
Meeting Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date 23 January 2014

Subject Early Years Provision Task and Finish Group – Final Report

Report of **Scrutiny Office**

Summary of Report This report at Appendix 1 presents the findings of the Early Years Provision Task and Finish Group following their review of early years provision within Barnet. The Committee are requested to consider the findings and recommendations of the Task and finish Group as set out in the report and endorse the report for onward referral to Cabinet.

Officer Contributors Anita Vukomanovic Overview and Scrutiny Officer

Status (public or exempt) Public

Wards Affected All

Key Decision N/A

Reason for urgency / exemption from call-in N/A

Function of Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Enclosures Appendix 1 – Report of the Early Years Review Task and Finish Group

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1. RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 The Committee to consider the findings and recommendations of the Early Years Review Task and Finish Group, as set out in the report attached at Appendix 1.**
- 1.2 Committee to endorse the report for onward referral to the next Cabinet meeting.**

2. RELEVANT PREVIOUS DECISIONS

- 2.1 Business Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 18 April 2012, Agenda Item 14 – Task and Finish Group Appointments
- 2.2 Business Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 7 February 2013, Task and Finish Group Updates – following receipt of a representation from Children’s Services officers, the Committee agreed to defer the start of the Children’s Centres Task and Finish Group to mid-April 2013

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Panels and Task and Finish Groups must ensure that the work of Scrutiny is reflective of the Council’s priorities.
- 3.2 The three key priorities set out in the 2013-16 Corporate Plan are: –
 - Supporting families and individuals that need it – promoting independence, learning and wellbeing,
 - Improving the satisfaction of residents and businesses with the London Borough of Barnet as a place to live, work and study,
 - Promoting responsible growth, development and success across the borough.
- 3.3 The Children and Young People’s Plan 2013 – 2016 sets out a vision that ‘every child in Barnet has a great start in life, with the security and safety to grow in a nurturing environment’. The early years priorities in the plan are:
 - Engage families early to ensure children have happy lives at home.
 - Provide high quality health services for mothers and young children.
 - Ensure children in need of support are identified early and appropriately supported in their early years.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 4.1 Failure to address issues of public concern through the overview and scrutiny process may result in reputational damage to the Council.
- 4.2 The Council has statutory duties surrounding child care provision. Failure to meet these requirements would result in the Council breaching these requirements, which would in addition present a reputational risk. Failure of the Council to implement its Early Intervention Strategy would present risks to Children and families within the Borough.

5. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 5.1 Pursuant to the Equality Act 2010 (“the Act”), the council has a legislative duty to have ‘due regard’ to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act; advancing equality of opportunity between those with a protected characteristic and those without; and promoting good relations between those with protected characteristics and those without. The ‘protected characteristics’ are age, race, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy, and maternity, religion or belief and sexual orientation. The ‘protected characteristics’ also include marriage and civil partnership, with regard to eliminating discrimination.
- 5.2 In addition to the Terms of Reference of the Committee, and in so far as relating to matters within its remit, the responsibility of the Committee is to perform the Overview and Scrutiny role in relation to:
- The Council’s leadership role with respect to diversity and inclusiveness; and,
 - The fulfilment of the Council’s duties as employer including recruitment and retention, personnel, pensions and payroll services, services, staff development, equalities and health and safety.
- 5.3 Task and Finish Groups will need to take into account equalities considerations throughout the lifecycle of the review and through the on-going monitoring, via the Scrutiny Office, by implementation of accepted recommendations.

6. USE OF RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (Finance, Procurement, Performance & Value for Money, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

- 6.1 Task and Finish Group reviews have the scope to consider value for money issues which identify how well the Council is managing and using its resources to deliver value for money and better and more sustainable outcomes for local people.
- 6.2 Task and Finish Group reviews must take into consideration value for money considerations when conducting their work, including the costs and benefits (both financial and non-financial) associated with any recommendations made by the Group. The costs associated with administering the Task and Finish Group review has been met from existing resources within the Governance Service budget.
- 6.3 The implementation of recommendations being made by the Task and Finish Group will need to be met from existing delivery unit budgets.

7. LEGAL ISSUES

- 7.1 Under Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000, the Council’s executive arrangements are required to include provision for appointment of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee with specified powers, including the power to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive.

8. CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS (Relevant section from the Constitution, Key/Non-Key Decision)

- 8.1 The scope of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees is contained within Part 2, Article 6 of the Council’s Constitution.

- 8.2 The Terms of Reference of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees are set out in the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules (Part 4 of the Constitution).
- 8.3 The Education Overview & Scrutiny Committees Terms of Reference states that their responsibilities are to:

1. *To scrutinise and monitor the Council and its partners in the discharge of statutory duties in relation to the provision of school places and education within the Borough and in particular to monitor the delivery of the Corporate Plan 2013/14 – 2015/16.*
2. *In relation to the functions set out in paragraph 1 above, to make reports and/or recommendations to the full Council, the Executive and/or any committee as appropriate in connection with the discharge of those functions.*

9. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 9.1 In early 2012, the Business Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned a Task and Finish Group (TFG) review on the following basis: “To undertake an in-depth analysis of the role of Children’s Centres and their contribution to delivering the Council’s Early Intervention Strategy and supporting the Safer Families Project.”
- 9.2 The Members appointed to the Task and Finish Group were: Councillor Gordon (Chairman), Councillor Kate Salinger, Councillor Marshall, Councillor Ioannidis, and Councillor Coakley Webb.
- 9.3 The purpose of this TFG review was amended to incorporate an on-going internal review into Early Years provision rather than to just consider a standalone review of Children’s Centres.
- 9.4 An internal Early Years review which commenced in early 2013 is currently being conducted by the Children’s Service, with the ambition of aiding the Council and its partners in identifying how improvements could be made to early years’ provision in Barnet, whether they were state or privately provided.
- 9.5 At the time of this report, the Children’s Service had completed the first phase of their analysis and the Member comments made throughout this piece of work will feed into the wider strategy for Early Years Provision which is expected to be approved in mid-2014.
- 9.6 A Final meeting of the Task and Finish Group took place on 21 October 2013 at which the Group concluded their findings and agreed the recommendations as set out in the report at **Appendix 1**.

10. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 None.

Cleared by Finance (Officer’s initials)	JH & AD
Cleared by Legal (Officer’s initials)	LC