



Report of the Acting Chief Officer Early Years and Integrated Youth Support Service

Executive Board Date: 5th November 2008

Subject: Inclusion and Early Support: Hawthorn Centre deputation to council
September 2008

Electoral Wards Affected:

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In

(Details contained in the report)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report provides Executive Board with a response to the deputation submitted to Council on 8th September 2008 regarding Hawthorn Family Support Centre. A copy of the deputation is provided at appendix 1.
2. The report seeks to assure Executive Board that the Children's Trust have been responsive to the wishes and needs of all parents in developing commissioning arrangements, that the contract awarded for the delivery of Inclusion and Early Support Services will demonstrate good outcomes and meet those needs and that the services such as those delivered at the Hawthorn Centre will continue under the new contract. In doing this the report provides:
 - information and evidence around the process used to commission high quality, value for money, services for Inclusion and Early Support through the Children's Trust arrangements for Children Leeds.
 - details of the involvement of the Hawthorn Centre in that process.
 - Information about how the specification for the provider has a clear focus on services that ensure disabled children and their families receive targeted, high quality support.
3. The report recommends the Executive Board accepts this response to the deputation in explaining commissioning activity undertaken for Inclusion and Early Support Services and the ambitions that this will both continue to meet the needs of disabled children and their families in Leeds and also help develop the future quality of that support.

1.0 Purpose of this Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Executive Board with:

- A response to the Deputation submitted to Council on 8th September 2008 in relation to Hawthorn Family Support Centre (see appendix 1), in doing so it includes:
- Information and assurance about the robust procedures used by the Children's Trust to commission preventative services for Inclusion and Early Support
- Assurance about the range of services that will be co-ordinated through the new contract and the role the Hawthorn Centre will continue to play as a partner and provider

2.0 Background Information

2.1 Leeds Sure Start Partnership, formerly Leeds Early Years Partnership, have commissioned services for the parents of children with additional needs since 1998. We have worked with providers and parents to determine need, aligned that to the requirements of Government guidance, frameworks and funding and sought to commission a range of provision through a competitive annual partnership process. Sure Start funding had commissioned four major areas of work for early support and inclusion:

- family support services for children aged 0 to 2, transition to early education services and portage
- Early Years Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCO's) for all sectors
- Leeds Inclusion Support Service providing individual support for pre school children to attend the early education setting of their parents choice
- out of school and holiday play schemes for children and young people with special needs

2.2 The Sure Start Partnership expects all partners to consult with and provide advocacy both for their organisation and their service users as part of their membership. In this way the work of the Sure Start Partnership is grounded and informed by the needs of service users and the expert knowledge of service providers.

2.3 Children Leeds has a Commissioning Strategy. The Integrated Strategic Commissioning Board (ISCB) represents the commissioning arm of the Children's Trust in Leeds and was established in 2006. In June 2007 the ISCB tasked the current partnerships commissioning services for children using external grant funding, including the Sure Start Partnership, with the development of more robust commissioning processes. These processes should be compact compliant with the voluntary sector, offer good value for public money and provide all sectors with the benefit of a three yearly Comprehensive Spending Review. All partners and providers were informed in June 2007 by the Sure Start Partnership Manager that the annual process noted above in 2.1 would be replaced in April 2008 by open procurement through the developing Children's Trust arrangements.

