

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting15th January 2014

1. Title of Item/Report

Children's Centre Performance Review

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report that provided an update on the performance of the Children's Centres in the Borough.

There were 12 Children's Centres in Stockton, which provided geographical coverage of the whole Borough.

As part of the Early Years EIG review in 2011/12 a decision was made to operate 12 Children's Centres in Stockton, providing geographical cover of the whole Borough. It was also agreed that 8 of these Children's Centres would be commissioned. The Council was to retain operational management responsibility for 4 Children's Centres. Following a procurement exercise which was undertaken in 2012, two organisations, Big Life Families and 4Children, were awarded contracts to run the commissioned Centres. The location of these centres, and the organisation responsible for the running of them, was shown at Table 1 within the report. Big Life Families and 4Children took over management of the centres on 1st June 2012 with full delivery of services commencing in September 2012.

The location of the Children's Centres and the areas they serve was attached to the report. These areas were described as 'Reach areas'. A Reach Area was a designated geographical area that could be likened to a school admissions zone. In the same way, the critical information was the number of children 0-5 residing in that area.

Children's Centres were described as targeted or non-targeted. This reflected the socio-economic profile of the area they served. Targeted Children's Centres were those with a high proportion of LSOA's in the bottom 30% nationally. The non-targeted centres may well have pockets of deprivation in the area the Children's Centre served, and may have some LSOAs in the bottom 30% nationally, but generally, they supported the more affluent communities (those in the top 70% LSOA's, nationally). In Stockton, there were 8 targeted and 4 non-targeted Children's Centres

and Table 1 also noted which Children's Centres were targeted and which were non-targeted. The funding that the Council made available for the running of Children's Centres varied significantly for targeted and non-targeted centres with the majority of the resource going to the targeted centres.

Children's Centres were judged and graded by Ofsted on their ability to meet the core purpose of a Children's Centre, as described in the Statutory Guidance published in April 2013, which was, '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'. When Ofsted judged the overall effectiveness of a Children's Centre three key judgements are made. These reflected:-

- access to services
- quality and impact of services
- effectiveness of leadership, governance and management of the centre

Ofsted would conclude an overall judgement on a Children's Centre which would be one of the following: Outstanding (Grade 1), Good (Grade 2), Requires Improvement (Grade 3) or Inadequate (Grade 4). The "Requires Improvement" category was 'Satisfactory' in earlier frameworks.

Four Stockton Children's Centres were inspected between October 2010 and April 2012. High Flyers, Star, Sunrise and Redhill centres all achieved a 'good' judgement. In April 2013 the Ofsted framework was revised. Footsteps and Frederick Nattrass Children's Centres were inspected under this revised and more challenging framework. They were judged to be satisfactory. Riverbank, New Life, Elm Tree, Layfield, Barley Fields and Northern Community Children's Centres had not been inspected by Ofsted. This information was included in Table 1 of the report.

In April 2013 Ofsted replaced the framework once more. It was in the 2013 framework that the previous 'satisfactory' judgement was replaced with 'Requires Improvement'. The framework stated that Children's Centres would be inspected within five years of opening and then at five-yearly intervals. No Children's Centres in Stockton had been inspected under this framework, although it was anticipated that those Centres that had not been inspected to date would be prioritised by Ofsted.

The Local Authority was ultimately responsible for all Children's Centres, whether they were commissioned or retained. As such, the Council had in place robust governance and partnership arrangements so that the Council were able to monitor the performance of Children's Centres and maximise opportunities to deliver shared strategic objectives that would make a difference to children across the Borough.

A Children's Centre Strategic Partnership provided a strategic overview and ensured that collaborative working took place. The Local Authority Chairs this Group. Members included Health, Job Centre Plus, the Council (Social Care, Education, Performance), Big Life Families and 4Children. Other groups were in place to lead on specific aspects of Children's Centre business and performance. Partner agencies including Health, Midwifery, Social Care and other relevant council departments were represented on the Groups as appropriate. A diagram showing these arrangements was attached to the report.

Data was fundamental to Children's Centres and a key focus for Ofsted Inspections. Table 2 within the report provided information on Children's Centre registrations, by setting. However, the percentages of children registered need care in their evaluation as inspectors would also take into account the following:-

- The increase in registrations over time
- The percentage of vulnerable children registered, which is of significant importance
- Continued engagement of children and families who access services after registration

This detail was included in the data sets which were used at the Annual Conversation and performance monitoring meetings and would influence the concluding judgements made by Officers.

A key aspect of the Local Authority performance management process was 'The Annual Conversation' which took place with each centre. This was the responsibility of the Chief Adviser who, through the Annual Conversations, assessed the quality and impact of services in each Children's Centre. A formal written record was made, an anonymised example of which was attached to the report. The first annual conversations took place in March 2013. Each Centre was required to complete a self-evaluation form which included relevant data. This process resulted in judgements and priorities for the Children's Centre to take forward.

Table 3 within the report showed Ofsted outcomes and judgements from the Annual Conversations which provided the latest summary position. It

was noted that the Annual Conversation Evaluation judgement in this table were based on the previous Ofsted framework.

The priorities that emerged from the Annual Conversations were included in the development plans for each Children's Centre as these were the actions that would result in improved outcomes and performance. For completeness, the priorities that emerged from the 12/13 Annual Conversations were attached to the report. Progress against these priorities, which were monitored on a quarterly basis at a formal performance meeting, and any associated impact on Ofsted judgements and/or Annual Conversations would be recorded and reported in future reports to Cabinet.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

3. Reasons for the Decision

The report was for noting only.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

N/A

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight on Thursday, 23rd January 2014

Proper Officer
17 January 2014