



**Haringey** Council

## **NOTICE OF MEETING**

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# **Scrutiny Review of Children's Services**

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THURSDAY, 27TH MARCH, 2008 at 09:30 HRS - CAMPSBOURNE CHILDREN'S CENTRE,  
NIGHTINGALE LANE N8 7AF .

MEMBERS: Councillors Newton ( Chair) Engert and Peacock

### **AGENDA**

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (IF ANY)**

**2. URGENT BUSINESS**

The Chair will consider the admission of any late items of business. Where an item is already included on the agenda, it will appear under that item, but new items of urgent business will be dealt with at item 7.

**3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

A member with a personal interest in a matter who attends a meeting of the authority at which the matter is considered must disclose to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest at the commencement of that consideration, or when the interest becomes apparent.

A member with a personal interest in a matter also has a prejudicial interest in that matter if the interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the member's judgment of the public interest and if this interest affects their financial position or the financial position of a person or body as described in paragraph 8 of the Code of Conduct and/or if it relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to them or any person or body described in paragraph 8 of the Code of Conduct

**4. MINUTES (PAGES 1 - 8)**

To confirm the minutes of the meetings held on 26 February and 3 March 2008.

## **5. VIEWS OF PARENTS/CARERS**

To hear from parents/carers on the quality and range of services provided at Children's Centres.

## **6. FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN'S CENTRES**

To receive a presentation on issues that have arisen during the course of the review, including-

- The extended use of facilities and spaces,
- The further development of practice and the support given by Children's Centres in the private, voluntary and independent sectors,
- The further development of outreach work to the most vulnerable children and families
- Management structures
- Charging structures.

## **7. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

To consider any new items of business admitted under 2 above.

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18 March 2008

**MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW OF CHILDREN'S CENTRES****26 FEBRUARY 2008**

Councillors \* Newton, \*Engert and Peacock

\* Members present

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Peacock

**2. URGENT BUSINESS**

There was none

**3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There was none

**4. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Panel confirmed the scope and terms of reference for the review.

**5. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF CHILDREN'S CENTRES**

The Panel received a presentation from the Head of Park Lane Children's centre detailing the services provided at the centre and their priorities. It was noted that their reach target was 1,345 children, of the 3,000 children in the area. Family support and outreach work was very important in supporting the most vulnerable children and young people and in giving access to the most excluded groups. Collaborative work with a range of services to provide activities for the 0- 19 year old was on going.

A presentation was given from the Children's and Young People's service which set out the range of provision and the core offer of services provided at Children's centres. Phase 1 centres were expected to offer every aspect of the core provision. For Phase 2 centres there was a shift in focus towards access and signposting provision and for phase 3 centres (from April 2008 to 2010) all children would have access to services. The service would be looking to see if there were any gaps in provision. Partnership working was crucial to the effectiveness of the services offered. Key partners included health, Job Centre plus, and private, voluntary and independent childcare providers. Closer working relations were being developed within the Children and Young People's Services social care and education. Information was being shared with other providers, such as the PCT, to ensure that services were of a high quality.

Monitoring the quality of childcare and the impact of services on performance was currently being developed. A tracking system was being implemented, and using information such as where a child had attended prior to school and

attainment at Key Stage 1 and 2 performance was being monitored. Performance indicators were set both nationally and locally from the Children and Young People's Plan. The two statutory targets were an achievement target at age 5 and narrowing the gap between the lowest 20 % achievers. The Panel noted that the Department for Children, Schools and Families were looking at how PI's could be designed around the LAA targets. A group of Children's Centre improvement partners was being set up to support and challenge performance and to collate information on the range and quality of education. It was noted that OFSTED did not yet have a proper inspection structure in place for Children's centres.

Key issues discussed included:

- Centres were keen to involve parents in the planning of services. There was a continuous process involving parents, the community, staff, centre management and a representative from the equality improvement team who identified what works well, and subsequently produced an Action Plan. The Triangle Centre consulted the community, was continually seeking feedback from users and work was ongoing with parents to assess satisfaction with the services provided. Parents Forums had been established to develop services. Additionally all centres were engaged in outreach work to engage with those traditionally excluded. It was noted that outreach workers found post offices a valuable contact point.
- Discussions were ongoing with partners in terms of flexibility of service delivery including longer opening hours to enable sessions to be regularly available in the evenings and weekends. Further dialogue was needed with the PCT on access to services and the setting up of new services such as GP's offering immunisations.
- All private, voluntary and independent providers had been asked to complete self evaluation forms and to develop Action Plans, which would enable them to buy into the Haringey quality mark. Holistic Training courses were provided to agencies and the PVI through Graduation leader funding.
- Referrals were made through the Common Assessment Framework. There was currently a pilot scheme in the South Network which was working well. Due to multi- agency working a good dialogue was in place and there was a good basis for further development. There were regular meetings involving all centres and workshops etc looking at good practice. Articles had appeared in the termly publication produced by the service improvement team. Also there was regular dialogue with providers to disseminate good practice. It was hoped that the first round of self evaluation forms would be a guide on good practice. Partners were key in providing centres with a critical challenge.
- OFSTED were keen to evaluate the impact of children's centres on achievement. At present it was not clear how this would be achieved. It was acknowledged that it was difficult to measure quality and its impact. All centres reported on their reach figures

and provided details on who they were reaching. There was a need to enhance the information and more work was needed on its impact. At Park Lane Childrens Centre they had an impact board so that they could assess the difference they made.

