

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 14 July 2009
Report of: John Weeks, Strategic Director People
Subject/Title: Free early years education and childcare pilot for two year olds

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks approval from the Cabinet to proceed with arrangements for the provision of free early years education and childcare to the most disadvantaged two year olds in Cheshire East from 1 September 2009.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet approve the arrangements for the provision of free early years education and childcare to the most disadvantaged two year olds in Cheshire East from 1 September 2009.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet approve the arrangements for the provision of free early years education and childcare to the most disadvantaged two year olds in Cheshire East from 1 September 2009 as this will work towards meeting the Authority's Early Years Outcomes Duty to reduce inequalities between disadvantaged children and their peers.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 Delivery across all wards but it is expected that the majority of children will be identified from within the most disadvantaged areas

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 All

6.0 Policy Implications including - Climate change - Health

- 6.1 None

7.0 Financial Implications for Transition Costs (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

- 7.1 None

8.0 Financial Implications 2009/10 and beyond (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

- 8.1 The project costs will be contained within the ring fenced funding available in the Sure Start, Early Years and Childcare Grant of £162,052 in 2009/10 and £209,539 in 2010/11. This includes the cost of the free entitlement, £45k each year for project management and coordination, and a combined total of £55k across the two years for outreach and family support costs.
- 8.2 Some childcare providers may need support to adapt their provision to be more suitable for two year olds. These costs will be met from the grants already approved to support the local authority's duty to secure a sufficiency of childcare.

9.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

- 9.1 Section 1 of the Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on the local authority to improve the five Every Child Matters outcomes of all young children (aged 0-5) in their area and reduce inequalities between them through integrated early childhood services
- 9.2 The authority will commission private, voluntary, independent and maintained sector childcare providers to deliver the free early years education and childcare to the most disadvantaged two year olds under the terms of contracts which will be approved by the Borough Solicitor.

10.0 Risk Management

- 10.1 There is a risk that this initiative may not reach the most disadvantaged two year olds in the authority. Plans are underway to put in place a robust outreach and family support strategy to ensure that these children and families are able to access the offer.
- 10.2 There is a risk raised by the maintained nurseries that because they do not admit two year olds, this offer may impact on their admissions at age three as children accessing these places may choose to stay with a private, voluntary or independent provider. This risk is being considered by officers and the impact on the take up of nursery provision will be monitored and reviewed.

11.0 Background and Options

- 11.1 Under Section 7 of the Childcare Act 2006 local authorities are currently required to make available 12.5 hours per week of high quality Early Years Foundation Stage to all 3 and 4 year olds free of charge for 38 weeks per year. By September 2010, this will be extended to 15 hours per week, to be delivered flexibly. Securing the free entitlement is one of the key levers that local authorities have, alongside the delivery of integrated services through Sure

Start Children's Centres, to meet their statutory duties to ensure there is sufficient childcare for local families, to improve child outcomes at age 5 and to narrow the achievement gap

- 11.2 Since 2006, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has been working with 32 local authorities to pilot an extended offer of free early education and childcare to the most disadvantaged two year olds and their families. Building on the success of these pilots, it was announced in the Children's Plan that the Government would invest further funding to extend the pilot to all Local Authorities in 2009-10. Cheshire East has been allocated funding to provide 73 places each year up to 2011. This number has been calculated using a combination of 2007 local population data, and the 2007 Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI). This gives the number of disadvantaged children in East Cheshire and funding is provided for 15% of this number.
- 11.3 The offer - The minimum requirements of the offer are to provide at least 10 hours of free, high quality, flexible childcare a week to 15% of the most disadvantaged children in the local authority. The minimum session length is two hours and parents must not be charged for any element of the two year old pilot. Providers will be expected to signpost families to wider support which may include skills, training, employment or more personal aspects such as benefits.
- 11.4 Identifying families - This funding will be targeted based on a data-driven approach to 'hard to reach' families i.e. those who would not usually access provision. These children and families will be identified predominantly through agency referral and by using a number of data sources including the Income of Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI). Appendix 1 gives a summary of the 25% most disadvantaged super output areas in Cheshire East. It is expected that a large majority of the two year old children will be identified from within these areas.
- 11.5 The two year old pilot needs to be focussed on economically deprived families who must be in receipt of one or more of the following:
- Income Support
 - Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
 - Child Tax Credit at a higher rate than the family element
 - Extra Working Tax Credit relating to a disability
 - Pension Credit.
- 11.6 In addition, the Local Authority can determine its own local criteria. Work is in progress with a multi-agency steering group to define the final criteria that will target 15% of the most disadvantaged two year olds in the area and to agree local working arrangements to ensure a joined up and integrated approach for families. The criteria will be in line with guidance from the DCSF and aimed at the following groups:

