

Cambridge Education Annual Report 2015
Second Contract Year

Executive Summary

This year has seen positive progress across the portfolio of services that Cambridge Education provides for Slough children and their families. We are proud of many of the achievements made given that they are set against a rapidly changing environment with the arrival of Slough Children's Services Trust, a marked increase in demand for many services and confirmation that the existing contract will expire at the end of its initial term of three years (30th September 2016). This shows our team's commitment to continuous improvement and better value for money. We have sought to be a productive and supportive partner to Slough Borough Council and the wider community and this has borne dividends in many areas including:

- Better Children's Centre provision leading to better outcomes for the most vulnerable families with very young children
- More Slough children being educated in schools that are judged by Ofsted to be 'Good' or better
- Improved attainment and progress for more pupils at most stages of their learning
- Timely access to help and support for more vulnerable pupils in school
- A more cohesive, mutually supportive workforce which finds effective, efficient and economic solutions to the challenges for their services.

During the first months of the contract all service areas were reviewed and changes implemented. These changes have been driven by the need to achieve greater efficiencies, effectiveness and improved quality and have resulted in a more integrated and supportive team. As a result of business process re-engineering, all services are now underpinned by a single team, providing finance, administrative and data support.

The second year of the contract has further strengthened our relationship with the Local Authority and increased the credibility of the service with partners, particularly with schools. The service is now well placed to maximise impact and improve outcomes for children, young people and families during the third year.

There is still much to achieve in the remainder of the contract and the overarching priorities are:

- Ensuring safeguarding is robust across all services.
- Supporting the Local Authority in ensuring sufficient and appropriate high quality and effective early years and school provision, available in the right places at the right time. Securing sufficient primary places for in-year admissions are the main focus at present.
- Promoting children's development and raising children's achievements, particularly with attainment and progress. The focus is on Key Stage 2 achievement with reading and maths.

- Early identification of children with additional needs, meeting these needs and confirming positive outcomes, particularly with preparing for Ofsted scrutiny from May 2016 when the new inspection regime commences.
- Timely and appropriate engagement with vulnerable groups with the focus on closing the achievement gap for these groups with their peers. Particular emphasis has been placed on support and challenge with the following groups: White disadvantaged boys, Black Caribbean children, Children Looked After (CLA), children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), Gypsy, Roma, Travellers (GRT) and those children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM). This supports Priority 7 of the Children and Young People's Plan.
- Good quality and effective early years provision with high levels of engagement, and meeting statutory requirements.
- Children's centres working effectively with partners to provide early learning and child care opportunities to promote children's development and education with a focus on support for vulnerable groups and their families; alongside help and advice on children and family health, parenting, finances, training and employment.

These priorities contribute to the aims of the Borough Council as laid out in the Well-Being Strategy and the Five Year Plan.

Alongside these priorities, a significant challenge for the coming year will be retaining service quality and impact due to the impending ending of the current contract and any impact the re-organisation or disaggregation may have on services as a result.

School Improvement and Raising Standards

Annual Performance summary

The School Improvement Service (SIS) continues to operate on a consultancy basis, employing seven part time consultants, which equates to approximately three full-time equivalents (FTE). This is a format that has been agreed with schools as the most appropriate model as it provides the flexibility to challenge schools with knowledge of their context. Schools speak highly of this support and are clear that they wish to see this continue. It is critical that this challenge and support is impartial, objective and operates with integrity.

During the past year in the maintained sector the team has worked with all five nursery schools, 13 primary/junior and infants schools, and four secondary schools. The team has also worked with 9 primary and 6 secondary academies, nearly two thirds of all Slough schools, including all maintained schools. It is significant that 15 academies have voluntarily opted to be part of this scrutiny process, an increase of nearly 50 %.

In the maintained sector there are one primary school and one secondary school in the Ofsted category of 'Requires Improvement' (RI). There are nine maintained primaries rated as 'Good' and one as 'Outstanding'. Ofsted also rates the only maintained infant school as 'Outstanding'. In the secondary sector there are two rated as 'Good' and one as 'Outstanding'. This is an overall improvement since last year with 77% (up from 66% in 2014) (or 85% of maintained schools) of primary pupils now being taught in primaries rated as 'Good or better' by Ofsted. There is still a job to be done in raising the remaining two maintained schools to Good or better, alongside the five primary academies. Cambridge

Education continues to pursue its approach of monitoring and robustly challenging these schools, predominantly through the regular Strategy Action Group (SAG) meetings.

