

City of London Early Years Strategy 2013–2015

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Early Years Strategy 2013–2015 (the Strategy) builds on existing practice in the City to meet the duties set out in the Childcare Act 2006, the partnership priorities in the City's Children and Young People's Plan (2013–2015), the Healthy Child Programme (0–5), and the NHS *Social and Emotional Wellbeing: Early Years* guidance. It is supported by an Action Plan which identifies the key objectives, actions and outcomes we wish to achieve.
- 1.2. The Strategy replaces the previous Childcare Sufficiency Strategy 2011–2014, encompassing the duties covered in that strategy for local authorities to work in partnership to ensure integrated early years provision and sufficient provision of children's centres,¹ and to secure sufficient childcare.² It builds on previous achievements of providing affordable childcare not only to City residents, but also to low income families who work in the City. Some of the timescales in the attached Action Plan therefore pre-date the start of this Strategy.
- 1.3. The Strategy has been developed as an overarching strategy for all services in the City delivered to families with children under five, in consultation with providers, and in response to key findings of the City's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and Family Profiling Project.
- 1.4. The vision the City has for children and young people is to ensure that:
Every child and young person will have and enjoy a safe and healthy lifestyle. They will be able to access a high quality education provision to achieve their maximum potential in order to thrive in their community. They will be supported by a skilled and confident workforce.

2. Overall aim of the Strategy

- 2.1. The aim of the Strategy is to improve outcomes for all children and to narrow the gap between those who are the most and least vulnerable through the development of sustainable, high quality, inclusive, integrated early years services – services which are safe, accessible, affordable, and responsive to children and their parents' needs.
- 2.2. Local authorities have a key role in ensuring that there is sufficient quality childcare which matches the needs of parents, and this is a main focus of the Strategy: childcare that supports parents and carers to work or study, but also provision for respite purposes (for parents/carers of children with disabilities/SEN). Recognising that not all families can, or wish to, access childcare, this plan outlines efforts for improving outcomes for children by the provision of early learning opportunities for those families who do not, or cannot, access formal childcare.

¹Sure Start children's centres statutory guidance 2013

²Childcare Act 2006

- 2.3. The integration of services to reduce social and health inequalities is another key focus of this Strategy, recognising the importance of the Healthy Child Programme (pregnancy and the first five years of life), part of the Early Intervention and Prevention public health programme, and the City's Early Intervention and Prevention Framework for improving the outcomes for children by ensuring that early help is provided when it is needed.
- 2.4. The Strategy also covers the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It is widely acknowledged that 'high quality pre-schooling is related to better intellectual and social/behavioural development for children':³

Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high quality early learning together provide the foundation children need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.

(Early Years Foundation Stage statutory guidance 2012)

3. National and local context

- 3.1. The importance of early intervention and prevention in the early years has been highlighted in a number of recent public reports: the Graham Allen Review on early intervention, Frank Field's review of poverty and life chances, Tickell's Early Years Foundation Stage Review and the NHS *Social and Emotional Wellbeing: Early years* guidance.⁴ Evidence based interventions, such as the Family Nurse Partnership for vulnerable young parents, are being expanded nationally and will be implemented in the City and Hackney shortly, with strong multi-agency working seen as critical to ensuring the best possible outcomes for children and their families.
- 3.2. The City has an estimated 340 children under the age of five with a projected increasing demand for early years services and reception school places over the next four years.⁵ The percentage of children reaching a Good Level of Development at the Foundation Stage is above that of other London local authorities and there has been an increase in the provision of affordable childcare places over the last year for both City residents and low income City workers. Apart from universal services available through children's centres, libraries, health visitors, the Family Information Service etc., targeted interventions are provided to families with additional needs through the early intervention referral process managed within the Children's Social Care Team.

