

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel
16th March 2021

CONTACT OFFICER: Michael Jarrett – Associate Director, Children and Families
(For all Enquiries) 01753 476556

WARD(S): All

PART I **FOR INFORMATION**

EARLY YEARS AND CHILDREN'S CENTRE SERVICES

1. **Purpose of Report**

To provide an update to the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel regarding Early Years and Children's Centre services.

2. **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

Areas covered throughout this report

- 2.1 Current position of children's centre services due to Covid and national legislation
- 2.2 Healthy Early year's accreditation
- 2.3 Current 2 year old attendance data and plans for renewed focus
- 2.4 Holiday activities and food programme 2021 (HAF) and The COVID Winter Grant Scheme
- 2.5 Early Years Adopters and EYFS reforms
- 2.6 Private and voluntary sector Covid specific updates and attendance.

3. **The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

The [Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy](#) (SJWS) is the document that details the priorities agreed for Slough with partner organisations. The SJWS has been developed using a comprehensive evidence base that includes the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). Both are clearly linked and must be used in conjunction when preparing your report. They have been combined in the Slough Wellbeing Board report template to enable you to provide supporting information highlighting the link between the SJWS and JSNA priorities.

3a. **Slough Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

The work of the Early Years service and the network of children's centres supports the following priorities of the strategy:

- 1. *Protecting vulnerable children*

2. *Increasing life expectancy by focusing on inequalities.*

3b. **Five Year Plan Outcomes**

- *Outcome 1: Slough children will grow up to be happy, healthy and successful.*

4. **Other Implications**

The Table below must be completed fully for each recommendation from Section 2:

Recommendation from section 2 above	Risks/Threats/ Opportunities	Current Controls	Using the Risk Management Matrix Score the risk	Future Controls
Service delivery from Children's Centres due to Covid	<p>Vulnerable children and parents not being seen</p> <p>Parents fearful of returning to large groups</p> <p>High numbers in groups</p> <p>Reviewing offer targets and universal services</p> <p>Increased Vulnerability</p>	<p>Midwifery targeted Yew Tree road CC from 29th April – 26th August 20. Health Visiting new birth visits from Wexham Road CC from 27th July – 4th November 2020. Virtual stay and play weekly.</p> <p>Early years offered. 23rd March – 1st June vulnerable/ Keyworker 1st June –all children. Food bank vouchers issued.</p>	<p>Economic/ financial-risk negligible probability-very low, H&S-risk-marginal, probability-low Legal/regulatory - risk negligible probability very low.</p>	<p>8th March HV clinic at YTR and WR targeted families. 12/4/21 – HV clinic to be offered one day a week am/pm from all 10 CC across</p> <p>Targeted and universal stay and play groups to return from 12th April 21 (capped at 15) across the 10 centres.</p> <p>Targeted breastfeeding support group Chalvey grove.</p>
Healthy Early years accreditation	<p>Increase in obesity in children, sedentary behaviour, and lack of access to professionals.</p> <p>1 in 5 children start school as overweight or obese.</p> <p>3rd of 5years olds and quarter 3year olds suffer with dental decay.</p>	<p>Healthy early years kite mark launched in January 21, focus on healthy inequalities and will support settings to establish best health improvement practice,</p>	<p>2 Economic/ financial- risk negligible probability-very low</p>	<p>10 Children's centres undertaking Kite Mark. 9 PVI settings 2 Childminders 3 Nursery Schools.</p>

