

Subject:	Early Years Strategy		
Date of Meeting:	19 June 2017		
Report of:	Executive Director - Families, Children & Learning		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 The Council has a duty under the Childcare Act 2006 to improve outcomes for all young children, reduce inequalities and ensure that there is sufficient, high-quality early years provision and childcare for parents locally.
- 1.2 The Early Years Strategy sets out how the Council is meeting this duty and priorities for the future. It contributes to the council's ambition that children and young people have the best possible start in life, growing up happy, healthy and safe with the opportunity to reach their potential.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Committee agrees five priorities for the Early Years Strategy:
 - 1) To focus on disadvantage including agreeing a shared definition of disadvantage across services in the early years.
 - 2) To provide joined-up services through Children's Centres to strengthen families by supporting child development, parenting, healthy lifestyles and increasing the number of working families.
 - 3) To ensure children receive early assessments including the health and progress checks at age two and promoting information sharing between health visiting, early years providers and schools.
 - 4) To ensure there are sufficient early years childcare places in the city so that disadvantaged children take up their free early years entitlement and parents can work.
 - 5) To ensure early years childcare places are good quality and additional funding improves outcomes for disadvantaged children.
- 2.2 That the Committee notes the extension from 15 to 30 hours of free childcare for three and four year olds with working parents from September 2017.

3. CONTEXT / BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The key national indicator for early years children is the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) which is completed at the end of the reception year in school. Data shows that disadvantaged children nationally, and locally in Brighton & Hove are already achieving less well than their peers. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development in the city was 66.2 per cent in 2016 below the England average of 69.3 per cent. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development in disadvantaged groups was also lower than the national average. The aim of the strategy is to increase the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development in the future.
- 3.2 Ofsted's report "Unknown Children - Destined for Disadvantage" (July 2016) evaluated the effectiveness of local authorities and early years providers in tackling the issues facing disadvantaged families and their young children. It stated that "A child's earliest years, from their birth to the time they reach statutory school age, are crucial. All the research shows that this stage of learning and development matters more than any other".
- 3.3 A key recommendation in the report was that local authorities should publish their strategies for meeting the needs of disadvantaged families and families so that local communities are clear about the support available and how success will be measured. The draft Early Years Strategy attached to the report sets out five main priorities for early years in Brighton & Hove which address the issues raised in "Unknown Children".
- 3.4 The first priority is to work towards a shared definition of disadvantage across early years services. The proxy indicator used by the Government is children's eligibility for free school meals. Ofsted found that the most effective local authorities and schools used a wider definition. The strategy proposes sharing a wider definition of disadvantage across all providers of early years services.
- 3.5 The second priority is to provide joined-up services through children's centres to improve parenting and healthy lifestyles and reduce the number of workless families. The strategy describes the work of children's centres in the city including working with the 0-19 Public Nursing Service provided by Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust who deliver the Healthy Child Programme. This includes assessments of children and families and a programme of universal and targeted services for families with young children to improve outcomes.
- 3.6 The third priority is to ensure children receive early assessments including the health development check and the Early Years Foundation Stage progress check in nurseries at age two, and to promote information sharing between health visiting, early years providers and schools.
- 3.7 The fourth priority is to ensure there continues to be sufficient high quality accessible early years childcare places in the city so that disadvantaged children take up their free early years entitlement and parents can work. Take up of free early education places by disadvantaged two year olds is high with 88 per cent of

eligible two year olds taking up a place. A Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) was published in November 2016. The CSA did not find any significant gaps in childcare in terms of childcare quality, location of childcare, availability of childcare for children of different ages, childcare availability at different times, and childcare affordability, although parents were concerned about the high cost of childcare.

3.8 There are two new Government schemes to help parents with the cost of childcare: Tax Free Childcare and 30 hours free childcare. With Tax Free Childcare for every £8 a parent pays into their childcare account, the government will pay in an extra £2 up to a maximum of £2000. Parents can then use this money to pay their childcare provider.

3.9 From September 2017, working parents of three and four year olds will be entitled to 30 hours of childcare during term time which is free of charge. This equates to around 23 hours per week if spread across the whole year. This is double the 570 hours a year that three and four year old children currently receive. Local authorities are required by legislation to secure this childcare for qualifying children in their area and it is important in doing so that the universal entitlement of three and four year olds is retained. Publicity and information for parents about new support for childcare costs is provided by the Family Information Service.

