

16th December 2019

Agenda Item: 14

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, COMMISSIONING AND RESOURCES

JOINT STRATEGIC NEEDS ASSESSMENT CHAPTER – EARLY YEARS AND SCHOOL READINESS

Purpose of the Report

1. To share the findings and recommendations of the new 'Early Years and School Readiness' Joint Strategic Needs Assessment chapter, and to consider what if any actions are required by the Children and Young People's Committee.

Information

Joint Strategic Needs Assessments

2. Government legislation makes production of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) mandatory for local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups through the Health and Wellbeing Board. The JSNA provides an overview of the current and future health and wellbeing needs of the local population, and each chapter outlines the local picture for the topic of interest, evidence of what works, unmet need, assets and recommendations for consideration. The JSNA undergoes a programme of continuous improvement including future national guidance, local priorities and feedback from consultation and engagement with key stakeholders.
3. This JSNA chapter focuses on school readiness which is measured by the level of development of a child when they reach Foundation Stage at school. The chapter provides information about current performance, local services and interventions, as well as a comprehensive review of research and evidence of what works to improve children's development. The chapter was approved by the Health and Wellbeing Board on 6th November 2019.

Key Findings

4. Ensuring children are able to get the best from education is vital; not enough children are starting school with the range of skills they need to succeed. Educational attainment is one of the main markers for wellbeing through the life course and so it is important that no child is left behind at the beginning of their school life.

5. Research shows that access to high quality early learning experiences, together with a positive learning environment at home, is a vital combination to ensure that children have reached a good level of development at the start of compulsory school age. School readiness is a strong indicator of how prepared a child is to succeed in school cognitively, socially and emotionally.
6. In 2018, there was a small increase in the percentage of children who achieved a good level of development both nationally and locally. However, in 2018, 69.7% of Nottinghamshire pupils achieved a good level of development, compared with 71.5% across England. Nottinghamshire also performs poorly in comparison with statistically similar local authorities. Progress in Nottinghamshire is slow and despite improvements in many other outcome measures, addressing school readiness remains a challenge and therefore a local priority.
7. Children from low income households do less well than their peers. In 2018, only 49.9% of children eligible for free school meals in Nottinghamshire achieved a good level of development. *“Early years education for children below the age of four has a positive impact on the life chances of disadvantaged children, yet disadvantaged children spend significantly less time in pre-school than children from more affluent backgrounds”* (House of Commons Education Committee 2019). Around 25% are unable to communicate effectively, control their own feelings and impulses or make sense of the world around them to ensure they are ready to learn. Furthermore, many have reduced opportunities for home learning and parental engagement (Ofsted 2016).

Unmet needs and service gaps

8. Unmet needs and service gaps are explored fully in the JSNA chapter. Gaps and opportunities have been identified in relation to several areas:
 - i. Interventions to improve school readiness should start much earlier during the antenatal period so greater engagement of maternity services is required.
 - ii. School readiness targets have often been the responsibility of the Children and Families Department, however evidence suggests that a partnership approach is required, taking into consideration a holistic whole family approach focusing on a range of interdependent outcomes as evidenced in this JSNA chapter.
 - iii. Resources and funding for children accessing early years provision who have complex medical needs is insufficient. Children accessing Childminders, Private Day Nurseries and Voluntary Sector Preschools have to pay the NHS to train their practitioners in order to meet the specific health needs of a child; they also have to pay for specialist equipment and assessments which enable a child to access childcare; this is currently provided at no cost for school early years settings. Dedicated Schools Grant Funding from the Early Years Inclusion Fund and Disability Access Fund only provide costs to contribute towards staffing and some equipment, as criteria for these funding streams are set nationally; however both of these funding streams are underspent. A longer-term solution is required in order to prevent children with complex medical needs being turned away from early years provision.

- iv. There are localities across Nottinghamshire where there are sufficiency challenges in terms of childcare. This is especially the case for parents who require childcare to fit around their working patterns. There are also localities where there is sufficient high-quality childcare, however parents choose not to take up their funded childcare entitlements for a range of reasons.

