

## Committee: Children and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Panel

**Date: 26<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

Agenda item: 6

Wards: All

**Subject: Early Years, Childcare and Children's Centre Update**

Lead officer: Allison Jones

Lead member: Councillor Maxi Martin

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### **Recommendations:**

A. Scrutiny note the items in the update

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#### **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. Scrutiny has requested an update on CSF's programme to improve education provision for vulnerable children.
- 1.2. This report provides an update on the progress made by Merton's Early Years Service in its work to:

#### **Improve education provision for vulnerable children**

- From September 2013 Merton Council had a statutory duty to provide advice, training and support for early years education providers that are graded satisfactory/requires improvement
- From September 2013, to secure, where reasonably practicable, funded 2 year old places in Ofsted registered provision that is graded good and above only.
- To secure sufficient Children's Centres to improve outcomes for young children and their families and reduce inequalities between families in greatest need and their peers in:

Child development and school readiness

Parenting aspirations and parenting skills

Child and family health and life chances

#### **Develop sufficient places in the market to meet the statutory duties for providing free early education places for vulnerable 2 year olds**

- From September 2013, Merton had a statutory duty to provide early education places for up to 500 vulnerable children aged 2 who meet national eligibility criteria phase 1 and from September 2014 a further 500 vulnerable children who meet national eligibility criteria phase 2
- 1.3. There are 3 key strands of work across the service, broadly underpinned by the Childcare Act 2006, which specifically support improvements of education provision for vulnerable children:

- Early Years Foundation Stage support to the sector - providing support, advice and challenge to Merton's Ofsted registered early education and childcare providers: schools, private and voluntary preschools and nurseries, independent schools and childminding sector
- The provision of Children's Centres Localities to deliver a range of services to meet the core purpose of Children's Centres (see above)
- Working in partnership with the sector to manage the market and ensure the sufficiency of childcare and early education for 2, 3 and 4 year olds that meets the needs of families (including children with SEN/disabilities)

## **2 DETAILS**

### **Improve education provision for vulnerable children:**

#### **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) support to the sector**

- 2.1. In Merton we have a thriving and diverse early years sector that delivers a range of day care and early education to families with children under the age of 5. The statutory Early Years Foundation Stage provides the framework for all providers to deliver early education and childcare for children aged 0 -5.
- 2.2. All providers that deliver early education/ childcare services to children under 5 must register with OFSTED as either a school or as an early years provider.
- 2.3. Additionally, if a provider chooses to draw down funding so that they can deliver free places to children aged 2, 3 and 4; they must also register with the Local Authority.
- 2.4. In Merton 79 private, maintained and voluntary providers and 17 child-minders have registered to deliver funded places to children aged 2, 3 and 4. All Merton primary schools deliver funded places to children aged 3 and 4 as well as one special school
- 2.5. As part of the registration process providers must meet specific criteria and must also agree to attend specific Merton training which includes safeguarding and working with children with SEN/Disabilities
- 2.6. Merton provides a Continuous Improvement Framework (CIF) to providers that choose to work with us to support the provision of quality early years provision. This programme provides support, advice and challenge to the sector so that the quality of the provision improves and that the attainment gap by the end of the EYFS is narrowed, placing children on a secure pathway to achieve at the end of their school education.
- 2.7. Merton provides a training programme which is equitably available to all providers who have signed up to the CIF. The training includes core training courses as well as a specialist programme which is delivered in accordance with specific priorities as identified from the Early Years Foundation stage profile (EYFSP), findings from the CIF and Ofsted. From the analysis of the data from the EYFSP the key areas where children do not score well are literacy (specifically writing) and mathematics, and children living in an area of deprivation are less likely to do as well as their peers. The training and support framework offered to the whole sector now specifically provides CPD opportunities in these priority areas.

- 2.8. The Early Years Service is a registered college through the Open College Network and we run an in house accredited programme for providers who work with vulnerable 2 year olds, with the course content focussing on integrated and multi agency working, maximising children's learning and development and supporting their parents to give their children the best start in life by supporting learning at home. To date 46 child-minders have attended the programme and have gained accredited level 3 units improving their practice with vulnerable 2 year olds
- 2.9. Specific projects/programmes are also run in partnership with school nursery classes where there are identified cohorts of children who are vulnerable to poor outcomes. The programmes include: Families and Schools Together (FAST), Communication, Language and Literacy groups/focussed work, developing outdoor learning environments, supporting boys attainment, Children's Centre school readiness workshops, speech consultation and targeted support
- 2.10. Support for individual children who are identified as vulnerable either due to developmental delay, special education needs/disabilities and/due to family circumstances (including children known to Children's Social Care (CSC) are supported in accordance with need. There are clear support pathways and services that can provide early help provision ensuring that needs are identified and met as early as possible so that there is a co-ordinated package of support provided either in the setting, at home or both.
- 2.11. Providers who identify children with additional needs, or take children with known additional needs, are supported by staff who advise and model best practice in addition to supporting referrals to enhanced or specialist services
- 2.12. All children aged 2 who are attending an EYFS setting must have a formative assessment at the age of 2, and this assessment carried out by the early years practitioners in partnership with the parent provides a tool to identify vulnerable children and raise concerns with appropriate professionals to intervene as early as possible. Providers are supported through training and model examples as to how best to carry out the assessment and working in partnership with parents to ensure engagement and intervention
- 2.13. All children at the end of the EYFS have a profile completed; this is a measure of attainment across 7 areas of learning – EYFSP, and provides an overview of general attainment and is an early indicator of children who are vulnerable to ongoing poor outcomes.

