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| CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE | AGENDA ITEM No. 8 |
| 29 JANUARY 2018 | PUBLIC REPORT |

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| Report of: | Wendi Ogle-Welbourn - Executive Director, People and Communities | |
| Cabinet Member responsible: | Cllr Lynne Ayres - Lead Cabinet Member - Education | |
| Contact Officer(s): | Gary Perkins - Assistant Director (Education) | 07920 160285 |

SCHOOL READINESS PROJECT

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| R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S | |
| FROM: Gary Perkins, Assistant Director (Education) | Deadline date: 29th January 2018 |
| <p>It is recommended that the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the contents of the report and 2. Support Elected Members and Officers in their work to support and challenge schools to improve the attainment of children in Peterborough. | |

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 This report is offered by the Assistant Director (Education) at the request of the Committee.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 This report is presented to update Committee Members on progress made through the School Readiness project.

2.2 This report is for the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference No. Part 3, Section 4 - Overview and Scrutiny Functions, paragraph No. 2.1 Functions determined by Council :

Education, including

- a) University and Higher Education;
- b) Youth Service;
- c) Careers; and
- d) Special Needs and Inclusion.

2.4 This report links to the Corporate Priority: Improve educational attainment and skills

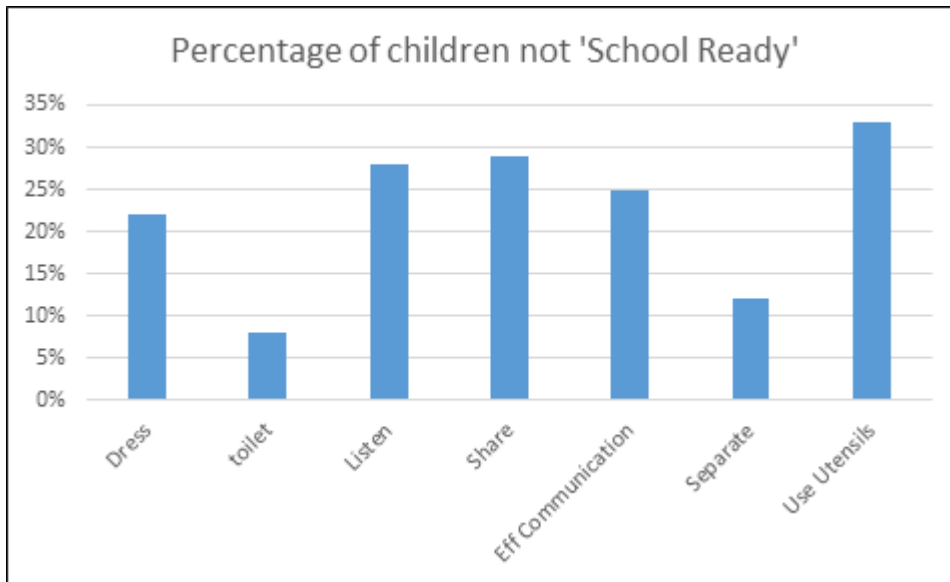
2.5 This report links to the Children in Care Pledge: Support children in care to have a good education.

3. **TIMESCALES**

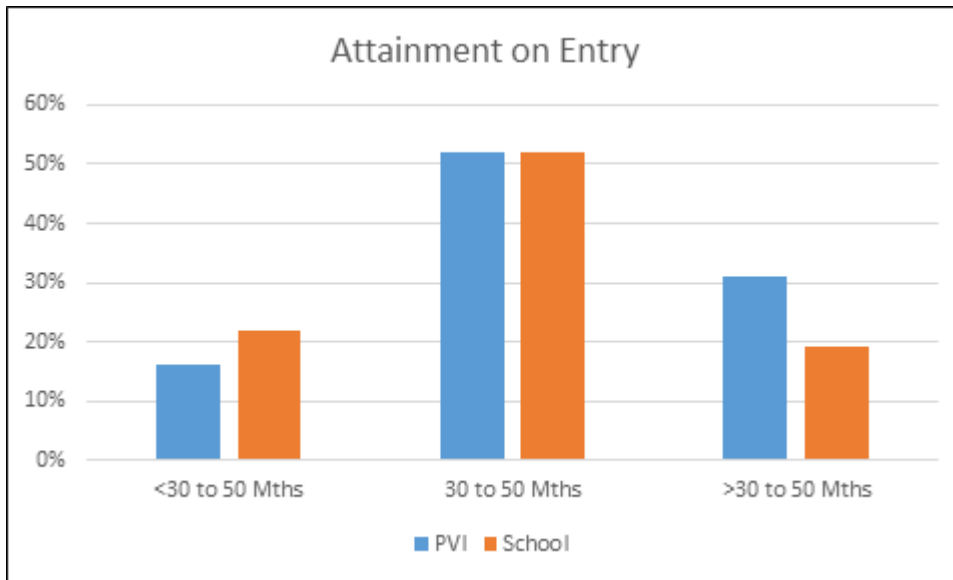
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| Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan? | NO | If yes, date for Cabinet meeting | N/A |
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4. **BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES**

