

12 February 2019		ITEM: 11
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Update on Brighter Futures Children's Centres Service		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A	
Report of: Andrea Winstone, School Improvement Manager		
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Interim Assistant Director of Learning, Inclusion and Skills		
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This paper is to give members an update on the earlier paper 'Review of the Children's Centre Service January 2017'.

The Brighter Futures Children's Centres form a large part of Thurrock Council's Early Offer of Help, working to reduce referrals to MASH, Troubled Families, Education Welfare Services, and to divert families from unnecessary statutory interventions.

1. Recommendations

1.1 The committee is asked to note the improvements to the Brighter Futures Children's Centre Services.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The transfer of Public Health functions and the development of a 0-19 Wellbeing model, now known as Brighter Futures, provided the impetus to develop a more sustainable Children's Centre delivery model. This presented an opportunity to redesign the delivery model for Children's Centres whilst ensuring that the core work of the service continued to be delivered to the same high standard.

2.2 The Core purpose of the Brighter Futures Children's Centres (further information in Appendix 2 and 3) is to improve outcomes for young children and their families and reduce inequalities between families in greatest need and their peers in:

- Child development and school readiness

- Parenting aspirations
 - Parenting skills
 - Child and family health and life chances
- 2.3 There are five main Brighter Futures Children’s Centre sites (BFCC), across three localities (East, Central and West), with a number of ‘outreach’ sites also in development (see **Appendix 1** for the lists of sites and associated outreach sites in each locality).
- 2.4 In the East Locality there are two BFCCs: Tilbury and Chadwell St Mary, in the West Locality there are two BFCCs: Purfleet and Ockendon and in the Central Locality one BFCC: Thameside.
- 2.5 Each locality is staffed by one BFCC Manager, one Reception and Engagement Officer, two Facilitators and two Parent Outreach Workers. There is also an additional .4FTE BFCC Manager and a relief facilitator to cover periods of annual leave as well as to add capacity to deliver more programmes.
- 2.6 We have also created a post for an apprentice Reception and administration assistant in the West locality.

3. Update, current position and outcomes

- 3.1 The Brighter Futures Children’s Centre offer is delivered by Children’s Centre staff and a wide range of partners (for the complete list see Appendix 2). There are approximately 45 different services available currently, delivered by Children Centre Staff and over 17 partners/ professionals. Brighter Futures Children’s Centres also refer and signpost families to a wide range of different services and providers as well as offering work and volunteer placements.
- 3.2 Brighter Futures recognises that the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Local Offer, Early Offer of Help, Prevention and Support Services (PASS), Public Health and Children’s Centres are key partners in contributing to improving outcomes for young children and their families. The BFCCs contribute widely to all of the above and have worked to further develop partnerships to deliver services to meet the core purposes (see appendix 3).
- 3.3 Services include: stay and plays, Play and Learns, Baby Massage, Fun, Food & Fitness, Parenting (Patch, PEEP, Pyramid), Chatterbox, Bookstart Corner, Parent Outreach Services, Speech and Language, Early Interaction Advice services, English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) Conversation, Go Girls, Dental sessions, child-minder led sessions to name but a few.
- 3.4 The Brighter Futures Children’s Centre offer has always been available to all parents across the borough with children aged 0-5. This offer is now being extended to families with older children (0-11) with new targeted services

designed to support the above core purposes as well as other Early Offer and local offer services.

- 3.5 BFCC have increased the health and medical services on offer through working with partners in Public Health, CCG and North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT). There is now a new medical room at Purfleet Children's Centre. Every Children's Centre now offers child health clinics, including baby weighing, one and two year development checks, introductions to solids and infant feeding. Immunisation clinics are held at Tilbury Children's Centre for all of Thurrock families to access.
- 3.6 By working closely with partners the service is able to improve outcomes for young children and their families and reduce inequalities between families in the greatest need and their peers and, as such, see them as equal partners. To ensure we have the greatest range of targeted and universal services available for families, no partner or organisation is charged to use the space at Children's Centres (except for early education and childcare businesses that rent parts of Children's Centre sites).
- 3.7 Children's Centre staff receive a rolling programme of training to ensure that they have the skills and knowledge to deliver the services on offer and to support families with information. Some of this is in-house information, some by the Council and some by external partners provided free of charge. For example: Thurrock Adult Community College staff trained BFCC staff to deliver English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL); NELFT provided training on infant feeding; and Wize Up provided training on drug awareness.

