

Cabinet – 17 March 2010

Early Years Strategy

Portfolio: Councillor Walker, Children's Services

Service: Walsall Children's Services - Serco

Wards: All wards

Key decision: No

Forward plan: No

1. Summary of report

The report sets the Early Years Strategy for all providers of early years across Walsall identifying the principles and priorities for the next 3 years.

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet agree to the submission of the strategy to Council in April for approval (**Appendix A**).

3. Background information

3.1 Over the last ten years a series of national strategies have been implemented by the Department for Schools, Children and Families all designed to improve services for young children and their families.

3.2 This guidance has identified a range of targets, all of which have a direct bearing on early years services. These include:

- integrating services for young children and their families
- ensuring quality, access and inclusion
- creating and sustaining child care
- developing the workforce

3.3 Taking account of government requirements and Walsall's Children and Young People's Plan, the strategy identifies six priorities for early years in Walsall:

- empowering parents, carers, children and communities and promoting a positive view of parenting
- integrating services and ensuring that effective systems and practices are in place to support gathering and sharing information, providing early support and making early referral to specialist providers where necessary
- ensuring quality, access and inclusion for all
- developing the workforce

- supporting and sustaining high quality early years experiences and
- improving outcomes for young children and their families

3.4 The development of this Walsall Strategy takes account of those national targets and places them within a local vision for early years. It identifies a set of shared principles and priorities for local providers which will support the delivery of the local vision and strategy.

4. Resource considerations

4.1 **Financial:** There are no direct financial implications to this Strategy as delivery will be within existing resources.

4.2 **Legal:** All local authorities are required to deliver early year's services through the Early Years Foundation Stage for children Birth to Five.

4.3 **Staffing:** There are no direct staffing implications as a result of this report.

5. Citizen impact

The adoption of this strategy will impact on the learning, health and social care of children, young people and their families in Walsall. It will contribute towards making Walsall a place where "growing up is as good as it can be" by ensuring families can access high quality early years provision in their local area.

6. Community safety

There are no direct community safety implications to this report .

7. Environmental impact

There are no direct community safety implications

8. Performance and risk management issues

High quality Early Years provision improves children's readiness to learn when they enter reception classes and supports parents and carers in enabling their children to achieve their optimum outcomes.

9. Equality implications

The delivery of high quality Early Years provision promotes equality of opportunity for children, parents and carers.

10. Consultation

- 10.1 Consultation on this strategy has been carried out across all early years' providers in the maintained, voluntary, private and independent settings and with strategic partners.
- 10.2 There are 70 nursery classes in primary schools, 8 nursery schools, 38 private, voluntary and independent providers and 200 childminders
- 10.3 Nineteen responses were received, fifteen from providers which represents 6% of all providers, analysed as follows: 3 nursery schools, 5 PVI providers and 9 childminders
- 10.4 The consultation was also sent to 41 strategic partner; there were 5 responses.
- 10.5 The Consultation asked respondents to comment on 4 questions:
- Is the local vision right for Walsall?
 - Do the principles reflect the values of Early Years across Walsall?
 - Do the actions outlines in the plan reflect the right steps towards achieving our priorities?
 - Are there any other priorities you would like to see included within the strategy?

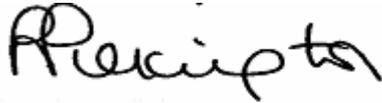
All those who responded felt that the local vision was right for Walsall and that the principles reflect the values of Early Years in Walsall. The priorities and actions identified to meet those priorities were also endorsed by those who responded.

Background papers

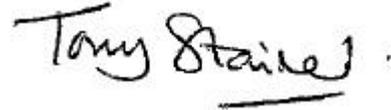
- DCSF Guidance 2004 Choice for Parents, the best start for children: a ten year strategy for childcare
- DCSF Guidance 2007 Extended Schools: Access opportunities and services for all – a Prospectus
- DoH Guidance 2004 The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services – Core Standards
- DCSF Guidance 2008 Families in Britain: an evidence paper
- DCSF Guidance 2008 Early Years Foundation Stage for children Birth to Five
- DCSF Guidance 2009 Next Steps for Early Learning and childcare: Building on the 10 Year Strategy

Author

Carol Boughton
Head of Early Years and Disability Services
☎ 01922 686406
✉ carol.boughton@walsallcs.serco.com



Signed:
Executive Director: Pauline Pilkington
Date: 5 March 2010



Signed:
Managing Director, Walsall Children's
Services, Serco
Date: 5 March 2010



Signed:
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Rachel Walker
Date: 5 March 2010



Walsall Children's Services

Walsall Children's Services Early Years Strategy 2009-2013

Our Vision

We believe that all children and young people in Walsall have the right to be healthy, happy and safe, to be loved, valued and respected and to have high aspirations for a successful future.