- 4.1 During the early part of the spring term 2016 , the Executive Director (People and Communities) held a meeting with the National Literacy Trust (NLT) Hub Manager (Peterborough) at which the issues of low attainment of children during baseline assessment on entry to school and for children at the end of their first year of schooling were raised.
- 4.2 As a result, a meeting was convened in April 2016 and attended by a HT representative, the Early Years Head of Service and representatives from housing and health. This meeting agreed to convene a further meeting of a larger group of professionals.
- 4.3 This was followed in May 2016 by the meeting involving a larger group of professionals which agreed to act as a group to consider the issues of school readiness, barriers to improvement and possible actions to address the issues raised.
- 4.4 In September 2016, the School Readiness Steering Group was formally launched, chaired by the Assistant Director (Education) and involving representatives from schools, pre-schools, the PCC Early Years service, the NLT Hub Manager, children’s centres and maintained Nursery provision.
- 4.5 The Steering Group was tasked with raising the issues of low attainment on entry to school as well as low attainment at the end of the first year of school and arriving at strategies which may be employed to address these issues and provide support and challenge to schools in improving attainment outcomes.
- 4.6 This Steering Group met regularly and also formed two sub groups to act as working parties.
- 4.7 The Steering Group set itself three tasks to achieve by the end of the 2016/17 school year:
1. To publish a questionnaire to schools in September 2016 to ascertain from them the extent to which children were deemed to be “school ready”;
 2. To publish a leaflet for parent/carers to highlight activities which could be undertaken with children at home to help them to be ready to start school;
 3. To hold a public event to raise awareness of the importance of children being ready to start school and to demonstrate the activities highlighted in the leaflet.
- 4.8 The questionnaire was published to schools in September 2016 and responses received by November 2016. These responses were then analysed and reported to the Group to discuss particular areas of need which were being consistently identified. There was also a survey undertaken regarding the quality of transition arrangements between pre-schools and schools.
- 4.9 Analysis and outcomes of the 2016 schools’ questionnaire:
- School Readiness Questionnaires were sent to 57 Primary Schools in Peterborough to provide baseline information for the School Readiness Steering Group.
 - 68% (39 out of 57) of schools responded and returned the questionnaires.



1. Nearly a third of children (33%) had difficulty using utensils on entry into school which could have a big impact on their ability to write.
2. A quarter or more of children were unable to share, listen and effectively communicate which would impact on their capacity to engage with effective learning at the start of school.
3. One fifth of children had difficulty in putting on their shoes and coats, which impacts on the time spent preparing to go outdoors and getting changed for PE.
4. 74% of schools had at least one child with no preschool experience. 5% of children had no preschool experience. In one school 32/60 children had had no preschool experience. Six schools indicated that 5 or more children had no preschool experience.
5. Childminders fed into 55% of the schools.
6. More than half the schools had 10 or more settings feeding into their school that includes childminders, preschools and nurseries. Five schools had 20 or more feeder settings.
7. 74% of schools did not receive Transfer to School documents for all the children starting school. Seven schools stated that they had received most and 5 schools stated that they had received some. Several schools recorded that some documents were received after the child started at school. It is important for schools to receive these so that they can provide appropriate learning opportunities for the children as they start school.
8. School and setting links were generally good regarding children with SEND. 82% of schools attended a Transition meeting for all of their SEND children and 79% had contact with the setting SENCO or Key Worker. Some schools recorded that there were some SEN children who arrived in school without any prior indication from the settings.
9. Feeder settings and schools were in general agreement with assessing children at 30 to 50 months but the feeder settings recorded more children at above 30 to 50 months and less children at below 30 to 50 months. Several schools suggested that preschools should moderate their data or schools and preschools could moderate together:



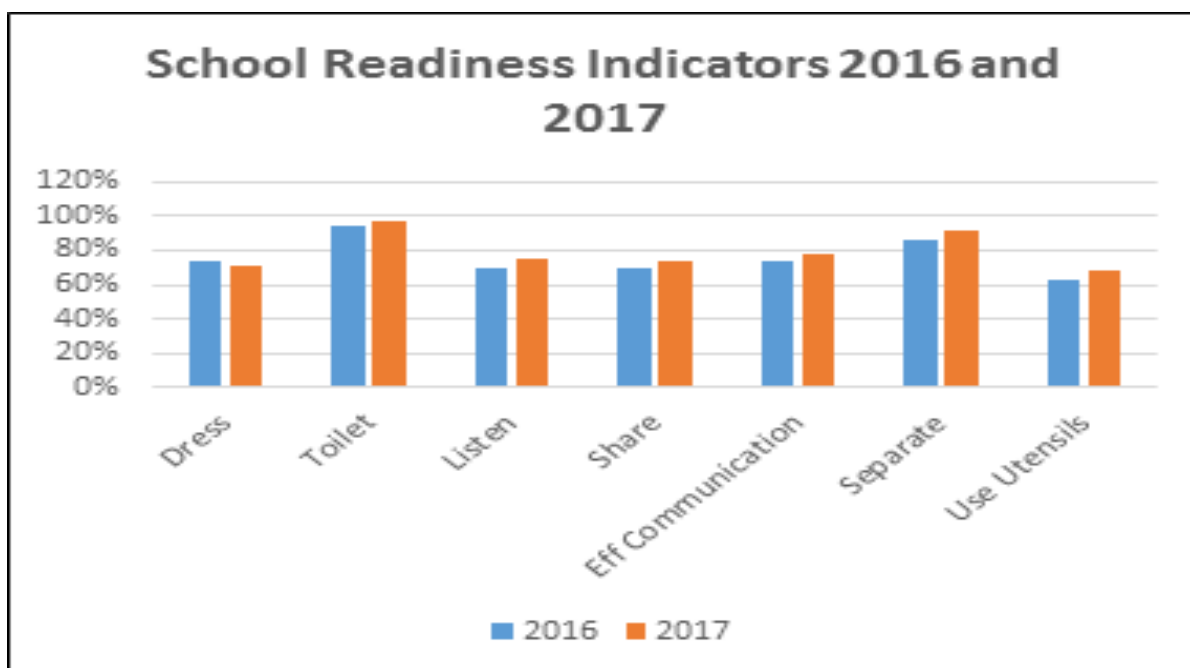
- 4.10 This information was disseminated to Steering Group members and used to design the actions for the remainder of the academic year.
- 4.11 A leaflet for parent/carers was designed, produced, published and distributed. It is attached as Appendix 1.
- 4.12 A major publicity event was held in Queensgate during two days over the Easter holidays 2016. This event was publicised by the local newspaper and BBC radio station. It was visited by the Leader of the Council, Chief Executive and Senior Officers
- 4.13 The event was extremely well attended and there were a very large numbers of very positive reviews received from parent/carers and education professionals regarding how useful and successful the event had been. The Event “flier” is attached as Appendix 2.
- 4.14 The event was judged to be a great success, and evaluation comments are included as Appendix 3.
- 4.15 Following the success of the public event, the Steering Group members resolved to continue with their work and enhance it.
- 4.16 In the summer of 2017, development of a Practitioner Leaflet began. The idea of this is that it should be an easily accessible resource for practitioners in schools and pre-schools, to aid them in their work towards ensuring that children are completely ready to begin learning at an appropriate level when they start school.
- 4.17 The leaflet is now at final draft stage and will shortly be ready for publication.
- 4.18 The school questionnaire was refreshed and reissued to schools in September 2017.
- 4.19 Analysis and outcomes of the 2017 schools’ questionnaire:

The 2017 School Readiness School Survey Analysis:

- 95% (86% in 2016) of schools responded and returned the questionnaires. This was an increase of 5 schools compared to 2016
- 99% (2800) of children starting school in September 2017 were included in this data analysis (87% in 2016). 3 schools who did not return the questionnaires meant that 150 Peterborough children were not included in the analysis this year, compared to 390 in 2016.

School Readiness Indicators:

In 2017 all schools submitting data included information on the School Readiness Indicators. In 2017 this data involved 2800 children compared to 2564 in 2016.



