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**Report of the Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support & Director of Children and Families**

**Report to Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)**

**Date: 24<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

**Subject: Scrutiny Inquiry into Children's Centres – recommendation tracking update.**

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 type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" 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

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**Summary of main issues**

1. This report sets out the progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the previous Scrutiny inquiry into Children's Centres.
2. Scrutiny Boards are encouraged to clearly identify desired outcomes linked to their recommendations to show the added value Scrutiny brings. As such, it is important for the Scrutiny Board to also consider whether its recommendations are still relevant in terms of achieving the associated desired outcomes.
3. The Scrutiny recommendation tracking system allows the Scrutiny Board to consider the position status of its recommendations in terms of their on-going relevance and the progress made in implementing the recommendations based on a standard set of criteria. The Board will then be able to take further action as appropriate.

**Recommendations**

4. With regard to the Scrutiny Inquiry, the Board is requested to:
  - Agree those recommendations which no longer require monitoring;
  - Identify any recommendations where progress is unsatisfactory and determine the action the Board wishes to take as a result.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report sets out the progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the Scrutiny inquiry into Children Centres.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 On 16<sup>th</sup> June 2016, the Children and Families Scrutiny Board resolved to undertake an inquiry which would consider the value of children's centres and how they deliver the aspirations defined in the Best Start Plan and the Children and Young People's Plan.
- 2.2 A key objective of the Scrutiny Inquiry was to identify how the services provided through children's centres impact on the lives of children, particularly in their early years, and improve the lives of their associated family. It also explored how austerity measures within the Council and wider partnerships are impacting on children's centres and the strategic and operational intention for sustaining children's centres now and in the future.
- 2.3 The Scrutiny Board's inquiry report was published on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2017 and detailed the Scrutiny Board's findings and recommendations ([Link to inquiry report](#)). In January 2018, the Scrutiny Board received a formal response to the recommendations arising from its inquiry.

## **3 Main issues**

- 3.1 Scrutiny Boards are encouraged to clearly identify desired outcomes linked to their recommendations to show the added value Scrutiny brings. As such, it is important for the Scrutiny Board to also consider whether its recommendations are still relevant in terms of achieving the associated desired outcomes.
- 3.2 The Scrutiny recommendation tracking system allows the Scrutiny Board to consider the position status of its recommendations in terms of their on-going relevance and the progress made in implementing the recommendations based on a standard set of criteria. The Board will then be able to take further action as appropriate.
- 3.3 This standard set of criteria is presented in the form of a flow chart at Appendix 1. The questions in the flow chart should help to decide whether a recommendation has been completed, and if not whether further action is required. Details of progress against each recommendation are set out within the table at Appendix 2.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 4.1.1 Where internal or external consultation processes have been undertaken with regard to responding to the Scrutiny Board's recommendations, details of any such consultation will be referenced against the relevant recommendation within the table at Appendix 2.

## **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

4.2.1 Where consideration has been given to the impact on equality areas, as defined in the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme, this will be referenced against the relevant recommendation within the table at Appendix 2.

## **4.3 Council Policies and Best Council Plan**

4.3.1 The scope of the inquiry fulfils some of the best council objectives and priorities as defined in the Best Council plan, particularly supporting children to do well at all levels of learning and have the skills they need for life, keeping children safe, supporting families, and raising aspirations and educational attainment.

## **4.4 Resources and Value for Money**

4.4.1 Details of any significant resource and financial implications linked to the Scrutiny recommendations will be referenced against the relevant recommendation within the table at Appendix 2.

## **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

4.5.1 This report does not contain any exempt or confidential information.

## **4.6 Risk Management**

4.6.1 This section is not relevant to this report.

## **5 Recommendations**

5.1 With regard to the Scrutiny Inquiry, the Board is requested to:

- Agree those recommendations which no longer require monitoring;
- Identify any recommendations where progress is unsatisfactory and determine the action the Board wishes to take as a result.

