

1.0 Background

- 1.1 This report details the progress on activity monitored through the Children First Strategic Board and is the second bi-annual report of the Board to the Children's Trust.
- 1.2 The Children's First Strategic Board is a multi-agency board on which a range of partners have representation. It meets six times over the year with a focus on activity relating to children under five and their families. This addresses not only the multi-agency work undertaken in Children's Centres, but also the range of activity to support quality early years experience in schools and the private, voluntary and independent sectors, childminding, the childcare workforce and also health programmes. All such activity is within the remit of the SureStart Support team and within the context of the Healthy Child Programme.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 Early Intervention Grant allocations fund all activity in the Children's Centres and the wider SureStart Team. This grant funding enables the Local Authority to meet the duties set out in the Childcare Act 2006 and as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.
- 2.2 The duties referred to include a responsibility that Local Authorities and their partners in Health Services and Jobcentre Plus to:
 - Improve outcomes and close gaps at age five through the provision of integrated early years' services
 - Provide and maintain sufficient children's centres and ensure they each have access to and support from an advisory board
 - Ensure there is sufficient childcare available for parents with children 0-14 (or 18 for children with a disability) who want to work and train, including an expanded and where possible, more flexible free entitlement for three and four year olds
 - Provide a comprehensive information service for families, making available any information parents and carers might need to support their children up to the age of 20

- 2.3 Key priorities for the Board are determined by Priority 2 of the Enjoy and Achieve Plan within the Children and Young People's Plan. These are:
- a. Review of Early Years and Children's Centre Strategy to ensure Best Value and alignment to corporate objectives for Child Poverty;
 - b. Further develop use of data so that priorities, resources, support and performance management are even more targeted and cost effective;
 - c. Further develop Parenting and Family Support and in particular:
 - i. Promote improved outcomes for young children;
 - ii. Promote future good behaviour in older children;
 - iii. Through the outreach model, continue to develop family support in the home;
 - iv. Support the improvement of the home learning environment;
 - d. Continue to develop support for the most vulnerable children especially those who are Looked After and those with Special Educational Needs;
 - e. Improve Early Years & Childcare settings resulting in more good or better OFSTED outcomes and no inadequate judgments;
 - f. Further improve early communication and language development through more effective speech and language services and through continued CLLD and ECAT programmes;
 - g. Improve access to information through community based provision specifically Children's Centres and community settings;
 - h. Ensure Local Authority retained function duties are met;
 - i. Improve the number of Early Years settings and Schools delivering flexibility in relation to the 15 hour free entitlement;
 - j. Review the current approach to the development of and support for childcare new places and their sustainability.

3.0 Current Progress and Achievements

Priority area	Progress to date
<p>Review of Early Years and Children’s Centre Strategy to ensure Best Value and alignment to corporate objectives for Child Poverty</p>	<p>Current service delivery has been aligned to ensure that emerging Government priorities are addressed through Centre Delivery Plans.</p> <p>Long term staffing has been confirmed to ensure continuity of service.</p> <p>The success of the 2 year old funding initiative is being built upon to increase number accessing the free offer by 20%. The allocated number of funded places for Wirral is 142 places but currently, 205 children are being funded under this initiative, far in excess of the target.</p>
<p>Further develop use of data so that priorities, resources, support and performance management are even more targeted and cost effective</p>	<p>100% of Centre Managers have attended training and development on the use of Together for Children Unit costing Analysis Toolkit to ensure more cost effective service delivery.</p> <p>Every Children's Centre has an Annual Area Profile which includes demographic data and a Needs Assessment based on the Wirra JSNA. This is supported by detailed local analysis based on the Estart database which captures engagement rates of local families. The number of children now registered with Children’s Centres currently stands at 58%</p>
<p>Further develop Parenting and Family Support and in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote improved outcomes for young children • Promote future good behaviour in older children • Through the outreach model, continue to develop family support in the home • Support the improvement of the home learning environment 	<p>Evidence-based parenting programmes have been implemented to ensure a consistent approach to parenting support, in line with the corporate Parenting and Family Support Strategy. These include Nurturing, Solihull approach and Mellow Parenting.</p> <p>The impact of parenting programmes is being measured through existing data systems, parental feedback and impact assessment.</p> <p>Successful launch of the Safe and Sound scheme to further develop parents’ understanding of the importance of home safety through information sessions in Children’s Centres.</p> <p>Training for Children’s centre staff to support good home learning environments in the light of the current EPPE research. This also links to the implementation of the Payment By Results pilot programme.</p>

