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| Report to: | Health and Wellbeing Board | Date of Meeting: | Wednesday 8 December 2021 |
| Subject: | Early Years Foundation Stage | | |
| Report of: | Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education | Wards Affected: | (All Wards); |
| Portfolio: | Education | | |
| Is this a Key Decision: | N | Included in Forward Plan: | No |
| Exempt / Confidential Report: | N | | |

Summary:

To brief members on current activity taking place within the LA focused on increasing the proportion of children in Sefton who start school ready to learn.

Recommendation(s):

- (1) Members of the board are asked to note the content of the report.
- (2) Members of the board are asked to endorse the proposed next steps.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

This is a critical area of activity in achieving the outcomes of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Children and Young Peoples Plan for Sefton.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

Not applicable

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

No identified Revenue costs from the contents of this report

(B) Capital Costs

No identified Capitals costs from the contents of this report

Implications of the Proposals:

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| Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): |
| Legal Implications: |

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| Equality Implications: There are no equality implications. | |
| Climate Emergency Implications: The recommendations within this report will | |
| Have a positive impact | N |
| Have a neutral impact | Y |
| Have a negative impact | N |
| The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors | Y |
| The contents of this report reflect a neutral impact on climate change. | |

Contribution to the Council’s Core Purpose:

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| Protect the most vulnerable: The paper details activity to support all our children to achieve school readiness |
| Facilitate confident and resilient communities: The paper details activity to support all our children to achieve school readiness |
| Commission, broker and provide core services: Not applicable |
| Place – leadership and influencer: The paper details activity to support all our children to achieve school readiness |
| Drivers of change and reform: The paper details activity to support all our children to achieve school readiness |
| Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: The paper details activity to support all our children to achieve school readiness and contributors to sustainable economic prosperity in the future |
| Greater income for social investment: Not applicable |
| Cleaner Greener: Not applicable |

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.6627/21.) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.4828/21) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Not applicable

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the Board meeting.

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Appendices:

The following appendices are attached to this report:

Appendix One – Overview of Sefton Early Years in Sefton

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction

1.1 From the start of the current academic year Schools and other early years providers are required to implement a revised version of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Guidance. This provides a refreshed focus on the skills children need in order to be; ready for school at the age of 5; capable of making expected or better progress throughout their school career and therefore well placed to be a resilient and self-reliant Sefton resident.

Within the revised framework, it states that a child's Early Years (pre-conception to age 5) is the optimum time to bring learning and progress back on track. This is confirmed by evidence-based research conducted by the Education Endowment Foundation which states that if a child leaves the Early Years Foundation Stage with their learning and development below the age-related expectation, they are unlikely to regain this lost ground at all during the remainder of their school career.

The focus on school-readiness at the age of 5 is necessarily part of the delivery model and outcomes framework of the LA and partner agencies as we aspire to the following:

- all parents having access to the support they need
- high quality early years services across education, health, Early Help and private and voluntary service providers
- excellent places to play, develop and learn
- strong leadership and systems

The information below details;

- I. The systems and collaboration in place in Sefton to facilitate these improved outcomes
- II. Considerations for future development in order to maximise the impact of this window of opportunity in the life of every Sefton resident and potentially decrease demand on public services.

2. Body of report

The Sefton Early Years Landscape

- I. 0-5 Education provision in Sefton is delivered by; maintained Nursery Schools, schools with Nursery Classes, PVI providers (day nurseries and voluntary pre-schools) and in some cases child-minders.
- II. All Local Authorities have a statutory duty to secure sufficient childcare of an appropriate quality (ie judged good or outstanding by OFSTED).
- III. To support the maintenance of quality, challenge and support is currently provided to schools through the School Improvement Service (Education Excellence) and to PVI settings and Childminders through a team of 3 'Quality Improvement Officers' (Early Help). Plans are underway to deliver this support and challenge via a single Early Years Team within the Education Excellence Function.
- IV. LA Officers in both teams maintain an overview of the quality of provision in each school / setting, through scrutiny of intelligence, including OFSTED Reports and targeted support and challenge visits delivered by LA officers, professional partners and the QIOs. This is complemented by a repertoire of professional development opportunities.
- V. Longstanding partnership with Children's Health Services has facilitated a strategic approach to quality improvement activity focused on thematic areas for development such as Communication and language. This activity is currently funded by underspend from the Early Years Block of the DSG which makes long term delivery uncertain. Discussions between senior council and health officers about a place-based approach to the resourcing of projects such as this would be of assistance in securing long term delivery.
- VI. Recently Early Years Leads from across the LCR commissioned the LGA to undertake a Peer Review of Early Years Services across the region. The outcomes of this review not surprisingly identify the need for a co-ordinated strategy to improve outcomes in children's communication and language. Work to develop this is currently underway. In addition, the Merseyside Violence Reduction Unit has been successful in recurring resources from the NSPCC in the form of the LCR 'Look Say Sing Play' initiative. This has been designed to support parents to develop better attachments and to become more 'in tune' with the needs of their babies and young children. Each Local Authority within the LCR will be provided with £50,000 of resources to disseminate the project across the local area. The dissemination of resources will be accompanied by a media campaign to raise the profile of this approach.