Department for Education (DfE) data for the summer 2015 results indicate that there has been a significant increase in standards at Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) so that 65% of children are making Good progress compared to 50% in 2013. In Key Stage 1 (KS1) we have also seen continued, sustained improvements in reading, writing and mathematics. Although there has been a slight drop in the overall figures for Key Stage 4 (KS4) 5A*-C, including English and mathematics, DfE figures indicate that Slough is ranked the 8th highest local authority (LA) in the country for its GCSE results.

At Key Stage 2 (KS2) the results have not been as encouraging with the year showing no improvement in the percentage of pupils gaining Level 4 and above in reading, writing and mathematics. This places Slough at 116th out of 152 local authorities (4th quartile). In 2014 Slough was placed at 88th (3rd quartile). This has become an area of particular focus and a number of actions have been initiated to address this issue, including establishing two borough-wide mathematics programmes, one for Year 6 and one for Key Stage 2. Additionally, White disadvantaged boys, Black Caribbean pupils, SEND, Children Looked After, Gypsy, Roma, Travellers (GRT) and those on Free School Meals are being targeted. Schools where there have been specific concerns are being worked with individually and in the case of those that are academies, an offer of help has been made.

Key Achievements

Progress has been made during the academic year (2014-15) with one 'RI' primary school moving to 'Good' and one primary maintaining its 'Good' status. Furthermore, our only maintained 'Special Measures' (SM) primary was inspected by Ofsted and declared to be 'Good'. Only two primary schools in the country have made such significant progress in 2014/15.

A number of academies have accepted our offer of support and this has helped one of the primary academies move from 'RI' to 'Good'. We are also working with one infant academy which is in 'SM', one with no Ofsted status (schools that become sponsored academies have no Ofsted status for the first 18 months, known as 'No Formal Designation - NFD) and one that is 'RI'. Out of the six Ofsted monitoring visits by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) all but one have stated that the schools are making progress.

As a result of the outcomes from previous Ofsted inspections of the Council's safeguarding and Children's Social Care services, Cambridge Education has supported the Council in its identification and monitoring of children looked after (CLA) in Slough schools. We have made substantial progress and schools are now held strongly to account. Plans now exist for their academic provision and schools have a designated member of staff responsible for the welfare of the CLA in their schools and their statutory duties towards these children and young people. The Lead Consultant for CLA is in regular contact with the schools and maintains a close monitoring brief to ensure they fulfil their responsibilities toward the children. However, there is still a substantial task to be addressed in raising the attainment and progress of CLA who are for the most part functioning at levels significantly lower than their peers.

In the secondary sector one of the priorities has been to ensure that pupils are provided with impartial and comprehensive advice with regard to careers which is a necessary statutory function. Through the support and challenge provided by Cambridge Education seven secondary schools have applied and are working towards a national certificate related to demonstrating this requirement and further work is planned with the remaining secondary schools during the current academic year.

We also have continued to work closely with colleagues within the Council to ensure education strategies and policies are in place and that these address the priorities in the schools in the Borough.

Key Priorities for 2015-16

The key priority for Slough primary schools is improving attainment and progress at KS2 given that performance is 2% below the national average. In partnership with Schools Forum, Slough Learning Partnership and the Slough Primary Headteachers' Association, additional arrangements are now in place for training to be delivered to improve pupil attainment and progress in key areas – particularly mathematics, reading and the vulnerable groups referred to above (White disadvantaged boys, Black Caribbean, Children Looked After, those on Free School Meals, Roma, Gypsy, Travellers and SEND). Alongside the training, various other approaches are being fostered related to schools focusing on their own responses to self-improvement, school-to-school support, drawing on the Slough Learning Partnership, the use of National Leaders in Education (NLEs), Specialist Leaders in Education (SLEs), System Leader local experts and other external specialists and programmes.