<p>Continue to develop support for the most vulnerable children especially those who are Looked After and those with Special Educational Needs</p>	<p>An plan has been developed to build on the good practice from Aiming High for Disabled Children to ensure continuity and consistency across local Centres to meet local need e.g. development of sensory rooms</p> <p>The Children's Centre Communication Strategy has been enhanced to include all areas of Early Years and childcare activity, specifically to capture the views of service users.</p> <p>Budget streams have been re-aligned to ensure equality of access to effective support and reduced duplication of services for children with Special Educational Needs.</p>
<p>Improve Early Years & Childcare settings resulting in more good or better OFSTED outcomes and no inadequate judgments</p>	<p>A Quality Improvement Support Programme for Out of Schools' Clubs and Childminders is under development and will reflect the successful model already in place for private, voluntary and independent sector early year's settings.</p> <p>Wirral's first Childminding Network was approved by the National Childminding Association in January 2011. Work continues to recruit successful childminders into the network. A number of network members have undertaken or are undertaking an additional accreditation that will allow them to claim Nursery Education Grant funding for eligible children in their care.</p> <p>At the point at which OFSTED conducted Wirral's Children's Services Assessment in July, the following figures were available on OFSTED judgments of childcare:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childminders: of the 249 inspections noted, 59% (147) judged as Good or better, 38% (99) as Satisfactory and 1.2% (3) as Inadequate. • Early years and childcare settings: of the 149 inspections noted, 68% (104) judged as Good or better, 29% (44) as Satisfactory and 0.7% (1) as Inadequate. <p>Since this point, of the inspections published, 1 childminder has achieved a Good OFSTED judgment and 10 early year's settings have achieved Good or better judgments.</p> <p>Currently, one childminder and one pre-school playgroup hold an OFSTED judgment of Inadequate. These providers are working with</p>

	designated staff from the Quality Improvement Team to move this judgment forward. The main challenge for the team is to improve the number of early years and childcare settings judged as Satisfactory by OFSTED.
Further improve early communication and language development through more effective speech and language services and through continued CLLD and ECAT programmes	<p>In September 2011, the newly configured Early Communication Programme was launched, based on the success of the Communication Language and Literacy Development programme in schools and the Every Child A Talker initiative in early year's settings.</p> <p>Schools and Children's Centres have been offered a new speech and language screening toolkit to support early identification of receptive and expressive language delay. Early years settings can access this support through their allocated Foundation Consultant.</p> <p>Speech and Language Therapists are working with schools as an advice and consultancy service that effectively acts as a triage for concerns about speech and language issues. The aim of this programme is to reduce the number of inappropriate referrals to SLT and to increase the level of support to children.</p> <p>The monitoring of this programme is through the newly re-configured Better Communication Group to ensure effective inter-agency co-operation.</p>
Improve access to information through community based provision specifically Children's Centres and community settings	<p>Current service has been assessed against the statutory duty of the Local Authority to provide information to parents/ carers.</p> <p>The Family Information Service webpage has been established enabling easy access to information and a marketing campaign in local publications is underway</p>
Ensure Local Authority retained function duties are met	<p>The Childcare Development Workers and Foundation Consultants have been assimilated into a single Quality Improvement Team, specifically to improve the quality of childcare settings.</p> <p>The team continues to provide advice and guidance to newly registering childcare provision to ensure sustainable businesses are established to meet the needs of parents in work or training.</p>
Improve the number of Early Years settings and Schools delivering flexibility in relation to the 15 hour free entitlement	<p>46% of private, voluntary and independent sector providers currently enable parents to take their child's 15 hour early education and care entitlement flexibly.</p> <p>15% of schools with Foundation 1 provision are offering flexibility, with a number of others consulting on the development of a flexible offer to</p>

	parents. Case study examples on good practice have been collected for future publication.
Review the current approach to the development of and support for childcare new places and their sustainability.	An interim Childcare Sufficiency Assessment has been completed and is available for public access. Plans are in place to undertake a comprehensive Sufficiency Assessment in 2012.

