

7 December 2017

Agenda Item: 3

## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR COMMISSIONING AND RESOURCES NOTTINGHAMSHIRE EARLY YEARS IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To update the Childrens Trust Exec on the progress of the Early Years Improvement Action Plan 2016-17.
2. To seek endorsement for the 2018-2019 Early Years Improvement Plan.

### **Information and Advice**

2. The Early Years Improvement Plan aims to improve the life chances of the most vulnerable young children by ensuring they achieve a good level of development; the plan also considers the findings and recommendations of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.
3. A review of the Early Years Improvement plan 2016/17 has been informed by progress and impact of actions identified last year, and changes to government policy introduced earlier in the year.
4. The refreshed Childcare Act (2016) placed additional duties on local authorities in relation to sufficiency of early education places and funding in preparation for the implementation of extended childcare provision for working parents which was launched in September 2017.
5. Since April 2017 local authorities are now required to:
  - Ensure 15 hours of free childcare places for eligible 2 year olds, all 3 and 4 year olds
  - Ensure up to 30 hours of free childcare for 3 and 4 year olds of working parents;
  - Administer the Disability Access Fund – an annual payment of £615 for children in receipt of Disability Living Allowance
  - Establish and administer a new special educational needs inclusion fund for children eligible for funded early years education
  - Administer and allocate a revised early years deprivation fund to be determined locally.
5. The four key priorities within the Nottinghamshire Early Years Improvement Plan are to:
  - i. Ensure that early childhood services are working effectively together to provide early help for children and families to meet identified need.

- ii. Ensure there are sufficient, sustainable, high quality, inclusive and safe early education and childcare places.
- iii. Improve school readiness, especially for the most vulnerable children.
- iv. Effective parental engagement.

## Overall impact and future challenges

- 6. The Early Years Improvement Plan includes a range of key performance targets. Key progress highlighted within this report under each priority.
- 7. **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) The Nottinghamshire Early Years Attainment group is a multi-agency group that develops and monitors the Early Years Improvement Plan. The group includes colleagues from support to schools, public health, and the local childminder agency, voluntary organisations, Children's Centres and community health services. Their key focus is to improve attainment levels, support children to be ready for school and to close the attainment gap between the most vulnerable children and their peers.
  - b) Children Centres continue to use a range of strategies and services to engage with vulnerable families and in 2016/17 had contact with 19,116 children from low income families. This represents 73% of the total numbers of targeted children. This equates to 3 out of 4 children under 5 who live in a low income household who received a service.
  - c) In 2016/17, Children's Centres in Nottinghamshire provided services to 543 teenage parents under the age of 19 and 6,784 young parents under the age of 21.
  - d) The Healthy Families Programme commenced in April 2017 with 20 new Healthy Family Teams established across the county in line with Children's Centre clusters. They work collaboratively with Children's Centres to ensure the most vulnerable children and families are supported through effective information sharing arrangements and case management.
  - e) Relationships between Healthy Families Teams and early years providers also continue to be strengthened through the introduction of the Integrated Review for 2 year olds whereby a health practitioner and an early years professional carry out a joint assessment where there are concerns. All early years providers now have named linked practitioners from Healthy Families Teams and Children Centre teams. 168 recorded conversations took place during the second half of 2016-17 resulting in a shared understanding of children's needs and agreement about subsequent actions necessary.
  - f) 14% of all 2 year olds (rising to 25%) in areas of disadvantage were identified for early support with their speech and language through the Home Talk programme, delivered by Nottinghamshire Children and Families Partnership (NCFP) as part of the Children's Centres contract.

