



Equality Analysis Report

Title of activity:

Review of Children's Centres CSSF 08

Summary of activity:

There are currently 15 Children's Centres operating across 16 sites in Bedford Borough. These are dispersed across the area, including a number of rural models. The legislative framework to support the need for provision in Bedford Borough is the Childcare Act 2006, as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. More specifically;

- Section 5A of the Act: The duty to make sufficient provision of children's centres to meet local need, so far as is reasonably practicable. Local authorities should ensure universal access to children's centres is achieved and all children and families can be reached effectively, especially the most deprived
- Section 5D: The duty to consult before establishing, significantly changing or closing a children's centre. Local authorities should allow adequate time for responses, actively encourage parents from disadvantaged groups to participate, and demonstrate in their decision how they have taken consultation responses into account.

The proposal is to conduct a review of the provision of services around children's centres to ensure they are fit for purpose and continue to meet national policy requirements and local need. As part of this review and consultation, the service area will consider the recently published document from the Department for Education on the 'core purpose' of Children's Centres. The core purpose is intended to move beyond the concept of a full core offer which all Sure Start Children's Centres were required to deliver as the network was being established. The concept of a full core offer played an important role when the network of children's centres was being established, but many in the early years sector have said that it does not necessarily reflect what the best children's centres are doing, or leave room for local innovation. The Government wants to see a greater focus on local leadership of services to improve outcomes for families in greatest need.

The proposal outlines a reduction in the funding available by 20% (£364,000) from 2013/14 onwards to help address the financial challenges faced by the Borough Council. With all existing Children Centre contracts due to end during 2012/13, there is an opportunity to identify targeted delivery models and re-tender in readiness for the proposed savings to become effective from 1st April 2013 onwards.

Lead officer:

Anne Cheveralls, Head of Early Engagement & Development

Equality analysis team:

James Dove, Children's Centre Development Manager
 Sharon Simpson, Head of Commissioning & Resource Allocation

Relevance

An equality analysis of this activity is required.

This activity has no relevance to Bedford Borough Council's duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations. An equality analysis is not needed.

Explanation why equality analysis is not needed:

N/A

Level 1 Equality Analysis

Scope of equality analysis**Impacted by activity:**

The activity proposed under CSSF 8 will potentially have the most impact on the Children (aged 0-5) and their families including women, pregnant women, and those on maternity leave. There could also be issues for those from black and minority ethnic communities, those with a disability and those with religious and cultural barriers that may act as a barrier to accessing services not in their immediate locality.

The activity proposed is to reduce the funding available by 20% for Children Centre services delivered on behalf of the Borough by the voluntary & community sector. For some this could mean the service will be available but operate in a different way or with a different provider. In addition, this will potentially have implications for existing service providers, particularly local providers who may not have the financial resources to service future contracts that have significant financial liabilities (E.g. Costs associated with a staffing restructure & redundancies).

Depending on the outcome of the consultation feedback, it is proposed to go out to tender during 2012 with a view that re-focused children's centre services will be in place from 1st April 2013 onwards

This analysis represents equality analysis for Policy Options proposed to take affect from April 2012. Please note that whilst some initial analysis has been undertaken for those options that take affect in later years, further work will be required to assess the impact taking into account circumstances at that time.

Protected equality groups:

It is considered that the activity would have the most impact and therefore relevant to those under the 'age' and 'gender' protected groups and 'pregnant women' and those on 'maternity leave'. Others from different protected equality groups may also be impacted such as black and minority ethnic communities, those with a disability and those with religious and cultural barriers that may act as a barrier to accessing services not in their immediate locality.

Due regard has been given to those protected equality groups for gender reassignment, sexual orientation or marriage and civil partnership and at this stage there would not be an impact. However, this will be considered through consultation as appropriate.

General Equality Duties:

This activity proposed under CSSF8 relates to the Bedford Borough Council's equality duties to:

- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- Foster good relationships between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Evidence

What relevant evidence is there about the activity?

For the activity proposed under CSSF 8, there is some information available on service users which may help us in analyse the impact on equality. For example;

- We have 15 Children Centres working across 16 sites
- We currently have 5,045 children registered with a Children Centre
- We currently regularly work 2,270 Children through Centres

However, there is more evidence needed from the service users and stakeholders through engagement and analysis work to ensure that the impact of each activity proposed is considered in more detail in respect of the protected equality groups

What does this evidence tell you about the different protected groups?

At this stage, the evidence we have does not tell us a great deal about the different protected equality groups in relation to service users will be affected by activity proposed under CSSF 8.

We know that the proposed activities could potentially have an impact on one or more different protected equality groups and Bedford Borough Council's equality duties to:

- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- Foster good relationships between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

However, there is more evidence needed from the service users and stakeholders through engagement and analysis work to ensure that the impact of each activity proposed is considered in more detail in respect of the protected equality groups.