- 3.1 In 2011 there were improved outcomes at the end of Foundation 2 (children aged 5) across Wirral 6% since 2009. The overall outcomes are exceeding national figures and demonstrate that Wirral has sustained a year-on-year improvement since the implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework. This has been achieved through bespoke training and support in both the maintained and non-maintained sectors and robust nationally accredited moderation practises.
- 3.2 The gap between the lowest performing children and the rest is continuing to close. The gap has reduced by 2% from 2009. This is a more rapid improvement than the national picture and is a consequence of the successful strategies detailed above.
- 3.3 The attainment of children in our most disadvantaged Districts continue to significantly improve:

Main Wirral National Indicators

N172 District and Area	Percentage				Numbers		
	2011	2010	2009	Change	2011	2010	2009
Wirral	58	57	52.0	6.0	3573	3523	3510
Birkenhead	53.2	52.4	40.4	12.8	1101	1071	1024
Wallasey	55	55.5	46.5	8.5	1032	1036	1011
South Wirral	62.9	57.8	59.9	3.0	623	649	628
West Wirral	62.6	65.3	66.4	-3.8	789	754	823

Birkenhead and Wallasey areas continue to improve over the period 2009-2011. Pensby/Heswall/West Kirby decreased by 14% over the same period. A focussed training programme for the 17 schools in this particular area is being implemented and closely monitored by the Early Intervention Manager.

- 3.4 Children's Centres gained statutory designation in 2010 and a new Ofsted inspection framework was implemented in April 2010. This was revised in September 2011 and we have successfully implemented a response to the OFSTED framework through improved self-evaluation, better data analysis and better development planning. So far, 8 out of the 16 centres have been inspected by the OFSTED with 2 achieving "satisfactory with good features" and 6 achieving "good" or "good with many outstanding features."
- 3.5 We have developed an evidence-based performance management framework for Children's Centres building on learning from the successful OFSTED inspections. This has been endorsed by the national organisation, Together for Children;
- 3.6 Wirral is amongst 27 Local Authorities who have been chosen to trial Payment by Results (PbR) between September 2011 and March 2013. The research and learning from this trial will shape future government policy for PbR across other areas of the Early Intervention Grant and will support us in the development of more sophisticated methods of measuring outcomes and outputs.
- 3.7 We are implementing the e-Start database to support monitoring and evaluation of Children's Centres. This is significantly improving the level of measurable data available to support service evaluation and consequently, service development and delivery.
- 3.8 The 2-year old funding initiative has been successful and there is case study evidence of impact. Wirral has exceeded the Government target of 142 children by reducing administration costs and diverting this saving into increasing the number of places available. Currently, 205 children are being funded under this initiative. We have increased the number of settings able to offer parents this facility and we are currently developing a strategy to include Accredited Network Childminders in this. A workforce conference is planned for autumn 2011 which will support the settings in their work with this most vulnerable group of children and ensure that they are able to offer a high quality experience. Individual families are also offered family support in the home and access to universal and targeted parents groups where appropriate.
- 3.9 Children's Centres are active partners in the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference and are represented on this body by a Children's Centre Manager. To date, 980 requests have been made to Children's Centres from the Family Safety Unit and the number of evidence-based programmes for families living with domestic violence is increasing.
- 3.10 The Family and Baby project offering social and psychological support to parents with children in the neo-natal unit at Arrowe Park Hospital has been

operating successfully for two years. The project is operated collaboratively between the hospital and Wirral Children's Centres and has achieved national recognition as an example of how such a level of support can be implemented in any neo-natal unit.

- 3.11 Significant support is available to improve the skills levels of the early years and childcare workforce. A termly programme averaging 75 courses for professional development is published and accessible to early years settings, Children's centres, childminders and out of school clubs. In addition, funding is available to support staff in achieving accredited qualifications up to Foundation Degree level (for early years). To date, 45 students have achieved Foundation Degree status, a number of which have gone on to achieve full degree status, funded through other sources. 58 Wirral candidates have achieved Early Years Professional Status and the impact of their leadership in terms of improved OFSTED outcomes is being monitored through the Quality Improvement Team.

4. Recommendation

That Wirral Children's Trust Board note the report.

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