

Date:	17 March 2016
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Innovation in raising parental employment rates
Report of:	Liz Bruce, Executive Director of Adult Social Care
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	Raising employment rates among low income parents is a major challenge and essential if child poverty in the borough is to be reduced. New approaches to supporting parents to recognise and develop their skills and secure and sustain work are required. These need to build on existing assets, enabling partners sustainably to achieve greater outcomes from within existing financial resources.
Financial Summary:	NA
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 In July 2014 £948,000 was allocated from the Public Health Investment Fund to galvanise activity and test innovative approaches to improve parental employment rates among low income families in order to address child poverty.
- 1.2 A cross departmental task-and-finish group was established to identify how best this funding might be invested.
- 1.3 As a result a programme of initiatives, four led by Children's Services and two by Employment and Skills, was devised. Work to implement the *Innovations in Parental Employment* programme commenced in October 2015.

- 1.4 The programme should be expected to contribute to a number of Public Health outcomes. Specifically, it seeks to reduce the number of children living in poverty (Public Health Outcomes Framework 1.01).

2. KEY MATTERS FOR THE BOARD

- 2.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to note the foundations for the programme, its objectives and progress made. The Board is also asked to consider how:
- This programme of work relates to projects currently underway or being planned by partners; and
 - How partners can contribute to achieving the objectives of the programme and its long term sustainability.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The [Child Poverty Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#) published in April 2014 identified six priority areas for attention, the main one being parental employment.
- 3.2 In May 2014 the Public Health department launched the Public Health Investment Fund to support investment in activity to further performance against the Public Health Outcomes Framework (which will be led by non-Public Health LA departments). As a result of this process, £316,000 for each of three years¹ was allocated to support activity to address the barriers to parental employability identified in the JSNA.
- 3.3 A task-and-finish group involving officers from Children's Services, Employment and Skills, Policy Team, Public Health, Business Intelligence and Housing was established in October 2014. This considered how best to invest the funding in the light of the evidence base, local intelligence, existing assets and gaps in provision. To ensure a sufficiently local focus in the evidence review, a number of qualitative initiatives were undertaken to elicit the views of key experts. These included a community survey undertaken 'face-to-face' with parents and a series of 'roundtable discussions' with front line professionals.
- 3.4 The group reported on its findings in July 2015.

4. KEY MESSAGES

Characteristics and primary location target group.

¹ As the Public Health grant is ring fenced, allocations can be carried forward.

- 4.1 The greatest number of children aged 0-15 years from families claiming out of work benefits live in Queens Park, Westbourne and Church Street wards. With the addition of Harrow Road ward, these are also the wards where there is the greatest deficit of early years' childcare and child-minder places.
- 4.2 The main primary schools attended by the four wards of interest are Ark Gateway, Edward Wilson Primary, Wilberforce Academy, Queens Park Primary, Essendine Primary and Our Lady of Dolours RC.
- 4.3 There is a high correlation of wordlessness and benefit claimants with a diverse migrant population. Employment options can often characterised by low pay and high staff turnover. Zero-hours contracts are becoming increasingly common.

Predominant barriers to parental employment.

- 4.4 While there is a deficit of early year's places in Westminster there are also some vacancies - families' need more flexible models of delivery and affordability.
- 4.5 Childcare for school age children is important – whilst 50% of children living in poverty are in their early years, a further 25% are aged below eleven-years.
- 4.6 Parents' access to information regarding the different models of childcare and their relative merits for individual families' circumstances is currently insufficient.
- 4.7 The 'better-off calculation', often central to resolving complex financial concerns regarding the transition from benefits to employment, is not readily available.
- 4.8 Commonly the barriers to employment associated with parental responsibilities are insufficiently addressed by job brokers and employment support agencies.
- 4.9 There is a lack of employment opportunities with family-friendly terms and conditions, e.g. flexible working hours, part time opportunities.

