

<b>Title of paper:</b>	A summary of the work linked to the creation of a Speech, Language and Communication Pathway for Nottingham City	
<b>Report to:</b>	Children's Partnership Board	
<b>Date:</b>	29 <sup>th</sup> June 2021	
<b>Relevant Director:</b>	Catherine Underwood	<b>Wards affected:</b> All
<b>Contact Officer(s) and contact details:</b>	Kathryn Bouchlaghem, Early Years Manager <a href="mailto:Kathryn.bouchlaghem@nottinghamcity.gov.uk">Kathryn.bouchlaghem@nottinghamcity.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Other officers who have provided input:</b>	Nick Lee, Director of Education <a href="mailto:Nicholas.lee@nottinghamcity.gov.uk">Nicholas.lee@nottinghamcity.gov.uk</a>  Katherine Crossley, Early Years Project Officer <a href="mailto:Katherine.crossley@nottinghamcity.gov.uk">Katherine.crossley@nottinghamcity.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Relevant Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) priority or priorities:</b>		
<b>Safeguarding and supporting children and families:</b> Children, young people and families will benefit from early and effective support and protection to empower them to overcome difficulties and provide a safe environment in which to thrive.		X
<b>Promoting the health and wellbeing of babies, children and young people:</b> From pregnancy and throughout life, babies, children, young people and families will be healthier, more emotionally resilient and better able to make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing.		X
<b>Supporting achievement and academic attainment:</b> All children and young people will leave school with the best skills and qualifications they can achieve and will be ready for independence, work or further learning.		X
<b>Empowering families to be strong and achieve economic wellbeing:</b> More families will be empowered and able to deal with family issues and child poverty will be significantly reduced.		X
<b>Summary of issues (including benefits to customers/service users):</b>		
<p>Local Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) data evidences that children and young people of Nottingham are not developing in communication and language and literacy to the best of their potential, with scores consistently below the national average.</p> <p>The vision for the City is for all of the City's 0-5 year olds to develop speech, language and communication (SLC) skills to the best of their individual potential and preparing them to be ready for school, positively impacting on their attachment, attainment, leisure, mental health, wellbeing, later employment and ultimately improve life chances. The need for this vision has been accelerated by the recent COVID-19 global pandemic. The vision also incorporates an intention to extend the age range, so that this strategy covers children and young people up to age 25 in the future, in order to reduce inequalities in health and contribute to positive wellbeing, increased life chances in terms of employment and reduction in youth offending.</p> <p>The LGA Peer Challenge in 2019 recommended a collaboratively produced, city wide, 0-5's Early Years Strategy with a particular focus on SLC, alongside recommendations to accelerate the integrated approach for the 2 ½ year check and increasing participation in the free entitlement hours for eligible 2, 3 and 4 year olds to support the earlier identification of children in need of support or interventions with their SLC. These latter two recommendations feature as collective aims in the draft SLC Strategy 0-5 years for Nottingham City, which is due to go the Health &amp; Wellbeing Board, who oversee the governance of, and are accountable for, this work.</p>		

The proposed collective aims within the draft Strategy are:

- Joint commissioners must ensure that commissioning supports the delivery of a whole systems model including universal, targeted and specialist offer delivered seamlessly from a child and family perspective.
- Data sharing agreements across agencies in order to ensure that the outcome is achieved of no child or family missing out on support from any part of the system.
- Integrated 2 year checks are crucial to providing a robust system of universal identification. Although not mandatory, given Nottingham’s level of identified and predicted need, this must be a necessary intervention across the early years system (health/childcare/education).
- A strategic approach to engagement of families in take up of the 2, 3 and 4 year old offer. This supports economic growth, school readiness and identification of need.
- Integration of the 0-5 workforce, with identified baseline training and assessment/understanding of the screening process.

It is hoped that by having a citywide 0-5 years SLC Strategy, a golden thread of expectation and a robust infrastructure across the partnership taking into consideration commissioning arrangements of statutory health and education assessments, that our parents, carers and youngest children will be fully supported with the early identification of SLC needs, avoiding duplication and preparing for school readiness.

**Recommendations:**

<b>1</b>	That the Children’s Partnership Board support the development of an SLC Strategy for the City and integrate and embed this work into wider strategies and work plans to ensure maximum impact.
<b>2</b>	
<b>3</b>	

**1. BACKGROUND AND PROPOSALS**

**(Explanatory detail and background to the recommendations)**

“Supporting families to give their babies the best start for life will ultimately result in far greater levels of school readiness and a significant reduction on youth problems, such as anti-social behaviour, poor mental health, drug use and gang membership. There can be no greater contribution to levelling up across the nation” (p113, *The Best Start for Life; A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days, March 2021*).