- 2.4 In September 2007 the Sure Start Partnership, the Leeds Children's Fund Executive, the Youth Work Partnership, and Connexions amalgamated their partnerships to form one Joint Preventative Partnership (JPP) for children aged 0 to 19 and their families. The JPP was given authority to establish a Joint Preventative Commissioning Panel (JPCP) and proceed to commission all early intervention and support services for children and young people aged 0 to 19 and their families for 2008 - 11 based on the Universal Offer and priorities identified in the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP).
- 2.5 The Children's Trust required JPCP in September 2007 to comply with the Children Leeds Commissioning Strategy and employ an open and transparent process starting with contracts valued over £100k and using Leeds City Council Corporate procurement processes. This is in line with Government guidance, recently strengthened as a result of the Children's Plan. All contracts exceeding £100k per annum would be commissioned from April 2008 using a PQQ and open market testing. Contracts less than £100k per annum would be subject to PQQ and competitive Project Proposal Forms. This process has been ongoing since September 2007.
- 2.6 The JPCP approved a proposal to develop a single contract specification to support families with children with special needs and disabilities. The specification was worked on by all partners and providers. All partners agreed to consult within their organisations and with their service users and feed back views about what was needed into the specification. A wide range of comments were received and incorporated. The specification matched the aspirations of the CYPP in Leeds and what was required of the Sure Start Partnership by Government targets and outcomes. The single contract specification encouraged providers working together in loose consortia or developing sub contract arrangements to deliver early intervention inclusion services for the city as a partnership.
- 2.7 The contract held by Hawthorn Centre to deliver family support for transitions and portage exceeded £100k. They submitted a successful pre-procurement quality questionnaire and were invited to tender for the delivery of services. The Hawthorn Trustees considered carefully their position and chose not to submit a tender. Subsequently, parent users of the Hawthorn Centre submitted a deputation to Council raising concerns that the services they consider central to their well-being may be at risk and seeking reassurance that that same type of support will be available through any new arrangements.

3.0 Main Issues

3.1 The Hawthorn Centre

- 3.1.1 The Hawthorn Centre has been an active Sure Start partner since 1998, ably representing the views of parents using their services and delivering services from the centre. They have been commissioned to deliver family support services for parents with disabled children under the age of two, including portage, through external General Sure Start government grant funding since 2002. Hawthorn and the Trustees have been supported by the Sure Start Partnership with quality assurance issues, registration issues and business support. The current contract will run until December 1st 2008.

- 3.1.2 Hawthorn Centre were informed of the changes to the commissioning process in spring 2007 and supported and encouraged by officers to tender for the contract singly or as part of a partnership consortia. The voluntary sector group who secured the contract approached Hawthorn to establish loose consortia for the tender. Hawthorn chose not to tender as part of that partnership.
- 3.1.3 The Hawthorn Centre must have considered their future carefully, and the financial implications of their decision, when choosing not to tender for the contract either singly or as part of a loose consortia. This will have involved consultation with their service users. The Trustees believe that they best serve parents of children with disabilities in their own distinctive way. We respect that choice and accept it represents the views of parents using the Hawthorn Centre.
- 3.1.4 Hawthorn has been given many opportunities to integrate more closely with the children's centre programme either with the two closest children's centres at Richmond Hill or Osmondthorpe or specifically with the 6 SILC Children's Centres. They have chosen not to do that. We respect that choice and accept that it represents the views of parents with disabled young children under the age of two.

3.2 **The Inclusion and Early Support Contract**

- 3.2.1 In August 2007 the Inclusion Standing Group considered what early support and inclusion services were required and how those services might be best delivered. Hawthorn Centre is an active member of the Inclusion Standing group. They were part of the recommendation to the JPCP to procure one Inclusion and Early Support contract. The Hawthorn Centre identified no issues or challenges for their organisation or parent and child users as part of this consultation and specification development process.
- 3.2.2 The specification is clear that providing effective family support, working with children, young people and parents to plan services and gather opinions and views, is a key component of taking the inclusion service forward. Through a 'One Point of Contact System' parents of children with special needs will be provided with simplified, clearer support, information and advice services. The successful contract holder will administer all funds relating to inclusion, revenue and capital, and ensure that services are in place when and where they are needed. This will involve sub contracting work.
- 3.2.3 The specification is also clear that the provider must help ensure that the family support needs of those with disabled children are met through close partnership with the various lead professionals working with the children (for example teachers, social workers and children's centre staff) to provide the training, mentoring and challenge to do this. This will include working with parents themselves, identifying appropriate Family Group Activities, facilitating additional groups where required and, through initiatives such as the common assessment framework, ensuring the support provided is increasingly tailored to the particular needs of individual children and their families.
- 3.2.4 As such, the specification both recognises the existing support in place and needed by children and their families and also identifies opportunities to strengthen this by improving the way we target and help parents and lead professionals in the future.