Evidence base

- 4.10 The lack of flexible, affordable childcare was commonly identified as the primary barrier to parental employment. The Task-and-Finish Group sought to consider alternative models of childcare provision which specifically sought to address this, however it became apparent that other London boroughs are grappling with the same issue and as yet there is no robust evidence base on which to base a local model. [Sufficient intelligence is available to inform pilot work, however](#)².

Looking forwards

- 4.11 The Task-and-Finish Group found the drivers for parental unemployment to be complex and multi-faceted and concluded that there is no single initiative that will achieve the step change required in parental employment rates in the four focus

² UCL Institute of Health Equity

wards. A programme of initiatives was proposed to the Cabinet Members for Public Health and for Children in October 2015.

5. PARENTAL EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME

5.1 This programme comprises four core initiatives, two led by Children Services, two by Employment and Skills. There are also recognised interdependencies with two further initiatives being progressed by Children's Services through the separate Childcare Delivery and Early Help programmes. These six work streams together provide a whole-system approach to supporting parental employment, as illustrated in appendix one.

5.2 The programme objectives are as follows:

- i Employment Academy: To provide a structured career development guidance and training programme for those working or seeking to gain employment, incorporating career mentoring;
- ii Flexible early years provision: To ensure the way early years childcare is provided facilitates uptake of the 2 and 3/4 year offers among the target group (thereby enabling parental employment). This work will be developed under the WCC Early Help Board;
- iii Family Information Service: To ensure that all families, but particularly those from the target group, have ready access to information and advice regarding the options and eligibility for the different types of childcare available in each locality. This work includes the redesign by Family Services of the public facing website, with the new development of Parent Champions to deliver peer support and advice through a variety of initiatives in their local community;
- iv Schools' Extended Childcare provision: To work in partnership with primary schools, supporting them to develop and extend after-school and holiday childcare provision which remains affordable to low income households and enhances health and wellbeing³;
- v Employment support: To develop capacity and capability within mainstream employment support providers to address parental barriers to employment;
- vi Family friendly employment: To increase the number of employment opportunities with family friendly terms and conditions; and
- vii Sustainability: To secure sustainable outcomes and test ongoing financial viability.

³ Funding up to a maximum of £168k may be requested as necessary to support this work stream.

- 5.3 Each initiative is being built into 'business-as-usual' wherever possible. This increases the cost-benefit ratio of the programme and contributes towards the development of sustainable models.
- 5.4 The budget includes provision for providing some limited additional staffing capacity to support the development of the evaluation framework, which includes cost benefit analysis, and its implementation. This is a central component of the programme, given its innovative nature and the current lack of published evidence on how the challenge of addressing child poverty through increasing parental employment might be achieved.
- 5.5 It is proposed that a further update is brought to the Health and Wellbeing Board in Autumn 2017.

6. PROGRESS TO DATE

Employment (Childcare) Academy

- 6.1 The establishment of the academy is progressing well:
- Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES) will deliver the training from Queens Park and Church Street Children's Centres and has produced a curriculum plan which includes a number of pathways tailor-made to reflect students' different starting positions;
 - Courses, promoted extensively across the Queens Park and Church Street communities, will start in March and April and the assessment days to allocate students to the appropriate the pathway have commenced;
 - Children's Centre staff will provide crèche facilities to run alongside these services;
 - Course attendees will also have the opportunity to link with a Family and Community Employment Service (FACES) advisor to discuss their individual financial situations and employability opportunities;
 - London Early Years Foundation have agreed to be part of programme and have offered a number of places on their childcare apprenticeship programme to successful candidates;
 - Courses provided will support other career opportunities to ensure parents with aspirations to work in areas other than childcare are helped into work.
- 6.2 The Early Years team will track course attendees' progress into further education, apprenticeships and employment to aid evaluation.

Flexible Early Years Provision

6.3 Progress on work to establish the foundations by which to secure more flexible and tailored early years provision is currently being managed under the work portfolio of the Children Services Childcare Programme Board. From April 2016, this work programme will be absorbed under the direction of the WCC Early Help Board.

