

Report for: Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel – 6 October 2016

Item number:

Title: Haringey Children's Centres: The Impact of Closures

Ward(s) affected: All

1. Introduction

This report will provide the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel with an overview of the impact of the closure of a number of children's centres from April 2016 on residents with children under 5.

Following a wide programme of engagement with children's centres, parents and partner agencies to discuss, shape and finalise a new model for children's centres delivery between January and May 2015, followed by a public consultation exercise between June and September 2015, the Council agreed a new model for the delivery of children's centres in Haringey.

This new delivery model became operational from 1st April 2016 and incorporated the following elements:

- Nine designated children's centres organised into five children's centre planning areas. These planning areas align with the Early Help Localities and the existing School Network Learning Communities¹ (see map of provision enclosed)
- Eight of our remaining children's centres cover the four planning areas with greater levels of deprivation and as a consequence it means that we are deploying a higher concentration of resources in Tottenham.
- We have one centre built around the establishment of a peripatetic team operating in the planning area that covers the west of the borough. This arrangement was out in place to ensure that there would be no cessation of services in that part of the borough whilst plans were being developed for the commission of a longer-term children's centre service provision.
- Haringey's Health Visiting services have been reconfigured around the children centres planning areas, aligning the health visiting teams with the

¹ NLCs are groupings that bring schools and other local educational establishment together for planning and practice sharing purposes. There are 6 NLCs in Haringey: Muswell Hill & Highgate; Hornsey & Stroud Green; Wood Green; Harringay & West Green; North East Tottenham and South East Tottenham

nine children's centre teams and facilitating a more integrated service delivery model.

- There is a named Family Support Worker (FSW) from the Early Help team for each designated children's centre, with each FSW spending an allocated two half days per week in the centre .
- Links to a named Social Worker as set out in the statutory guidance² with the aim of building centres confidence when managing risk and taking appropriate child protection action. The direct link into children's social care complements the holistic work of the centres is already doing with the whole family.

2. Impact of Closure

Access to services

A data comparison for the period April to June 2015 (pre-remodelling) and the period April to June 2016 (post remodelling), showed that:

- The registration of children under 5 with the Haringey Children's Centres has slightly increased from 14,444 to 15,878 (this is 86% of the Haringey's 2013 midyear population estimate of under 5s)
- The registration of children under 2 has increased from 5,358 to 5,889 (this is 73% of Haringey's 2013 midyear population estimate of under 2s)
- The number of children from BME communities registered have stayed more or less the same with a slight decrease – from 10,334 to 11,031
- The number of children with a disability has decreased by 38% going from 73 to 45.

In summary, the registration of under 5s and for children from BME communities has grown slightly and reflects the general demographics in Haringey, with 69% of the children registered being from a BME community.

The registration of children under 2 has also grown slightly, reflecting improved systems and working relationships with the Health Visiting teams. The reconfiguration of the Haringey's health visiting teams to reflect the remodelled children's centres has only recently been completed and we are expecting the impact of the contacts with very young children in children's centre to continue to improve over the year.

² DfE, 2013, p.19

The lower levels of access to services for children with disabilities and special needs are in line with the findings from our 2015 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment³ which highlighted gaps in access to early education services. Improving access for children with SEN and Disabilities (SEND) is now a key priority within the children's centres outreach strategy. Part of our approach to improving access is to incorporate a specific focus on children with SEND into the development of our Parent Champion Scheme amongst other elements.

Looking at the number of children that registered in the first quarter of 2015 and the first quarter of 2016, we can highlight that:

- The number of registrations in those specific months has increase at Rowland Hill (+11%), Woodland Park (+13.5%), Pembury House (+24%) and at Woodside (+19%) Children's Centres.
- The number of children registered has remained the same in Welbourne, Triangle, Park Lane and Broadwaters Children's Centres
- The number of children registered slightly decreased in the West due to the need to induct the peripatetic team and finalise venues for service delivery. The majority of registrations for the area have been as a consequence of Health Visitor contacts.

Impact of services

In the first quarter of delivering services in the new model, centres have used the Reach Out Framework⁴ to plan services in each area based on the data set issued by the local authority.

As part of the revised performance management cycle, centres have been provided with a range of evaluative tools to measure the impact of the sessions they are delivering, particularly focusing on children's language and communication development. Centres' Early Intervention & Outreach Practitioners have also been trained in the Family Star and will be using this tool to measure change in any form of one to one engagement with families for more than 6 weeks.

Since April 2016 Children's Centres and Health Visiting Teams have been conducting integrated education and development reviews of children that are 2/2.5 year old. Healthcare professionals have conducted 1 and 2/2.5 year universal reviews in children's centres and the initial outcomes are:

- 100% take up of appointments for integrated reviews in the settings
- 100% of self reported parental satisfaction with the review
- 17% increase in referrals to speech & language therapy as a result of the reviews.

³ Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, (CSA), Executive Summary, 2015, p. 16

⁴ Reach Out Framework, 2015. The Reach Out is a framework for planning and assessing impact of services developed by 4 Children and commissioned by the DfE specifically for children's centres. In Haringey the Framework has been used specifically to plan provision of services based on evidence and data.

