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Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

2 February 2015

**Name of Cabinet Member**

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People – Councillor Ruane

**Director Approving Submission of the report:**

Executive Director of People

**Ward(s) affected:**

All Wards

Services are delivered on a citywide basis

**Title:** Coventry Children's Centres

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**Is this a key decision?**

No

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**Executive Summary:**

The purpose of this report is to inform the Cabinet Member, of the current status of Ofsted outcomes for Children's Centres and progress against actions to address recommendations in order for the Centres to get to "Good" or "Outstanding"

In Coventry we have 17 Children's Centres in total. The Inspection process for Children's Centres assesses performance and impact against a Statutory Framework of how the needs of children and families are identified and met within a geographical area. The overall outcome of an Inspection is categorised under the following judgments: Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement / Satisfactory or Inadequate. The key judgements are:

- Access to services by young children and families
- The quality and impact of practice and services
- The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management.

The Ofsted Inspection framework was introduced from 2010 and was revised in 2013. In Coventry, the Inspection of Children's Centres to date have been as both stand alone and group based Inspections. As a result 16 children centres have been inspected both as single centres as a group of centres. The outcome of the inspections have led to 4 single centres judged to be good, 6 single children's centres and 2 children's centre group (involving 6 children's centres) judged to be requiring improvement or satisfactory.

The Statutory Guidance for Sure Start Children's Centres clarifies what local authorities and statutory partners must do because it is required by legislation, and what local authorities and partners should do when fulfilling their statutory responsibilities;

- focuses on outcomes for children (the core purpose of children's centres);
- clarifies the duty to secure sufficient children's centres accessible to all families with young children, and targeted evidence-based interventions for those families in greatest need of support; and
- promotes the greater involvement of organisations in the running of children's centres with a track record of supporting families.

The Local Authority aspires for all Children's Centres to achieve "Good" or "Outstanding" at their next Inspection and as a result work to achieve this remains a priority.

Progress has been made in all areas identified through recommendations from OFSTED. Strategic developments such as integrated working, data and Information sharing continue to be a focus in the development of the Early Help Offer, details of which can be found in the main body of the report.

#### **Recommendations:**

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People is requested to note the progress made, against the recommendations, following Children's Centre Ofsted Inspections and request that Officers continue to work to develop the Children's Centre service area in order to move Centres to "Good" or Outstanding" at future Inspections.

#### **List of Appendices included:**

##### **Children's Centre Ofsted Inspection Reports and Action Plans**

##### **Children's Centres judged as "Requires Improvement" or "Satisfactory"**

Flutterbies Children's Centre – November 2010 (Commissioned)  
Stoke Heath Children's Centre – March 2011  
Middleride Children's Centre - May 2011  
Valley House Children's Centre – December 2011 (Commissioned)  
Foleshill Children's Centre – November 2012  
Tommies Children's Centre – November 2012 (Commissioned)  
North West Children's Centre Cluster – November 2013  
North East 2 Children's Centre Cluster – December 2013

#### **Background papers:**

None

#### **Other useful documents:**

Sure Start Children's Centres Statutory Guidance for local authorities, commissioners of local health services and Job Centre Plus. (DfE April 2013)

Children's Centre Inspection Handbook (Ofsted 2014)

**Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?**

No

**Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?**

No

**Will this report go to Council?**

No

**Title of Report:** Coventry Children's Centres

## **1. Context (or background)**

**1.1** Statutory Guidance (2013) defines a Children's Centre as: "A group or a group of places managed by or behalf of local authorities, through which childhood services are made available, at which activities for young children are provided ". The Core purpose of children's centres is to improve outcomes for young children and their families and reduce inequalities between families in greatest need and their peers in:

- Child Development and school readiness;
- Parenting aspirations and parenting skills;
- Child and family health and life chances.

