

Report of the Deputy Director to the meeting of the Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on 14th February 2017

AJ

Subject: Progress report on the Children's Centre clusters

Summary statement:

Children's centres were launched with the aim of giving disadvantaged children the 'best possible start in life,' and were intended to be one of the main vehicles for ensuring there are integrated and good quality accessible family services to support young children and their families.

Children's centres began in 1997 as Early Excellence Centres where nursery provision was integrated with early education, childcare and multi-agency services to form a key strand of support for families to improve health, address social exclusion and child poverty. In 1999 Sure Start local programmes were launched with responsibility to meet the needs of children within their reach area. Sure Start childrens centres began in 2004 and were given the responsibility of serving 30% of the most deprived communities. Children's centres were given legal status under the Childcare Act 2006 which requires Local Authorities to make arrangements so that there are sufficient childrens centres to meet local need and that early childhood services are provided in an integrated manner. By 2010 further childrens centres were opened in response to the government's vision that every community should have a centre providing onsite and outreach services for young children and their families pre-birth to age 5. By April 2013 numbers of children's centres nationally were falling because funding for children's centres has fallen significantly, by as much as one third at a local level over five years. In Bradford in April 2014 there were 41 children's centres managed through a varied range of providers, 20 by the Local Authority, 6 by nursery schools, 7 by primary schools, 8 by voluntary and community sector organisations. A budget decision was taken in 2014 to reduce funding to Children's centres resulting in savings of £2.4m 2014/15 to 2015/16.

This report provides a progress update about the reorganisation of childrens centres and the cluster arrangements to the Overview and Scrutiny committee as requested at the meeting of 7 June 2016.

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Overview & Scrutiny Area:
Children's Services

1. SUMMARY

Children's centres were launched with the aim of giving disadvantaged children the 'best possible start in life,' and were intended to be one of the main vehicles for ensuring there are integrated and good quality accessible family services to support young children and their families.

In summer 2013 a review of childrens centres across the Bradford district was carried out followed by a statutory consultation and a proposal for a new model for future delivery in November 2014. As a result of this the council executive agreed to a new seven cluster model of delivery for childrens centres managed by a variety of different providers – a 'mixed economy' model. Implementation of phase 1 i.e. the three nursery school clusters and the local authority cluster in Keighley was completed by 1st September 2015 and phase 2 the external clusters managed by the voluntary sector completed on the 1st August 2016.

This report provides a progress update to the Overview and Scrutiny committee as requested at the meeting of 7 June 2016.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Children's centres began in 1997 as Early Excellence Centres where nursery Provision was integrated with early education, childcare and multi-agency services to form a key strand of support for families to improve health, address social exclusion and child poverty. In 1999 Sure Start local programmes were launched with responsibility to meet the needs of children within their reach area. Sure Start childrens centres began in 2004 and were given the responsibility of serving 30% of the most deprived communities. Children's centres were given legal status under the Childcare Act 2006 which requires Local Authorities to make arrangements so that there are sufficient childrens centres to meet local need and that early childhood services are provided in an integrated manner. By 2010 further childrens centres were opened in response to the government's vision that every community should have a centre providing onsite and outreach services for young children and their families pre-birth to age 5. By April 2013 numbers of children's centres nationally were falling as a result of budget savings. Nationally funding for children's centres has fallen significantly, by as much as one third at a local level, over five years. In Bradford in April 2014 there were 41 children's centres managed through a varied range of providers, 20 by the Local Authority, 6 by nursery schools, 7 by primary schools, 8 by voluntary and community sector organisations.
- 2.2 In summer 2013 a review of childrens centres across the Bradford district was carried out followed by a statutory consultation and a proposal for a new model for future delivery in November 2014. Alongside this a budget decision was taken in 2014 to reduce funding to children's centres of £1.2 m in 2014-15 and £1.2 m 2015-16.
- 2.3 As a result of these decisions the council executive agreed to a new seven cluster model of delivery for childrens centres managed by a variety of different providers – a 'mixed economy' model, one cluster being brought in house, three going to a contestability process for schools to run, and three to go to external procurement for external providers to bid for.

