
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

15 September 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 -Progress Update

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to inform the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, on progress, to date, to address actions identified in the Cabinet Member meeting, 7 April 2015, where 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” was discussed.

In Coventry there are 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 Local Authority aspires for all children’s centres to be judged “Good” or “Outstanding” at their next Inspection and as a result, work to achieve this remains a priority. At the meeting of Cabinet Member for Children and Young People on 7 April 2015, the Cabinet Member for

Children and Young People requested 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.

In addition, a number of key actions were identified and this report sets out to update on how actions are being progressed.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People is requested to note the progress made against the recommendations from the last meeting on 7 April 2015, 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:

Appendix 1: NE1 Coventry Report Final

Appendix 2: NE2 Coventry Report Final

Appendix 3: NW1 Coventry Report Final

Appendix 4: SE Coventry Report Final

Appendix 5: SW2 Coventry Report Final

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 -Progress Update

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's 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's 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 (Barley Lea, Tile Hill, Canley and Hillfields) and the rest are judged as "requiring improvement" or "satisfactory". (Flutterbies, Tommies and Valley House children centres which are commissioned), Stoke Heath, Foleshill both Local Authority centres, North East 2 Cluster (Bell Green, Moat House and Richard Lea children's centres) and North West cluster (St Augustine's, Radford and Spon Gate children's centres) which are also Local Authority.

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 centre's 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. 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 Boards 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 Actions identified at Cabinet Member for Children and Young People meeting 7 April 2015 and progress to date:

2.1 The Cabinet Member requested 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.

Progress- Work continues to be a priority for the Local Authority in further developing the children's centre service area across the City at both a local and citywide level.

- 2.2** The Cabinet Member requested that Officers commission, as a matter of urgency, the undertaking of mock inspections/ assessments of Ofsted readiness across children's centres.

Progress – The Local Authority commissioned Indigo Children's Services to carry out reviews of children's centre clusters across the city. Reviews took place between May 2015 to July 2015. During this time Officers worked collectively across the citywide children's centre teams to share learning and implement changes. Findings outlined below consolidate common themes taken from all reviews and identify areas of strength and areas for development:

2.2.1 Areas of Strength:

- **Acting Early Programme - 0 – 5 years:**

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.

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.

Findings from the reviews found that the 'Acting Early' partnership with health services is developing well and was recognised as a model of very good practice of joint working in some areas of the City. As a result, some centres know relatively higher numbers of families and are in a better position to jointly identify and provide effective early help to vulnerable families.

This approach has contributed very well to the increasing number of families expecting children and those with young babies being known to early childhood services. This is well embedded in the areas of the city that were identified as demonstrator sites, practice continues to build as the model is rolled out across the city. The recent provision of live birth data has strengthened information sharing further but it is too soon to see the impact of this.

- **Effective joint working between children centres, social care, children & family first teams and health services:**

Some good partnership working was observed across the centres. Families who are known to social care and those subject Common Assessment Framework processes are very well engaged in the work of the centres. Centres have effectively prioritised early help and support to children stepping down from social care.

- **Raise Share and Review tracking and monitoring process.**

The Raise Share and review process is in place in all children's centres. Its purpose is to track and monitor cases that are being supported by the children's centres.

It was recognised through the reviews that Children's Centre Leaders have a good overview of children and families who receive support through this process.

- **Effective support and challenge to Early Years providers regarding quality:**

The work of children's centre teams with the Private, Voluntary, Independent and maintained Early Years and childcare sector was acknowledged as being a "real strength" which is contributing to an increasing number of children achieving a good level of development (GLD).

In 2015 the % GLD rate increased by 4.3% points to 63.9%. In 2013 it was just 55.4%. The city remains above the national rate of 2014 at 60% with data 2015 not yet confirmed.

- **Quality of services**

Findings from the reviews, where the reviewer talked to parents and observed sessions found that services delivered were of good quality with parents and children well engaged. Parents were very positive about the activities and services which they access.

- **Family support work**

It was evident through the reviews that the quality of family support is good. Caseloads are effectively managed and appropriate interventions are being delivered to families as part of this work which focusses on the most vulnerable families. Partnership working with Children and Families teams at CAF level 3 is very good. Staff and their partners have a very good understanding of evidence based approaches to supporting more vulnerable families and often jointly support families well, particularly at times of transition.

There was some evidence of good quality case recording which clearly demonstrated the impact of the centres' family support work.

2.2.2 Areas for Development:

The areas for development have been listed under the Ofsted judgement areas of a) access to services by young children and families b) the quality and impact of practice and services and c) the effectiveness of leadership, governance and management.