Teacher recruitment remains what is arguably the most significant problem across all schools and although this is not part of the scope of the contract with Cambridge Education, the impact of insufficient high quality and effective teachers is considerable. We have facilitated a programme now being run by schools themselves to help address the challenge. Headteachers across Slough have identified recruitment as currently their most significant issue and have raised this with the Council with support in considering some joint approaches, including exploring accommodation options, given the challenges in attracting staff in other areas, such as social workers.

Case Studies

St Ethelbert's Primary School is an excellent example of what can be achieved with effective intervention. As part of the Local Authority's (LA's) monitoring of schools, St Ethelbert's was identified as a school experiencing difficulties with regard to leadership. Consequently, the LA applied for, and appointed an Interim Executive Board (IEB). The IEB implemented changes in the leadership of the school; nevertheless, Ofsted inspected the school soon after the IEB began and it was placed in Special Measures. For the following 18 months the IEB and Cambridge Education worked in partnership with the school's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to raise educational standards and in early 2015 the school was inspected again by Ofsted and found to be 'Good', one of only two schools across the country to have gone from Special Measures (SM) to 'Good' in one inspection cycle.

St Joseph's Secondary School had a number of major issues – financial, no head teacher in post and an Ofsted inspection rating it as 'Requiring Improvement' (RI). With significant support from the LA, Cambridge Education and Schools Forum, the school managed to reduce its debts which allowed it to continue without significant cuts to the curriculum or teaching staff which could have impacted on learning. The LA 'brokered' the support of a local head teacher who ran the school for a period of time while the governors secured permanent leadership. Over the past 18 months Cambridge Education has been working with the governing body, the school's senior leadership team and HMI to secure the required improvements. A completely new leadership team was appointed, the governing body 'slimmed down', with a full review of its effectiveness leading to extensive re-training. The result of this intervention and challenge by the LA, CE and HMI has resulted in much improved educational standards in 2015 and the school is now rated 'Good' by Ofsted with accolades to the strength of leadership and management.

Integrated Support Service (ISS)

Annual performance summary

The Integrated Support Service (ISS) has delivered a high quality service to schools, children, young people and families across Slough. Individual teams within the service have worked collaboratively to support schools identified as 'Requiring Improvement' by Ofsted. ISS has worked in collaboration with colleagues from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) to support young people with mental health issues in Slough schools and settings.

ISS works closely with the School Improvement Service to promote jointly the raising of the attainment and progress of vulnerable children and young people. Through the engagement with school improvement, the team now has a much stronger understanding of the school systems within which they are working, leading to a stronger and more contextualised approach to their day to day work. This involves using a variety of strategies focused on individuals, groups and systemic approaches, drawing on psychological techniques which are applicable to use in the context of education. Greater emphasis is placed on evidenced based practice and implementing approaches which are monitored and evaluated to test out the benefits for the children and young people in improving their outcomes.

ISS has focused on providing more robust measures of effectiveness of intervention. Measures demonstrate positive changes for vulnerable children who have received support so far this academic year. As a result of ISS intervention, 80% of primary aged children, 55% of secondary aged children in maths, and 64% of secondary aged children in English made the expected level of progress or better in their learning, which is a positive outcome. This has contributed towards closing the gap in attainment between them and their peers. Impact measures have demonstrated a positive increase in staff confidence in how they support vulnerable children in 68% of work in primary schools, 76% of work in secondary schools and 100% of work in special schools.

ISS is a fully integrated service with personnel from the disciplines within it (psychology, SEND and autism), working together with schools using a project focused approach to support the raising of attainment of vulnerable children and young people.

There has been a 45% increase in the number of early years children being referred for an educational psychology assessment to support an education, health and care plan (EHC). Furthermore there has been a 30% increase in referral requests 2014-2015 compared with the academic year 2013 -2014. This increase relates to the increase in the early years population associated with births and inward migration. There has also been a recent increase in referrals from Health for engagement to assess needs. There is also some anecdotal evidence that some families have been attracted to Slough because of positive views about the availability and the quality of support for children with additional needs.

Alongside this, there has been a 50% increase in the number of SEND Tribunals at which the senior educational psychologists have acted as expert witnesses, though this has now decreased following the formation of the Slough Children's Services Trust.

