

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Early Years, Children & Youth Policy Development Overview & Scrutiny
MEETING DATE:	9 th July 2012
TITLE:	Children's Centres Briefing
WARD:	ALL

AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

List of attachments to this report:

Appendix 1: extracts from the annual report on the numbers of children and parents accessing Children's Centres & their Services in 2011-12

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 This is a briefing for Members on the current activities, issues and future pressures for Children's Centres in the Council.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Early Years, Children & Youth Policy Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

2.1 Accept the briefing within this paper as an overview of the current position for Children's Centres & Play.

2.2 To note the progress of Children's Centres since the last report came to Overview & Scrutiny in September 2010, including recent Ofsted Inspections.

2.3 To be aware of the future landscapes for Children's Centres regarding Payment by Results and the provider/commissioner split within People & Communities restructure.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 This report does not contain any direct financial implications, however as part of the Council's drive to reduce costs over the next 3 years, there are financial implications for Children's Centre services and some reference to finances is made within the report.
- 3.2 Total funding allocated to early childhood services (including Children's Centres) is £4.9 million. Any issues identified in this report will not impact upon the budget position.

4 THE REPORT

- 4.1 The Council was required to set up 11 Children's Centres by March 2010, which was achieved. Each Children's Centre has a reach of approximately 700 children under 5, geographically positioned to cover all children under 5 years in the authority (see Appendix 1). Local Authorities are charged under the 2006 Childcare Act to provide sufficient children's centres to meet the needs of all children under 5 year.
- 4.2 Under the new DfE requirements local authorities should:
- ensure that a network of children's centres is accessible to all families with young children in their area
 - ensure that children's centres and their services are within reasonable reach of all families with young children in urban and rural areas, taking into account distance and availability of transport
 - ensure that opening times and availability of services meets the needs of families in their area
 - target children's centres services at young children and families in the area where there are risks of poor outcomes
- 4.3 The core purpose of Children's Centres is to improve outcomes for young children and their families, with a particular focus on families in greatest need of support, in order to reduce inequalities in:
- child development and school readiness;
 - parenting aspirations, self esteem and parenting skills; and
 - child and family health and life chances
- 4.4 The current budget supporting the combined, integrated early childhood services, is £4.9 million. This covers:
- 4.4.1 £2.7 million split across the 11 Children's Centres, based on levels of deprivation and numbers of children living in an area;
- 4.4.2 £900k on commissioned services supporting health, family support, specialist services to under 5's (and some over 5's).
- 4.4.3 £1.3 million is spent on children in need & inclusion services for children under 5 years, as well as advisory support and training to the

83 early years nurseries and pre-schools & 250 childminders across the local authority.

4.5 Children's Centres in B&NES are run by both the voluntary sector (2 in Bath West are run by First Steps Charity) and the Council (9 are run across Bath and North East Somerset Children's Services).

4.6 The local authority has had 2 Ofsted Inspections of Children's Centres since the framework was introduced by the DfE in 2010. St. Martin's Garden Children's Centre received a **Good** Inspection in December 2011 and First Steps Twerton received a **Good** in January 2012. Since then the nursery at St. Martin's Garden Children's Centre received a separate daycare inspection, which was **Outstanding** and First Steps received a daycare only inspection for their Moorlands Children's Centre which was also **Outstanding**.

4.7 Services to Children's Centres in B&NES are integrated and offer good multi-agency working across all the early years sectors, enabling us to achieve the best for children under 5, no matter where they access services (evidenced recently by our narrowing the gap at the end of Reception Year, achieving Good Ofsted outcomes and earlier identification of need through good integrated processes such as Common Assessment Framework (CAF). Sirona Health & Care continue to delivery services alongside the Children's Centres in a way that is not common in other areas and which supported their successful application to become an Early Implementer of the new Health Visiting programme led by the Department of Health. 4 Children's Centres run by the local authority have office bases for Health Visitors in them.

4.8 Services have become more targeted over the last 2 years and act as a strong preventative aspect of keeping children safe, healthy and parents supported to enable children to start school well prepared. Services continue to focus on evidenced based approaches to supporting children and families (as evidenced by the 2 Ofsted Inspections that have taken place in our local authority area). Commissioned services in early years are outcomes focused, with a common purpose across agencies.

4.9 With the advent of Payment by Results in April 2013, it will be important to maintain a close, integrated relationship to all early childhood services as recent indications suggest that payment will be received for targets such as breastfeeding rates; sustained engagement of hard to reach groups of parents; children's readiness for school and results of the Foundation Stage Profile at the end of Reception class in schools. Clearly other organisations will be greatly contributing to these targets whilst the local authority will be the recipient (or otherwise) of any payments.

4.10 It is inevitable at a time of budget constraints that the model of Children's Centre delivery (including our support to the private, voluntary and independent sector early years nurseries and childminders) will need to be reviewed to ensure resources remain targeted; maximum income is generated from the many Children's Centre buildings that have been built or

refurbished through Sure Start capital grants and that voluntary and community engagement ensures that whoever is running these centres, they remain able to respond to local need and can evidence positive outcomes for children whose family or medical needs mean they are less likely to achieve without intervention.

4.11 The projected significant increase in Housing over the whole local authority by 2026 will inevitably put a strain on early years resources. Whilst the Local Plan supports the development of new nursery provision there is no similar model of SPD contribution to Children’s Centre Services.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT

5.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

6 EQUALITIES

6.1 Equality Impact Assessments have been completed for all Children’s Centre Services.

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 No direct consultation has taken place in respect of this briefing paper. Staff and service users are consulted about the development and provision of the Children Centre Services

8 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

8.1 Social Inclusion; Customer Focus; Property; Impact on Staff; Other Legal Considerations are all areas for consideration if a future decision on Children’s Centres is needing to be made.

9 ADVICE SOUGHT

9.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Divisional Director – Legal and Democratic Services) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

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Background papers	
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