Recommendations for consideration by Commissioners

9. A number of recommendations have emerged following a review of local service provision, performance, research and evidence. The JSNA has provided opportunities to review activities which will help inform the new Best Start Plan, as well as the transfer of the Children’s Centre Service to the Council in June 2020.

Priority	Recommendations	Suggested Lead
To ensure Children get the Best Start	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Best Start Strategy/Plan and a strategic partnership group to consider wider factors which contribute to school readiness from preconception to the age of 4. Target resources to engage families earlier during the antenatal period and not wait for children to access early years provision. 	Early Childhood Services, NCC Public Health, NCC
Children achieve a Good Level of Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raising 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. Promotion, delivery and commissioning of evidence based interventions only. Implement and review the findings of the Best Start early years tracker tool to help early years providers to assess the developmental needs of children and enable commissioners to track progress and assess impact of services and interventions. Explore increasing the moderation of assessments carried out by schools during the Early Years Foundation Stage as they do not reflect the progress children are making at age 2 - 2½. 	Early Childhood Services, NCC
Children most at risk of poor educational outcomes have a good level of development and the attainment gap is narrowed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narrow the attainment gap for children eligible for Free School Meals and their peers, ensuring that progress is on a par with statistical neighbours (measured by the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile). Target wards across Nottinghamshire with higher proportions of children living in poverty and low IDACI¹ scores. Additional work is required to engage low income families prior to the age of three and low income families not accessing early education or childcare. Increase the take up of funded early education for 2 year olds eligible for Free School Meals. Work with early years providers to ensure there are sufficient high quality and sustainable places available in low income areas. Target Children’s Centre resources to target groups most at risk of poor attainment and development. Undertake tracking of outcomes for children with SEND who have claimed supplementary funding (Disability Access Fund and Early Years Inclusion Fund). 	Early Childhood Services, NCC

¹ IDACI – Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index

Priority	Recommendations	Suggested Lead
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review specific needs of migrant families and refugees with young children. Information is required to help engage these groups to access early years and childcare provision. 	
Highly Skilled Early Years Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide and evaluate high quality training and workforce development support to early years professionals across Nottinghamshire. Links with Higher Education and Further Education organisations should be strengthened to improve promotion of accredited qualifications including teaching. 	Early Childhood Services, NCC
Improve outcomes for Looked After Children and those known to Social Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure early years is embedded in the work of the Virtual School to enable young children in Local Authority Care to succeed; and commissioners are able to assess the impact of additional Pupil Premium funding allocated to this group. Ensure early years strategic leads work closely with the Virtual School to ensure that social workers, kinship and foster carers are aware of the importance of the quality of early years education. Provide training and support to early years settings to enable them to be prepared for working with high-risk and potentially high-need groups, such as looked after children. Undertake early years foundation stage data tracking and analysis for Children in Need and those on Child Protection Plans following the introduction of the Deprivation Fund. 	Early Childhood Services, NCC
Parents are engaged in their child's learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the Home Talk intervention or similar evidence based intervention to address and improve speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) by working with parent and child in their own home. Promotion of the national Home Learning campaign 'Hungry Little Minds' (launched July 2019) Consider the commissioning/delivery of a Home Learning resource co-produced with parents. Ensure that home learning is promoted through all local online and social media opportunities. Evaluate existing home learning interventions and launch the new home learning pathway. 	Early Childhood Services, NCC
Parents are effectively supported to improve their wellbeing, parenting skills, and understand their child's development needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the latest evidence base to identify which parenting programmes and family support interventions are most effective and evidence value for money, for delivery by the Children's Centre Service from 2020. Continued evaluation of outcomes for parents and carers who have participated in a variety of evidence based programmes delivered by Children's Centre Services. Topics will include boundaries and behaviour, sleep routines, parental conflict etc. Continued delivery and evaluation of 1-2-1 family support delivered by the Children's Centre Service, focusing on family routines, parental wellbeing, keeping children safe, emotional needs of children and home learning. 	Early Childhood Services, NCC
Children's Centre Services are responsive to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the impact of Children's Centre interventions and ensure that interventions are evidence based and evaluated. Greater engagement of children most at risk of developmental delay and their families. 	Early Childhood Services, NCC