6.4 Work continues in relation to the Westminster 2YO targeted programme, which has seen the development over the last 6 months of over 50 new full-time places to support parents into work. This has resulted in an achievement of 60% ratio of capacity to demand from eligible families.

Term	DWP figure - Number of families identified	Total families occupying a place*	Occupancy as a % of DWP figure
End of Autumn Term 2014/15	801	280	35%
End of Autumn term 2015/16	709	422	60%

6.5 This work has included:

- A capital investment using DSG funding at Essendine school, creating 24 new full time new places for 2 year olds from September 2015;
- The creation of eight new places at Paddington Green provided through the refurbishment of existing children centre facilities offering seamless childcare support;
- The planned development of Bayswater Children Centre as a multi-use facility providing multi-disciplinary support for families including a health clinic for integrated two year old checks, and an additional twelve places for targeted two year old places by the end of 2016; and
- A pipeline proposal for Hallfield School which will result in the creation of 20 FTE places under the 2YO programme with effect from September 2016. This is again being funded through use of DSG funding.

6.6 Over the next year, the Early Help programme will consider the potential for the engagement of child-minders in the development of family based support to accommodate the childcare needs of those parents with irregular working patterns. This will be funded by the allocation of £168,000 from the Parent Employment programme.

6.7 Further work is required to consider the strategic planning to increase the universal offer for three and four year olds to 30 hours of free childcare by September 2017. This will require additional resource in terms of both capital and revenue investment, with the challenge that many small providers may not be able to afford to increase the capacity of their current provision.

Family Information Service (FIS)

- 6.8 Work has commenced to upgrade the online FIS which includes:
- Establishing a web-based facility which improves access for families to a directory of childcare service options; and
 - An enhanced public facing application process, with regards the eligibility and place matching for targeted two year old places.
- 6.8. A new user friendly FIS website, will provide all information to support families on making informed choices around childcare, provide up-to-date information on settings and allow parents/carers to see the wider services on offer. This is expected to be available by June 2016.
- 6.9. Work will commence in March 2016 funded through the Parent Employment programme, to develop the service model for a team of volunteer Parent Champions across the borough.
- 6.10. Local parents will be trained to provide an information and advice function in community settings such as schools, faith groups, libraries and children's centres. Their role will facilitate Stay & Play sessions in order to introduce a support network for families in the same neighbourhood, and sign post families to the range of services in their local community.
- 6.11. This project will provide recognised work experience for the individual Champion to enhance their own CV with supervision from the Children Centre Hubs. It will also provide an informal contact for families to support their parenting role and employment options, with the specific aim to reach those families who are not yet engaged with the childcare services available in the area.

Schools' wraparound provision

- 6.9 Children Services have been working with over fifteen primary schools where the Council proposes to transfer responsibility for the provision of wrap-around provision to schools. This work covers both an extended school day and developing the two year old provision, by lowering the school age to enable early years education for the targeted group of children.
- 6.10 With regards the schools in scope for this Parental Employment programme the progress to date has been:
- Essendine have engaged a third party provider to manage their wraparound and holiday provision with effect from 6th June. This will include extended provision for pupils from Queens Park School.
 - Wilberforce School are engaging a third party provider to deliver wraparound and holiday provision from 6th June, with an enhanced offer providing support to parents with regards their children's homework, and a range holiday physical activity sessions.

- Hallfield will offer an enhanced wraparound activity programme for pupils in term time and holidays from June, which will extend to children under five from September 2016.
- Edward Wilson already have an established breakfast club, and both after school and holiday play provision, in addition to a wide choice of activity clubs for their pupils. Further work is needed to engage with the school, to consider additional parental demand for after school and holiday childcare provision.
- Our Lady of Dolours and Gateway Academy both offer a wide range of after school activity clubs, but currently do not provide the extended school childcare offer until 6pm. Again work is needed to consider with the School, the level of demand for after school provision through conducting a parent survey.

