


Non-Executive Report of the: Overview and Scrutiny Committee 4 th April 2016	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Debbie Jones, Corporate Director of Children's Services	Classification: Unrestricted
2016-19 Children and Families Plan	

Originating Officer(s)	Joanne Starkie/Layla Richards
Wards affected	All wards

Summary

The 2016-19 Children and Families Plan sets out how the partnership will support children and families in Tower Hamlets over the next three years.

The Plan has been developed in close consultation with staff and stakeholders, as well as with children and families themselves.

The Children and Families Plan is due to be agreed by Cabinet in May 2016.

Recommendations:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the action taken to develop the 2016-19 Children and Families Plan to date and the next steps.
2. Review and comment on the 2016-19 Children and Families Plan.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review how the 2016-19 Children and Families Plan has been developed.
- 1.2 To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to comment on the 2016-19 Children and Families Plan.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 For alternative or fewer priorities for the 2016-19 Children and Families Plan to be developed.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

3.1 The Children and Families Plan

- 3.1.1 The 2016-19 Children and Families Plan has been developed by the Children and Families Partnership. This partnership is made up a range of local agencies and other representatives, including health services, the Police, registered housing providers, schools and the third and voluntary sector. Different organisations will continue to have their own plans setting out how their core responsibilities will be met, however this Children and Families Plan states our collective vision for children and families in the borough. The Plan brings together priorities that require input from a range of services and organisations, as well as from children and families themselves.
- 3.1.2 The 2016-19 Children and Families Plan supersedes the 2012-15 Children and Families Plan. It should be noted that the statutory requirement for local authorities to have a “Children and Young People’s Plan” ceased in 2010. However, at this time the Tower Hamlets Children and Families Partnership Board agreed that the borough would continue to have a “Children and Families Plan”, acting as the overarching strategic plan for how children and families will be supported.
- 3.1.3 While the majority of Plan focuses on the needs of children aged 0-18 and their families, the Plan also has a focus on supporting the needs of young adults up to the age of 25 where we have specific duties to do so.
- 3.1.4 The Children and Families Plan is part of a series of key strategies in the borough which set out how local services will support and improve the lives of local residents. A full list of strategies that are most closely linked to the Children and Families Plan are included in the Plan. Key among these is the borough’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy: The 2016-19 Health and Wellbeing Strategy sets out how local services will work together in partnership to improve the health and wellbeing of local residents over the next three years. The Strategy looks at health and wellbeing in a holistic sense, recognising the importance of enabling and engaging communities and their assets, as well as providing services in response to need. The Children and Families Plan has been developed in tandem with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, ensuring

that the two strategies collectively move us closer to the ambitions of the Tower Hamlets Community Plan.

3.2 Methodology for developing the Children and Families Plan

3.2.1 Needs assessment: An assessment looking at the needs of children and families in Tower Hamlets was carried out in 2015 and has driven the content of this Plan. To develop the needs assessment, a “task and finish” group was established to oversee the development of the needs assessment, with representatives from a range of services¹. The needs assessment was informed by a range of intelligence, including the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. Direct consultation with young people to inform the needs assessment took place with the Tower Hamlets Youth Council in summer 2015. Feedback raised by children and young people in other ways (e.g. through the last Pupil Attitude Survey) was also gathered and incorporated into the needs assessment.

The needs assessment was agreed by the Children and Families Partnership Board in December 2015. A summary of findings is included at the beginning of each section.

3.2.2 Child rights: The 2016-19 Children and Families Plan has been developed using a “child rights-based approach”. The headings within the Charter of Child Rights in Tower Hamlets (“reaching potential”, “living well”, “free from harm” and “playing a part and freedoms”) have provided the structure of the needs assessment and the Plan itself. These headings collectively explain those child rights that children and young people in Tower Hamlets feel are most relevant to them. Relevant articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child² have been allocated to each of the sections and background information and context to each of these. Finally, seven child rights principles have provided the analysis framework for the needs assessment and therefore the Children and Families Plan. These principles have been developed by Unicef to act as a framework to consider when putting rights into practice within public services. These are: Dignity; participation; life, survival and development; non-discrimination; transparency and accountability; best interest; and interdependence and indivisibility. These principles have not been made explicit in the needs assessment or Plan, but have nonetheless provided the main analytical framework for the findings.