4. Improvements to the Children's Centre Buildings and Environment

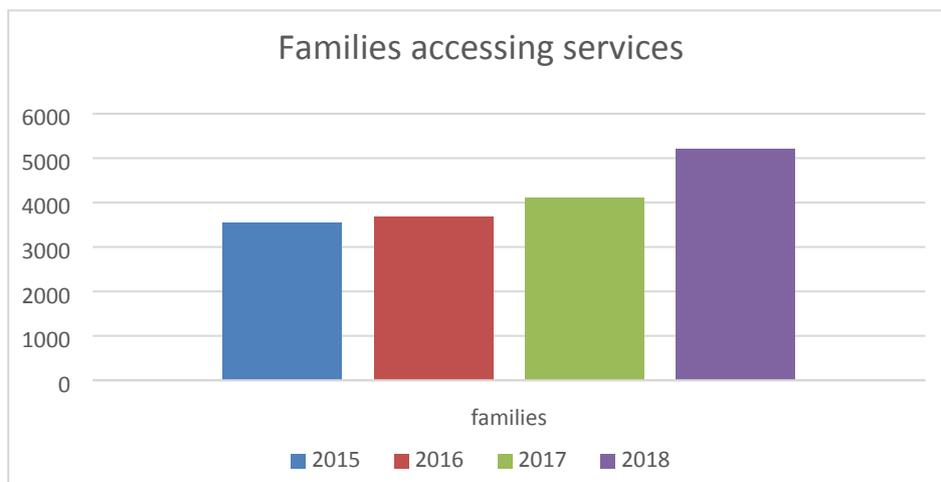
- 4.1 The service has remained within budget each year due to robust financial management whilst improvements to sites have been carried out – these include:
- Updates to CCTV and security systems: CCTV systems have been installed in all BFCCs and comply with the wider council's protocols and procedures.
 - A locking and unlocking service has been commissioned to ensure key holders are registered and secure.
 - A rolling programme of redecoration has been started which has seen Reception areas, medical and playrooms and offices redecorated in every main site.
 - Gardening services across all sites.
 - New fencing, windows and pipework and essential roofing works.
- 4.2 New Brighter Futures Branding has been used to ensure consistency and new noticeboards have been provided for Health & safety, Safeguarding, Children's Centre services and timetables, Health, Breast Feeding, Adult Learning and staff notices.

- 4.3 A continual programme of Health and Safety and environment walks ensure all Health & Safety standards are met and that inside and outside areas are clean and fit for purpose. Car parks and perimeters have been tidied up and parking bays marked at Aveley CC and Stanford le Hope where numerous outreach services are still delivered.
- 4.4 A training room has been developed at Aveley CC which is freely available to Council teams and is used widely by the School Improvement Team.
- 4.5 Through working with the Corporate Assets and legal teams – new leases have been negotiated and some unused buildings have been let. These leases contribute to a small income of approximately £50,000.