Employment support

6.11 Work with the range of employment support providers, to ensure their offer reflects the challenges clients face as a result of being parents, is progressing. A first 'Think Family' training session was delivered in November with 100% attendance and positive feedback. This was used to launch the two-year learning programme, which will commence in the spring. One of the central elements of this will be training for all current staff on the 'better-off calculation', which identifies the impact on individual households' income of paid employment and increased working hours.

Family friendly employment

6.12 A baseline report of current employment practices among local employers and business, their strengths and areas for development will be produced in the spring, based on intelligence gathering undertaken since October 2015. This will incorporate an action plan for how best businesses might be supported to enhance their offer. A toolkit for businesses has been produced and twenty businesses are actively engaged. Following a first event at the end of 2015, five parents secured employment.

Evaluation and cost benefit analysis

6.13 The specific additional staffing capacity required to support the development and implementation of the evaluation framework has been identified and recruitment will commence imminently.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1. None at this time.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. The amount initially allocated to addressing parental employment during the PHIF process was £315,762 for each of three years, approximately £948,000 in total.
- 8.2. The revised budget proposed for this programme is £678,440, plus a reserve of £168,000 available to develop a sustainable business model for childcare for working parents with non-standard working patterns.
- 8.3. The table below provides a breakdown of indicative costs for each initiative:

Work stream	Total Budget 2015/2018	Comment
Employment Academy	453,000	
Early years provision	0	Funded through DSG 2YO and 3/4 year old programmes
Extended school childcare	0	With up to £168K as required for development of childcare provision for shift workers
Development of FIS	26,040	Start –up funding to support development of Parent Champions
Employment support tailored for parents	48,400	
Family friendly employment opportunities	41,000	
Programme management	110,000	
Total	£678,440	
Reserve for extended school provision	168,000	Subject to formal proposal Cabinet Member agreement
Grand total	£846,440	

- 8.4. The savings from the original allocation amount to £101,560.

If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers please contact:

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APPENDICES:

Appendix One: Illustration of the programme to increase parental employment

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

[Child Poverty JSNA, April 2014](#)

Westminster CSA Refresh 2015

Appendix One: Illustration of the programme to increase parental employment

Case Study

Ms X is 29 years old and has two children.
 Eldest child is aged 7 and attends school 9 – 3.15
 Youngest child is aged 2 with a free nursery place 9.30 - 12.30.
 She is interested in training for a career in childcare.
 Her husband is in work but on a zero-hours contract.

Current Barriers

Employment support	Childcare Info and Advice	Childcare	Partner's Employment
JCP advice shows course is unaffordable and requires entry qualifications she lacks.	Ms X cannot find her way around the website or work-out childcare options.	Course is provided 2-4pm. Eligible places in nursery are operated 9.30 – 12.30 and school finishes at 3.15. Ms X cannot afford additional childcare during course hours.	Zero hours contract, unreliable income, no regular shift patterns.

Innovation in Parental Employment Programme Solutions

Employment support tailored for parents	FIS (Family Info. Serv.)	Flexible childcare	Extended provision in primary schools	Family Friendly Employment
<p><i>Ensuring employment agencies have the appropriate tools to support parents into work</i></p> <p>Ms X approaches JCP advisor and is given info about funded places at Childcare Academy and referral to FIS support for further advice.</p>	<p><i>Ensuring information and advice about childcare options is readily accessible</i></p> <p>Ms X accesses advice regarding care options for children and better off calculation to confirm employment is a viable option.</p>	<p><i>Offering extended provision and flexible 2yr offer</i></p> <p>Flexible offer enables younger child to attend 1.30 – 4.30.</p>	<p><i>Offering quality wraparound provision</i></p> <p>Targeted afterschool provision enables elder child to attend 3.15-5.30.</p>	<p><i>Influencing the number of employment opportunities with family friendly t&cs.</i></p> <p>Partner able to establish a regular shift pattern and a minimum number of hours per week, stabilising family income.</p>
		<p>Employment Academy</p> <p><i>Providing a structured career pathway in childcare</i></p> <p>Ms X accesses support with entry level qualifications and work experience, and embarks on her childcare training.</p>		