



Officer Decision Report

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Report to: Education, Children and Families Committee

Date of Decision: 9th November 2022

Subject: Final Report of the Early Years School Readiness Review.

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|-------------------------------------------------------------|------|-------------------------------------|----|-------------------------------------|
| Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken? | Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? | 1262 | | | |
| Has appropriate consultation taken place? | Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken? | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Not applicable | | | | |
| Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

Purpose of Report:

This report is to update the Education, Children and Families Committee on the findings of the Early Years School Readiness review and the actions taken to address the issues to date.

In addition, there are a number of key areas where the committee is asked to endorse the progression of strategic level activity to support the Council and partnership ambitions in terms of Ready Children, Ready Families and Ready Schools in raising the numbers of children who arrive in school ready for learning and life.

Recommendations:

The Education, Children and Families Committee to consider the findings of the report and the importance of Early Years in the long-term life chances of Sheffield Citizens within the wider context of planning and commissioning for Education Children and Families.

The Education, Children and Families Committee is recommended to endorse the recommendations within the Early Years Readiness report;

- the development of a leadership role for Sheffield Early Years.
- consideration and exploration of increased investment in Portage workers
- consideration and exploration of increased investment into Early Years Prevention services and Early Years SEND support
- Early years SEND support integration into the wider early years system
- further development of parental voice and influence in terms of service development using the opportunities presented by the development of Family Hubs

Background Papers:

*Early Years School Readiness Report
Summary Presentation*

| Lead Officer to complete:- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required. | Finance: |
| | | Not applicable as there are no specific financial implications arising out of the report |
| | | Legal: Karen Gould |
| | | Equalities & Consultation: <i>Bashir Khan</i> |
| | | Climate: |
| | | Not applicable as there are no climate implications arising out of the report |
| <i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i> | | |
| 2 | SLB member who approved submission: | <i>Andrew Jones, Director for Children</i> |
| 3 | Relevant Policy Committee | <i>Education Children and Families</i> |

| | | |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 | I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Decision Maker by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1. | |
| | Lead Officer Name: Marie McGreavy | Job Title: Strategic Commissioning Manager |
| | Date: 29-9-2022 | |

1. PROPOSAL

- 1.1. There is a strong evidence base that children’s experiences during their early years are likely to shape the rest of their lives, whether it is their attainment at school and in turn their future job prospects, through to their long-term health outcomes. The Early Years School Readiness review and its resulting activity aims to support parents and professionals to provide Sheffield children with the best possible start to their school life to support better outcomes for Sheffield’s future adult population.
- 1.2. The review was initiated following feedback from schools that, in line with national trends, increasing numbers of Sheffield children were starting school at a position of disadvantage. The review heard that children were arriving with unidentified and unmet needs ranging from significant SEND issues to a lack of the basic self -care skills expected of the age group. The review began in February 2021 and was completed in April 22.
- 1.3. Getting a good start in life and throughout childhood, building resilience and getting maximum benefit from education are important markers for good health and wellbeing throughout life. (From evidence into action: opportunities to protect and improve the nation’s health and NHS Five Year Forward View).
- 1.4. Ensuring that every child has the Best Start in Life: “ready to learn at two and ready for school at five” is a national priority for Public Health England. Delivering this vision is reliant upon a wide range of organisations and key stakeholders working together and embracing change to:
 - ensure high quality services for children, young people and families; actions to improve women’s health before, during and after pregnancy (Maternity Transformation Programme)
 - give every child the best start in life,
 - support school readiness and improve resilience for school-aged children;
 - support young people’s transition to adult services.

Good health, wellbeing and resilience are vital for all our children now and for the future of society.