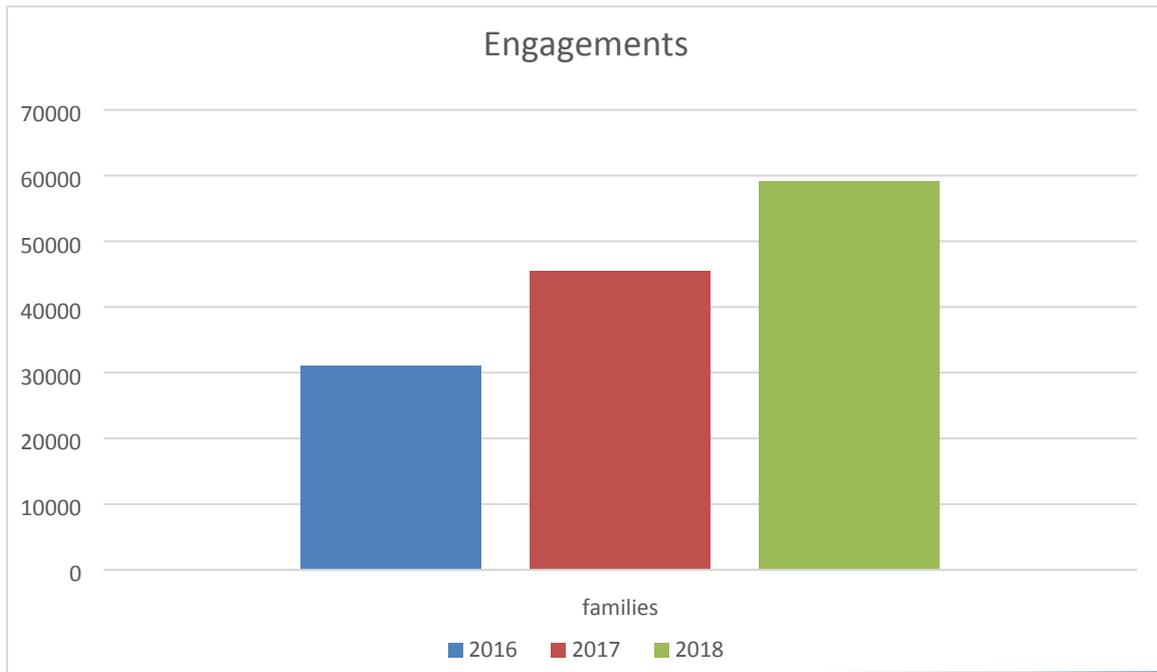
5. Improvements to the services evidenced through data:

5.1 Children’s Centres have a target to register 100% of families with children between the ages of 0-5 within their ‘reach’. The ‘reach’ is limited to surrounding postcodes within the locality. The number of families with children aged 0-5 registered with the Brighter Futures Children’s Centre service has increased by 10% since September 2017 from 63% to 73% at end of December 2018. In Ofsted terms this would be rated as good (Ofsted good 65-79%).

5.2 The number of families accessing BFCC services has increased:



5.3 The number of occasions users have engaged with BFCC services (engagements) within BFCCs has increased by over 28,000 in 3 years:



Each locality has identified two wards with the lowest income deprivation affecting children index scores (IDACI) to focus on the improvement in registration and engagement of families, ensuring targeted services in areas of need. Since the restructure the registrations in these targeted areas has increased by 22% from 48% to 70%.

5.4 Children’s Centres Facilitators are trained to deliver a wide range of services to support the needs of the families in the borough (see appendix 4 for the full range). The Facilitators have had a target of delivering 4 sessions per day, this is in the context of delivering 20 sessions each across the locality they are based in, including BFCC outreach sites, partner sites, schools and community sites. The six facilitators now deliver on average 94% of the target.

5.5 Examples of increased attendances by families to sessions;

	2017	2018
Stay and plays	17,022	22,529
School readiness sessions	15,220	39,010
Health sessions	9,917	9,954
Ante-natal appointments	4,743	7,174

5.6 Evaluation and impact of Facilitator-led sessions takes place after each session and at the end of courses. Here are just a few examples of evaluation and impacts gathered. The BFCC managers have this data for all sessions delivered at BFCCs.

5.7 **Baby Massage Evaluations 2017:** Parenting skills – developing relationships and communication

- 79% of parents understood the importance of baby massage for both parents and baby
- 75% of parents understood the right time to massage their baby
- 87% of parents said they were able to respond to their baby's needs/cues as a result
- 80% of parents said they now understood the importance of talking and singing with their baby
- 95% of parents said they recognised the importance of 'tummy time'
- 92% of parents said they understand how to massage their baby
- 100% of parents said they were satisfied with the service
- 100% of parents said the sessions helped them to understand about baby massage

5.8 Evaluation and impact of Fun, Food and Fitness: improve outcomes for children, healthy eating and fitness - Child and Family Health Chances;

- 69% of parents felt confident in providing a healthy meal/snack for their child/family.
- 77% of parents know the recommended amount of exercise their child should do each day.
- 75% of parents felt aware of what household objects can be used to make exercise fun for their child.
- 100% of parents felt they were aware of suitable portion sizes for toddlers and small children.
- 100% of parents were satisfied with the service.

