanctions of non-payment that could be applied, 97% responded in July 2016 when a further request for the information was made.

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<sup>2</sup> DCATCH – Disabled Children's Access to Childcare

- d) An online survey for parents also saw 1,700 questionnaires completed – the highest rate of return in the region. Data from questionnaires and information obtained from three focus groups held so far provides the Council with information necessary to inform targeted development of the childcare market.
- e) A capital bid has been submitted to the Department of Education to create 330 new childcare places in low sufficiency areas and highest levels of eligibility. Nottinghamshire were unsuccessful in their funding application and this was confirmed in December 2016.
- f) More than 360 early years providers have attended district workshops to consider local plans ready for full implementation of the extended childcare offer in September 2017. Further support is planned to ensure all parts of the sector are engaged and to aid providers with business remodelling to ensure future provision is flexible to meet the varied needs of working parents.
- g) Successful implementation of the extended childcare offer will be determined by the capacity of existing providers to deliver flexible provision that meets the needs of working parents. The greatest challenge providers perceive to have to achieve this is the level of funding they will receive. Revised national funding rates for local authorities are currently being consulted on. It is anticipated that Nottinghamshire should see a small increase in the hourly rate given to childcare providers.
- h) A comprehensive workforce development plan has been commissioned and delivered primarily by the Early Years Quality and Attainment Team, to the early years sector. Since April 2015, 4,154 training places have been accessed by early years practitioners designed to ensure practice is effectively led and managed, is safe and inclusive and that practitioners are equipped to ensure children, including those most vulnerable, achieve or exceed their expected learning goals.
- i) As a result of training and support provided, the quality of early years provision has improved already this year with 89% currently rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted compared to 80% this time last year, 3% more than the national average. Learning from the Commercial Development Unit will look at the feasibility of developing traded services from the work currently undertaken by the Council's Early Years Quality and Attainment team, aligned to that delivered by the Education Improvement Service.
- j) New partnerships have been forged with two teaching schools, i.e. Candleby Teaching School and TORCH Teaching School Alliance, through the development of a model of systems leadership. Designed to promote sector-led support, the Early Years Systems Leadership initiative has selected representatives from across the sector to trial its

use through the deployment of their expertise and skills, complementing and supplementing existing available support.

- k) In order to strengthen safeguarding practice across the sector, relevant training continues to be commissioned as demand increases. The Safeguarding self-evaluation toolkit has been updated in line with both changes to national and local policies, and feedback suggests that providers are more confident in their ability to keep children safe.

8. **Priority 3** focuses on improving school readiness for those most vulnerable children, which include:

- children whose families are in receipt of free school meals (FSM)
  - children with English as a second language (EAL)
  - children looked after (LAC)
  - children with special educational needs and/or disability (SEND)
  - white British boys
  - eligible two year olds.
- a) The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) is currently used to indicate how prepared children are to learn at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (typically aged 5 years).
- b) A child is deemed to have reached a good level of development (GLD) if they achieve at least the expected level within communication and language; physical development; personal, social and emotional development; literacy and mathematics.
- c) 67.1% of Nottinghamshire pupils achieved a good level of development in 2016 which represents an increase of 1.8 percentage points (from 65.3%) in 2015. National data suggests 69.3% of pupils achieved this measure which is a 3 percentage point increase (from 66.3%) in 2015.
- d) The FSM gap for pupils eligible for free school meals attaining a good level of development and those not eligible has narrowed to 22.6 percentage points - a 5 percentage point fall from the 27.6 reported in 2015.
- e) Analysis by district shows results are varied as illustrated in Table 1 below. Gedling witnessed the greatest decrease from 2015 and largest FSM gap, whilst Rushcliffe is the only district with GLD outcomes greater than the national average.