Our Mission statement

To ensure all children and young people achieve the best possible levels of education, health and development and to support those who are most vulnerable. We will encourage children and young people to build on their achievements, to develop and improve their confidence, resilience and self esteem, to participate in their communities and economic well being. Our service delivery model will integrate services in localities through Children's Centres, extended schools and other appropriate venues, focusing on providing early multi-agency support to families. We will safeguard children by early recognition of risks and the provision of local support, with specialist intervention when needed.

Our Values

We **respect** all children, young people and their families – by listening carefully to their views and acting on them wherever possible.

We are **open** and **trustworthy** – by making decisions transparently, involving others and doing what we say we will.

We believe in the **potential** of all children – by doing all we can to support their development and talents.

We are **caring** and **responsible** – by acting as good corporate parents and going the 'extra mile' in our supportive approaches to all children.

We will **protect** vulnerable children and young people – by taking firm urgent action when needed, sharing information and not tolerating oppressive behaviour.



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We engage with children and young people, helping to **empower** them through supporting their **aspirations** and giving them **responsibility**.

We **celebrate** and support cultural diversity and children's sense of identity.

Introduction

This Early Years Strategy has been produced to support the vision, values and mission statement of Walsall Children's Services. This strategy builds upon the work already undertaken to deliver the Sure Start Children's Centre programme, the extended services programme and the existing relationship between Walsall Children's Services, providers in the maintained, private, voluntary and independent sectors and children, their families and their communities.

However, it cannot be separated from the over-arching government priorities and policies for early years health, education and care. The national government priorities are provided at the end of this strategy at Appendix 1; additional background references are provided at Appendix 2.

Walsall's current Children and Young People's Plan was produced in 2009 and is available at <http://www.mywalsall.org>.

This Strategy will be reviewed in 2013.

The Local Vision

The local vision for Early Years in Walsall is:

1. Services that deliver the very **highest quality** outcomes for our children and their families
2. Services that are flexible and targeted to meet **the needs of all children** and their families delivering inclusion for all
3. Services that are **inspired and inspiring**, supporting the ambitions for service users, providers and local communities
4. Services that are local where possible, integrated and **a partnership** between families and providers
5. We will build resilience in families, practitioners and providers to enable us to **adapt to changing needs and circumstances**



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The Themes and Principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage have provided us with a clear direction. We want every practitioner to understand and be confident about the shared beliefs which underpin high quality and inclusive early years practice, so that every child in Walsall has the best possible start.

Principles

To achieve this vision we need to adhere to the following shared principles:

1. For outcomes to be of the **highest quality**:
 - children must be at the centre of everything we do
 - our outcomes must be measurable and regularly measured
 - we must deliver services that work rather than those that look good
 - we must share effective best practise in order that all children can benefit
 - we must give and receive feedback, using the data that is collected to analyse and develop practice

2. To meet the **needs of all children**:
 - we must recognise that all children are unique and have the right to be treated with respect
 - we must acknowledge that our very youngest children matter and respect their right to a childhood
 - children, families and their communities must be engaged as true partners both in learning and in the planning and developing of all services
 - we must ensure good communication and ensure that knowledge and learning is shared with families and between colleagues so that everyone is fully aware of all that is available; children must be supported by practitioners who have an in depth knowledge of child development
 - learning, development and support will be tailored to meet the individual needs of the child
 - we must recognise that there are no 'hard to engage' children and families, simply those whom services have yet to reach and ensure that we reach them
 - we recognise that some children are more vulnerable as a result of their early life experiences and that high quality early years services can contribute to re-dressing those inequalities

3. To be **inspired and inspiring**:
 - we will build confidence in what we do with children, families and providers
 - we will provide enabling environments that challenge children's thinking and supports their emotional well being



