

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee
Date: October 2021
Report for: Information
Report of: Karen Samples, Director of Education

Report Title

Early Years Sector, Early Years Ambition Plan and School Readiness

Summary

This report provides an update on the early years sector, ambition plan and school readiness

Recommendation(s)

That the contents of the report are noted.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Zoe Sweeney: Early Years Service Manager

1. Early years sector

Trafford has a strong early education and childcare market with a good mix of early years providers across all neighbourhoods offering parents and carers a range of options to suit their needs. There are 354 early education settings, comprising; 205 childminders, 92 early years group settings and 57 school nursery classes, two of which offer funded places for 2 year old children. There are nursery assessment places available in three of the primary special schools.

Quality of early years provision is high with 98% childminders graded Good or Outstanding compared to 96% nationally and 99% of group settings graded at Good or Outstanding which is compared to 97% nationally.

2. Early years strategic plan ambitions

Trafford has a well-established 0-5 Board with representation from all key partners. The 0-5 strategic plan has 7 ambitions (Appendix 1):

1. **1001 Critical days**
To promote good parent infant relationships and early child development
2. **Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)**
Needs and strengths are identified and supported at the earliest opportunity
3. **Integrated working and family support**
Working together to achieve better outcomes and be safe
4. **Speech, language and communication**
Children communicate well
5. **Social and emotional wellbeing**

Children have healthy relationships

6. Being healthy

Children achieve their best possible physical health

7. Early education

High quality early education for all

The priorities linked to these ambitions were refreshed for June 2020 – December 2021 to reflect the Covid recovery planning, ensuring that work is focused on key areas. A new plan with key performance indicators (KPI) will be developed with all partners in January 2022.

3. School readiness data pre-Covid

Key performance data for school readiness is linked to the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) at the end of a child's reception year in school. This is not available at scale due to the cancellation of the EYFSP centralised data collection for both 2020 and 2021. This is further compounded by the Early Years Reforms which have come into effect September 2021 meaning that comparable data will not be available moving forward.

The assessment tool used by Health Visitors to assess child development at mandated points as outlined in the Healthy Child Programme is the Ages and Stages Questionnaire. This information is also not available at scale not just due to pressures of Covid but also due to the challenges of the implementation of the Electronic Patient Record and Information Governance. However ASQ data from 2018 demonstrated that 12% of children in receipt of their 2 year mandated review were not meeting age related expectations.

Key headlines from 2019 pre pandemic include:

- The majority of children achieved a good level of development (GLD) at 75% which is above the national average.
- Partington and the North locality were below both the national and Trafford average in terms of children achieving a good level of development.
- Children in these localities were below the national average in the three prime areas of learning: communication and language, social and emotional development and physical development.
- Particular cohorts of children were also not achieving both the national and Trafford average namely:
 - Black and mixed heritage children
 - Boys in both Partington and in some areas of the North were also not achieving a GLD.

The most recent Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for children and young people in Trafford age 0-19 highlighted the following for the 0-5 age range:

- One in 5 children aged 5 is overweight or obese (one in 4 nationally)
- One in 5 children has tooth decay by age 5 (one in 4 nationally)
- Children age 0-5 in the 20% most deprived small areas were 2.5 times more likely to require Social Care Support than the Trafford average (March 2018)
- 24% of children assessed as being a Child in Need were in the 0-5 age range. 'Abuse and neglect' was the primary need followed by 'Family in acute stress' and 'family dysfunction'. (March 2018)
- 18% of looked after children were in the 0-5 age range. (March 2018)

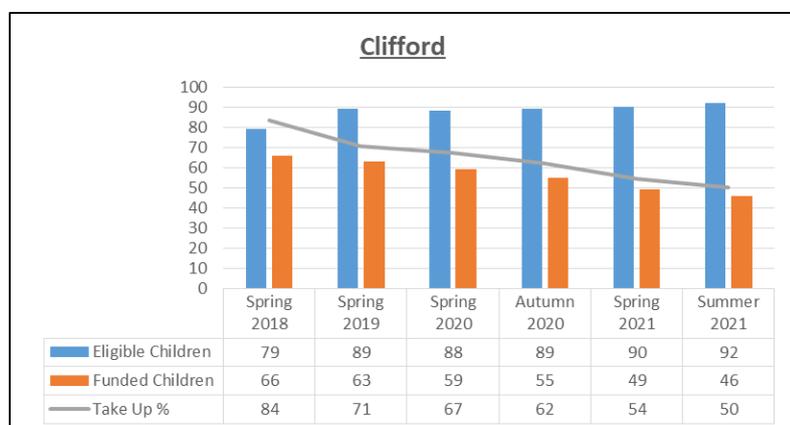
There is an assumption that attainment gaps and outcomes highlighted in 2019 will inevitably have widened/ deteriorated due to the impact of the pandemic. The work of the

0-5 Trafford Board and Ambition Plan is to narrow these gaps and improve outcomes particularly for our most vulnerable or disadvantaged children and families.