Priority	Recommendations	Suggested Lead
need and improve outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater focus on engaging families from the antenatal period until children reach the age of 3. Ensure the Children's Centre Service once under the management of the Local Authority maintains strong links with Healthy Family Teams and Maternity Services. 	
Improve outcomes for White British Boys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve outcomes for White British Boys by ensuring that the opportunities we are providing for boys in the Early Years Foundation Stage fully engage and support them in developing positive dispositions to learning. Increase take up of childcare and early education opportunities for White British Boys as early as possible. Provision of Forest School approaches should include a thorough evaluation on the impact for White British Boys, anecdotal information on the impact is insufficient and yet practitioners regularly share information about the successful engagement of boys in Forest School work. 	Early Childhood Services, NCC
Improve communication and language skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the recommendations highlighted from the Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) Maturity Matrix assessment tool which include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater engagement with maternity services and specialist Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) services. Greater ownership by Clinical Commissioning Groups Improve Speech Language and Communication Needs pathways to specialist SLT services. Maintain effective speech and language support through the evaluated Home Talk programme (or similar), which identifies and supports children with early speech and language delay. Active promotion of the new national Hungry Little Minds home learning campaign which includes a focus on SLCN. 	Early Childhood Services, NCC & Public Health, NCC
Improve the emotional wellbeing and resilience of children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote tools to foster emotional wellbeing from the earliest stages of life, enhancing resilience and the importance of relationships to help build solid foundations for overall health and wellbeing. Implement the Routine Enquiry about Adversity in Childhood (REACH) programme to ensure that parents have their needs addressed and the intergenerational cycle of disadvantage is broken through the Children's Centre Service and Healthy Family Teams. 	Public Health, NCC
Improve outcomes for Children with SEND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The significant increase in the number of young claimants of Disability Living Allowance will require a focus on this population to review access and take-up to inform plans to ensure sufficiency of appropriate provision. Commissioners should work across County Council departments to help share findings from SEND assessments for children under the age of five, sharing key findings and learning which in turn will inform commissioning decisions and service planning. This will need to include the children that do not meet the thresholds for specialist support. Review the use of the Early Years Inclusion Fund and the Disability Access Fund to ensure that children are effectively supported as part of their transition to school. 	Early Childhood Services, NCC

Priority	Recommendations	Suggested Lead
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater promotion of childcare provision to families with children with SEND and increased promotion of funding supplements to early years settings. 	
Developmental Delays are identified and supported early	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed and review the findings of the 2-year integrated review and the impact for children accessing early years settings, and compare progress against statistical neighbours. 	Public Health, NCC
Improve outcomes for children with English as an Additional Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the specific childcare and health needs of families with English as an Additional Language (including refugees and asylum seekers). Encourage schools and health services to report both ethnic origin and English as an additional language using Office of National Statistics (ONS) codes to enable improved monitoring and analysis. 	Early Childhood Services, NCC
Ensure sufficient high-quality childcare provision is available	<p>Nottinghamshire needs to have robust data about both supply and demand for childcare, it is recommended the Local Authority evaluates progress of new data collection and monitoring procedures to ensure it supports their market management role and sufficiency duties.</p> <p><i>Refer to the Nottinghamshire Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.</i></p>	Early Childhood Services, NCC
Reduce financial barriers preventing access to childcare	<p>Work should be undertaken with key stakeholders to ensure partners and staff are aware of what support for the costs of childcare is available, and how the free entitlement can be used, and disseminate that information to their client groups.</p> <p><i>Refer to the Nottinghamshire Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.</i></p>	Early Childhood Services, NCC
Offer flexible childcare provision and provide additional childcare during school holidays and increased wrap around care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore flexible delivery models as a matter of urgency; and consider how these models of working can be applied across different types of provision for all age ranges of children. The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment identified demand for provision in school holidays and an unmet need for after school and before school provision. Work should be undertaken with key stakeholders to identify options for additional childcare and wrap around provision, ensuring all available provision is recognised and promoted through the Local Authority's information duty, delivered by the Families Information Service. <p><i>Refer to the Nottinghamshire Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.</i></p>	Early Childhood Services, NCC
Ensure Teenage Parents are effectively engaged and supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve uptake of Care to Learn Grant for teenage parents Gain a better understanding of which services teenage parents access and gain a better understanding of the local barriers for young people in accessing the Children's Centre Service and childcare. 	Public Health and Early Childhood Services, NCC
Consider ceasing the commissioning /delivery of some	<p>Review the interventions provided locally that do not have a clear evidence base, or evaluation and performance does not evidence impact. Commissioners and service providers should not prioritise</p>	Public Health and Early Childhood Services, NCC

