



Havering
LONDON BOROUGH

CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Subject Heading: Children's Centres

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Policy context: Children's Centres

SUMMARY

This report is intended to report the progress on the recommendations of Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee Topic Group. The topic group reported to Children's Overview and Scrutiny committee on the 21.04.09. The recommendations of the Topic Group were considered by Cabinet on the 24.06 09 and many of the recommendations were agreed. This report will report progress on the recommendations agreed by the Councils Cabinet.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This is a progress report so no recommendations are sought at this time.

I would ask the committee to note the positive work being undertaken while recognising the development and improvement in Children's Centres since the Topic Group reported.

REPORT DETAIL

Since the Topic Group reported in 2009 the following Children's Centres have been opened and/or gained full core offer status with the Department of Education.

- Airfield
- Thistledene (Pinewood School Collier Row)
- South Hornchurch Library
- Upminster Library
- Hilldene
- Pyrgo
- Rainham Village
- St Kilda's
- Elm Park
- Harold Court

The Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 gave Children's Centres a statutory status in terms of requiring Local Authorities to provide a sufficient number of Children's Centres to meet local need. The 2009 Act also required Ofsted to inspect Children's Centres against a self evaluation framework for judging the standard full core offer status. The London Borough of Havering had two Ofsted inspections; one of Harold Court Children's Centre in January 2011, and one of Collier Row Children's Centre in April 2011.

Children's Centres are managed and provide a service in a hub and spoke/cluster model with staff, working across a number of Children's Centres.

Improvements and progress in terms of services and governance arrangements have been ongoing; Children's Centres have linked with and embedded Think Family programmes working with the most vulnerable families.

Recommendations of the Topic Group.

That, in light of anticipated legislation concerning the granting of statutory status to Children's Centres, greater emphasis be given to the embedding of partnership working between the Council and NHS.

Children's Centres now have a statutory status. There has been an increased emphasis on improving partnership working by the Council with NHS Havering. We now have 4 Health hubs across the Borough, which are at:

- Collier Row
- St Kilda's
- Ingrebourne
- Elm Park

Midwives are based at these centres and provide community services such as antenatal care and parent craft classes. At these hubs, there are also health visiting services providing a range of clinics covering child's development, healthy eating; weaning and breastfeeding cafes. These services are provided in conjunction with third sector organisations such as NCT and Lifeline who provide parent craft classes such as breast feeding, peer mentoring, and separate parent craft classes for young parents, in particular young men.

The centres continue to provide breast feeding support and intensive family support for vulnerable young parents (Baby FIP). There are also early speech and language programmes; and early support for children with additional needs including support groups for parents, baby massage programmes, and sensory rooms.

We hope to provide sleep clinics for parents experiencing problems particularly those with children with a disability such as autism. Currently staff are training jointly with NHS Havering.

That a standard form of occupation agreement for nurseries on Children's Centre premises be drawn up as a matter of urgency and that it be a compulsory requirement for nurseries to sign this before moving into the premises.

There are two Children's Centres which have private nursery provision. There is now a standard form of occupation agreement with Ingrebourne Nursery based at Ingrebourne Children's Centre, with regular reviews built in.

The nursery at Collier Row Children's Centre (Abbs Cross), still have not signed an agreement and this matter is before the Court for resolution. There have been no further rentals to private providers since 2008.

Ingrebourne Nursery allows the Local Authority access to data. We manage and assess vulnerable families for the 2 year pilot which enables 2-3 year olds to access free pre-school provision. We work alongside a number of pre-school carers and nurseries to provide services to vulnerable families.

That where possible, self contained buildings are used for Children's Centre accommodation.

The majority of Children's Centres are in self contained buildings. South Hornchurch Library Children's Centre has recently moved to the converted portacabin on the library site.

Currently we share premises with Upminster Library. We also use isolated classrooms at Pinewood School next to the nursery and use classrooms at Rainham Village School as a temporary site, until the new building is ready.

That the commitment to establish a parents forum for each Children's Centre be progressed as quickly as possible.

There are parents forums at each Children's Centre. The governance arrangements were agreed by the Children's Trust and are in place. Currently, there are discussions with the School Governor Service of the Local Authority for that service to manage children centre governance. Beside parents forums, there are also Local Advisory Boards across hubs at which parent representatives attend and participate.

