

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 7
23 JULY 2012	Public Report

Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services

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CHILDREN'S CENTRES

1. PURPOSE

To provide Members with a progress report on the commissioning of Children's Centres and implementation of the new children's centres contracts.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to scrutinise the progress made on the new children's centres arrangements by providing challenge and to suggest ideas and initiatives to support the children's centres development.

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

One of the priorities contained within the Sustainable Community Strategy is Creating Opportunities, Tackling Inequalities. The Children's Centres have been created to support young children and their families and fully support priorities in the Sustainable Community Strategy including improving health, supporting vulnerable people and improving skills and education.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 Children's Centres are part of the Government's agenda to improve outcomes for children – providing a place where families with children under 5 years can access a range of services which include: early learning services; parenting and family support including relationship support; outreach services and information and support for families; child and family health services; and adult learning and employment support.

4.2 Children's Centres now have a statutory basis. The Childcare Act 2006 imposed duties on local authorities to improve the well-being of young children in their area and reduce inequalities between them and to make arrangements to ensure that early childhood services are provided in an integrated way in order to improve access and maximise the benefits of those services to young children and their parents. The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 goes further. It inserted new provisions into the Childcare Act 2006 so that the Act now defines Sure Start Children's Centres in law. It places duties on local authorities in relation to establishing and running children's centres.

4.3 On March 31st Cabinet Members agreed to the contracts for children's centres delivery to be awarded to Spurgeons and Barnardo's. These contracts covered the Central and East area, South locality and North West and Rural.

Central and East area comprises of Fulbridge, First Steps, Gladstone and East Children's Centres; the South locality comprises of Hampton, Orton, Fletton (Brewster Avenue) and Stanground; and the North West and Rural locality comprises of Bretton, Paston, Raventhorpe and East Rural Children's Centres.

5. KEY ISSUES

5.1 Barnardo's and Spurgeons – about the new providers in Peterborough

Barnardo's

Barnardo's is now delivering children's centres in the Central Locality of Peterborough. The centres are East, First Steps, Fulbridge and Gladstone Children's Centres.

Barnardo's is a large and well known organisation which delivers over 800 Government funded contracts supporting 180,000 children, young people and their families every year. Barnardo's vision is that the lives of all children, young people and families should be free from poverty, abuse and discrimination. Their purpose is to help the most vulnerable children and young people transform their lives and fulfil their potential. The work of Barnardo's is supported by research and an evidence base that underpins the work and engagement with policy at government level. Summary of other work includes:

- Managing 131 children's centres across the country
- A Strategic Partner to DfE for Improving Outcomes for Families
- Participation on the ACEVO Early Years Task Force, currently examining how payment by results can be applied to children's centres
- Managing 13 Family Intervention Projects on across the UK, Hull and Blackpool where they are piloting *Working Families Everywhere*

Barnardo's vision for Peterborough is to provide a community resource for families consisting of innovative, integrated children's centres that serve as hubs for families to access the services they need. Their aim is to create one service across the central locality, creating a new joint identity for staff while remaining a known and trusted provision for parents and families.

Barnardo's will build on the best of current provision and through a process of consultation and analysis, refocus services to improve outcomes for those young children and their families that need it most.

Barnardo's bring experience in raising the consistency of service delivery through shared resource, expertise and best practice as well as a level of expertise in engaging and working with vulnerable children and families. This will be integrated into the children's centres in the central locality, using innovative methods to engage with children and families who may not seek services but have high need with outreach work as a priority.

Barnardo's is committed to empowering service users to participate – their experience demonstrates that solutions that are owned by the child and family have far more impact and are more closely aligned to need. Children and families therefore will be involved in the design and delivery of services. Barnardo's will facilitate parents to run services and recruit and support volunteers from the wider community to assist with groups and individual families. This will free up skilled staff to focus and engage on families and children with the highest need. Barnardo's brings its long history of supporting volunteers into children's centres.

Spurgeons

Spurgeons is now delivering children's centres across the South Locality, Brewster Avenue, Hampton, Orton and Stanground as well as the North, West and Rural locality, comprising Bretton, East Rural, Paston and Ravensthorpe.