- 3.2.5 The Pre School Learning Alliance (PSLA) won the contract to deliver early support and inclusion services. This is a well respected voluntary sector group and partner. The Children's Trust will ensure appropriate services for families with children with complex needs through this contract. The co-ordination of support services for families with disabled children from birth including portage, support and counseling will be a monitored part of the contract.
- 3.2.6 The Hawthorn Centre has already been approached by the PSLA to continue to deliver particular services under a service level agreement. The Hawthorn Centre represents just one organisation that delivers support to parents with disabled children in the first few years of their lives. The PSLA will work across all of these groups to ensure that parents have excellent services and choices.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

- 4.1 The JPP was tasked by ISCB to consider how the elements of the universal offer that provides early intervention and preventative services can be commissioned jointly through partnership approaches. Early support and inclusion services for all children with additional needs including support to their parents lie within this authority. The new services will be available to all children and young people with special needs and their families and are embedded in the Children and Young People's Plan. Successful delivery of outcomes from services commissioned in this way will impact upon the inspection of Children's Services and the Council

5.0 Legal And Resource Implications

- 5.1 The Corporate Procurement Unit has supported the implementation of the processes and protocols which have enabled a consistent and transparent commissioning process to be applied to the procurement of Inclusion and Early Support services. The contract report showed that the successful tender demonstrated both high quality and value for money. Legal and Democratic services have supported the development of all forms, contracts and protocols and will support any challenges to decisions legitimately made by the Children's Trust arrangements through work undertaken by the JPCP. There has, as yet, been no challenge to the outcome of the commissioning process.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 This report has addressed the issues raised in the deputation to Council about Hawthorn Family Centre by demonstrating the work done and ongoing with the Hawthorn Centre in developing and now implementing the contract awarded for the delivery of Inclusion and Early Support Services, and showing how the needs of parents will continue to be met. In doing so it has highlighted that:
- 6.2 The procurement process entered into by the JPCP to commission services for early support and inclusion was robust, fair and transparent. It has not been challenged at any point in the process.
- 6.3 The Sure Start Partnership will continue working with Hawthorn Centre as partners in the delivery of services. Their work with families is respected. The Sure Start

Partnership truly appreciates the value of the services Hawthorn have provided to families soon after birth and the commitment those families then have towards the services they have received. The JPCP will monitor the contract closely to ensure that the needs of the parents ably represented by the deputation to Council in September are met. The PSLA have already begun working with Hawthorn and other providers to secure services for families.

- 6.4 The Partnership accept that Hawthorn has made choices not to tender to deliver services on behalf of the Children's Trust and that they will have done so after consultation with their parent users. The Hawthorn Centre has a stated preference for working as a charity and on donation or grants to worthy causes basis. The Children's Trust arrangements in Leeds have no large grant programme and the Trust arrangements do not operate as grant giving. All services are openly commissioned against outcomes as recommended by Government guidance.
- 6.5 The JPCP, acting for the Children's Trust, has also had to make difficult decisions based on the key priorities in the CYPP, value for money and service needs analysis. The JPCP are confident that the new contract will offer more services and good value for public money. Their aspiration remains for excellence in service provision, choice for parents and a personalised approach.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 Executive Board is recommended to

- Accept the report of the Acting Chief Officer for Early Years and Integrated Youth Support Services
- Accept that in responding to the deputation, this report has shown how Hawthorn have had the opportunity to be involved throughout the commissioning process and how as a result of that process, services will continue to be provided that meet the needs of disabled children and their families and look to further develop the quality of that support in the future.

Background Papers

- Deputation submitted to Council on 8th September 2008 regarding Hawthorn Family Support Centre – see Appendix 1
- Report to the Integrated Strategic Commissioning Board (06.09.07): Commissioning of Preventative Services for Children and Young People aged 0 to 19 and their Families by the Joint Preventative Commissioning Panel
- Children Leeds Commissioning Strategy 2006 (reviewed annually each year)
- Government Guidance on Joint Planning and Commissioning: see the Every Child Matters website
<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/strategy/planningandcommissioning/guidance/>