### **Improve education provision for vulnerable children Children's Centre Localities**

- 2.14. There are three Children's Centre localities each managed by one manager with either 3 or 4 individual Children's Centres in each locality. All Children's Centres are expected to deliver services in accordance with agreed priorities in order to meet key performance indicators and targets
- 2.15. A key purpose of the Children's Centres is to improve children's learning and early education experiences:

- Support parents in finding high quality childcare and advice on types of early education available
- Provide early education family programmes with a focus on supporting children's development and learning through parental support and targeted activities
- Deliver home learning programmes for more vulnerable families where there may be a delay in child development or the family require support to facilitate learning in the home
- To carry out Common and Shared Assessments where needs are identified and require a multi agency response
- Deliver evidence based parenting programme Incredible Years to support positive parenting for vulnerable families and their children
- Deliver crèches that are of high quality and facilitate maximum opportunities for children's learning
- To enable language rich environments and speech and language targeted programmes to support children and families with speech and language delay
- To deliver across identified schools, school readiness workshops/joint home visits and outreach
- For staff to participate in CPD to ensure that their practice is based in evidence and that the impact of their work can be evaluated to show its impact upon outcomes

2.17 Children's Centres are subject to an internal rigorous continual improvement and performance framework (aligned to the Ofsted Children's Centre inspection framework) which provides advice, support and challenge to ensure that the outcomes for vulnerable children and their families are improved (through the delivery of evidenced based programmes), and that services are integrated, targeted, co-ordinated and are value for money

## **2.18 Impact to Date**

- 99% of all children aged 3 and 4 took up their funded entitlement (DfE March 2014), the England average is 97% and statistical neighbours and outer London is 92%
- 80% of all children aged 3 and 4 take up a place in good and outstanding provision (DfE March 2014), the England average is 71% and outer London is 72%
- 83% of all children aged 2 took up provision in good or outstanding provision (an additional 8% are in provision waiting inspection. Local data summer and autumn headcount)
- EYFSP in 2013 was a revised assessment framework and the national data set shows wide variations and fluctuation across the local authority and does not show robust comparisons with previous years or with other authorities
- 38 families completed evidenced based parenting programme (Incredible Years, Q3 snapshot)

- 60 children attended targeted speech and language programmes in Childrens Centres (Q3 snapshot)
- 69% of all families living in areas of deprivation attended a Children's Centre (April – Dec 2013)

**Develop sufficient places in the market to meet the statutory duty for providing free early education places for vulnerable 2 year olds**

- 2.19 For phase 1 (450 eligible children ) Merton set up 228 new places for vulnerable 2 year olds in 7 Children's Centres and 3 private/voluntary providers, primarily operating in areas of need
- 2.20 The newly created places have been delivered primarily through Children's Centres enabling a holistic and integrated service to families and their young children.
- 2.21 Specific partnership work has taken place with the childminding sector to facilitate place expansion in a home environment which provides greater choice for families and for some children a more appropriate learning environment
- 2.22 Recent change to the law through the Children and Families Act will see the setting up of new childminder agencies which are intended to encourage new childminders to the market with a view to more places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds being delivered via the new agencies. Merton has been a pilot of the childminder agencies and will be evaluating this pilot shortly to inform future opportunities/working practices
- 2.23 For phase 2 (1000 eligible children) Merton is working in partnership with existing providers to provide places for vulnerable children within their current provision. It is estimated that at least one third of the places will be delivered through existing capacity in good and above settings
- 2.24 Provision for eligible children with additional and complex needs will be developed in accordance with the broader project work in response to the Children and Families Act
- 2.25 Amendments to the Early Years Foundation Stage in September 2014 will provide opportunities for schools to deliver places for 2 year olds without the requirement to separately register with Ofsted or the Local Authority. In Merton, many schools currently deliver, or work in partnership with private providers to deliver, wraparound services and some separate provision for 2 year olds. The early years service will work closely with schools to identify possible areas for expansion in accordance with demographic need and place planning
- 2.26 Impact to Date:**
- 228 new places created in the market in areas of deprivation and where demand is anticipated
  - 17 child-minders registered as new providers of funded education
  - 409 children have taken up a funded place (April 2013 – October 2013).
  - 255 (62%) children lived in area of deprivation

- 46 (11%) children had additional educational needs identified
- 87 (21%) children at enhanced or specialist level
- Take up of places from 2013 – 2014  
Summer 245, Autumn 301 and Spring 328

### **3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 3.1. None for the purposes of this report

### **4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 4.1. None for the purposes of this report

### **5 TIMETABLE**

- 5.1. The statutory duty to provide early education for up to 1000 vulnerable 2 year olds is September 2014. The new Children and Families Act will become law by September 2014. The revised statutory guidance for 2, 3 and 4 year old funding will be reissued in April for implementation in September 2014. Amendments to the EYFS will be implemented in September 2014

### **6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. The Council, via the DSG, has received start up funding for 2013 – 2015 to create the new places for 2 year olds which includes capacity building, outreach/promotion, improving quality and raising the skills of the workforce.

### **7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. The provision of funded early education places are statutory duties for the Local Authority. The requirements to reduce inequalities and improve outcomes for all children under 5 are also statutory. The EYFSP is a statutory requirement.

### **8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. Research and evidence shows that providing children with the best start in life has life long benefits and is a key focus for the work with vulnerable children in terms of human rights, equalities and community cohesion.

### **9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. Not applicable

### **10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1. Not applicable

### **11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**

Not applicable

### **12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Not applicable



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