

Committee	Dated:
Grand Committee – Community and Children’s Services	13 January 2017
Subject: Early Years Performance	Public
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Summary

During 2016, the Education and Early Years Service has focused on understanding the quality of Early Years provision across the City of London with regards to its statutory responsibilities. This report sets out the City of London’s statutory responsibilities and the work that has been undertaken this year to understand the baseline for early years provision which includes audits of every early years setting for safeguarding and Special Educational Needs practices.

The report confirms that there is sufficient early years capacity for families wanting places. It points to key areas of high performance which includes judgements of good or outstanding for all settings and areas of development, which includes work required on literacy, communication and language.

The report provides an overview of priorities for 2017. These are:

- The appointment of a permanent Early Years Advisory Teacher and Area SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) to support the settings;
- The strengthening of literacy skills and the introduction of a literacy scheme for all resident children under 5;
- The continuation of ‘Little Movers in the Big City’, a movement scheme designed to develop cognitive development;
- Building practitioner participation in training and professional development and preparing for Inspections
- Managing the introduction of additional free hours of childcare

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The importance of the early years on a child's immediate and longer term outcomes has been widely evidenced in recent years and more recently, they have been shown to play a pivotal role in addressing and breaking cycles of poverty and deprivation. This has been recognised in the Childcare Act 2006, Education Act 2011 and the Childcare and Families Act of 2014 which have all provided, pre-school aged children with an entitlement to high quality early education provision. This entitlement is provided through Local Authorities delegated duties.
2. The role of the Local Authority in its partnership with early years settings has changed in recent years, and the 'Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities in the Provision of Early Education and Childcare' published in 2014, placed duties on Local Authorities in relation to ensuring 'sufficiency' of childcare and early education provision but also clarified that the LAs role is to:
Secure information, advice and training for early years childcare providers in their areas of:
 - Meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Curriculum for 0-5 year olds
 - Meeting the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities, vulnerable and disadvantaged children; and
 - Effective safeguarding and protection
3. These duties are limited to providers who are newly registered, registering, or not yet judged as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' at Ofsted inspection so the core minimum role of the Local Authority has changed from an offer of a universal support service to all settings and has become instead a more targeted role to ensure sufficiency, and to provide support for settings not yet 'good'.

Current Position

4. The City of London has assessed its need for early years places and established that the numbers of places are sufficient. There is a good variety of types of places available to families and whilst there are no registered childminders within the City, a large number of nannies support families and work is being undertaken to provide nannies with professional training.
5. All settings are rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted where they have been inspected. One newly opened setting is yet to have its first inspection.
6. Statistically outcomes for children are generally good and in some areas higher than the national average.
 - 89.8% achieve a 'good level of development' in the area of Physical Development compared to 87.2% nationally.

- 95.9% of City children achieve a 'good level of development' in their Personal, Social and Emotional development compared to 83.7% nationally.
 - 75.5% of children achieve a 'good level of development' in Communication, Language and Literacy compared to 89.3% nationally.
7. A key area for development is Communication, Language and Literacy where children do not fare as well as the national average. To some extent this is because of the different starting points that they have as they join an early years setting and the fact that English is not always the first language spoken in the family home.

2016 Workplan Focus

8. At the beginning of 2016, the City commissioned the London Borough of Islington to conduct audits of each of the City of London settings, to look at the key areas of statutory responsibility across all settings; Safeguarding and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. In parallel, a skills audit was also undertaken with settings, by the City of London Corporation, to benchmark the qualifications and skills of those working within the settings, and this informed a targeted training programme. A package of targeted support has been constructed around settings, to enable them to be largely self-sufficient and self-developing, whilst doing so within a supportive framework:
- The audits provided bespoke feedback to both the Corporation and each individual setting about their performance against key statutory requirements, including areas for development and action required.
 - Termly 'Early Years Advisor' visits were also commissioned from Islington Council to provide practical input into raising and ensuring the quality of provision across all settings.
 - An Early Years Forum for providers has been developed and now runs termly; early indication show that this is already well-regarded as a forum for professional development and where best practice ideas can be shared across a professional network.
9. Within the past year, a new setting has opened within the City, and has benefitted from extensive input by the City's Early Years and Education Service and services commissioned by it. The aforementioned approach has enabled the Corporation to alert the setting to any short-fallings at an early stage and provide support for them to rectify matters swiftly. Moving forward, this framework provides regular avenues of communication between settings and the LA and vice-versa, thus enabling a more strategic approach to ensuring and raising the quality of provision locally.
10. The interlacing of these discreet pieces of work has enabled the Corporation to have a cogent understanding of the provision on offer to the youngest residents of the City, and to be confidently assured that legislative duties are being met, and that provision is largely sound.

11. The settings have been supported during the year with specialist Early Years Teaching advice, a wide programme of training, specialist training on SEND and the introduction of a professionals forum for practitioners.

2017 Priorities

12. Challenging and supporting children's learning in the areas of Communication, Language and Literacy remains a focus across the City of London settings. A new permanent and full time post of Early Years Advisor will be recruited to early in 2017.

13. A programme focusing on promoting movement and physical development in young children has been rolled out to all Early Years Settings. This is in response to recent research that demonstrates a consequential link between physical development and cognitive development. The progress of children participating in 'Little Movers in the Big City' will be monitored throughout the year so that its impact can be evaluated with a view to becoming a City of London Early Years entitlement.

14. Universal services delivered within the City's library service under the Children's Centre programme have been strengthened and have an even more rigorous focus on promoting language and literacy of the City's youngest children. The Dolly Parton Imagination Library, an international scheme which provides a free book to every child between 0-5 every month for the whole 5 years is due to be rolled out at Easter 2017 across the City and will be available for all City resident families.

15. Recent months have seen the Government consult with key stakeholders about increasing the entitlement for free early years education for all three and four years olds to 30 hours per week for eligible children. This consultation has now ended, and from September 2017 a small proportion of the City's residents will be entitled to up to 30 hours of free early years provision for 38 weeks of the year. In parallel, the funding formula currently delegated to each LA to pay for the free 2, 3 and 4-year-old entitlements is also set to change, with further stipulations about how much can be retained for 'central spend' (e.g. training, LA support resources etc.). Future work will therefore focus on supporting settings to continue to deliver quality within this new financial position, and to continue to ensure sufficient provision following the introduction of the new September 2017 reforms to entitlement.

16. Like all Local Authorities, the City of London will receive two key inspections that will impact on Early Years within the next few years. These are the SEND Inspection which has recently been introduced and the Children Centre Services which will affect those centres providing Children's Centres Services. The framework for this inspection has not yet been introduced.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

17. The Early Years strategy is consistent with the Children and Young People's Plan objectives and in particular, the work focuses on closing the gap in outcomes between children.

Conclusion

18. The City of London recognises the crucial impact of early years provision on future outcomes for children. It goes beyond its statutory duty in supporting Early Years providers to deliver excellent services for very young children and their families. City wide programmes have now been commissioned to establish a level playing field of entitlement for all children.

Appendices

None

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