Priority	Recommendations	Suggested Lead
interventions with no evidence base	these interventions where budgets are restricted. This could include baby massage which parents enjoy. However, it must also be acknowledged that evidence of effectiveness is not a replacement for ongoing evaluation. The fact that an intervention has evidence from a rigorous evaluation conducted at one time and place does not mean that it will be effective again. The evidence described in this chapter is therefore not a replacement for good monitoring and evaluation systems as interventions are set up and delivered.	
Provision of behavioural sleep training	Continue to provide behavioural sleep training through the Children's Centre Service and provide information through Healthy Family Teams during the antenatal and postnatal stage.	Public Health and Early Childhood Services, NCC
Increase the use of social media and web-based resources	Consider increasing and improving information and support available for parents and expectant parents including activities to promote positive home learning environments and parenting support such as 'Triple P Online'.	Early Childhood Services, NCC

10. It is proposed that a new Best Start Group should oversee the implementation of all recommendations, working in close partnership with commissioners and providers of educational, health and wellbeing services for preschool children and their families. The proposal to establish the Best Start Group will be progressed following a workshop with members of the Children and Families Alliance and the Health and Wellbeing Board in February 2020.

Other Options Considered

11. No other options have been considered.

Reasons for Recommendation

12. The JSNA chapter has provided an opportunity to consolidate information regarding service provision and local performance data against the latest evidence of what works. It is now understood that some interventions are provided because parents enjoy them rather than there being any evidence to suggest that outcomes have improved for those families. The JSNA chapter therefore provides detailed recommendations of what should change and what activities should continue.
13. Historically, work to improve children's development has resulted in intensive work with organisations providing childcare; however, we know that disadvantaged children are less likely to access childcare and that interventions need to start much earlier. The JSNA chapter helps to reprioritise activity provided by the Council and other key stakeholders.
14. The aim to give every child a good start in life is a key priority in the Nottinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and the aim to ensure families prosper and achieve their potential is a priority within Nottinghamshire County Council's Strategic Plan.

Statutory and Policy Implications

15. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, 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, smarter working, sustainability and the environment 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

16. There are none arising from this report although the findings and recommendations will inform local commissioning decisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Committee:

- 1) considers whether there is any further action it requires arising from the information contained within this report, including any opportunities to review the support available for children with complex medical needs.
- 2) agrees to support the recommendations through their inclusion in County Council priorities, strategies, and divisional work plans.

Laurence Jones
Service Director, Commissioning and Resources

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Irene Kakoullis
Group Manager, Early Childhood Services
T: 0115 97 74431
E: irene.kakoullis@nottsc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments (LW 15/11/19)

17. Children & Young People's Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of the report.

Financial Comments (CDS 12/11/19)

18. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

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 Health and Wellbeing Board: Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2022](#)

[Early Years Improvement Plan - report to Children and Young People's Committee on 29th April 2019](#)

[Nottinghamshire Childcare Sufficiency Assessment](#)

Approval of JSNA Chapter – Early Years and School Readiness Health and Wellbeing Board Report (6.11.19)

<https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/care/health-and-wellbeing/health-and-wellbeing-board>

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C1317