

Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Tuesday March 2 2010
7.00 pm
Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

Supplemental Agenda

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DRAFT

EARLY YEAR'S REVIEW

Report of the Children's services and education scrutiny sub
committee

March 2010



1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Children's services and education scrutiny committee decided in September 2009 to do an Early Years review. The review principally looks at the delivery of the free early education offer and the impact of a new funding regime, the Single Funding Formula (SFF), on this provision. The review also addresses take up of the early education offer, how the early education offer fits in with wider subsidised day care provision and lastly considers how this could be best targeted.
- 1.2 Members of the sub-committee chose this as a review topic for a number of reasons including:
- Concern about the possible negative impact of Single Funding Formula on settings economic sustainability and therefore their ability to deliver the early education offer;
 - Anecdotal stories of a lack of provision in East Dulwich;
 - A plethora of evidence that good early education can positively impact on children's emotional, social and cognitive development;
 - Concern with up take of free early education places by families and whether the provision of nursery care meets the needs of children and families;
 - concern that more disadvantaged and vulnerable families were not accessing the Free Early Education offer.

2. Key Evidence Considered

2.1 Review of documents produced by Officers at the request of Committee members

2.2 Review of existing Local Authority documents.

2.3 Five settings were visited: Ivydale Nursery School; 1st Place Children's centre; Robert Browning Nursery School; Kintore Way Nursery School (based in a Children's centre) and Puddleducks (private nursery). *[Reports for visits are separately written up and available]*

2.4 One to one interviews with two parents. *[Reports for visits are separately written up and available]*

2.5 Consultation with parents through attending the Parent Participation Forum. *[Report will be tabled]*

Parent Participation Forum (PPF) builds on the work of local forums and partnerships where parents play an active part in decision-making and consultation, to create a Southwark-wide early years forum for parents. The Forum is developed and

supported to feed into and contribute to the planning and development of services for children, young people and families. The Forum particularly relates to and responds to the priorities and targets originally set by the 0 – 6 sub partnership, and Children's Centres Development programme. The group meets monthly. Membership currently runs at 45 parent members, of who 90% are bi-lingual.

Background

3 Free Early Education offer (FEE).

- 3.1 The FEE is the government funded early years provision that every child should be able to access. All three and four year olds are currently entitled to 12.5 hours of free early education for 38 weeks of the year. This applies until they reach compulsory school age (the term following their fifth birthday). The early education can take place in nurseries, play-groups, preschools or with qualified child minders.
- 3.2 All settings receiving government funding to provide free early education to three to five year olds must:
- be included in the local authority Directory of Providers
 - help children progress towards the 'early learning goals' set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - be inspected regularly by Ofsted
- 3.3 This means that a child should get a good quality early years education, regardless of which type of setting they attend.
- 3.4 The Early Years foundation stage emphasizes learning through play to develop cognitive skills and children's confidence, emotional and social well being. (Ref.1)

4 Single Funding Formula (SFF)

- 4.1 The single funding formula affects the delivery of the free early education offer in a number of ways. Originally the SFF was scheduled to be fully implemented by September 2010; however in January 2010 the government decided to delay its implementation for most Local Authorities and Southwark will be delaying full implementation by a year.
- 4.2 The guidance requires local authorities to plan for four interrelated changes:
- Introduction of funding based on children's 'participation' rather than 'places'
 - Development of a single formula covering all settings
 - Extension of the free entitlement from 12.5 hours to 15 hours per week term time only
 - Ensure, as far as possible, that parents have flexibility in using the services

- 4.3 All non-maintained school settings are already funded on the basis of participation so this change is less likely to adversely impact on these settings. However nursery schools and children's centers are more likely to experience a negative impact as they are currently funded by 'places'. Buffer funding is planned to help alleviate some of the consequences.
- 4.4 Following discussions with all sectors working in early years Southwark has concluded that the following factors should be taken into account when developing a formula:
- Basic hourly rate.
 - Social deprivation supplement.
 - Staff qualification supplement.
- 4.5 The following delivery patterns that form the Core Offer (FEE) have come from the findings of the pathfinder local authorities. These authorities have found these patterns to be popular with parents and deliverable by providers within the national limits designed to protect child development