What further research or data do you need to fill any gaps in your understanding of the potential or known effects of the activity?

As a result of the activities proposed under CSSF 8, there is potentially an impact on service users and other stakeholders– who may be from one or more of the different protected equality groups. Through engagement and the collation of more information and evidence, the extent of any impact can be considered further.

Have you thought about commissioning new data or research?

Through the engagement and consultation which is being undertaken, specific information and evidence will be collated to allow us to better understand the impact of the proposed activity under CSSF 8 for service users and other stakeholders.

Adverse affect on equality

Age

By virtue of the fact that children and their families are the predominate service users for the Directorate – the activity proposed under CSSF8 will have an impact on those in the protected equality group with the characteristic of age. However, from the evidence we have so far, the extent of this impact would need to be explored further through consultation work.

Disability

There may be a small number of children and their families who access Children Centre services who would be included in this protected equality group; however, from the evidence we have so far – the impact of the proposals on this protected group is not fully understood and more work is therefore needed to understand this.

Gender reassignment

At this stage there is no evidence that the activity proposed under CSSF8 would have an adverse impact on this group. However this will be explored further through consultation where appropriate.

<p>Pregnancy and maternity</p> <p>There are women and young parents who are protected by this equality group. The services provided by Children Centres do provide essential services for those accessing in relation to pregnancy and those on maternity leave. However, from the evidence we have so far, the extent of this impact would need to be explored further through consultation work.</p>
<p>Race</p> <p>There may be a number of children and their families from BME communities who access Children Centre services who would be included in this protected equality group; however, from the evidence we have so far – the impact of the proposals on this protected group is not fully understood and more work is therefore needed to understand this</p>
<p>Religion or belief</p> <p>There may be a number of children who access Children Centre services that would be included in this protected equality group; however, from the evidence we have so far – the impact of the proposals on this protected group is not fully understood and more work is therefore needed to understand this</p>
<p>Sex (gender)</p> <p>There are women who are protected by this equality group. The services provided by Children Centres do provide essential services for women, particularly those accessing in relation to ante & post natal services. However, from the evidence we have so far, the extent of this impact would need to be explored further through consultation work.</p>
<p>Sexual orientation</p> <p>At this stage there is no evidence that the activity proposed under CSSF8 would have an adverse impact on this group. However this will be explored further through consultation where appropriate.</p>
<p>Marriage & civil partnership (in relation to eliminating discrimination)</p> <p>At this stage there is no evidence that the activity proposed under CSSF8 would have an adverse impact on this group. However this will be explored further through consultation where appropriate.</p>
<p>Other identified groups (e.g. carers, different socio-economic, other groups experiencing barriers to access)</p> <p>There may be children and their families who access the services as proposed under CSSF 8 who would be included in this protected equality</p>

group. For example, those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. However, from the evidence we have so far – the impact of the proposals on this protected group is not known, and therefore more work is needed to understand this. This will be explored through consultation.

Positive affect on equality

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation

In line with contractual & Ofsted requirements, Children Centre services are monitored on their capacity to challenge discrimination in all its forms. This will remain a requirement of service delivery regardless of the funding available for service provision

2. Advance equality of opportunity

In line with contractual & Ofsted requirements, Children Centre services are monitored on their work to advance the equality of opportunity for their users. This will remain a requirement of service delivery regardless of the funding available for service provision

3. Foster good relations (including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between different protected groups)

In line with contractual & Ofsted requirements, Children Centre services are monitored on work to foster good relations between different community groups and individuals. This will remain a requirement of service delivery regardless of the funding available for service provision

4. Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people

In line with contractual & Ofsted requirements, Children Centre services are monitored on their capacity to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people. This will remain a requirement of service delivery regardless of the funding available for service provision

5. Take account of disabled people's disabilities

In line with contractual & Ofsted requirements, Children Centre services are monitored on their capacity to take account of people's disabilities. This will remain a requirement of service delivery regardless of the funding available for service provision

Summary of analysis

The evidence we have so far would suggest that the activity proposed under CSSF 8 will have an impact on a number of protected equality groups and Bedford Borough Council's equality duties to:

- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- Foster good relationships between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

What is not fully known is the extent of any impact as a result of the activity, adverse and positive, and specifically on which protected equality groups. Work needs to be done on each of the service areas under the activity proposed in order to address this in more detail. Therefore, the most appropriate course of action would be to carry onto a level 2 analysis.

For most of the activity in CSSF 8 there are gaps in the relevant equality information preventing an evidence led analysis of the effects on equality. By completing the level 2 analysis, and through the proportionate engagement with service users, staff and other stakeholders, we can determine the impact of each, whether this is positive or adverse and any mitigating actions.

