



Report of: **Corporate Director of Children’s Services**

Meeting of:	Date	Agenda item	Ward(s)
Children’s Services Scrutiny	3 March 2016		

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SUBJECT: Engagement with and Consistency of Early Years Provision

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the current quality of early years provision, families’ use of early years provision including their use of children’s centres services and take-up of the early education entitlement, and outcomes for children at age 5.
- 1.2 While the three data sets evidence the improving trends in all areas, the most recent 2015 outcomes data cannot be directly attributed to the 2015 data for quality and reach. This is because
 - the majority of children’s centre family services usage is by families with children under 3;
 - the majority of children in early years provision are children age 3 or 4; and
 - outcomes data relates to children who are 5 years old.
- 1.3 In Islington, 65% of 3 and 4 year olds receive their nursery education in primary schools, where until very recently school inspections contained no separate Ofsted judgement for the quality of early years provision. The two inspection frameworks have been aligned since September 2015.
- 1.4 Reach from children’s centres and take up of the funded early education entitlement, particularly for disadvantaged 2 year olds, is improving and where the local and national comparisons are available, Islington has better take-up than inner London but lower than national.
- 1.5 Engagement with children’s centre services is lower for our most vulnerable families who are involved with children’s social care who are harder to reach but our larger target groups (BME, workless households, families living in overcrowded households, lone parents, families living in social housing) is in line with the general reach figure across the borough. There is no comparative national data available.
- 1.6 The overall quality of early years provision, which includes children’s centres, early years group providers and childminders is above national and statistical neighbour averages.
- 1.7 The percentage of children achieving a good level of development at the end of their reception year rose by 6% in 2015, tracking the improvement at national level but not closing the gap. Scores have risen for all groups of children but gaps in attainment remain between specific groups of children with English as an additional language and all others.

- 1.8 While improvements have been made in all these areas over the past five years, there is clearly still a sizeable proportion of children who are not as ready as we would like them to be for the Year 1 curriculum. Because early experiences have a profound and enduring effect on young children's health, well-being and learning, support for families in the very early years even before children access their early education entitlement continues to be a key priority for early childhood services, alongside continuing support for providers to ensure they offer the best possible care and education.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the report and conclusion.

3. Discussion

Reach and engagement with children's centres

- 3.1 Reach to families with children under four has increased with 11,795 families registered with children's centres April-Dec 2015 (provisional data). This equates to 93% of the eligible population, a rise of 5% from 2014-15. Reach by individual centres varies from 91% to 98%. There are no regional or national comparisons of reach data to children's centres. The table below shows how reach has improved over the past 5 years.

Table 1: Reach to families by Children's Centres

Islington CC reach	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015 Apr-Dec
Overall reach	65%	74%	88%	91%	88%	93%

- 3.2 The reach measurement includes families who are registered as well as those who are registered and regularly using their children's centre. As a minimum, registered families receive regular information about services and activities available at their children's centre, and, may well receive an outreach or welcome visit.
- 3.3 Neither the DfE nor Ofsted have an agreed definition of sustained participation for children's centres. Families with a higher level of need (who do not reach the children's social care threshold) will have an Early Help assessment where the plan and outcomes are formally recorded. A lot of the work of children's centres supports families at a level below that of Early Help either through universal services, such as child health clinics and stay and plays, or through more targeted services such as English Language classes, a speech and language stay and play, support with housing, baby massage, a parenting programme. Clearly some families need more contacts to have impact than others. Quantifying a specific number of contacts is, however, the only way currently of measuring sustained participation.
- 3.4 A recent analysis (September 2015) to explore sustained participation was based on families making 3 or more contacts with children's centres per year over the child's first 4 years. This showed that about 65% of families had regular engagement with children's centre services. Improved data collection and information sharing systems across the early childhood system will support a more sophisticated understanding of sustained participation as well as better targeting of families, who are less likely to engage.
- 3.5 The recent First 21 Months pilots in 4 children's centre clusters has focused on improving contact with pregnant mothers and those with children under 1. The provisional reach data shows that the average reach across centres involved in the pilot is marginally higher than in those centres not involved in the pilot (94.5% compared with 93%).
- 3.6 Reach to target groups is broadly in line with overall reach but reach to families involved with children's social care is lower despite joint efforts from Early Years and Children in Need teams to encourage families to register and use children's centres.. This remains an area for improvement.

3.7 Encouraging better integration and consistency of services across the early childhood system and responding to evidence about what works should help to continue to improve reach and sustained participation particularly for those families with most to gain.

Early Education entitlement

3.7 Access to high quality early education is another key factor which impacts on improved outcomes for children from the foundation years through to GCSE level (EPPE 2003, 2004, 2008, EPPSE 2014). The most recent DfE data shows that 92% of 3 and 4 year olds take up their funded early education entitlement in Islington. This compares well with London (90%) and inner London (87%) but less favourably with England (96%).

