

Report of: Director of Children's Services

Report to: Scrutiny Board (Children's Services)

Date: 13 October 2016

Subject: Childrens Centre Inquiry- Session 1

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

To give background and contextual information for members to be able to consider the following:

- Legislation and Statutory Framework for Children's Centres
- The links and relationships with partners, clusters and schools and governance frameworks.
- Ofsted - the current situation around regulation and any views of Ofsted about Leeds Children's Centres
- An overview of the headline principles in the Best Start Strategy, 0-5 Strategy and role of the 0-5 Partnership Boards
- Facilitating Voice and Influence – how this is currently achieved in Childrens Centres and the role of Advisory Boards
- Family Hubs: The Future of Children's Centres – to advise the Board of the existence of this report and how it accords with the Leeds approach/views/approach.

Recommendations

The Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) is requested to note the information presented as part of session 1 of the Children's centre Inquiry.

Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to provide the context for Session 1 of the Scrutiny Board's inquiry into Children's Centres. This session will consider:

- Legislation and Statutory Framework for Children's Centres.
- The links and relationships with partners, clusters and schools and governance frameworks.
- Ofsted - the current situation around regulation and any views of Ofsted about Leeds Children's Centres.
- An overview of the headline principles in the Best Start Strategy
- , 0-5 Strategy and role of the 0-5 Partnership Boards.
- Facilitating Voice and Influence – how this is currently achieved in Childrens Centres and the role of Advisory Boards.
- Family Hubs: The Future of Children's Centres –To advise the Board of the existence of this report and how it accords with the Leeds approach/views/approach.

1 Background Information

The Board is seeking to understand the impact that Children's Centres are having in Leeds and identify how they can remain effective and sustainable and ensure the service continues to deliver on the long term strategic aim to improve the lives of young children. If during the course of the inquiry it is evident that improvements are required the Scrutiny Board will seek to clarify what is being done to change things to ensure better outcomes.

It is important to consider how the Scrutiny Board will deem if their inquiry has been successful in making a difference to local people. Some measures of success may be obvious at the initial stages of the inquiry and will be included in these terms of reference. Other measures of success may become apparent as the inquiry progresses and discussions take place.

Following the inquiry the Scrutiny Board will publish its report which will identify clear desired outcomes. These will be reflected in the recommendations made. The director or organisation to whom the recommendations have been made will be responsible for monitoring the impact of each recommendation and for advising the Scrutiny Board accordingly as the board reviews progress.

2 Main Issues

Legislation and Statutory Framework for Children's Centres

Legislation about children's centres is contained in the Childcare Act 2006. The statutory definition of a children's centre is

'a place which is managed by or on behalf of, or under arrangements with, the local authority with a view to securing that early childhood services in the local authority's area are made available in an integrated way'.

Local authorities are required ensure there is consultation if significant changes to children's centre provision is made, for example, making a significant change to the range and nature of services provided through a children's centre and / or how they are delivered, and closing a children's centre; or reducing the services provided to such an extent that it no longer meets the statutory definition of a Sure Start children's centre.

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 the areas of:

- child development and school readiness;
- parenting aspirations and parenting skills;
- child and family health and life chances.

In discharging their duty in section 5E of the Act 9, local authorities, commissioners of local health services and Jobcentre Plus may decide to make early childhood services available through children's centres, if they do they should do so in ways which enable children's centres to achieve their core purpose.

The links and relationships with partners, clusters and schools and governance frameworks

Integrated Early Start Service

Early Start is an integrated family based offer for children aged 0-5 years and includes the provision of services such as health, childcare, play, early learning and development. Early Start recognises the importance of early help (guide) and giving every child, in every community, the best start in life both through improving maternal health and better care of children's health and development.

The Early Start Service is comprised of health visitor service practitioners and children's centre practitioners working together in fully integrated teams which are aligned to each of the 25 clusters (guide) and based in health centres and children's centres across the city. The Health Visiting element of the service is commissioned by LCC Public Health, and provided by Leeds Community Healthcare (NHS) Trust

***Appendix 1* One Minute Guide.**

Leeds Children and Families Trust Board

The governance framework for local authority Children's Centres sits with Leeds Children and Families Trust Board which plays a part in improving outcomes for children and young people in the city. This occurs through the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP), which is a statement of intent and ambition for making a positive and significant difference to the lives of over 180,000 children and young people of Leeds.

