

## **Core purpose of Children's Centres & statutory responsibilities for youth provision compared with proposal for Early Help Hubs**

### **A Children's Centre core purpose is summarised as follows:**

- To assess need across the local community
- To provide access to universal early years services in the local area including high quality and affordable early years education and childcare
- To provide targeted evidence based early interventions for families in greatest need, in the context of integrated services
- To act as a hub for the local community, building social capital and cohesion.
- To share expertise with other early year's settings to improve quality.

### **Principles underpinning the core purpose are:**

- Respecting and engaging parents
- Working in partnership across professional/agency boundaries

### **Statutory definition of a children's centre**

A Sure Start children's centre is defined in the Act as a place or a group of places; which is managed by or on behalf of, or under arrangements with, the local authority with a view to securing that early childhood services in the local authority's area are made available in an integrated way; through which early childhood services are made available (either by providing the services on site, or by providing advice and assistance on gaining access to services elsewhere); at which activities for young children are provided.

### **Early childhood services are defined as:**

- Early years provision (early education and childcare);
- Social services functions of the local authority relating to young children, parents and prospective parents;
- Health services relating to young children, parents and prospective parents;
- Training and employment services to assist parents or prospective parents;
- Information and advice services for parents and prospective parents.

Children's centres should have a clear core purpose, focused on:

### **1. Improving outcomes for young children and their families, and reducing inequalities.**

#### **By:**

- Offering inclusive universal services which welcome hard to reach families;
- Hosting targeted and specialist services on site where appropriate (such as speech and language therapy, parenting programmes, mental health services and social care) or providing access to those services;
- Considering the use of multi-agency assessment and referral processes; and work with other services to:
  - Support families before, during and after specialist programmes and/or interventions;
  - Provide opportunities to help families develop resilience to risk factors;
  - Promote child development.

## **2. Assessing strengths and need across the area to inform local commissioning of services It will require:**

- Information-sharing and collaboration with local partners.
- Assessing what services already exist locally and decide what evidence suggests about which additional services are needed to improve outcomes for all parts of the local community but particularly for those with the greatest needs.
- Assessment of the needs of individual families at greatest risk of poor outcomes,

## **3. Providing access to high quality universal (available to all families who wish to use them) services in the area**

Evidence suggests that the following **universal services** (i.e. available to all families who wish to make use of them) make a difference to children and families, when delivered in an integrated manner:

- **High quality, inclusive, early learning and childcare**, particularly for disadvantaged families or those with particular needs (for example disabled children) or in disadvantaged areas. This includes supporting families to access the offer of free early learning for 2 year olds, support for childminder networks and sessional and crèche facilities appropriate to meet local need. Where early learning and childcare is delivered by the children's centre (or by a third party on behalf of the children's centre), it should be supported by someone with either Qualified Teacher or Early Years Professional status.
- **Information and activities for families**, so that parents can make informed choices. This will include provision of family activities to improve outcomes (for example, learning through play or healthy eating) and could involve access to wider sources of support for example benefit or debt advice.
- **Adult learning and employment support**; this may include language, literacy and numeracy support, family learning, access to apprenticeships and volunteering opportunities as steps toward employment and links to Jobcentre Plus. It is supported by good quality, inclusive childcare.
- **Integrated child and family health services**; to include Health Visitors delivering the Healthy Child programme, engagement with midwives and GPs and use of the Family-Nurse partnership where appropriate.

In good children's centres, these universal activities bring in many of the families in need of extra support. As families build up confidence and relationships with staff and other service users they may become more receptive to appropriate targeted activities.

## **4. Using evidence-based approaches to deliver targeted, family-centred support**

This means children's centres combining evidence with professional expertise – in order to decide which early interventions work best for local families, and help ensure families receive the services they really need and that will make a difference to their lives. The following **targeted services** can make a difference for families with the greatest needs:

- **Parenting and family support**, including outreach work and relationship support (the quality of the relationship between parents is linked to positive parenting and better outcomes for children). Provision of integrated support in response to identified strengths and risk factors within individual families.

- **Targeted evidence-based early intervention programmes** (such as those recommended by Graham Allen MP, the NAPR and C4EO) where published evaluation demonstrates that particular interventions can help families make accelerated progress in improving outcomes where they are at greatest risk of falling furthest behind.
- **Links with specialist services** for families where there are the most complex health or social care needs (e.g. disabled children, children with major health difficulties, or children likely to be “in need” or where there are safeguarding concerns as in the Children Act 1989)

This list of services (under 3 and 4 above) links to the “full core offer” children’s centres have focused on up to now, but rather than providing a detailed list of services for all children’s centres to deliver (as with the current core offer), it sets a framework to support local assessments of need and delivery of services. Although overall less detailed and prescriptive, it includes increased emphasis on family-centred support, including relationships. It puts an emphasis on children’s centres thinking innovatively about the range of services they might provide.

