

City of London

Review of Children's Centre Services

Summary Report

March 2016

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Background, Scope and Context

1. Background

1.1 The City of London Corporation is the accountable body for ensuring 'sufficient children's centre provision to meet local need' within the City geographical boundaries. Within the City, responsibility for children's centre provision sits within the Education and Early Years Service which is part of the Department for Community and Children's Services.

1.2 Towards the end of 2015, the City of London commissioned a review of its Children's Centre provision in order to assess the degree to which services are meeting the needs of children and families living in the City. In order to do this, the review aimed to focus on:

- The number of City families accessing Children's Centre services compared to local demographics.
- The range of Children's Centre services available to families and whether these were meeting the needs of children and families and the requirements of the Children's Centre Core Purpose.
- The use of funding and whether this is providing value for money.
- Establishing a set of recommendations that builds on the strengths of the existing model and is informed by recognised best practice.

2. The role of Children's Centres

2.1 The Childcare Act 2006 (The Act) sets out the responsibility for Local Authorities to provide sufficient Children's Centres, insofar as reasonably practicable, to meet local need. The Act includes a range of other duties including a duty to:

- Improve the well-being of young children and reduce inequalities (Section 1).
- Ensure that early childhood services are provided in an integrated manner (Section 3)

2.2 The Children's Centre Core Purpose (see Annex 1) sets out the minimum expectations required to improve the wellbeing of young children and reduce inequalities, stating that services should support:

- Child and family health and life chances.
- Child development and school readiness.
- Parenting aspirations and parenting skills.

2.3 Services, which may be provided by partner agencies, can be delivered in a specific Children's Centre building and in the community and other venues such as health centres and libraries to encourage and reach families.

3. Ofsted Inspection Framework

- 3.1 Section 98 of The Act requires Ofsted to inspect all children's centres within five years of opening and then at five yearly intervals.
- 3.2 Ofsted inspectors focus on the impact of children's centres on targeted young children and their families. They currently make three key judgements that contribute to a judgement on the overall effectiveness of the centre:
- Access to services by young children and their families within the children's centre reach area.
 - The quality and impact of practice and services on children and families.
 - The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management.
- 3.3 Judgements can be 'outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate'. Annex 2 sets out the targets in the current inspection framework required for a good judgement.
- 3.4 This framework, and all related inspection activity, is currently suspended pending consultation on the future for Ofsted inspections of children's centres. The most recent indications from Ofsted are that they will launch a consultation in the summer of 2016, leading to the introduction of a new inspection framework in September 2016.

4. Children's Centre Services provided in the City of London

- 4.1 In order to fulfil its statutory duties, the City has commissioned the Cass Child and Family Centre via Sir John Cass School, as the City's designated children's centre. The Cass Child and Family Centre combines children's centre provision with full and part-time day care for children aged 12 weeks to 5 years in the nursery. The Cass Children's Centre was inspected in October 2012, when it received a 'good' judgement. Sir John Cass school was inspected in April 2013 and received an 'outstanding judgement' and the early education was inspected in May 2015, when it also received a 'good' judgement.
- 4.2 The City also commissions children's centre and family support services from Golden Lane Children's Centre (in the London Borough of Islington). Golden Lane was last inspected in January 2012, when they received a 'good' judgement. The City's libraries service is also funded to provide children's centre activities.

5. Methodology

5.1 The review has involved :

- Interviews with 17 key staff responsible for the leadership, management and delivery of services that contribute to achieving Children’s Centre outcomes, and that are delivered through a commissioned service level agreement or by City staff.
- Interviews with 107 mothers, fathers and other carers including other family members, childminders and nannies attending provision at the Cass Child and Family Centre, Artizan, Shoe Lane and Barbican libraries and Little Pickles, Hatching Dragons and Barbican Playgroups.
- Interviews with the Sir John Cass Primary School Head Teacher and with the Chair of the Cass Child and Family Centre Advisory Board.
- Observations of provision at the Cass Child and Family Centre and the Artizan, Shoe Lane and Barbican libraries.
- Attendance at a City Multi-Agency Practitioners’ Forum.
- Training and attendance at a data support session, in the Tribal Synergy Connect Early Years Management Information System in use by the Children’s Centre. Training was delivered by London Borough of Islington.
- Telephone conversations with Tribal the providers of the Synergy Connect system used for recording Children’s Centre data.
- Desk research, including analysis of financial and attendance data and a review of relevant City strategies and policies and of published good practice.

