

REPORT TO: Children & Families, Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 23rd February 2015

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Children & Enterprise

PORTFOLIO: Children, Young People & Families

SUBJECT: Children's Centres

WARD(S) Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To update PPB on the performance of children's centres, particularly on the reach and engagement of the most vulnerable families.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

i) That PPB note the report.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Background Information

3.1.1 The 8 children's centres in Halton are managed in groups of 2, with one Principal Manager and one team of staff working across each pair of centres. Each group of 2 centres offers a full spectrum of services across a defined reach area, primarily targeting services at children under 5 and their families, but also offering some services to children up to 11 years old.

3.1.2 As set out in statutory guidance, the core purpose of Sure Start children's centres is to improve outcomes for young children and their families, with a particular focus on those in greatest need. They work to make sure all children are properly prepared for school, regardless of background or family circumstances. They also offer support to parents and parents to be, particularly in supporting parenting, and in supporting parents to be ready to for work.

3.1.3 Children's centres in Halton are firmly established as part of the Early Intervention offer. They act as hubs in their local communities, as a first port of call for families with young children, as locality bases for multi-agency staff, and as delivery bases for partner agency services.

3.1.4 As part of the universal offer for families, children's centres,

working closely with midwives, health visitors, early years settings, speech and language therapists, schools and locality early intervention teams, as well as commissioned services, are a key element in the early identification of children and families who need additional help and support.

3.1.5 Children's centres are judged on a number of key areas of performance, which make up the core offer for children's centres, namely:

- Children's early learning and development and readiness for school
- Parenting support, early help and safeguarding
- Healthy lifestyles
- Adult learning, training and employability, including volunteering opportunities.

3.1.6 Performance measures for these key strands of children's centres delivery are shared with the whole of the Children's Trust and are delivered within the framework of the Halton model for early help by working in partnership alongside other local agencies, partners, the voluntary and community sector, and commissioned services. Across all strands children's centres will be expected to make a difference to all children and families and to close the gap between those who do best and those who do not do so well in the borough.

3.1.7 Halton children's centres are overseen by 2 Advisory Boards, one covering the 2 groups of centres in Widnes and the other covering the 2 groups of centres in Runcorn. The Principal Managers receive monthly and quarterly monitoring reports to allow them to continuously scrutinise their performance against agreed targets and priorities. The Principal Managers, through the Divisional Manager, report regularly to the Early Help Closing the Gap Group, and agree any additional priority areas where they can contribute to improved outcomes.

3.1.8 As recommended in the statutory guidance the Principal Managers have an "Annual Conversation" with the LA to discuss their performance and agree targets for the coming year. This year, 2014/15, this was held with the Divisional Manager, the 4 Principal Managers, a representative from each Advisory Board, and the Commissioning Manager for early help and parenting.

3.1.9 Sure Start children's centres are inspected by Ofsted. Under the current Ofsted regulations, centres are inspected in groups. One of the Halton groups, Halton Lodge and Halton Brook has been inspected and received a judgement of "Good". All other centres were previously inspected as single centres, and are awaiting inspection since being grouped together. Continual self-evaluation against the current Ofsted guidance is part of the performance

monitoring and annual conversation.

3.1.10 During the year 2014/15 centres have been working to deliver their core offer across all the areas as outlined above and also working to deliver better outcomes across agreed priority areas:

- babies under 1 year old,
- the take up of the free 2 year old offer,
- children being “ready for school”
- reaching and engaging the most vulnerable families, e.g. families with a CAF, children under 5 in children’s social care, children from the 10% most deprived SOAs.

3.2 Current engagement with vulnerable groups

3.2.1 Population and accessing figures for Children’s Centres is increasing year on year with more children attending the centre in their reach area, as well as more children attending linked provision. Attendance at all centres is high for quarter two and at this stage of the reporting year it looks like figures could exceed previous years.

Table 1

Year	Total 0-5 yr olds attending
2011/12	6,035
2012/13	6,760
2013/14	7,719
2014/15 (Q1 & 2 only)	5,636

3.2.2 Of particular focus for each centre, are the children who are in the 10% and 30% most deprived lower super output areas (10% LSOA, 30% LSOA) within the reach of the centre.

Comparison cannot be made against previous years data at present, as only Q1 data is currently available, although the trend shows that there has been an increase in children attending from these most deprived areas accessing the Children’s Centre provision. A significant increase is from the 10% LSOA 0-5 population.