Despite these additional pressures, all the assessment requests have been completed within statutory deadlines. This is as a direct result of the new flexibility and responsiveness built into the team structure. However, this has been at a stretch due to the dearth of educational psychologists nationally which can be drawn on to maintain a full complement of high quality psychologists. On a positive note, the success and credibility of the service has improved over the last 18 months leading to a team which is in a more positive position to attract applicants for substantive posts, interims and agency assignments.

Key achievements

Educational Psychology Service

- 131 requests for Education, Health and Care Plan assessments (formerly statutory assessments) were received over a 12 month period.
- 100% of assessment requests were completed within the statutory deadlines.
- 100% of EHCP Conversion assessments and plans were completed within the six week statutory timescale.

The service level agreement between schools and the educational psychologists ended in August 2015. A new three year service level agreement has been negotiated with 98% of those schools who had previously bought in. This provides a financial stability for the service, clearly dependent on the strength and impact of service delivery.

ISS works closely with the School Improvement Service to promote jointly the raising of the attainment and progress of vulnerable children and young people. Through the engagement with school improvement, the team now has a much stronger understanding of the school systems within which they are working, leading to a stronger and more contextualized approach to their day to day work. This involves using a variety of strategies focused on individuals, groups and systemic approaches, drawing on psychological techniques which are applicable to use in the context of education. Greater emphasis is placed on evidenced based practice and implementing approaches which are monitored and evaluated to test out the benefits for the children and young people in improving their outcomes.

Autism, Social Communication and Interaction Team

- 69 early years pre-school children received a medical diagnosis of autism from the Multi-Agency Assessment Group at Fir Tree House to which ISS contribute.
- 100% of the families with a child diagnosed as having autism have been offered support through the EarlyBird programme. However, there are still challenges to be addressed in achieving a higher level of engagement. An average of 50% of families offered support take up the offer. Two team members are analysing the issues around take up and looking at why some parents do not engage with the support offered through the EarlyBird programme. Alongside this, one trainee educational psychologist is analysing the impact of the EarlyBird Plus programme on schools as a doctoral thesis.
- 4 EarlyBird programmes have been delivered. Each programme lasts for 10 weeks and is offered to a minimum of 32 families. Parental feedback is externally collated and analysed by the National Autistic Society and this shows that the majority of families accessing the programme reported significant gains in understanding and managing their child's autism as a result of attendance.

Teacher Advisor, SEND

- Support has been provided to groups of pupils in a number of primary schools through the delivery of writing projects and Year 2 literacy projects, including dyslexia. 97% of all interventions made by the Advisor have been recorded as showing pupil progress measured against the schools' own attainment data.
- Training has been provided to 18 schools, SENCo's and teaching assistants with positive feedback about its value and resulting in positive outcomes for children.

Key priorities for 2015-2016

Educational Psychology Service

- Recruitment and retention: The national shortage of qualified educational psychologists has impacted significantly upon the Service. With maternity leave and normal staff turnover the challenge is to retain a full complement of staff so that both the statutory duties and contractual obligations can be met. The growing positive reputation of the service is proving helpful in maintaining and attracting psychologists, together with very active and time consuming focus on trawling for applicants while keeping an eye on ensuring quality in delivery. Engagement of trainees and input into educational psychology courses is being pursued as routes to increase the positive profile of the Slough service and attract applicants.
- Assessments: The number of requests for EHCP assessments has been rising at a relatively unpredictable rate. Strong working relationships with Slough Children's Services Trust will be vital to manage this increasing risk. There has also been an increase in requests for educational psychologists to carry out assessments for Children Looked After placed outside of Slough.
- Early Years: The team is focused on addressing the increasing number of early years children with additional needs who require timely assessment to determine their needs. The complexity of their difficulties and being so young makes the nature of this assessment a significant challenge which requires considerable skills and expertise. These assessment competencies are a priority for mastering to ensure robust and secure judgements.