Outcomes for Children

- I. Currently the proportion of children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) varies considerably between Sefton localities. Achievement of the GLD in Sefton is inverse proportion to deprivation.
- II. Cabinet members may have read or seen in recent news items detailing further delays in children's development occurring as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. These reports relate specifically to children's communication skills, which; schools, early years providers and health professionals were already concerned about prior to the pandemic.
- III. Clearly these delays in children's development and attainment not only risk impairing their capacity to become resilient and self-reliant citizens, they also risk creating a significant cost to public services.
- IV. Early Years Services in Sefton are therefore focused on intervening at the earliest opportunity to address; environmental, social or developmental issues that may create barriers to a child achieving the expected outcomes at the age of 5.
- V. The supporting document that accompanies this report details the range of providers (public, private and voluntary services) directly involved in service delivery focused on support, assessment and, where appropriate, intervention to ensure that babies and young children meet expected milestones at key points in their development from pre birth to age 5.

- VI. Members will be aware that the work of these providers is complimented by a broader range of services, including the police, housing and benefits departments and other voluntary services e.g. SWACA.
- VII. The range of services involved in supporting all Sefton residents is substantial, and co-ordination and a shared purpose is necessary to ensure that residents can access support in a timely and appropriate manner and without duplication.
- VIII. Given that Early Years (pre-birth to age 5) is the optimum time to set Sefton residents on the path to achieving expected outcomes and becoming self-reliant citizens, co-ordination of Early Years services is essential.
- IX. To address the disparate nature of Early Years Services an 'Early Years Development Group' was established in September 2019. The group is comprised of representatives from;
 - LA Services; Education, SEND, Early Help and Finance
 - Health Services; Health Visiting and Children's Therapy Services
 - Schools; Primary and Nursery School Headteachers
 - Private and Voluntary Early Years Providers
 - Other providers that complement the work of those detailed above are invited as necessary in order to progress or inform a particular action.

The group was created from the Early Years Sub-group of Schools forum and agreed terms of reference for the group include;

- the development of; a shared Early Years Strategy and implementation plan for Sefton
- proposing to Schools Forum the allocation of the permitted percentage of the Early Years Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant in order to fund the activity detailed in the implementation plan.
- The expectation that all members of the group will contribute to the delivery of the implementation plan and provide the group with reports detailing progress towards the collectively agreed objectives.
- Accountability for all members of the group to feedback to and influence the direction on travel of their respective organisations in relation to Early Years' service delivery.

Reports detailing the work of the Early Years Development Group are shared at; School's Forum and the Early Help Partnership Board.

Achievements of the group and the Early Years Services represented are:

- Establishment and implementation of a COVID Recovery Plan for Early Years providers.
- The proactive involvement of all services represented in the co-ordination and delivery of Early Years services with a view to improving the number of children who meet expected milestones from pre-birth to age 5.
- Identification and allocation of funding to support providers that remained open during the first lockdown (in advance of the government and LA grants open to Private providers)
- Delivery of and Early Years Education Improvement Training programme in partnership between the LA, Sefton Teaching Schools and a Maintained Nursery School.
- Delivery of training and briefing events to ensure that teaching staff and leaders, including headteachers in schools and other early years settings are best place to implement the new Early Years Framework.
- Delivery of an accredited award for early years Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators

- Collaboration across the Liverpool City Region to deliver a shared approach to support for children's communication and language through the implementation of the 'Sefton Language Pathway'. This had previously run for a number of years in Sefton as a partnership between the LA and the Speech and Language Therapy Service. Capacity to deliver this had reduced as a result of re-organisation within LA services. Temporary funding has been secured from the Early Years Block to continue this approach during 2020-21 and again during 2021-22, however there is a risk that this funding may not be available in future years.

3. Next Steps

At a strategic level:

- I. Continue and strengthen the work of the Early Years Development Group
- II. Review reporting and communication structures to ensure that the co-ordination of Early Years Work is reported at the highest level within the LA and partner organisations e.g. the Children and Young peoples partnership Board, The Early Years Provider Alliance and the Clinical Commissioning Group.
- III. Establish a 'Sefton Early Years Service' within the Educational Excellence Function and collaborate with partners to; develop an Early Years Strategy for Sefton and co-ordinate service delivery in line with partners' aims and objectives.

At an operational level

- IV. Review progress towards objectives set out in the Early Years Development Group implementation plan for 2021-22.
- V. Undertake a review of the process of carrying out the integrated review for 2 year old children. This is a review of children's health and educational development that is a requirement of the both the Health Visiting 'Healthy Child Programme' and the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- VI. Create closer collaboration between Early Help and Social Care to identify children not benefiting from access to the free educational entitlement at age 2,3 and 4.
- VII. Implement the agreed revised processes to support the inclusion of children in schools and early years settings with Special Educational needs and Disability (this has been undertaken as part of the review of the Las SEND services)

4. Resource Implications

Sustain the cost of delivering the Liverpool City Region Communication Pathway
Review the co-ordination of Early Years Strategy and Services