Whilst the main structure of the needs assessment and Plan are based around child rights, the sections and sub-sections also relate to other key frameworks for children and young people. These include the Marmot Review policy objectives³ and Every Child Matters outcomes⁴.

¹ Public health, early years, CCG, CAMHS, voluntary sector and the troubled family service.

² The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a set of internationally agreed legal standards which lay out a vision of childhood underpinned by dignity, equality, safety and participation.

³ <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/every-child-matters>

3.2.3 Consultation and engagement: Consultation on the priorities within the 2016-19 Children and Families Plan was carried out with a wide range of children, families, staff and stakeholders. This included meetings with the Parent and Carer Council, with a Parent Forum at a Children's Centre, and with pupils at the Pupil Referral Unit and at a local primary school. A range of communication was initiated with staff (across the Council) and stakeholders, including the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Collectively, almost 100 children, young people and adults told us their views on the issues affecting children and families in Tower Hamlets, as did a large number of staff from a wide range of organisations. This feedback has driven and shaped both the needs assessment and the final 2016-19 Children and Families Plan. Some of the key messages we heard from children and families included:

- The importance of professionals treating each child or young person as an individual.
- Active play and socialising is beneficial to children and families and should be protected and promoted
- Housing was highlighted by many as a problem facing a number of families, and one that can affect all other areas of life
- Whilst most younger and older children feel safe, older children cited a number of areas where young people are at risk of harm from others or themselves. Feedback was that a number of people have a fear or mistrust of some services
- Parents can need support in their parenting role, and should be encouraged to engage in activities that are relevant to their children's lives
- Mental and emotional wellbeing needs to be considered in all services.

3.2 The structure of the Plan

3.2.1 The Plan is broken into four sections, which comprises the main body of the Plan. The title of each section has been drawn from "The Charter of Child Rights in Tower Hamlets", reflecting our commitment to the rights of children and young people:

- i. Reaching potential. This section focuses on education and employment.
- ii. Living well. This section focuses on life, survival and development.
- iii. Playing a part and freedoms. This section focuses on civic rights and responsibilities.
- iv. Free from harm. This section focuses on protection from abuse and harm.

3.2.2 Each of these sections sets out our "vision" for children and families in Tower Hamlets, and a description of the current situation for children and families in the borough. This is followed by a core set of priorities for children and families, and a list of actions setting out how that priority will be achieved. There are a total of 18 priorities under these sections. Each priority has an assigned "group" who will work in partnership with others to carry out activities and ensure the priority is met. Finally, each section has a list of key

information that we will collect and review to be able to measure our progress against the vision and each of the priorities.

3.2.3 Furthermore, the Plan identifies three cross-cutting priorities which will underpin the work planned for the next three years:

- Help at an early stage
- Holistic support that is easy to access
- Protecting and promoting the rights of the child

3.3 Delivering the Plan

3.3.1 The Children and Families Partnership Board will oversee the delivery of the Plan. The Board has membership from a wide range of local organisations, and functions as one of the key strategic groups within the borough. The Board is chaired by the Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services.

3.3.2 Specific performance measures to enable the Board to oversee the delivery of the Children and Families Plan are included in the Plan itself at the end of each section.

3.3.3 As previously noted, each priority has an assigned "group" who will work in partnership with others to carry out activities and ensure the priority is met. These groups are articulated in the Plan itself under each priority.

3.3.3 The Plan sets out a clear set of priorities and actions to be carried out over the next three years. However, we recognise the need for flexibility, particularly in the event of unforeseen changes in the national or local environment that can impact on future plans. An annual action plan derived from the Children and Families Plan and overseen by the Children and Families Partnership Board will therefore be produced each year to capture any relevant changes.