3.10 The fifth priority is ensuring that early years childcare places are high quality and additional funding improves outcomes for disadvantaged children. Ofsted inspection outcomes indicate that the quality of early years provision in Brighton & Hove is high with 97 per cent of early years childcare providers rated Good or Outstanding. The strategy explains support for providers to take up and use the Early Years Pupil Premium for disadvantaged three and four year olds, support and challenge for childcare providers and schools and support for disadvantaged groups of children including children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities, English as an Additional Language and support for children in care.

3.11 The strategy includes ten next steps and a framework for how success will be measured:

- Ofsted outcomes – percentage of providers who are good and outstanding
- Early Years Foundation Stage Profile - good level of development measured at the end of the reception year in school
- Proportion of children claiming Early Years Pupil Premium
- Percentage of eligible children taking up 30 hours
- Numbers of new to work parents taking up 30 hours
- Percentage of eligible children in two year old places
- Proportion of children receiving a two year old health check

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

4.1 The recommendations follow the Ofsted suggestion that Local Authorities should publish an early years strategy which focussed on disadvantaged children.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Two parent surveys have been completed; one regarding childcare sufficiency (responses from 805 parents) and the other regarding 30 hours free childcare (responses from 1,431 parents). Twenty-five face to face interviews were carried out regarding 30 hours free childcare. Additional consultation was completed with parents with SEND and English as an Additional Language.
- 5.2 Childcare providers and employers were consulted regarding their plans regarding provision of 30 hours free childcare from September 2017.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Early Years Strategy should be implemented to improve outcomes for disadvantaged young children and their families.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 Funding for the Early Years Free Entitlement for eligible two, three and four year olds is from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The total funding is £14.57 million for 2017/18. The government has allocated all local authorities early years funding based upon a national formula. Brighton & Hove's allocation for three and four year olds equates to an increase of 4p per hour on the amount for 2016/17 and at £4.45 is significantly below the published national average amount of £4.78 and below the average hourly charge for childcare in the city of £5.05.
- 7.2 Funding for other areas is from the Council's General Fund: Children's Centres £1.462m, support for early years and childcare £0.422m and nurseries £0.300m.

Finance Officer Consulted: Andy Moore

Date: 10/05/2017

Legal Implications:

- 7.3 Local authorities are charged with meeting the needs of young children through the primary legislation of the Childcare Act 2006. This act places a duty on local authorities to improve the outcomes for all young children, reduce inequalities, and ensure that there is enough high-quality, integrated early years provision and childcare for parents locally.
- 7.4 From September 2017 local authorities will have a new duty under section 2 of the Childcare Act 2016 and associated Regulations to secure the equivalent of 30 hours of free childcare over 38 weeks of the year for qualifying children.

Lawyer Consulted: Serena Kynaston

Date: 15/05/2017

Equalities Implications:

- 7.5 The aim of the strategy is to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children including those in low income families, with Special Educational Needs and

Disabilities and children in care. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) was completed for Early Years Free Entitlement for two year olds in 2015 and found that the scheme has a positive impact on the most disadvantaged two year olds in the city. An EIA will be completed for 30 hours free childcare.

- 7.6 All early years providers follow the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage which promotes equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.1 The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment did not find any significant geographical gaps in childcare provision. In general families are able to access childcare in their local community reducing the need for travel.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 7.2 The Early Years Strategy will contribute to the following council's priorities:
- A good life – ensuring a city for all ages, inclusive of everyone and protecting the most vulnerable
 - A vibrant economy – promoting a world class economy with a local workforce to match.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 7.3 A key risk to securing the increase to 30 hours for three and four year olds with working parents is the low rate of funding from the Government.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Early Years Strategy for Brighton and Hove

Background Documents

1. Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2016 (<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/children-and-education/childcare-and-family-support/childcare-city>)
2. Unknown Children Destined for Disadvantage (Ofsted) (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/541394/Unknown_children_destined_for_disadvantage.pdf)
3. Early education and childcare – statutory guidance for local authorities. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/596460/early_education_and_childcare_statutory_guidance_2017.pdf