6. Summary findings and recommendations

6.1 Access

Ofsted judgments assess how children’s centres engage with families with young children, how they identify the services families need and how they know that those who are in most need of services are supported to participate. Particular emphasis is paid to identifying and meeting the needs of target groups.

6.2 Ofsted standards for a ‘good’ judgement are:

- 80% of families with young children are known and target groups identified.
- 65% of target group are registered and continue to access services until their needs are met.
- 80% of target groups take up their early education entitlement

6.3 A key finding of the review is that not all attendance of Children’s Centre Services has been reported consistently across the City but from a review of the available data, it is evident that between all services accessed by families with young children, over 80% of families with young children are known. Similarly over 65% of families

with children under five continue to access services at Children's Centres. Target groups have not explicitly and consistently identified.

6.4 Recommendations

- Develop a needs analysis or City profile, detailing levels of need for families with children under five.
- Establish explicit target groups for provision, based on need and location, in line with the CYPP.
- Implement a process of planning services based on a) an analysis of the needs of City residents in general and target groups in particular and b) an analysis of take up of services. An annual service plan is also recommended.
- In light of the above, consider whether an outreach programme is needed to reach families not accessing services.

7. Quality and Impact

7.1 The quality of the activities observed was good and there is some evidence of impact. Parents interviewed consistently commented positively about their satisfaction with the services and the way in which they have improved outcomes for their children. Going forward there is an opportunity for a more systematic approach to planning and evaluation including for target groups. Services provided, whilst often popular and well attended, would benefit by being planned in greater alignment with identified need and co-ordinated across the range of locations to be most accessible.

7.2 Recommendations:

- Set clear targets and introduce a systematic way to measure quality, impact and levels of satisfaction.
- Implement a systematic approach to formal evaluation, assessment of progress and tracking, so as to provide evidence of the quality and impact of services. Ideally, this would extend to provision by partners, including libraries and adult education
- Produce a quarterly performance report for the advisory board and City senior manager. This data would also provide much of the impact evidence required for the SEF.

8. Governance, leadership and management

8.1 An Advisory Board which scrutinises and supports Cass Child and Family Centre was established in 2015 but there an opportunity to include all providers within a single City-wide Advisory Board that can provide strategic input and jointly agree the distribution of the right services across locations. As the commissioning authority, the City of London would still retain management oversight, performance measurement and the decision making responsibility under this arrangement.

8.2 The SLA with the Cass Child and Family Centre is due for renewal in August 2016 which provides an opportunity to review the service specification, target setting and performance monitoring across each location where services are provided. Formal self-evaluation against an outcomes framework should be central to this process.

8.3 Data for Children's Centre usage by both the City and the Cass Child and Family Centre needs to be better quality and more regular management information. Data should be provided on City families accessing and benefiting from services, as well as details on the activity itself.

8.4 Recommendations

- Develop a children's centre services outcomes framework. An outline for this is included as Annex 6.
- Work with providers and partners to collect data on activities that contribute to the Children's Centre Core Purpose, including where possible those delivered by the Library Service, health and adult education.
- Implement a data reporting process - either through a robust SLA with LB Islington that outlines the data and reports that are required or by the City purchasing its own EYMIS licence.
- Introduce quarterly performance reports.
- Assume responsibility for self-assessment and produce an overall SEF incorporating provision delivered by Cass Child and Family Centre, Golden Lane Children's Centre, health and the various departments of the City (FYi, libraries, adult education etc).
- Assume responsibility for an overall children's centre advisory board which would have representation from Cass, Golden Lane, Health (health visiting, midwifery, FNP), Early Intervention, Adult Skills, housing, early years, libraries etc. The role of the advisory board would be to provide support and challenge on overall performance and to support shared planning. Some consideration would need to be given to how this would align with other boards.
- Introduce SLAs for the delivery of children's centre services to cover the services to be provided, the outputs and targets linked to an outcomes framework, monitoring and evaluation expectations and how providers will report on quality and impact including contributing to self-evaluation.

9. Service delivery model

9.1 In October 2015, the responsibility for commissioning health visitor services moved from NHS England to local authorities. This has been a key driver for local authorities to review how they deliver children's centre provision and, in particular, how they ensure targeted services meet the needs of the most vulnerable families whilst maintaining a universal offer. By bringing together the Healthy Child Programme and the Children's Centre Core Purpose local authorities, in partnership with the local health trust, are developing an integrated approach to streamline provision, to ensure families are not 'falling through the net' and to avoid

duplication of activities. Typically universal services are delivered through the children's centre structure (in some cases supplemented by additionally commissioned voluntary or community sector providers), health services are delivered by health visitors and targeted family support are delivered by local authority early help or early intervention staff.