3.4 Communicating the Plan

Once approved, a Communications Plan will be developed. This will set out how the 2016-19 Children and Families Plan will be communicated to staff, stakeholders and residents.

4. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

4.1 The Children and Families Plan outlines the activities and priorities over the three year period to 2019. It is expected that these priorities will be funded within the resources available to the Children's Services directorate and partner organisations.

4.2 The plan incorporates early help and early intervention as key themes within the draft priorities. Over the medium term this may help to mitigate some of the cost pressures which materialise as a result of more complex or advanced interventions.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 5.15.1 The strategy set out in the Children and Families Plan is consistent with a number of general duties of the Council. The Council has a duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness by virtue of section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999. This is known as its Best Value Duty.
- 5.2 The Council's functions in relation to children include a duty under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 and section 175 of the Education Act 2002 to make arrangements to ensure that its functions are discharged having regard to the need to promote the welfare of children. Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 introduced a general duty for local authorities to promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need, including children with disabilities. The Council's general duty to promote high standards of education in respect of primary and secondary school students is set out under section 13A of the Education Act 1996.
- 5.3 The Childcare Act 2006 ("the 2006 Act") imposes a number of duties on local authorities. The general duty contained in section 1 of the 2006 Act is to (a) improve the well-being of young children in their area; and (b) reduce inequalities between young children in their area in respect of various matters, including physical and mental health and emotional well-being, protection from harm and neglect, education, training and recreation, the contribution made by them to society and social and economic well-being.
- 5.4 By section 3 of the 2006 Act, a local authority must make arrangements to secure that early childhood services in its area are provided in an integrated manner, which is calculated to facilitate access to those services, and to maximize the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children. "Early childhood services" are defined by section 2 of the 2006 Act, and includes "early years provision" for young children – i.e. the provision of childcare for a young child. In deciding what "arrangements" to make under this section, a local authority must have regard to (a) the quantity and quality of early childhood services that are provided, or expected to be provided, in the area; and (b) where in that area those services are provided or are expected to be provided.
- 5.5 Under related regulations, the Local Authority (Duty to Secure Early Years Provision Free of Charge) Regulations 2012, the Council must secure free early years provision for 15 hours per week, 38 weeks per year, for all 3-4 year olds and eligible 2 year olds.
- 5.6 Section 193 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 inserts a new s116A into the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, which places a duty on the Health and Wellbeing Board to prepare a joint strategic health and wellbeing strategy in respect of the needs identified in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. The duty to prepare this plan falls on local authorities and the Clinical Commissioning Group, but must be discharged by

the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Board must have regard to the Statutory Guidance on Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies published on 26 March 2013, and can only depart from this with good reason.

- 5.7 In the exercise of its functions, the Council must with the public sector equality duty to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010, the need to have regards to equality of opportunity and the need to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic, including ethnicity, and those who do not.

6. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 The needs assessment and priorities for the 2016-19 Children and Families Plan both highlight a series of equalities considerations. As a result, a number of priorities and the actions within them aim explicitly address inequality associated with age, gender, ethnic background, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender assignment and maternity. Taking these priorities forward in the 2016-19 Children and Families Plan will enable these issues to be addressed.

7. BEST VALUE (BV) IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The 2016-19 Children and Families Plan is a partnership-wide plan. Working effectively with partners on issues that are relevant to all will help to ensure that duplication is avoided and that resources are used in the best possible way.
- 7.2 A consistent theme running through the draft priorities is one of “early help” and “early intervention”. Providing help at an early stage will help ensure issues do not escalate into those that require resource-intensive interventions.

8. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

- 8.1 The priorities for the 2016-19 Children and Families Plan include those related to the environment and sustainability. These are captured in the “living well” section of Appendix II.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no identified risks to the Council in relation to the proposals in this report.

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.2 The priorities for the 2016-19 Children and Families Plan include those related to crime and disorder. These are captured in the “playing a part and freedoms” section of Appendix I.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

- Appendix I: 2016-19 Children and Families Plan

Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)

List of “Background Papers” used in the preparation of this report

List any background documents not already in the public domain including officer contact information.

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

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