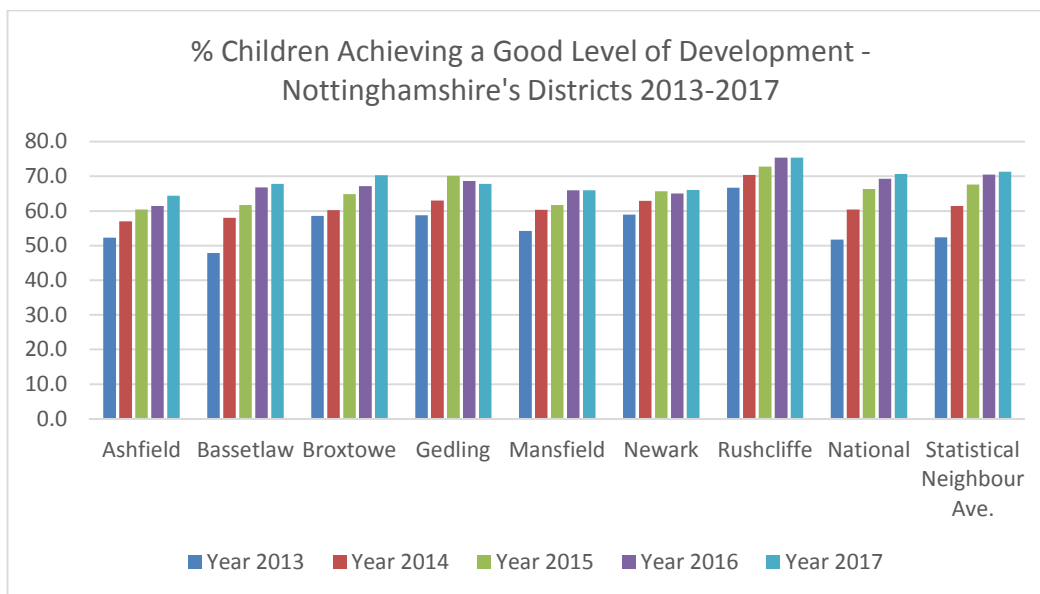
- g) In addition, 300 children aged 0-3 with high level speech, language and communication needs who did not access mainstream support were supported by NCFP Speech and Language Therapy services.
  - h) In order to ensure children with additional needs are effectively supported an early notification process has been reviewed and is now in place to ensure consent is gained for the Schools, Families Support Service (SFSS) to share information with Early Years Specialist Teachers where children do not meet SFSS criteria for an intervention. Early Years Teachers then work with Children Centre staff, including Speech and Language Therapists to ensure the child and family have access to appropriate support, including access to their funded early years entitlement.
  - i) In 2016/17 246 children with special educational needs accessed DCATCH (Disabled Children's Access to Childcare), the funding is allocated for children with who require additional support to enable them to access childcare. Applications for funding this year highlighted 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.
  - j) In order to establish the new SEN inclusion fund, the DCATCH process has been reviewed to create greater alignment to school processes; to ensure children have access to a graduated approach to support and access a comparable level of support. Proposals to increase available resources for the SEN inclusion fund in order to meet growing demand, are currently subject to consultation with early years providers and schools and will be implemented from April 2018 should they receive support from the sector.
  - k) The Disability Access Fund has been promoted to early years providers to ensure parents are aware of the additional funding available to support their child and to encourage their consent for payment. Since its introduction in April 2017, 46 applications have been processed so far. This will continue to be promoted and providers will be contacted to report on the impact it has had on children's ability to access provision.
  - l) Proposals to administer a new Early Years Deprivation Fund have focused on the needs of the most vulnerable children. The fund intends to provide backfill costs for the PVI sector to enable them to participate in multi-agency meetings and prepare reports for children in their care that are 'Children in Need' and those on child protection plans. Proposals are currently part of the local School's Forum consultation focusing on Devolved Grant funding. If agreed, this payment will be introduced from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018.
8. **Priority 2** focuses on sufficient high quality early education/childcare places. This priority has been prominent 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 from low income families.
- a) Nottinghamshire was awarded Early Innovator status to help pilot and prepare for the roll out of new funded childcare entitlements for 3 and 4 year olds launched in September 2017. This enabled the local authority to proactively engage parents and local early years providers to help shape both local and national plans.

- b) The Department of Education estimates that 5,800 Nottinghamshire children are eligible for additional hours this year. By the beginning of September, 3,980, i.e. 69% of parents had received codes by HMRC and were confirmed as eligible through the local early years portal.
- c) Of those children 3,602 (90.5%) are using all, or part of their 30 hour entitlement in a Nottinghamshire setting, across 584 different providers. 656 children (16.4%) are sharing their funding across 2, or more early years settings e.g. using both a childminder and a preschool.
- d) Two early years capital projects are being progressed at Holgate Primary and Infants School in Ashfield, and Robert Mellors Primary and Nursery school in Gedling. Funding was made available by the Department of Education to create 60 extra early years' places for 3 and 4 year olds in areas of need. Both projects will be completed by the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018.
- e) The annual Childcare Sufficiency Assessment was published in September 2017 based on data collected from early years providers and parents to identify the potential supply and demand for childcare. Analysis has identified key 'hot spot' areas and Early Years Project Officers are now engaging with early years providers and parents to identify local solutions to meet sufficiency gaps. In recognition of the fluctuating nature of the childcare market, 'census fortnights' have been identified each term to update and inform local sufficiency plans, this will include occupancy levels and waiting lists.
- f) Since April 2017, more than 360 early years providers attended district workshops designed to support their preparations for full implementation of 30 hours. Support has also been available locally to help with business remodelling to ensure future provision is flexible to meet the varied needs of working parents.
- g) The local authority childcare sufficiency duty includes the need to provide high quality childcare places. In order to improve quality, a comprehensive workforce development plan has been commissioned and delivered to the early years sector. Since April 2016, 1,963 practitioners have accessed early years training. As a result of training and support provided, the quality of early years provision has improved already with 89% currently rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted compared to 86% this time last year, 3% more than the national average.
- h) Since September 2017, all local authority training courses are part of the new early years traded offer. This offer is closely monitored and will be further informed by a workforce development needs assessment to ensure development needs are identified addressed, subsequently increasing knowledge, skills and quality.
- i) In order to strengthen safeguarding practice across the sector, relevant training continues to be commissioned as demand increases. The early years safeguarding self-evaluation toolkit has been updated in line with both changes to national and local policies; feedback suggests that providers are more confident in their ability to keep children safe.