5.9 Evaluation and Impact English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL); Parenting aspirations and skills;

- 69% of parents said they can use the English language to talk about themselves.
- 54% of parents said they can use the English language to understand and answer questions about their family.
- 64% of parents said they can understand text to gain information.
- 69% of parents said they can use English language to fill in basic forms.
- 68% of parents said they can use the English language to access facilities in their local community.
- 68% of parents said the peer support in the group was important.
- 85% of parents said they were satisfied with the service.

6. Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential: A plan for improving social mobility through education to close the word gap in early years. (DfE 2017)

6.1 The Children’s Centres have contributed widely to the first ambition in the above action plan: Close the word gap in early years. Whilst the Good Level of development in Thurrock at the end of the reception year is above the national average, therefore the borough is not eligible to benefit from additional funding available for this ambition, our schools still record poor speech and language skills on entry to school. The Children’s Centres provide a number of services to support closing the word gap;

- Let’s Talk with your baby.
- Language focused play.
- Baby Massage.
- Bookstart activities.
- Bookstart Corner.
- Chatterbox.
- Keeping up with your children’s literacy.
- Phonics workshop.
- Speech and language drop in.
- Speech and language therapy.

There has been over 800 referrals to these services in 2018 alone.

7. Services for families with children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

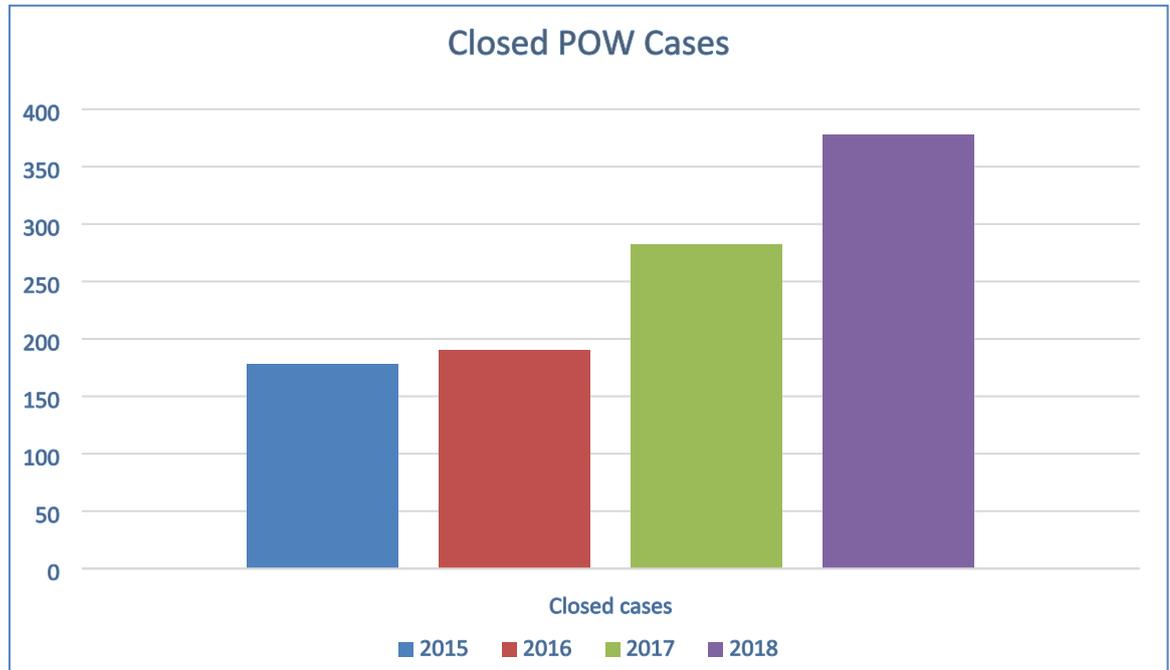
7.1 BFCCs commission external evaluation and monitoring from an independent Children’s Centre Improvement Partner, to ensure improvements continue and their self-evaluations are rigorous and accurate. These reports also ensure that the Children’s Centres advisory boards have an expert external evaluation of the service. The Children’s Centre Improvement Partner commented in the 2018 summer term visit: *“ I think this visit demonstrated how much has improved and become embedded especially for children with additional needs, SEND and their families”*.