3 hours a day over 5 days of the week
5 hours a day over 3 days of the week

Currently the Department for children, schools and families is consulting on two additional models:

6 hours + 6 hours + 3 hours over three days of the week
9 hours + 3 hours + 3 hours over three days of the week

Delivery of any model should not go ahead without assessment of parental demand and local provider capacity to deliver

5 Types of pre- school education and day care settings

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Pre-school playgroups | Generally take children aged 3-5. Most offer half-day sessions, not all are open all week. Usually non-profit making and run by volunteers. Many parents involved. |
| Day nurseries | Take children under 5 for whole working day. Run by local authority, voluntary sector, private companies, employers or individuals. |
| Childminders | Childminders look after children under 5 and older children out of school hours. Usually in childminders own home. Local authority determines number of children |
| Private nursery | Take children aged 2-5. Offer full or half day sessions, sometimes including school age children. |
| Children's Centres | Provide a range of activities for children and families including daycare and nursery provision |

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| State nursery schools | Take children aged 3-4 during school terms and normally offer 5 half day sessions a week. |
| State primary schools | Take children aged 3-4. Open during term time and offer five half-day sessions a week. |
| Reception classes | Take children aged 4-5. Some children start off with half day sessions and build to full time, |

6.0 Focus of the review

The review decided to focus on policy development around four areas:

- Delivering the flexible offer
- Developing a policy around part time and full time places
- The impact of the SFF on admissions
- Increasing the uptake of the FEE by disadvantaged; stressed and vulnerable groups

7 Context and summary of views

7.1 Central government

The government childcare strategy has two main aims;

- Promotion of high quality childcare and provision of the early years offer in order to affect positive child development
- Providing childcare so parents can work in order to combat poverty and deprivation

7.2 Local Authority

Southwark Council has a duty to ensure that there is sufficient childcare of good quality that is flexibly delivered to meet the needs of children and families. Local Authorities produce a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment every three years. Southwark did one in February 2008 and this was supplemented by further work in December 2008.

7.3 Children

Research shows that children from the age of three benefit from good quality Early Years provision. To obtain these benefits it is essential that the provision is delivered to a high standard. High quality early years education impacts positively on children's cognitive, emotional and social development and the impact is particularly measurable on children from disadvantaged backgrounds. High quality care is associated with well trained and educated staff. It can be delivered in a number of settings; what matters most is the

development of nurturing relationships and a stimulating environment that promotes learning.

There is some research showing some moderate adverse affects to children's emotional and social development when children spend too long in centre based day care. (Ref 2)

7.4 Parents, families and carers

The sub-committee considered three main sources of information; Southwark Childcare Sufficient Assessment and Gap Analysis which interviewed parents; two telephone interviews and attendance at the Parent Participation Forum.

The main concerns for parents are:

- Increasing flexibility
- Reducing the number of providers an individual family has to use
- Assistance with transitions and admission
- Affordability
- More availability of Nursery provision
- More provision for disabled children
- Provision located closer to home

Other issues are:

- Use of informal childcare is high; family members are the most popular choice
- Inflexibility of employers is one of the biggest barriers
- A significant number of parents do not want to use childcare
- Satisfaction with childcare is generally quite high; as choice goes up satisfaction increases.

7.5 Settings

Summary of how the settings responded to the issues the review is focusing on:

| Name of setting | Type of setting | Impact of SFF | Current offer | Admission criteria | Actives to reach disadvantaged families |
|-----------------|----------------------|---------------|--------------------------|---|---|
| Ivydale | State Nursery School | Neutral | Morning or afternoon FEE | <u>Criteria for places is given to</u> Looked after children Children with special needs Children with a sibling at the school; Nearest maintained Nursery Class or | Home visits |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--|----------|--|---|---|
| | | | | Nursery School. | |
| 1 st Place | Children's Centre with charity status | Positive | Full time or part time places incorporating the core FEE with wrap around care | <p>A List</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Looked after children - Children with disabilities - Parent and child live in the catchment area - Sibling attending 1st Place <p>B List</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teenage parents in education - Children from lone parent - Training or studying - Starting or returning to work - Using working Tax Credit - Working in the Aylesbury Area | Outreach Range of family activities |
| Kintore Way | Nursery School in state maintained Children's Centre | Negative | Full time or part time places incorporating the core FEE with wrap around care | <p><u>Priority for places is given to</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looked after children • Children with special needs • Siblings • Nearest nursery • Balanced mix of ages <p><u>Criteria for full time Nursery</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable families • Children with special needs <p><u>Extended wrap around care</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable families (safeguarding) • Parent/ Carer's working or studying | Outreach and range of family activities |
| Robert | State primary | Slightly | Moring or | | Word of mouth |

| | | | | | |
|------------|------------------------------|-------------------|--|---|--------------------------------|
| Browning | schools | Negative | afternoon FEE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looked after children • Siblings • Catchment area • Children with special needs – if appropriate funding can be accessed | and toddler group planed |
| Puddleduck | Private Nursery offering FEE | Slightly Positive | Full time or part time places incorporating the core FEE with wrap around care | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are able to match children to places • length of time on the waiting list • Referrals from Social Services • Siblings and family | Outreach via Children's Centre |

Findings

Responding to flexible offer

12 Settings: present and planned offer

Present offer:

12.1 Nursery schools

The two maintained Nursery Schools we visited offered part time only places term time only; either morning or afternoon for 2.5 hours.

| Morning | LUNCH | Afternoon |
|------------------|-------|------------|
| 9.15am – 11.45am | | 1.15- 3.15 |

12.2 Children's centres

Children's Centres (Kintore Way Nursery and 1st Place) offered part time for 2 or 3 days a week or full time 5 days a week using these options:

Kintore Way

| | | |
|-------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Wrap around | Nursery school | Wrap around after |
|-------------|----------------|-------------------|

| | | |
|------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| breakfast club | | School care |
| 8.15 am – 9.15am | 9.15am – 3.15pm | 3.15- 5.45 |

Ist Place

| | | |
|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| Wrap around | Nursery school | Wrap around |
| 8-9 | 9-5 | 5-6 |

12.3 Private nursery

The private nursery offers full time and part-time places

Puddleducks

| |
|-------------------------------|
| Full and part time : 8am -6pm |
|-------------------------------|

Proposed response to the flexible offer

12.4 The two maintained Nursery Schools visited offered part time only places term time only; either morning or afternoon for 2.5 hours and they will increase this to 3 hours. One would like to offer full-time place but needs consent from the local authority to do this. The other Nursery is considering the possibility of offering part time places over 2 or 3 days but this would need capital investment to provide lunches.

| | | |
|------------------|-------|------------|
| Morning | LUNCH | Afternoon |
| 9.15am – 11.45am | | 1.15- 3.15 |

13 Economic issues

Settings that offered part time places tended to offer Monday / Tuesday or Thursday/ Friday with Wednesday as an optional day or they juggled places according to need. They also offered some variation in hours. This seemed complex but manageable. The private nursery said parents purchasing additional hours was key to remaining economically viable and offering the FEE.

Teacher led Early Years education is more expensive to provide than wrap around care so some providers adapt their staffing to suit.

14 Impact of change on provision

Two Nurseries expressed concerns that expanding nursery and day care provision might put pressure on the more traditional morning or afternoon term time provision.

They thought these slots were beneficial to the children as they were not so tired and that it allowed more children to access a preschool place and smooth the transition to reception class in Primary Schools. A number of settings were concerned that some parents preferred this pattern but might get squeezed out if settings moved to a longer day pattern.

15 Parents

Parents that the committee gathered views from wanted more flexible provision that fitted in with their work or family life. The prevailing view was that slots of 2.5 hours were too short and a comment was made that this hardly left time to take the bus home and then return again. Parents seemed to prefer the longer slots. 5 hours, 6 hours & 9 hours were mentioned as preferred options.

Some parents were using a number of providers for different siblings in different locations and finding the travelling stressful for their children.

