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| NCC-l-head-black | Report to Children’s Trust Board  Insert name of Council Body (eg County Council) or Decision Maker (eg Cabinet Member for Finance and Property). |
| 19th November 2015  Insert the date the report is to be considered (eg the date of County Council or Portfolio Meeting). **Must** be in the format “dd MMMM yyyy” (e.g. 10 August 2011). |
| Agenda Item: 4  Please leave this blank. |
| Children’s Trust Board Sponsor: Derek Higton, Service Director, Youth, Families and Culture | |
| NOTTINGHAMSHIRE EARLY YEARS IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2015-2017 | |

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Board members of the performance of the Nottinghamshire Early Years Improvement Plan 2013 – 2015.
2. To seek approval of the Children’s Trust Board for the draft Early Years Improvement Plan 2015-17.
3. To agree with the Children’s Trust Board the proposals for a wider early childhood plan.

Information and Advice

1. 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.
2. Securing a successful start for our youngest children, and particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, is crucial. It can mean the difference between gaining seven Bs at GCSE compared with seven Cs and is estimated to be worth £27,000 more in an individual’s salary over the course of their career.
3. By the age of three, 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.
4. 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. In 2015, around 260,000 two-year-olds were eligible for 15 hours of free early education but did not take up their place nationally; this represents 42% of all eligible children in the East Midlands and 37% nationally and 37% in Nottinghamshire.
5. School readiness is a measure of how prepared a child is to succeed in statutory education. The good level of development (GLD) is used to assess school readiness. Currently 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.
6. School readiness starts in pregnancy and continues after birth. Health visitors, children’s centres and other professionals working with new parents, particularly the most vulnerable, are supported to ensure that from birth, each child’s home provides both emotional and physical security as well as positive opportunities to learn and develop, thus ensuring each child is ‘school ready’ by the time the child reaches statutory school age. The role that parents and carers play in preparing their child for school is vital.

**National Context**

1. 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.
2. Government Early Years statutory duties:
   1. 15 hours of free childcare for all 3 and 4 year olds where a parent works
   2. 15 hours of free childcare for eligible 2 year olds (FSM eligible)
   3. Early Years Pupil Premium for children aged 3 and 4 eligible for FSM
   4. LAC Pupil Premium for all Looked After Children of preschool age
3. Government is planning to place additional duties on local authorities to offer 30 hours of free childcare for all 3 and 4 year olds where a parent works (from September 2017)
4. In addition, Nottinghamshire runs the DCATCH scheme which provides additional funding and training for Early Years providing working with disabled children.

**Progress of the Nottinghamshire Early Years Plan 2013 - 2015**

1. All early education providers have sharply focussed on early education in its widest sense 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%
2. Nationally, 94% of 3 and 4 year-olds benefited in 2010 of the 15 hour entitlement which this has risen to 96% in 2015. In Nottinghamshire, the take up of the free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds increased from 96.39% in 2010 to 99.6% in 2015.
3. In Nottinghamshire 63% of eligible 2 year olds took up their free entitlement in the summer of 2015. Of the eligible cohort of 3,470, 37% didn’t take it up, which equates to 1,278 of eligible 2 year olds. At district level, there was greatest uptake of the 2 year old free entitlement in Rushcliffe where 205 (91.11%) 2 year olds benefited from this free provision. The lowest take up was in Newark and Sherwood where out of the 550 number of eligible 2 year olds, only 291 (52.91%) accessed the provision.
4. 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 free school meals (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.
5. 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 two year olds.
6. Likewise, the findings form the Integrated Review pilots have highlighted the benefits of the review in forging stronger links between health visitors and Early Years practitioners, resulting in a shared understanding (with parents) of children’s needs.
7. 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.
8. The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment undertaken provided useful information to identify hotspot areas and formed the basis of the capital development plan for additional early education places for eligible two year olds.
9. 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.
10. The Early Years funding formula has also been reviewed to bring it into line with regional neighbours whilst we await the outcome of the national consultation.
11. DCATCH funding criteria has also been reviewed to ensure that providers have a clear pathway for accessing SEND support, and that funding is targeted at those children with high level needs.
12. Nottinghamshire’s Language for Life strategy has continued to be implemented with proven success, including an increase in accredited language leads across the county.
13. With more disadvantaged 2 year olds taking up their childcare entitlement, safeguarding practice has become a priority 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.
14. Safeguarding training continues to be a popular feature on the workforce development plan, including the PREVENT duty and the new responsibilities placed on all Early Years providers.
15. The statutory guidance[[1]](#footnote-1) placed new requirements on Local Authorities to focus on quality improvement support for those settings requiring improvement (in response to Ofsted reports). As such, the quality improvement team was reviewed, and now have a revised offer, including an annual workforce development plan, elements of which are now a sold offer.
16. New relationships have been forged with Ofsted Early Years inspectors and regular meetings are now held to support collaborative working and effective quality improvement.
17. The advent of Early Years hubs and government’s desire to involve schools in quality improvement within Early Years has paved the way for joint working opportunities with schools. Systems leadership and peer/sector-led support have been tested, learning from which will inform future work involving Teaching School Alliances.