2.4 The in-house and three nursery school-led clusters have been operational since 1st September 2015 and these are:

- Keighley cluster (Cluster lead Julie Greene) run by Bradford Council, the Cluster is made up of five sites:
Highfield, Low Fold, Treetops, Daisy Chain and Rainbow.
- Lister Park cluster (Cluster Lead Zoe Duffy) run by Midland Road Nursery School and Children's Centre, the cluster is made up of the following sites: Abbey Green, Farcliffe/Lilycroft, Frizinghall, Midland Road and Heaton.
- West Bradford cluster (Cluster lead Kulbir Bura) run by St Edmunds Nursery School and Children's Centre the cluster is made up of the following sites: Allerton, Crossley Hall, Thornton, Farnham/Grange, Lidget Green, Princeville and St Edmunds.
- Airedale and Wharfedale cluster (Cluster lead Lizzie Hughes) run by Strong Close Nursery School and Children's Centre the cluster is made up of the following sites: Baildon, Little Lane (Ilkley), Menston and Burley, Owlet, Bingley Rural, Hirst Wood, Strong Close and Trinity 5 Rise.

2.5 Children's Centre review and procurement for the three remaining clusters

Following a thorough procurement process for the contracts to manage the three remaining clusters, the Council awarded the BD5 cluster to the charity Barnardo's and the East Bradford Cluster to Action for Children Services Ltd.

- BD5 cluster (Cluster lead Deborah Buxton)
The cluster contains the following sites:
Burnett Fields Children Centre; Canterbury Centre's Children and Woodroyd Children's Centre
- East Bradford cluster (Cluster lead Susan Earnshaw)
The cluster contains the following sites:
Barkerend Children's Centre; Communityworks; Fagley Children's Centre; Gateway Children's Centre; Mortimer House Children's Centre; Parkland Children's Centre.

The Council did not receive a bid for Bradford South cluster that met the requirements that were set out in the tender. The Council has put in place arrangements to manage this cluster in-house.

- South Bradford cluster (Cluster lead Jenny Sneideris)
The cluster contains the following sites:
Bierley Children's Centre; Holme Wood Children's Centre; Reevy Hill Children's Centre; Tyersal Children's Centre; Victoria Hall Children's Centre; Woodside Children's Centre; Wyke Children's Centre.

Council staff have successfully been TUPEd across to Action For Children Services Ltd and Barnardo's as well as staff in the voluntary led centres. Staff from the voluntary led centres in the south have also TUPEd across to the council as part of the South Bradford cluster, and a cluster lead has very recently been appointed and

takes up post on 30 January 2017.

2.6 Cluster arrangements are a more cost-efficient way of securing children's centre services. New arrangements for BD5, East Bradford and South Bradford will deliver annual cost savings of £1.45m. The reconfiguration of children's centres also means that families continue to have access to a range of services across the district and that they should be delivered more consistently across each cluster.

2.7 Complementary offer

Nine of the original children's centres were de-designated centres within what is known as the complementary offer. This means that at these sites, children's centre services are delivered on a part-time basis, and so the sites have limited opening. These sites are:

Frizinghall, Thornton, Bingley Rural, Bingley Trinity 5 Rise, Menston and Burley, Little Lane Ilkley, Baildon, Haworth Treetops and Victoria Hall (Queensbury). Significant progress has been made towards achieving the required cost savings in respect of premises. Under the new cluster arrangements, nine centres in non-disadvantaged areas no longer have separate Ofsted children's centre registrations, but form part of wider cluster service planning. The sites continue to deliver children's centre services, but are no longer used for office accommodation.

