

Report of the Head of Democratic Services & Director of Children and Families

Report to Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)

Date: 4th March 2020

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

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<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
Will the decision be open 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

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 16th 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 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 19th October 2017 and detailed the Scrutiny Board’s findings and recommendations. In January 2018, the Scrutiny Board received a formal response to the recommendations arising from its inquiry and further tracking report in April 2019.

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.

Climate Emergency

- 4.3.2 There are no specific implications in relation to the climate emergency agenda.

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 Any specific risk management implications will be referenced against the relevant recommendation within the table at Appendix 2.

5 Conclusions

5.1 The progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Board's earlier inquiry into Children Centres is set out within Appendix 2 of this report for the Board's consideration.

6 Recommendations

6.1 The Board is requested to:

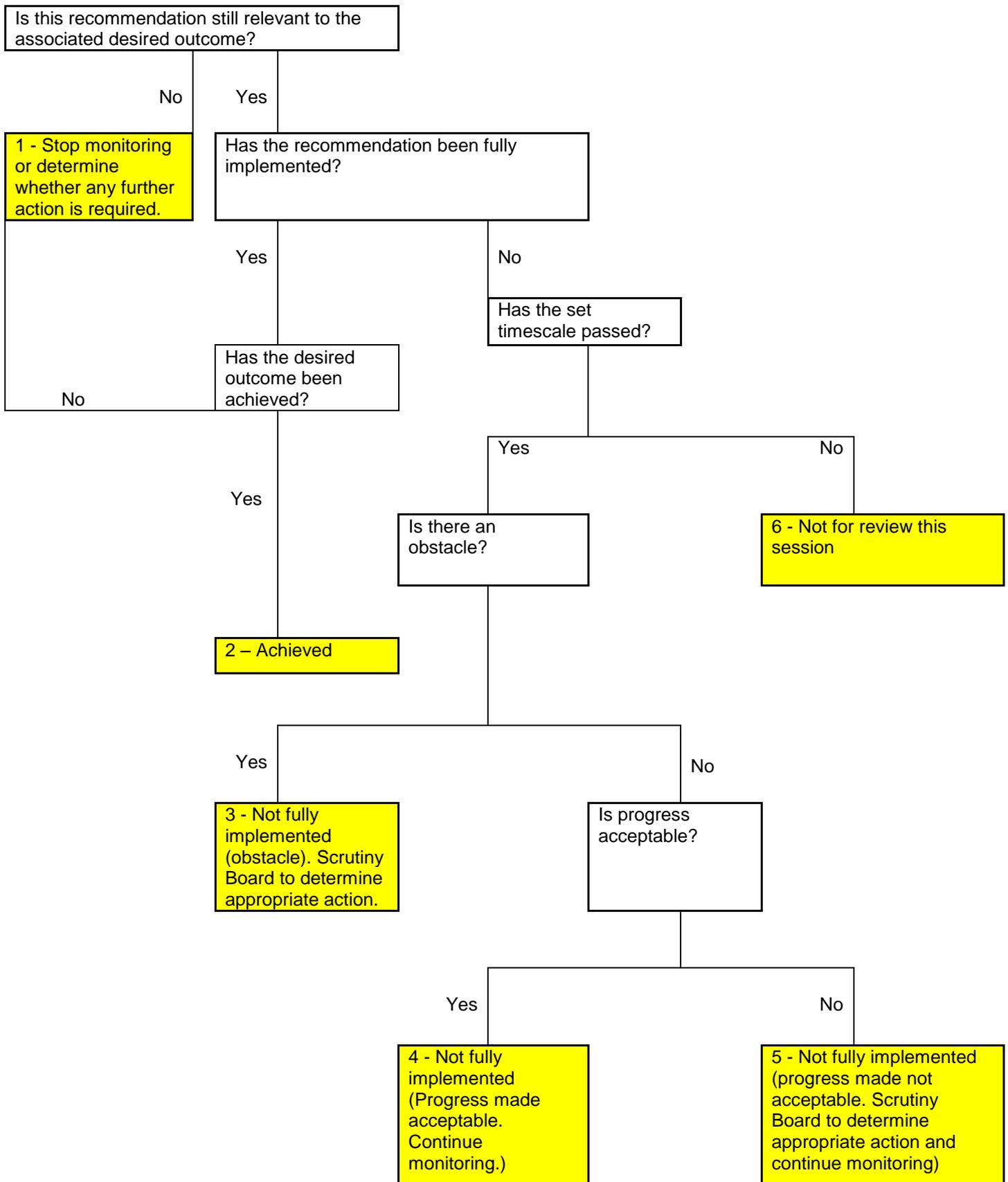
- Agree those recommendations which no longer require monitoring;
- Identify any recommendations where progress is unsatisfactory and determine the action the Board wishes to take as a result.

