

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Thursday, 25 January 2018

REPORT TITLE:	Children Are Ready for School Pledge
REPORT OF:	Chair of the Early Childhood Reference Group, Elizabeth Hartley (Senior Manager Children's Services)

REPORTS SUMMARY

The Children Are Ready for School pledge is co-ordinated and delivered through the multi-agency Early Childhood Reference Group. Within the group there are four Priority Action Leads who work in partnership with various professionals to deliver the outcomes of their specific action plans. On a quarterly basis, the Early Childhood Reference Group meets to receive updates from the Priority Action Leads, provide advice and support, offer challenge and agree progress updates for corporate pledge reporting.

The report provides the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee with information on the four Priority Areas for the Children Are Ready for School pledge.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Committee notes the report.

1.0 Background

1.1 The Children Are Ready for School pledge is co-ordinated and delivered through the multi-agency Early Childhood Reference Group. Within the group there are four Priority Action Leads who work in partnership with various professionals to deliver the outcomes of their specific action plans. On a quarterly basis, the Early Childhood Reference Group meets to receive updates from the Priority Action Leads, provide advice and support, offer challenge and agree progress updates for corporate pledge reporting.

2.0 Priorities

2.1 There are four Priority Areas for the Children Are Ready for School pledge, these are:

- Priority 1- To improve multi-agency arrangements to safeguard and protect our youngest children;
- Priority 2- Children in Wirral will start life well;
- Priority 3- Children receive sensitive and responsive care from their main caregivers in the first years of life; and
- Priority 4- Increase the % of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

2.2 Priority 1 was added following the refresh of the Wirral Plan in advance of the 2017-18 financial year. This addition was made in direct response to two specific *serious incident notifications* for under 5s and the tragic death of a Birkenhead toddler. The Early Childhood Reference Group felt strongly that the pledge work needed to respond to those circumstances by providing focus on safeguarding for infants and young children.

3.0 Overview of progress

3.1 The body of this report seeks to provide Members with an overview of activity and outcomes delivered through each pledge priority area. The report focusses specifically on activity completed during the 2017-18 financial year and does not include activity from earlier stages of the Wirral Plan period.

3.2 Priority 1

Priority 1: To improve multi-agency arrangements to safeguard and protect our youngest children
What we said we would do:
(i) Establish processes to identify vulnerable parents-to-be (and infants) in order to provide co-ordinated packages of care. (ii) Increase opportunities for contact with parents and infants during the early years. (iii) Undertake a review of all children under 1 who became subject to a child protection plan or became a looked-after child in the previous 12 months, to better understand vulnerability factors in order to deliver more proactive services. (iv) Deliver an awareness raising campaign on the particular vulnerabilities of infants.
What we've done so far:
(i) Embedded multi-agency pre-birth pathway and pre-birth liaison meeting. (ii) Launched a new Wirral parenting offer (<i>Set Sail on a Parenting Journey</i>) which, through an integrated approach between the Local Authority and Health Services, increases the number of contact points/home visit opportunities in the early years. (iii) Commenced a review of 50 cases where under 1s have become subject to child protection or looked after processes, including developing a bespoke audit tool, defining terms of reference and completed the first stage of data collection from an individual agency perspective. (iv) Initiated discussions with Birkenhead Foundation Years Trust to undertake a promotional campaign with Wirral families on the value of parenting. (v) Rolled out a marketing promotion with Children's Social Care re engaging with Children's Centres to support vulnerable children under 5.
What difference it's making:
(i) Year to date (YTD) figures show 104 unborns have been discussed at the pre-birth liaison meeting, with 82 receiving additional support. (ii) Increase in number of unborns supported through a co-ordinated Team Around the Family approach. YTD figure is 56 against the 2016-17 figure of 12. (iii) Increase in the number of under 5s being supported through a Team Around the Family approach. YTD figure is 532 against the 2016-17 figure of 234. (iv) Target group registration with Children's Centres has increased from 81.6% in 2016-17 to 86.8% YTD. (v) Sustained contact for target groups with Children's Centres has increased from 51.0% in 2016-17 to 61.5% YTD. (vi) There has been a reduction in Serious Incident Notifications for under 5s. However, we have not yet been able to demonstrate an impact on the number of children under 5 becoming a looked after child.
What we need to do next:
(i) Develop a means by which to evaluate the impact of support given through co-ordinated care packages. (ii) Complete the review of under 1s becoming subject to child protection or looked after children by undertaking the multi-agency analysis, delivering a report and recommendations, and using the findings to inform interventions. (iii) Improve registration and sustained contact for children in need, those subject to child protection plans and children who are looked after. (iv) Implement the <i>Preventing Family Breakdown</i> strategy for under 5s. (v) Roll out pre-birth assessment training. (vi) Roll out the raising awareness promotion and complementary parenting campaign.