Recommendation from section 2 above	Risks/Threats/ Opportunities	Current Controls	Using the Risk Management Matrix Score the risk	Future Controls
Current 2year old attendance data and plans for renewed focus	<p>Vulnerable children and parents are not seen.</p> <p>Parents fearful of returning or accessing early years provision.</p> <p>Opportunities to engage new families.</p>	<p>Early years providers are offering Covid secure arrangements</p> <p>Families identified on the DWP list are contacted regularly</p>	2 Economic / financial- risk negligible probability-very low	Marketing material will specifically target families with 2 year olds and will cover parental concerns regarding accessing early years provision due to Covid.
Holiday Activities and Food Programme & Winter Grant programme	<p>Children eligible for FSM are not engaged in activities during the holidays and do not have access to healthy, nutritional food.</p> <p>Opportunities to engage potentially vulnerable children during periods of time where they would otherwise not be seen which also supports them to have greater knowledge of health and nutrition</p>	Eligible families have had access to the Winter Grant voucher scheme during the holiday period.	2 Economic / financial- risk negligible probability-very low	<p>Providers delivering the HAF programme will be encouraged to offer places to FSM children and private paying.</p> <p>Marketing materials will be widely shared.</p> <p>The steering group encourages partnership working and the inclusion of schools to identify eligible families.</p>
Early years adopters and EYFS reforms	<p>7 EA schools in Slough. support</p> <p>Various termly EY fora provide networking, discussion & key messages about EY reforms.</p>	<p>S2S support facilitated networking & training with an external consultant.</p> <p>QCL team attended DfE training (Feb 21)</p> <p>Targeted information & training to be provided in the summer term 2021</p> <p>Senior EY advisory teacher</p>	2 Economic/ financial- risk negligible probability-very low.	Sharing of information and training across the EY sector and relevant partners.

		lead moderation & support.		
Recommendation from section 2 above	Risks/Threats/ Opportunities	Current Controls	Using the Risk Management Matrix Score the risk	Future Controls
Private and voluntary sector Covid specific updates	<p>Applying Covid-19 DfE guidance</p> <p>Home learning support for children not attending</p> <p>Furlough and some staff loss across the sector due to reduced numbers</p> <p>Self-employed grant scheme used by some childminders</p> <p>Sustainability of settings</p>	<p>Support from QCL team</p> <p>STEER materials available online for EY settings and families</p> <p>Maintained training offer to sector (online)</p> <p>Various grants accessed by settings</p>	2 Economic/ financial- risk negligible probability-low	Support from QCL team through visits, PIPs and FIPPs to ensure quality of provision and practice

(a) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Acts implications.

5. **Supporting Information**

5.1 **Services being offered from children's centres:**

- Early years and Childcare for vulnerable children and the children of key workers has been offered at Penn Road Children's Centre from 23rd March to 1st June as the Hub. The 9 other children's Centres opened alongside national guidance on 1st June until current date. Occupancy has remained around 70% during this period but expected to rise to 85% from 8th March.
- Midwifery clinic delivered targeted services to new and expectant mothers between April 20 – August 20
- Health visiting targeted service at Yew Tree Road and Wexham Road June 20 – current day.
- Virtual stay and play groups delivered weekly.
- Food bank vouchers issued week during the national lock down period ranging from 3-4 families per week.
- Universal services to be delivered from all children's centres from 12th April. Focusing on Health, wellbeing and economic support.

5.2 **Healthy Early Years accreditation Kite Mark**

- Accreditation launched in January endorsed by public health. Participation of settings in Slough enrolled currently: 10 Children's Centres, 9 PVI settings, 3 nursery schools and 2 childminders.

5.3 **Current 2 year old attendance data and plans for renewed focus**

- Slough has a statutory duty to secure a free entitlement place for every eligible child in the area. Slough Early Years Service manages this duty on the authority's behalf. (Childcare Act 2006 and 2016)
- The DWP list November 2020 showed 814 families potentially eligible for 2 year old funding (*table 2 year old funding 2020/21*)
- As a result of COVID, the numbers of 2 year old children who actually took up their funded early education place has reduced significantly
 - Summer 2020 funding claim 336, actual average attendance 31 this equates to 305 children accessing home learning.
 - Autumn 2020 funding claim 370, actual average attendance 237 this equates to 133 children accessing home learning.
 - Spring 2021 prelim funding claims 282, actual average attendance 179 this equates to 103 children accessing home learning and 503 children not accessing any form of early education.
- The local authority has a renewed focus on raising awareness of funded 2 year old provision and have developed a robust communications and marketing plan which will be rolled out during March and April 2021. We have reviewed our partnership arrangements with health colleagues, job centre plus and social care.