They welcomed the Childminder option to expand provision and offer flexibility.

Providers thought that some parents may well want the more traditional morning or afternoon offer and this may suit children well; particularly morning provision. More consultation work would need to be done to see if other parents wanted this pattern. The parents we spoke to all preferred the longer pattern.

16 Recommendations

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| Provision of the FEE in longer days of 5 or 6 hours may meet most parents needs better. The maintained sector may need capital investment to provide additional space for providing lunch etc; permission from the Council to vary hours and assistance with changes to staffing. |
| Provision of Nursery education alongside wrap around care means that parents can combine their FEE and then purchase additional care in order to work or study. It may be worth considering this as an option for maintained sectors. |
| Investment in the Childminder option to deliver FEE will expand provision, offer flexibility and be welcomed by parents. |

Developing a policy around part time and full time places

17 Settings have different status (voluntary, private, maintained) and benefit from different levels of state support. All the settings we looked at benefit from some state support because they have agreed to deliver the FEE. The level of state support varies across settings; some settings such as private nurseries only get help with their capital programs and through network and learning opportunities. Others settings such as children's centres get more intensive state support and this directly subsidise the fees they charge to parents for additional hours of care they offer families over and above the Free Early Education offer.

These places are often desirable because the fees are more affordable than in those in the private sector.

18 This is a summary of the priorities used by all the different settings visited to set

their criteria for admission:

| All prioritise | Some prioritise | Most prioritise |
|-------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| Looked after children | Children with special needs/disabilities | Teenage parents in education |
| Siblings at the nursery | Parent and child live in the catchment area or nearest nursery | Lone parents |
| | | Using working tax credit |
| | | Working locally |
| | | Balanced mix of ages |
| | | Parents working or studying |
| | | Starting or returning to work |
| | | Training or studying |
| | | Vulnerable parents |
| | | Safeguarding |

19 Responding to looked after children and families in crisis. Settings said they wanted to be able to respond to families in crisis; whether or not this was a formal policy, as well as the needs of looked after children. Nurseries said that they needed to leave some spare capacity and this had an economic cost.

20 Although most settings prioritise disabled children some settings had particular expertise in this area; 40 % of Kintore Way children have special needs. Other settings found the slow assessment process a barrier.

21 Parents

When parents were asked who should get priority they said:

- 1) Every body should get access
- 3) Low income families should get priority. They particularly picked out working families with a low disposable income and emphasized that this should not be rigidly applied and not exclude those who were ineligible for income support.

22 Recommendations

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| Ensure settings can maintain spare capacity to respond to families in crisis and looked after children |
| Assist settings with stalemating for disabled children and children with special needs |
| Prioritise nursery places for parents with a low disposable income who are working or studying |

The impact of the SFF on admissions

23 There were two main potential adverse impacts noted:

23.1 Nursery schools had concerns that the counting of 'participation' happened early in the term so impacted on gradual transitions. They would like parents to be able to reserve a place even if they fully took it up later in the term.

23.2 There are particular difficulties for Nursery Schools in children's centre where they also provide day care. The present set up makes a smooth transition very economically difficult and this is anticipated to get worse by the move to a single point of entry to Primary Schools in January.

24 Recommendations

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| Children's centres would like 'participation' funding to start earlier and provision of a special children's centre buffer. |
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| Allow parents to be able to send a child to Nursery gradually even if they don't fully 'participate' until later in the term |
|--|

Increasing the uptake of the FEE by disadvantaged; stressed and vulnerable groups

25 According to Southwark's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 87 % of parents use the FEE offer but this includes schools and this may be lower for children aged 3. The Day care trust concluded that nationally disadvantaged children are less likely to take up childcare. In 2004 only 31 per cent of the lowest income families accessed formal childcare versus 52 per cent of the highest income families.

26 The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and the Gap analysis both suggested that the evidence indicated that the needs of disabled children and their families were not being met effectively. The report recommended that further information be gathered to more accurately understand the barriers faced by this group.