Table 1: Nottinghamshire Early Years Foundation Stage Profile 2016

DISTRICT	% GLD	Change from 2015	GLD Gap between national	FSM GAP 2015	FSM GAP 2016
Gedling	68.6	-1.5	-0.7	19.1	31.2
Newark	65.0	-0.7	-4.3	28.5	24.5
Ashfield	61.4	1.0	-7.9	25.1	22.5
Broxtowe	67.2	2.3	-2.1	33.8	14.9
Rushcliffe	75.4	2.6	6.1	38.7	19.1
Mansfield	66.0	4.3	-3.3	22.4	18.6
Bassetlaw	66.8	5.1	-2.5	27.0	20.9
County	67.1	1.8	-2.2	27.6	22.6

- f) The educational achievement gap between boys and girls continues to be a concern despite the increase in activities designed to address boys' attainment levels. Analysis by gender shows a 15.6 percentage point gap between boys and girls with the lowest performing priority group being summer born boys with only 46.4% achieving a good level of development. Autumn born girls was the highest performing group at 84.5%. This reflects the national picture.
- g) Data also suggests that the gap for children with SEN achieving a good level of development has also widened with a 4.9 percentage point increase between them and their peers. Anecdotally it is known that this is replicated across other SEND services within the Council and priority has been given to work together to develop a shared strategy for improving outcomes for this particular group of children.
- h) Analysis of the EYFS Profile data has identified 930 pupils, i.e. 9.7% of the cohort that did not achieve a good level of development in any area of learning. When broken down most were summer born white British boys – a feature common across other local authorities in the region. Further analysis will enable us to identify each child's journey to determine their early years experiences and to establish where improvements in practice are required. Evidence so far, suggests that a large proportion of these children have significant speech and language delay requiring specialist interventions.

- i) Local plans, led by the Council's Early Years Quality and Attainment Team, ensure that data analysis informs and reflects improvements required, whilst ensuring that all early years providers have a shared understanding of what 'school readiness' looks like, and that teaching and learning within settings meets the requirements of EYFS and Ofsted.
  - j) Support to individual early years providers by the Early Years Quality and Attainment Team ensures that the needs of vulnerable groups of children have robust assessments and plans in place including the use of the Early Years Pupil Premium that their progress is routinely tracked and that suitable transitional arrangements are in place. Plans are in place to capture start and end point data which will provide important evidence of the impact of their practice and use of supplementary funding where it exists.
  - k) Early years providers have benefited from additional support in their practice for caring for children with English as an additional language (EAL), ensuring that early assessments are undertaken to distinguish between a language need and the need to learn English, by encouraging parents to develop their child's first language.
  - l) The Nottinghamshire Language for Life strategy continues to play an effective contribution to ensure that FSM children achieve their expected learning goals in communication and language borne out by the EYFSP results. Programmes such as Home talk and ELKLAN support both parents and practitioners to create effective 'communication-friendly' spaces and address early signs of language delay.
9. **Priority 4** focuses on the important role parents have as primary carers and educators of their children, ensuring they have access to quality information about local provision and are supported to fulfil their parenting role.
- a) The Family Information Service (FIS) forms part of Inspire to ensure families have access to current information about services through an online directory. A new commissioned contract was agreed at the beginning of the year and is monitored through the Early Childhood and Early Help Locality service.
  - b) Parents involved through the consultation for the extended childcare offer have also committed to work with staff to co-produce Nottinghamshire's Pledge for Parents, due to be launched in the New Year. The Pledge will support the promotion of key opportunities and entitlements throughout the ages and stages of the child's life, including early education for eligible two year olds.
  - c) Successful marketing has resulted in a steady take up of free childcare places by eligible two year olds, with 72% having taken up their place

(November 2016). Targeted marketing has also been introduced this term after data analysis revealed that 500 parents had registered but failed to take up a place. They have now been provided with early years establishments in their area which have vacant places. These parents are actively encouraged to take up a place.

d) Children's Centres are strengthening links with Inspire and their adult learning services to ensure parents have access to opportunities designed to strengthen their employability.

e) The Family and Parenting strategy was formally launched at Nottingham Trent University and locality-based Parenting Programme planning groups are established to co-ordinate local delivery.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That the Children's Trust Board notes the progress with Nottinghamshire Early Years Improvement Plan 2015-17.

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