Specific cost savings have been achieved in relation to the following de-designated centres:

- Thornton and Haworth – management of premises has transferred to the local primary school. Children's centre clusters now pay hourly room hire to the schools
- Ilkley (Little Lane) and Silsden (Daisy Chain) are both subject to Community Asset Transfer, with local community groups having taken on responsibility for managing the premises from 1st April 2016. Children's centre clusters now pay hourly room hire to the community groups
- Bingley Town (Trinity 5-Rise) will shortly transfer premises to the Diocese of the Church of England
- The Lease of dedicated space in Cottingley Cornerstone for Bingley Rural was terminated and different space in the centre is hired when required.

The Council's Estates Management Service are continuing to pursue alternative arrangements for Baildon and Menston which may be part of a Community Asset Transfer of Kirklands Community Centre. No further cost savings were required for Victoria Hall, Queensbury.

Rationalisation of service delivery across the clusters means there is reduced delivery of universal Stay and Play activities from the nine de-designated locations, but all families continue to have access to a range of universal services through the close integration of children's centre and health visitor work. These include:

- Ante-natal support for pregnant women and their partners to prepare for the birth and parenthood
- Birth visit including breast feeding support within the first month
- A home visit to assess maternal mood, promote attachment and consider home safety (3 – 4 months of age)
- Weaning advice

- Developmental movement and play session (6 months of age)
- Nursery nurse home visit (9-12 months)
- Early Language Development session (18 months)
- Two and a half year development review
- Access to a free early education place in the term after their child's third birthday
- Free Book Start packs
- Access to information through the Families Information Service

These universal services help identify families where children would benefit from additional support and underpin delivery of targeted family support, health and early learning interventions.

2.8 Ofsted inspections of children centres

The last inspection of a childrens centre in Bradford was Woodroyd in June 2015. In September 2015 the then Under Secretary of State for Childcare and Education, Sam Gyimah MP, wrote to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to suspend inspections of children's centres and announced that there would be a consultation in the autumn term 2015 on the future of children's centres and their accountability arrangements. There has to date, been no consultation and no further news about children's centres nationally or any new framework for Ofsted inspections.

2.9 Potential Capital Clawback

The DfE has a right to clawback a proportion of capital grants spent on childrens centres where the space ceases to be used for a significant amount of delivery of early year's services to children and families in the centre.

To date there has been minimal clawback nationally, despite the closure of many children's centres across the country.

- In order to try and minimise any potential future clawback and reduce costs, the strategy in Bradford has been to, where possible, work with partners such as schools and community groups to take on the management of the children's centre space alongside other space in schools or community venues.
- Services continue to be run from all of the de-designated (complementary offer) centres (refer to paragraph 2.7 above) in order to try and avoid any potential clawback. Some of these services are run directly by the cluster; others are for example midwifery or health visitor clinics. There are also a number of self-run groups and external groups offering music, singing, dance and sporting activities for young children for a small fee, as well as financial /debt advice services which are well used by families.

Bradford has just submitted a set of financial returns to the DfE providing information about the use of these de-designated centres.

We will know in the next few months whether the DfE will invoke any capital clawback; based on current information nationally about clawback we cannot make any guarantees, and there is a potential risk, but are reasonably confident they will not. The Report to the Executive Committee 4th November 2014 included a description in the Risk Register of a potential long term risk of clawback if some buildings were not secured for future use. We have continued to work with providers and partners to make sure the centres are used to provide services to children and families.

There is no specific contingency if clawback is invoked but there is a £100k capital resource fund.

2.10 Integrated delivery model

Crucial to the delivery model for the new clusters has been the implementation of the Integrated Early Years Strategy 2015-18.

We have a young diverse population of young children with high rates of infant mortality, obesity, poor oral health and below average school readiness and educational achievement overall particularly in more deprived parts of the district. This strategy for children aged 0-7 years was developed over 2014/15 with all key partners and was published in September 2015. It links to the key strategic priorities in the District and Council Plan and also with key priorities for partners; specifically A Great start in life and Good schools and Better Health Better lives and also the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Health Inequalities Action Plan, Children and Young People's Plan, 5 Year Forward Plan and Sustainable Transformation Plan (STP) and Clinical Commissioning Group plans for Maternal and Child Health.

