

Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Date of meeting:	16 February 2022
Title of Report:	Early Years Strategy Board
Lead Member:	Councillor David Downie (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills, Children and Young People)
Lead Strategic Director:	Alison Botham (Director for Childrens Services)
Author:	Sue Smith
Contact Email:	Sue.smith@Plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	Click here to enter text.
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

This report provides an update of the establishment of the Early Years Strategy Board and seeks Scrutiny Boards endorsement of its priorities and next stage of work.

Recommendations and Reasons

It is recommended that the Scrutiny Panel:

1. endorse the three strands of work for Early Years as agreed by the Early Years Strategy Board as set out in this report
2. endorse the 2022/23 priorities for the Board as set out in this report

The Early Years Strategy Board was established in December 2021 and Scrutiny Panel are being asked to support the current priorities and work streams of the Board.

Alternative options considered and rejected

N/A

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

Early Years and childcare are cited in A Bright Future. Improving the life chances for the children within Plymouth by providing high quality and sufficient childcare is a priority. It also enables parents/carer to train/work. This supports the cities ambition to eradicate the effects of deprivation and poverty. It also supports Plymouth's economy.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

Officer time

Financial Risks:

None

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

N/A

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

* When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.

N/A- Information only

Appendices

*Add rows as required to box below

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Briefing report title							
B	Equalities Impact Assessment (if applicable)							

Background papers:

*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Ming Zhang / Sue Smith

Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes

Date agreed: 24/01/2022

Cabinet Member approval: *[electronic signature (or typed name and statement of 'approved by email/verbally')] Councillor David Downie approved verbally*

Date approved: 27/01/2022

EARLY YEARS STRATEGY BOARD - FEBRUARY 2022

Education, Participation and Skills

This report provides an update of the establishment of board and seeks Scrutiny Board's endorsement of its priorities and next stage of work.

Why Early Years Is Important?

It is widely recognised that the quality of a child's first 1,001 critical days from conception to age two is fundamentally important for their long term outcomes, from childhood into adulthood.

High quality early experiences, including childcare can not only improve a child's physical, emotional, social and educational outcomes in their early years, but lay down solid foundation for success throughout childhood and into adulthood.

Central Government recognise the importance of early years, charging councils to deliver statutory duties to ensure that maternity, health and educational services provide high quality support for parents to be and parent/carers. One of these duties is to ensure there is sufficient, accessible and high quality childcare to support better outcomes for children and to enable parents/carers to work. The importance of early years and childcare is cited in Plymouth's strategy for children and young people, A Bright Future.

In order to build the synergy of the City's early years and childcare providers to maximise the outcomes of early year's children, the settings-led Early Years Strategy Board was established in December 2021.

Plymouth Demographics

During the height of the pandemic Ofsted stopped regulatory inspections. Childcare stopped for everyone except vulnerable children and those of Keyworkers. Consequently reliable data sources stalled. This is now restarting.

Currently, there are approximately 309 childcare providers across Plymouth. These are a mixture of Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) structures.

There is currently sufficient childcare in Plymouth, although at time the number of baby places are limited in some areas.

Early indications show that our Ofsted results for 2020/21 are similar to those in 2019, when 95% of childcare settings in the PVI sector were judged Good and above by Ofsted and 81% in schools and academies.

In 2019, the free childcare entitlement was taken up by 4,792 children aged 3 and 4 years old and 1,028 children aged 2 years

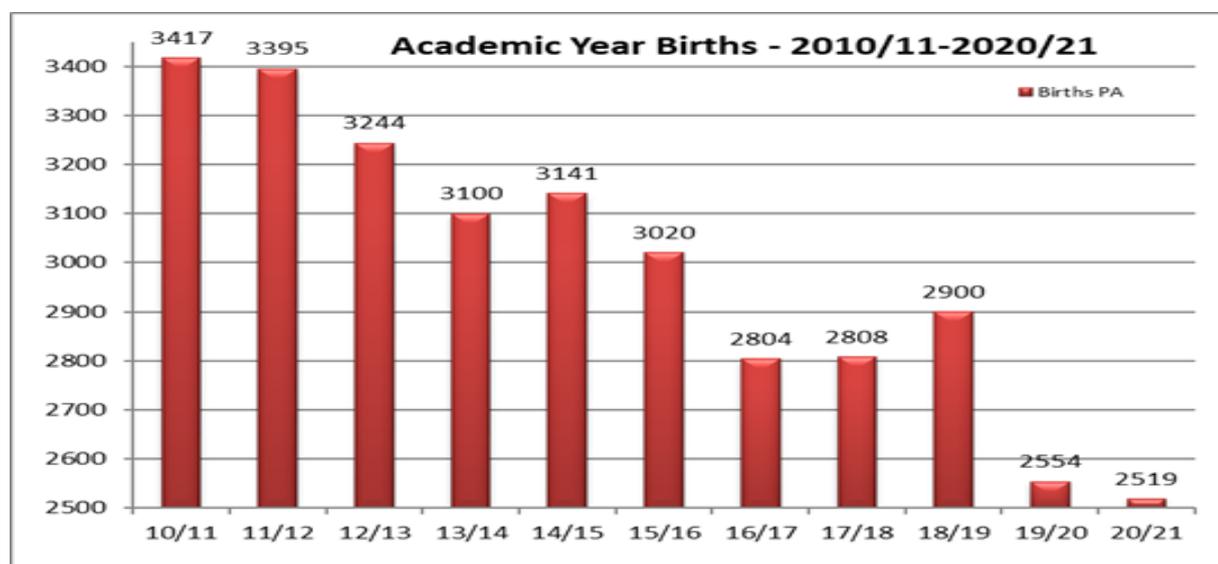
In 2021 the total number of children claiming entitlements, those receiving additional financial support based on deprivation and is shown in the table below:

