

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Date of Meeting

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Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life: School Readiness

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Public or Exempt No

Purpose of this report

1. This report provides the Health and Wellbeing Board with an update on progress being made in respect of 'School Readiness'.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to:

1. **consider and comment on the progress and continuing work in giving every child the best start in life: School readiness.**

Background

2. This item was last considered by the Health and Wellbeing Board at its meeting held on 27 July 2016.
3. The measure for school readiness is based on an assessment carried out at the end of the reception year at school across seven areas of learning.
4. In 2013 the level of children achieving a 'good level of development' was 49%, 3% below the national average.
5. In 2014 whilst the levels of achievement increased considerably to 57% the gap behind the national figure remained at 3%.
6. Work has progressed on this area through the School Readiness workstream of the Partnership Vision for Education.

Current Updated Position

7. The steady improvement from the baseline of 49% has continued. In 2015 64% of children in Central Bedfordshire achieved a good level of Development , just 2% behind the national average of 66%.
8. 2016 saw another improvement to 68.5%, and whilst the national figure also improved, this is now 69.3%. Central Bedfordshire is now less than 1% behind the national average. The national ranking is 94 out of 151, a rise of 16 places, however this is still in the 3rd quartile.
9. This represents a local increase of 19.5 percentage points (ppt) over the period since 2013, against a national increase of 17 ppt.
10. Whilst progress has been made against the national average, within the statistical neighbour cohort Central Bedfordshire still ranks at 9th out of 11 as in 2015. Statistical neighbours are achieving 71.6% of good levels of development.
11. In 2016 76% of girls achieved a good level of development, a 4% increase over 2015, and a 17 place ranking increase nationally, and an increase of 2 places from 11th to 9th against statistical neighbours. Nationally the achievement of girls is at 77%.
12. 62% of boys achieved a good level of development, a 6% increase from the previous year, and the same as national achievement levels. The statistical neighbour ranking remains the same at 9th out of 11, nationally there has been a 16 place increase.
13. For children who meet the Free School Meals criteria 49% achieve a good level of development, against 70% of children who are not eligible. This is a 21 percentage point (ppts) difference, an improvement of 4 ppts against the 2015 figure. Amongst statistical neighbours the ranking has increased from 10th to 9th. Nationally the ranking has improved by 16 but at 131/151 Central Bedfordshire remains in the bottom quartile.

Work being carried out to perpetuate the improvement journey

14. The leaflet sent to all parents whose children were starting school, identifying characteristics of school readiness, is now also being distributed through health visitors and all early years settings.
15. Posters along the same lines are also being sent for display in all possible places used by parents of young children.
16. Work is progressing to provide video clips available for parents to enhance the leaflet and posters. Some of these are available on Youtube, and still need to be linked from the CBC website.

17. A similar leaflet explaining the need for high school attendance levels starting in the early years has been drafted and will be circulated following final design and printing.
18. The work carried out on transition documents and assessment tools is being embedded, and regular transition meetings between early years providers and schools is starting to become regularised.
19. Work continues to integrate the courses offered by Children's Services and the Teaching School in the early years area.
20. There has been a significant improvement in the 2/2½ year old checks which are being carried out as part of the Healthy Child Programme. The check at this age is considered crucial to identifying emerging communication difficulties such a delay in developing age appropriate speech and language, or behavioural issues, problems with hearing or sight not previously identified, and other issues around physical development.
21. There had previously been poor performance in the completion of these checks. Since 2015 a new method of carrying out these checks has been piloted, making them an integrated review with a similarly based assessment which education/care settings make – known as the Early Years Progress Check.
22. In the integrated review parents are invited to a child's setting (or Children's Centre if they are not attending a setting). Information is gathered in advance, including a parental questionnaire completed in advance, and these form the basis of discussions between Health and Education professionals with parents/carers about their child's progress. Any issues that emerge can then be considered, and if necessary appropriate support put in place, along with regular monitoring of the child's development and progress.
23. The Integrated 2½ year Review for all children is now being rolled out across all of Central Bedfordshire and the delivery of the 2½ year review has increased from 54.6% at the end of Q2 in 2015-16 to 76.3% at the end of Q2 2016-17. SEPT (the Health Visiting providers) are now actively engaged with all Children's Centres and Nurseries to meet the target for the delivery of >90% integrated 2½ year reviews by the end of 2016.
24. Engaging child-minders further in the process is the priority for development over the next 6 months.
25. Further work is also being undertaken to ensure a smoother handover between Health Visitors and School Nurses.

26. The Two year old Offer for an additional 15 hours for the most vulnerable children (mostly based on income) has a high take-up in Central Bedfordshire. For the last 2 terms take-up figures have been around 80% against a national average of around 65%.
27. National research is being carried out on the impact of the additional hours for this cohort of children, but the expectation is that there will be an overall improvement in outcomes.
28. The annual data continues to be interrogated to ensure that appropriate strategies can be put in place to deal with specific areas that emerge.
29. For children who meet the Free School Meals criteria the small increase in the good level of development between 2015 and 2016 needs to be accelerated.
30. The Early Years Pupil Premium is specifically aimed at this cohort of children. This was introduced in April 2015 at a rate of £300 per year.
31. Providers use the money in ways which will support the specific learning and development needs of each identified EYPP child. This is informed by the understanding of each child's needs and preferences.
32. One such example is the provision of home learning bags to support three areas of learning: Communication, Physical and Mark making. The bags had learning cards for parents to use to play with their children which will support their personal, social and emotional development. This is a good example of settings and parents working together to improve the outcomes for children. My Explorer bags will be provided to all settings with EYPP children in January 2017. These will include a bug catcher, binoculars and information charts, amongst other items, to encourage parents to take their child out on a 'nature' hunt.
33. Another example was a bespoke session for two children with a teaching assistant for two thirty minutes sessions a week. This enabled detailed work on a range of identified needs, assessed on entry to the setting. The impact of this work meant that when the child left the setting they were achieving in line with expectations for their age.
34. Ofsted are monitoring use and impact of Pupil Premium at early years inspections.

Governance and Delivery Implications

35. School Readiness is a workstream of the Partnership Vision for Education Board.

Equalities Implications

36. Central Bedfordshire has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
37. Research compiled by Ofsted indicates that early education for low income and ethnic minority children can contribute important to combating educational disadvantage if certain criteria are met.
38. The plan is fully inclusive to the needs of adults and children within Central Bedfordshire and promotes equality of access for all the children.

Conclusion and next Steps

39. Work will continue with schools, settings, parents and health colleagues to ensure a continuation of the improved results.
40. Data analysis will also continue to ensure that work is targeted to the most appropriate groups.

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None