

Agenda item:

[No.]

Cabinet

On 26 January 2009

Report Title:

Executive response of the Children and Young People's Service to the Scrutiny Review of Children's Centres.

Forward Plan reference number (if applicable): N/A

Report of: **Peter Lewis, Director of the Children and Young people's Service.**

Wards(s) affected: All

Report for: **Non-Key Decision**

1. Purpose

1.1 To set out the Children and Young People's Service's response to the Scrutiny Review of Children's Centres

2. Introduction by Cabinet Member

- 2.1 Overview and Scrutiny's review of Children Centres has provided a timely opportunity to consider the key areas of development in our Children Centres. The Review highlights the considerable positive work which is taking place. We are, however, fully aware that there is still much more to do and officers have already put in place mechanisms to develop the action plan appended to this report.
- 2.2 Given the importance of ensuring that the services offered by our Centres reach excluded and disadvantaged groups of children I will be bringing a further report to Overview and Scrutiny in October, to inform Members of the developments of our outreach services.
- 2.3 I am particularly concerned that there should be a clear health offer from our centres and that the borough has sufficient health visitors to make this a reality. I will ensure that we work with Great Ormond Street Hospital and the PCT on this issue.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That the Cabinet welcomes the Overview and Scrutiny Review of Children's Centres.
- 3.2 That the Cabinet agrees the attached response and proposed action plan as set out in Appendix One

Report Authorised by:



Peter Lewis
Director of the Children and Young People's Service

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4. Chief Financial Officer Comments

4.1 The Chief Financial Officer has no further comments to make on this report.

5. Head of Legal Services Comments

5.1 The Head of Legal Services has been consulted on the content of this report and has no specific comment to make.

6. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

7. Strategic Implications

7.1 Children's Centres are an essential element in the council performing its statutory duties under the Childcare Act (2006). Whilst the review commented on the fact that the foundations have been laid for a well-run service to children with support and help for their families, the development areas identified as part of the review are integral to the Council achieving improved outcomes for children.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 There are no specific financial implications to achieving the attached action plan. All actions can be contained within the budget for 2009/2010

9. Legal Implications

9.1 There are no specific legal implications in this report.

10. Equalities Implications

10.1 A key aim of children's centres is to try to ensure that all children under five have access to good quality, early childhood services. An emphasis is placed on ensuring that services reach the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children through the targeting of services and service delivery.

11. Consultation

11.1 Where the agreed recommendations involve changes to service delivery or policy, consultation will be conducted as appropriate.

12. Background of scrutiny review

12.1 It is imperative that the Council has well run children's centres which are models of excellence because they:

- are an early and vital link in the provision of services for children and young people under the age of 19 which "provide support for children and their families through a child's life stages";
- allow early targeted intervention of children and families who do not meet statutory thresholds for specialist services but who need help and support to prevent them becoming more vulnerable;
- assist compliance with the duty placed on the Council under Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006 to "secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the provision of childcare (whether or not by them) is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents" to enable them to work or undertake education or training.

13 Scope of the review

13.1 The Scrutiny Review of Children's Centres set out to look into the following key areas:

- The range and quality of the provision provided at the Council's children's centres including ancillary issues such as family support.
- Health services etc and the contributions made by users. In particular whether this provision enabled "early intervention" and specific action to be taken to narrow the gap in achievement between the lowest achieving children and the rest.
- The manner in which children's centres worked with other local providers of childcare.
- The processes for measuring performance including self evaluation.
- The processes for identifying best practice and ensuring its disseminated elsewhere.

14 Conclusion

14.1 Whilst the review acknowledges that much work is already being undertaken by the Children and Young People's Service on most of the areas identified for review, we are committed to ensuring the actions set out in Appendix one are implemented as swiftly as possible.

15 Use of Appendices / Tables / Photographs

- 15.1 Appendix one: Action Plan for implementing the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Children's Centres.



Action Plan for implementing the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Children's Centres.

No	Recommendation	Proposed action	Timescale
1	To report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee; i. In October 2009 on the future developments of outreach services to help identify and target disadvantaged children. (Paragraph 5.7) ii. in April 2009 on progress on the development and outcomes to date of the support strategy for all child care providers in the Borough. (Paragraph 8.4)	i. Agreed. A further report will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee providing an overview of outreach services in children's centres. The report will reflect the outcome of current work being undertaken to identify and target disadvantaged children. It will set out elements of the children centres service's developing outreach strategy and its impact on the take-up of services and contacts being made by children's centres with children from vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. ii. Agreed. The report will include a review of the support that is already being undertaken by the service to support childcare providers in the Borough.	October 2009.
2	To target resources to provide more affordable high-quality childcare places where a deficiency has been identified. (Paragraph 5.2)	Agreed. We are already committed to and have begun working with colleagues across the Children and Young People's Service in the development of an action plan in response to the findings of the Childcare Sufficiency Audit. The action plan will place an emphasis on the targeting of resources to address gaps in the provision of affordable, good quality childcare.	On-going
3	To continue to encourage children's centres to make greater use of their facilities at weekends and evenings. (Paragraph 6)	Agreed. This will continue to be monitored and promoted. The realignment of Local Authority Children's Centres with schools means that the majority of our children's centres are based within, or linked to, schools. This presents us with an opportunity to further explore this	September 2009

	<p>recommendation in the context of the Extended Services full core offer and will be considered in terms of capacity and resources. It is anticipated that future Service Level Agreements will reflect a commitment to extending community use of facilities</p>	
4	<p>To consider the possibility of introducing some kind of incentive to encourage those involved in child-care provision to attend relevant training courses. (Paragraph 10)</p> <p>Agreed. A Local Authority accreditation scheme is being created to provide an incentive to providers to continually improve their provision for children. This will be based on a star system and will include such things as: the qualifications of staff, the amount of training staff take up, whether the provider uses a quality assurance scheme and is regularly involved in self-evaluating the quality of their provision. The scheme will be published for parents in order to support their decision-making when looking for childcare. It is expected that the scheme will be a positive incentive to all providers to ensure that they are employing well qualified staff and enabling them to attend training.</p> <p>The management of our Childminding Coordinators now lies within the CYPs' Workforce Development team and we believe this will continue to strengthen links with this group of child-care providers and their access to, and engagement in training.</p>	Ongoing
5	<p>To issue good practice guidance to children's centres on the composition of their management boards. (Paragraph 11.1).</p> <p>Agreed. This is currently being progressed and work is beginning with Governor services to review children's centres governance and produce good practice guidelines. The intention is to reinforce models that promote parental and community representation and participation in children's centre management boards. It is anticipated that Service Level Agreements will reflect, more explicitly, the expectations around the role and composition of children's centre management boards, particularly where there is the interface with School Governing Bodies to be considered.</p>	March 2009

6	<p>To request the TPCT to ensure that sufficient Health Visitors are appointed to enable them to visit newly born children and make holistic family health assessments.(Paragraph 5.3)</p>	<p>Agreed. The Children and Young People's Service continues to work closely with Haringey's TPCT and GOSH (Great Ormond Street Hospital) in Haringey ,at a strategic level, to ensure the provision of Health Visiting input into the delivery of the children's centre core offer. Joint work is currently being undertaken to plan around the implementation of the new Child Health Promotion Programme and align targets and outcomes with those of the children's centre programme. Our health colleagues are undertaking a recruitment drive to fill vacant posts and it is anticipated that when the Health Visiting teams are fully recruited to, universal Health Visiting services will resume and we will continue to work with jointly to improve the health outcomes for young children and their families.</p>	On-going
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