9.2 City children's centre services are currently delivered through two commissioning arrangements with Cass Child and Family Centre and Golden Lane Children's Centre and supplemented by additional provision by libraries, by adult education, by early help and by health.

9.3 Whilst the current delivery model has many strengths, and broadly meets the children's centre agenda, there are aspects of management and delivery that could be further developed or strengthened. It is not recommended that significant changes are made at this stage but rather that the City employs a strategic Children's Centre Services Manager (or similar) to implement the recommendations in sections 4.1 – 4.3. The unit of inspection for children's centre may become the local authority rather than the designated centre and therefore the City should lead on these recommendations and changes.

10.4 In taking this forward, the following key issues should be considered:

- The City has identified a need for children's centre services to be more aware of, and responsive to, its families in greatest need.
- Cass Child and Family Centre and Golden Lane Children's Centre both have a limited geographical reach and are unlikely to be able to reach families across the whole borough. Furthermore Golden Lane Children's Centre is located in, and maintained by, another borough.
- The Cass Child and Family Centre, Golden Lane Children's Centre and libraries each have potential to reach out to City families. Better data is needed to demonstrate the extent to which they already do this.
- The Cass Child and Family Centre is recognised as a huge asset to the City. Senior leadership within the Sir John Cass School recognise and acknowledge that the Children's Centre is on an improvement journey and evidence from the review indicates that it is making changes that support this journey.
- There is capacity in other venues in the City to deliver additional children's centre provision as part of an outreach a strategy such as libraries and the Green Box community centre.

Annex 1

THE “CORE PURPOSE” OF SURE START CHILDREN’S CENTRES GOVERNMENT VISION:

The Government believes that Children’s Centres should have a clear core purpose, focused on

1. Improving outcomes for young children and their families, with a particular focus on the most disadvantaged families, in order to reduce inequalities in:

- child development and school readiness;

Supported by improved:

- parenting aspirations, self esteem and parenting skills;
- child and family health and life chances.

CO-PRODUCED STATEMENT OF INTENT:

The Government has worked with sector leaders to consider evidence and good practice, resulting in a co-produced statement of intent about how the core purpose can be achieved, by:

- 2. Assessing need across the local community**
- 3. Providing access to universal early years services in the local area including high quality and affordable early years education and childcare**
- 4. Providing targeted evidence based early interventions for families in greatest need, in the context of integrated services**
- 5. Acting as a hub for the local community, building social capital and cohesion.**
- 6. Sharing expertise with other early years settings to improve quality.**

SECTOR-LED PRINCIPLES:

Sector Leaders believe that all Children’s Centre activity should be underpinned by the principles of:

- 7. Respecting and engaging parents**
- 8. Working in partnership across professional/agency boundaries**

Annex 2 - Ofsted targets for a good judgement

Access to services

What Ofsted is looking for to achieve a **good** judgement:

1. 80% of families with young children are known and target groups identified
2. 65% of target group are registered
3. 65% of target groups continue to access services until their needs are met (sustained contact)
4. 80% of target groups take up their 2, 3 & 4 year old early education entitlement
5. 80% of 2YOs, identified as in need of Early Intervention, access the help they need

An **inadequate** judgement would be realised where the centre does not have, or does not use, robust data to identify families and target groups and as a result participation rates are low. This would also apply to sustained contact with target groups and how families are supported to access appropriate support.

Quality and impact

What Ofsted is looking for to achieve a **good** judgement:

1. Planning, observation, assessment of progress show 51% of children & targeted families have improved outcomes & reduced inequalities
2. Tracking shows that 65% of children from target groups have made good progress and 80% of targeted children work within age-related expectations when starting school
3. 65% of parents identified as needing to develop and extend parenting skills complete a parenting course, with a positive impact on family life
4. 97% of adults supported by the centre develop a good understanding of their responsibilities for child's wellbeing and safety; Data shows that early help has positive impact on children
5. 80% of adults identified as needing help with employment skills access appropriate high quality services and that 65% of adults accessing courses complete them & improve their skills (including literacy, numeracy and language)
6. 97% of health-specific targets are met
7. Effective support, advice & training improves the quality of linked EY provision in the reach
8. Robust assessment ensures 65% of target groups receive appropriate and timely early help
9. Case files and records are of a high standard, include views of targeted families and demonstrate involvement of professionals
10. 51% of target groups actively contribute to centre activities; get involved in volunteering and/or establish their own informal support networks
11. A balance of targeted & universal activities engage 65% of families

An **inadequate** judgement would be realised where the centre does not track and monitor quality and impact or identify intended outcomes, where partnership working does not identify targeted families, where practice (including planning, observation and assessment) is poor and service planning is not informed by evaluation of impact and outcomes.