³ The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education Project (EPPE) 2004

⁴ Graham Allen MP, *Early Intervention: Next Steps*; Frank Field MP, *Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances*; Dame Clare Tickell, *The Early Years: Foundations for life, health and learning*; NICE, *Social and Emotional Wellbeing: Early years*

⁵ City of London Education Strategy 2013

4. Objectives of the Strategy

- 4.1. The objectives are set out in the attached Action Plan, along with expected outcomes, timescales, partner's strategy and lead responsibility.
- 4.2. The strategic objectives of the strategy are:
 - improving information, advice and guidance to parents so they have the knowledge, skills and confidence to meet their children's needs
 - managing the supply and sufficiency of provision
 - improving access to services for parents of children who are vulnerable or have additional needs/disabilities
 - supporting parents/carers to engage in the benefits of early education
 - ensuring high quality provision
 - maximising early intervention and prevention.

5. Challenges

- 5.1. While the Strategy will aim to support parents and carers needing childcare who are wishing to work or study as far as possible, the present economic outlook adds significantly to this challenge. This is coupled with the limited number of childcare settings in the City, and the high costs associated in delivering services, which makes providing affordable childcare challenging, with fees here being significantly higher than in surrounding local authorities.
- 5.2. The contrast of wealth and areas of poverty in the City makes getting the balance of services right more challenging than in other local authorities. Approximately 50% of children under the age of five are not using children's centre services, with a high proportion of families who are using a children's centre doing so in another local authority. In July 2013 the Family Profiling Project identified that 21% of children living in the City of London were in low income households (defined as being in receipt of low income based benefits), which reaches over 50% concentration in the Portsoken Ward, a significant number of whom do not have English as their first language.
- 5.3. The disproportionate make-up of residents compared with City workers is different to other local authorities and brings with it the additional challenge of the needs of childcare for low income City workers which, although not a duty for the City to provide under the Childcare Act 2006, are desirable to reflect the broader remit of the City of London Corporation.

6. Monitored and evaluated

- 6.1. An annual report will be submitted to the Community and Children's Services Department Leadership Team reporting on progress, as well as appropriate reporting to the Health and Wellbeing Board and Children's Executive Board on the key findings of the Strategy being reflected in the Action Plan.

7. ACTION PLAN 2013–2015

The Action Plan is attached.

City of London: Early Years Strategy Action Plan 2013–2015

Objective 1: Improving information, advice and guidance to parents so they have the knowledge, skills and confidence to nurture and provide support to meet their children’s needs					
Actions	Outcomes	Timescale	Lead	Partners/Link strategies	2013 update
1.1 Maintain high quality, accurate and timely information about childcare and services for children and their families on the Family Information Service Directory.	Parents, carers and professionals have 24/7 access to information.	March 2014 On-going	Family Information Service (FIS) Manager		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Family Information Service Directory is undergoing a complete re-design to enhance its functionality and performance. The new-look site is scheduled to launch in early 2014. • Visits to the site continue to increase, with an average of 1,087 a month. This is a rise of 300 per month compared with the previous year.
1.2 Produce targeted information to promote services to ‘hard to reach’ families in areas with higher levels of need.	Increased take-up and understanding of early years and childcare services by families who are isolated, on low incomes and disengaged from mainstream services.	On-going	FIS Manager	CCFC Libraries Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new children’s centre registration form has been introduced that can be completed by families in situations where a professional cannot be present. • Text messaging function used to target families to specific activities. • Service-specific publicity material produced and sent out to targeted families. Targeted outreach sessions in Cripplegate and Portsoken Wards.

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<p>1.3 Develop and improve the capacity of the Family Information Service and practitioners to provide specialist information, advice and guidance.</p>	<p>Increase in understanding, awareness and take-up of services to improve resilience of families.</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>FIS Manager</p>	<p>CCFC Libraries Service City Advice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Information and Outreach Officer continues to work in partnership with City Advice, City Libraries activities and GP practices to provide a seamless IAG service for families. • CCFC Family Support Worker and the Outreach Officer both trained on the Solihull Approach. • Both members of staff undertake home visits to families with new births.
<p>1.4 Increase participation in adult and community learning activities.</p>	<p>Parents and carers enhance their ability to provide for and nurture their family.</p>	<p>March 2014 and annually</p>	<p>FIS Manager</p>	<p>CCFC Golden Lane Children's Centre</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive programme of activities available at both sites. To be reported on at the end of the 2014 financial year.
<p>1.5 Publish a directory of services.</p>	<p>Parents, carers and professionals can find the services they need.</p>	<p>March 2014</p>	<p>FIS Manager</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New objective.

