



**Nottinghamshire
County Council**



Early Years Plan

2014-2015



1. Introduction

The Early Years Plan sets out the vision and priorities to ensure that young children have the best start in life to reach their potential, to achieve success in adulthood and contribute positively to their community. The Plan has been developed at a time of rapid change, with many uncertainties still remaining. It seeks to reflect the policy changes¹ emerging from government whilst being informed by local strategies, such as Child Poverty and Closing the Gap, and is overarched by the Early Help development plan. The Plan also incorporates Nottinghamshire's Language for Life strategy and will be supported by action plans to enable us to achieve our objectives, ensuring too that the council continues to fulfil its statutory obligations. In recognition of the economic climate within which we are currently operating, the Plan will seek to explore opportunities for maximising resources through greater collaboration, integration and partnership working between all those who provide early childhood services, such as midwives, health visiting teams, speech therapists, children centres, childcare and early education providers, and schools etc.

Defining early years - Whilst the focus for this Plan and subsequent actions are on children, and their families aged 0-4 years, the family support needs of those with children aged 5-12 years will also be considered in acknowledgement of the enhanced core offer now delivered by children centres.

2. The Early Years – national context

It is now widely understood that everything that happens to a child within the first few years of life is the foundation for their future success. Evidence² has shown that early experiences shape children's future development and influence how well they do at school, their ongoing health and wellbeing and their achievements later in life. A strong focus at this time in a child's life can have huge economic, social and emotional benefits later on, for the individual

¹ Supporting families
More affordable childcare

² Californian Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)

and for society as a whole. Research³ has also shown the benefits of agencies working together by investing in high quality, evidence-based services and interventions which have proven to simultaneously save money in the long-run whilst reducing lifetime inequalities.

Government recognises the important role that families play in a child's development and that effective parenting gives children confidence, a sense of well-being and self worth, whilst providing stimulation for brain development increasing a child's capacity to learn. Access to high quality early learning experiences, together with a positive learning environment at home, is a vital combination to ensure that children are have reached a good level of development at the start of compulsory school age. It acknowledges too that whilst all families need support, for some the need is more acute. Early help and intervention is critical to ensure that needs are identified early and that children and families are effectively supported at the earliest opportunity.

As a response, the government has confirmed its commitments to early childhood services and has set out its vision for the 'Families in the Foundation Years' which aims to promote the importance of child development and early learning in preparation for formal education. Key priorities include:

- improvements to maternal care, including the expansion of the Family Nurse Partnership
- additional health visitors to deliver the healthy child programme, working closely with children centres
- a commitment to retain children centres to coordinate and provide a range of universal and targeted services to meet local need, with the option of supporting older children where it makes sense to do so

³ The Wave Trust Report- Conception to Age 2

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- the introduction of the Integrated Review for all 2 year olds in order track a child's progress and provide information to parents about their child's development
 - an increase in the number of 15 hours of funded early education places for 20% of all disadvantaged and/or disabled 2 year olds, rising to 40% by September 2014
 - a new Early Years Foundation Stage framework, designed to support practitioners and inform parents on their child's readiness for school, with an emphasis on the following prime areas: physical, social, emotional, communication and language development
 - a review of early years qualifications in order to improve the quality of childcare and early education
 - a review of how information is provided to parents that support them to make childcare choices

Revisions to Ofsted frameworks and statutory guidance for local authorities across the sector places greater emphasis on the need for quality improvement and a sharper focus on vulnerable young children. A recent Ofsted report ⁴ highlighted the need for effective leadership in early years settings to ensure that provision is of the required standard. It emphasised again that children will only benefit from an early learning experience if it is of at least a good standard at least and advocates that only those settings with such ratings should be used for two year olds where possible.