3.3 Priority 2

Priority 2: Children start life well
What we said we would do:
(i) Deliver against the outcomes that contribute to the <i>Healthy Child Programme</i> in Wirral. (ii) Develop an approach to promoting healthy eating in the early years. (iii) Roll out the 2 ½ Year Integrated Review with an information system to inform the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. (iv) Develop co-ordinated approaches to engage early years settings in thematic issues such as use of dummies, increasing physical activity and speech & language. (v) Deliver locally applicable recommendations of the North West Sector-Led Infant Mortality Study to address modifiable risk factors.
What we've done so far:
(i) A weight management programme for pregnant women has been launched. (ii) The <i>breast start</i> app is being promoted and complements the support and peer support groups for continued breastfeeding. (iii) A localised approach, working in partnership with Children's Centres and foodbanks, has been agreed to increase the uptake of <i>Healthy Start</i> vitamins. (iv) Weaning groups continue to be well-attended. (v) The recently launched guide, <i>Eat Better-Start Better</i> has been distributed across all early years settings. (vi) Feedback from participants in the 2 ½ Year Integrated Review has been collected and shows a very positive picture from the perspective of parents and professionals. (vii) A targeted piece of work is underway to increase take up of the 2 ½ Year Integrated Review in areas where participation is low (Bidston, Seacombe and Beechwood). Learning from successful areas within Wallasey will be used to drive improvements. (viii) <i>Link Health Professionals</i> have commenced a schedule of attending early years settings and providing professionals with support and advice. (ix) The Children's Continence Service has established a pathway for support which involves providing training and consultative support for universal practitioners.
What difference it's making:
(i) % of infants who received a 6-8 week development check by 8 weeks is 84.0%, against a year-end target of 90.0% (ii) % of children who received a 12 month Health Visitor Review by 12 months is 83.0% against a year-end target of 85% (iii) % of children who received a 2 ½ Year Integrated Review is 81% against a year-end target of 85% (iv) Since the beginning of the Wirral Plan the % of children aged 4-5 classified as overweight or obese has increased from 22.4% to 25.6% (2016-17).
What we need to do next:
(i) Continue to increase take up of 2 ½ Year Integrated Review in priority areas. (ii) Use the findings of the North West Sector-Led Infant Mortality Study to improve safe sleeping arrangement. This will include midwives seeing the baby's sleeping arrangements and health visitors discussing safe sleeping at the first ante-natal review. (iii) Develop the information system to collect data on the 2 ½ Integrated Review which will inform the Joint Strategic Needs Analysis. (iv) Continue to further embed the role of the Link Health Professional.

3.4 Priority 3

Priority 3: Children receive sensitive and responsive care from their main caregivers in the first years of life
What we said we would do:
(i) Deliver multi-agency training for early years practitioners which focuses on the attachment needs of babies. (ii) Continue to embed the <i>Cherish Programme</i> across the early years workforce. (iii) Ensure training and support is available to all foster carers of children looked after under 5. (iv) Develop a Wirral-wide parenting pathway of evidence based parenting programmes, peer-led and community-based activities to address all areas of need through joint working between the Local Authority and Health Services.
What we've done so far:
(i) Cherish Programmes are underway, with 3 to be held during quarter 4. (ii) An Attachment Seminar has been devised by the Educational Psychology Team and will roll out as multi-agency events in quarter 4. (iii) Nurture training for Foster Carers has been delivered. (iv) Co-delivery of Nurture training by Early Childhood Service and Children's Social Care is in planning. (v) Mapping of parenting provision in Wirral has been completed. (vi) A database of parenting provision has been established and contributes to the Early Help Service Directory, making services more accessible to local families. (vii) The mapping of parenting provision has enabled gaps and duplication of services to be identified, with findings being reported to the Children's Joint Commissioning Group. (viii) A data dashboard has been developed for parenting programmes and signed off by the Children's Joint Commissioning Group. Data is being shared by providers, however for most agencies the lack of sophisticated data collection makes this a laborious task. (ix) A consultation with parents regarding parenting programmes has commenced and seeks to provide further insight into <i>what works</i> .
What difference it's making:
There are no defined performance indicators for this priority area. Evaluating the impact of training and parenting programmes is underdeveloped. Whilst it is possible to report on the number of participants attending training/programmes we do not have systems in place to demonstrate the impact this has. This is both a local and national issue.
What we need to do next:
(i) Implement joint delivery of the Nurture programme for Foster Carers with Children's Social Care and roll out across localities. (ii) Deliver the programmes and training scheduled for quarter 4, collecting evaluation from participants. (iii) Develop a means to standardise and improve data collection across providers. (iv) Work with the Birkenhead Foundation Years Trust to develop a means by which to evaluate and demonstrate impact of training/parenting programmes. (v) Continue to utilise the Parenting Steering Group to reduce duplication and address gaps in parenting provision, and inform commissioning arrangements.