Level 2 Equality Analysis

Engagement – Methodology

A consultation has taken place and included individuals from the following groups;

- Parents of children aged under 5
- Women
- Those who are pregnant and on maternity leave
- Parents who have a disability
- Young pregnant women & young parents
- Parents and/or carers from BME communities
- Parents and/or carers who practice a religion or have a belief

The consultation took place with the following dates;

Group	Date
Play Together – Wilstead	1 st Nov
Busy Bluebells – Bromham	4 th Nov
Stay & Play – Cauldwell	7 th Nov
Explore Together – Pinecones (Harpur)	8 th Nov
Baby Group – Bedford Central	8 th Nov
Play Together – Gt Barford	10 th Nov
Activity Tots – Sharnbrook	10 th Nov
Stay & Play – Pear Tree (Kempston)	14 th Nov
Daisy Hill (individual response)	15 th Nov

In addition, the consultation questionnaire was made available to existing Children Centre providers, partners & stakeholders from 26th September

onwards. Paper copies were distributed again at the Children Centre Strategy group on 26th October & Early Years Reference group on 3rd November. All partners & stakeholders were encouraged to make the questionnaire available to parents & carers.

An offer was made to all partners & stakeholders to meet with any groups to discuss the issues in more depth

The deadline for feedback was 21st November. Where requested, stakeholders were informed that proposals will go forward to the Executive on 7th December for further consideration.

Age

Given that Children aged 0-5 were potentially adversely affected by the activity proposed in CSSF8, all the consultations carried out by the Children Centre team focused on capturing the views of parents who have children under the age of 5. There were 65 parents who completed the response

Disability

The opportunity for parents who have children with a disability to be part of the consultation was made available through the work that targeted parents with children aged 0-5. In addition, questionnaires were delivered to the Child Development Centre. There were 3 parents out of the 65 respondents who reported having a disability.

Gender reassignment

No specific consultation was aimed at this protected group but where it was noted as issue during the consultation; this was explored in more depth and will be considered in the findings.

Pregnancy and maternity

Given that those who were pregnant, on maternity leave and young parents were potentially adversely affected by the activity proposed in CSSF8, the consultation with groups that support very young children. In addition, questionnaires were also delivered to Charis House which provides supported accommodation for young parents. There was 1 respondent who was pregnant and 8 individuals who had very young children

Race

The opportunity for those from BME communities to be part of the consultation was made available through the work that targeted parents with children aged 0-5. There were 10 parents out of the 65 respondents from BME communities

Religion or belief

The opportunity for those with a religion or belief to be part of the consultation

was made available through the work that targeted parents with children aged 0-5. There were 39 parents out of the 65 who responded who recorded having a belief or religion

Sex (gender)

Given that Women were potentially adversely affected by the activity proposed in CSSF8, the consultations carried out by the Children Centre team focused on capturing the views of women. There were 57 women and 8 men who responded to the consultation

Sexual orientation

No specific consultation was aimed at this protected group but where it was noted as issue during the consultation; this was explored in more depth and will be considered in the findings.

Marriage & civil partnership (in relation to eliminating discrimination)

No specific consultation was aimed at this protected group but where it was noted as issue during the consultation; this was explored in more depth and will be considered in the findings.

Other identified groups (e.g. carers, different socio-economic, other groups experiencing barriers to access)

In planning the consultation, consideration was given to including those who may be experiencing socio-economic disadvantage in areas of the higher deprivation and attendance at groups in those areas was targeted. Of the groups consulted, 7 were held in wards with areas that fall into the 30% most disadvantaged wards in England.

Engagement findings

Age

The impact on Children aged 0-5 could be significant if fewer opportunities to learn & play together are made available for this age group. A specific comment focused on the benefits of Children Centres in helping to prepare Children for school life and the costs this could save the authority in the future

Disability

There were no specific issues raised regarding disability in the process other that there could be a reduction in services some individuals & communities

Gender reassignment

There were no issues that arose for this particular protected group

Pregnancy and maternity

There were no specific issues raised regarding pregnancy & maternity in the process other that there could be a reduction in services for some individuals