5.4 **Holiday and Activities Food Programme 2021 (DFE funded)**

- School holidays can be particular pressure points for some families because of increased costs (such as food and childcare) and reduced incomes. For some children that can lead to a holiday experience gap - with children from disadvantaged families less likely to access organised out-of-school activities; more likely to experience 'unhealthy holidays' in terms of nutrition and physical health; and more likely to experience social isolation.
- Free holiday clubs are a response to this issue and evidence suggests that they can have a positive impact on children and young people and that they work best when they provide consistent and easily accessible enrichment activities, for more than just breakfast or lunch, and when they involve children (and parents) in food preparation.
- In 2021, the DfE will be providing grant funding to local authorities to coordinate free holiday provision - including healthy food and enriching activities - for children who receive benefits-related free school meals (FSM). It will of course be optional for eligible children to attend this provision if they wish.
- In Slough there are approximately 5,000 children eligible for FSM
- The DfE also encourage local authorities to make the holiday clubs available to any children not eligible for free school meals, who can pay to attend.
- Slough Borough Council has begun working with a range of providers (private, voluntary, independent, charities) to offer places where children will:

- a) eat more healthily over the school holidays;
- b) be more active during the school holidays;
- c) take part in engaging and enriching activities which support the development of resilience, character and wellbeing along with their wider educational attainment;
- d) be safe and not to be socially isolated;
- e) have greater knowledge of health and nutrition; and
- f) be more engaged with school and other local services.

- **The COVID Winter Grant Scheme** was made available during December 2020 to support children and families most in need across England with the cost of food, energy (heating, cooking and lighting), water bills (including sewerage) and other essentials.
- The aim was to give vulnerable households peace of mind in the run up to Christmas and over the winter months (inc February half term) during the pandemic by helping those who need it to have food on the table and other essentials, so every child would be warm and well-fed during the winter.
- Every qualifying child was eligible for a £30 payment, and we worked with early years providers, social care and the Early Help Hub to ensure that all eligible children and their families received the award.
- Children qualifying for this grant were:
 - those in receipt of Early Years Pupil Premium
 - those in receipt of 2 year old funding.
- The COVID Winter Grant was also available and distributed to eligible families during February half term 2021 to the sum of £15 per child.

5.5 **Early Years Curriculum, early adopters and EYFS Reforms**

- Seven schools in Slough have been identified as Early Adopter Schools and have been using the revised framework. Local collaboration and support has been established by the network of schools – accessing training with an external consultant and the early years advisory teacher leading moderation in Slough.
- Some of the common issues have been the challenge with making assessments, particularly tracking as no national 'commercial' system in place to support this. The early adopter schools will be part of the LA training to the wider sector in summer term ready for September 21 roll out.
- Our advisory teachers attended a DfE LA event which informs Slough's training schedule to share information and good practice across the EY sector; including schools SLTs, Governors and practitioners; including child minders and PVI settings.

5.6 **Private and voluntary sector Covid specific updates**

- The early years advisory team have provided support to all early years providers; settings and childminders, through weekly contact calls (@4900 calls during pandemic) and emails to address individual support of their provision and practice, including managing risk assessment and adapting

their provision and practice inline with the Government guidance for CV19, and, advice and recommendations for supporting families and carers with home learning for the children not attending during lockdown.