4. Key issues

a) The early years sector, sufficiency and parental confidence

Take up of 2 year education places for economically disadvantaged families remains high at 88% with Trafford currently ranked 1st nationally out of 151 areas. This is also higher than statistical neighbours (71%) and significantly higher than national (62%). This however is lower than previous years and illustrates a national decline in line with the start of the pandemic. Analysis of Trafford’s two school readiness areas, Partington and the North demonstrates that in the main 2 year take up for eligible families is high however it appears to be the lowest in one small area of the North in Clifford ward. Further exploration of this is required to fully understand the potential barriers for families, however the introduction of the 18 month assessment will be key in addressing this issue.



Interestingly the numbers of children eligible for the 2 year entitlement offer has decreased slightly when this was originally predicted to increase as an impact of Covid. As this entitlement is linked to economic criteria there is an assumption that this could be a reflection of the current employment position with high number of job vacancies available.

Take up of early education of 3 and 4 year olds in Trafford, whilst reasonably high at 94% has decreased from 101%. This is still above national (88%) and is 1% above the North West average and that of our statistical neighbours (1%). Further exploration will be required to validate the reasons for this decrease.

(a) Academic Year 2020/21
Information to date for the current academic year

Term	Universal Part Time Equivalent (PTE) Places					Extended Part Time Equivalent (PTE) Places					Total Part Time Equivalent (PTE) Places					% universal children taking up 30 hours
	PVI		School		Total	PVI		School		Total	PVI		School		Total	
	PTE	%	PTE	%	PTE	PTE	%	PTE	%	PTE	PTE	%	PTE	%	PTE	
Aut 2020	1,358	48%	1,593	54%	2,951	827	53%	735	47%	1,562	2,185	48%	2,328	52%	4,513	53%
Spr 2021	2,014	54%	1,884	48%	3,898	1,332	65%	727	35%	2,059	3,348	58%	2,411	42%	5,757	56%
Sum 2021	2,983	62%	1,784	38%	4,747	1,891	70%	811	30%	2,702	4,854	65%	2,594	35%	7,448	57%

The number of places funded across the sector has also decreased. In the school year 2020/21, there was a decrease of 753 part time equivalent (PTE) places which equates to a 6% drop in universal places funded in the sector when compared to school year 2019/20. The reasons for this *may* be attributed to a number of factors;

- A declining birth rate.

- Parental confidence and changing work patterns
- A shift towards informal childcare arrangements in particular grandparents
- Younger children and parents have spent a significant time at home with limited social interaction. Parents may well feel more anxious about separation due to a lack of opportunity to socialise and access the usual baby and toddler groups.
- Family health vulnerabilities or circumstances

Of particular note is the decrease in the extended places. This is where working families accessing the universal offer can access extended places of up to 30 hours per week if they meet specific economic criteria. In school year 2020/21 there were 492 less part time equivalent (PTE) places than in 2019/20 which equates to a 7% decrease. It is assumed that this is reflective of families changing working patterns and behaviour. This will also be a contributory factor linked to sufficiency. The places are available but may not be being used due to lack of demand.

There are no known sufficiency issues resulting in children being unable to access an early education place.

The numbers of early education providers in the private voluntary and independent (PVI) sector has decreased as highlighted in the table below.

Type of provider	Pre Covid	October 2020	September 2021
Day nursery	70	71	70
Pre- school	28	22	22
Childminder	239	234	205

The overall number of childminders is also not a true reflection of those providing early education places as we are aware that a number of these are currently 'working out of the home'. This means that whilst they have retained their 'Registration' with Ofsted they are choosing not to provide early education at this time and have taken alternative work. In addition a number of childminders registered may be providing 'wrap around care' for older children but not providing early education throughout the day for early years children.

The numbers of Childminders have been steadily declining over a number of years mainly due to the fact that this group have traditionally been in an older demographic with a number retiring from the profession. Registered Childminder numbers have dropped by 29% since December 2017 as evidenced below:

Date	Total number of childminder	Early Years Register	Childcare Register only	Registered with Childcare Agency*
March 21	213	205	6	2
August 20	232	223	7	2
December 19	238	230	8	0
March 19	260	250	10	0
December 18	266	257	9	0
December 17	298	291	7	0

Figures taken from Ofsted Official Statistics for Childcare and Inspections (Data, Charts and Tables).

