

**REPORT FOR: EDUCATION STRATEGY
CONSULTATIVE FORUM**

Date of Meeting:	Monday 3 December 2012
Subject:	Development of the Early Years Strategy
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Adrian Parker, Head of Education Strategy and School Organisation
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Mitzi Green, Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools and Families
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	No
Enclosures:	Appendix A - Executive summary Needs assessment - early years

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report updates the Forum about early years needs assessment and the proposed priorities of the early years strategy.

Recommendations:

1. The Education Strategy Consultative Forum is requested to consider the questions raised in paragraph 14 and bring to the meeting any comments on possible actions to address the priorities

Reason: (For recommendation)

To ensure that Early Years services deliver better outcomes for children.

Section 2 – Report

Introductory paragraph

1. The purpose of this paper is to outline the key priorities in early years and to consider possible actions to deliver improved outcomes and reduce the achievement gap at 5 years of age.

Background

2. The Early Years Strategy Board has been meeting on a monthly basis since the previous ESCF meeting, and its membership is drawn from a broad range of service providers, including representatives from the private, voluntary and independent sectors, schools and health, as well as children's centres and special needs.
3. These meetings have begun to actively and collaboratively to agree and understand the current position in relation to the provision of early years services and the impact these services have on children's learning and development.
4. The Board has also identified three key priorities that will make a positive impact on outcomes for children aged five.

Current context

5. In Harrow parents are able to access their child's free entitlement to three and four year old early years provision in over 90 PVI providers, 37 schools. Over 270 childminders are registered with Ofsted. The hub and spoke model of children's centres is also part of the web of services for children under the age of five.
6. The improvement in outcomes for children at the age of 5 is the result of a complex interplay of health and children's services, and the effectiveness of transition arrangements across points of transition.
7. Responsibility for monitoring the range of providers in terms of quality and impact upon outcomes for children sits across a number of LA services, including Education and School Strategy Organisation (ESSO), Harrow School Improvement partnership (HSIP) and Early Intervention Services (EIS).
8. The LA also has statutory duties to ensure that by 2014 up to 40% of two year olds at risk of exclusion and under-achievement are able to access up to 15 hours of funded early years provision.

9. Underpinning these developments is the review of the single funding formula, which begins in December and will come into effect from the 1st April 2013.

What is the impact of services to date?

10. National expectations of the outcomes for children at the age of five are measured in terms of the percentage of children achieving at least 78 points across the six areas of learning in the EYFS as well as in terms of the gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and their peers. A sample of the school data is moderated each year and Harrow Council's moderation processes have been externally validated by the Standards and Testing Authority (STA) and judged to be rigorous.
11. The percentage of children achieving a good level of development increased from 56% in 2011 to 60% in 2012. Despite this significant improvement our national ranking has declined further from 103rd to 107th.
12. There has been an unprecedented improvement in the gap data in 2012, and Harrow has improved its national ranking from 149th to 98th.
13. The needs assessment undertaken over the last three months has identified that the sustained improvement of outcomes is at risk because of
 - a mismatch between areas of need and the distribution of some services
 - the uneven distribution of quality across the borough
 - fragmented LA improvement functions
 - locality arrangements are weak.
14. This has led the strategy board to identify the following three priorities-
 - broadening participation
 - building capacity
 - raising quality

Each of these priorities raise a number of key questions.

Broadening participation

How do we

- improve access and take up by under-represented groups and those at risk of exclusion and under-achievement to services that enhance children's health, well-being, learning and development?

- raise the profile and the status of EY services in the community?
- enable a full range of professionals to appropriately contribute to a child's learning and development?