3.8 This figure is based on the number of children attending Islington settings for which funded early education is claimed against the estimated population of eligible three and four year olds in the borough. These figures are less reliable in inner London, where there is movement across boroughs with children attending nursery in a borough other than the one in which they live. However, it is an indication of take-up.

3.9 The proportion of three year olds accessing their entitlement is 88% and the proportion of 4 year olds 95%. The number of children overall accessing their entitlement continues to increase year on year, but the percentage of three year olds not accessing their early education entitlement needs further investigation. Continuing to receive a list of eligible two year olds from the DWP may help in improving three year old take-up particularly if a majority of these three year olds are from low income families.

3.10 The proportion of eligible 2 year olds now benefitting from early education rose in Autumn 2015 to 66% of the eligible cohort. Again, this is above the London average of 62.7% but below the national average of 72.1%. This is a 13% increase from the previous term. There are still places available across the early years sector, including with childminders and further places are being developed, particularly in primary schools.

3.11 Following a recent bus-stop campaign as well as direct mailing of eligible families and follow-up from local children's centres, the Family Information Service is receiving increased traffic with enquiries about provision available for eligible 2 year olds.

3.12 Widely promoting the dual benefits of early education and childcare to all groups to increase take-up of the entitlement continues to be a key priority of the Early Years and Childcare service

3.13 The early education entitlement is funded through the Direct Schools Grant (DSG). The Department for Education (DfE) is about to consult on changes to the way in which the early years part of the DSG is formulated, which is likely to divert funding from London to other areas.

Quality of provision

3.12 The quality of early years provision in Islington, as judged by Ofsted, is either in line with or above national averages. 93% of early years group providers are judged by Ofsted as good or better with 85% of childminders in Islington also judged as good or better. 100% of nursery schools and 84% of primary schools are good or better.

3.14 There is a programme of monitoring, support and challenge to all early years providers in the borough to support them in meeting statutory welfare and learning and development requirements. 86% of schools (excluding academies, nursery and free schools) and 53% of the pvi sector nurseries buy additional Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) support and training from the Early Years and Childcare Service. EYFS consultant support is currently still part of the core offer for voluntary sector community nurseries and childminders and for all providers offering funded places for eligible 2 year olds where there is a particular focus on improving processes for earlier identification and intervention to provide children and families with timely help and support.

3.15 14 (87.5%) of the 16 children’s centres in Islington are judged as good or better compared with 66% nationally. Ofsted inspections of children’s centres have currently been suspended pending a DfE consultation on their future direction. 11 centres have achieved Healthy Children’s Centre status; Whittington Health NHS Trust and Islington children’s centres received formal accreditation in December 2015 under the Unicef Baby Friendly Initiative.

3.16 Children’s centres continue to receive regular improvement partner visits to support and challenge their performance against the Ofsted framework.

Children’s outcomes

3.17 The Childcare Act 2006 placed a statutory duty on the local authority to improve outcomes for children at age 5 and narrow the gap between the bottom 20% of children and the rest through the services provided. The gap is calculated as the percentage difference between the mean average of the lowest 20% and the median average for all children. The latest statistical release on attainment at age 5 for 2015 shows that children achieving the “good level of development” (GLD) in Islington last year increased by 6 percentage points. However, the improvement was mirrored regionally and nationally, with a 2% point gap between Islington and national remaining..

Table 2: Percentage of children achieving a “good level of development” at age 5

GLD %	2013	2014	2015
LBI	44	58	64
Inner London	53	62	68
England	52	60	66

3.18 In terms of the equality gap between the bottom 20% of children and the rest, this closed by 2% in 2015 bringing the LB Islington figure closer to inner London and national average.

Table 3: Equality gap between the bottom 20% and the rest at age 5

Equality gap %	2013	2014	2015
LBI	33.4	34.7	32.7
Inner London	35.9	33.2	31.4
England	36.6	33.9	32.1

3.19 A greater percentage of pupils achieved the expected level or more in all seven areas of learning and development, with the greatest improvement in literacy where children achieving the expected level increased by 6 percentage points (Table 4).

Table 4: Percentage of children achieving the expected level or above in the areas of learning and development at age 5

Areas of Learning & Development	Prime areas			Specific areas			
	Personal social & emotional devt.	Communication & language	Physical devt	Literacy	Maths	Understanding the World	Expressive Arts & Design
LBI 2013	72.7	70.9	82.4	51.4	62.1	71.2	76.2
LBI 2014	81.5	78.2	84.8	61.4	69.1	76.2	81.4
LBI 2015	82.0	80.3	87.3	67.2	73.6	81.7	85.4
Inner London 2015	83.9	79.7	88.0	71.7	77.6	82.2	86.2
England 2015	83.7	80.3	87.2	70.1	75.8	82.1	85.3
Areas which make up the GLD measure							