Whilst sufficiency does not appear to be a problem in Trafford the challenges for the early years sector should not be underestimated. Business continuity is of particular concern due to the following factors:

- The sector is experiencing severe recruitment and retention issues. This cannot be solely attributed to what is being termed 'the great resignation' as this is not a new situation but has been exacerbated by the pandemic.
- Non-vaccinated staff or those who are not yet fully covered working in group day care settings who are required to self-isolate if they are deemed a contact.
- There have been circumstances where agencies are either unable to find or reluctant to provide staff where there has been a positive case and staffing is low due to low rates of vaccination.
- The sector are reporting a lack of skilled practitioners coming in to the sector following initial training and qualification. This is expected to be exacerbated by the fact that many 'in training' have been unable to access placements to consolidate their practice.

A more in-depth sufficiency exercise will be undertaken during autumn 2021 and spring 2022. This has been intentionally delayed until the CJRS has ended and the first term of autumn was underway with new children starting new school nursery places in order to obtain a more accurate position of the early year's landscape and market. The North will be a particular focus due to declining numbers of childminders in this area, a couple of group setting closures and business continuity challenges in a number of settings.

b) 2021 Snapshot of School Readiness

Despite the absence of a statutory EYFSP data collation, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Consultant worked collaboratively with Headteachers and EYFS Leads across Trafford to gather, where readily available, predicated data based on the previous criteria for assessing if a 'Good Level of Development' had been achieved. This was collated July 2021.

Data submitted by 40 schools across Trafford (70% of all schools) evidenced that outcomes for children at the end of their Reception Year had been impacted. The average Good Level of Development (GLD) overall was an average of 64%, however it must be acknowledged that this is not a full data set. It does, however, provide an indication of impact. Other averages can be highlighted below:

- Girls reaching a GLD : 71%,
- Boys reaching a GLD : 57%,
- Children in receipt of Pupil Premium : 44%,
- Children with English as an Additional Language: 51%.

A full data set was submitted for all Partington schools therefore providing a more accurate picture of educational attainment and development:

- GLD of all children 43% (68% in 2019)
- Girls : 53%, (82% in 2019)
- Boys: 39% (56% in 2019)

Speech, language and communication was cited as a key issue and this validates data that was collated in October 2020 where results of WellComm screens (SLC assessment tool) highlighted high numbers of children not at age related expectation (ARE). This was presented in a previous report in July 2021.

Summer 2021 data for one school in Partington demonstrates the success of an evidence based intervention Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI). A school reception class saw a decrease in the numbers of children not at age related expectation with 30.9% of children not secure for age on the WellComm in July 2021 compared to 75.7% at the beginning of the academic year. The SENCO reported that the introduction of the NELI had made a huge difference to this cohort of children.

c) Strategies and up to date information linked to key Ambitions to improve school readiness

Speech, language and communication (SLC)

- Contain funding has been secured until March 2022 to provide targeted speech, language and communication groups to parent carers of children aged 18 months – 30 months. A Speech and Language Therapist has been recruited to deliver these groups.
- A multi- agency SLC task and finish group has been established to agree the pathway for children aged 0-5. This will feed in to the Health Visiting Review and Early Help Redesign.
- The 'Giving Voice' accreditation program and associated workforce programme is delivered virtually with over 70 early years practitioners accessing the WellComm Training. Encouragement for all settings to use WellComm as a routine assessment tool at the start of the academic year as part of the baseline assessment.
- A Partington specific task and finish group has been established by the EYFS Consultant with an SLC focus.
- The Greater Manchester Top 10 Tips for Talking has been launched across Trafford week commencing 27th September with a social media campaign and live story times at the Hideaway and Urmston Library – this was covered in a press release to raise the profile.

Social emotional development and wellbeing (SEDW)

- Feel Good Early Years Project has been launched for PVI early years settings to support children's social and emotional development and well-being – it is planned that this will be extended to schools.
- A multi-agency Social and Emotional Development Well-Being Pathway Task and Finish Group has been established to co-produce the Trafford Pathway building on good practice from Bolton's THRIVE model. A draft will be developed by December.
- A piece of research has taken place with the support of the GMCA school readiness team and NESTA investigating parents' wishes for social and emotional support for 0-5s (focus group with parents of 0-5s from Partington held at The Hideaway). The findings from this piece of research will inform the development of Trafford's SEDW pathway and early help approaches.

