

CHILDREN'S SERVICES REVIEW COMMITTEE

9 April 2009

PROGRESS ON DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF CHILDREN'S CENTRES

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Strategic Priority: Healthy City, Learning City
Corporate Improvement Priority: Delivering Customer Focused Services,
Being 'One Council', Improving Partnership Working to Deliver 'One
City'

1. Why has this report come to the Committee?

1.1 In April 2008 members received a report on progress of Children's Centres in relation to early performance of centres as they evolved from Sure Start Local Programmes. This report looks to inform members of development and progress over the last year.

2. Background and Current Position

2.1 At the April 2008 meeting members were advised of two publications;

- The Sure Start National Evaluation
- The National Ofsted Report

2.2 These highlighted positive outcomes from Children's Centres with specific reference that children achieve best when qualified early educators lead teaching and learning and when families accessed parenting and family support services.

2.3 This combination of integrated practice was showing that children had better social development with higher levels of positive social behaviour and independence/self regulation. Parenting was also shown to be less negative with the home environment being more nurturing and self managed.

2.4 Locally, in Sunderland, an independent report by the University of Sunderland echoed these reports, with high levels of multi agency working to provide packages of support around family needs where these were more complex, evident in Sunderland.

2.5 In April 2008 we reported that the city had 17 Children's Centres established which had been achieved ahead of the government's target date. Since this time Sunderland has once again achieved the

expansion of its services citywide, which will be in place by March 2009. This citywide coverage is detailed in Section 4 of this report.

3. New Governance Arrangements & Reporting

- 3.1 In December 2008 Cabinet approved a new governance model for Children's Centres in Sunderland. These governance arrangements place the responsibility for Sunderland's Children's Centres with the Early Years and Childcare Strategic Partnership (EYCSP).
- 3.2 As part of this governance model the Cabinet decision also establishes 5 Children's Centre Local Advisory Partnership Boards (LAPB) across the city which are co-terminus with the new regeneration boundary areas. These LAP Boards will ensure that integrated and effective Children's Centre core services for children pre birth to 5 years and their parents/carers are delivered and performance of individual Children's Centres are managed.
- 3.3 The Terms of Reference and membership of the EYCSP have been amended to reflect their increased responsibility to monitor targets and reach of services. This remit includes increased responsibility "To deliver the Early Years Outcome Duty within the Childcare Act 2006 by providing a strategic overview of the Early Years and Childcare programme and the Children's Centres network of services on behalf of the Children's Trust."
- 3.4 The 5 Children's Centre Local Advisory Partnership Boards will be set up prior to the inaugural meeting of the revised Early Years & Childcare Strategic Partnership on the 19th May 2009.

4. Phase 3 Children's Centres

- 4.1 In October 2008 Cabinet made the decision to reconfigure some existing Children's Centres through extension of boundaries. This was considered to be the most viable option which enabled the Council to maximise existing resources and financial grant available, whilst ensuring full city coverage.
- 4.2 This approach is entirely consistent with the Local Authority's previous strategy of developing a network of services alongside existing provision which would be delivered through Children's Centre sites rather than stand alone investment buildings, which could lead to duplication of provision.
- 4.3 Therefore, Sunderland has achieved its Phase 3 service delivery target a year ahead of government expectations of March 2010. From the 1st April 2009 the core offer of services will be available citywide, although Capital development in outreach venues in local neighbourhoods will take up to 12 months to complete.

- 4.4 Sunderland's approach to service delivery therefore provides the optimum use of resources while grant funding is available. Grant funding has been profiled against the following key areas:
- Childcare & Early Learning
 - Support and challenge to Early Years settings delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - Delivery of Play and Family Learning 0-5 years
 - Childcare support for vulnerable children
 - Parenting & Family Support
 - Delivery of Parenting programmes
 - One to One support through Home Visiting and Outreach
 - Child & Family Health
 - Early Years Mental Health service
 - Community Paediatrics
 - Family support & parenting work on Child Development
 - Additional ante natal support particularly focused on vulnerable groups
 - Community Involvement & Parent Engagement
 - Support parents in governance arrangements of Children's Centres
 - Support parents to access training, education and employment
 - Volunteering opportunities
 - Infrastructure & Premises Costs
 - Area Coordination and Central Management & Administration
 - 17 Children's Centre premises and related costs (23 sites)
- 4.5 During previous phases of Children's Centre development, and now Phase 3, there has been rapid expansion and focus on securing key delivery partners through brokerage and contracting. This strategic response was in line with Children's Services development and Children's Trust arrangements to secure a 'whole systems' and joined up approach to service delivery.
- 4.6 Key developments in response to this approach are that Parenting work within Children's Centres is aligned with Sunderland's Family & Parenting Strategy 2008-2012, with universal parenting programmes jointly delivered by Family Support and Health practitioners.
- 4.7 Likewise, previous models of practice to access services for families' additional needs have been replaced using the Common Assessment Framework.
- 4.8 During this expansion it has been a challenge to ensure thorough community engagement and parental involvement and therefore this is

a key performance area in future. A new needs led grant for local community groups to access funds to support delivery of services and involving parents in service contract evaluation are two key actions through Phase 3 development.