- 3.20 The improvement in scores in maths and literacy reflects the attention paid by schools to the increased expectations for children that were introduced in 2013 and the engagement of the early years sector in training and support to establish regular early phonics sessions, inviting book corners, frequent songs and rhymes, and mark-making opportunities to encourage early writing.
- 3.21 All providers including schools have also focused closely on improving the development of children in the prime areas of learning (see Table 4) as the fundamental building blocks for learning in the specific areas. 75.4% of all children achieved at least the expected level in all of the 8 early learning goals in the prime areas compared to 76.3% of children nationally. Although gaps do remain, it is particularly pleasing to see that there was no gap last year between Islington and the national figure and Islington was above the rest of inner London in Communication and Language.
- 3.22 There remain particular groups of children who do not do as well as others. For example, in the prime areas:
- 67.7% of boys; 83.6% of girls
 - 65.5% of summer born; 83.4% of autumn born
 - 67.6% of children eligible for FSM; 79.7% non-FSM
 - 60% of children on SEN School Action
 - 36% of children SEN School Action Plus
- 3.23 Local ethnic category information shows that although scores have risen for all groups, gaps in attainment remain for some. For example, in comparison to the 64% of children overall who attained the GLD:
- 58.1% of Somali children attained the GLD;
 - 59.8% of Bangladeshi children attained the GLD;
 - 46.6% of Turkish children attained the GLD; and
 - 54.3% of Black Caribbean children attained the GLD
- 3.24 A detailed analysis of children’s outcomes is carried out at borough level and communicated with all providers. Schools and settings are encouraged to analyse their own data and address issues of under-performance in either areas of learning or within specific groups of children, seeking further support as needed.

4. Conclusion and way forward

- 4.1 While there will be a number of factors as to why particular groups of children do less well than their peers, encouraging all families to engage with a range of health, family and education services when their children are young in order that they receive appropriate and timely help and support, identifying additional needs requiring targeted and specialist support early and ensuring the services are of high quality, will help all children achieve their potential.
- 4.2 Our Children and Families Prevention and Early Intervention strategy (2015-2025), sets out the Council's commitment to strengthening the partnership between the range of services across early years, health, schools and the third sector. The plans to improve integration between health and children's centre services, make better use of resources and reduce duplication will drive improved outcomes for babies and young children and help to ensure that children are 'ready for school'. A more consistent offer across the borough will help to ensure equity of access to services.

5. Implications

5.1 Financial implications: None

5.2 Legal Implications: The Council has a range of statutory duties relating to early years provision arising from The Education Act 2002; The Childcare Act 2006, in particular s6, s7, s7A, s9A, s12 and s13; The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009; The Equality Act 2010; and The Children and Families Act 2014.

At present, all three and four year olds are entitled to 15 hours of free childcare over 38 weeks – a universal provision that is not affected by the circumstances of the parent or child, including their parents' income.

The Childcare Bill 2015/16 proposes:

- an extended entitlement to an additional 15 hours of free childcare for 38 weeks of the year but only for a qualifying child of a working parent; and
- a duty on local authorities to publish information about childcare and related matters.

5.3 Environmental Implications: None

5.4 Equality Impact Assessment: Improving access to as well as the quality and integration of early childhood services will have a positive impact on outcomes for children and families, particularly those who find it more difficult to access and /or engage with services, some of whom will have protected characteristics such as pregnant women, young parents, families from minority ethnic backgrounds and families with children with disabilities.

Better integration in the First 21 Months period will support early identification of and intervention with vulnerable pregnant women for whom a wider range of health and outreach services can make a difference to outcomes for mothers and babies.

The 2 year old early education entitlement is aimed at disadvantaged children, either those with a disability or those from low income households, of which there are a higher proportion of either young families and/or families from minority ethnic groups. Improving take-up amongst these groups will help with early identification and intervention for children, giving them a full additional year of high quality care and education. For eligible children from minority ethnic groups for whom English is an additional language, the additional year will support with English language acquisition, which is key to attainment at age 5.

Background papers/ web links:

- **Getting it right for families:** A review of integrated systems and promising practice in the early years, Early Intervention Foundation November 2015: <http://www.eif.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Getting-it-Right-Overview.pdf>

- **Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education (EPPSE) Project (1997 – 2014):**
<http://www.ioe.ac.uk/research/153.html>
- **Islington Children and Families Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy 2015-25:**
[http://www.islington.gov.uk/publicrecords/library/Children-and-families-services/Business-planning/Strategies/2014-2015/\(2015-03-03\)-Islington-Children-and-Families-Prevention-and-Early-Intervention-Strategy-2015-2025.pdf](http://www.islington.gov.uk/publicrecords/library/Children-and-families-services/Business-planning/Strategies/2014-2015/(2015-03-03)-Islington-Children-and-Families-Prevention-and-Early-Intervention-Strategy-2015-2025.pdf)
- **Islington Early Help Strategy 2015-25:** [http://www.islington.gov.uk/publicrecords/library/Children-and-families-services/Information/Leaflets/2015-2016/\(2015-06-02\)-Islington-Early-Help-Strategy-2015-2025.pdf](http://www.islington.gov.uk/publicrecords/library/Children-and-families-services/Information/Leaflets/2015-2016/(2015-06-02)-Islington-Early-Help-Strategy-2015-2025.pdf)

Final report clearance:

Signed by:



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