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- we will support good practice and develop our weaker areas
 - practitioners and providers will be committed to developing their own knowledge and expertise and we will support them to do so
 - all partners will continually strive for improvements
 - we must celebrate our cultural differences and each child's achievements
4. For our **partnerships** to work well:
- partnership must be our 'normal' way of working, not something bolted on as an added extra when required
 - partnerships must be mutually beneficial to all partners, including families, and all partners must understand what the partnership adds to the service and outcomes
 - we must acknowledge and respect the different skills the partners bring. Parents and communities in particular must feel that they are true partners in reviewing and shaping services, not simply recipients
 - we must share responsibility for outcomes and targets as well as skills and input – "your targets are my targets"
 - we must continue to work towards developing multi skilled, multi professional teams, valuing the different skills, recognising and reducing duplication where it exists
5. To be able to **adapt to change**:
- we must view the future positively embracing the changes that will come our way
 - we must be prepared to support services which are different where they deliver good outcomes for children and their families
 - we must recognise that this is a journey for providers, families and children with opportunity to learn on the way
 - we will work with providers to equip and empower children and their families with the knowledge and skills to make positive choices

By adhering to these principles we will continue to develop and deliver services that work towards ensuring improved outcomes for all children laying firm foundations for future success.



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Our Priorities

Taking account of government requirements and Walsall's Children and Young People's Plan our priorities are as follows:

- empowering mothers, fathers, carers, children and communities and promoting a positive view of parenting – the Parenting Strategy
- integrating services, ensuring that effective systems and practice are in place to support gathering and sharing information, providing early support and making early referral to specialist providers where necessary – the Child Concern Model and CAF
- ensuring quality, access and inclusion for all
- developing our workforce
- supporting and sustaining high quality early years experiences
- improve outcomes for young children and their families

These priorities will be underpinned by:

- robust arrangements for safeguarding all children
- delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage providing high quality learning experiences for young children

We will achieve them by:

- high quality management and leadership
- involving provision from all sectors – statutory, community, voluntary, private and independent
- working in partnership at a strategic level to ensure that the specific needs of the early years sector are taken account of and that the sector is enabled to contribute to future developments
- extending services in and around schools



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Priority One: Empowering mothers, fathers, carers, children and communities

		How
1	Ensure that mothers, fathers and carers are represented in the planning, delivery and evaluation of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support each Children’s Centre to ensure that each Children’s Centre advisory panels(local management groups) has representation from mothers, fathers and carers which adheres to legislative requirements • take account of input from existing parent/carer forums • develop and provide training and support for mothers, fathers and carers • encourage accessible consultation opportunities with mothers, fathers and local carers within their local communities
2	Raise the status of parenthood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contribute to promoting a common approach between agencies to “parenting courses” ensuring that gender and cultural differences are recognised and responded to in order to meet the specific needs of mothers, fathers and carers
3	Listen to children and include their views in planning processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respect children’s need to communicate their views in different media • support and promote the ‘Hear By Right’ agenda by providing tools for effective consultation • incorporate listening to children and positive communication into parenting courses

Priority Two: Integrating Services

		How
1	Deliver the final phase of Children’s Centre development to create universal access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure the last 3 Centres will be delivered by March 2010 resulting in 18 centres in total • develop a collaborative approach across the Centres to ensure shared best practice
2	Support the ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in partnership with the programme



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	implementation and development of the Child Concern Model and use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF)	<p>manager support the ongoing delivery of CAF & Team Around the Child training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respond to Information Sharing & Assessment requirements
3	Integrate universal and targeted services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • with partners work to ensure delivery of integrated services in local settings • ensure the private, voluntary and independent providers are included in planning and delivery • encourage and foster integrated working through developing networking, information and providing support and by celebrating evolving good practice • promote multi-agency working through support to the Children's Area Partnerships and or Extended Service clusters
4	Promote early years and ensure links to services for a broader age range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure links as appropriate with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ extended services in and around schools ➢ CAMH's ➢ Teenage Pregnancy Services ➢ Walsall NHS ➢ Youth services ➢ Child Poverty Strategy

Priority Three: Ensuring Quality, Access and Inclusion

		How
1	Capacity building and engaging with local networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work through the Children's Area Partnerships to develop the final phase of Children's Centre development • support mothers, fathers and carers to become involved in service planning, development and evaluation
2	Ensure equality of access to provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encourage optimal take up of universal services • develop improved ways of signposting mothers, fathers and carers to services • deliver programmes identified through the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment
3	Address individual need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support all service providers to



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		<p>develop and deliver inclusive services for all</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and support individuals who may need specific additional support • Identify and support groups that may need specific support
4	Safeguarding Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • raise awareness of safeguarding • ensure providers and staff access training including Safer Recruitment
5	Ensure parental confidence in provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • through challenge and support to all providers