1.5. The review sought to act upon the strengths of the partnerships in the city to identify those areas where we could collectively improve outcomes to;

- clarify the required outcomes to improve school readiness in the city.
- agree what needs to change in supporting good school readiness ambitions for the city
- develop and describe transformational, innovative practice and models which support improvements in school readiness in the city
- identify short and long-term benefits of achieving our identified outcomes
- identify the infrastructure requirements for change in terms of systems and support
- develop outcome measures and monitoring requirements.
- ensure that developments are aligned with the direction and ambitions of the current Early Help Review

1.6. The review was led by Early Years and Early Help Commissioning and included parents and partners. Following consultation, stakeholder involvement remained a priority in terms of development of the workstream action plans, progression of the activities and oversight of the review in the form of a Multi-agency Leaders Group.

1.7. Many of the issues raised in the review have been addressed through workstream activity including;

- development of a new Perinatal Mental Health pathway
- SENCO training at level 3 and 4 accessible to all Early Years Settings funded by Sheffield City Council and DFE
- a Speech and Language Review led by the Integrated Care Board and a DLD review led by Sheffield City Council Children's Commissioning Team are both in progress.
- Save the Children Locality B work to support the Home Learning Environment project is established and further roll out possibilities are under consideration. The project aims are to work with parents to encourage simple ways to support their child's learning through play in the home.
- Two ongoing DFE funded Family Hub bid research projects are underway.
- South Yorkshire Futures Partnership work in conjunction with The University of Sheffield has produced resources for speech and language
- Family Centres "Start for Life" offer is developed and planning for DFE Family Hubs Funding is in progress.

- training for school and providers for brain architecture and trauma informed practice
- review of Early Years SEND Funding
- a clear focus on transitions from early years settings to school especially for children with SEND

1.8 There are system, infrastructure and investment recommendations which require consideration and exploration.

- development of a leadership role for Sheffield Early Years
- increased investment in Portage workers.
- increased investment into Early Years Prevention services and Early Years SEND support.
- early years SEND support integration into the wider early years system.
- further development of parental voice and influence in terms of service development using the opportunities presented by the development of Family Hubs.

There are also local and national factors requiring Sheffield leadership voice and influence:

- the retention and recruitment of Early Years settings staff
- the national issue of setting closures and viability
- the national 2-year-old Funded Early Learning criteria is excluding children who would benefit, and yet take up is low in the city
- toddler groups and support groups in the city are slow to recover following the pandemic and need support to do so
- focused exploration of the issue of early identification of SEND needs amongst children from minority ethnic communities and the links to high exclusion rates.
- support to improve educational outcomes for Roma children should build on the good practice in place

2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE ?

2.1. With a long-term view, there is a significant incentive to invest in Early Years, ensuring resources are appropriately targeted to support the health and learning of young children is a critical economic and educational development strategy.

2.2. The UK economy depends on having a pipeline of talented, educated employees with the skills needed in today's work environment including;

- problem-solving

- communication
- decision-making
- critical thinking
- motivation
- collaboration

2.3. By taking forward the recommendations in this review there is the potential for long term savings in health and education. For example, targeted parenting programmes to prevent conduct disorders pay back £8 over six years for every £1 invested with savings to the NHS, education, and criminal justice system.

2.4. The activities and recommendations within this paper will contribute to the ambitions and priorities related to Good Physical and Mental Health, Education and Economic Wellbeing within the Corporate Plan, Sheffield's Inclusion Strategy, the Sheffield Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Sheffield's Great Start in Life Strategy.

2.5. The Early Years Readiness Review is an ambition and priority within the 2021 *Our Sheffield One Year Plan*, specifically Education, Health and Care;

- our ambition is for every person in Sheffield to be able to achieve their full potential. We want to address educational inequalities and support people to stay fit and healthy, so fewer people reach crisis point and families can thrive and also contributes to the following ambitions;
- Communities and Neighbourhoods: focusing on our ambition for all communities to love and be proud of where they live, to have great facilities, to feel safe, live without discrimination and be healthier and happier
- Our Council: we want to lead boldly with purpose and decisiveness, putting the communities and people of Sheffield at the heart of everything and working hard to deliver excellence always

3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?

3.1. Focus groups including Heath Visitors, Nursery Nurses, Early Years providers, Early Years Teams, Early Help and Children's Social Care staff, Sheffield Parent Carer Forum and parenting groups have taken place.

