

**Nottingham City Health and Wellbeing Board**  
**27 July 2022**

<b>Report Title:</b>	Speech, Language and Communication Strategy
<b>Lead Board Member(s):</b>	Councillor Cheryl Barnard – Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Schools, Nottingham City Council
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<b>Other colleagues who have provided input:</b>	
<p><b>Executive Summary:</b></p> <p>At the previous meeting on 28 July 2021, the Board agreed on the collective aims presented within the draft Speech, Language and Communication (SLC) Strategy, pending a full public consultation process and action plan development, recognising that this SLC Strategy was a highly important part of addressing the wider determinants of health and that an effective partnership approach to engaging with the wider system will ensure that the necessary support structures are in place for the most disadvantaged.</p> <p>Online and face-to-face consultations took place during Autumn 2021, with both parents/carers and the Early Years workforce. These consultations were shared via the Customer Hub; on the Council website and Twitter; directly mailed to childcare practitioners, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators in primary schools; key stakeholder colleagues, including CityCare; Early Help Services; the Families Information Service; Small Steps Big Changes; the Inclusive Education Service and Autism Team; the Child Development Centre at the City Hospital; the voluntary sector; and Parent and Carer Forums.</p> <p>The key headlines from the Early Years Workforce Consultation were;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 99% agreed it is important for all professionals to undertake training relevant to their role and to understand the assessment and screening processes for children under 5.</li> <li>• 97% agreed all relevant organisations working with children and families should promote the free Early Years entitlement offer for eligible 2, 3 and 4-year-olds, to encourage participation.</li> <li>• 100% agreed that relevant information should be shared across services to ensure that no child or family misses out on the support they need.</li> <li>• Less than half (37%) felt the child’s Red Book was important to their role.</li> <li>• 68% were using the Balanced System Speech, Language and Communication Pathway in some format, in their role.</li> </ul>	

- Excellent partnership working was noted with a wide range of agencies, organisations and services to support children's SLC needs.
- An urgent need was identified for early and universal identification of need and evidence based interventions with a quick referral process.
- A need was identified for collaborative, cross-sector working to ensure all professionals know who to contact, how, and when, to ensure families they are working with receive the right support at the right time.

The key headlines from the Parents and Carers Consultation were:

- 70% agreed it was important for all professionals and organisations to work together so families do not miss out on the support needed, and 68% agreed this information should be shared with families.
- Around half (51%) of families knew who to contact if they had a concern about their child's SLC.
- Less than half (47%) understood all the health and education assessments that their child will have before they are 5 years of age or used their child's Red Book regularly.
- 65% were aware of the free funded childcare places for eligible 2, 3 and 4-year-olds.
- Over half (63%) did not know about the Balanced System Speech, Language and Communication Pathway.
- 58% were not concerned about their child's speech or language following the Covid-19 pandemic, but 59% were concerned about their child's communication and how they engaged with others.

The feedback from both consultations will feed into the future Implementation Plan to support the delivery of this work. In Nottingham, when this work started 3 years ago, the Council's last set of Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Results were below the national average. With the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council anticipates further challenge, and this work will support the Department for Education's Early Years COVID Recovery Programme and the new Family Hub Models, which have a speech and language focus, target 3 and 4-year-olds across the sectors, and focus on SLC training for Early Years providers.

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

Over the last 12 months, in addition to developing and consulting on a written, workable SLC strategy, the Council has promoted the Balanced System Pathway and offered training to the early years workforce to maximise the benefits the Pathway can offer within their settings and we have increased participation in the free early years entitlements places for 2, 3 and 4-year-olds, almost back to pre-pandemic levels, uptake of which also supports the early identification of SLC needs in our youngest children.

The Council has also worked to identify and progress the necessity for a strategic leadership steer to drive this work forwards at implementation level. The content of the draft SLC Strategy has been agreed and there is a strong commitment to integrate this work with both the Best Start (Family Hubs Model) and the reinvigoration of the 0-5s Best Start and 0-25s Early Help offer, both planned for September 2022 onwards, aligning resources to ensure that this SLC Strategy sits in the best infrastructure to achieve maximum impact, with a high profile and cross-cutting prominence, driven forward by key strategic champions. Once resources have been identified, it will be possible to begin to populate the Implementation Plan with partners.

Over the coming months, the Council will continue to integrate and drive this work forwards, to continue to firmly embed the SLC Strategy as a city priority with a cross-sector, robust implementation plan, further promote the Balanced System Pathway and look to extending the age range and continue to increase participation in the free Early Years entitlement places, which all contribute to the collective aims of the Strategy.

**Recommendation(s):** The Board is asked to:

1. endorse the Speech, Language and Communication Strategy.

### The Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy

<b>Aims and Priorities</b>	<b>How the recommendation(s) contribute to meeting the Aims and Priorities:</b>
<b>Aim 1:</b> To increase healthy life expectancy in Nottingham through addressing the wider determinants of health and enabling people to make healthy decisions	The impact of a person not developing sound SLC skills in early life is far-reaching and significant, affecting school attainment, relationships, employment prospects and lifestyle choices. This work contributes to almost each element of the Board's aims and outcomes, but specifically increasing healthy life expectancy, reducing inequalities in health by neighbourhood and in supporting children and adults in Nottingham to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles. The Early Outcomes Fund work identifies need by ward and seeks to target resources to areas and communities who most need it through joint commissioning and shared oversight.
<b>Aim 2:</b> To reduce health inequalities by having a proportionately greater focus where change is most needed	
<b>Priority 1:</b> Smoking and Tobacco Control	
<b>Priority 2:</b> Eating and Moving for Good Health	
<b>Priority 3:</b> Severe Multiple Disadvantage	
<b>Priority 4:</b> Financial Wellbeing	

**How mental health and wellbeing is being championed in line with the Board's aspiration to give equal value to mental and physical health:**

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. However, addressing poor SLC across all age brackets should be prioritised and will have significant mental health advantages.

<b>List of background papers relied upon in writing this report</b>	
<b>Published documents referred to in this report</b>	