Nottingham City Children’s Services have been involved in some innovative and ground-breaking work with Leicester and Derby City Councils and Better Communication CIC having secured some external funding through the Early Outcomes Fund (DfE 3 Cities Bid). This funding has enabled work to identify and understand current levels of speech, language and communication (SLC) need and predicted future levels of SLC need by ward. This work, dovetailed with the recommendations from the LGA Peer Review in 2019, has supported the development of an SLC Strategy for Nottingham City. The journey of this work, over the last 2 years, was initially overseen by the Best Start Strategic Group, made up of partners, including Small Steps Big Changes, Health, Education, Early Help, the Early Years Workforce and Parent and Carer Forums. It was agreed in January 2021 that the governance and accountability for this work would sit with the Health and Wellbeing Board. There have been several local and national stakeholder events, particularly over the last 6 months, sharing the journey and developments, locally these have focused on the digital information hub and the draft SLC Strategy.

It is well documented that, from an early age, children who cannot communicate as well as their friends struggle with attachment and attainment and by the time they are five years old, they are less engaged at school and one and a half times more likely to have mental health problems in later life. Children with undiagnosed SLC needs are more likely to be excluded from school and struggle to form relationships with their peers. Supporting children to achieve good SLC before they turn 5 is fundamental to support their mental health.

The draft 'Speech, Language and Communication Strategy, 0-5 years, for Nottingham City' and the document, 'Identification and Intervention for Speech, Language and Communication in the Early Years' (*Marie Gascoigne, Bibiana Wigley and Claire Welburn, March 2020*) are attached as additional documentation to this paper to provide further context and information.

## **2. RISKS**

**(Risk to the CYPP, risk involved in undertaking the activity and risk involved in not undertaking the activity)**

In 'The Best Start for Life: A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days', the Rt Hon Andrea Leadsom MP states *"Two is too late! We spend billions on challenges in society from lack of school readiness to bullying to poor mental health to addictions and criminality"*.

The notable risks are the ones that are involved in not undertaking this work. The draft Strategy is a key recommendation of the LGA Peer Challenge, with the Peer Challengers set to return later this year and has been supported through dedicated work through the Early Outcomes Fund. Without the collective action this draft Strategy proposes, we will continue to see disjointed work in silos, a fragmented workforce, children not being school ready, EYFSP scores below the national average, poor attachment and attainment, poor leisure choices, poor mental health and wellbeing and reduced life chances.

## **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The work involved to date and the pending consultation of the Strategy and subsequent publication of the Strategy are costs being met through the Early Outcomes Fund. The actions that will be cited in the Strategy's supporting Action Plan 2021-2025 will embed this work across Council Plans and Strategies, as well as those of key partners and stakeholders. One of the proposed collective aims of the draft Strategy is that joint commissioners must ensure that commissioning supports the delivery of a whole systems model, including universal, targeted and specialist offers, delivered seamlessly from a child and family perspective. For this collective aim to be achieved it is expected that some pooling of budgets may be required but this is not for the purpose of this paper at this stage.

## **4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no current legal implications expected for this work. As stated above, for the collective aim of joint commissioning supporting the delivery of a whole systems model, this may impact on current arrangements for commissioning of services as they stand at present, but this is not for the purpose of this paper at this stage.

## **5. CLIENT GROUP**

**(Groups of children, young people or carers who are being discussed in the report)**

The client group impacted by the work noted in this report and all children and young people in Nottingham City, across all wards, their families and the workforce supporting these groups.

## 6. IMPACT ON EQUALITIES ISSUES

(A brief description on how many minority groups are being engaged in the proposal and how their needs are being met: This section includes traveller and refugee families. The themes of the Shadow Boards – children and young people; parents and carers; equalities issues and the voluntary and community sector should be considered here.

The consultation and engagement in this work to date, and set to continue, has involved Parents and Carers Forums, Small Steps Big Changes and a range of voluntary and community sector organisations, including Nottingham CVS.

## 7. OUTCOMES AND PRIORITIES AFFECTED

(Briefly state which of the CYPP priorities will be addressed)

The proposed collective aims in the SLC Strategy, and the supporting action plan for implementation, will address each of the CYPP priorities noted above.

Through accelerating work on the integrated 2 year checks, **children and families can be supported through early and effective support** through a robust system of universal identification, helping them receive the right support at the right time and help the children to be school ready and able to thrive to reach their full potential. This will also **empower families to be strong** and deal with family issues, feeling there is local support there for them at from the earliest points in their children's lives.

'The Best Start for Life: A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days' stresses the importance of **promoting the health and well-being of babies, children and young people** from pregnancy and throughout life. Engagement of maternity services in such strategies and a critical focus on the child's formative years, will be critical to ensuring that children develop SLC skills to the best of their potential to enable them to school ready and ultimately **positively impacting on their attachment, attainment, leisure, health, wellbeing, employment and life chances as they get older.**

## 8. CONTACT DETAILS

Kathryn Bouchlaghem, Early Years Manager, 0115 87 64531,  
[Kathryn.bouchlaghem@nottinghamcity.gov.uk](mailto:Kathryn.bouchlaghem@nottinghamcity.gov.uk)