- In terms of transition into schools there was a need to ensure that the move was smooth and equitable. There had been very positive feedback on the quality of children's learning at Children's centres. The development of the tracking system for children from birth to the end of Key Stage 1 would assist this further. It was noted that the Authority was going to carry out an investigation to see whether it was in a child's interest to remain at a children's centre for longer or to transfer to a well run nursery class within a school. It was acknowledged that funding was a factor for parents. Children's centres were made aware through health visitors of babies being born and new parents were given leaflets about children's centres.
- Centres were looking at provision for children beyond the age of 5 and Cluster working with primary schools and between centres was being developed.
- Healthy living and eating was actively promoted in children's centres. Relations between family support and centres were crucial, further work could be done on developing existing sessions to parents on healthy eating.
- Partnership working worked particularly well, especially with the health services. Haringey was seen as a good role model for other Authorities.

MARTIN NEWTON  
Chair

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## **MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW OF CHILDREN'S CENTRES**

**3 MARCH 2008**

Councillors \* Newton, \*Engert and \*Peacock

\* Members present

### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were none

### **2. URGENT BUSINESS**

There was none

### **3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Councillor Peacock was a Governor at Pembury Children's Centre.

### **4. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF CHILDREN'S CENTRES**

The Panel had a tour of Pembury's Baby Unit and the Children's Centre which was a Phase 1 centre. It was noted that the under 2's unit was full with 30 places, but there were vacancies for over 2's. The total capacity was 70 places. There were 30AM places, 30 PM places, 24 fee paying full time places and 16 community need funded places. A Full time place cost £175 per week. Although the centre was open 48 weeks of the year, there was an issue as to whether the Centre should be open at the weekends for community use. Pembury worked closely within its own cluster group and this had continued as the number of centres had grown. For example the Health visitor visited Pembury on a Thursday and Friday and other centres on different days. All Centre Managers met regularly to exchange ideas on good practice and discuss any problems.

The Director of Children and Young People's Services gave an overview of the development of Children's Centres in Haringey. The size of the six Network Learning Centres had been determined following discussions with the PCT around the deployment of services. The most important change was that services were being delivered with the whole family in mind and with a joined up approach. A paper had been prepared for presentation to Cabinet shortly addressing the whole agenda for 0-19 year olds outside of statutory schooling.

Key issues included:

- There was a good coverage to ensure that needs were met. Discussions took place with other service providers such as the Youth service, local primary schools and it was noted that the

Private Voluntary Independent providers had representation on the Early Childhood Forum.

- Whilst the Children's Networks were still in development and being embedded, it was noted that the single referral process was leading to looking at the family as a whole. Early intervention was crucial. Outcome measures for the short and longer term were being developed. A long term target would be to reduce the number of Looked After Children. The investment in Children's Centres should have an impact on the foundation stage.
- Details of the formula funding to be provided to Members.
- Work within Networks, by Family Support Workers and through community engagement was ongoing to identify the most disadvantaged groups. There was mapping and a constant reviewing of where the need was greatest. An analysis of the Foundation stage profiles showed where provision was good. Although all Phase 1 centres had outreach workers the majority of staff performed some outreach work in one way or another. Centres felt that they were getting better at being aware of areas of need and were working well within their cluster to develop it further.
- Work was in hand to develop output measures, to determine how the changes impacted on children's lives. It was proposed that an evaluation of 100 users be undertaken.
- In respect of Governance arrangement there was a need to look at flexing the Governing Body regulations for Children's Centres particularly as some operated from stand alone buildings, some from school sites and others from nursery school sites. Focus on working with parents and the local community was fundamental. Governance for all centres to include both care and education.

The Panel received information from the London Manager and the Local Programme Adviser for Together for Children, an organisation who were working in partnership with the Department for Children, Schools and Families to support local authorities in delivering Children's Centres across England. They stated that Haringey was ahead of many other Authorities with their provision. Together for Children were committed to working with local authorities to ensure that children and families got the provision that they needed when they needed it.

Issues raised included:

- Links with PCT and Health funding were major issues for many Authorities. Haringey gave the PCT just over £1/2m to provide specialist services such as speech therapy. Other core services such as health visitors and midwives were funded by the PCT
- Future funding for Children's Centres was not considered to be a concern provided that they could evidence their effectiveness in terms of both educational achievement and meeting families' needs. Together for Children agreed to send information on best practice regarding health services funding arrangements.



- There was a need to look at targets being embedded in LAA's and in local Children's Plans. Measuring of performance outputs was not a quick exercise and took time to show through as children grew up. It was suggested that indicators at 3 and 5 years were needed. Other targets could be how many parents were encouraged back into work, how much money was claimed from the benefits system.
- There was a target for narrowing the gap and a general target for improving the achievement of all children.
- Work with fathers was developing and a lot of centres were thinking creatively about how to engage with them. It was suggested that there should be a target for the number of fathers reached. A possible option was to employ fathers in the Centres, although it was felt that for many the pay was not sufficient.
- It was accepted that it was a universal challenge to reach the most vulnerable in the community. It was noted that 2 and a half percent of the population were very hard to reach and didn't want to be reached. Consequently sustained efforts and a different approach was needed. Provision of mental health services was a major element in the programme. The Panel noted that performance around domestic violence, mental health, and safeguarding children needed to be evaluated. Together for Children advised that they could facilitate regional learning and/or sharing of information with statistical neighbours on this and other issues. Also best practice was shared through the Children's Centre Portfolio Framework. An analysis of all London Boroughs was being undertaken, which would identify key themes and issues. This was likely to be available by end of April/May 2008.
- Noted that Together for Children offered advice on embedding performance management. A key feature was to learn together.
- It was noted that all phase 2 centres were now designated and the planning process for phase 3 centres was underway.

### RESOLVED:

That arrangements be made for the Panel to be provided with:

- a) a briefing on the formula funding for centres and
- b) the reach figures for all Centres.

MARTIN NEWTON  
Chair

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