27 One of the providers the committee visited had teenage parents from the 'Care to Learn' scheme, however a number of providers said that they did not have a high uptake from this group and they were not using services. One provider did indicate a specialised group meeting in Chumleigh Gardens of young parents. The Gap analysis did not gather data on this group specifically.

28 Parents want more help with admissions and transitions; both into early years and primary school. They want more communication from nursery schools about places once they have applied. Two parents commented that they made applications and heard nothing back for many months and then one received a call the week before term started and the other on the day the nursery place became available. They valued the home visits and wanted more providers to offer one to one slots prior to their child joining the nursery. A comment was made that discussing their child's needs was difficult to do in a classroom in a 15 minute slot. They wanted more support for transition to primary school. There were concerns about the single point of entry plans for primary schools.

- 29 Children's centre employ outreach workers and Puddleducks works in partnership with the local outreach worker to reach out to parents.
- 30 The Parent Champions Project produced by the Day care trust promoted peer to peer networks to reach the most disadvantage groups through the use of word of mouth. This increased the uptake of the formal childcare. (ref 3)
- 31 The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment demonstrated that in 2008 63 % of providers had an average of 3 vacancies. Only Dulwich had a demonstrable need for more provision; however parents living in Bermondsey and Borough & Bankside were most likely to have concerns over provision. There appears to be a gap between what is on offer and parents perception of choice.

32 Recommendations

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| Consider if extra work needs to be done to gather the views of parents of disabled parents to understand more the needs of this group. |
| Consider children's centres acting as hubs to promote good practice around meeting the needs of disabled children. |
| Consider linking up outreach workers from children's centres to work with other local providers to reach out to disadvantaged parents |
| Consider using the Day care trust Parent Champion Project toolkit; particularly to reach target groups such as families with a disabled child, teenage parents, BME groups etc |
| Concentrate on giving more family support around admission and transitions particularly through more regular, sustained and sensitive communication including home visits where appropriate. |

SOURCES

This will be expanded

- 1 Early years Foundation stage

<http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/83972>

- 2 Centre for excellence for early childhood development. Bulletin; March 2004

<http://www.excellence-jeunesenfants.ca/documents/BulletinVol3No1March04ANG.pdf>

- 3 Parent Champions Project , day care trust , August 2007–March 2008
Project Highlights

<http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk/pages/parent-champions.html>

4 Making a Big Difference case study 11: Working with reception classes in Southwark

<http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/180275>

Local Authority documents: To be expanded

Early Years Site Visits

Visit 3: Kintore Way Nursery School

Location: 97 - 102 Grange Rd, London SE1 3BW

Visit date: 29.01.15

Members present: Cllr Barrie Hargrove, Cllr Veronica Ward & Cllr Eliza Mann

Children's Centre contact: Sharon Donno (Head teacher), Terri Cole (Deputy Head Day Care)

Officer support: Julie Timbrell

Summary of notes taken:

Activities / services provided

Core offer is provision of accessible and affordable childcare as a route out of poverty. Babies are accepted from 6 months up until entering primary school. Once they are admitted to the Centre they have a place at Nursery School, there is no need to reapply. This is to reduce the amount of transitions.

The nursery is part of a Children's Centre and provides wrap around care and a range of complementary and additional activities for families and childminders.

Admissions, waiting list, referrals

120 full time equivalent places are provided.

Long waiting list for under 3's for full time or part-time places.

There is an unmet need for baby places and concern that this is then met by unregistered childminders.

The nursery gets referrals from Social Services for children in need, and there is funding from the Local Authority to subsidise fees for some of these families.

Teenage parents can access places through 'Care to Learn' and the Nursery accommodated two 15 year olds and one 16 year old last year.

There is some additional CAP funding for working parents and those seeking work but this scheme is undergoing changes and some funding has been withdrawn.

The nursery receives a number of formal and informal referrals for children with special needs. A very high number of children at the Centre have special needs; around 40 % and they have become locally known as a nursery that is able to accommodate these children well.

Outreach

An outreach worker is employed to encourage take up of all the Centre's activities by local families.