5. Current Performance

5.1 Phase 1 and 2 Children's Centres can record a number of key successes and improvements in 2008/09. These are:

- Centres reached 5,889 children 0-5 years; an increase of 10.5% on 2007/08 and 16.8% over 2 years.
- In addition, 3,461 parents received services in addition to their children
- Health Services and Play & Learn activities remain popular with an increase in family support and parenting work
- Current reach of 0-3 year olds is 51.6%
- Children accessing the 3 and 4 year old free entitlement of 15 hours education is in excess of 95%.
- In addition, 22.6% of all 3 and 4 year olds accessed Children's Centre services
- 1078 families either received multi agency packages of support, or gained direct access to services for additional needs. There were 474 families in 2007/08.
- Services accessed for additional needs show 110% increase for childcare and 5% increase for additional Family Support and Child Development against 2007 figures.
- 302 children aged 2 years have accessed Pathfinder places which are available for vulnerable children. Of these children, 84% have accessed universal Children's Centre services and 20% accessed targeted family support following a needs assessment. This is a 22% increase on last year.

5.2 Since October 2008 through pilot work and now everyday practice, parent satisfaction surveys are undertaken to gauge the quality of services delivered through Children's Centres. Appendix 1 shows a high level of satisfaction with services including service quality and staff ability to connect with parents. 90+% of families would recommend friends to Children's Centres

- 5.3 Outlined in Appendix 2 & 3 are 2 case studies which evidence work undertaken by multi agency workers to support specific child and family needs. In both cases the CAMHS team have provided their professional opinion and stated that there is likely to be cost savings through early prevention which has led to specialist services not needed in both these cases.

6. Key Developments/Projects

- 6.1 The 2 Year Pathfinder provides funding for vulnerable children for up to three terms, therefore by nature these children and their families would not receive support during school holidays. Through Children's Centre funding we have been able to address this gap in service provision by supporting 86% of these children to have continued access to core services and learning through the Early Years Foundation Stage (259).
- 6.2 The Community Parent Outreach Service is a pilot project to be delivered from the 1st April 2009 in the South & East locality. The service has been designed to reach out to those families with a child under 3 years of age, who live in the lowest Super Output Areas (under 5% and 5 -10% IMD) and are not accessing Children's Centre services or activities. Evidence would suggest this focus is needed as these children are likely to be amongst the lowest achieving at the Early Years Foundation Stage. The service will be delivered by trained volunteers and supported by a voluntary sector contract.
- 6.3 Parental satisfaction is a key factor that will influence future service development and delivery. During May/June 2009 a citywide parental satisfaction survey of all families with children under 5 will be undertaken as part of the Children's Centres self assessment process. This survey will look to seek the views of previous users, as well as non users. The results are expected to provide a wide needs assessment and satisfaction response on which to plan more effectively and evidence where improvements need to be made at local level.
- 6.4 Through customer feedback and demand from working parents, pilot work across the city has resulted in delivery of services one twilight session per week and Saturday opening in the 5 localities. Evaluation of this pilot, which ran from January to March 2009, will provide information for planning of services. Early evidence shows that these opening hours are welcomed by families and is likely to continue with evidence and customer feedback providing the basis for expansion.

7. Future Targets and Areas for Improvement

The key targets and areas for improvement in the coming 2 years 2009 - 2011 are:

- Greater focus on identifying and supporting the most vulnerable children through Outreach and Home Visiting
- Greater emphasis on engagement in Universal Services from Excluded and Priority families
- Improved access to services for fathers and father figures
- Increased individual targets for services contracted to deliver Universal and Targeted services using 2008 data as the baseline
- Increase in consents received from parents by all practitioners to share information to support family needs
- Combined reach of services for 0-3 year olds to increase from 51.6% to 55% in 2009/10 and 65% in 2010/11
- All families with a new baby through a birth visit receive specific information and advice on Children's Centre services with support to access provision in the local area
- Targets to focus particularly on those children in the most disadvantaged areas (< 20% IMD) as these children are more likely to be the lowest achievers at the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)
- Continued working with settings to promote the use of the CAF to access services where additional needs are identified for children accessing the 3 and 4 year old universal free offer of education
- Additional services through Children's Centres for 3 and 4 year olds set at 25% for 2009/10 and 30% for 2010/11. Current reach is 22.6%.