Objective 2: Managing the supply and sufficiency of provision					
Actions	Outcomes	Timescale	Lead	Partners/Link strategies	2013 update
2.1 Implementation of the City revised admissions and charging policy to subsidise families according to income.	Banded charging policy increasing take-up of childcare places by low income families who would otherwise not have access.	Sept 2013	Education and Early Years Manager	CCFC Golden Lane Children's Centre (LB Islington)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised charging policy introduced for September 2013. An increased number of families on lower incomes who are taking up childcare places. • Virtually all low income families who request a place at CCFC are given one, providing that their requirements for hours can be accommodated.
2.2 Support to low income City families and workers to remain in work through implementation of the S106 Childcare Affordability Scheme.	Provision of affordable childcare to low income City resident and City workers.	Oct 2013	Education and Early Years Manager	Smithfield House Nursery (City) Nursery at St Paul's (Tower Hamlets) King Square Community Nursery (Islington)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New contracts put in place with three nurseries offering 15 places. A publicity campaign in summer 2013 produced increased enquiries. Seven places have been taken up by six City workers and one City resident, with two of the families on the lower income band of under £31,000 (six at St Paul's and one at Smithfield). • A review will be undertaken in early 2014 that will look in depth at the how the scheme is performing and how it might be improved.

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<p>2.3 Map current support to families in gaining learning, training and employment opportunities and/or remaining in work.</p>	<p>Record of all support available to enable targeting of information and services to promote participation by families according to needs.</p>	<p>March 2014</p>	<p>FIS Manager</p>	<p>CCFC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Family Information Service Directory holds comprehensive details of all services in the City that support families. Work is currently being undertaken on collating details of organisations beyond the City borders.
<p>2.4 Provision for local families of information about training and employment, and effective links with Jobcentre Plus, local training providers, and further and higher education institutions.</p>	<p>Increase of parents and carers undertaking learning, training and employment opportunities.</p>	<p>March 2013 and on-going</p>	<p>Head of CCFC</p>	<p>Education and Early Years Jobcentre Plus Adult and Community Learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and advice sessions are held at CCFC and Portsoken, for parents attending the children’s centre, the school and the ‘Green Box’.
<p>2.5 Deliver a range of learning and training opportunities, such as family literacy, language and numeracy courses, parenting courses, and opportunities leading to further education and employment, including ongoing support for Adult and Community Learning activities/courses.</p>	<p>Increase of parents and carers undertaking learning, training and employment opportunities.</p>	<p>March 2014 and on-going</p>	<p>Head of CCFC</p>	<p>Education and Early Years Adult and Community Learning CCFC</p>	<p>Data to be provide at the end of the 2013–2014 financial year.</p>

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<p>2.6 Deliver a programme of outreach to engage and support parents, particularly 'hard to reach'.</p>	<p>85% of families with children 0–5 in Portsoken Ward accessing children's centre services each year, either at the SJC site or through community based outreach provision.</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>Head of CCFC</p>	<p>Education and Early Years CHPCT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The FYI Outreach Worker and CCFC Family Support Worker undertook a programme of 'door knocking', visiting all households with a child under 5 in the Portsoken Ward who were not accessing services. • This targeted outreach is to be repeated periodically in conjunction with other services. • New birth visits are carried out, working in conjunction with the health visitor.
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Objective 3: Improving access to services for parents of children who are vulnerable or have additional needs/disabilities					
Note: actions under Objectives 1 (information) and 2 (transition to work) should also contribute to this objective.					
Actions	Outcomes	Timescale	Lead	Partners/Link strategies	2013 update
3.1 Deliver a training programme covering the area of inclusion and special needs to early years staff working in the City's PVI and maintained childcare settings.	To increase the levels of confidence practitioners have in taking on children with SEN/disabilities to give parents more choice on where they can send their children.	March 2014	F&YP Service Projects Manager	Daycare Trust All early years childcare providers Early Education City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Board	A bespoke programme of training sessions is in place from September 2013 until March 2014. Sessions are well attended by settings in most cases and targeted work by the Advisory Teacher is being undertaken where necessary.
3.2 Embed the Early Intervention and Prevention Framework to ensure the early identification of additional needs for children accessing the City's PVI and maintained childcare settings.	Appropriate referrals take place, and services are provided for children with additional needs.	March 2014	Education and Early Years' Service Manager	Early Intervention Manager Early Years Advisory Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Intervention and Prevention Sub-group of the Children's Executive Board in place and embedded. • The Advisory Teacher and practitioners in most PVI settings have undertaken Pre-CAF Checklist 'Pathways to Services' training in order to make appropriate referrals.