Admissions policy

(This is simplified)

Priority for places is given to

- Looked after children
- Children with special needs

- Siblings
- Nearest nursery
- Balanced mix of ages

Criteria for full time Nursery place is given to

- Vulnerable families
- Children with special needs

Extended wrap around care priority is given to

- Vulnerable families (safeguarding)
- Parent/ Carers working or studying

Work with other Children's Centres

They work closely with other Children's Centres and exchange good practice. The Nursery offers teacher input to South Bermondsey with a shared post. They also share and offer good practice around leadership, management and teacher functions.

Economic situation

Places are funded through a combination of fees, subsidy from the Free Early Education offer and a cross subsidy from Southwark Council as a Children's Centre.

This is essential to keep the cost of Day Care economically viable for parents. The centre has to identify the deficit of fees to service and negotiate that with Southwark Council as part of the Service Level Agreement.

In order to respond effectively to a family in crisis or an urgent requirement to give a place to a child in need identified by Social Services the Nursery ideally need to have some spare capacity; but there is an economic cost to this that has to be recognised.

Impact of SFF

If the Nursery no longer receive 'place' funding and instead have 'participation' funding it causes a problem for toddlers moving from day-care into the Nursery School as the funding does not kick in early enough. Also they will only qualify for a part time place (12.5 / 15 hours) but may need to move to a full time place and there is no mechanism to manage this. If they have special needs there may be additional costs. At present both full time and part-time Nursery School places are free and parents only pay for additional wrap around care if they need it. To sustain a place as outlined in the present SFF arrangements would entail either the parents or the Nursery bearing additional costs to manage the transition and neither is viable.

The other additional issue is that the impending change to a single point of entry to primary schools means that the Nursery School will have too thin a slice of time (3 yrs 3month – 4 yrs) to be sustainable.

Solutions

Participation funding starting earlier would help

A Children's Centre factor for settings that combine Day - Care provision with a Nursery School provision.

The nursery offer's teacher led provision and this is of higher quality but more expensive. Some consideration has been given to providing different types of staffed care to reduce costs but maintain quality. For example wrap around activities and lunch does not need to be teacher led.

Early Years Site Visits

Visit 4: Robert Browning Nursery School

Location: King and Queen St

Walworth London SE17 1DQ

Visit date: 28.01.10

Members present: Cllr Barrie Hargrove & Cllr Veronica Ward

Children's Centre contact: Early Years Coordinator Trevor Wilkinson

Officer support: Julie Timbrell

Summary of notes taken:

Activities / services provided

The core offer is provision of part time Nursery School places for children aged 3 – 5 years; either morning or afternoon. The Nursery places an emphasis on offering teacher led play based provision based on the Foundation Early Years curriculum.

Admissions, waiting list, referrals

There is a waiting list of around 15 – 25 that fluctuates. The nursery considers it is just about meeting demand but there could be a little unmet need.

Some referrals come from Social Services and local agencies. The School is well known in the local community and relies on informal networks to recruit. There is no formal outreach.

SEN are a priority but It can be difficult to accommodate SEN children as sometimes they do not come with funding and the nursery has to make sure that they are properly resourced and the nursery is balanced . Statements can take time.

Admissions policy

Priority for places is given to

- Looked after children
- Siblings
- Catchment area
- Children with special needs – if appropriate funding can be accessed and the needs of the child can be met

Work with other settings and the Council

The Nursery goes to joint meetings of lead practitioners and other schools come and visit. Staff take up training offered by the Early Years Council.

The Council has recently indicted support and funding for a playground; we would welcome more interaction from the Local Authority and assistance with development, particularly around capital improvements.

Impact of SFF

Economic situation

The new criteria means participation is counted on the 3rd Thursday of term of transition. The Nursery has looked at the figures for funding and we will lose some funding; approximately £4,000. With out the buffer this would be much greater and leave the Nursery down around £10,000 - £20,000.

The Nursery offers teacher led provision and this is of higher quality but more expensive. They welcome the introduction of the Foundation stage and early learning but the focus on proving the practice and the assessment process can take time away from teaching and interaction with children.

The other additional issue is that that the impending changes to a single point of entry to primary schools at January.