Building capacity

How do we

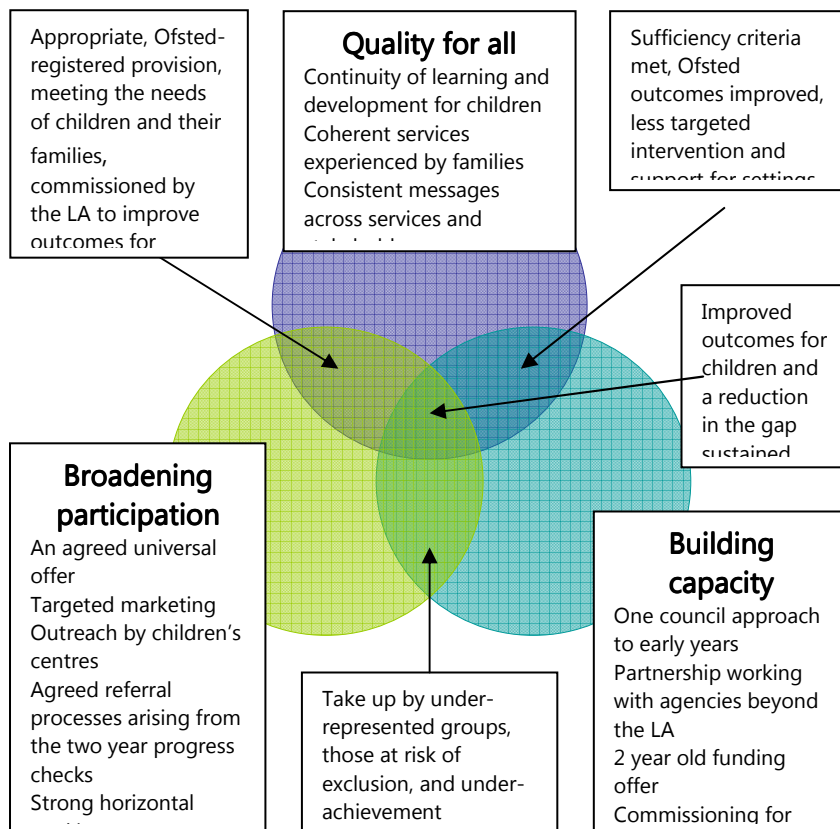
- enable parents to autonomously make decisions in their child's best interests?
- encourage EY sectors to offer sufficient places of high quality to meet the needs of families?
- support settings and practitioners to use the statutory frameworks as a basis for engaging with communities and with individual families and to work collaboratively to improve outcomes?
- Share information across professional boundaries so that a range of professionals can contribute to children's learning and development appropriately

Raising quality

What resources can we draw on in order to:

- offer commissioned support, guidance, advice and training in relation to the statutory framework?
- develop a clear and explicit basket of measures to define quality, enabling parents to make better informed choices?
- ensure providers' self-evaluation drives forward improvement?
- commission and de-commission places, and ensure commissioned services have an impact?
- monitor the impact of cpd in terms of outcomes for children
- ensure quality is sustained?

The three elements may be seen in terms of working with one another to improve outcomes for children:



Financial Implications

15. Improving pathways between services, and having explicit thresholds for referral, with information sharing protocols that lead to earlier interventions, have the potential to reduce the duplication of assessment and service delivery. As actions to address priorities have not been agreed at this stage, it is not possible to set out the financial implications of the proposed strategy.

Risk Management Implications

16. Risks associated with the Early Years Strategy will be identified in the development process

Equalities implications

17. Equalities Impact Assessments will be undertaken by officers and members of the EYFS strategy board once the priorities and the associated actions have been agreed. It is anticipated that the conclusions of these assessments will be that the implications are either positive or neutral in terms of broadening participation by groups at risk of under-achievement and exclusion as well as improving outcomes for all children.
18. Harrow's early years providers and services are successful and inclusive and provide a diversity of provision. The EYFS strategy aims to ensure that existing effective practice is more wide spread

and builds on the successful provision that already exists in Harrow across early years services.

Corporate Priorities

19. The early Years Strategy contributes to the following corporate priorities:
- United and involved communities: A Council that listens and leads
 - Supporting and protecting people who are most in need
20. In addition it will make significant contribution to the priorities of the Children and Young People's Commissioning Strategy, including
- Early Intervention
 - Health prevention
 - Safeguarding
 - Narrowing the gap

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Emma Stabler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 20.11.12		
Name: Sarah Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 20.11.12		

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Michael Baxter Education Lead Professional, Early Years
0208 736 6500 michael.baxter@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers:
None