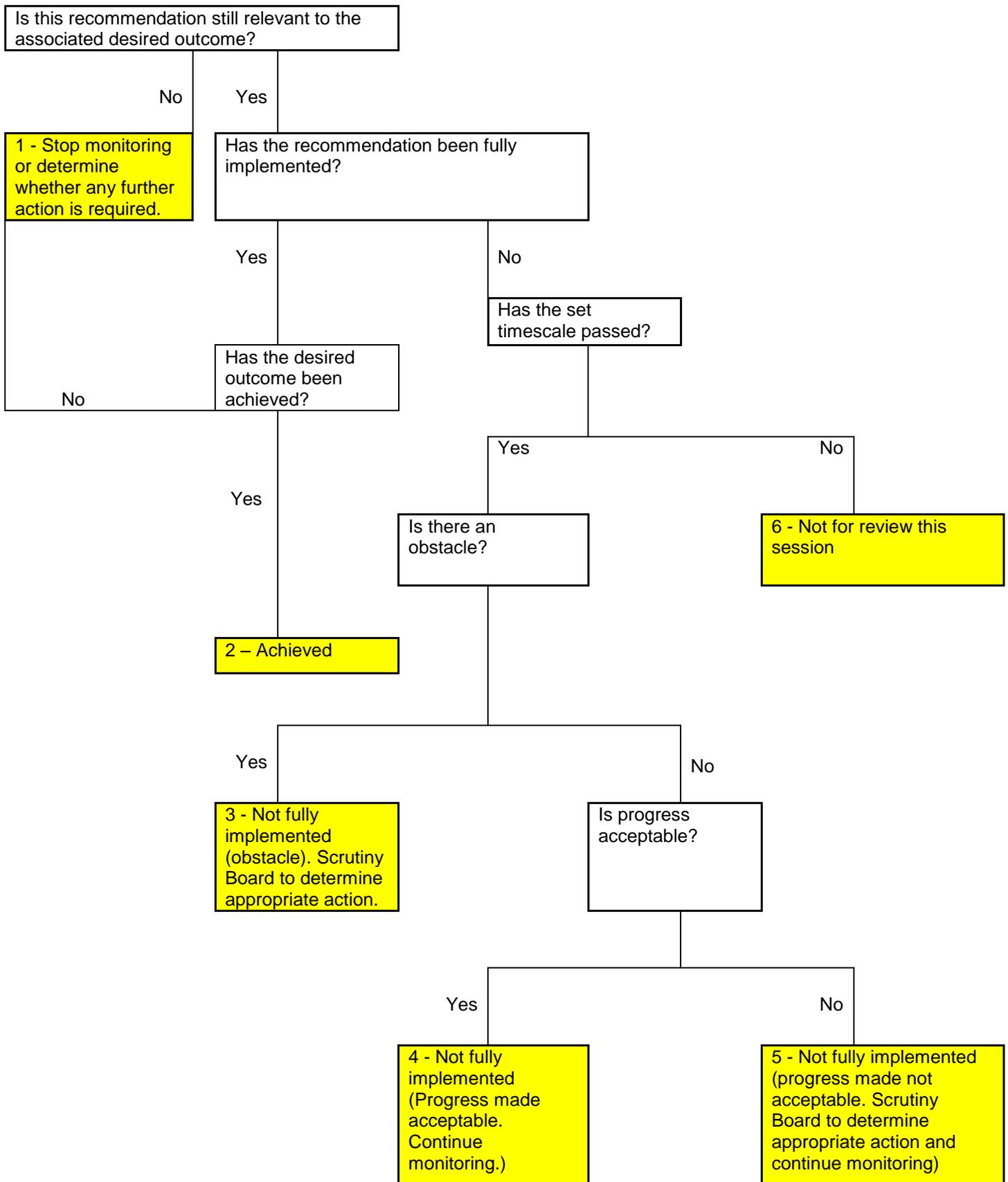
## **6 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

6.1 None

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

**Recommendation tracking flowchart and classifications:**  
**Questions to be considered by Scrutiny Boards**



## Appendix 2

### Position Status Categories

- 1 - Stop monitoring or determine whether any further action is required
- 2 - Achieved
- 3 - Not fully implemented (Obstacle)
- 4 - Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- 5 - Not fully implemented (Progress made not acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- 6 - Not for review this session

**Desired Outcome** - To promote and enhance parental voice and influence.

**Recommendation 1** – That the Director of Children and Families undertakes a review of Children’s Centre Advisory Boards to assess the strength of governance arrangements and parental inclusion. Where action is required the Director is requested to provide the necessary support to secure improvement.

**Formal response (January 2018):**

The Director of Children and Families accepts this recommendation. A review of Children’s Centre Advisory Boards will be undertaken in April 2018 through the Annual Conversation Review process which quality assurances the delivery of services. This will ensure a thorough review of governance arrangements and the involvement and voice of parents in service delivery and development. The Director will report on progress in September 2018.