**1.2** The regulatory function for the inspection of Children's Centres is the responsibility of Ofsted, under Part 3A of the Children's Act 2006. The inspection framework was revised and published in April 2013 and subsequently updated in April 2014. Under this framework an inspection will either be a single centre or children's centre group that offers integrated services and shares leadership and management. The changes to the framework in 2013 also saw the removal of the Satisfactory judgement and the introduction of "Requires Improvement"

**1.3** Inspections can take place at any time as well as being scheduled using the information held by Ofsted. Children centres that are judged as 'requires improvement' will normally be inspected within a maximum period of two years and earlier if required. The Local Authority expects that these Children's Centres will be Inspected in 2015

**1.4** The inspections make three key judgements that contribute to an overall judgement of the effectiveness of the centre. The three key judgements are:

- Access to services by young children and families
- The quality and impact of practice and services
- The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

**1.5** When judging the overall effectiveness of the children's centre and when making the three key judgements about access to services, the quality and impact of services, and the effectiveness of leadership, governance and management of the centre, inspectors will use the following scale:

Grade 1: Outstanding

Grade 2: Good

Grade 3: Requires improvement (previously judged satisfactory)

Grade 4: Inadequate.

**1.6** In order for Children's Centres to achieve a "Good" or "Outstanding" overall judgement Ofsted states that:

*"The centre's practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for all children and their families and in particular those in target groups and, as a result, inequalities are reducing rapidly."*

*"All three key judgements are outstanding. Exceptionally one of the key judgements may be good and rapidly improving and all other key aspects of the centre's work are good or outstanding. The centre's practice enables most targeted children and their families to access good-quality services that improve children's well-being and achieve the centre's stated outcomes. Other key aspects of the centre's work are likely to be at least good."*

**1.7** There are 17 children centres in Coventry and of these 3 are commissioned to the Private Voluntary and Independent sector. 12 centres have been inspected between 2010 and 2013, 10 have had single Inspections, there has been 2 group Inspections that include 6 centres and 1 has not yet been inspected. Overall 4 children's centres were judged to be good and the rest are judged as "requiring improvement" or "satisfactory".

**1.8** Recommendations arising from any Inspection are integrated into the Centre Development Plan and the self evaluation form both of which are a statutory requirement and are robustly monitored by the Centres Senior Management Team and Partnership Advisory Board on a quarterly basis

**1.9** All Children's Centres have a duty to ensure that there is a Partnership Advisory Board in place. And this board advises and helps those responsible for running the centre. It ensures the centre is clear on parents' views and plays an active role in driving improvement in the children's centre's performance." Partnership Advisory Board members are involved in any Ofsted inspection of the children's centre.

**1.10** Partnership Advisory Board members are responsible for offering support and challenge to each other (the agencies that they represent) and the Children's Centre Manager and their teams. The role of Partnership Board members is to hold each other and any external partners to account in regard to sharing information, contributing to improving outcomes for children and families, identifying key priorities and target groups based on data, experience and in meeting local need.

**1.11** Partner agencies represented on Partnership Advisory Board across the city include: Schools, Health Visiting Service, Elected Members, Housing, Midwifery, Voluntary organisations, Training providers, Job Centre Plus.

**1.12** Parents Forums provide opportunities for parents to either be a member of the Partnership Advisory Boards or for those parents who chose not to become members of the Board their views are still valued and considered as part of its decision making processes

## **2.0 Recommendations relating to Centres judged as "Requires Improvement" or "Satisfactory"**

The recommendations in respect of the 8 Children's Centres judged to as "Requiring Improvement" or "Satisfactory" have a number of common themes. Each Children's Centre will have a clear action plan (**See Appendices**) to address recommendations and actions resulting from the Inspection. There are however cross cutting themes such as access to data that are addressed across the Local Authority.

Common themes on recommendations from Inspections to date have been summarised below under the current Ofsted Grade Descriptors:

## **The Effectiveness of Leadership & Management**

### Local Authority:

- Development of strategic arrangements with partners in relation to service delivery.
- To secure the provision of a robust data set to be used by the children's centres to inform service delivery and impact.
- Effective use of data to be reflected in performance management and target setting.

### Partnership Advisory Boards and Parents Forums:

- To clarify the roles & responsibilities of Partnership Advisory Board members in relation to accountability, for monitoring and evaluation of services measuring impact and effectiveness.
- To ensure that Centres use data effectively to influence service design and delivery.
- The Partnership Advisory Board to have representation and engagement from appropriate partner agencies.
- Centres to have in place appropriate representation from target groups providing opportunities for parents to influence the type and quality services offered.