Impact of SFF on children

The counting of children this early means that the Nursery will not be able to do the more gradual transitioning that they would prefer.

Responding to the flexible offer

The Nursery will offer part time Nursery School places for children aged 3 – 5 years; either morning or afternoon for 3 hours.

There is a possibility that the Nursery might offer two full days from 9 – 3pm; but this would mean developing new lunch facilities and changes to present staffing arrangements and explorations are only in the provisional stage.

The disadvantages are that the daily offer benefits children as they have a regular routine. A full day can be tiring for young children.

The Nursery had not considered charging for additional days to avoid children transitioning through multiple providers, but did think this was a possibility. However this could have an adverse affect on the number of part time place they could offer. Wrap around care is not being considered.

The Nursery places an emphasis on easing the transition from Early Years into the Primary reception class and views this as a very important part of its role as transitions can be difficult for children. The Nursery want to continue in this role.

They are planning to offer a toddler group to develop relationships with families and ease the transition into Nursery School.

Solutions

Participation funding starting earlier would help.

Capital investment in the School so that lunch could be provided to enable us to respond to the flexible offer.

Early Years Site Visits

Visit 5: Puddleduck Nursery

Location: Saint Anthony with Saint Silas Community Centre, Merttins Road, Nunhead, SE15 3EB

Visit date: 12.02.10

Members present: Cllr Veronica Ward

Children's Centre contact: Carol Bromley - Senior Manager

Officer support: Julie Timbrell

Summary of notes taken:

Background

Puddleducks has recently moved location and found much better premises which has allowed it to extend its opening hours. Formally it was open term time only from 9 - 3pm. Since September they are open from 8 - 6pm and for 50 weeks a year.

Activities / services provided

Core offer is provision of day-care, including the Free Early Education offer, for children aged 2 – 5 years.

Admissions, waiting list, referrals

There is a long waiting list. There could be unmet need for full-time places suitable for working parents. Many of the nurseries existing children and parents have part time and term time only use of the nursery but as the nursery extends their opening hours they will be less able to offer this pattern, although they intend to accommodate their present cohort. This may mean that families who want this pattern will not be so well provided for.

Some referrals come from Social Services and they keep a space available for emergencies.

They link up with the outreach worker of Ivydale Children's Centre and the health worker to promote our services locally.

Admissions policy

Criteria are:

- are able to match children to places
- length of time on the waiting list
- Referrals from Social Services
- Siblings and other family using the service

Work with other settings and the Council

There is a good childminding unit across the road.

The Council has recently provided capital funding to extend the play area outside.

The nursery is quality assessed by the Council to ensure provision meets the right standard to offer the Early Years Foundation stage.

Economic situation and impact of SFF

The provision of 3 hours per day used to mean that parents often did not buy additional time; which had a negative impact on the nursery's economic viability. The purchasing of extra hours makes the provision of the free entitlement more sustainable. Parents use working tax credits and business vouchers to help buy more time.

The amount Southwark gives to settings per hour is quite generous; however if this is not enough the nursery is concerned it will have a knock on effect of raising fees for extended provision.

The new requirements for graduate leaders will mean that nursery costs will rise. We support this as it raises quality but this comes at a cost.

Recruitment is an issue as it is difficult to find well qualified staff.

The Nursery would like financial information as early in the business cycle as possible so it can make accurate financial forecasts.

*DRAFT report***Parental Engagement review****March 2010****Children's' services and education sub committee****Introduction**

The Children's' services and education sub committee decided to conduct a review on parental engagement after receiving a briefing on : Building a 21st Century Schools System, Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future at a committee meeting in September 2010 . A key emphasis in the White Paper is the theme of parental responsibility. Research indicated that a common feature of the lowest performing primary schools is a lack of parental involvement with the education process. There are some outstanding Southwark schools in very challenging neighbourhoods that have worked very hard to engage parents more, and parental engagement may be the biggest lever not yet used in the borough to effect further improvements. The review therefore decided to focus on parental engagement in primary school children.