#### **5. Acting as a hub for the local community, building social capital and cohesion.**

This will involve children’s centres capitalising on their role as a welcoming environment for families, for example by welcoming older people’s groups to use the facility for community activities or by supporting siblings or older children’s activities where this is appropriate locally. It is about children’s centres using their facilities creatively so the whole community can benefit and using the skills within the community to the benefit of the children’s centre, (e.g. members of the community volunteering their skills). It links to the Health Visitor Building Community Capacity work and the Health Visitor Early Implementer Sites.

#### **6. Sharing expertise with other early year’s settings to improve quality.**

This isn’t about taking on the quality improvement role of the Local Authority but could involve sharing expertise, brokering relationships, sharing (and learning from) good practice, support for childminding networks, shared training and joint planning.

#### **7. Respecting and engaging parents**

Respecting the views and wishes of all parents, with local families is at the heart of inclusive decision making. This may involve a role for parents in governance. It will involve local families having a greater say in how services are delivered (with transparency about what money is being spent on and what difference it is making), actively engaging them in delivery through volunteering opportunities, as well as working with health visitors to build the capacity of local parents to help each other and form informal networks of support.

#### **8. Partnership working**

This core purpose puts an on us on a cross-sector approach and effective local partnerships, particularly between social workers, health visitors and children’s centre outreach workers, so that vulnerable families are supported into appropriate interventions. Reducing child poverty and increasing social mobility Centres will also work with a range of other partners to help them deliver this core purpose for example other early years providers, Jobcentre Plus, GP consortia, information and advice organisations, schools and voluntary and community sector organisations.

**Statutory duties on LA to provide youth services are as follows:**

- **Under Section 507B of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. It relates to local authorities' duty to secure services and activities for young people aged 13 to 19, and those with learning difficulties to age 24, to improve their well-being**
- **LA duty to secure, equality of access for all young people to the positive, preventative and early help they need to improve their well-being. This includes youth work and other services and activities that:**
  - Connects young people with their communities enabling them to belong and contribute to society, including through volunteering, and supporting them to have a voice in decisions which affect their lives;
  - Offers young people opportunities in safe environments to take part in a wide range of sports, arts, music and other activities
  - Supports the personal and social development of young people through which they build the capabilities they need for learning, work, and the transition to adulthood
  - Improve young people's physical and mental health and emotional well-being;
  - Help those young people at risk of dropping out of learning or not achieving their full potential to engage and attain in education or training;
  - Raise young people's aspirations, build their resilience, and inform their decisions – **and thereby reducing teenage pregnancy, risky behaviours such as substance misuse, and involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour.**

### ***Securing access to sufficient services and activities***

The Government do not prescribe which services and activities for young people local authorities should fund or deliver or to what level. They should take the strategic lead to work with young people; the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector; health and wellbeing boards; schools and colleges; and agencies including health and police to:

- Understand the needs of local young people, particularly the needs of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, taking full account of equality and diversity issues;
- Enable parents and communities to meet young people's needs wherever possible, and engage businesses and other employers to contribute funding and expertise to help enhance and sustain local provision;
- Plan how aspirational personal and social development programmes, including National Citizen Service, and youth work and youth workers can contribute to meeting the needs of young people and reduce demand for more specialist services;
- Determine the mix of open access, targeted, preventative and specialist provision needed to meet local needs, and how to integrate all services around young people;
- Decide what facilities are needed and how to make these available and accessible, wherever possible maximising the utilisation and potential of all local partners' assets;
- Determine which services and facilities need public funding and which can be secured through other means so that public funding is targeted primarily on young people at risk of poor outcomes;
- Determine which services and facilities can be delivered by third parties so that the local authority delivers directly only where it is clearly best placed to do so;

- Plan how to best support and grow the role of voluntary, community, and faith organisations, including through a transparent commissioning process, given the benefits the sector can bring to work with young people, families and communities;
- Agree priorities for publically funded services and facilities with local partners and how these can be most effectively and efficiently delivered, including considering with their employees the options for them to set up and transfer into a public service mutual in line with their 'Right to Provide';
- Ensure providers have the capacity and skills to deliver effective services to young people, by learning from good practice and developing their workforce;
- Publicise effectively to young people and their families the overall local offer of all services and activities available for young people locally;
- Put in place actively-managed systems for assuring the quality of local services and driving improvement, including in response to feedback from young people,
- Publish at least annually, details of the feedback young people have given on the quality of the local offer and of how they have influenced local decisions; and
- Publish at least annually, in a form that enables young people and others to hold them to account, their plans for improving young people's well-being and personal and social development, together with relevant funding and performance data.