7. Background documents¹

7.1 None

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.

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



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.

Position reported in April 2019:

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.

Current Position:

Following the training for all centres on developing and sustaining their advisory board the annual Self Evaluation Forms identify that most centres are clear about their remit and are meeting regularly. A number of centres have merged boards where management of centres have come together for example Chapletown/Chapel Allerton/Meanwood. There continues to be an issue recruiting parents to advisory boards centres work to ensure the voice of parents is reflected in advisory boards through ongoing consultations.

Examples of practice:

In the recent ‘Practice week’ which undertook a review of working practice in the Airborough cluster the following was identified;

“.....senior stakeholders (i.e. health, education and social work) advocate for representation at local governance groups (e.g. Cluster Joint Collaborative Committees and Children’s Centre Advisory Boards) so that the alignment of agencies and settings can be challenged and supported and, the complexity of multi-agency working overcome.”

Bramley's SEF identifies that the governance arrangements for the Cluster's children centre services are robust and very well-established with exceptionally clear lines of accountability. The Advisory Board is a critical group within this arrangement and, chaired by a parent representative, is dominated by parental participation. This Group reports to the Cluster's multi-agency Steering Group which is in turn accountable to the Cluster Partnership's Joint Collaborative Committee (JCC). The Board's chair, a parent, completed training with the local authority's Voice and Influence Team, has successfully bid for funds from the local authority's community committee to pilot a new service (pyjama drama) for the area. The Chair has also progressed in a professional capacity and returned to employment. Parent representatives continue to chair the Board on a rotational basis.

Hawksworth Wood SEF suggests that the centre has developed good working partnerships with Castleton Children's Centre and has joined the centres advisory boards. Hawksworth Wood and Kirkstall also have a shared advisory board. The shared advisory board is well attended by a wide range of partners and parents who keep a close eye on the work of the centre, providing good levels of support and challenge.

Wetherby Children's Centre is challenged by the Advisory Board, and consultations with local professionals to ensure the balance of universal and targeted services meet the family's needs. Representatives from the Local Authority, Children's Centres, Health Visiting team and Advisory Board have been involved in evaluating, compiling development plans and setting precise and challenging outcomes and performance measures.

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.

Position reported in April 2019:

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.

Current Position:

At the last meeting the Board asked to better understand the obstacles around GPs and children’s centre’s sharing data and building relationships. The service can report progress at a local level where work with Chapeltown Child and Family Hub partnership has developed successfully. The Childrens Centre Manager is invited to attend the multi disciplinary practice meeting at the Practice on a monthly basis. A newsletter, which is circulated to all agencies in the cluster, highlights the discussions at the meetings. This has been really useful in sharing information for example around children’s injuries / illnesses, ie bruising / nose bleeds. This GP information is shared by the Childrens Centre manager with the whole service. Resulting in a really useful and informative partnership.

Further practice improvement discussions and commissioner challenge meeting with 0-19

PHINS and midwives has identified specific health visitor and midwifery contacts for every GP surgery where direct communication can occur around children and families. Health visitors and midwives are able to share data. As Childrens Centres do have a formal data sharing agreement, reviewed every year with 0-19 and midwives GPs have been made aware and some are using this communication link.

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 Children's 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.

Position reported in April 2019:

Overall the Children's Centres have good working relationships with Cluster teams by ensuring representation at meetings, for example support and guidance, JCC and locality domestic violence meetings. Links with the RES teams are good and in some areas very strong partnership e.g. Bramley. All Children's Centres 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 new opportunities for co-location with teams. The new Early Help Hub in the South is located on Cottingley Children's Centre site, the new Burley Children's Centre will be co located with the local social work team. Existing areas of co located services include Bramley and Hollybush.

Current Position:

Members asked, at the last meeting, about the relationship between clusters and Children's Centres, particular around governance. Further investigation does show a changing picture across the city around school, clusters and wider partnerships. Some children's centres that have been run previously by schools or clusters have returned to local authority governance, due usually, to changing status or governance in schools for example Brigshaw MAT.

