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Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

8 December 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 –Quarterly Progress Update

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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 for Children and Young People, on progress, to date, to address actions identified in the Cabinet Member meeting, 15 September 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 15 September 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 15 September 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:**

None

**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 – Quarterly 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.

## **2.0 Actions identified at Cabinet Member for Children and Young People meeting 15 September 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-** Systems have been developed to closely monitor progress and to offer support and challenge to children's centre leadership teams as part of the Children's Centre Improvement Strategy. Considerable work has been undertaken to refine the data provided for children's centres to enable them to identify target groups and monitor impact of services and activities provided through the children's centre. A target setting tool that integrates neighbourhood population data and facilitates performance monitoring has been introduced and is in use in each cluster.

An Early childhood service model has been introduced which means children accessing early childhood services in the city will also be automatically registered with their local children's centre. This will improve access. This has resulted in a marked increase in registration rates. Since the first report in December 2014 'Reach statistics citywide have risen by 28% from 54% to 82% in September 2015. This should result in families who require additional support having their needs identified and appropriate intervention offered to meet these in a timely manner as part of Coventry's early help offer.

**2.2** The Cabinet Member requested that officers investigate the possibility of providing Apprenticeships in children's centre service area.

**Progress-** The possibility of providing apprenticeships in children's centres is currently being explored.

**2.3** The Cabinet Member requested that Officers present further progress reports to Cabinet Member meeting, on a quarterly basis.

**Progress** – Dates have been set for progress to be reported at Cabinet Member meetings quarterly.

## **2.4 Progress against actions to date:**

The Children's Centre Improvement Strategy has prioritised the key areas of focus for Officers to progress as part of Ofsted readiness and is listed below:

Review and update Partnership Advisory Board member training programme – In progress training in relation to data analysis and the role and function (as outlined in the Ofsted Inspection framework for children's centers) of a children's center partnership advisory board has been commissioned.

Introduction of Children's Centre Improvement Board – 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2015. Board members include senior managers who represent priority services in connection with the children's center offer. The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People has also been invited to attend.

Performance Management cycle for children's centers has been developed and introduced – November 2015

Target setting and monitoring documentation has been introduced – September 2015

Quality assurance processes of activities delivered in the children centres have been improved to better monitor quality of experience for children and their families as required by Ofsted.

Systems have been introduced to track long term impact for children and their families for appropriate services (for example parenting interventions and groups) delivered through the children's centers. Further work to embed this across other services is in progress.

## **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 and /or need to make the most improvement.

### **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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