- Delivery of Solihull and Incredible Years parenting programmes. Evidence of impact:

Solihull 'Understanding your Baby' course August 2021: 32 learners, 86% of course completers found the course helpful, 71% course completers would recommend the course to others and a parent attending the Incredible Years course stated:

It can be the smallest of changes of how I do something that will make a big impact on the effectiveness!! I also think the interaction and hearing from other parents facing the same is really nice so I know I'm not the only one. I'm also really grateful that there is a course like this. It makes me feel like there is hope and I don't need to keep struggling on forever. I feel really supported with you all there. So a big thank you"

Be Healthy

- Public health support to early years settings regarding guidance and protective measures
- Enhanced support provided regarding minimising risk and spread of other childhood viruses that have increased significantly to reduce pressure on paediatric wards and hospitalisations by providing key public health information in a timely way
- Catch up of early years immunisations that were affected due to deployment of health visitors and services
- A campaign across early years to reduce accidental poisoning in the home. Between 2016 and 2019, 60 children under 5 from Trafford were admitted to hospital due to accidental poisoning and 95 admitted to hospital from poisoning from medication.

Integrated Working and family support

A number of systemic changes are in scope to improve early identification of need, provide holistic support to families with the 'right help, at the right time by the right person.' These include:

- The introduction of a universal assessment at age 18 months for families in the North and Partington to increase 2 year take up, identify SLC needs at the earliest opportunity and support social and emotional development and well-being of families. This is tabled for discussion at the Children's Commissioning Board in October 2021.
- The Health Visiting Review and Early Help redesign will ensure that there are integrated pathways for children and families making best use of resources from across the system.
- Digitisation – Trafford are exploring the GMCA Digitisation offer where parent carers can access their child's journey via an app. This will contain key information such as developmental assessments and WellComm scores which can also provide health data at scale.
- Early Years Workforce Competency – Each locality in GM is hosting a session for front line workers to test out components of an early years workforce competency approach. Trafford is hosting this on 17th November. This will ensure that all those working with early years children have the necessary skills and underpinning knowledge to support families.

- Extension of the Trafford Team Together model for Early Years – Early Years Trafford Team Together approach is in conception.

Early Education

- Quality improvement support provided to all PVI and schools to support implementation of EYFS Reforms that came in to effect September 2021.
- A focus on narrowing the gap for black and mixed heritage children. An Educational Psychology Research Project has been developed in conjunction with Trafford Early Years Service, Educational Psychology Service and MMU exploring attainment gap in Trafford for particular BAME cohorts. Bright Futures Teaching School will be asked to support this work with a focus on the North of the Borough.
- Support has been commissioned for autumn term to support both the school/PVI sector with early reading and phonics which has been identified as an area of focus linked to Ofsted outcomes.
- All children attending an early years setting receiving specialist support from a social worker have attendance tracked weekly to ensure the most vulnerable benefit from regular attendance at a high quality early education provision – at present this equates to 46 children.
- Neighborhood approaches will continue for Partington and North to narrow attainment gap
- A comprehensive workforce programme is in place which underpins Trafford's key priorities to affect change. This includes a widespread speech and language package, SENCO qualifications, specific Safeguarding Training, Pediatric First Aid, and Public Health Support.

SEND

- 34 SENCOs in Early Years now trained to Level 3 Early Years SENCO qualification with a new cohort started September. This will ensure over half of all group settings in Trafford have a trained SENCO.
- Level 2 SENCO qualification to be offered to Childminders to develop SEND knowledge across all the sector.
- Multi-agency task and finish group established to review the Early Years Trafford Autism and Social Communication (TASC) Pathway.
- New early years provision map template and accompanying guidance materials have been developed and due to be launched. This will provide improved support for settings in planning effective, challenging and realistic targets and outcomes for children with the most complex needs, and provide impact data.
- Exploration of the introduction of the evidence based Pediatric Autism Communication Therapy (PACT) in Trafford. PACT is an early social communication intervention with parent carers to improve communication and interaction skills.

1001 Critical Days

- Chat Health', a confidential help and advice tool which enables safe and secure text messaging between health visitors and families launched July 2021
- Health Visitor Review is nearing the final stages with implementation due April 2022

- Parent Infant Mental Health Pathway finalised – agreement that this should link with the social emotional development and well-being pathway to ensure a consistent approach across the early years age range from pre birth to age 5.
- Trafford Infant-Parent Service (TIPS) launched with multi agency steering group.

Risks and challenges moving forward

- Increased pressure and demand on key partners and services including Intensive Family Support, Social Care, a range of health services due to increasing complexity of issues experienced for families.
- Health Visiting Capacity is of particular concern due to obvious interdependencies on improving school readiness. The 12-15 year old vaccination programme is affecting capacity along with national and local recruitment and retention challenges along with 'catch up' of developmental assessments due to original redeployment.
- Lower take up of 3&4 year old offer – need live birth data /IG sharing to assess how many children are not accessing universal provision and why