3.2. In addition, surveys of parent and professional views have been undertaken. This local evidence gathering has provided a wealth of views, information, and ideas to support progress in this area.

3.3 Key findings of professional views on areas of development include:

- communication and collaboration at key points of transition and assessment can be much improved
- SEND related issues have formed the vast majority of the concerns raised and areas for development
- Speech Language and Communication needs to be recognised as an indicator and a focus for early activity
- there is variation amongst professional's understanding of their own contribution to school readiness
- a need to raise awareness in the city of the social and economic impact of inequality in terms of the child's whole life course, particularly in terms of vulnerable and seldom heard groups and the impact
- there is good quality activity in the city, but we meet to be more connected in terms of making the most of resources to avoid overlap and support more families
- information sharing is a concern for many and is impacting negatively on good quality communication. This is an issue which contributors feel could be resolved
- across the system, we need to consider activity and input far much earlier in the child's journey and use key early contact points to the best advantage

3.4 Key findings of parental views on areas of development include;

- parents tell us that they have difficulty getting professionals to listen to their concerns about their very young children and getting referral and diagnosis is a battle
- we have heard from parents that children are being refused nursery places because of their Special Educational Needs: that settings feel unable to accommodate their child's needs
- we have low take up of Disability Access Fund (DAF) funding and need to explore if this is related only to take up or whether children with SEND needs are not accessing places
- pathways to support remain unclear to both providers and parents
- parents tell us that the offer for non – breastfeeding mums is limited within our Family Hubs
- there are limited opportunities for parents in co-production to address a broad range of issues to which parents would bring subject expertise

3.5 National and local data has been central to our research in order to establish the current position for Sheffield compared with available comparators.

3.6 The research and consultations have supported the development of the findings in the report and has brought stakeholders together to crystallise the collective vision of what good school readiness will look like in Sheffield and the changes we need to put in place to realise our ambitions.

4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

4.1. Equality of Opportunity Implications

4.1.1. Decisions need to take into account the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. This is the duty to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

The Equality Act 2010 identifies the following groups as a protected characteristic: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation.

4.1.2. An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken. The review has highlighted the evidenced impact of inequality in early years and has set out the recommendations which will support parents / carers and Early Years practitioners to reduce inequalities in the city in terms of good physical and mental health, economic wellbeing, and whole life outcomes.

4.1.3. In Sheffield, the two key contributors to a child's ability to reach their Early Learning Goals are significantly influenced by their SEND needs and by where they live in the city. In terms of ethnicity, Sheffield, Roma children, especially boys, fare less well in terms of Good Levels of Development than all other ethnic groups and the review seeks to highlight the good practice in this area which should be further developed in order to make a positive difference to this cohort of children. In addition, the report recommends focused exploration of the issue of early identification of SEND needs amongst children from Black, Asian and Minoritised Ethnic communities and the links to high exclusion rates.

4.2. Financial and Commercial Implications

4.2.1. No specific financial implications are identified at this point, however, in the progression of the high-level recommendations listed in the report there may be a need to revisit financial implications if approaches and activity are developed which need additional resource.

4.3. Legal Implications

4.3.1. This review helps the Council to meet its duties under the Childcare Act 2006, which requires local authorities to improve the outcomes for all young children, reduce inequalities and ensure that there is high quality early years provision locally.

4.4. Climate Implications

4.4.1. There are no climate implications arising out of this report.

4.5. Other Implications

4.5.1. There are no other identified implications.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 The Education, Children and Families Committee is recommended to consider and endorse the Early Years Readiness Review and the associated recommendations.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. The Education, Children and Families Committee's endorsement of the recommendations is vital to the progression of the city's ambitions to give all of Sheffield's children the best start and the best outcomes in adult life. The Education, Children and Families Committee is therefore recommended to;

- **consider the findings of the report and the importance of Early Years in the long-term life chances of Sheffield citizens within the wider context of planning and commissioning for Education Children and Families.**
- **endorse the recommendations within the Early Years School Readiness report**

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