0-5 Early Years Partnership

The CFTB is one of five city-wide strategic multi-agency boards working towards the

overall ambition of making Leeds the best city in the UK. The Board is chaired by the Lead Executive Member Children's Services. A key strategy for Leeds for Learning Landscape will be undertaken by the 0-5 Early Years Partnership (0-5 EYP), which aims to embed within Leeds investment in the early stages of children's lives across the partnership. This reflects the growing research evidencing that early years are vitally important in its own right and in promoting future life chances of children and young people. Children's Centres are a key part of the delivery for the 0-5 Early Years Partnership (0-5 EYP). The local authority ensures its accountability for Children's Centre services city wide through a Self Evaluation Framework. This framework is reviewed annually. In the Spring term centres submit a data return and hold an Annual Conversation between the centre and the local authority. In the summer term data is submitted, then in the Autumn term a data and progress review are undertaken.

Appendix 2 Improvement Cycle.

Cluster

The 25 Early Start Teams are completely aligned with cluster groupings, Childrens Centre staff/health visitors meet regularly together to review family needs and allocation of support. They also attend cluster management/JCC groups playing a key part in the intelligence gathering around vulnerable families and support. An increasing number of clusters , as budgets reduce are looking at 0-19 teams, Merging Early Start and cluster support workers together for example in Bramley and the ARM cluster.

Appendix 3 shows the total list of Children's Centres by cluster, ward, phase and governance lead.

Health Partnership

LCC Public Health has commissioned a range of preventative services through the Children's Centre offer. These include Preparation Birth and Beyond(a universal perinatal education programme based in communities), HENRY (a health lifestyles programme for parents), and breast feeding support. This has maintained a universal offer of early preventative family services. Children's Centres are held accountable for delivery of this preventative offer through the Early Start Commissioning Group and monitored through the Early Start Dashboard.

The relationships with CCGs are developing with investment, particularly from the South East CCG around specific areas of first aid training, maternal mental health and parenting support.

Appendix 4 Early Start Dashboard.

Ofsted - the current situation around regulation and any views of Ofsted about Leeds Children's Centres

In July 2015 Sam Gyimah, then minister for childcare, announced a Government consultation on the future of Children's Centres. There was a recognition at this point that Children's Centres have the potential to make a critical difference to young families at vulnerable and challenging times in their lives. He committed to

the need for parents to access flexible care, help and advice. The changing role of Health visitors is recognised in providing support to families alongside Children's Centres and the new free entitlement to early education for eligible two year olds, an extended child care offer from 15 to 30 hours for working parents in September 2017.

At this point Children's Centre Ofsted inspections were put on hold, pending the DfE consultation, supposedly before the end of the year. **At the end of August 2015 Children's Centres in Leeds had 73% of centres good or outstanding, with a national comparison of 49%.**

The inspection framework focused on the impact of Children's Centres on targeted young children and their families, especially those identified as being most in need of intervention and support. The three elements of the inspection for judgement were:

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

See **Appendix 5** for inspection example outstanding, good, requires improvement.

An overview of the headline principles in the Best Start Strategy, 0-5 Strategy and role of the 0-5 Partnership Boards

Best Start Strategy

The aim to give every child the best possible start in life is a top commitment of the Leeds Health and Wellbeing Strategy. This aligns closely with the Leeds Children & Young People's Plan which focuses on those at most risk of a poor start through its priority to reduce the number of children looked after. The Leeds Best Start Plan describes a broad preventative programme from conception to age 2 years which aims to ensure a good start for every baby, with early identification and targeted support for vulnerable families early in the life of the child. This is a progressive universal approach. In the longer term, this will promote social and emotional capacity and cognitive growth, and will aim to break inter-generational cycles of neglect, abuse and violence.