The review took place from September 2009 to March 2010. It became apparent that parental engagement is a huge topic that the committee had limited capacity to review. The review is therefore restricted to noting good practice in Southwark and in recent research.

The primary aim of this report is to suggest further areas for investigation and investment. It is hoped this will compliment the investment Southwark already has in parental engagement and the action research project currently being led by external consultant, Dr Jan McKenley. This project will use action research to discover how Southwark can best build parental engagement processes with parents in homes where an effective learning culture may not be evident.

Methodology

Review of research and scrutiny reports from other Councils.

Officer presentation on the theme of 'Parental Engagement'.

Committee members sharing good practice.

Visit to parent governor event 'Promoting good parenting; Wednesday, 24th February; led by Commissioner for Parenting and CAMHS and review of 'Incredible Years: Parenting Pathfinder DVD'.

Findings and recommendations

The sub committee noted the importance of family learning and the key role that parent's play as informal educators. It was noted that reports and research conducted by Professor Alma Harris and Dr Janet Goodall indicated that:

*'Parents have the greatest influence on the achievement of young people through supporting their learning in the home (parental engagement) rather than supporting activities in the school (parental involvement). It is their support of learning in the home environment that makes the maximum difference to achievement.'*¹

Recommendation 1 Support and encouraging parents in their role as informal educators

Research indicates that children are more disadvantaged by a lack of parental engagement in their learning than by social class (2). The Committee consider it important that all parents and families are encouraged to engage with their children's education; particularly the most disadvantaged, and favoured initiatives that communicate to all parents to avoid stigmatising or alienating parents and carers.

Recommendation 2: Provide universal services

Evidence was heard that the father's role in their child's education was particularly important and there is considerable research demonstrating that a father's involvement is significantly related to positive child outcomes (3). However it was also noted that some children do not have an active father but that other significant males in children's lives can still be engaged. The importance of grandfathers, uncles, stepfathers and others was noted. Kintore Way Nursery School has successfully engaged male carers in their children's education by setting up regular play themed events. Children are encouraged to send personalised invitations to a significant male in their lives. Around a hundred fathers and carers have got involved and benefited. Members welcomed this approach and considered that it is vital that initiatives does not undermine fathers but rather promote the importance of their roles and empower both fathers and male carers.

Recommendation 3: Fathers and male carers of children have a vital role in children's education and this should be promoted and encouraged.

A number of scrutiny reports from London Boroughs and research evidence has demonstrated that transition from Early Year's or home into primary school and later from primary school into secondary school are crucial times. Support at these times is particularly important and can make a significant difference to subsequent attainment. Children from families experiencing multiple stress factors are particularly vulnerable at these times (4,5,6).

Recommendation 4: Family support is particularly targeted at transition times

Members heard from the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Leadership & Learning Services) that the latest DEMOS report on parenting as character building (7). This drew attention to growing evidence that what matters most is character capabilities – application, self-regulation and empathy and that these makes a vital contribution to life chances, mobility and opportunity. Confident, skilful parents adopting a 'tough love' approach to parenting, balancing warmth with discipline, seem to be the most effective in terms of generating these key character capabilities.

Southwark has a 'Commissioner for Parenting and CAMHS' and Southwark runs a valuable scheme: 'Incredible Years – parenting pathfinder' which teaches and enhances these skills using peer support in a supportive and non judgmental way.

Recommendation 5 Parenting courses that increase and develop parent's skills should be promoted.

References

1 Engaging parents in raising achieving; do parents know they matter. A Research project commissioned by the specialist schools and academies trust. Professor Alma Harris and Dr Janet Goodall.

2 & 3 The Impact of Parental Involvement on Children's Education. Department for Education and Skills

4 Helping Families Support Children's Success at School. Published by Save the Children: Professor Alma Harris of the Institute of Education, University of London and Dr Janet Goodall of the Institute of Education, University of Warwick Review of Research Evidence.

5 Tower Hamlets scrutiny report on Parental Engagement in Secondary Education

6 Haringey council scrutiny review of parental involvement in education

7 Building Character , parents are the principle architects of a fairer society . Jen Lexmond & Richard Reeves

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