1. In 2017, six of the seven School Readiness Indicators suggest that, overall children are 'more ready for school'. However, the percentage of children able to dress themselves independently declined by 3% in 2017 from 74% to 71%. This was particularly significant in 4 schools.
2. The increase in the numbers of children being unable to put on their shoes and coat impacts on the time spent preparing to go outdoors and getting changed for PE which then leaves less time for teachers and practitioners to focus on other aspects of the EYFS curriculum.
3. In 2017 the number of children having difficulty using utensils (using a knife and fork, a paintbrush, scissors and a pencil) on entry into school reduced from 37% (955) of children to 32% (890). This is still nearly a third of children which could have a big impact on children's ability to achieve the ELG in Writing and Moving and Handling at the end of the EYFS.
4. In 2017 the number of children unable to share and listen reduced to a quarter of children (25%) compared to 30% in 2016. Numbers reduced from 758 to 717 children unable to share and from 754 to 689 children unable to listen. Children unable to effectively communicate reduced from 26% (660 children) in 2016 to 22% (626 children) in 2017. These factors impact on the children's capacity to engage with effective learning at the start of school so reducing these numbers further could have a significant impact on children's learning.
5. In 2017 the number of children being unable to use the toilet independently reduced by half from 6% (132) to 3% (75). The SEND information infers that this number could be reduced to 1% if parents were supported to encourage children to use the toilet independently prior to starting school.
6. The number of children struggling with separation reduced from 14% (356) to 9% (245) in 2017. This reduction suggests that the focus on Transitions is having an impact. Staff need to continue to reflect on their transition into schools. Reducing these numbers further would enable staff to focus on teaching and learning.
7. The number of schools who had at least one child with no preschool experience increased by 4% to 75% in 2017. The proportion of children remained the same at 5% but the number increased slightly from 134 children in 2016 to 141 in 2017. The school that had 32 children with no preschool experience in 2016 had 11 children with no preschool experience in 2017. The number of schools who had 5 or more children with no preschool experience remained the same (9 schools) in 2017. However, the number

of schools with less than 5 children with no preschool experience increased from 26 to 31 schools in 2017.

8. In 2017 71% of schools had 10 or more settings feeding into their school (69% in 2016). However, less schools had 15 or more feeder settings (34% compared to 48% in 2016). The large PVI sector in Peterborough that feeds into the 57 schools has a big impact on transitions into school compared to some Local Authorities where most of their children will feed into school via their Maintained Nursery attached to the school. Some schools had to liaise with more than 20 settings. In 2017 one school had 28 settings to liaise with. This has capacity and financial implications for the schools and the PVI sector regarding transition visits prior to children starting school.
9. In 2017 schools not receiving Transfer to School documents for all the children starting school reduced by 6% (61% compared to 67% in 2016). Several schools recorded that some documents were received after the child started at school. A higher number of schools stated that they had received most but highlighted several preschool settings that had not sent information. Settings do appear to be sending information in a variety of formats, including electronic formats. It is important for schools to receive these so that they can provide appropriate learning opportunities for the children as soon as they start school.
10. Of the 53 schools (2746 children) that submitted data for SEND in 2017 there was an increase of children with SEND (up by 1%) with 7% of children starting school in September 2017 who were SEND or had an EHCP. Despite an increased number of schools submitting data in 2017 the number of EHCPs on entry has reduced. Several schools indicated that they were starting the process immediately. One school highlighted 10 children who they needed to refer to SALT on entry.

4.20 The evaluations have been discussed by the Steering Group and will form the basis of actions to be agreed in January 2018.

4.21 The Steering Group also agreed that they should become a formal Project Board, with agreed Aims, Terms of Reference and Standing Membership. These are included as Appendix 4. The Project Board should be formalised during the Spring Term 2018.

4.22 Two further public events are planned for 2018 - a 2 day event at Serpentine Green in February and a 2 day event in Queensgate in April.

4.23 The next focus for the Board will be on raising awareness of the many issues which impact upon children's readiness for school, through producing guidance papers for schools and pre-schools, a clear and concise explanation and description of what it means to be "school ready" and also on developing ever-closer links between schools and pre-schools.

4.24 **Conclusion:**

A huge amount has been achieved by this group and I must say that it has been an absolute pleasure to chair the group. I am excited by the possibilities of impact in the future, and have clear ideas for how best we can offer guidance to schools and monitor impact.

I am convinced that this is a vital group for Peterborough and can undertake positive work in so many areas, bringing partnership working to the forefront. Its members are absolutely committed to this area of work and can see the difference which it can make to the lives of children and parent/carers.

5. CONSULTATION

5.1 All Infant and Primary schools have been consulted, as have pre-school providers in both the maintained and PVI sectors.

5.2 None

6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

- 6.1 That the Project Board should receive the support of Elected Members to continue its work
That the actions taken should be helpful to schools and pre-schools
That standards of attainment in the 2018 and 2019 EYFS Profile assessments should see an improvement.

7. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 To raise awareness amongst Committee Members and ask for their support for future actions to be taken as appropriate.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 8.1 None

9. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 9.1 None

Legal Implications

- 9.2 None

Equalities Implications

- 9.3 None

Rural Implications

- 9.4 None

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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

- 10.1 None

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix 1 - "Start" leaflet
Appendix 2 - "Start" Event 2017 flier
Appendix 3 - "Start" Event 2017 Evaluation
Appendix 4 - School Readiness Project Board - Aims, Membership and ToR

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