That transport arrangements to Children's Centres be kept under review and that good corporate signage be installed at each centre.

There has been a review of signage and consistency of approach adopted. There are new signs that clearly mark the buildings and signs on the main highways indicating the location from major junctions. We continue to review transport links and signage.

That, if funds are available, facilities allowing N3 connectivity are installed in all existing and future Havering Children's Centres.

NHS Havering has supplied their staff with mobile working 3g solutions or at some hubs; health staff have direct access to their database. This matter is no longer an issue.

That the provision of sexual health services at Children's Services Centres continues and is developed.

Children's Centres have continued to provide some sexual health services. We have also developed services for teenage parents with an emphasis on preventing a second pregnancy.

That the council institutes a high level of promotion of Children's Centres including improved use of Living in Havering, development of the councils website, a clearer corporate image and review of the use of exterior of Centre buildings.

There continues to be a communication strategy to promote Children's Centres.

Health Services give advice/information about Children's Centres before and post birth. Staff regularly leaflet parents in local schools and visit antenatal and neonatal wards at Queens and King George Hospital to locate the vulnerable parents.

We have had articles in Living and also invite the local papers to key events. We have worked closely with local radio stations to provide joint Christmas and Easter activities with donations from local residents.

We do have a website and are training staff to update this as regularly as they are able.

We have reviewed the exterior of the buildings and where possible and funds allow have made improvements to signage and appearance. Our biggest advocates are the parents and we have recorded parents speaking about their experiences of Children's Centres. Parents, particularly parent volunteers, recommend our services to others. We are about to launch a more formal volunteering scheme.

That the existing strong working relationships between the Council and its partners continue in the establishment of further Children centres.

The existing strong working relationship with our partners in Health, Job Centre Plus and with the third sector has continued. There have been a number of centres opened as detailed in the beginning of this report. All of the old and new centres are linked to partner agencies.

That work continues as soon as possible to finalise locations of new Children's Centres covering Central Romford and Rainham Village.

Work has continued with a centre developed in Pinewood School and Rainham Village School. Both have a Children's Centre offer in place. The plans are well advanced for the self contained Children Centre at Rainham Village.

The plans for Wykeham and Mawney School received strong local opposition and therefore we withdrew these plans. Instead, we have adapted St Kilda's to increase its capacity and are offering parenting groups to local schools in the Romford area. Health Services are moving their staff from Romford Clinic to St Kilda's.

That the establishment of outreach services from Children's Centres be continued and the use of mobile solution be considered for more isolated area if appropriate.

We have an outreach service operating across the Borough. The outreach service works with the most vulnerable; providing parenting classes and one to one parenting programmes to parents whose parenting requires support. We utilise local halls and school premises if needed.

That the existing good relationships with schools that have Children's Centres on their premises continue as further centres on school sites are developed.

We have excellent relationships with a large number of schools, particularly schools which have a Children Centre on site. During school breaks and in the evening we are able to offer family activities such as play opportunities and parenting classes using school buildings and grounds.

That communications with will families on Children’s Centres waiting lists be reviewed to ensure equality of opportunity and of information received.

We have reviewed our waiting lists and how they function. We prioritise families in greatest need in accessing groups. The E-Start computer system has been extended into all centres and has been cleaned in terms of its data quality. We are now able to run meaningful reports which assist with the management of waiting lists.

CONCLUSION

Children’s Centre’s are a major part of the service delivery for Early Intervention and Prevention.

The centres have gained national recognition and staff have been to meet with the Minister and her Policy Advisors about the future of centres. Staff have also submitted case studies to Professor Eileen Munro about working with the most vulnerable parents, preventing abuse and neglect, and ensuring school readiness.

The centres will become a major part in delivery of the priorities of the Preventative Strategy within localities.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

*There is a **statutory** obligation to list papers relied on in the preparation of the report, unless:*

- 1 It is an exempt report*
- 2 Papers relied upon are already in the public domain as “published papers”. This can include: books, magazines and newspapers; Government publications; Council publications (including previous reports and minutes of meetings)*
 - 1. Apprenticeship skills children and leaning 2009*
 - 2. Sure Start Children’s Centres statutory guidance 2008.*