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<p>3.3 Provide advice and practical support for the identification, assessment and intervention within the SEN Code of Practice, supporting the development and dissemination of good practice.</p>	<p>Provision of day to day support for setting based SENCOs in drawing up and implementing an SEN policy covering identification and assessment, and admissions and inclusion of children with special educational needs.</p>	<p>March 2013 and on-going</p>	<p>Education and Early Years Manager</p>	<p>LB Islington SENCO Area Forum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area SENCO in place to support practitioners in PVI settings to set targets and strategies for achieving these targets for children with additional needs. • Termly training in place for PVI SENCOs through the Islington SENCO Forum.
<p>3.4 Implement a Short Breaks Programme within the City of London, offering families with disabled children a range of short breaks services including overnight respite and day care provision.</p>	<p>To enable the child to participate in fun, interesting and safe activities, and to provide respite for the parents.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Children’s Social Care Team Manager</p>	<p>LB Tower Hamlets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New contract in place from March 2013 to deliver this service.

Objective 4: Supporting parents/carers to engage in the benefits of early education					
Actions	Outcomes	Timescale	Lead	Partners/Link strategies	2013 update
4.1 Promote the take-up of the 2 year old free entitlement offer for eligible low income families.	Eligible 2 year olds take up 15 hours free entitlement early education offer.	Termly and on-going	Head of CCFC	Education and Early Years CHPCT Golden Lane Children's Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A revised leaflet will be produced in autumn 2013 that sets out the new eligibility criteria for the offer. • For the autumn term, there are four eligible families for the 2 year old offer. Currently three of these are accessing a place, and one family has declined.
4.2 Increase participation of parents/carers in early education activities in children's centres, libraries and at home who are not accessing formal childcare.	Readiness for school and improved learning.	Six programmes a year	Head of CCFC	Libraries Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A programme called Talking Toddlers is scheduled to run twice a term, being delivered in children's centres and libraries over the next year as part of an Early Language Development Programme. • Information from the EYMIS has enabled targeting families to engage with services, increasing participation.
4.3 Continue to embed the flexible 15 hour, free at the point of access childcare entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds.	A range of flexible childcare opportunities to meet the needs of working families.	Ongoing	Education and Early Years' Service Manager	CCFC Golden Lane Children's Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The revised admissions policy at CCFC has led to an increased proportion of City families taking up free entitlement places. • Funding for settings has been increased, recognising the high cost of providing the 15 hour entitlement in the City.

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4.4 Regular consultation with users over services.	A range of services tailored as far as possible to suit the needs of families.	March 2014	FIS Manager CCFC Manager	CCFC Golden Lane Children's Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A consultation exercise is currently under way to obtain the views of City parents on the services they access for children under 5. A summary of findings will be reported in March 2014. • CCFC conducts on-going evaluation of its services and tailors its offer to parents according to their feedback. • The Centre is also planning to re-launch its Parents Forum.
4.5 Raise awareness of holiday provision available at CCFC and Golden Lane.	Increase take-up of holiday provision, particularly by low income families.	Easter and summer breaks 2014	FIS Manager CCFC Manager	CCFC Golden Lane Children's Centre	To be taken forward in early 2014.