Autism, Social Communication and Interaction Service

- Diagnosis: There is an increase in the number of children receiving a late diagnosis of ASD. The ASD Service has devised a programme aimed at the older age group. This was piloted in schools during the Autumn Term 2015 and is now being rolled out more widely.
- Caseloads: The increasing number of early years' referrals is necessitating a focus of resources on addressing this upturn in demand to ensure that children are having their needs identified and met in a timely manner.
- Development of Autism Champions: A new initiative has been introduced which sees the development of an Autism Champion within schools. This is a joint initiative between the ASD team and the educational psychologists. The intention is to have an Autism Champion in each school by 2017. The ISS team is working with Haybrook College to pilot a programme focused on Autism Friendly Schools. Alongside this there is already considerable interest in schools seeking to train key staff to be Autism Champions.

School Services and Access to Education

Annual Performance Summary

The services provided are clearly defined and include areas such as co-ordinating school admissions, pupil attendance, home-to-school transport, monitoring home education provision, children missing education (CME), licensing and catering.

There have been some notable successes during the second year of the contract including:

- Lower overall absence in secondary schools
- Only 3 permanent exclusions across 28,716 school children
- Fixed term exclusions which are lower than national figures, and are reducing at a time when national figures are increasing.

There has been significant growing pressure on the school admissions service with a rapidly changing profile of applications occurring throughout the year. This appears to be primarily as a result of increasing net migration into the Borough which was not predicted. Renewed efforts are underway to enable both the systems and schools to cope better with this new pressure.

Key Achievements

With school admissions, primary reception places for September 2015 were offered on the 16th April 2015. All applicants who applied on time were offered a place and 97% at one of their preferred schools. This is the same as the closest statistical neighbours, Hounslow and Redbridge, and the national average of 97%, but not as high as Luton at 98% and Hillingdon at 100%. With secondary admissions all parents who applied on time for Year 7 places in September 2015 were also offered a place, and 96% at one of their preferred schools. This compares closely with national and close statistical neighbour averages (Hounslow 94%; Redbridge 95%; England and Luton at 96% and Hillingdon at 99%). These are good results, but subject to parental preference trends which can change each year. The picture is additionally complex in Slough with the high number of grammar schools where a substantial number of pupils come in from other authorities and

significant numbers of Slough children apply but are unsuccessful in securing selective school places.

There has been significant growing pressure on the challenge of securing and funding home to school transport and creative solutions have been sought. A good example of our approach is that two schools are now commissioned to provide home to school transport for eligible pupils. Littledown provided the service from September 2014 and Haybrook from September 2015. Pupils benefit because they are transported by school staff and the costs are lower than using private contractors. Schools benefit because they have access to additional vehicles during the school day for other activities. We are exploring how best to grow this approach through proposals with other schools as well as identifying other mitigation where feasible.

New home education monitoring procedures started in summer 2015. Littledown School is now responsible for arranging visits to families who have decided to home educate and for writing visit reports. These are reviewed by Cambridge Education so that follow up action can be taken if required. It is expected that this will deliver a more consistent, timely service than has previously been in place. Ofsted recently reported favourably on this provision: *'Appropriate steps are taken to build positive relationships with educators, although some families choose not to accept this support.'*

Key Priorities for 2015-16

Priorities identified for the coming year include:

- In 2013-14 there were 384 children pursued through the children missing education (CME) protocol. This figure was 413 children in 2014-15. This year the number is already at 391 with five months to go and a very strong likelihood of exceeding the figures for previous years. The reasons are related to a growing population where there is substantial mobility in, out and around the Borough, including families going abroad, moving to other parts of the country, pupils not attending and pupils believed to have moved to Slough from another local authority, as well as an increased awareness of the safeguarding issues. This is being dealt with by dedicated team members. This work was commended by the recent Ofsted inspection of safeguarding: *'Notifications to the children missing education coordinator are prompt and appropriate, as are the subsequent actions. The whereabouts of these children are comprehensively recorded and communication with other local authorities is efficient. In the few cases where children are taken abroad, this is investigated in depth.'*
- A full review of the admissions service is underway as this is an area of increased pressure and complexity. Initial work has led to a new primary in-year admissions process which is being implemented, followed by refinements to the secondary in-year admissions arrangements, including modifications to the Fair Access protocols.
- Working closely with the LA to help inform the level and nature of school places required across the primary and secondary sectors, including the range and quantity of provision for special educational needs.
- Maintaining strong performance on high levels of secondary attendance and low levels of permanent and fixed term exclusions, with short duration of the latter.
- Improving primary overall attendance which is currently 97th out of 152 local authorities, while persistent absence is more positive at the 41st ranking. This will be addressed

through supportive and punitive action where necessary to bring about timely and secure improvements.