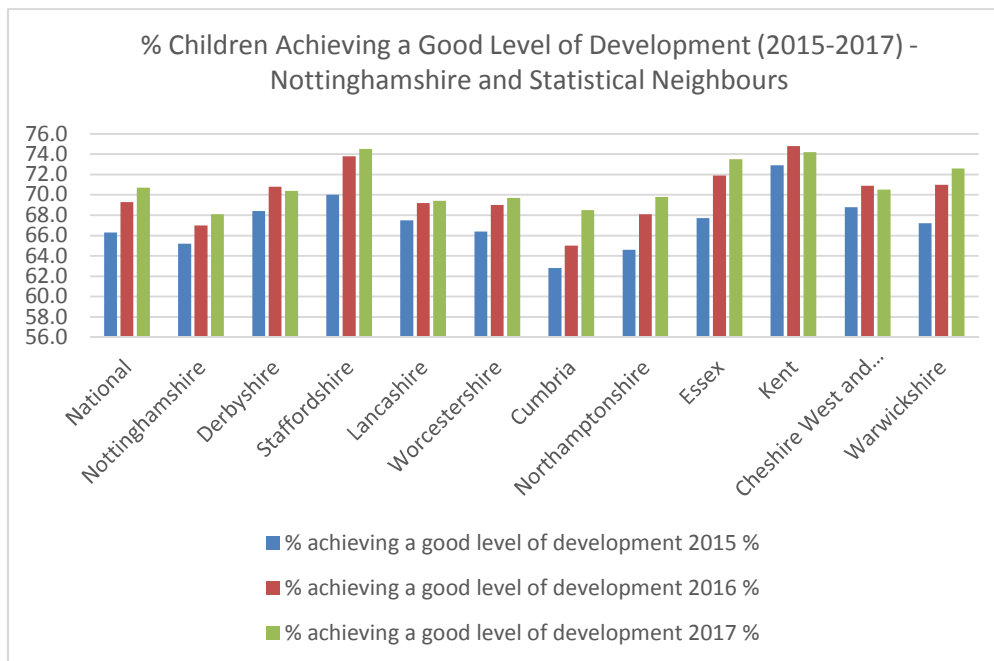
9. **Priority 3** focuses on improving school readiness for those most vulnerable children, which include:

- 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). 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. As EYFSP data was published in October 2017, detailed analysis of this data and progress for target groups is currently underway.
- b) 68.2% of Nottinghamshire pupils achieved a good level of development in 2017 which represents an increase of 1.1 percentage points (from 67.1%) in 2016. In comparison, national data suggests 70.7% of pupils achieved this measure which is a 1.4 percentage point increase from 69.3% in 2016.



- c) The graph above shows that all districts have witnessed increasing levels of children achieving a good level of development since 2013, with the exception of Gedling. Only Rushcliffe has a higher proportion of children achieving a good level of development (75.4%) than the national average of 70.7%, this is followed by Broxtowe at 70.3% with the lowest proportion of children achieving a good level of development living in Ashfield (64.4%). These results should be considered alongside local early years Ofsted judgements which are constantly improving across Nottinghamshire.
- d) Data across statistical neighbours shows that Nottinghamshire is not performing as well ranked and is ranked 11<sup>th</sup> out of 11 local authorities with Staffordshire being ranked first as depicted below. Work with Staffordshire and Warwickshire is progressing in order to understand different approaches and effective practice.