- 25% of all referrals to speech and language therapy services are coming from the reviews.
- 100% of the referral received are appropriate for the service

Regular performance reporting is required throughout the year. The first quarter reviews highlighted that the centres have continued providing similar levels of services in terms of weekly Stay & Play sessions and the first round of evaluation of Stay & Play services is due to be reported by 19 October 2016 and reviewed as part of the annual performance management cycle with visits to each centre scheduled for early November 2016.

The full impact of the first two quarters of the remodelled provision will be assessed during the forthcoming visits which will be focusing on the three key areas of access to services, impact of the provision and leadership, governance and management of the centres.

3. The Current Offer

There is a core offer at each designated centre, which is enhanced by a range of other services offered through close partnership working with other services and agencies.

Midwifery

Each children's centre and a variety of community venues host midwives from both hospitals (North Middlesex and Whittington) running weekly clinics. Those clinics enable local pregnant women to access services near their home and offer new parents the opportunity to have their baby checked in the first two weeks after delivery. The centres' staff facilitate parents' access to the service and work with the midwives to support those identified as in need of help and support.

Adult Learning & Volunteering

Each planning area offers a progression route from pre-entry ESOL and Family Learning opportunities to higher level courses and signposting to further training and education. Volunteering is also on offer in each area to support parents develop skills and confidence whilst looking after their children. The main partners delivering adult learning are Haringey Adult Learning Service (HALS) and Workers Education Association (WEA).

Early Learning Stay and Play sessions

Each centre and a variety of community venues in the West of the borough offers free Stay & Play sessions for families. The sessions are built around the delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) particularly focusing on communication & language development.

In addition, a programme called Five to Thrive is offered by trained children's centre staff and through which parents receive direct support in how they can contribute to their children's learning and development. The Stay and Play sessions also provide opportunities to break parental isolation.

Early Help Services

Children's centres offer access to coordinated support for families with multiple needs. Children's Centre staff are also part of Team around the Family meetings and contribute to plans aimed at supporting children and families most in need of help.

Breastfeeding Support

Support for breastfeeding expectant mother and new parents is offered in partnership with the Health Visiting Teams, an Infant Feeding Coordinator and the Breastfeeding Network. Centres offer access to support and advice about breastfeeding and infant feeding on a one to one or group based intervention according to needs.

Weighing Clinics

Each centre offers a monthly baby weighing clinic on a drop in basis in partnership with the health visiting service. Parents have an opportunity to check their baby's growth and receive support, information and advice from children's centres and health practitioners.

Baby groups

Targeted intervention in partnership with Health for first time parents with babies under 6 months. The group will provide support with infant feeding, baby massage, attachment and will aim to connect families into services.

Haringey Healthy Child Programme

Children's Centres host 1 and 2/2.5 year old health and development reviews as part of the universal offer to all families in Haringey. Children's Centres staff and health practitioners work closely to support families to access this valuable service.

The Healthy Eating and Nutrition for the Really Young (HENRY) Programme

This is an accredited 8 week programme of healthy eating, nutrition and active lifestyle for families with very young children aiming to prevent unhealthy habits and associated health problems. Children's Centres work closely with colleagues from our Public Health team to ensure families access the service and outcomes are clearly captured.

Free Early Education Entitlement

Children's Centres are part of the outreach and brokerage system to increase take up of free entitlement places for eligible 2 year olds and all 3&4 year olds

Eight of the centres offer Free for 2 places (free entitlement for eligible 2 year olds) and the universal 3&4 year old free entitlement. They also work closely with their local providers to increase the take up of the free entitlement across all ages.

Information, Advice and Guidance (IA&G)

Children's Centres are part of a wider system of IA&G and provide access to Citizen's Advice Bureau workers with the aim of ensuring that local families access the information and advice they need to enable them to address their own needs and be well informed about what is available locally. Providing access to information and advice about parenting, volunteering, employment, benefits, health services and childcare are key IA&G functions delivered by the centres.

4. Communication Strategy

The communications strategy for the redesign of Haringey's children's centres focused on working collaboratively with the centres, key partners and service users. The strategy is articulated in 3 stages in which we utilised a variety of information dissemination and feedback collection methods reflecting the diversity of Haringey's residents and providers.

Stage 1 – Pre Statutory Consultation engagement January – June 2015

A series of Children's Centre engagement meetings were planned and took place between January and June 2015 involving staff, leaders, governors and managers, with input from health and early help colleagues. During this initial phase, the aim was to engage with all stakeholders and agree on a model within the constraints of the available funding.

Alongside specific meetings with professionals a series of daytime, evening and weekend public engagement meetings were planned and delivered by the Local Authority and the Elected Member for Children. The aim of these meetings was to collect feedback and views from the local community of the principles and model that was taking shape.

Stage 2 – Consultation June – September 2015

Following the June 2015 cabinet approval to commence the statutory consultation on the proposed new delivery model; a consultation booklet and questionnaire were produced and disseminated widely both on line and on paper. The main distribution channels were children's centres, local providers, key agencies and Haringey's webpage. Part of the strategy was also ensuring an inclusive approach to capturing residents views and considering Haringey's demographic, it was necessary to set up a number of face to face meetings with parents, carers and interested residents to capture the views of those residents unwilling or unable to fill in forms. Children's Centre Staff were also given opportunities to provide feedback and have an input on the final proposed model via two face to face staff meetings.