8. Conclusion

Members as asked to consider the progress on development and performance of Children's Centres since April 2007.

9. Appendices

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| Appendix 1 | - | Parental Satisfaction Analysis |
| Appendix 2 & 3 | - | Case Studies |

10. Abbreviations

EYFS – Early Years Foundation Stage

CAF – Common Assessment Framework
IMD – Index of Multiple Deprivation

11. Background Papers

- Children’s Services Review Committee Report 17th April 2008
“Progress on development of management information for Children’s Centres”

Parental Satisfaction

Since October 2008 parental satisfaction surveys have been undertaken with Baby Massage, Busy Bodies, Messy Play, Soft Play, Time for Rhyme and Toy Library. An annual timetable of evaluations is now in place to seek parents views from all universal services to support planning and continuous improvement.

The percent of responses to the following questions were:-

How did you hear about the service/activity

Family / Friend	Activity timetable
33.0%	35.7%

How helpful and friendly the staff were

Very Good	Good
89.6%	9.0%

The quality of the service / activity

Very Good	Good
88.4%	9.9%

The welcome you received

Very Good	Good
88.9%	9.4%

How easy it was to ask questions

Very Good	Good
88.6%	9.6%

How appropriate the venue was for the activity?

Very Good	Good
87.7%	10.0%

Would you recommend the service / activity to family or friends?

Yes
90.2%

Some comments received from parents were:-

How the service benefited you

'Meet other mums & babies and helps to learn ways to relieve symptoms i.e. Wind etc' (Baby massage – Coalfields Locality)

'Gives myself and my child time to play and have fun together with other children'
(Messy Play – West Locality)

'As a grandmother, the opportunity to meet other parents and small children' (Messy Play – Washington Locality)

'I'm a childminder so it is great for the children to meet others and enjoy the activities'
(Messy Play – Washington Locality)

'Helped to give me ideas for home and helped me bond better with my children'
(Messy Play – South & East Locality)

'Chance to spend time with my child as I work part time' (Busy Bodies – West Locality)

'Child loves it. Happy child happy parent!' (Time for Rhyme – North Locality)

How the service benefited your child

'After being fussy about touching anything he is now reformed' (Messy Play – North Locality)

'Becoming more confident by interacting with children' (Messy Play – West Locality)

'Gets him interested in books and making things' (Story Time – Washington Locality)

What you liked best

'Very welcoming – good atmosphere' (Baby massage – Coalfields Locality)

'Meeting up with friends and socialising and the friendly atmosphere' (Messy Play – North Locality)

'Able to play with wide range of messy activities that I may not be able to provide at home' (Messy Play – South & East Locality)

Is there any other service or activity that we could offer that you and your family would find useful, and was there anything else you would like to tell us?

'More dad and child activities on a weekend' (Messy Play – West Locality)

'Things on a weekend like messy play, dancing or arts and crafts' (Stay & Play – West Locality)

'More dads activities or making men more welcome to join in different groups' (Messy Play – Coalfields Locality)

Have you any other suggestions or comments?

'These groups are very well planned and children love attending' (Messy Play – South & East Locality)

'I have been to groups in Sunderland and Seaham and the Monument Centre staff are the most helpful and so friendly. They make you want to come back – my little boy runs into the sessions' (Soft Play – Coalfields Locality)

'I have a very high opinion of this service and facilitator' (Busy Bodies – Washington Locality)

Case Study – Children’s Centres

Background

- Young mother (20 years) with a 2 month old baby, living with her mum, step dad and sister living in the Houghton le Spring area – feeling isolated.
- No contact with baby’s father
- Mum had been planning to emigrate prior to pregnancy
- History of depression and self harm
- Finding it difficult to cope with baby’s excessive crying
- Health Visitor reported that mother had high score on Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Score (EPDS).
- Mother had previously been referred to counselling at her own request regarding self harm.
- Referral originally received from Dr Morgan, Houghton Health Centre, as part of Request for Services (RFS) process.

