

Children's Centre Consultation PVI Early Years Settings focus Group – Monday 6th February 2023

This focus group was split into 4 subgroups covering the different areas in Slough. Representatives were grouped according to the location of their existing Early years setting.

Overall feedback

- The PVI sector are happy to host services in their settings and some are already doing so. For example; one setting in the Wexham Road Children's Centre area provides a food bank for their parents to donate to and also access parcels, a nursery in the Romsey Close Children's Centre area has a health visitor attending to carry out 2 year old checks. A nursery based at the Wexham Road Children's Centre would be happy to run a parent and toddler stay and play session if they wouldn't incur additional costs for use of the space and almost all representatives said they would be happy to host a speech and language session.
- When asked 'how can we do things differently in our children centre's and how can we improve our service provision on a continual basis?' the focus group shared that they would need to be better informed about the different services that run out of the children's centres. As a result of not feeling informed they don't currently signpost many parents to access service.
- The PVI settings feel that they support the whole family and offer a holistic approach, this mainly occurs because they have the relationship already to work with the family
- Children's Centres are seen as a competitor to the PVI sector because they run their own early years and childcare provision. This often deters a PVI setting from referring a family to the services available.
- Currently across all PVI providers there is a concern regarding the long waiting lists for children to access speech and language support.
- Suggested use of any vacant buildings included; family support, safe spaces where people can go for social contact, casual meetings, meet for a cuppa, friendship, support, used more by charities

Sub-group Romsey Close and Vicarage Way

1 participant – 1 PVI setting represented RC

- 99% of parents can travel to reach services with most coming from Langley and Iver
- Services in this area need to be provided in the evenings and at weekends for meeting the needs of working parents
 - Current challenges in this area include higher numbers of children with SEND, children's wait time to see a paediatrician or other professionals, waiting list are extortionate and look to the setting for answers as the health services are not there.
 - Having the staff available with the knowledge to support children with SaLT
 - Some setting considering looking to employ a private Speech and Language Therapist to overcome the wait time.
 - When asked 'What capacity does the wider early years sector have to meet the demand for funded early education and childcare, if any of the options were implemented?' This setting in the Romsey Close CCA would be happy to take on more children with SEND and vulnerable children /families but staffing continues to be a problem recruiting at Level 3 qualified, they currently have a big waiting list mostly babies, staffing – rooms have been closed. Have closed a 2-3year room due to lack of qualified staff however the retention of staff is good
 - Pros and cons on both sides and having the right structures in place. If Romsey Close CC does shut, they may not be able to offer places to those families as they currently have a big waiting list

Sub-group Penn Road, Wexham Road, Elliman Avenue

6 participants (5 PVI settings represented) x3 PR and x2 WR

- Initially the group were unsure about how the consultation would impact their provision
- Mixed feelings about referrals to the children's centres services, some refer families as and when the need arises whilst others feel that they offer the support the families need and therefore a referral to a children's centre is not necessary
- Settings in WR have vacancies and could take on additional children
- Setting in WR would be happy to facilitate a parent and toddler stay and play session as long as not costs where incurred by the nursery
- Settings in the PR area are looking to relocate to bigger premises and would be interested if the PR site became available
- Parents know about the satellite library at WR children's centre and often ask the PVI nursery about how they can access it
- Concerns about overall sufficiency levels of early years and childcare with new housing development

Sub-group Chalvey Grove, Yew Tree Road

2 participants (2 PVI settings represented) x2 CG

- Families come to the nurseries for support because of the trusting relationships already established.
- It is key to keep the PVI sector up to date with information to support the families
- The needs of families in this area are increasing.
- Services need to go out to the community.
- There is a need for parenting classes in this area, Informal parenting groups – expectations, childcare, routines, eating, sleeping, toilet training, language etc
- Engagement with health visitors, speech and language therapists
- Provide services in rooms but cannot afford rental charges
- Impact of parents requiring above support and advice impacts on staffing/time
- Suggestion open sessions where nursery staff can come to CC with parents to access services/find out more

Sub-group Monksfield Way, St Andrews Way, Orchard Avenue

4 participants (4 PVI settings represented) x1 MW, x1 SW, x2 OA

- Concerns around the high numbers of children with SEND and the capacity in MW to recruit specialist staff to work with children with SEND
- Value speech and language therapy drop in sessions and health visitor groups, often sign post families to these.
- Home Start has been a valued service in this area.
- It was felt that services could be delivered in a different way and services could come to the PVI nurseries instead of parents going to another venue.
- There needs to be more communication so parents know what services are available and where.
- Suggestion that the PVI sector could be funded to provide services to early years families.
- From a business point of view if the children's centres closed then the PVI's would have more of a competitive market in terms of early years and childcare and in terms of services the sector would 'cope'
- It was discussed that the overall savings of the consultation has very little impact on the overall impact on the loss of services to families. It was stated that the consultation should have talked more about the savings to reinvest into other services.
- A PVI would possibly be interested in relocating the provision if a space become available

