

COUNCIL 24/03/15 – MOTION FROM CLLR ONASANYA

To: Children and Young People Committee

Meeting Date: 19 May 2015

From: Adrian Loades, Executive Director: Children, Families and Adults Services

Electoral division(s): All

Forward Plan ref: N/a **Key decision:** No

Purpose: Committee is asked to consider the resolution by Council on 24th March 2015 that the motion submitted by Cllr Onasanya about Early Years education should be referred to the Children and Young People Policy and Service Committee.

Recommendation: The Committee is asked to:

- a) note its recognition of the value of play in the Early Years; and
- b) ask the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Education on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council to confirm this Council's belief that learning through play remains a vital part of the initial training for those working towards a qualification in Early Years (including qualified teachers status) and also in the continuing professional development for those already working in the sector

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1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At Council on 24th March 2015, Cllr Onasanya proposed a motion about Early Years education, which was seconded by Cllr Scutt (**Appendix 1**).
- 1.2 Following discussion, it was resolved by a majority: 'In accordance with Part 4.1, Section 12.6 (a) (i) of the constitution, to refer this matter to the Children and Young People Policy and Service Committee for consideration'.

2.0 MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 Cllr Onasanya raised a number of issues about Early Years education, which are outlined in sections 2.2 to 2.6 below.

2.2 Expansion of funded early education

- 2.2.1 Funded nursery education for three and four year olds is well established in Cambridgeshire. All three and four year olds in England are entitled to 570 hours of free early education or childcare a year. This is often taken as 15 hours each week for 38 weeks of the year. In Cambridgeshire, 14,350 (95%) three and four year olds take up their funded place.
- 2.2.2 Since 2013, government funding has been extended to include nursery places for approximately 40% of the most disadvantaged two year olds. In Cambridgeshire, 1,264 (63%) of eligible children are currently taking up their funded place.
- 2.2.3 The majority of funded provision for two, three and four year olds is within the Private, Voluntary and Independent sector. The quality of this provision in Cambridgeshire is currently rated as 84% good or better by Ofsted (nationally it is 79%) and this contributes to the continuing improvements in outcomes for these children when they attend school.
- 2.2.4 The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Profile at the end of Reception shows that 61% of children achieve a Good Level of Development in Cambridgeshire (60% nationally). A rigorous moderation process, which is monitored by the Standards and Testing Agency, ensures that these assessments are accurate and that the principles of the EYFS are adhered to.
- 2.2.5 It is too soon to evaluate fully the impact of these policies locally. However, a small study was developed by Early Years, the Educational Psychology Service and the University of Cambridge in partnership with Children Centres and settings across the county. Achievement in the EYFS for 99 two year olds receiving their entitlement to free early education was analysed. The study showed that while the children started at the lower end of development their progress in all areas was shown to make large gains, higher than would have been expected according to the 'age stages' of the EYFS.

2.3 Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)

- 2.3.1 More than 170,000 three and four year olds are set to benefit from the £50m Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) from April 2015, which aims to close the gap between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers by

providing funding to early years providers to help them raise the quality of their provision.

- 2.3.2 Nurseries, schools and other early year's providers will receive an extra £300 per year for each eligible child that takes up their full entitlement of early year's education. Early years settings will have the freedom to choose how they spend the money to best support disadvantaged children in their care.
- 2.3.3 Children eligible for the EYPP include those from low-income families, defined as meeting the criteria for free school meals, children that have been looked after by the local authority for at least one day, adopted children, those in care or subject to a child arrangement order.
- 2.3.4 Cambridgeshire, along with six other local authorities, was asked by the DfE to be an 'early implementer' of the EYPP. This means that eligible families have been able to receive the funding for their child from January 2015. Case studies looking at the how the EYPP is being used and its impact is currently being collected.

2.4 Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

- 2.4.1 The EYFS sets standards for the learning, development and care of children from birth to five years old. All schools and Ofsted-registered early years providers must follow the EYFS, including childminders, pre-schools, nurseries and school reception classes.
- 2.4.2 The EYFS framework supports an integrated approach to early learning and care. It gives all professionals a set of common principles and commitments to deliver quality early education and childcare experiences to all children. Trainee Early Years Educators and Teachers will need to meet the standards set out in that qualification, but this will be within the requirements of the EYFS.

2.5 Learning through Play

- 2.5.1 Within the statutory EYFS framework are the 'Characteristics of Effective Learning' which focus on how children learn, and not just what they learn. These characteristics underpin and drive children's learning across all areas. The three characteristics of effective learning are as follows:

Playing and exploring - engaging

- i. Finding out and exploring
- ii. Playing with what they know
- iii. Being willing to 'have a go'

Active learning – motivation

- i. Being involved and concentrating
- ii. Keeping trying
- iii. Enjoying achieving what they set out to do

Creating and thinking critically – thinking

- i. Having their own ideas
- ii. Making links
- iii. Choosing ways to do things

- 2.5.2 Learning through play is intrinsic to the EYFS. In the Early Years Outcomes (DfE, September 2013) play is referenced in 'typical behaviour' in each of the strands of the Early Learning Goals, for each age group. For example, 22 – 36 months, 'Shows interest in play with sounds, songs and rhymes' and 30 – 50 months, (Mathematics) 'Uses some number names accurately in play'.
- 2.5.3 The importance of play is implicit rather than explicit. For example, there is no direct reference to learning through play in the standards for the new Early Years Teacher qualification. Whilst to qualify, all practitioners working in the Early Years sector must meet the standards within the EYFS and must therefore address 'playing and exploring', this is not explicit and there is a danger that the importance of play could be understated.

2.6 School readiness

- 2.6.1 A core purpose of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and responsibility for Early Years providers as outlined in the Statutory Framework (2014), is to enable school readiness.
- 2.6.2 There is no nationally agreed definition of school readiness. In Cambridgeshire, guidance given to the Early Years sector works on the principle that school readiness is created when families, the community, the school and the pre-school setting consider their combined contribution.

3.0 ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

- 3.1.1 The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:
- A high quality start to education makes a significant positive difference to a child's achievement in future years.
 - A sufficient supply of high quality early years education has a positive impact by enabling parents to either return to work or take up training to help them gain employment.

3.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives

- 3.2.1 The following bullet point sets out details of implications identified by officers:
- Quality early years education is key to a positive and healthy start in life.

3.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

- 3.3.1 The following bullet point sets out details of implications identified by officers:
- A good start to education is particularly important for vulnerable groups because the evidence is that once a child falls behind it is very difficult for them to catch up.

4.0 SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Resource Implications

- 4.1.1 There are no significant implications within this category.

4.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

4.2.1 There are no significant implications within this category.

4.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

4.3.1 There are no significant implications within this category.

4.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications

4.4.1 There are no significant implications within this category.

4.5 Localism and Local Member Involvement

4.5.1 There are no significant implications within this category.

4.6 Public Health Implications

4.6.1 There are no significant implications within this category.

SOURCE DOCUMENTS GUIDANCE

Source Documents	Location
Early Years Foundation Stage documentation	https://www.gov.uk/early-years-foundation-stage