	Spring 21	Summer 21	Autumn 21
Funded 2 yr olds	646	732	742
Children in receipt of Early Pupil Premium	-	735	460
Settings in receipt of deprivation funding	99	103	95
Children from deprived postcode	1,188	1,369	858
Total 2 yr olds	646	732	742
Total 3&4 yr olds	3,414	4,032	2,598
Total	4,060	4,764	3,340

Cautionary note: The number of children in receipt of Early Years Pupil Premium is dependent upon parents wishing to apply. Some of the children can fit into more than one category.

Prior to the pandemic (2019) Plymouth’s % of 3 & 4 year old children benefitting from funded early education places was 95%, compared with England at 94%. The % of 2 year old children benefitting from funded early education places was 87%, whereas England’s % was 68%. Central government are now resuming an annual census therefore there will be new data shared with council’s in the later part of 2022/23.

The birth rate in Plymouth is decreasing too.



Achievement

The statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage sets out the statutory requirements for the development, learning and care of children from birth to age 5. The EYFS framework sets the standards that all early years’ providers, including schools with early years provision, must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children’s ‘school readiness’ and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life. At the end of reception all schools have to complete an Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) assessment on all children.

In Plymouth in 2019, the percentage of all children in EYFSP cohort within Plymouth Schools and Academies reaching a 'Good level of development' (GLD – having the essential skills, knowledge and understanding to be ready for starting the National Curriculum) for 2019 is 68.3%. Although Plymouth has improved continuously over the previous four years, when comparing this to National we were still behind by 4%. When comparing to our statistical neighbours Plymouth is the lowest performing Local Authority, performing 5.7% lower than our highest performing statistical neighbour.

Physical Development and Expressive Arts & Design remain the highest performing learning areas for the third year running. Literacy and Maths development remain the lowest performing learning areas for the fourth year running.

Girls consistently perform better than the boys in the GLD, however this gender gap reduced by 2.4% in 2019. In 2019 the percentage of girls reaching GLD was 73.9% compared to 63.2% for boys.

Children who qualify for Free School Meals (FSM) attain less well than those who do not qualify for FSM. 54% of children who qualify for FSM achieved GLD compared to 70.6% who do not qualify. The percentage of children who qualify for FSM achieving the GLD was up 5% from 2018.

The percentage of summer born (those children born in May, June, July or August) achieving GLD in 2019 was 56%. When comparing this against the non-summer born the summer born are performing 19% below the non-summer born. This has been the same performance gap for two years running.

The EYFSP data for 2022 will be the first set of data since 2019 due to the Covid19 pandemic. The revised EYFS became statutory from September 2021. One of the main changes to the EYFS 2021 has been a revision of the Early Learning Goals (ELGs). What has stayed the same is that there are still 7 areas of learning and development and 17 ELGs. The difference is that the ELGs are not the same as in the previous EYFS and all the descriptions of the Early Learning Goals have changed. This will also be the first year that most teachers will be using the new ELGs to assess children's attainment. Another part of the EYFS reforms was the removal of the statutory requirement for LA moderation of the EYFSP. Schools are required to carry out their own internal and interschool moderation.

There is a possible risk that some schools may find it challenging to assess children's attainment in the EYFSP due to children and staff absences due to COVID.

Parents/carers of children with SEND report that sometimes finding childcare is difficult. The numbers of referrals to specialist services are rising too.

Plymouth is currently looking at its School Readiness definition with an aim of improving the Communication and Language levels across the city and easing the transition process from childcare to Primary School Foundation.

The Purpose

The Early Years Strategy Board's role is to develop and monitor multi-disciplinary system improvement strategies that improve the life chances of Plymouth's youngest children.

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The Early Years Strategy Board will improve educational outcomes for children 0-5 years, specifically as well as contribute to overall cross-phase city-wide development planning.

Specifically, the Board will:

1. contribute to the strategic direction of the framework and the governance of the city's education improvement partnership, in the framework of A Bright Future;
2. review performance data and other outcomes based evidence relating to the progress of specific early years outcomes, focusing on GLD and percentage of Good or Outstanding provisions;
3. set improvement priorities and contribute to improvement planning for Plymouth as a whole;
4. commission, broker and signpost setting improvement support;
5. encourage and sustain robust professional challenge between early years schools, setting and early years system partners;
6. communicate Plymouth's school and childcare setting improvement offer;
7. use intelligence to advise and guide on the future system planning;
8. ensure that no schools or settings are left out;
9. evaluate the impact of support
10. provide up to date information to other strategic groups to ensure there is no duplication, strategies are aligned and communication channels are clear.