Programme of Support and/or Intervention

- At initial referral baby massage was identified as identified for the family and the case was closed as the mother was under the care of her GP / Health Visitor.
- Family were re-referred and at this point the support of Early Years Mental Health Specialist was identified for the family.
- Early Years Mental Health Specialist carried out initial assessment in 2008, as referred had identified concerns regarding attachment.
- Early Years Mental Health Specialist requested Family Support Worker to support mum to access groups and activities, to compliment the work that she was undertaking around confidence and attachment.
- Initial take up of Family Support was unsuccessful, as at that stage mum was not ready to engage.
- Early Years Mental Health Specialist continued to work with mum and child to a point when the time was ready to access Family Support once again.
- Early Years Mental Health Specialist referred back to Family Support Worker – via direct referral process, requesting support re befriending and access to groups / activities etc.
- Initial joint visit undertaken by Early Years Mental Health Specialist and Family Support Worker, to introduce additional support to the family
- A weekly programme of support by was developed with the Family Support Worker and Mum, including registering the child for Local Education Authority nursery placement and supporting to access toddler groups and other Children Centre activities in an attempt to build confidence and self esteem.
- This support led on to accessing training courses with a long term goal of returning to work.
- Mum also began attending parent group on a weekly basis, with the support of the Family Support Worker in the initial stages until her confidence had built up and she was able to access on her own.
- Following a visit to the parent group by the Community Volunteer Worker, who was providing information on Volunteer opportunities within the admin team.
- Mum is currently going through the volunteer pathway, and once completed a place within the admin team will be sourced.

Outcomes for Child

- Child presents as a confident, happy child who is able to mix with other children.
- Accessed crèche sessions during parent group and training courses
- Developing mentally achieving all milestones for age (2 years)

Outcomes for Family

- Mum and child have a firm attachment and the Early Years Mental Health Specialist reports that they have a positive relationship.
- Mum has grown in confidence and is flourishing. She is now able and confident to access training and activities without support.
- Mum has built new friendships with other members of the parent group and wider community
- Mum and child now living independently in their own home
- Mum has now moved on in her life, has a new partner and is now in a stable relationship
- Mum has recently commented that “she has gained more confidence within herself and with going into new groups with her daughter”. She is really appreciative of the support provided.

Outcomes for Services/Lessons Learned

- Good example of effective multi agency team working
- Open communication channels between workers enabled joint support to be provided to the family for co-ordinated approach to prevent duplication.
- Case closed to both Family Support Worker and Early Years and Early Years Mental Health Specialist
- Flexibility in the provision of support, as this case shows that the timing of support can affect the take up of the support. At the first attempt to provide Family Support, the mum was not ready to engage, however with more therapeutic work, her confidence increased making the support easier to accept at a later stage.

Case Study – Children’s Centres

Background

- Referral received by Health Visitor on 08.09.08 – Family Support Worker allocated 12.09.08
- Mother recently moved into area via Woman’s Refuge. She fled Physical and Emotional abuse leaving the family home with minimum belongings
- 1 boy ages 15 years. No contact with father since few months old.
- 1 girl aged 1 year. Good general health. Has secure attachment with Mother. Father currently fighting for custody of her. Father has had no contact with her since Mother fled the family home 7 months ago. Ongoing court case.
- Extended family live outside the area. Limited contact with few family members. Mother had abusive physical and emotional relationship with her brother.
- Family living on low-income. Mother does not work due to depression
Children’s basic needs provided for.

Programme of Intervention

- A four month package of support was offered by the Family Support Worker, home visits provided initially x1 session per week to offer emotional support
- Support given to attend GP for medication regarding depression
- Safety equipment received via Children’s Essential Service.
- Offer Welfare Support: attending Citizens advice re: debt management, applications for Community Grants, opening new bank account and review of benefits currently receiving.
- Support to attend Children Centre activities e.g. Messy Play
- Support to attend adult courses in the local community e.g. Jewellery making courses, Community Volunteer Drop in sessions.

Outcomes for children

- Children making good progress since leaving abusive home. Mother states children are much happier away from that environment.
- Girl aged 1 enjoying being involved with Children’s Centre activities mixing with other children in group situation and also crèche environment.

Outcomes for Family

- Mother enjoying Adult Jewellery making course. Interacting with other adults, feeling less isolated.
- Family settling into community well making friends with local people.
- Family home has been decorated in lounge due to a Community Grant which was applied for by the family support worker.
- Mother happy with emotional support received, now accessing services without support.

Outcomes for Services / Lessons Learned

- Updated processes of application of Community Grants for the Family Support Worker
- Recognition of Citizens Advice Bureau’s resources and contacts.
- Packages of support for the family were undertaken in full consultation with mum.

- Family Support Worker liaised successfully with referrer, keeping her updated with intervention that had been offered.