The strategy builds on existing good practice in Early Years Services, the Integrated Care Pathway for midwifery, children centre and health visiting staff developed in 2014 and also the learning and joint working arising from the £49 million Big Lottery funded 10 year Better Start Bradford (BSB) Programme. This programme is based in three of the most deprived wards across the district and is focused on pregnant women and children under 3 years of age. The approach for the district and also for BSB is based on the evidence of what works to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities; with a whole system approach based across key priority areas of commissioning; co-ordinated family support, workforce planning, Improve the health and wellbeing of all children in the District and reduce inequalities and Children ready for school and schools ready for children.

3. Progress with Implementation

- 3.1 As a result of agreement amongst the key partners represented on the IEYS some key decisions have been made recently to the key accountabilities for the children's centre clusters. These were based on:
- a. A review undertaken in 2015 of the performance indicators (KPIs) for childrens centres. There were in excess of 70 indicators for childrens' centres, but most of these were output or quality measures.
 - b. In April 2016, the Local Authority commissioned an ex Senior Ofsted HMI, to review its approach to children's centre performance management. This work involved review of SEFs and observation of four Annual Conversations with four recently established clusters. The review concluded that the multiplicity of KPIs had led to a loss of rigorous challenge on the performance in areas of work which make the most difference to outcomes for children: *"the impact of children's centre services on the children and families that need it most"*

3.2 The report suggested a way forward for performance management in Bradford:

- a move away from children's centres being held accountable for all aspects of the work they engage in and deliver with partners
- the contribution they make to the delivery of integrated services for children and families locally; for example,
 - the extent to which centres know about, share information and address specific local issues such as high family mobility and high infant mortality
 - the contribution children's centres make to safeguarding children and families
 - the contribution children's centre make to tackling health and well-being inequalities and priorities
 - the contribution children's centres make to adult learning and employability in their locality
 - the contribution children's centres make towards the achievement of area wide improvement targets and priorities

3.3 The report made several recommendations for the Local Authority:

- Clearly define those aspects of partnership working that children's centres are: a) expected to contribute to, and b) are responsible for driving and delivering. Adjust expectations, data, quality assurance and reporting requirements according to these new parameters.
- Ensure there is a clear and increased focus on contributing to and delivering activities that are related to early education and care and improving school readiness.
- Once the overarching performance framework and parameters have been agreed, engage into dialogue with centre leaders in order to:
 - Establish area wide performance targets and measures all centres will be expected to a) contribute to and b) deliver
 - agree locality specific impact and outcome measures for those groups of children and families that it had been agreed are most in need of help and support
 - ensure performance measures are outcome and impact driven and include specific quantitative targets and benchmarks wherever possible
- Ensure that each centre has a concise and sharply focused action and improvement plan with a review cycle that:
 - incorporates the agreed outcome and impact measures
 - includes benchmarks, and captures incremental improvements
 - timelines and milestones
 - designates responsibilities to named individuals.
- Consider how best to demonstrate the contribution children's centres make towards the achievement of the priorities and objectives set out in the City of Bradford MDC Integrated Early Years Strategy 2015 – 18 and other relevant strategies and development plans.
- Consider how the impact and outcomes of children's centre engagement with children and families can be tracked and demonstrated over the longer term. For example, by tracking children who have accessed early education and care or specific support such as speech and language development through

the children's centre as they move through the different phases of their education.