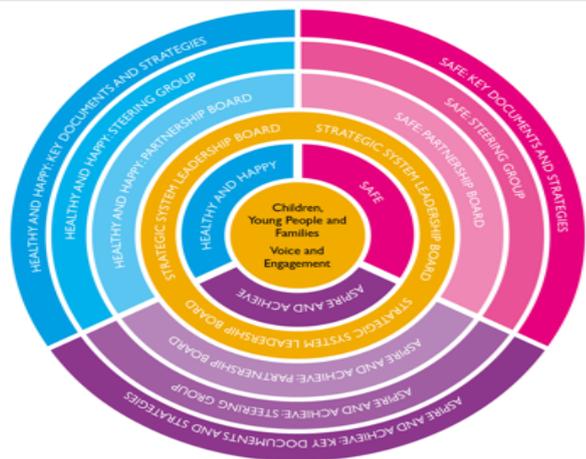
The membership consists of:

- Service Director of Education, Participation and Skills, PCC
- Head of Education and Virtual School, PCC
- Service Manager of Early Years, PCC
- 1 x MAT CEOs
- 1 x representative Family Hub
- 3 x representatives private settings, sole trader, childminder, local chain and national chain
- 1 x representative from Livewell, health visiting and speech and language service.
- 1 x Public Health
- 1 x Early Years Federation and maintained school
- 1 x Social Care

Heidi Price (Head Teacher – Yealmpstone Farm Primary School) has been nominated as the Chair at the first Board meeting held on 4th December 2021.

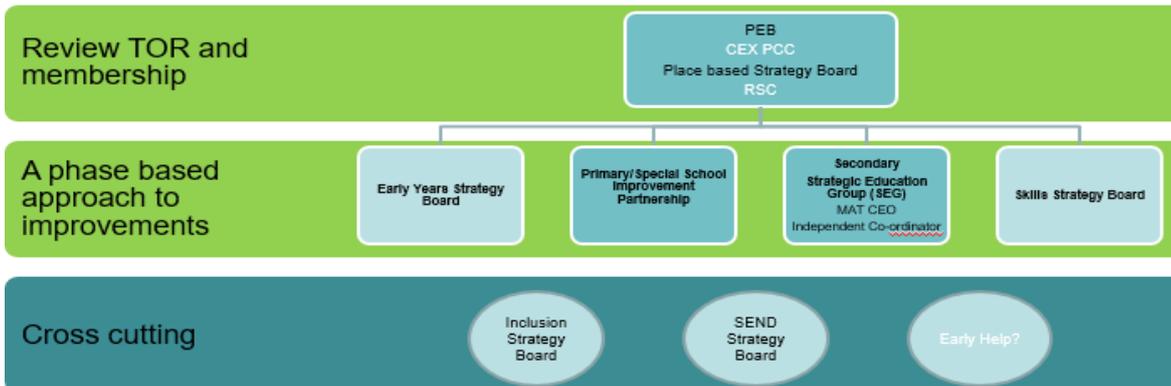
How it fits into the Governance Structure

Bright Future Governance Framework



- The voice and engagement with Children and Young People will be central to all aspects of the plan: See the C&YP version of the Plan
- Each Priority Partnership Board will have and agree
 - Key representatives on the Bright Future Strategic Leadership Board.
 - TOR and membership
 - Partnership Plan/s
 - Forward plan
 - Relevant sub groups/strategy Groups

Proposed Plymouth Education Board and related partnership governance



Board’s work programme for 2022

The Board are currently finalising an Early Years Strategic Improvement Plan for Dec 2021 – Dec 2024),

The three strands of work are agreed as:

- Quality
- Children are ready for school
- Disadvantage and Inclusion

The 2022/23 priorities for the Board are:

- Early Years Foundation Stage Reforms: The new reforms started in 2021. These need to be fully embedded across the sector
- Raise standards: The Settings of Concern process will challenge and support settings at risk of falling below the standards needed for quality
- Communication: To formalise a working group to progress Plymouth’s approach to supporting children’s communication, language and literacy

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- Transitions: To improve transitions from pre-school to school, for all children and those requiring additional support, through best practice interventions that implement recommendations from research
- Inclusion: To improve the sectors application of the Graduated Approach and mastery/up take of the newly developed Inclusion Award
- Closing the attainment gap/school readiness: To progress the pre-pandemic research into factors affecting school readiness and develop a response based upon any recommendations/best practice
- Data and research: The pandemic has disrupted the flow of outcome data. Re-establishing data scorecard will be 2022/23 priority.

Next Steps

The Board will meet four times a year. There will be subgroups convened and close alignment with other strategic groups in order to progress work in related to the priorities identified.