Priority Four: Developing our workforce

		How
1	Ensure all partners are supported to deliver excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effectively administer the Graduate Leader fund • fund qualification Level 3-6 • deliver a training programme of Continuous Professional Development • working in partnership with colleagues to inform and support practitioners to develop their workforce to meet the demands of every setting having a graduate leader by 2015
2	Increase diversity within the workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focus on where increased diversity is needed and plan accordingly
3	Secure career development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop opportunities for mothers, fathers, carers and other community groups to access training with partners • support staff in developing their skills and knowledge

Priority Five: Supporting and Sustaining High Quality Childcare Experiences

		How
1	Help mothers, fathers and carers to make informed choices about childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide information about making choices • continue to develop the Children’s Information Service and explore new ways of providing information • recognise the importance of reaching and engaging fathers
2	Promote the Early Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate the implementation and impact



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	Foundation Stage standards to all providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> of EYFS across all settings promote consistent messages about what constitutes good practice and effective pedagogy
3	Make link to childcare provision for over 5’s through the Extended Services programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure continuity of childcare provision with wrap around, before and after school and holiday care

Priority Six: Improve Outcomes for Young Children and their Families

		How
1	Narrow the gap between the Council’s priority vulnerable children, young people and family groups and the rest of the children young people & families who access services in the reach area in centres offering the full core offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify vulnerable groups and provide data to support Children’s Centres and other providers through the network and sector support meetings identify and provide support to those settings with the highest number of children at risk of performing least well support settings to increase their targeted interventions to priority vulnerable children
2	Increase targeted intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> offer universal services and agree enhanced service delivery to meet the needs of families in Walsall



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Appendix 1

Over-arching national government priorities for early years services

Any local strategy must take account of the national strategies and targets which Government has published in:

Choice for parents, the best start for children: a ten year strategy for childcare (2004)

Extended schools: Access to opportunities and services for all – A Prospectus (2007)

The National Service Framework (NSF) for Children, Young People and Maternity Services- Core Standards (2004)

Reaching Out: Think Family (2007/8)

Think Families Improving Support for Families at Risk (2009)

Childcare Act (2006)

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for children Birth to Five (2008)

Next Steps for Early Learning and Childcare Building on the 10 Year Strategy (2009)

These documents have identified the following targets that have a direct bearing on early year's services:

1. Integrating services for young children and their families
 - Delivery of extended free flexible entitlement with all children having access to 15 hours of free entitlement by 2010
 - Delivery of children's centres to offer integrated early years education, childcare, family support services, child and family health services, Family Information Services and Job Centre Plus
 - 2008 15 Centres
 - 2010 18 Centres ensuring universal reach across Walsall
 - Ensuring that the health and wellbeing of children and young people is promoted and delivered through a co-ordinated programme of action, including prevention and early intervention wherever possible to ensure long term gain, lead by the NHS in partnership with local authorities (NSF Standard 1)



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2. Ensuring quality, access and inclusion

- Provision of information and support to ensure informed choice (Childcare Act 2006 Section 12)
- Ensure the learning and development needs of all children are met (Early Years Foundation Stage)
- Enable parents and carers to receive information, services and support to help them care for their children and equip them with the skills they need to ensure their children have optimal life chances and are healthy and safe (NSF Standard 2)
- Ensure children and young people and families receive high quality services which are co-ordinated around their individual and family needs and take account of their views (NSF Standard 3)

3. Creating and sustaining childcare

- Undertake the Childcare Sufficiency review every 3 years (Childcare Act 2006 Section 12) and act upon the outcomes of each sufficiency review
- Support all schools to ensure that the requirements of the Extended Services agenda are met

4. Developing the workforce

- Recruit and retain sufficient childcare workers
- Deliver workforce training and development to ensure at least 50% of the workforce are qualified to a minimum of level 2 and all supervisors at level 3 qualification in an area of work relevant to the childcare or training in the core skills as set out in the *Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children's Workforce*.
- Strengthening interagency and multi-disciplinary working

5. Overall integration

- Working with an through the Children's Area Partnerships to deliver local authority responsibilities for integrated Children's Services arrangements
- Being inclusive, ensuring children from minority ethnic backgrounds or additional needs are welcomed and supported within settings



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Appendix 2

Further Background References

The main legislative and policy framework for this strategy is provided by:

- Every Child Matters 2003
- The Children Act 2004
- The Childcare Act 2006
- The National Service Framework (NSF) for Children, Young People and Maternity Services – Core Standards (Department of Health 2004)
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Early Years Foundation Stage (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2008)
- Draft Code of Practice on Provision of The Free Entitlement for 3 and 4 Year Olds (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2009)