

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting24th April 2014

1. Title of Item/Report

Children's Centres Quality Assurance Outcomes - Spring 2014

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report that was an update to the report presented to Cabinet on 16th January 2014. Members were informed in that report that a performance management structure was in place and as part of the monitoring, annual conversations took place with each centre to assess the quality and impact of services. The second annual conversations took place in February 2014 and the report detailed the outcomes of those conversations for all 12 children's centres.

The report provided an update on the performance of Stockton's 12 Children's Centres of which 8 were commissioned. Big Life Families managed Frederick Nattrass, The Star (with Newtown)] and 4Children manage Barley Fields, Elm Tree, Layfield, New Life, Northern and Riverbank.

Children's Centres were judged and graded by Ofsted on their performance to meet the core purpose of a children's centre which the Department for Education describes as: 'to improve outcomes for young children and their families, with a particular focus on those in greatest need. Children's Centres must work to make sure all children are properly prepared for school, regardless of background or family circumstances. They also offer support to parents.' (revised January 2014.) Ofsted Inspectors judge the overall effectiveness of the centre.

This was the overarching judgement.

In order to make a judgement about the overall quality of a centre, inspectors first make three key judgements. These were:-

- access to services by young children and families
- the quality and impact of practice and services
- the effectiveness of leadership, governance and management.

In judging the quality of the provision and the impact of service provided

by the centre, inspectors would decide whether the centre was 'outstanding' (grade 1), 'good' (grade 2), 'required improvement' (grade 3) or was 'inadequate' (grade 4). Prior to April 2013, when a more challenging Inspection Framework was introduced, the "Requires Improvement" judgement was "Satisfactory".

Two Stockton Children's Centres were inspected in March 2014- Elm Tree and Barley Fields; reports were yet to be published.

A key aspect of the Local Authority performance process was 'The Annual Conversation' which took place with each centre. This was the responsibility of the Chief Adviser who, through the Annual Conversations, assesses the quality and impact of services in each Children's Centre and ensures key priorities for improvement were identified and actions to address the priorities were given. These actions were monitored at quarterly performance management meetings.

The second round of annual conversations took place in February 2014 and involved each centre completing a self-evaluation form including data and any other relevant information which was then submitted to the Education Improvement Service (EIS). The EIS team visited the centres and met with the centre manager; other key personnel joined the discussions as decided by the Centre Manager or as requested by the lead adviser to facilitate discussions. Discussions took place with reference to the SEF, data and any other information. Considering the evidence discussed against the Ofsted schedule, advisers reached final annual conversation judgements. Where the Centre's judgement differed from the advisers, reasons for the differences were clarified.

An appendix to the report identified the reach area by ward and shows the outcomes for all centres, including both partner and council managed centres, from the 2014 annual conversations.

Three key priorities were identified for each Centre which addressed the area of focus for the Centre and addressed the key priorities for the Borough as identified in the SBC Council Plan to 2015.

The Annual Conversation and subsequent Performance Management meetings contributed to the SBC Council plan key objective to have 'A robust performance and financial management framework' and the key objectives of the council plan addressed in the Children's Centre priorities were predominantly:-

- Narrow the attainment gap (ensuring school readiness)
- Improve targeted early intervention services (increasing access from

targeted groups)

- Reduce Levels of Obesity in children and Young People (increase breastfeeding rates and other services to combat obesity)
- Reduce the impact of poverty on family life (increase opportunities for adult training and volunteering)
- Ensure all young people are in receipt of education, employment or training (improve partnership with schools and improve services to support pregnant teenagers and teen parents to access education and employability)
- Effective Community Engagement (increase number of users represented on Parent Forums and Advisory Boards)

A table within the report gave the three key priorities identified for each Children's Centre.

There had been 2 Children's Centre Inspections in March 2014 (subsequent to the Annual Conversation). Elm Tree was judged 'Requires Improvement', which was consistent with the Centre Self-Evaluation and the Annual Conversation Evaluation, whilst Barley Fields was judged 'Good', an improvement on the Centre Self-Evaluation and the Annual Conversation Evaluation, both of which were 'Requires Improvement'.

In both inspections, the improvement actions identified by Ofsted broadly reflected those identified by the local authority in the Annual Conversation.

A table within the report identified Annual Conversation Priorities and Ofsted Improvement Actions.

The focus for the Council would be on the performance management going forward in 2014 towards the next annual conversation to pursue completion of the actions to achieve the priorities agreed. Specific actions for the Council included:-

- Refining further the data available to Children Centres from Social Care so they can target families in need more accurately.
- Supporting the Children Centres through Ofsted inspection and learning from the findings to inform future improvements.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

3. Reasons for the Decision

For information 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 Friday, 2nd May 2014

Proper Officer
28 April 2014