Governance, leadership & management

What Ofsted is looking for to achieve a **good** judgement:

1. Challenging outcomes and performance measures, based on analysis of need and ambitious aspirations for targeted families; 80% of measures met
2. Governance arrangements are well-embedded, provide effective challenge and drive continuous improvement
3. Effective SLAs and cross-agency partnerships enable good cooperation and information sharing
4. The culture of safeguarding is embedded and robust policies, procedures & practices are in place, including working with partners
5. Parents & children are consulted about their needs; 80% of users are fully involved in design of services & contribute to decision-making about priorities and 80% of users are satisfied with the quality and ability of services to meet their needs and improve outcomes
6. Effective arrangements for evaluation and improvement of services: Parents, children and practitioners contribute to evaluation; evaluation informs service planning
7. Data and management information is used for continuous improvement, & is sensitive to the diverse needs of the community.
8. Performance management and professional supervision are well established; professional development opportunities are provided
9. Financial resources are well deployed through effective partnership working etc.; Resources are used effectively & efficiently

An **inadequate** judgement would be realised where the centre is not meeting legal obligations, where safeguarding arrangements are poor, where performance is not monitored and there is no evidence of impact, where governance is weak and does not challenge the centre, where leaders do not monitor quality and impact; where parents are not engaged and resources and services are insufficient to meet the needs of targeted families.

Annex 3 – Provision delivered by the City of London Adult Skills and Education

| Course Title | Venue |
|--|-----------------------------|
| CV writing, application writing and interview skills | Cass |
| Book-keeping | Cass |
| English – functional skills | Golden Lane |
| English conversation – first steps into ESOL | Golden Lane |
| ESOL entry 1 | Cass and Golden Lane |
| ESOL entry 2/3 | Cass and Golden Lane |
| Maths – functional skills | Cass and Golden Lane |
| Family ICT | Community Ed Centre |
| How to support your child with maths | Cass |
| Exploring and making up stories as a family | Community Ed Centre |
| Learning through play | Community Ed Centre |
| Family Arts & Crafts | Golden Lane |
| Family pottery | Cass |
| Family cookery | Cass |
| Creative Stitch Craft | Cass |
| Craft | Cass |
| Creative sewing | Portsocken Community Centre |

Annex 4 – Example of Children’s Centre services evaluation form

Name of the session:

Please complete this form to help us plan and improve our services. If you are a childminder please complete the questions for the children in your care – thank you

Postcode: _____

What are the number and ages of the child/ren with you to-day?

Under 1 year 2 years old 3 years old
 4 years old 5 years old Over 5 years old

2. How would you describe your ethnicity?

.....

3. Which best describes you? (please tick as appropriate)

| | Male | Female |
|-----------------------------------|------|--------|
| Parent/carer with a child under 5 | | |
| Childminder | | |
| Grandparent | | |
| Nanny | | |
| Other (please state) _____ | | |

4. Since attending this Children’s Centre please tick what has changed?

1. My child is getting better at sharing and taking turns
 A lot A little No Change
2. My child is talking/communicating more
 A lot A little No Change
3. My child is more independent (less clingy)
 A lot A little No Change
4. My child listens to stories with increasing attention
 A lot A little No Change
5. My child joins in with nursery rhymes and songs
 A lot A little No Change
6. My child is physically more active and confident
 A lot A little No Change

7. My child is more ready for nursery/pre-school
A lot A little No Change

8. I know where to go for help, information and support if needed
A lot A little No Change

9. I have grown more confident in dealing with the different needs of my child
A lot A little No Change

10. I feel more confident interacting/playing with my child
A lot A little No Change

11. I have made friends with other parents/carers & their children
A lot A little No Change





12. I feel I know more about how to keep my child safe
A lot A little No Change

13. Me and my child enjoy taking part in festivals and celebrations
A lot A little No Change

14. My family's views are listened to at the centre
A lot A little No Change

Please use this space to tell us what you like about the session and what could be done to improve it

5. How do you find this session?

| Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> | Good <input type="checkbox"/> | Okay <input type="checkbox"/> | Poor <input type="checkbox"/> |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |

6. Have you attended another Children's Centre in the last six months?

Yes No

If yes which centre(s)

7. Do you feel more ready / better equipped to go to work or take up training?

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Yes | |
| No | |
| Not relevant | |
| Not sure | |

8. From your general experience of our Children's Centre services, how satisfied/dissatisfied are you with the services you have accessed?

