Introduction

Children’s Centres are service hubs where children under five years old and their families are able to receive seamless, integrated services and information. Every community in Warwickshire is served by a Sure Start Children’s Centre offering universal provision across the county to ensure that every child has the best possible start in life.

Children’s Centres offer a range of services:

- Child and family health advice and services including ante-natal provision, health visitor services and breastfeeding support.
- Support for parents, including advice on parenting, local childcare options and access to specialist services for families.
- Family support to families in greatest need.
- Helping parents back in to work with a view to reducing inequalities.

Warwickshire has 39 designated children’s centres delivered over three distinct periods of development. Children’s Centres need to demonstrate their ability to meet the stringent requirements of the OFSTED inspection framework. To date, all OFSTED inspections in Warwickshire have resulted in good or outstanding judgements.

National and corporate drivers

The aim of Sure Start Children’s Centres is to improve outcomes for all children. They are a vital part of the government strategy to reduce inequalities, especially for those families in greatest need of support. The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 amends the Childcare Act 2006 at section 5A, giving local authorities the responsibility for making arrangements for the provision of sufficient children’s centres to meet local need i.e the needs of parents, prospective parents and children within the local authority’s area.

Key policy documents include:

- Sure Start Children’s Centres statutory guidance.
- DFE Business Plan 2011-15
- Early Intervention Business Unit Plan
- Children’s Trust priorities
- People Group vision statement.
- Marmot Review
- Graham Allen reviews
- OFSTED Evaluation Schedule and Grade descriptors
- Conducting Children’s Centre inspections
- National Performance indicators for Children’s Centres.
- Children’s Centres Self Evaluation form guidance
- Children’s Trust area priority documents.
- Payment by Results

The Children’s Centre Team embrace the Warwickshire County Council ambitions to:
- Work with partners to enhance community engagement.
- Support communities to help themselves
- Encourage volunteering
- Increase opportunities for people to improve their work related skills.
- Raise the educational aspirations of children, young people and families.

The team also sign up to the Warwickshire People Group mission statement: **To support people, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, to access throughout their lives, every opportunity to enjoy, achieve and live independently.**

**Role of the team**

The newly established Children’s Centre Team was created in January 2012 with a change in focus from development to performance management of children’s centres in Warwickshire.

It is the role of the team to ensure that children’s centres are effectively making available universal and targeted early childhood services in line with the core purpose.

The core purpose of children’s centres is to improve outcomes for young children and their families with particular focus on families in greatest need of support, in order to reduce inequalities in:
- Child development and school readiness
- Parenting aspirations, self esteem and parenting skills
- Child and family health and life chances.

It is therefore necessary for the children’s centre team to ensure that contractual arrangements with children’s centres are robust to allow the necessary performance management arrangements to be effective. Local authorities have the responsibility of commissioning children’s centres to achieve the core purpose as a key component of their strategy to improve the well-being of young children.

The Children’s Centre team has direct line management of 8 Local Authority Children’s Centres.

**Description of services**

Commissioning of service delivery is a key area of work and the children’s centre team have a duty to ensure there are sufficient children’s centres to
meet local need. Commissioning provision is likely to increasingly involve a
diverse range of organisations that have a track record of supporting families
and young children. It is necessary to agree priorities with a focus upon
frontline services in areas of greatest need.

Performance management is conducted through the process of Annual
Conversations with subsequent production of targets for delivery within the
forthcoming year. Quality Assurance documentation is provided as a
recording mechanism in line with OFSTED evaluation requirements.
There is an ongoing requirement for the team to identify data in line with key
performance indicators.

The Children’s Centre team has a responsibility to support all Children’s
Centres through the OFSTED inspection process.

3 year strategy

- Consultation with communities regarding proposals for the change to
  the structure of identified children’s centres.
- Authority from Strategic Commissioning review to proceed with
  proposals.
- Manage the System Leaders programme.
- Establishment of procurement arrangements and tendering of
  children’s centre contracts.
- Close working with Strategic Procurement team in the delivery of
  contracts.
- TUPE arrangements
- Maintain and develop strategic partnership arrangements with health
  and job centre plus.
- Identify opportunities for greater engagement with GP’s.
- Work to identified Children’s Trust priorities
- Ensure the embedding of the updated statutory guidance for children’s
  centres.
- Support Professional Development meetings for Early Years providers
  to establish firm links with children’s centres. Promote the statutory
  EYFS framework.
- Monitor the development and response to Payment by Results.
- Engage in the Memorandum of Understanding with Coventry and
  Solihull.
- Ongoing support for advisory boards.
Annual plan 2012-13

The key priorities for 2012-13 are as follows:

- Complete business case and options appraisal for consideration within the Strategic Commissioning Review process.
- Consultation on proposals with relevant local communities and elected members.
- Implementation of proposals and subsequent commencement of procurement and tendering process.
- Manage TUPE transfer process
- Develop systems
- Establish Quality Assurance documentation for use at Annual Conversations with Children’s Centres.
- Effective line management of 8 Local Authority Children’s Centres.
- Conduct Annual Conversations and quarterly monitoring arrangements with all 40 Children’s Centres.
- Create a mechanism for effective use of System Leaders to support priority areas of work.
- Deliver Professional Development meetings

Other relevant documents

Please see the targets recorded on the present SLA and completed Annual Report for 2011-2012.

Contacts

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