The overall outcomes for the programme will be:

- Healthy mothers and healthy babies at population and individual level
- Parents experiencing stress will be identified early and supported
- Well prepared parents
- Good attachment and bonding
- Development of early language and communication

The over-arching indicator for the programme is reduced rate of deaths in babies

aged under one year (infant mortality rate).

Appendix 6 Best Start Strategy Plan on a page

A Life Ready for Learning- 0-5 Strategy

The aim of the strategy is that every child in Leeds will be ready to get the best start from their early learning experience. Principles include:

- All communities have access to good or better early learning and care opportunities;
- Every child, from the age of 2 should be supported and encouraged to attend high quality learning experiences across all sectors
- Well prepared and informed parents will be supported to make good choices about their child's early learning;
- Families who are most vulnerable will be identified early and well supported by a highly skilled and well trained workforce
- Parents will have access to places they feel welcome, build networks and relationships to support their child's early learning and care
- Development of early language and communication

The overarching indicator is to reduce the 'inequality gap in achievement' indicator, and Early Years Foundation Stage which is measured as the percentage gap in achievement between the lowest 20 per cent of achieving children in a local authority (mean score), and the score of the median.

Appendix 7 A Life Ready for Learning- Action Plan.

0-5 Early Years Partnership

The purpose of the 0-5 Early Years Partnership is to bring together partners involved in the provision of learning support to children in Leeds. It seeks to bring together all aspects of the learning and support agenda and make a significant contribution to improved outcomes for children aged 0-5 and encourage partners to secure high quality integrated services for children, young people and their families.

Facilitating Voice and Influence – how this is currently achieved in Childrens Centres and the role of Advisory Boards

In terms of local governance arrangements, every Children's Centre, or Children's Centre group is required to have an Advisory Board. This is defined as;

“ a group of persons who represent the interests of the children's centre users. The role of advisory board members is to provide advice, assistance and challenge to centre leaders, in order to ensure that the children's centre operates effectively and efficiently and fulfils its remit.”

The advisory boards are held accountable, through inspection for the extent to which target families contribute to the centre's performance and delivery. They also take account of how well target families' views are taken into account to improve access and to shape services and the extent to which resources are used effectively and efficiently .

The advisory board has centre staff, parents or carers, school, health visitor, cluster and voluntary sector representation. These operate with varying degrees of success, with some centres struggling to maintain parental involvement.

Family Hubs: The Future of Children's Centres

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Children's Centres (referred to throughout this report as the APPG") decided to undertake an inquiry into the future of Children's Centres as the centre piece of its programme of activity for the 2015-16 Parliamentary session. The findings of this inquiry are summarized in **Appendix 8**.

The focus of this report – Family Hubs: The Future of Children's Centres – is on the role that Children's Centres' can potentially play as hubs for local services and family support. In recent years, the idea of expanding Children's Centres' provision to provide holistic support which joins up services for the whole family is one which has received an increasing amount of attention. In 2014, the Centre for Social Justice proposed a model that they termed "Family Hubs", which would see Children's Centres become:

The 'go to' place for any parent (including fathers) to access services or information about all family-related matters including: birth registration, antenatal and postnatal services, information on childcare, employment and debt advice, substance misuse services, relationship and parenting support, local activities for families and support for families separating.

The APPG suggests that there is significant potential in the Family Hub model. Its inquiry therefore set out to examine the benefits and case for Family Hubs, to highlight examples of best practice which already exist to demonstrate how the work of Children's Centres can be augmented, and to consider the challenges around implementation and how these can be overcome.

- The Government should give full consideration to augmenting Children's Centres into Family Hubs as part of its Life Chances agenda.
- Local authority leaders and public health commissioners should position Family Hubs at the heart of their Health and Wellbeing strategies. Accessing support should be normalised, supported by messaging from local leaders.
- Emphasis should be placed on how mental health needs, and particularly children's mental health, can be addressed in Family Hubs.
- The links between Family Hubs, local employers and Jobcentre Plus should be reviewed and strengthened.