- Very Satisfied 😄
- Satisfied 😊
- Neutral 😐
- Dissatisfied 😞
- Very dissatisfied 😡

9. Have the services you have accessed met your needs?

- Yes – completely
- Yes – to some extent
- No
- Don't know / not sure

10. Any other comments?



Annex 5 - summary of Children's Centre services reporting data requirements

Typically, quantitative data that should be extracted from the data system and reported on at quarterly intervals might include

| Theme | Indicator | Denominator | Numerator |
|--------------------|---|--|--|
| Families known | % of families registered | Number of families with children under 5 resident in the City | Number registered at a Children's Centre |
| Access to services | % of City families accessing services | Number of families with children under 5 resident in the City | Number accessing Centre services |
| | % of target families accessing services | Number of target families resident in LSOA E01000005 | Number accessing Centre services |
| | % of children aged 0-2 accessing services | Number of children aged 0-2 resident in the City | Number accessing Centre services |
| | % of children aged under 5 accessing services | Number of children aged from conception to 4 years, resident in the City | Number accessing Centre services |
| | % of those accessing services that are lone parents | Number of City families accessing services | Number that are lone parents |
| | % of those accessing services that are unemployed | Number of City families accessing services | Number that are unemployed |
| | % of those accessing services that are BAME | Number of City children accessing services | Number that are BAME |
| Sustained contact | % of target groups that sustain involvement | Number of target families accessing the centre in the past 12 months | Number attending 3 or more times in the past 12 months |
| Services delivered | Details of activities delivered, duration of activity, and numbers attending. It is also useful to 'group' activities according to their type and aim | | |

Annex 6 – outline outcomes framework

Outcome area 1 - school readiness: Children are prepared and ready for school or children are eager to learn and confident in achieving their potential

| Indicators | Measures |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Child development at 2 – 2½ years | Percentage of children achieving the expected score in ‘Ages and Stages Questionnaire’ (ASQ-3) questionnaire in the 2 – 2½ year integrated review Percentage of children achieving the expected score in ASQ-3 questionnaire communication domain in the 2 – 2½ year integrated review |
| Take up of early education | Percentage of eligible two year olds accessing funded early education Percentage of three and four year olds accessing funded early education |
| School readiness | Percentage of children achieving a good level of development (GLD) at the end of reception (Early Years Foundation Stage - EYFS) (PH 1.2i) Percentage of children achieving the expected level in the communication and language early learning goal (EYFS) Percentage of early education settings, Children’s Centres and childminders judged outstanding or good by Ofsted |

Outcome area 2 - health: children and families are emotionally and physically well

| Indicators | Measures |
|--|--|
| Emotional wellbeing | Percentage of children achieving the expected level in the personal, social and emotional development early learning goal (EYFS) |
| Breastfeeding | Percentage of women who initiate breastfeeding in the first 48 hours after delivery Percentage of infants who are totally or partially breastfed at 6 – 8 weeks after birth |
| Teenage pregnancy | Number of under 18 conceptions |
| Overweight and obesity rates at Reception and Y6 | Percentage of children aged 4-5 years (children in reception) classified as obese or overweight |

Outcome area 3 - staying safe: children are safe within their families and communities or children are safe and protected from harm

| Indicators | Measures |
|--|--|
| Contact with children's social care services | Number of children coming into care Number of children affected by domestic abuse |
| Contact with acute health services | Hospital admissions of children aged (0-4) |

Outcome area 4 - parenting and parenting aspirations: Mothers, fathers and other carers are confident in caring for their children or mothers, fathers and other carers are self-reliant and have strong and supportive social networks; Mothers, fathers and other carers can access employment and training

| Indicators | Measures |
|--|---|
| Increased parental confidence | Number of parents demonstrating improved outcomes from parenting courses CAF outcome targets met |
| Improvements in employment of parents/carers | Number of parents/carers who undertake volunteering opportunities |