

Select Committee on Children's Services – 11 November 2010

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Extended Services – Joint Working with Health Colleagues

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Select Committee members of the joint work currently being undertaken between the Extended Services Team through Children's Centres and Health colleagues (within the PCT, Dudley Community Services and Dudley Group of Hospitals).

Background

2. The Local Authority commissions the delivery of Children's Centres in the borough and Service Level Agreements are held between the Extended Services Team and the Centres. There are 20 Children's Centres in the borough; 15 are on school sites and 5 are commissioned through the voluntary sector, (Action for Children). The Extended Services Team is responsible for the performance management of the centres and commissioning specialist services e.g. Citizens Advice Bureau and Health provision as detailed below.
3. Children's Centres and Extended Service provision are the hubs of universal service delivery in the 5 townships of the borough. Clusters of schools which include Children's Centres work together with partner agencies including Health to deliver Extended Services to their local communities.

Children's Centres and partnerships with Health colleagues

4. There has been a huge amount of attention and activity nationally around the integration of Health and Children's Centres resulting in the production of statutory guidance which states that Health must consider the delivery of services through Children's Centres.
5. **UNICEF Baby Friendly Status**

In partnership with colleagues in Dudley PCT and Dudley Group of Hospitals we have been successful in achieving Stage One accreditation for **UNICEF Baby Friendly Status**. We are now focused on working towards Phase 2, which promotes breast feeding in every area of the borough. The impact of this is that mothers can now breast feed in all Children's Centres across Dudley and we now have a workforce, both Health and other professionals, who are specifically trained in supporting breast feeding. We also have a team of 'buddies', who are

volunteers at every Children's Centre, and who specifically work with new mums needing extra support to continue breastfeeding. There are a vast number of requirements for all organisations involved across the borough in terms of what can and cannot be supported and promoted to improve the health of babies and we have been successful in encouraging and persuading a vast range of organisations and partners to support us in this project.

6. **Direct Referral System**

All Children's Centres are now receiving referrals directly from the midwifery service of pregnant women who are booking with them. We have developed services that will encourage these ladies to use their Children's Centres and access services that will improve their experience of pregnancy, prepare them for parenting and help them maintain a healthy and happy lifestyle throughout. Specific projects have been developed to support this process:

7. **Distribution of Free Antenatal Vitamins**

Under '**Healthy Start**' women on benefits and low income are entitled to free vitamins whilst pregnant, and post natal drops for their babies. We are working with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) to distribute these vitamins through a coupon redemption process initially in the Phase 1 Children's Centres. These Centres are Brierley Hill, Kates Hill and Sledmere, Lye and Wollescote, Netherton Park, Wrens Nest and Priory.

8. **National Childbirth Trust Classes (NCT)**

We have commissioned, with the PCT, a pilot to assess whether investment in NCT classes will reduce the number of surgical interventions during delivery. The Children's Centres chosen, Gornal, Kates Hill and Coseley, were chosen because of the bus routes and access to Dudley Group of Hospitals, but they are open to any pregnant lady to attend.

9. **Antenatal 'Waddle'**

A new piece of work, being done in conjunction with the Obesity in Pregnancy team, is to develop a safe and recommended exercise programme for pregnant women. The cost of recruiting a suitably qualified exercise instructor prohibits any other form of antenatal exercise programmes but the benefits of the 'Waddle' will be just as good and effective.

10. **The Neonatal Discharge Support Group and Sibling Support Groups**

These were developed in partnership with Dudley Group of Hospitals and BLISS, the special care baby charity, which provides vital support and care to premature and sick babies across the UK. We have developed a unique and pioneering method to support parents as they prepare to be discharged from hospital with their premature babies. We have a clinical rotation which includes a Consultant Paediatrician, physiotherapist and dietician plus other support services that attend a monthly support group. Children's Centres have made a firm commitment to this programme by providing resources for a fortnightly activity at their centres.

11. **‘Drop in’ facility for children under five**

One Children’s Centre, closest to Russells Hall Hospital provides a **‘drop in’ facility for children under five**, with a parent or carer, to have some space from the hospital ward to be with their parent/carer and come to terms with what is happening to their sibling. This service has been particularly valued.

12. **The Health Visitor Communication Policy**

This has been developed following the team’s involvement on the development of the Child Health Strategy **“Healthy Lives Brighter Futures”**. This policy has made a commitment for there being a named health visitor for every Children’s Centre. This policy also ensures that there is a clear understanding of each of the roles and responsibilities of the partners involved.

13. **Joint Clinics**

Midwife and Health Visitors joint clinics are now delivered in some Children’s Centres across the borough. This service reinforces the antenatal work that the centres are delivering and provides all those pregnant ladies who have not engaged previously a chance to visit and learn about Children’s Centres.

14. **The Multi Skills Playground Markings Project**

This unique project was developed in conjunction with the PE and Sports in school team and supports children from six weeks upwards. We have trained parents in the use of the markings with a view to them being available in parks and play areas for all to use. We have also developed a new and pioneering postnatal exercise programme for mums to access as soon as they have had a successful 6 week check.

15. **Healthy Eating and Exercise Programmes**

Children’s Centres have a role to play in supporting the reduction of Obesity rates in Reception Class. Through the Weight Management Programme children are weighed with their parents’ permission on admission to school. All Children’s Centres give advice on healthy eating and have specific groups which support this agenda. We were very fortunate to be given the opportunity with our colleagues in the PCT to identify two Children’s Centres to be trained in an expensive childhood obesity programme called Mini-Mend. Stourbridge and Little Hands Children’s Centres were identified to send two staff members who would learn the programme and come back and pilot it and train other centres in the delivery of the programme. Two years later all centres are now delivering a full range of fitness programmes for children aged 6 weeks to five including a variation of the original programme Mini- Mend which has been renamed Jumping Beans.

16. **Clinical Pathways for Mental Health support**

Mental Health has been a key issue for both Children’s Centres and Extended Services for a significant period of time. We are currently reviewing the provision

of 'talking therapies' and developing clinical pathways to ensure that delivery of these services is safe and appropriate to the target audience.

17. **Health Charter for Early Years**

A new project to look at the development of a Health Charter has been initiated. In conjunction with colleagues in Public Health, work is being undertaken to consider an award process for Early Year's settings that promote and encourage a healthy lifestyle, including smoke free homes, healthy food and exercise programmes.

Proposals

18. The Extended Services Team continues to support and build upon the partnership work with Health colleagues to deliver better outcomes for Under 5's and their families accessing Children's Centre services.

Finance

19. Existing budgets are being used to maintain this work.

Law

20. The main pieces of legislation governing these aspects of our work are the Children Act 2004, the Education and Inspections Act of 2006 and the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

Equality Impact

21. Equality and Diversity issues are integral to all service development and delivery. Existing staff are being used to support delivery.

Recommendation

22. That Select Committee notes and endorses the joint work being done between the Local Authority (Extended Services Team), Dudley PCT, Dudley Community Services and Dudley Group of Hospitals to support service delivery through the Children Centres in Dudley.



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