- e) The attainment gap for children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and their peers has widened slightly and is now at 23 percentage points, compared to 22.6 in 2016 and 1 percentage point in 2015. The attainment gap varies across districts with the widest gap in Gedling and the narrowest gap in Broxtowe.
- f) In 2017 across the LA, 501 pupils or 5.1% of the total cohort missed out on a good level of development by one area of learning – a slight increase on last year of 4.9%. The area of learning where most children didn't achieve was literacy (360 children). Further analysis shows that writing is weaker than reading with 35% failing to achieve this - a reduction from 41% in 2016. However, more than half (56.7%) failed to obtain both reading and writing – an increase from 54% in 2016.
- g) Data analysis highlights that children with particular characteristics are less likely to achieve a good level of development, such as white boys born in the summer term, children with SEND, and children looked after by the local authority.
- h) Support to individual early years providers by the local authority ensures that the needs of vulnerable groups of children have robust assessments and plans in place which are closely monitored to track progress and to support effective transitions. A new tracking tool has recently been introduced for early years providers, this will better aid the understanding of the progress and needs of children and families and ensure appropriate interventions are in place. Data analysis will be available in the summer term 2018.
- i) 2 year olds from low income households are eligible for 15 hours of free early education a week, this entitlement stems from the need to prepare the most vulnerable children for school and to reduce the attainment gap for children eligible for Free School Meals and their peers. Successful marketing has resulted in a steady take up of free childcare places by eligible two year olds, with 76% having taken up their place compared to 72% at the same time last year. Targeted marketing has also been introduced this term

after data analysis revealed that 665 parents had registered but failed to take up a place. These parents have now been provided with early years settings in their area which have vacant places and are actively encouraged to use their entitlement.

- j) Children Centres play a key role in promoting school readiness by providing a range of services and interventions targeting vulnerable children and families. They provide a range of activities to engage parents in raising aspirations for themselves and their children including volunteering, family learning and educational programmes for children. This work starts from a young age with the majority of their focus being on children under the age of 3.
- k) In addition, support with communication and language development as delivered by the Children's Centre Speech and Language Therapy service saw 98% of children achieve their Speech and Language goals and 93% of children in receipt of Home-Talk service.

10. **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 is provided by Inspire to fulfil the local authority's statutory duty to ensure families have access to current information about services. They provide a Facebook page for parents and manage the Notts Help Yourself website which helps parents find and access childcare and a range of services including Children's Centres. Further work is planned in 2017-18 to review all on line information for families with young children, this will include plans to lead campaigns to promote home learning, and parenting skills using a range of social media.
- b) The Nottinghamshire's Pledge for Parents is in draft form and once published 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) Children's Centres are strengthening links with Inspire and their adult learning services to ensure parents have access to opportunities designed to support their employability. In 2016-17 1,127 parents accessed adult learning events, of which 687 (61%) went onto further training or employment opportunities.

#### **Early Years Improvement Priority Actions for 2017-19**

- 10. Currently the early years improvement plan spans academic years, however as the Early Years Foundation Stage data is not published until October each year, the next plan will begin in January 2018 and continue until the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019. A summary of the 2018-19 Early Years Improvement Plan is attached as **Appendix 1**.
- 11. Using local and national data, national research and the recommendations from the draft Early Childhood JSNA, the Early Years Attainment Group has recommended the following actions:

- a) Close the attainment gap for children eligible for Free School Meals and their peers, ensuring that progress is on par with statistical neighbours (measured by the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile).
- b) Further analysis of the 855 children who did not achieve any area of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage to identify possible trends, additional needs of children and/or improve early years practice.
- c) Further analysis of the 501 children who achieved all but one area of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage to identify possible trends, additional needs of children and/or improve early years practice.
- d) Further in depth analysis of the children least likely to achieve a good level of development e.g. children with SEND, white boys, looked after children etc.
- e) Additional research and work with statistical neighbours to understand differing practices that are most effective in improving the level of development of children.
- f) Develop and implement a Language and Literacy Strategy.
- g) Work with early years providers to ensure there are sufficient high quality and sustainable early years places available to disadvantaged children.
- h) Raise the quality of early year's providers to ensure that all childcare settings are 'good' or 'outstanding' to enable poorer children to gain the best start in life
- i) Increase take up rates for 2 year olds from disadvantaged backgrounds to access 15 hours a week free early education.
- j) Increase take up and analysis of Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) funding and ensure that EYPP is devolved quickly with clear advice for evidence based interventions that would improve the educational outcomes for disadvantaged children. This includes improved analysis of the EYPP for Looked After Children.
- k) Allocation and guidance for using supplementary early years funding which will be launched in April 2017 to ensure the most vulnerable children receive additional support to improve attainment level.
- l) Evaluate and extend the new early years tracker tool (Better Start) to track the developmental needs of children and assess impact of interventions and school readiness, including analysis for Children in Need and those on Child Protection Plans.
- m) Active engagement with parents to promote home learning environments.
- n) Improve the aspirations that target parents have of themselves and their children through opportunities for parent volunteering, adult education and parenting programmes.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1) That progress with Nottinghamshire Early Years Improvement Plan 2016-17 be noted.
- 2) The suggested priorities for the 2018-19 Early Years Improvement action plan are endorsed.

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