Objective 5: Supporting all childcare providers to raise standards and offer good quality services to close the gap in attainment (EYFS – close the gap between the bottom 20% and the rest)					
Actions	Outcomes	Timescale	Lead	Partners/Link strategies	2013 update
5.1 Support all settings in the City to be judged Good or Outstanding in Ofsted inspections.	Improve outcomes of children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage to above the London and England average.	August 2013 and annually	Education and Early Years Manager CCFC Manger	All settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All settings in the City are judged Good or Outstanding in Ofsted inspections. New assessment system in place. Good Level of Development is a child reaching the 'expected' level in five areas. SJC results: 67% Overall city average: 72% National average: 42% Tower Hamlets average: 44%
5.2 Continue to embed Every Child a Talker (ECAT) programme with the City's PVI childcare settings.	Improve the quality of interactions between workers and children, improved scoring of children in language for communication and thinking.	Ongoing	Education and Early Years Manager	Sir John Cass (SJC) Primary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Settings have been supplied with the ECAT monitoring tool which enables them to identify areas of concern in children's language development and how this can be addressed. A publication detailing a storytelling and mark-making project delivered through this programme was produced in spring 2013.

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<p>5.3 Provide EYFS Advisory Teacher support to the City's PVI and childcare settings.</p>	<p>Contribute to creating a lasting improvement in the quality of early years education and care provision for children from birth to the end of their reception year, across all sectors, raising standards and improving outcomes for children.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Education and Early Years Manager</p>	<p>Core Monitoring Group</p>	<p>A programme of support is in place for each setting which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saturday training days on safeguarding • physical development working with 2 year olds and their families • supervision (for managers and deputies only) • using Makaton sign language. <p>All settings have been engaged in this training.</p>
<p>5.4 Support and training provided to existing and potential workforce to ensure that they meet qualification and other Ofsted requirements.</p>	<p>Improve the quality of provision to ensure that all settings in the City are judged as either Good or Outstanding by Ofsted. Use of Apprenticeships to support new entrants into childcare work.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Education and Early Years Manager</p>	<p>CCFC Adult and Community Learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modern Apprenticeships presently at CCFC. • A bespoke comprehensive training programme is in place for practitioners. • Funding has been retained and publicised to offer qualification training opportunities and other qualification training to early years providers but there is a low take-up.

Objective 6: Maximising early intervention and prevention					
Actions	Outcomes	Timescale	Lead	Partners/ Link strategies	2013 update
6.1 Develop early years practitioners' skills in identifying vulnerable children, at risk of underachievement.	Practitioners trained to recognise children with additional needs and in the use of the Pre-CAF Checklist.	August 2013 and annually	Early Intervention Co-ordinator	EIP Sub-group and partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training on SEN, delivered as part of the bespoke programme, needs to be repeated.
6.2 Promote swift identification of children with additional needs using the Pre-CAF Checklist and follow-up intervention.	Families needing additional targeted support are referred in a timely manner to CSC.	March 2014 and on-going	Early Intervention Co-ordinator	EIP Sub-group and partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practitioners from settings have undertaken 'Pathways to Services' training.
6.3 Provide family support and outreach work including through universal and targeted parenting activities.	Parents have access to a range of activities to support their parenting	Ongoing	Early Intervention Co-ordinator	EIP Sub-group and partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A programme of outreach in place delivered in partnership with Health, children's centres and FIS.
6.4 Embed the Solihull Approach as the methodology used across services when working with families in the City to provide targeted support.	The Solihull Approach is the methodology used across services when working with families.		Education and Early Years Manager	EIP Sub-group and partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two Solihull Approach training programmes delivered to practitioners with six weekly following sessions in place to embed and monitor practice.
6.5 Run HENRY courses for practitioners and parents/carers at SJC Community Kitchen.	Support parents to provide a healthy start for babies and young children by providing information about nutrition and exercise.		CCFC Manager		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two courses for practitioners and one course for parents booked.
6.6 Embed the 27-month Health and Education development checks.	Early identification of developmental delay.		CCFC Manager		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff have undertaken training and developed a template for use.

Glossary

CAF	Common Assessment Framework
CCFC	Cass Child and Family Centre
CHPCT	City and Hackney NHS Primary Care Trust
ECAT	Every Child a Talker
EIP	Early Intervention and Prevention
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
EYMIS	Early Years Management Information System
F&YP	Family and Young People
FIS	Family Information Service
FYI	For Youth Initiative
HENRY	Health Exercise Nutrition for the Really Young
IAG	Information, Advice and Guidance
LB	London Borough
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
PVI	Private, Voluntary, and IndependentS106
SJC	Sir John Cass