Aimed also at having a less bureaucratic regulatory framework for childcare providers, government now sees Ofsted as being the main arbiter for 'quality'. Whilst the extent of such changes are still to be determined, it is clear that the role of the local authority is to act as a 'champion' for disadvantaged children, along with a focus on supporting settings which require improvement. In summary, the duties the council therefore has for the early years are:-

⁴ Getting it right first time, July 2013

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- to improve the wellbeing of young children in their area and reduce inequalities between them through the delivery of integrated early childhood services through sufficient children's centres and other commissioned services
 - to secure sufficient, high quality early education places for all 3 and 4 year olds, and eligible 2 year olds, and childcare for children aged up to 14 of working parents (18 for disabled children); whilst working with providers to deliver high quality provision as judged by Ofsted
 - to provide information, advice and assistance to settings, and to parents and prospective parents on the provision of childcare in their area.

3. AMBITION, PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

Our ambition is to ensure that all young children and their families, including those with SEND, are able to reach their potential by having the best possible start in life through the provision of high quality, integrated early childhood services and to prepare them for school.

Our ambition **is** aspirational - we recognise the inequalities that exist across the county that prevent some children from reaching their potential and of the long-term commitment required to achieve it. We understand the links between poverty and low attainment, and of the imperative to provide early help services if we are ever going to break the cycle of poor outcomes for children and families. Whilst keeping **children at the heart** of everything we do, we also know that in order to achieve our ambition, this Plan must be underpinned by the following **principles**

- that our ability to establish and maintain respectful relationships with **parents and families** is critical and central to all that we do, supporting them when necessary to build capacity in order for them to be effective in their role as primary carers and educators of their children

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- that children, parents and families are able to **access** services where and when they need them most
 - that all early childhood services are of **high quality** and **evidence-based** to ensure the desired outcomes are achieved
 - that collaborative processes are strengthened to enable needs to be **identified early** and appropriate supports to be put in place at the earliest opportunity
 - that resources are **targeted** at where there is greatest need;
 - that available resources are maximised through greater **integration** and **partnership working**
 - that early childhood services are supported by a **well-qualified and properly skilled workforce**
 - that evaluation processes are able to measure the **impact of early help services** and the learning from which informs service planning
 - that services known to make a difference are **commissioned**, both internally and externally to meet identified need

OUR PRIORITIES – in order to achieve our Ambition we have identified 3 priorities:-

1. to ensure that early childhood services are fully integrated to provide early help and prevention for families in need
2. to ensure there are sufficient, high quality, inclusive and safe early learning and childcare opportunities that prepare children for school
3. to ensure the early years workforce has access to training and development opportunities that lead to required service improvement

Priority 1: Ensure that early childhood services are integrated to provide early help and prevention for families in need.

Why is this important

- Providing support to meet children and families' needs at the earliest opportunity reduces inequalities and improves longer term outcomes.
- Identifying potential need and early detection in the early years, including for children with SEND, can prevent situations from escalating and ultimately reduces the need for intensive, specialist help and provides increased value for money. The Government have identified that there is a high percentage of low level SEND within vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.
- Recognising and supporting early children's speech language and communication needs are vital as research shows that two thirds of children with serious behaviour problems have such needs. Pupils entitled to free school meals are 1.8 times more likely to have speech, language and communication needs, and if they live in a disadvantaged area are 2.3 times more likely, impacting on their ability to learn and reach their full potential.

Where we are now

- There are currently 45,200 0-4 year olds living in Nottinghamshire, a figure forecast to rise to 47,000 by 2021. 55% of children are living in low income areas; 19% are living with lone parents; 8.5% are from BME communities; with the highest number of mothers aged below 20 in Mansfield, Ashfield and Bassetlaw. Based on available data, there is an increased number of young disabled children.
- There are high levels of vulnerability. 44% of all children subject to a child protection plan, and 21% of all CAF compliant assessments relate to this age range.
- 77% of all children living in low income areas are registered with one of the 58 children centres and last year, 57% of them accessed children centre services.
- A county average of 14% of 2 year olds are identified as needing additional support with their speech, language and communication, with a gap of, on average, 19% between less and more disadvantaged areas, i.e. Mansfield and Rushcliffe. Local small scale studies have shown that early parent-based interventions, for instance, can alleviate these difficulties, with only a third of these going onto require specialist speech and language therapy services.