3.5 Priority 4

Priority 4: Increase the % of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage

What we said we would do:

- (i) Implement a data tracking tool across early year's settings to better support early identification of and track progress of vulnerable individuals and groups.
- (ii) Work with early years childcare providers to increase the percentage of schools and childcare settings rated *good* or *outstanding* by Ofsted.
- (iii) Provide targeted support and intervention for schools identified, from analysis of Early Years Foundation Stage Profile data, as in need of improvement.

What we've done so far:

- (i) Developed and rolled out a cohort progress tracker, with access to an online portal for data sharing. Currently 60% of providers are engaged. Submission of data has commenced and analysis will begin in January 2018.
- (ii) Moderation clusters have been established in pilot areas and will commence activity in January 2018, with a view to sharing data more effectively and improving transitions.
- (iii) Birkenhead Foundation Years Trust has been working in 8 PVI settings and 9 primary schools delivering PEEP Learning Together Programme with parents to improve the Home Learning Environment.
- (iv) 9 Parent Champions have been recruited to promote 2 Year Old Funding opportunities and Home Learning.
- (v) A consultation with the BME community has been completed regarding take up of funded nursery places. A *walking bus* will commence in January 2018, from a Children's Centre to local nurseries for this cohort.
- (vi) A group for Asylum Seekers and Refugees has been set up in Birkenhead to ensure a co-ordinated approach for those with children under 5.
- (vii) A *pop up* Healthy Child Clinic has been established for BME families to increase engagement with service and particularly the 2 ½ Year Integrated Review, which will identify developmental needs.

What difference it's making:

- (i) Take up of the 2 Year Old Funded Nursery places has increased from 88.1% at beginning of quarter 1 to 95.0% YTD.
- (ii) The % of early years providers rated *good* or *outstanding* by Ofsted is 90%, an increase of 12% since the beginning of the Wirral Plan.
- (iii) The % of children achieving a good level of development decreased by 0.2% in 2016-17, from 69.6% to 69.4%.
- (iv) The achievement gap for disadvantaged children has increased by 3.4%, from 18.0% in 2015-16 to 21.4% in 2016-17.
- (v) The percentage of children looked after who achieved a good level of development decreased in 2016-17 to 47.8% from 52.6% in the previous year. It should be noted that due to an increase in the cohort size, the actual number of children who achieved GLD increased by 12 children.

What we need to do next:

- (i) Quickly use analysis of progress tracker data to identify need and respond.
- (ii) Avoid a plateau for good level of development by working with partners and external colleagues from Action for Children and Birkenhead Foundation Years Trust to implement strategies for the Home Learning Environment.
- (iii) Establish the local learning networks to improve transition and joint working between childminders, nurseries and primary schools.

4.0 Challenges

4.1 The Early Childhood Reference Group has identified the following challenges to ensuring school readiness, and will continue to respond collaboratively as a partnership:

- Improving outcomes for disadvantaged children;
- Avoiding a plateau for good levels of development outcomes;
- Increasing service integration and formalising arrangements between the Local Authority and Health;
- Improving information sharing and harnessing the full resource available for early years across the partnership;

4.2 A new focus for the Early Childhood Reference Group is learning from other local authority areas and findings from studies such as the *State of the Nation-Social Mobility Report*. The group is able to identify areas which have overcome similar challenges to those listed above and seeks to learn from their experiences in order to ensure that children in Wirral are achieving and are ready for school.

5.0 Financial implications

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

6.0 Legal implications

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

7.0 Resource implications: ICT, staffing and assets

There are no resource implications arising directly from this report.

8.0 Relevant risks

Not applicable.

9.0 Engagement/Consultation

Not applicable

10.0 Equality implications

This report is for information only and there are no direct equality implications.

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Appendices: None

Reference Material

Subject History (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
N/A	