

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: June 2010	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Early Years Review	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Scrutiny Sub-Committee Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Sub-committee	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the cabinet considers the comments of the Strategic director of children's services in response to the recommendations of the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Sub-committee (scrutiny report attached as appendix 1)

BACKGROUND

2. The Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Sub-committee undertook a review of Early Years. The review principally looks at the delivery of the free early education offer. It considers :
 1. the impact of a new funding regime, the Single Funding Formula (SFF), on delivery of the free early education offer
 2. take up of the early education offer
 3. how this could be better targeted
 4. how the early education offer fits in with wider subsidised day care provision
3. The sub-committee's report was considered by overview & scrutiny committee at its meeting on 8 March 2010.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Comments from the Strategic Director of Children's Services

4. We welcome the scrutiny review on early years which has helpfully identified the pinch points and difficult issues from a family's perspective.
5. The response to scrutiny's recommendations is set out below:

Recommendations	Officer response
1. Provision of the Free Early Education offer (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	There is some concern that a six hour day which is focused on learning is too long for children who have just reached four. As part of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment we will be getting further information on preferred patterns of

<p>space for providing lunch etc; permission from the Council to vary hours and assistance with changes to staffing.</p>	<p>provision from parents. Most PVI providers can already offer 5 or 6 hour days. The FEEE regulations state that provision must be educationally based.</p> <p>The maintained sector has had the opportunity to bid for funding to make modifications to enable them to offer a more flexible approach to entitlement and many have availed themselves of this opportunity.</p> <p>The council now provides support to schools on planning staffing in the early years but the costs of additional staff has to be borne by the school.</p>
<p>2. 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.</p>	<p>We agree that this is important and this option is available to the maintained sector, and is a requirement of them as part of the extended services offer.</p>
<p>3. Investment in the child-minder option to deliver FEE will expand provision, offer flexibility and be welcomed by parents</p>	<p>We agree and have committed further investment in childminders to encourage those seeking appropriate qualifications so that they are able to offer the FEEE.</p>
<p>4. Ensure settings can maintain spare capacity to respond to families in crisis and looked after children.</p>	<p>We agree that a number of places need to be available on an emergency basis. We are planning to do this through spot purchase across the sector, recognising that to be viable settings they will need to fill their places and the council has limited money to keep places empty.</p>
<p>5. Backdate support funding for children with special needs to the start of their time in nursery for children who later receive a more extensive statement.</p>	<p>Children will have their needs met from the day they join a nursery. The fact that a formal statementing process sometimes lags behind their admission is inevitable. Establishing a principle of backdating funding would potentially set a precedent for all cases where a child progresses to a statement which would be very expensive, and would not necessarily improve the opportunities for the individual child.</p> <p>Nonetheless, we have been looking at establishing a more co-ordinated approach to resourcing of children with additional needs so that appropriate support packages are immediately available.</p>

<p>6. Prioritise daycare places for parents with a low disposable income who are working or studying.</p>	<p>For part-time provision, parents with low disposable incomes should not be disadvantaged as FEEE is (currently) an entitlement. Members could set this as a first criterion for the provision of full time places, alongside the requirement to provide for looked after children and vulnerable children.</p>
<p>7. Give urgent consideration to providing adequate transition funding for children moving from daycare to nursery school in relevant Southwark Children's Centres so that affected children who are not '3 enough' still receive adequate funding to sustain a place.</p>	<p>This issue stems from the proposal to introduce a single funding formula (SFF) in April 2011. It is acknowledged nationally that the single funding formula creates problems for nursery schools and the current policy is that its introduction should not adversely impact on such schools. In developing proposals for the SFF we will need to consider how to address the issue of children entering who have yet to reach 3 years of age. This could potentially be covered through the "2 year old offer" although the future of this policy is in doubt.</p>
<p>8. Allow parents to be able to send a child to nursery gradually even if they don't fully 'participate' until later in the term.</p>	<p>We will issue further guidance to ensure that parents and settings are aware of this possibility.</p>
<p>9. Consider if extra work needs to be done to gather the views of parents of disabled children to understand more about the needs of this group.</p>	<p>There is a specific strand in the current Childcare Sufficiency Assessment on gaining the views of parents with a disability and parents of children with a disability. This will be able to inform any future policy around provision for these groups.</p>
<p>10. Consider children's centres acting as hubs to promote good practice around meeting the needs of disabled children</p>	<p>The children's centres are designed to be hubs within local communities so that all the needs are met. However, some of the needs of disabled children are highly specialist and the Child Development Centre at Sunshine House remains the main hub of good practice in the borough.</p>
<p>11. Consider linking up outreach workers from children's centres to work with other local providers to reach out to disadvantaged parents to promote take up of early education (FEE).</p>	<p>This is a key function of the outreach workers and further efforts must be made to seek out and encourage families not accessing any provision to do so from any type of local provider.</p>
<p>12. Consider using the Day Care Trust Parent Champion Project toolkit; particularly to reach target groups</p>	<p>We welcome the suggestion and will incorporate the toolkit in our work. We will use this to develop what is already a</p>

such as families with a disabled child, teenage parents, BME groups etc to promote take up of early education (FEE).	strong group of parent mentors, many of whom are from the BME community.
13. Concentrate on giving more family support around admission and transitions particularly through more regular, sustained and sensitive communication including home visits where appropriate.	We agree that centres must place further emphasis on support around admissions and transition. Each centre has responsibility for this which can be reinforced with protocols and the specific assessment record intended to provide schools with an accurate picture of the child.

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Sub-committee /Overview & Scrutiny Committee - minutes and reports	Scrutiny Team Tooley Street London SE1 2TZ	Julie Timbrell, Scrutiny project manager Tel: 020 7525 0514

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	(Scrutiny report)

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Shelley Burke, Head of Overview & Scrutiny	
Report Author	Julie Timbrell, Scrutiny Project Manager	
Version	Final	
Dated	04 June 2010	
Key Decision?	No	
Consultation with other officers / directorates / Cabinet member		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Strategic director of communities, law & governance	No	No
Strategic director of children's service	Yes	Yes