What difference do we want to see and how we will achieve it.

Outcome	Key Tasks	Time-scales	Lead officer
<i>Parents are better informed about services available for them and their child/family</i>	Transfer the Family Information Service to the ASK libraries team to support information available through the Customer Service Centre and children Centres.	March 2014	Niki Coupe (EYEI)
<i>More children and families are registering and being seen by children centres, particularly those from target groups.</i>	Monitor effective information sharing protocols between children centres, midwives, health visitors and schools, including early notification	March 2015	Gary Eves (PH)



<p><i>More children are having their needs identified earlier and met through CAF processes</i></p> <p><i>Early childhood services are working more effectively together to identify and respond to vulnerable children and families</i></p> <p><i>Parents report an increased confidence in their parenting role</i></p> <p><i>Parents are better informed about the progress their child has made by the time they reach school.</i></p> <p><i>More children are identified earlier with SLCN and SEND</i></p> <p><i>More children take up their free early education place at 2, 3 and 4 years of age.</i></p> <p><i>Schools are better informed about the children who enter the foundation stage</i></p>	of pregnancy, live birth data, Children Centre registrations, through commissioning processes.		
	Embed single points of access to early help services through children centres.	Sept 2014	Sally Penn (NCFP)
	Develop a child development programme that supports parents to establish positive home learning environments.	Sept 2014	Lesley Dunn (EYEI)
	Evidence positive impact of evidence-based parenting programmes.	Sept 2014	Rachel Clark (EYEI)
	Develop a strategy to effectively implement the Integrated Review for 2 year olds	Sept 2015	Amanda Edmonds (NCH)
	Monitor and support increased take up of early education places based on headcount information.	April 2014 then end of each term	Nicola Hughes (StSS) NCFP
	Implement and evaluate the use of the Early Years Tracker tool - to track the attendance and progress of children taking up the two year free entitlement.	July 2014	Lesley Dunn (EYEI)
	Develop and trial ways to share an 'Early Years Foundation stage handbook' with schools as part of the Newark Town pilot	Sept 2014	Bev Cameron (Data & Perform) Janeen Parker (School Improvement)
	Explore opportunities to strengthen links between Early Help services and the Family Nurse Partnership to ensure effective support to young parents.	Sept 2014	Rachel Clarke (EYEI)
	Ensure the additional needs of children and families inform the service specifications of commissioned contracts, including specialist services such as speech and language therapy services.	April 2015	Gary Eves (PH)

Priority 2: Ensure there are sufficient, sustainable, high quality, inclusive and safe early education and childcare opportunities that prepare children for school.

Why is this important

- Local authorities are required by legislation to secure sufficient, flexible, high quality early education places for eligible two year olds, and all three and four year olds, offering 570 hours a year over 38 weeks a year.
- The need for flexible and affordable childcare is necessary to support those parents ready to enter the labour market and local authorities are also required, where practicable, to ensure sufficient childcare places for working parents, or parents who are studying or training.
- Evidence shows that children will benefit most from an early learning experience, in terms of their social, physical, emotional, communication and language development, if it is of a Good standard at least, as defined by Ofsted. Government proposes that only those settings with such ratings should be used for two year olds where-ever possible.
- The national Every Child a Talker initiative showed that good quality early communication environments enable a significant improvement in children's communication and language development, fundamental to early learning.
- A positive home learning environment is equally important in preparing children for school and settings are required to share information about a child's progress to enable parents to fulfil their role as primary educator.
- It is vital that settings are confident and competent in their safeguarding practice, particularly as more vulnerable children are placed in their care, and at a time when deregulation of some childcare is being proposed.