### **Proposed core offer for Early Help Hubs**

#### **Local leadership, management and governance**

- To work with partners to assess and understand the needs of children, young people and adults across the local community; particularly the needs of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, taking full account of the views of service users
  - It will require:
    - Information-sharing and collaboration with local partners.
    - Assessing what services already exist locally and decide what evidence suggests about which additional services are needed to improve outcomes for all parts of the local community but particularly for those with the greatest needs.
    - Assessment of the needs of individual families at greatest risk of poor outcomes,
    - To agree priorities for services and facilities with local partners and how these can be most effectively and efficiently delivered.
- A key element of the EH Hub proposal is to develop a way of working to provide consultation and collaboration between partner agencies that are working at different levels with families. This will offer timely advice and expertise to prevent escalation into more specialist and costly interventions. As the model develops this will be available from a range of different agencies and disciplines; housing, addiction, mental health, welfare rights, learning and skills employability, engaging teenagers, tackling family violence and safeguarding. This means that families get the right help at the right time, reduces the need for multiple workers and helps to secure engagement through a warm handover, when face to face intervention is required.

## Community plus Level

- Acting as a virtual hub for the local community, building social capital and cohesion and to ensure providers have the capacity and skills to deliver effective services to children, young people and families
- To enable families and communities to meet needs wherever possible, and engage businesses and other employers to contribute funding and expertise to help enhance and sustain local provision
- To plan how to support and grow the role of voluntary, community, and faith organisations, including through a transparent commissioning process
- Working with partners and the community to ensure there is access to high quality universal (available to all families who wish to use them) services in the area

This could include:

- High quality, inclusive, early learning and childcare, particularly for disadvantaged families or those with particular needs (for example disabled children) or in disadvantaged areas. This includes supporting families to access the offer of free early learning for 2 year olds, support for childminder networks and sessional and crèche facilities appropriate to meet local need.
- Information and advice for families, so that parents can make informed choices. This could involve access to wider sources of support for example benefit or debt advice.
- Adult learning and employment support; this may include language, literacy and numeracy support, family learning, access to apprenticeships and volunteering opportunities as steps toward employment and links to Jobcentre Plus. It is supported by good quality, inclusive childcare.
- Integrated child and family health services; to include delivering of the Healthy Child programme, engagement with midwives and GPs

## Targeted level

- Using evidence-based approaches to deliver targeted, family-centred support
- This means combining evidence with professional expertise – in order to decide which early interventions work best for local families, and helps ensure families receive the services they really need and that will make a difference to their lives. The following targeted services can make a difference for families with the greatest needs:
  - Targeted evidence-based early intervention programmes (such as those recommended by Graham Allen MP, the NAPR and C4EO). These programmes have been evaluated and demonstrate that they can help families make accelerated progress in improving outcomes where they are at greatest risk of falling furthest behind.
  - *The Stronger Families* approach means helping parents/families secure better outcomes for their children through more effective and better co-ordinated interventions from a wide range of services. Implementing *Stronger Families* practice depends on breaking down professional barriers and achieving changes in culture so that all practitioners see their clients in the context of their family and are willing to refer and work collaboratively with other service providers to help ensure better outcomes for all family members.

### **One to one Key Worker intervention**

The model of intervention is a **whole family support intervention** based on the model currently operated by the Family Intervention Project (FIP). This is in line with the evidence base relating to families with complex needs more generally and in successfully preventing children from entering the care system. The DCLG<sup>1</sup> report highlights the 5 family intervention factors which lead to positive outcomes:

- Dedicated workers, dedicated to families
- Practical 'hands on' support
- A persistent, assertive & challenging approach
- Considering the family as a whole
- A common purpose and agreed action

This echoes the messages from the earlier Ofsted report<sup>2</sup>, which highlights the importance of a **strong and persistent key worker** and describes how successful services are supported by:

- Strong multi-agency working
- Clear and consistent referral pathways to services
- Consistent decision-making processes based on
- Thorough assessment of risks and strengths within the family network
- A prompt, persistent, and flexible approach, based on listening to families and building on their strengths
- Regular review of progress and risk factors
- Robust risk management
- Clear planning for case closure and for sustainability of good outcomes
- Parenting and family support, including outreach work and relationship support (the quality of the relationship between parents is linked to positive parenting and better outcomes for children). Provision of integrated support in response to identified strengths and risk factors within individual families

### **Complex level**

- To develop effective links with specialist services for families where there are the most complex health or social care needs (e.g. disabled children, children with major health difficulties, or children likely to be "in need" or where there are safeguarding concerns as in the Children Act 1989)
- The core purpose puts an onus on a cross-sector approach and effective local partnerships, particularly between social workers, schools, health professionals, VCS workers and other key workers, so that the right families receive the right support at the right time.

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<sup>1</sup> DCLG report *Working with Troubled families*

<sup>2</sup> Ofsted report *Edging away from care*