Child characteristics

Children with speech and language needs, including english as an additional language (EAL)

Children in care

Children subject to a Child Protection Plan

Children in temporary accommodation

Children involved with social services

Children with developmental or learning delay

Children with disabilities

Children experiencing emotional and behavioural problems

Family characteristics

Asylum seeking/refugee families

Black and Minority Ethnic families

Parental characteristics

Children from families with 3 or more children aged under 5

Teenage parents

Lone parents

Parents with health issues or disabilities

Family have experienced domestic violence

Family have experienced substance misuse issues

11.7 Outreach officers within children's centres have already identified many of these families and are working to engage them in wider intervention programmes. The two year old offer will build on the family support and health visiting models around children's centres to identify children and families who meet the criteria for this free entitlement

11.8 Early findings from the pathfinder areas suggest that, as this is a targeted initiative, demand for places will not outstrip supply. Moreover, as these children become three, they will automatically become entitled to their free early years education entitlement under Section 7.

11.9 Identifying childcare providers - There is strong drive towards quality education for these most vulnerable children and places will only be provided in the best quality settings. The childcare providers will be, in the main, those in the top 25% most disadvantaged Super Output Areas within the authority. These will be those determined by Ofsted as 'good' or 'outstanding'. In exceptional cases providers who are 'satisfactory' may be part of the offer where there is clear progress in working towards a 'good' grading. Officers will work with families to offer a brokerage service to ensure that the childcare provision meets their needs.

11.10 In considering proposals, the Cabinet can decide to:

11.10.1 reject the proposals

- 11.10.2 approve the proposals
- 11.10.3 approve the proposals with a modification or
- 11.10.4 approve the proposals subject to them meeting a specific condition

Officers will be asking Cabinet to approve the proposals

12.0 Overview of Year One and Term One Issues

- 12.1 The main issues in developing this initiative are to ensure that it is joined up with the wider early intervention strategies. The intention is to build on the existing framework of family support in and around children's centres and the work carried out by the health visiting service.

13.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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Cheshire East Super Output Areas (SOAs) - 25% Most Disadvantaged

SOA	SOA Name	IMD % 2007	2 Year Old Population
E01018484	St BarnabasL3	7.57	40
E01018466	West Coppenhall & GrosvenorL4	8.77	40
E01018459	West Coppenhall & GrosvenorL1	9.69	30
E01018445	AlexandraL1	11.18	30
E01018462	Central & ValleyL1	11.28	20
E01018476	East CoppenhallL2	12.29	30
E01018485	St BarnabasL4	12.97	20
E01018640	Macclesfield Town SouthL4	15.33	20
E01018594	Wilmslow Town Dean Row & HandforthL4	17.36	20
E01018467	West Coppenhall & GrosvenorL5	17.63	30
E01018498	Central & ValleyL5	17.71	30
E01018478	East CoppenhallL4	18.07	20
E01018596	Wilmslow Town Dean Row & HandforthL6	18.33	30
E01018400	Congleton EastL3	19.20	30
E01018645	Macclesfield Town WestonL2	20.07	20
E01018486	St JohnsL1	21.16	10
E01018611	Knutsford Town NorthL4	24.48	20

Note

In Cheshire East there are a total of 231 SOAs. Of which, 17 of these are in the 25% most disadvantaged areas in the country based on the 2007 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).