- Four year old attendance is at the 151st ranking out of 152 authorities. This overall absence is mainly associated with illness and unauthorised absence. The steps taken to improve this include: highlighting the importance of attendance; establishing good patterns early to set positive patterns for the future; the withdrawal of places related to longer periods of absence with parents warned about this; rewards for good attendance: stickers, certificates and referred to on the school/nursery website and first day calls in response to absence.
- Commissioning more schools to provide school transport.
- Providing all the services above as the school population grows and demands on the service increase.

Case Study

Pupil A, a Year 7 Slough resident, was permanently excluded from a school outside of Slough in May 2015. The School Access Officer (SAO) was notified as Slough has the responsibility to provide education in these circumstances. Pupil A was referred to Haybrook College by the SAO and provided with an interim place. These are provided when pupils are excluded. The SAO attended the governors' hearing that was arranged to consider the permanent exclusion. This was to provide support for Pupil A's mother, who would have preferred that Pupil A remained at her current school. The governors upheld the school's decision to exclude, so it was not possible for Pupil A to remain at her existing school.

The SAO then met with Pupil A's mother to discuss the options for the future and it was agreed that she would apply for a place at a school outside of Slough. The SAO assisted throughout the process. This support included advice on the application process and steering the parent through the application form. The SAO then worked closely with the local authority in which the school is based to ensure the application was considered at their Fair Access Panel. The application was considered in July and Pupil A was offered a place at her preferred school and started in September 2015. This released a place at Haybrook College for another student. This was deemed a successful outcome for the pupil as she was successfully returned to mainstream education within a relatively short period of time.

Children's Centres

Annual Performance Summary

It has been a good year for Children's Centres which saw a re-inspection by Ofsted in March 2015 which resulted in a removal of the 'Inadequate' grading. This demonstrated the significant steps taken by Cambridge Education (CE) to address the weaknesses in the service that had been identified by both CE and Ofsted in the first year of the contract. Ofsted recognised a substantial shift in the quality of provision, most notably commenting on:

- *"A capable leadership team which have brought about major improvements*
- *A significant increase in the number of families registered with the Centres*
- *Effective information sharing with Children's Social Care Services*

- *Good outcomes evident within family files*
 - *Strengthening partnerships which results in better co-ordinated work with priority families*
 - *Early years provision linked to the Centres is at least 'Good' with effective sharing of expertise in order to share good practices across the Borough*
 - *The Centres are warm and inclusive hubs of their communities; families feel safe and welcome"*
- (Ofsted report, 2015 p1)

The above, coupled with a demonstrable improvement in both families' and children's outcomes provides evidence of a distinct move towards a 'Good' outcome at the next inspection. In order to secure this, a detailed and comprehensive Improvement Plan was constructed immediately following the March 2015 inspection – bringing forward both the strengths and rigour afforded from the work undertaken between the previous and most recent inspections, alongside the revised actions recognised as a result of the re-inspection. The 'areas for development' cited by Ofsted mirrored those identified by Cambridge Education and we had already started working to address.

Key Achievements

Registration data provides a limiting factor to inspection grading. At the start of the contract this was at 34%. At the time of inspection, a year later, this had been increased to 72%. Currently, it is at 82% with a figure of over 80% required to achieve a 'good' rating.

Quantitative successes of the preceding year are exemplified by the Centres' engagement with

- 75% of children who are on a low income.
This is important because research shows that poverty is one of the most significant disadvantages that children can face in their longer term outcomes, educationally, socially and emotionally.
- 91% of white British boys.
This is important because research shows that, typically and nationally, white British boys are at significantly lower levels than most other ethnic groups with their educational achievement.
- 75% of children under 5 who have an Early Help assessment.
This is important because research shows that where services can work in an 'early intervention' way the results on the child's immediate and longer term outcomes are considerably improved; it is also more cost effective because it reduces the likeness of the need for statutory safeguarding services to be engaged.
- 84% of children who are the subject of a Child in Need or Child Protection plan.
This is important because it shows that the Centres are supporting the well-being of the most vulnerable children. In doing so, a graduated 'step down' from statutory safeguarding services to targeted non-statutory services is afforded. This supported approach down through tiers of service delivery has been shown to reduce significantly the likeliness of the children being re-referred to statutory services in the following 12-month period.
- 93% of children who experience the effects of domestic abuse in their home.