- The early years advisory team have discussed with early years settings their risk assessments, procedures and policies to manage potential and positive COVID cases, and how cases are reported. They have ensured they have the correct information from the DfE and PHE and addressed issues raised from their Health and Safety Covid-19 compliance calls.
- The early years advisory team have delivered training and network support to the early years sector via online training; and included the issues relating to Covid-19 and their provision and practice.
- Information has been shared through weekly news bulletins and the use of social media across the early years sector and families across Slough.
- The early years advisory team worked with the Children's Centres and Maintained Nurseries to create a collection of resources made available online and through the Link – and included; Bursts for Learning, STEER materials, Social Stories, Outdoor Learning and assessment, good practice to the early years sector and families across Slough.
- <https://thelink.slough.gov.uk/news/covid-19-latest-updates-schools-early-years-and-fe-providers>
- <https://www.slough.gov.uk/early-years-childcare/support-together-early-education-resources-steer/1>
- The early years SEND service provided support and advice to the early years for children who have identified SEND needs and facilitated assessment, IEPs, individual behaviour plans and risk assessments. They enabled access to Early Years Inclusion funding to meet individual children's needs.
- Early years SEND and the Early Help Hub has continued to meet virtually during lockdown to allocate children to the specialist SEND advisory teacher support team for support from referrals made by the Child Development Centre.
 - between December 2020 and March 2021 total 33 children
- Since the first lockdown in March 2020 the support for families with children with identified SEND has moved to virtual; parents have been supported through weekly calls and advised of strategies for supporting their child at home, the specialist teachers and parents agreed and reviewed IEP targets regularly so that progress was monitored. The use of video calls has enabled the completion of baseline assessments for new children.
 - March to December 2020, 42 children received weekly support; 21 of which supported to transition to school/settings during the autumn term and 10 children supported through statutory assessments
 - January to February 2021, 26 children received support weekly
 - March 29, children remain on caseload for support.
- During the summer term 2020 transition support was put into place for children due to start in their settings in September 2020 mainly through virtual meetings, with parents and the identified settings and schools. Due to the

impact of COVID restrictions a number of children were delayed in joining their new settings and received continued support by the specialist SEND advisory teachers with planned gradual handover to the schools/settings once children were able to start.

- Parents have been signposted and supported to access information including the family fund, DLA, free school meal vouchers for older siblings, ensuring they have had access to and understood government information in regards to Covid-19.
- The specialist teachers have provided information and support to parents with children where it was deemed appropriate to make a request for statutory assessment and complete the 20 week process.
- Due to the complex medical needs of some of the children identified to the specialist advisory teachers, provision has been reviewed and deemed appropriate to provide virtual support through individual calls and video call groups alongside the face to face groups in the children's centres once these reopen following the COVID restrictions being lifted due to their ongoing vulnerabilities.
- The early years service has monitored attendance on a weekly basis; Actual participation rates during the autumn term 2020 significantly increased and from the start of February 2021 more children gradually returned to their provision. (*graph attendance June 2020 – February 2021*)
- From the period October 2020 and February 2021 there were two half term school holidays where a number of providers closed as they normally would at this time of year, due to being term time only provision.
- Attendance data gathered during February 2021 has shown a gradual rise in the number of children attending early years settings.

6. **Comments of Other Committees**

This report is intended to update panel members in relation to initial questions.

7. **Conclusion**

This report is intended to update panel members in relation to initial questions.

8. **Appendices Attached**

'A' – Table: 2 year old funding 2020/21

'B' – Graph: Attendance during the Coronavirus pandemic June 2020 – February 2021

9. **Background Papers**

None

Appendix A

2 year old funding 2020/21

	Participation	% take up	DWP
Autumn 2017	443	51%	869
Spring 2018	443	53%	836
Summer 2018	424	50%	840
Autumn 2018	458	54%	851
Spring 2019	446	56%	804
Summer 2019	464	55%	847
Autumn 2019	452	57%	795
Spring 2020	418	57%	731
Summer 2020	336	45%	754
Autumn 2020	370	45%	824
Spring 2021	282 Prelim	36%	785

Appendix B

Attendance during the Coronavirus pandemic June 2020 – February 2021