**Current Position:**

A review of all Children’s Centre Advisory Boards was undertaken during the Annual Conversation performance review process in April 2018. Following this, to support Centres to explore ways to strengthen their governance arrangements and parental inclusion, a workshop was delivered to all Managers. The Annual Conversation cycle will be undertaken again in April/May 2019 during which the impact of this training workshop will be assessed.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

**Desired Outcome** – To provide better informed and integrated support to vulnerable children and families.

**Recommendation 2** – That the Director of Children and Families investigates the strength of partnership and information sharing between each Children’s Centre and local GP services, and where required facilitate support to build up partnership arrangements to provide better support for families who require targeted services.

**Formal response (January 2018):**

The Director of Children and Families accepts this recommendation. We will continue to develop collaborative links with the CCG in terms of integrating services for example maternity and mental health services. We will look at the potential to become part of the social prescribing model for Leeds, similar to the neighbourhood Networks model for older communities.

**Current Position:**

The Children’s Centre Service Lead attended the GP Consortium to deliver a presentation on Children’s Centres and the core offer. Links with CCG colleagues continues to strengthen by ensuring our Service is included in the membership of various strategic meetings such as the Perinatal Mental Health Pathway implementation group and the Maternity Strategy implementation board.

Building on the development of the Local Care partnerships, (the model for joined-up working to deliver local health care), Children’s Centres have established communication with the Chapeltown Child and Family Hub, and will make contact with the Pudsey Child and Family Hub shortly.

A procurement process has just been undertaken to re-commission the Children’s Centre Counselling Service. The contract has been awarded to Northpoint Well-being, the incumbent provider and discussions are underway to ensure this service links with the work of the CCG. One example of this is for Northpoint Well-Being to extract from their data sets, any data relevant for inclusion on the perinatal mental health dashboard. Children’s Centre are also working with the CCG to engage target groups to support the consultation on Urgent Care Centres by encouraging families to complete the consultation survey.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

**Desired Outcome** – To ensure full Cluster support is maintained to all Children’s Centres across Leeds to provide identified targeted support.

**Recommendation 3** – That the Director of Children and Families investigates the impact of changing Cluster Partnership structures on the support available to Children’s Centres and ensures that full support services are restored and maintained.

**Formal response (January 2018):**

The Director of Children and Families accepts this recommendation and will ensure that Childrens Centres and the new RES teams become closely aligned. We will also maintain and further develop the existing links with cluster teams through Guidance and Support JCC, Family of Schools meetings.

**Current Position:**

Overall the Children’s Centres have developed good working relationships with Cluster teams by ensuring representation at meetings such as support and guidance, JCC and locality domestic violence meetings. Links with the RES teams is beginning to develop and in some areas strong partnership working has been established; this will continue to be a priority for our Service. All Children’s Centres now have access to Mosaic which has really strengthened our ability to evidence the Early Help offer and enables partner agencies to allocate cases / step down cases to Children’s Centre teams.

We are developing opportunities for co-location with teams. The new Early Help Hub in the South is to be located on Cottingley Children’s Centre site, the new Burley Childrens Centre will be collocated with the local social work team. Existing areas of collocated services include Bramley and Hollybush.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

**Desired Outcome** – To better engage with the public by facilitating clear and up to date information to families and to promote the benefits of Children’s Centres.

**Recommendation 4** – That the Director of Children and Families undertakes a review of electronic media, website and social media provision for all Leeds Local Authority Children’s Centres to enhance the provision of information to families and facilitate engagement digitally.

**Formal response (January 2018):**

The Director of Children and Families accepts this recommendation. A programme of work has begun with the Communications team to consult with parents and stakeholders around service branding, ‘kerb’ appeal, electronic media, website and social media. We will also use new Public Health initiatives launched in the city for example Baby Buddy app, loaning breast pumps, home safety checks, book bags to further publicise Childrens Centre services.

**Current Position:**

Further to a stakeholder consultation exercise, all 29 Children’s Centre day care settings have the new branding of ‘Little Owls’. Banners have been produced and are displayed externally on each site to promote the Ofsted judgement for the Day Care provision. A schedule of work is underway to enhance the ‘kerb’ appeal of Centres which includes decorating and work to the outdoor areas.