### **Access to services by children young people and families**

- Use of evidence including that from partner agencies to identify need and influence targeted service development and delivery
- Development of strategies to improve access and sustain engagement from identified target groups
- Development of integrated services delivered through Children's Centres or in local community venues

### **The Quality and Impact of practice**

Systems for quality assurance to monitor evaluate and track impact of services delivered to children from targeted groups, in response to assessment of need. This includes those services provided by partner agencies.

## **2.1 Actions taken to address recommendations**

- 2.1.1** The last Inspection of a Children's Centre in Coventry was over 12 months ago, In the period since the last inspection, there have been significant developments which will support Improvement and go towards securing good outcomes for Children's Centres in any future Inspections. This has included strategic work on the access and analysis of data and a significant change in practice resulting in better integration and multi-agency working as a result of the Acting Early Programme. There has also been progress made in the development of places and increased participation in early education particularly the most disadvantaged two year olds
- 2.1.2** In order to address how recommendations and actions with a focus on children's centres achieving good or better at their next Inspections the following strategies are in place:

## **2.2 The Effectiveness of Leadership and Management**

### **Local Authority:**

**2.2.1** The Earl Help Offer is a key strategic priority for the Local Authority and is part of the improvement plan. The delivery of the Children's Centre Service will form part of this offer. A Head of Service for Early Help and Prevention has been appointed which will give a clear and greater focus on this area of work.

**2.2.2** At both strategic and operational levels effective partnership working principles continue to be developed and implemented, as part of the on-going progression of Coventry's Early Help Offer. An area of success is through the delivery of the Acting Early Programme (0-5years), where Information sharing protocols are in place. Integrated workforce development and training activities have also been delivered.

**2.2.3** The Local Authority has led on significant progression of the data set provided to Children's Centres. This is a continued focus for both the Local Authority Data Team and Children's Centres and includes support and training regarding data analysis, effective use of partner agency data to shape Children's Centre services and monitor impact on children's outcomes.

**2.2.4** The Acting Early Programme (0-5 years) has led to the introduction of the consent to share information being routinely sought at the earliest opportunity which has potential to provide live birth data directly to Children's Centres.

**2.2.5** As part of the performance management of Children's Centres an Annual Performance Management review is carried out with all Children's Centres where progress of the action plan in response to Ofsted recommendations is reviewed along with the Children's Centre Self Evaluation Form (SEF) (which is where the centre assesses its performance and makes Judgements against the Ofsted framework).

**2.2.6** Progress and Improvement are also robustly monitored by the Children's Centre Management team and the Partnership Advisory Board.

### **2.2.7 Acting Early Programme**

Senior Leaders across agencies, University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire (UHCW), Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust (CWPT) and Local Authority have agreed and implemented successfully an integrated working model which focusses on improving the way that the needs of children and families are met. This has strong governance arrangements at both strategic and operational levels and is closely performance managed through Key Performance Indicators which also relate to the core offer of Children's Centres.

### **2.2.8 Early Education**

The Local Authority are fully committed to the development and delivery through partners in the childcare sector, of the early learning for two year olds programme which is part of the children's centre offer. Significant progress has been made with good rates of participation for the most disadvantaged children. Officers have led on work with the sector to improve quality of provision, as a result of this work since the last children's centre inspection there are currently no "Inadequate" settings registered to take funded children.

### **2.2.9 Partnership Advisory Boards and Parents Forum**

Membership of the Board and Parents Forum is regularly reviewed and recruitment and induction processes have been significantly improved resulting in practice to ensure that roles and responsibilities are well defined and membership is at an appropriate level. This is included in the Terms of Reference for the Board.

An induction and training package has been developed and implemented for all new members joining a Partnership Advisory Board this is comprehensive and reflects principles and learning from the training and development programme offered to School Governors. It clarifies members' accountability and responsibilities.

The role of the Chairperson of the Partnership Advisory Board includes their involvement in the Local Authority Performance Management Review process for Children's Centres and Children's Centre Ofsted Inspections

Parents' Forums are in place and act as the formal process to link parents views to the Partnership Advisory Board as part of the governance arrangements. In addition, on-going work to engage with parents and provide opportunities for them to be involved at all levels has included focus groups, consultation (general and targeted for example Young Parents) and attendance at community events to encourage participation.