- **Access to services by young children and families**

The centres are reaching and engaging the majority of local families. However, the number of families accessing services is not yet high enough, particularly from priority groups.

Improving take up of free early education for two-year-olds so that most eligible children access their entitlement.

- **Quality and Impact of practice and services:**

Tracking processes are not sufficiently well joined up to enable leaders and managers to confidently show that target children make good or better progress as a result of attending services.

Joint planning between the children's centre and adult learning providers, to help parents to improve their education and employability, is not yet good. As a result centres are not clear that the needs of parents are being met within their local area.

Quality assurance processes are not robust enough to ensure that all services are consistently good including those services delivered by partners.

- **Effectiveness of leadership, governance and management:**

Improving the use of data to plan, evaluate and demonstrate good use of resources to improve outcomes, particularly for priority children and families.

Governance arrangements do not make best use of data to drive improvements quickly enough.

Partnership Advisory Boards are not always representative of all key partners. They have not always had the relevant information to challenge effectively to ensure that centres are good.

2.2.3 Progress to date to address areas for development:

- **Performance Management Data**

There have been significant developments in identifying early childhood services that legitimately contribute to the delivery of the children's centre core offer as stated in the Children's Centre Ofsted Inspection handbook

An "integrated dataset report" across all early childhood services is now in place. Using the central pupil database CAPITA ONE, registrations at children centres are linked to social care records in Protocol and to records of take-up of Early Years Funded places.

In December 2014 the first report was produced with an update provided in April 2015. In that period "Reach" statistics city wide rose by some 13% points from 54.4% to 67.4%

Children's Centre Area Profile:

The area profile has been reviewed to enable the identification of target groups. The demographic data has been refined and collated into dashboards for lower and medium super output areas. This will enable officers to target services to where indicators such as levels of poverty, workless-ness and poor health are a factor.

Capita ONE Data system reports:

A review of the range of reports produced by Capita ONE was undertaken in order to meet new data requirements following recommendations from Children's Centre reviews. Developments have ensured that sustained contact (where a family access a children's centre service more than three times) data are now identified and instant access to summary level data to inform the performance management of children's centres through target setting, quarterly monitoring and self-evaluation.

- **Performance Management Cycle**

Officers have undertaken a review to strengthen the Local Authority Performance Management cycle for children's centres which includes the introduction of new documentation and processes to facilitate effective target setting.

- **Take up of Early Education and Early Learning places for children aged 2,3 and 4 years**

Work to ensure all children access their entitlement for early learning for 2 year old and early education for 3 and 4 year olds continues to be progressed through the children's centre teams via a comprehensive communication and marketing approach and a targeted response to sufficiency of places.

2.2.4 Next Steps:

The actions which have been progressed to date (above) have been prioritised. The focus of further work has been identified as part of the children's centre Improvement plan and is listed below:

Review and update Partnership Advisory Board member training programme

Implement revised Local Authority Performance Management cycle for children's centres

Review and redefine quality assurance processes for early childhood services including those delivered by partners

Review and refocus work to track long term outcomes for children and their families who have accessed children's centre services

To develop an economic well-being strategy with a robust Implementation plan that outlines how services will be delivered to meet the needs of parents with a primary aim to secure parents employability and improve their access to education.

To further develop the existing data set, additional links to records for involvement with services listed below will be available for children's centres and will serve to provide a full profile of early childhood services accessed in each area:

Pre-school Education Service, Parenting Programmes, Education Psychology, Learning and Behaviour Support Services, Sensory Support, Looked After Children Education Service, Autism Support and Childhood Mental Health Services.

- 2.3** The Cabinet Member requested, as a matter of urgency, that the Head of Regulated Services (Looked After Children and Early Years) contacts the Chief Executives of both University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire and the Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust, on behalf of the Cabinet Member, seeking a commitment that their employees fully participate in and attend Ofsted inspections.

Progress: Action completed 10th April 2015. This action was also extended to all other relevant partners that include Job Centre Plus, Adult Education and other Local Authority Service Areas.

3 Timetable for implementing this decision

Officers will continue to develop practice to secure good quality services for children and families across the city. Priority in developing the data and evidence of impact in order to meet OFSTED requirements will focus on those children's centres likely to be inspected soonest.

Comments from Executive Director, Resources

4.1 Financial Implications Revenue Funding

There are no specific financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Any resource implications as a result of the recommendations will be delivered within the existing service resources

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.

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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