Work is underway with the Communications and marketing team to develop a website for each Centre to promote both the Early Learning and Family Services offer. A workshop has been delivered to all Managers to explore other social media provision, in particular facebook. A working group is being established to explore the protocols needed in order to progress this.

The Centres continue their involvement with public health initiatives and promotions and in addition to those detailed above, the Children’s Centres played a significant part in Baby Week delivering a range of activities to families. The Centres are actively encouraging families to download the Baby Buddy App & also are the main distribution point for the Baby Express magazine which is issued to new Parents at regular intervals for the first 12 months of the baby’s life. Another exciting development for our Centres is to launch the ‘50 Things to do before you are 5’ App which has just been developed.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

**Desired Outcome** – To improve communication skills during early year's development.

**Recommendation 5** – That the Director of Children and Families:

- a) investigates the level of needs led demand for communication and language development support, including the support required at each Children's Centre, and works in collaboration with Health Partners to address the deficits in support identified
- b) investigates the possibility of commissioning and provision of adult learning courses in Makaton in Children's Centres, to aid parents who wish to support the development of their child's communication skills.

**Formal response (January 2018):**

- a) The Director of Children and Families accepts this recommendation and will review the funding and support for communication and language needs with regard to the new requirements around the Early Years Dedicated Schools Grant. The Childrens centre communication and language named lead in every Children's Centre will undertake an audit of need. We will work collaboratively with Health Partners to identify collaborative ways to address demand.
- b) The Director of Children and Families accepts this recommendation will review the existing programme of Family Learning by Leeds City College and consider parent demand for specific areas of training and development.

**Current Position:**

Children's Centres are making effective use of their EYPP funding to support the development of communication and language support. This has included the implementation of 3 innovative projects taking children and families out of the centres by working with the Art Gallery, Herd Farm & an intergenerational project linking Children's Centres day care provision with Care Homes. The Art Gallery project has been nominated and shortlisted for a Creative Learning award. The entire workforce were given an appraisal objective around communication, language and literacy.

The Children's Centre teacher team have conducted an audit review to look at how Communication and Language (C&L) was continuing to be developed and how C&L is a continued focus as a Prime area of learning. This involved looking at how centres promote communication friendly spaces (CFS) in their settings and to discuss the measuring and monitoring of the impact of this. The teachers have also produced a Curriculum Support pack for centres to access. This includes example focus and group time plans, guidance on assessing children in C&L, language programmes plus other documents centres may find useful.

The directorate have put themselves forward to undertake and LGA Early Years Peer Review in June 2019. This will focus on communication and language development outcomes for the city. It will identify key lines of inquiry with recommendations for further action.

There is some availability of Makaton training for parents in the city for example at New Wortley Community Centre, but more work needs to be done to assess need.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

**Desired Outcome** – To secure the future financial sustainability of all Children’s Centres in Leeds.

**Recommendation 6** – That the Director of Children and Families explores how further funding reductions can be prevented in order to support the continued sustainability and prosperity of all Leeds Children’s Centres by:

- a) working in collaboration with partner organisations to secure sufficient funding which will support continued integrated practice.
- b) working in collaboration with the Director of Resources and Housing to attain sufficient Local Authority funding in accordance with the Council’s Budget and Policy Framework
- c) bringing a detailed report regarding Children’s Centre funding proposals for 2018/19 to the Scrutiny Board in December 2017.

**Formal response (January 2018):**

The Director of Children and Families accepts this recommendation and will explore how further funding reductions can be prevented in order to support the continued sustainability and prosperity of all Leeds Children’s Centres by working with health, school and voluntary sector partners and the new RES teams to better integrate services for families in their communities.

Whilst LCC budget pressures are challenging it is noteworthy that Children’s Services have taken an active decision to protect funding for Childrens Centres by cross directorate investment across Childrens and Public Health services and innovative work with other partners, recognised nationally as good practice. The inquiry has highlighted that nationally spending in Childrens Centre services fell significantly over the past few years in most other authorities. National Sure Start and early years investment fell by nearly £700m, or 44%, with one in three centres closing since 2010. The preventative work of the Children’s centres is recognised and highly valued and will be a part of the overall offer for children and families in Leeds in the future.