The individual relationships with schools/ clusters does remains strong with staff and service leaders working as part of JCC and Family of Schools alongside health, Early Help and social care colleagues. The Head of Early Help has organised a review with Cluster Chairs to re establish regular strategic dialogue and look at consistency of governance and mutual responsibilities.

Local examples to evidence cluster practice and governance include the 'Practice week' undertaken in November 2019. This was run in Airborough cluster where service leaders (eg Early Start Manager, Team Leader, cluster manager) shadowed each other's work in the cluster, children's centre early help and social care teams for a week. Detailed reflective practice and learning together identified strong multi-agency working, positive feedback from families using the service and a better understanding of professional roles across the cluster.

Cottingley Children Centre has now been refurbished to create office accommodation and working space for a multi-agency collaboration. South Early Help Hub and Family Action

are working alongside children centre family services, with other professionals using 'touch down' space

Chapelton Childrens Centre is presently being refurbished to co-locate 0-19 PHINS staff (health visiting and school nursing), midwifery, Children's Centre Family Services and Signpost staff. Working to co-locate teams and integrate working practice, this exciting development will develop Chapelton as a multi-agency hub for families by May 2020.

Work is underway at Nowell Mount Children's / Community Centre. Over £250,000, capital monies have been secured through a coordinated bid through the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) to the Home Office, to build an extension to Centre to create a Youth and Community Hub. A multi-agency steering group, inclusive of children, young people and local residents are working to maximise existing activities and lever in opportunities to meet local need.

City wide cluster programme delivery has increase through the re-procurement of 0-19 PHINS contract and continued funding of children's centres through Public Health. The success of the HENRY programme has focussed an ambition for the city for more families to participate in, the specification has increased from 60 programmes to 90 HENRY programmes per annum in all clusters across the city. This will enable more families to participate in the programmes delivered by both Family Outreach Workers and Family Health Workers (0-19 PHINS). Currently we are on target to achieve our aim, between April and December 2019, 65 courses were delivered.

The Preparation Birth and Beyond programme (antenatal) offer has also increased offer is to deliver 90 courses across all clusters over the year. This year and up to April 2020 we will have delivered 85 courses, and these have included newly introduced twilight courses. The later sessions have been well attended and parents have reported that it has fit well with their work commitments. The termly PBB forums are well attended by both FOW's and health colleagues.

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.

Position reported in April 2019:

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.

Current Position:

The Childrens Centre Little Owls website is up and running. The service has seen an increase in internet based enquiries from 23 in April to August 2019, to 66 from September to December 2019. There have been 42 internet based enquiries in January this year. Three centres have started Facebook pages, Rothwell, Chapel Allerton and Meanwood. These have regular posts around activities going on at the centres, vacancies and news updates. All centres have been trained and are beginning to develop Facebook pages. It is hoped this will raise awareness and use of the centres, but also improve parent understanding of early learning and development.

The first group of Little Owls centres identified for intensive marketing support were Quarry Mount, City and Holbeck and Osmondthorpe these have shown increased take up of places since September 2019. Intensive marketing for Hawksworth Wood; Rothwell; Shepherd’s Lane; Middleton (Laurel Bank) should increase take up of places in 2020.

The '50 Things to do before your 5' app continues to gain energy. Launched as part of Baby Week 2018 the app has been promoted to schools, settings and directly to families via settings website/ social media sites, via sessions and to staff via briefings. Also widely promoted through Child Friendly Leeds teams and CFL ambassadors. Cards, Posters (A2 and A4), fliers and bookmarks have been given to all Libraries, Speech and Language teams, Family Learning Development Team, these will also go to social workers. App info is being promoted through GP practices as part of Baby week; stickers on the 'red books' is being cascaded via Health visitors on all the new birth visits.

The number of followers of 50 Things is growing on Twitter each day, there has been a large increase since the summer. Interactions are also improving on Facebook. Currently have 2097 downloads, we have distributed a similar number of posters.

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 Children's 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.

Position reported in April 2019:

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 an 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.

Current Position:

The LGA Early Years Peer review in June 2019 highlighted a number of strengths and areas for development in Speech, Language and Communication. Following this a multi-agency 0-5 communication pathway has been developed identifying strengths and gaps in provision for the city in universal, targeted and specialist services.