### **2.3 Access to services by children, young people and families**

Timetables of activities have been developed to deliver services which targets specific needs in relation to the community in which the centre serves for example, English as a second language, young parents, child and family health). Parents/ Carers are provided with details of activities and services available in their local area and signposted to the Family Information Service website where they can identify and access services.

Children's Centres undertake a termly large scale outreach activity, using the details provided by Department for Work and Pensions to target families whose children are eligible and entitled to access their 2 year old Early Education place and provide information on Children's Centre services and Early Learning opportunities. For families who aren't able to access services either within a community venue or within their local Children's Centres, targeted services are delivered within the family home, this includes some health services, family support, and services for children with disabilities.

Opportunities for parents to access support with parenting such as Triple P, Family Links and Living with Confidence intervention is offered through groups delivered in the Children's Centre, community venue or within the family home.

Significant work to develop effective partnership and integration is an on-going focus for the Local Authority at a Strategic Level and Children's Centres locally. This includes the development of the 6 Acting Early Programme sites has seen the early integration of Health partners (Health Visitors, Midwives and GP's) and Local Authority (Children's Centres, Children and Families First and Children's Social Care) coming together to share information and deliver effective and efficient services that avoid duplication and ensures swifter access to appropriate service for families. These are not yet fully embedded across all Children's Centres.

### **2.4 The Quality and Impact of Practice**

Audit processes are in place to review the quality of assessment, recording appropriateness of intervention and the application of thresholds. The outcome of audits to date show that a high majority of cases were assessed as being "adequate" or "good" Service User consultations and satisfaction surveys are routinely used to review quality of services delivered by the Children's Centre.

Systems to gather the voice/ views of the child are embedded in practice.

Staff performance and delivery is managed effectively in line with corporate procedures for performance management of staff through supervision and appraisals are in place.

Key performance indicators which measure impact of integrated working are reflected in the Acting Early performance dashboard, these are monitored by the Acting Early Board on monthly basis and an external evaluation for this project is in progress.

Since the last inspection in 2013 systems have been developed to track long term outcomes for children who have accessed early education and children's centre services.

### **3.0 Timetable for implementing this decision**

The priority is to ensure that good progress to date is enhanced at both strategic and operational level to ensure that Children's Centres work towards gaining a "Good" or "Outstanding" outcome at their next Ofsted Inspection.

### **4.0 Comments from Executive Director, Resources**

#### **4.1 Financial implications Revenue Funding**

There are no financial implications to note

#### **4.2 Legal implications**

The Council has a duty under the Childcare Act 2006: Section 5A for arrangements to be made to ensure that there are sufficient children's centres, so far as reasonably practicable, to meet local need. This section defines what a Sure Start children's centre is and what arrangements and services constitute a children's centre.

The Childcare Act 2006 further outlines the statutory function of Ofsted in respect of the inspection of Children's Centre and the duty to inspect at five yearly intervals. Following inspection the Act outlines the actions to be taken by the Local Authority including the preparation of an action plan.

### **5.0 Other implications**

#### **5.1 This work Contributes to:**

"The core purpose relates directly to the wider duties local authorities have to improve the well-being of young children in their area and to reduce inequalities between young children in their area" (DfE 2013. Pg. 7)

The Statutory Duties relating to Children's Centres are being considered as part of the review and development of the Early Help Offer.

#### **5.2 How is risk being managed?**

The following may be risks for Children's Centres achieving an improved judgment at their next Inspection:



- Uncertainty around the future of Children’s Centres could impact on staffing stability and difficulties around the recruitment and retention of staff as there are currently a number of temporary contracts in place
- Capacity of partners as increasing demand may result in reduction in capacity or willingness to become involved in the delivery of Children’s Centre Services and its Governance arrangements.
- Staffing capacity to support engagement of parents from targeted groups on Parents Forums and to access services

The development of the Early Help Service will mean more clarity of the future staffing structures and Governance arrangements.

### **5.3 What is the impact on the organisation?**

There are no Implications on the Organisation

### **5.4 Equalities / EIA**

An EIA is not applicable for this report.

### **5.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment**

None

### **5.6 Implications for partner organisations?**

None

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## **Appendices**

- 1) Children's Centre Ofsted Inspection Reports**
- 2) Children's Centre Ofsted Inspection Action Plans**