**Current Positon:**

Sustainability business planning continues within the Children’s Centre Little Owls settings. New business modelling tools have been introduced which enable clearer analysis of staff hours against the number of children and this has been used to support centres with deficits. The impact of the implementation of world pay card machines, direct debit and on line payments in centres was fully realised and centres moved to fortnightly cash collections with some centres taking no physical cash at all. College payments started to be invoiced though sundry accounts and this, together with a tighter debt management policy has reduced debt and improved cash flow. The reconfiguration of Little Owls City and Holbeck has been completed and £22,000 will be saved by removing the hired portacabin which is now no longer in use. New support and challenge meetings have been introduced to challenge on discretionary places, sickness, agency use and debt.

Midwifery Services are now being delivered in a number of Centres and they pay a contribution to costs for shared use of space. Work is also underway to implement the co-location of the new PHINS Service which will mean that health visiting and school nursing colleagues will be based in Children’s Centres which will also secure income for our Service.

Arrangements for collocation with wider services and organisations is regularly reviewed. Examples include centres close to, or in Community Hubs, in Burmantofts with youth services and local faith groups in Kirkstall and Boston Spa.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

**Desired Outcome** – To promote financial planning, the building of aspirations and delivery of longer term programmes.

**Recommendation 7** – That the Director of Children and Families provides additional stability by supporting the planning of services in the longer term and by investigating the feasibility of budget allocation to all Children’s Centres that extends beyond the current 12 month annual settlement. The outcome of this investigation to be reported to this Scrutiny Board in December 2017.

**Formal response (January 2018):**

The Director of Children and Families forwarded a one page financial update to scrutiny in December. He will further investigate this recommendation as part of the council’s aspiration to develop a three year budget strategy. However this will be dependent on the overall budget settlement figure and wider directorate pressures and changing needs.

**Current Position:**

At a national level we are entering the final year (2019-20) of a 4-year funding settlement. Funding details for 2020-21 and beyond are linked with the new Comprehensive Service Review which will be announced in autumn 2019. As such this make long-term planning problematical at the current time.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

**Desired Outcome** – To ensure that the physical infrastructure of Children’s Centres is fit for purpose currently and in the future.

**Recommendation 8** – That the Director of Children and Families undertakes a review of buildings and facilities to ensure that the infrastructure and space available facilitates the provision of support services currently, and the aspirations of the early years services in the longer term.

**Formal response (January 2018):**

The Director of Children and Families accepts this recommendation and will continue to review the Childrens Centre assets. This will facilitate more effective use of space, more collaborative work with partners and where possible generate opportunities for additional income by December 2018.

**Current Position:**

The Service continues to work closely with colleague in Asset Management to review assets and identify alternative buildings where required ie. Burley CC.

Where Leeds City Council own the buildings, and from a business perspective to invest and improve the assets we will look at Invest to Save or Prudential Borrowing schemes, as and where appropriate.

A revised draft Service Specification has been produced which, after consultation will be issued to school led Children’s Centres in April 2019. This document clearly outlines the agreement between Leeds City Council and schools detailing responsibility for assets and the accountability in terms of any potential clawback of funds. Following this the leases with schools/ academies will be refreshed in light of service changes.

As previously described opportunities for collocation of other community and family services are considered where possible both to enhance working practice and generate income.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

**Desired Outcome – To secure the future sustainability of Children’s Centres in Leeds.**

**Recommendation 9** – That the Director of Children and Families provides the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) with a sustainability and development plan for Leeds Children’s Centres

- a) which reflects the recommendations made in this report, and
- b) explores the merits and risks of the family hub model, and
- c) supports the review of asset utilisation so that the most effective use of Children’s Centre buildings in Council ownership is achieved in order to generate additional income or reduce expenditure.

**Formal response (January 2018):**

The Director of Children and Families accepts this recommendation and will develop a sustainability and development plan for Leeds Children’s Centres which reflects the recommendations of this report, gives consideration to the Family Hub model; and gives consideration to asset utilisation and income generating potential.

**Current Position:**

See comments in 8 re Invest to Save and Prudential Borrowing re maintaining and effective use of assets. However without long term certainty around Childrens Centre budgets it is difficult to prepare a long term development plan.

Following the financial end of year close down and 2018-2019 budget summary will be prepared with areas for development and sustainability for 2019-1920.

The net cost of the Little Owls child care provision in the children’s centres for 2019-20 is £0.8m. As such the authorities 2019-20 budget continues to invest in its LCC run childcare centres. This ensures employment for over 600, largely female workers. Ensures a subsidised childcare fee in areas of greater need in the city, and is ensuring good and outstanding early learning provision for over 2,500 children every day.

**Position Status (categories 1 – 6)** *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*