- 3.4 As a result of this work the IEYS have agreed a number of changes including the reduction of the key performance indicators for children's centre clusters to seven which are:
- % target of all 3 year olds not accessing early education are seen
 - All family support cases are underpinned by a signs of safety action plan
 - % target reduction in childhood obesity (in reception)
 - % target reduction in missing/decayed and filled (DMF) teeth in reception
 - Reducing smoking in pregnancy and beyond by increasing the % of mums – to-be to set a quit target date
 - % target increase in the take-up of eligible 2, 3 and 4 year-olds in funded early education places
 - Increase attainment in reception (measured by a Good Level of Development) and narrow the gap between the disadvantaged children and their peers.
- 3.5 In work and it is recognised that health visitors are the lead professional for all children aged 0-4 years through their mandated five contacts. Attendance at high quality early learning settings should support children to achieve their full potential and provide effective safeguarding. It has been agreed that childrens centres no longer need to make three contacts per year with each child but that other contacts by health professionals, early year's partners are included. However, registration and maintenance of an accurate record of children living in the cluster reach area remain of critical importance and that is why three of the KPIs focus on these areas, in addition the principle has been established that every contact counts in partnership
- i) Identification and assertive outreach to children who appear not to be seen by health or early learning partners (missing children)
 - ii) Take-up of early education places
 - iii) Robust tracking of children's development to identify risk of delay.
- 3.6 The work of each cluster is overseen by an Advisory Board comprising parents and key partners from relevant agencies and the local community. The move from 41 individual centres to seven clusters has enabled the number of Advisory Boards to reduce to seven. This in itself helps the boards to operate in a more coherent and strategic manner. Health visitors are currently restructuring to align with the seven clusters and each Advisory Board now has a Senior Lead Health Visitor. This structural change supports further integration of services and this is evidenced by the fact that Advisory Boards are now starting to produce Integrated Action plans in line with a pioneering partnership model developed by the Lister Park Cluster. Joint planning by local partners and parents enhances local implementation of the five objectives of the Integrated Early Years Strategy.
- i) Children ready for schools and schools ready for children
 - ii) Improve health and well-being for all children in the district and reduce inequalities
 - iii) Support and increase parents knowledge and skills
 - iv) Support development of high quality leadership together with a highly skilled and responsive workforce
 - v) Integrated working and system change

3.7 As commissioner, the Early Years' Service will oversee contract compliance and evidence of impact of the new clusters through the following arrangements:

- i) Quarterly monitoring contract delivery, including financial monitoring
- ii) Annual conversations with Children's Centre Managers and Chairs of Advisory Boards looking at evidence of the impact of services on outcomes for children including performance against the KPI's. These will be undertaken in April 2017

More generally the Early Years' Service will be adopting a sector-led approach to quality improvement in the clusters similar to that which is in place in schools. This will involve supporting staff working in children's centre services to provide robust peer to peer review, support and challenge.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

The Council agreed in February 2014 to make budget savings of £2.416m from Children Centre budgets (£1.212m in 2014-15 and a further £1.204m in 2015-16). The School's Forum allocated £1.2m of "one-off" funding to support the saving in 2014-15 so that there was transition to support the way Children Centres services were Provided in the district. The Council increased the savings of £2.416m by a further £0.967m in February 2015 (£0.564m in 2015-16 and a further £0.403m in 2016-17). Therefore the total annual saving from the Children Centre services reconfiguration is £3.338m from 2017-18.

Note in paragraph 2.9 the potential for capital clawback from the DfE.

5. LEGAL APPRAISAL

None arising from this report

6. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None.

7. OPTIONS

Not applicable.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 That the information in this report be noted

9. APPENDICES

9.1 None.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

DfE – Research brief: evaluation of children’s centres in England strands 1 to 5. (ECCE) July 2016

DfE– The value for money of children’s centre services (ECCE) Strand 5 Research brief July 2016

Csn (Children’s Services Network) Policy briefing Evaluation of children’s centres in England DfE research 1 August 2016

DfE – Sure Start children’s centres statutory guidance April 2013

Report of the Director of Children’s Services to the meeting of the Executive Committee to be held on 4th November 2014.