T**he Early Years Improvement Plan 2015 - 17**

1. The Early Years Improvement Plan 2015-17 builds on previous success of early years and childcare provision in Nottinghamshire highlighted above.
2. The Early Years Improvement Action Plan is included in Appendix One of this report. The plan includes four priorities with supporting outcome indicators. A performance framework is in development and will be included in the action plan document.
3. **Priority 1: Ensure that early childhood services are working effectively together to provide early help for children and families to meet identified need.** 
   1. Providers are knowledgeable and effective in identifying and assessing needs of the 0-5 population across Nottinghamshire
   2. More vulnerable families and children have their needs met through effective engagement with Children Centre Services
   3. Children and Families experience seamless interventions and services from Health Visiting and Children Centre services
   4. More children are identified earlier with development delay and are offered appropriate early support.
   5. More eligible children are identified for early education places
4. **Priority 2: Ensure there are sufficient, sustainable, high quality, inclusive and safe early education and childcare provision**
   1. Children and Families in disadvantaged areas have access to sufficient and sustainable early education and childcare places.
   2. Children and Families have access to high quality Early Years provision
   3. Children with additional needs have their needs effectively met through early education support
   4. Children are effectively safeguarded
5. **Priority 3: Improve school readiness, especially those children most vulnerable**
   1. All stakeholders have a shared understanding of School Readiness
   2. 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 make significant progress from their starting point.
   3. Children have a good home learning environment
   4. Children’s progress is effectively tracked.
   5. All children, particularly LAC, FSM, and EAL children are effectively supported upon transition
6. **Priority 4: Effective Parental engagement**
   1. Parents are better informed about services available for them and their child/family
   2. Parents are supported to prepare their child/ren for learning
   3. Parents are effectively supported as their child moves between settings
   4. Parents have access to volunteering opportunities that support their child’s/own learning.
   5. Parents have access to opportunities to inform and influence service design and delivery.

**Future Plans**

1. The Early Years Improvement Plan is the responsibility of the Early Childhood and Healthy Child Programme Integrated Commissioning Group chaired by Kate Allen. The group aims to bring together an integrated approach to early help services for children aged 0-5 and universal health services for children and young people aged 0-19. This is a sub group of the Children’s Trust Board.
2. There are proposals to widen the plan Early Years Improvement Plan to include a more extensive brief for all early childhood services and interventions. A wider strategy and plan will bring together a range of commissioning plans including health visiting, breastfeeding, Healthy Child Programme and Family Nurse Partnership. This will help integrate early help commissioning plans, avoid duplication and provide a broader narrative for outcomes for pre-school aged children and their families. This plan would then be owned by the Early Childhood and Healthy Child Programme Integrated Commissioning Group on behalf of the Children’s Trust.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Children’s Trust Board:

1. notes the performance of the previous Nottinghamshire Early Years Improvement Plan
2. approves the Nottinghamshire Early Years Improvement Plan 2015 – 17
3. agrees with proposals for a wider early childhood and Healthy Child Programme plan.

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Background Papers

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 Early Years Improvement Plan 2014-15

APPENDIX ONE

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1. Early education and childcare – statutory guidance for local authorities, September 2014 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)