This is important because the effects of such experiences in early life have been shown to have a significant and profound effect on psychological, social and cognitive development of children.

Qualitatively, 'Partnership Working' protocols have been formalised between the Centres and their key delivery partners. This provides a more secure framework from which inter-agency working is conducted within the Centres. Furthermore, an alignment and strengthening of the process used for tracking the progress of adult learners has been established and has been amalgamated with that used within Adult and Community Learning provision. Within adult learning, a Community Parents scheme is being rolled out with success and with considerable numbers. This will see volunteer parents trained to a City and Guilds Level 2 award in Working with Parents, who then provide low-level family support to other parents locally. This increases the capacity of family service provision and also provides learning and employment opportunities to the volunteers, which helps to mitigate the effects of poverty on children's lives.

Key Priorities for 2015-16

Whilst there is a secure and robust platform from which future practice will continue to develop, the key priorities have been identified as:

- Increase the percentage of children under 1 engaging with the Centres, so that services can be offered at the earliest stage, increasing the focus on prevention, particularly for more vulnerable children.
- Increase the percentage of teenage parents which the Centres engage with given that teenage parents can be isolated and often don't fully access the wide range of support services associated with health, education, training and employment, recognizing that support will increase their life chances.
- Increase the percentage of children that the Centres engages with who live in workless households, helping to break the cycle of poverty and deprivation that will have the greatest impact on longer term outcomes for these families.

Case Study

"I arrived in Slough with my 3 young children 2 years ago. We didn't know anyone in the area and we had just been placed into an empty house where the locks and doors were broken. I had to leave my previous home due to an abusive relationship so I had no confidence and didn't trust anyone. I didn't speak much English and my son had recently been diagnosed with autism, so life felt really difficult.

"Since contacting the Children's Centre I've not looked back. I attend a programme which helped me to interact with my autistic son and I met other parents of children with special needs. I received help applying for grants to buy stair gates and furniture for my home. I began to feel I wasn't alone anymore. I undertook an English course and the Freedom Programme at the Children's Centre to help me understand my previous situation and to develop skills and confidence to move forward.

"My children have attended the Children's Centre. At first they didn't want me to leave them. Now, they wave me off to go and play.

“I am a Parent Representative for the Children’s Centre which has involved attending meetings. At my first meeting, I sat with people who all seemed well educated but they made me feel equal and an important part of the meeting. This made me feel so confident. I am proud of myself when I think of how far I have come and how I am contributing to services for families.

“Before I came to Slough, I wasn’t allowed to go anywhere and I didn’t know what support there is for people. Now I feel free. When I walk into the Children’s Centre I feel happy and safe. It is like a second home and it makes me smile when everyone greets us. As for the future, I would love to work in a place like this, with parents and children.”

Early Years

Annual Performance Summary

The work with schools and settings implementing the Early Years Foundation Stage has continued to focus on driving quality improvement across the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) and maintained sectors, whilst sharpening the focus on specific areas and outcomes for children, in order to target impact further. This has led to significant improvements in outcomes for children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and a marked narrowing of the attainment gap that exceeds the national level. As a result of a sustained continuing professional development (CPD) focus on mathematics and boys’ learning, the results climbed close to the 1st quartile nationally in July 2015 for outcomes in this area and reached the 1st quartile for Physical Development and Expressive Arts and Design. These results mark a significant improvement over any previous results for Slough.