Founded in 1867, Spurgeons have been working with marginalised and disadvantaged children and young people for over 140 years. The organisation strives for positive, lasting change for children and young people. They manage over 70 projects across England, reaching over 35 000 children and young people. Their projects include:

- Children's Centres
- Children and Young People affected by Imprisonment
- Family support and interventions
- Targeted support for young people

Spurgeons works closely with central government, local authorities and other organizations in the design, development and delivery of services for children and young people. It is an outcome focused, child centred organisation passionate about making a difference to the lives of children and their families. Their Strategic Vision for the leadership and service delivery of Children Centres in Peterborough is to align delivery of the current core offer with more targeted service provision in order to effectively identify and reach the most disadvantaged families in the locality, to reduce inequalities in child development and school readiness and achieve outcomes which improve parenting capacity and aspirations, self esteem, health and wellbeing and economic wellbeing.

Spurgeons operate a model of Children's Centres based on the principle that a Children's Centre is not just a place where families walk through the door to receive services. It is a complex network of interagency partnerships and a matrix of mainstream, specialist, commissioned and community services working to shared objectives, which, combined with harnessing the strengths and resources of families, improves outcomes for young children. Spurgeons is also committed to engaging with the local community, not only to increase the reach and registration figures but also to embed Children's Centres in each community, opening up opportunities for increased support, volunteering, added value and sustainability.

Both organisations bring a large amount of experience to Peterborough Children's Centres with the capacity to improve the quality and consistency of services. Both organisations are committed to engaging fully with the local communities to ensure the services delivered meet the needs of local residents and provide a community facility that can benefit children and families.

Both organisations also bring significant experience of safeguarding and have robust safeguarding policies and procedures.

5.2 Progress to date

The transition to the new providers is only at the very early stages, being less than three months into the 3 to 5 year contract period. In fact the contract required both organisations not to make any significant changes to front line services for the first four months of delivery. This period was to ensure sufficient time had been allowed for any new organisation to evaluate current practice, transition staff to their organisation and consult with service users, potential service users and stakeholders as to service development. Significant changes have to be agreed with the Local Authority prior to implementation.

Current activity includes:

- Inducting staff into their respective organisations
- Working through the restructure of the services
- Stakeholder/user events to present the organisational vision, timetable and future plans
- Assessment/review of current practice

All existing services are being delivered during this period of change.

5.3 Future Monitoring Arrangements to Ensure Quality Services

Processes have been established to ensure that the contracts are being monitored and the outcomes achieved, in terms of impact on children and families. These will be measured through a number of means:

- Submission of quarterly contract reports – looking at the quarterly statistics relating to activity in the centre, along with submission of qualitative information around the impact of service provision
- Quarterly contract meetings – to discuss the quarterly contract reports and any issues arising
- Quality visits to children's centres, to support the centres and assess the services being delivered

- Annual conversations with each of the children's centres – a conversation between the provider of the children's centre, the Local Authority and other key partners to consider progress of the children's centre and to discuss priorities for the centre.
- Ofsted inspections – the children's centres are subject to Ofsted inspections. 7 centres have already been inspected by Ofsted. 8 centres have yet to have their first Ofsted inspection. Of these, 1 has achieved an outstanding, 3 were rated as good and 3 rated as satisfactory.
- The numbers of children registered with each children's centre varies from centre to centre. At the time of the commissioning of the centres the average number registered for each centre was 69.6% of the total population of children under 5 years registered with their local children's centre, which ranged from 35.2% to 95%. In terms of the most vulnerable children 33% of the children on the Child Protection register are known to the local children's centre.

6 IMPLICATIONS

It is anticipated that the Scrutiny Committee will comment on and make recommendations relating to the updates provided in this report in order that delivery potential is maximised for the benefit of children and families.

7 CONSULTATION

No consultation has taken place with regard to this report.

8 EXPECTED OUTCOMES and NEXT STEPS

Comments and recommendations made by Scrutiny Committee members will be considered as part of the ongoing development and delivery of children's centres.

9 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

None

10. APPENDICES

None