As part of the statutory consultation, it was also key to gather the views of Governing Bodies of the school-based commissioned children's.

Stage 3 – Implementation November 2015 – June 2016

Following Cabinet approval of the new model on the 10th November 2015, communication then focused on informing all residents, via a letter, of the Council's decision and the imminent changes to the delivery model.

In order to ensure clarity and support for staff through the changes, the Local Authority and Governing Bodies organised specific face to face meetings as part of the formal staff consultation process. Alongside this process, centres were supported through planned meetings and regular updates on the operational implementation.

In early March 2016, a specific information leaflet was produced to ensure that professionals working in children's centres were able to reassure users of access to services from April 2016. The aim of this leaflet was twofold: on the one hand to ensure professionals felt confident in informing all users about Haringey's children's centre services and on the other hand, users could be reassured that in spite of changes, access to services would be preserved.

Finally, through working with colleagues in health, early help, Children's Centres staff and engaging directly with service users, we produced an information poster to clearly specify which services were on offer from the 1st April 2016 and where.

The outcome of having an engagement based strategy for communication through the three stages, meant that information were shared and discussed widely minimising the number of complaints from local residents during the implementation stage of the process.

5. Parental Engagement & Governance

New Learning & Volunteering Coordinators posts have a specific remit to work with the centres on facilitating and leading parental engagement, including adult learning and volunteering opportunities for local parents and carers.

Most centres have already established Parents' Forums and the peripatetic team covering the west of the borough is closely working with parents/carers that have started attending their Stay & Play sessions to ensure parental voice is heard and fed back into service planning and delivery.

The previous Children's Centre Advisory Board governance model is being revised to establish a new model which will be based on parental engagement and involvement being at the heart and will be built around having local mechanisms for parental involvement in planning, challenging and evaluating the impact of the work of the children's centres in each planning area. The children's centre advisory board will deliver the function of local scrutiny and challenge as expected under the statutory guidance for the delivery of children's centres and will be supported by the local authority to ensure they are able to fulfil this function across each planning area.

The model will have the following elements:

- Centre specific Parents' Forums. These will feed into:
- Planning Area Parents' Engagement Forums. These will underpin the children's centre advisory boards and feed into:
- Children's Centre Advisory Boards meetings which will feed into:
 - Borough level Commissioned Services & Partners Forum

The plans, views and the evidence provided by parents/carers through the advisory boards and parents forums will inform the Commissioned Services & Partners Forum. This forum will meet three times a year and will bring together Centres leaders, partners agencies and parents representatives for each planning area to review the planning and service delivery on the basis of evidence and feedback and focus on specific matters.

The first meeting of the Commissioned Services & Partners Forum took place in July 2016 with the specific purpose to agree the new Governance model.

The Commissioned Service & Partners Forum is coordinated by the Early Help Commissioning Team.

Service Level Agreements (SLAs) have also been issued to all commissioned school based centres and service specifications have been issued to the three Local Authority managed centres and the West Peripatetic team. Performance against these SLAs and service specifications will be monitored through a performance management framework which has been updated to reflect the new delivery model and incorporates a twice yearly review of which one is in-depth.

6. **Partnership Working**

A key strength of the new delivery model is the robust partnership developed with **health services**, particularly Public Health, Midwifery and Health Visiting services. The reconfiguration of Health Visiting Teams to reflect the children's centre planning areas has meant a renewed working relationship which is resulting in increased access for children under 2 years of age.

The reviews conducted by the healthcare practitioners in the centres and alongside education practitioners in childcare and early education for all 2/2.5 year olds, has contributed to building trust and enabling staff to identify needs at an earlier stage, confirming some of the evidence base on which services have been shaped. The work with the midwifery services to keep as many local clinics as possible in the community, in spite of reducing the number of centres, has allowed a similar level of access to this fundamental service for all local families.

Children's centres are a part of the **Haringey Early Help offer** providing universal access and some targeted intervention, particularly working with eligible 2 year olds and their families; supporting families to go back into learning and employment and working alongside Family Nurse Practitioners and Family Support Workers to ensure the most in need can access universal services.

The partnership with **adult learning services** and **employment support projects** in the context of local regeneration programmes has been clarified and strengthened by building a clear pathway for families in need of gaining skills for the future, improving their English and taking the first steps into employment.

Local **early education and childcare providers** are also a key partner of centres in the new delivery model particularly in working proactively together to increase the take up of free entitlement places and connecting all families to early years services.

In this context, it is also key the support that centres and providers receive from Haringey's Early Years Quality team aimed at improving the quality of the early education and childcare offer for all children.

Finally the key role played by **Information, Advice and Guidance providers, such as the Citizen's Advice Bureau**, who base some of their services and sessions in the centres, is vital to the success of the new delivery model. Signposting and informing families on what they can access, where and when is a function at the core of delivering integrated services and growing families' resilience.