Table 2

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15 (Q1 only)
All 0 -5 yr olds	73%	81%	87%	58%
10% SOAs	75%	80%	86%	59%
30% SOAs	77%	79%	86%	57%

3.2.3 Children under 5 yrs old engaged with Children’s Social Care (CSC) or who are subject to a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) planning are monitored around their engagement with Children’s Centre provision. Reporting of this has improved over the past 12 months and in future performance will be monitored on a quarterly basis.

3.2.4 Attendance during quarter 1 shows a significant increase on previous performance, when compared by quarters. Quarter two data is not available at present.

Table 3

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15 (Q1 only)
CAFs	78%	85%	68%
Child in Need	52%	60%	28%
Child Protection Plan	55%	68%	37%

3.2.5 Centres would expect that upwards of 90% of the children with CAFs would engage with centres. However it is always going to be the case that for children on child protection plans or who have a Child in Need plan, there will be a proportion for whom it is not appropriate or possible for them to engage with centres whilst their plan is ongoing. Centres are working on being able to ensure that all young children who have a CSC plan are known to the centres and that appropriate engagement is planned if/when the plan is “stepped down”. During 2014/15 children’s centres staff gave a presentation to one of the Big Social Work Conversation events to promote to social workers the added value that could be gained by using children’s centres resources or groups as part of parenting assessments. Some of the centres are routinely used by CSC staff for supervised contacts between children and parents.

Future challenges

- 3.3 3.3.1 Children’s centres will continue to focus most of their direct delivery to parents to be and on 0-3 year olds, and in particular in

closing the gap in the EYFS. At age 3 / 4 almost all children in Halton access their free 3 / 4 free early education offer.

3.3.2 The performance of children at the end of the EYFS who have accessed both the 2 year old and 3 / 4 year old free offers is still too great. Children's centres need to play a key role alongside early years staff in settings, our Early Years Consultant teachers, and health visitor colleagues in identifying early on those children who need more support to achieve their potential and ensure that support is available both within settings and at home. A pilot integrated 2 yr old check is currently underway at Warrington Road, with the aim of identifying earlier those children who may not achieve their full potential and offering further support at home as well as within the settings.

3.3.3 One area that is underdeveloped in Halton and at possible risk of challenge in an Ofsted inspection is the offer of work readiness and volunteer opportunities for parents. Centres in nearby Authorities that have been judged good or outstanding have well developed volunteer pathways for parents. This enables centres to demonstrate both good outcomes for parents who gain experience and qualifications, and also enables added value in delivery of services within centres as parent volunteers support the delivery of universal services, freeing staff up to deliver more targeted sessions to the most vulnerable families. Halton's offer of volunteering is not yet in place, although there are some evidenced outcomes for adult learning. Two very recent developments will however support this area, a grant from DWP recently awarded to Innovate Volunteering to support lone parents to volunteer and gain work experience, and a new commissioned service to provide parent to parent mentoring and support. Both these new services will work closely with the children's centres and the early intervention teams.

3.3.4 Children's centres buildings have received significant investment over the years. Each centre is unique in terms of the facilities and space available but all centres provide some space for locally based integrated delivery. For example Kingsway children's centre houses the locality early intervention team, the children's centres team, the local health visitor team and the borough wide Family Nurse Partnership team.

3.3.5 In the future it is possible that more centres could further develop as multi-agency locality hubs, with co-location of more services and more flexible opening and use of space. This could provide a way for centres to ensure that they are sustainable moving forward at the same time as continuing to provide the core offer of services for families within their own communities.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no policy implications arising from this report

5.0 OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no financial implications from this report

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

Children's centres delivery supports the priorities for young children, especially ready for school.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

Children's centre delivery supports parents in their learning and achievement

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Children's centre delivery supports the Healthy Halton priorities

6.4 A Safer Halton

Children's centre delivery supports the Safer Halton priorities

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

As hubs in local communities children's centres contribute to Halton's Urban renewal

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There are no immediate risks stemming from this report. The council would be at risk if they did not provide sufficient children's centre services to meet the needs of the population.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 Children's centre services are targeted at the most vulnerable families in the borough and ensure that needs of all families are met taking into account all equality and diversity issues.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None under the meaning of the Act.