Expansion of the early years and childcare market has been rapid and sustained, with a large number of two year olds accessing a place in the summer 2015. Over time these numbers have risen from 30 to 40% of the target group to figure in the 60s. The most recent highest figure was 69% in December 2015, dropping back to around 44% and now back up to around 65%. Clearly, there are significant fluctuations around cohorts becoming three years old and new two year olds needing to be engaged. There has been a concerted drive to maximise take-up of places, by refining internal processes and systems, tightening market management and capitalising on successful marketing strategies. This has resulted in the highest recorded take-up to date. Market development for two year olds has, inevitably, had an impact on the market for the three and four year old entitlement, as has continued population growth. Consequently, the largest recorded proportion of three and four year olds to date were accessing their free entitlement in a private, voluntary or independent setting.

The quality of provision and the knowledge and skills of the early years workforce have remained a high priority across sectors, with targeted and intensive support plans in place for those providers deemed by Ofsted to require improvement. Ofsted outcomes have continued to improve as a result, with 81% of PVI providers and 85% of childminders currently judged to be good or outstanding. Clearly, there continues to be the challenge of achieving settings which are all good or better. Alongside this, given the growing number of new providers continued emphasis needs to be focused on provision which is safe and secure as well as of high quality and effective.

As outlined in the ISS area of the report, there has been a significant increase in the number and complexity of children referred for input to the Early Years Service from paediatric services in 2014 to 2015. Amendments have been made to the provision of specialist play groups, increasing to a weekly group in each of the Children's Centres' locality areas, to ensure parity of access to services, as well as maintaining a specialist home teaching service for the youngest and most vulnerable children.

Annual Performance Summary

Indicator	2014	2015
Number of PVI settings (Children's Centres, day nurseries, pre-schools, independent schools and childminders)	200	195
Number of new providers registered	28	36
Number of family visits made	1343	1412
Number of Ofsted inspections conducted	59	44
Target number of 2 year olds required to access the free entitlement	1037	931
Take-up of 2 year old places	461	606
% of children achieving a Good Level of Development at the end of the EYFS	58.1	64.9
% attainment gap between all children and lowest achieving 20%	37.1	29.9
% of 0-4 year olds identified as at risk of delay in their speech and language development	23	20

Clearly, the table highlights the large number of settings across the community giving a significant task in monitoring the learning and care for quality and effectiveness. The number of providers is increasing with more interested in starting or expanding; however there is a major challenge in finding any accommodation. Ofsted is active across the community inspecting provision. Take up of 2 year old provision has to be increased. The current strategy is achieving good results with some distance still to be covered to meet the nationally determined target. Further work is required in preparing children for school and closing the gap for vulnerable groups, especially focusing on language development to access learning.

Key priorities for 2015-16

- Maintaining momentum and building on the successes of 2014-15, particularly in relation to EYFSP and gap data, two year old place take-up and Ofsted outcomes.
- Retaining focus on continuous quality improvement to support sufficiency duties and improved outcomes for children.
- Introduction of the duty on LAs to secure 30 hours per week free early learning/childcare for 38 weeks per year for working parents. This will be implemented from September 2017, with some pilots from September 2016.
- Finding innovative ways of securing further opportunities for expansion using capital sums for capital development to increase the number of early years places.

Case Study

In August 2014, a private day nursery was judged to be inadequate by Ofsted. The setting is an 80 full time equivalent (FTE) nursery, catering almost exclusively for parents wishing to access their free entitlement for 2, 3 and 4 year olds. In collaboration with the Local Authority (LA), a difficult decision was taken to remove funding and to introduce a Focused Improvement Partnership Plan (FIPP), stipulating at least weekly input from an Early Years Advisory Teacher, to address the key issues surrounding safeguarding, learning environment, routines and teaching and learning.

The setting was re-inspected in December 2014 and found to be 'Requiring Improvement', with some key areas of teaching and learning and behaviour management to be addressed. The Early Years Service issued a revised FIPP and input remained intensive, focusing on the quality of the learning environment, routines, adult:child interactions and the quality of teaching. Staff received training on safeguarding, safer recruitment and observation, assessment and planning in the EYFS. Funding for the free entitlement was re-instated. EYFS Advisory Teacher support was arranged on a weekly basis. The setting also received support from the Childcare Development Co-ordinator, in respect of compliance, the Head of Service and the Area SENCO.

In October 2015, the setting was inspected again and the quality of provision was judged to be good in all areas.