Where we are now

- Based on 2011 figures, there are approximately 1,493 registered childcare providers in the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector, providing 22,174 places.
- The Childcare Sufficiency audit indicates some shortfalls in childcare places in localities in Mansfield, Ashfield and Bassetlaw.
- Additional £1.1m capital funding has been awarded by Government to support the expansion of the 2 year old early education offer, together with £1.8m trajectory funding.
- 70% of all PVI childcare providers are rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted compared to the national average of 74%.
- In September 2013, 56.6% children in the county attained the Good Level of development

(GLD). This is higher than the provisional national figure of 52%. The percentage of children attaining the GLD is lower than 2012 due to the change in the EYFS curriculum and Profile. In 2012 Notts equalled National with 64% children attaining GLD, so in 2013 we have outperformed the national for the first time since 2008.

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	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Attaining 'good level'	49.2	53.1	56.4	64.2	56.6
National 'good level'	52	56	59	64	52 (indicative)

- The gap measurement has changed and is now likely to be the gap between those attaining the GLD who are in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) and those not (non-FSM). In 2012 Notts gap was 23 percentage points against a national gap of 19.
- Quality support arrangements are well established with support available to maintained schools, day nurseries and preschool playgroups from the NCC Early Years Specialist Teacher team and, through a commissioned contract with the Preschool Learning Alliance. Similar arrangements also exist for childminders with support available from PACEY (professional association for childcare and early years).
- 92% of parents surveyed in 2011 were 'satisfied' or better with the opening hours and times of childcare they used.

What difference do we want to see and how we will achieve it.

Outcome	Key Tasks	Timescales	Lead Officer
<p><i>Sufficient and sustainable childcare places, and other early years services, are available, particularly in areas of disadvantage</i></p> <p><i>More children have access to free early education place at 2, 3 and 4 years of age</i></p>	Undertake the Childcare Sufficiency Audit (CSA), including out of school provision that meets the needs of working parents and children with disabilities.	July 2014	Jude Burgess (EYEI)
	Create sufficient early education places in response to the CSA for all 3 and 4 year olds, and for vulnerable 2 year olds	March 2015	Nicola Hughes (STSS) Niki Coupe (EYEI)
	Develop a strategy for school delivery of free early education places for 2 year olds.	September 2014	Nicola Hughes (StSS)
	Revise policies in relation to funding of early education places informed by a market	June 2014	Jude Burgess (EYEI)



	assessment.		
<p><i>Quality of more early years provision is at least Good by Ofsted standards</i></p> <p><i>Schools report an increase in children ready to learn on entry</i></p>	Review quality improvement support arrangements to inform future priorities for the EYST team and revised service specification for commissioned contracts, focused on settings, including schools, requiring improvement.	<p>Review completed by end of July 2014</p> <p>new contract starts April 2015</p>	Jude Burgess (EYEI)
	Continue to promote the EYFS statutory framework and Ofsted framework(s) through QI visits and workforce development opportunities.	April 2014	Lesley Dunn (EYEI)
<p><i>Settings are delivering effective inclusive provision</i></p>	Establish systems and processes for delivering DCATCH through EYEI	April 2014	Lesley Dunn (EYEI)
	Support settings to deliver inclusive provision and appropriately resourced provision to meet the additional needs of children accessing their early education entitlement.	September 2014	Lesley Dunn (EYEI)
	Ensure full implementation of the Language for Life strategy.	ongoing	Jane Young (NCHP)
<p><i>Settings are effective in safeguarding children.</i></p>	Review and develop improved support arrangements that ensure settings are practicing safely.	April 2014	Jude Burgess (EYEI)
	Strengthen links and relationships between settings and the LADO.	April 2014	Sarah Turner (LADO officer)

Priority 3: Ensure the early years workforce has access to training and development opportunities that lead to required service improvement.