The 3 As strategy has driven a clear focus on early language and literacy in the early years. The Year of Reading focussed work of teams, to ensure a wealth of effective practice and provision is in place across the 29 Little Owls Nurseries and across the Children's Centres family services provision. As well as families having access to a range of literature, courses and workshops which promote reading, the Children's Centres are offering lending libraries, visits to libraries, story tellers visiting our Centres and curriculum planning to offer activities which promote reading.

The Children's Centre Teacher team have delivered a training package on reading for all Little Owls practitioners.

The Children's Centres have also launched the Leeds Book Hunt project this month. The main aim of this project is to introduce books to children and families in a new and exciting way. We believe children will be thrilled to find a book somewhere unexpected and to be able to take that book home to read. Finding one book will encourage the child to look for more books and we hope that parents and carers will talk to friends and families so the Leeds Book Hunt will grow. So far, 48 Children's Centres and 10 Little Owls Nurseries have pledged to hide books in their reach area –over 550 books are currently in circulation across our communities.

The Library Service recently launched the introduction of 2 new story buses and over the next month, will begin a rolling programme of visits to each of our Children's Centres on a termly basis to offer the experience of story telling sessions to children and their parents.

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.

Position reported in April 2019:

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 through 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.

Current Position:

Recommissioning of the PHINS (Public Health Integrated Nursing Service- health visitors and school nurses) identified co-location of teams on Childrens Centre sites as a key development with performance indicator on the contract, over the next three years. Health Visitors and Childrens staff have worked together in cluster teams for seven years, but co location will improve practice further

Midwives are already running services from 15 Childrens centre sites around the city including Wetherby, Bramley and Gipton. The 'Better Births' national programme sets out the ambition for each local area to have "community hubs" for maternity services, to promote:

- Access to a range of services under one roof;
- Fast referral to more specialised services if required.

This will improve services for families.

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.

Position reported in April 2019:

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.

Current Position:

As reported previously long term planning at this moment in time is problematic. The Director of Children and Families reported the implications of the medium term financial strategy to Executive Board, therefore we are not able to confirm at this time the budget for Children’s Centres beyond the annual budget approved by full Council in February for the forthcoming financial year.

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.

Position reported in April 2019:

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.

Current Position:

There has been a strong, pro-active focus over the last 18 months by Childrens Service Asset Management Board (CSAMB) to improve Childrens centre buildings. A number of building improvement programmes have been undertaken this year to address backlog repair issues and to improve the quality of provision experienced by children and families.. These include:

- City and Holbeck, consolidation and improvement of the provision and the site has improved financial sustainability;
- Chapeltown, consolidation of childcare into one building, development of the early years family services hub to house multi-agency team;
- Dewsbury Road Community Hub site has developed the old library space to offer family services on site, this is very popular with families;
- Backlog repairs to outdoor play spaces have been undertaken this year. These essential works are being undertaken to make the gardens safe and reinstate play spaces where possible, very important to high quality learning provision;
- Additional works to entry systems have been necessary to repair those entry systems which have now become obsolete.

The capital re-provision of Burley Park centre will develop by the end of the year as a joint Childrens Centre-Social Care hub. The site of the old Burley PRU (Springwell Site) has been secured, funding agreed and hopefully work will commence in the next few weeks. A timeline for the development is currently being agreed and this should be confirmed over the next week. The families have been informed and the feedback has been very positive. There is a real feel of excitement from the families and the staff team. It will bring together colleagues from Children's Social Work Services, LCC Family Services and Early Learning, all working together within the building. It really is an exciting development which will support children and families living in Burley and surrounding areas.

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.

Position reported in April 2019:

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.

Current Position:

The base line budget in 2020/21 for Little Owls nurseries has been increased by approx. £850k of which a key budget pressure during 2019/20 has been a shortfall in nursery fee income against the approved budget income levels. This is partially as a result of the introduction of 30 hours free offer, where parents have moved from fee playing in free 30 hour places. Also the nurseries went through a period where we were struggling to recruit staff to posts. Support from HR colleagues has introduced lots of new approaches e.g. a rolling recruitment of staff, weekend and evening interviews, monthly interviews planning 12 months in advance. In recognition of this pressure it is proposed to reduce the income target by £500k in 2020/21.

The service has also been working on various initiatives to increase income across the centres, including a pro-active marketing and communications strategy and improved website design. This alongside monthly analysis of business data is helping to support centres responsively to changes in the market. We do continue to ensure places for children with greater vulnerability for example complex SEND, discretionary place for children at risk, number of two year old places.

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