& communities
<p>Race</p> <p>There were no specific issues raised regarding race in the process other that there could be a reduction in services some individuals & communities</p>
<p>Religion or belief</p> <p>There were no specific issues raised regarding religion or belief in the process other that there could be a reduction in services some individuals & communities</p>
<p>Sex (gender)</p> <p>The majority of respondents involved in the consultation were women who access Children Centre services with their Children. It was commented that Centre services provide a place where they can learn with their Children and socialise with other parents</p>
<p>Sexual orientation</p> <p>There were no issues that arose for this particular protected group</p>
<p>Marriage & civil partnership (in relation to eliminating discrimination)</p> <p>There were no issues that arose for this particular protected group</p>
<p>Other identified groups (e.g. carers, different socio-economic, other groups experiencing barriers to access)</p> <p>It was raised that the support that Children Centres can provide for vulnerable Children was crucially important and a reduction in resources will impact on safeguarding. It was also noted that support for these groups incurs more cost. There was general consensus from stakeholders that the reduction in services would affect more disadvantaged groups the most and the risks are not fully considered</p>

Analysis of engagement
<p>What further adverse impact on each protected equality group was identified?</p> <p>That the reduction in services will impact on a number of protected groups through less services being available for some individuals & communities. This will particularly be an issue for children & women who are the predominant users of Children Centre services.</p>
<p>If the activity is likely to have a negative impact, what are the reasons?</p> <p>There will be a reduction in services for some individuals and some communities arising from the 20% saving. The review process will identify where resources should be prioritised and the impact of where services are reduced or delivered differently</p>
<p>What does your activity currently do to address the issues highlighted by engagement?</p>

It provides universal integrated early childhood services for 0-5 year olds across the Borough through Children Centres sites

What practical changes will help reduce any adverse impact on the relevant protected equality groups?

To work with all parents, partners & stakeholders on developing a re-focused model for Children Centres that prioritises services for disadvantaged and protected groups. The model will need to ensure services across all 16 Children Centre sites and be focused on the provision of services for disadvantaged and protected groups

What are the resource / budget implications of these actions?

None other than staff time and those already outlined in the budget options process

What will be done to improve access to, and take-up of, services and understanding your activity by relevant protected equality groups?

We will work with parents, partners & stakeholders to develop the re-focused model for Children Centre services

What impact will the activity have on helping different groups of people to get on well together and foster good relations?

A re-focused model for Children Centre services should enable Children Centre services to prioritise their resources at disadvantaged and protected groups and create an environment where more positive relations between groups can develop

What can you do to advance equality and eliminate discrimination when you procure goods and services?

Ensure procurement regulations are followed and specific attention is paid to prioritising services for disadvantaged and protected groups in future tendering processes

How will the activity meet the different needs of relevant protected equality groups?

We will work with parents, partners & stakeholders to develop the re-focused model for Children Centre services

What risk to equality / adverse impact would there be if your activity was **not** implemented?

There would be a significant reduction in services for disadvantaged and protected groups and we would fail to meet our statutory duties to provide

sufficient Children Centre services in the Borough

Analysis Findings

Analysis findings

1. No major change required.

Bedford Borough will continue to work with members of the Early Years sector to develop Children Centre services that are tailored to meet the needs of all children.

- Develop a re-focused model(s) for Children Centres that prioritises work for disadvantaged & protected groups
- Ensure focus on disadvantaged and protected groups through re-tendering of services
- To look at related budgets within the local authority to establish whether savings could be generated through more flexible use of Children Centre buildings and facilities.
- Look at the makeup of the budgets to identify any areas for savings
- Work with providers to undertake a competitive dialogue process and move away from traditional tendering
- Encourage other potential providers to join the dialogue
- Creating savings on Children Social Care budgets through an 'invest to save' and/or payment by results model for Children Centre delivery. This would require the delivery of very specific evidence based interventions that are proven to reduce the entry of children & families to social care services and thus reduce the demand for more costly interventions (e.g. children entering the looked after system)

Monitoring and review

The work to review and re-focus Children Centre delivery will be overseen by the Children Centre Strategy group with a direct reporting line through to the Bedford Borough Childrens Trust. The current providers of Children Centres will be involved in this process through the Senior Children Centre leads group and the Children Centre network day.

Action plan

Issues	Actions	Target date	Lead	Resources required
Adverse impact	To develop a re-focused model(s) for Children Centres that prioritises work for disadvantaged & protected groups. To undertake a number of studies to establish a cost base of Children Centres	By May 2012 July 2012	Head of Service 5	None above existing
Opportunities to advance equality and foster good relations	Ensure focus on disadvantaged and protected groups through re-tendering of services	Ongoing	Head of Service 5	None above existing
Engagement and involvement	Listen & Involve parents, partners & stakeholders in the development of Children Centre services	Ongoing	Head of Service 5	None above existing
Dissemination of analysis	Keep all partners & stakeholders up to date through strategic groups	Ongoing	Head of Service 5	None above existing
Equality information, data and evidence	Keep accurate records of ongoing engagement	Ongoing	Head of Service 5	None above existing



Sign off

Name of Executive or Assistant Director: Brian Glover

Date: 24 November 2011

Review date: August 2012