Why is this important

The Nutbrown review⁵ highlighted how high quality early education and childcare can improve the outcomes of children later in life if practice is led by someone with higher level qualifications. It is important that all early years practitioners know and understand their contribution to delivering services within the EYFS with an emphasis on child development and safeguarding. The recent Ofsted report 'Getting it right from the start'⁶ also highlights the need for strong leadership in order to develop and sustain high quality provision. Leadership and Management is a key feature of all Ofsted frameworks for early childhood services and one of the main contributing factors to the judgement Ofsted makes on the quality of the provision. Socially disadvantaged children can catch up with other children in their language skills if practitioners are trained to support their language development appropriately.

Where we are now

- Historically, the Council has provided work force development opportunities for all early years providers accessed through the TADO (training and development opportunities) web pages, a function which now sits within Workforce and Organisational Development (WOD).
- Working in conjunction with WOD, the Early Years Service has lead responsibility to work in partnership with the sector to identify workforce development needs, based on improvements required in practice, and often in response to changes in government legislation, delivered through networks and briefings, and specific training events.
- Whilst the TADO promotes opportunities for all settings, increasingly training and development has become more and more focused on specific issues and at specific settings – which follows Government's recently expressed expectations of local authorities to focus their support on those settings that require improvement.
- Established working relationships with key partners ensure that local expertise is used to deliver training and development opportunities such as: the Early Years Specialist Teacher team, SEND Policy & Provision, the Achievement & Equality team; the School Improvement team; the Speech and Language therapist team; PACEY and PSLA, children centres, amongst others.
- Nottinghamshire has invested in its language lead programme, linking it with the Level 3 award in Supporting Speech, Language and Communication Needs, and it is anticipated over 50 practitioners will achieve this combined award by the end of 2013.
- Encouraged by national developments from the National College of Teaching and Learning, peer to peer support opportunities have been extended through the implementation of the Systems Leadership programme from the children centre pilot which is currently being trialled with childcare settings.

⁵ Foundations for quality, June 2012

⁶ Getting it right from the start, July 2013

What difference do we want to see			
Outcome	Key Tasks	Timescales	Lead Officer
<i>Services are led and delivered by a well-qualified and skilled workforce that understand the importance of child development and safeguarding in order to improve life chances of young children.</i>	Review/establish a universal and targeted work force development offer based on requirements of the EYFS and Ofsted framework within available resources.	Draft April 2014 Implementation Sept 2014	Linda Mottishaw (EYEI)
	Develop a county-wide response to early years qualifications in line with government guidance.	Sept 2014	Lesley Dunn (EYEI)
<i>Available resources are prioritised and demonstrate impact on service improvement.</i>	Explore opportunities to create packages of 'sold services' utilising internal expertise.	Sept 2015	Linda Mottishaw (EYEI)
<i>Training and development opportunities available maintain quality provision and support those settings requiring improvement. Early Years practitioners have access to changes to policy and practice guidance</i>	Review and align networks and briefings to meet the needs of the early years/early childhood services workforce, including school-based family support staff, that promote the EYFS statutory/regulatory guidance and other areas of practice development.	Draft April 2014 Implementation Sept 2014	Linda Mottishaw (EYEI)
<i>Early years practitioners have access to shared learning opportunities that support service improvement.</i>	Implement and evaluate the impact of the early years systems leadership model to settings that require improvement to inform future development.	Ongoing July 2014	Jude Burgess (EYEI)
	Strengthen localised peer to peer support through mentoring, shadowing and buddying opportunities.	Sept 2014	Lesley Dunn (EYEI)



GOVERNANCE

The Plan forms part of the Early Help development plan and its implementation will be monitored through the Early Help executive, chaired by the Service Director for Youth, Families and Cultural services. The Plan contributes to the Closing the Gap agenda and reports regularly to the Closing the Gap Performance Board. The Early Years Attainment group has operational responsibility for the deliver of key actions and will monitor progress through its quarterly meetings.