- Relationship support delivered in Family Hubs should encompass parenting support, couple relationship counselling, pre-marriage courses, post-separation support and help with parenting teenagers, at a range of levels from structured to “light touch”.
- To support Family Hubs’ work, local authorities should be required to record family breakdown statistics on a statutory basis.
- Lessons from the successful Troubled Families programme should be learned, but with a focus on helping families before crisis point is reached.
- Engagement with voluntary, community, self-help and peer support organisations should be significantly expanded, with a recognition that people who have challenges can often offer solutions.
- Every National Citizen Service candidate should spend time in a Family Hub, both learning and volunteering, to emphasise that everyone has something to contribute.
- Online support should also be available, co-branded with Family Hubs, and promoted as a national, universally-recognisable point at which a wide range of support can be accessed.
- There must be a concerted effort to share best practice across the country, to overcome barriers to information sharing and improve the evidence base around the impact of services.
- Birth registration should be rolled out in Family Hubs nationwide, so that everyone is aware of the support on offer as and when they or their family need it in future years.

3.0 Corporate Considerations

3.1 Consultation and Engagement

A working group has met on a monthly basis for the last four months with CCG, Public Health, LCC, Leeds Community Health and Voluntary Action Leeds to consider a joint commissioning plan for the future.

Parental views around service delivery are sought on a regular basis.

3.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

Children's Centres presently offer a progressive universal service. An offer for all families with children under 5 years and an enhanced level of support for families with additional needs.

3.3 Council policies and City Priorities

3.3.1 Under Leeds Children's and Young People's Plan, the three priority areas for improvement in Leeds are:

- to support children to live in safe and supportive families so that the need for children and young people to become looked after is reduced
- to improve school and college attendance and behaviour in school so that more children can benefit from the opportunities provided, and
- to enable more young people to be able to take up opportunities for education, training and employment by the age of 19

3.3.2 The Early Start Children's Centres are an essential component of the Best Start priority within the Leeds Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and of A Life Ready for Learning Strategy and provide a key support for employability and skills, particularly for lower paid families in the city.

4.4 Resource and value for money

4.4.1 A significant amount of work has been undertaken to ensure the Leeds model for early Start delivers the best value for money. The Best Start and A Life Ready for Learning Strategy are based in a number of key national documents that demonstrate social and fiscal return on well designed early intervention (WAVE report "Conception to 2 years, Marmot report, Effective Provision of Pre-school Education –EPPE).

Recent cost benefit analysis was undertaken around the Leeds model suggests investment in the earliest years is already adding value to the Leeds £.

Appendix 9 Economic Modelling in support of Children's Centre Business Case for Leeds

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

Not applicable.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 Early Start Teams- Children's Centres have offered added value to the city strategy towards reducing health and learning inequalities for the city. Working with around 25,000 families per annum through a range of evidence based programmes Leeds has increased face to face contact and support for every family in the city, reduced the number of under 5s going into care, reduced levels of obesity, there are steady

gains in breastfeeding and narrowing of the attainment gap at the end of Early Years Foundation Stage. These outcomes have not been replicated in any other city in the UK.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 This concludes the contextual information to support session 1 of the Childrens centre Inquiry. There is a good range of evidence around the impact of the Leeds model for Childrens Centres described in this report. However the future of centres nationally and locally is under intense scrutiny. The model needs to demonstrate outcomes for families and illustrate value for money in terms of preventative spending for local authority, health and educational outcomes.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 The Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) is requested to note the information presented as part of session 1 of the Children's centre Inquiry.

7 Background documents¹

None

8 Appendices

Appendix 1 The total list of Children's Centres by cluster, ward, phase and governance lead

Appendix 2 Improvement Cycle

Appendix 3 The All Party Parliamentary Group on Children's Centres inquiry into the future of Children's Centres

Appendix 4 Early Start Dashboard.

Appendix 5 Ofsted inspection example outstanding, good, requires improvement

Appendix 6 Best Start Strategy Plan on a page

Appendix 7 A Life Ready for Learning- Action

Appendix 8 Family Hubs: The Future of Children's Centres

Appendix 9 Economic Modelling in support of Children's Centre Business Case for Leeds

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.