SEND	2017	2018
Families	17	67
Individuals	36	124
Attendances	41	494

8. Parent Outreach Workers

8.1 The six Parent Outreach Workers (POWs) previously worked with a family for anything from 6 weeks to 2 years. It became evident that families were not being encouraged to make the transition from targeted, individual support to accessing more widely available universal services quickly enough,

encouraging a sense of dependency. POWs now work in a much more focused way, ensuring families are supported to complete a focused plan in approximately 6 visits over 12 weeks. This has allowed POWs to deliver the early offer of help to many more families. Early indications are that POWs worked with 377 families in 2018, meeting the target for each POW to work with 60 families.



8.2 Figures are not yet available for 2018 as the data is still being analysed but in 2017 54% of families open to POW support who were subject to Child Protection Plans were de-escalated and 63% of families open to POW support who were subject to Child in Need plan were de-escalated (2018 estimated all cases).

8.3 Evaluation and impact parental/carers surveys of POW support evidence that:

- 89% felt that the support received had helped them in some way as a parent/carer.
- 76% felt that the support received helped with their personal confidence.
- 82% felt that they had been given new ideas to help their children learn at home.
- 98% felt safe working with a POW.
- 95% felt satisfied with the support they received.

9. Risks and Opportunities

9.1 There are a few potential risks to the ongoing success of the BFCCs and a number of opportunities.

9.2 BFCCs currently have 6 facilitators across a number of main and

outreach sites (28 in total). The BFCC has a number of services it could deliver and develop but does not have any additional capacity within its current staffing numbers. Therefore it will continue to look to increase the number of partners to deliver services within the Children Centres from the business, voluntary and community sectors as well as other professionals.

10. Reasons for Recommendations

- 10.1 To provide the Committee with an update on the Brighter Futures Children's Centre Service to confirm better services are being provided for less money.

11. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

None.

12. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

None.

13. Implications

13.1. Financial

Implications verified by: **Michelle Hall**
Management Accountant

There are no financial implications.

13.2. Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Deputy Head of Legal

Legislation about children's centres is contained in the Childcare Act 2006 Act as a place or a group of places:

- which is managed by or on behalf of, or under arrangements with, the local authority with a view to securing that early childhood services in the local authority's area are made available in an integrated way;
- through which early childhood services are made available (either by providing the services on site, or by providing advice and assistance on gaining access to services elsewhere); and
- at which activities for young children are provided.

Children Centres will continue to provide early childhood services and activities.

Efficiencies in buildings and staffing will be implemented in line with the Council's HR and Assets policies and procedures.

13.3. **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
**Community Development and Equalities
Manager**

The Children's Centres by their very nature have targets to reduce the inequalities and improved outcomes for the most disadvantaged families. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) will be completed before any changes are made to service delivery.

13.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder.

None.

14. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Report to Children's Overview & Scrutiny on the Children's Centre Review
- Report to Children's Overview & Scrutiny on the 0-19 Wellbeing Model.

15. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 – Mapping of Brighter Futures Children's Centres and Associated Outreach Sites in Thurrock
- Appendix 2 – Core Purpose of Children's Centres in Thurrock
- Appendix 3 – Service Delivery against Children's Centres' Core Purpose
- Appendix 4 – Brighter Futures: Children's Centre Offer

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Children's Services.