

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee 1st July 2019

Report of the Strategic Director People

School Readiness in Dudley

Purpose

1.
 - Provide a snapshot of school readiness in Dudley
 - Describe the importance of school readiness
 - Provide an update on plans to improve school readiness
 - Share Dudley's successful bid to support transformation of the maternity and early years system and contribution to school readiness outcomes.

Recommendations

2.
 - I. Members note the content of the report
 - II. Members suggest any areas they may wish to scrutinise on the work being planned to improve school readiness

Background

What is school readiness?

3. School readiness is a measure of how prepared a child is to succeed in school cognitively, socially and emotionally. The term good level of development (GLD) is used to assess school readiness.
4. The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, or EYFSP, is used at the end of the reception year (aged 5) to measure the communication and language, physical, social and emotional development of pupils along with levels of literacy and numeracy and other creative and practical skills.
5. Children are defined as having reached a GLD and therefore school ready if at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage they have achieved at least the expected level in the early learning goals measured by the EYFSP.

What are the characteristics of school ready children?

6. School ready children will all:
 - Be able to recognise numbers and quantities in the everyday environment
 - Participate in music activities such as singing
 - Have good oral health
 - Be able to take turns, sit listen and play
 - Be able to communicate their needs and have a good vocabulary

- Be able to socialise with peers and form friendships
- Be independent in eating
- Have motor control and balance for a range of physical activities
- Be independent in getting dressed and going to the toilet
- Have received all childhood immunisations
- Be well nourished and within normal weight for height

Children who have not reached a GLD may still be able to demonstrate many of these skills.

7. Unicef have reviewed the evidence about the causes of school readiness and developed a framework to help inform plans to improve it.
 - i. Ready children, focusing on children’s learning and development.
 - ii. Ready schools, focusing on the school environment along with practices that foster and support a smooth transition for children into primary school and advance and promote the learning of all children.
 - iii. Ready families, focusing on parents and carers attitudes and involvement in their children’s early learning and development and transition to school.

School Readiness in Dudley

8. School Readiness of Dudley children is poor compared to the rest of the West Midlands and England. Table 1 shows that Staffordshire has the highest proportion of children achieving a good GLD (75%), with Dudley being amongst the lowest (66.6%).

In 2017/18 of 4,016 children aged 5, 2,675 living in Dudley achieved a good level of development. However **1,341** five year olds did not achieve a good level of development and therefore were not school ready.

9. **Table1 School Readiness in West Midlands (2018)**

Area ▲▼	Recent Trend ▲▼	Count ▲▼	Value ▲▼
England	↑	466,668	71.5
West Midlands region	↑	50,800	69.8
Birmingham	↑	10,931	67.7
Coventry	↑	3,014	67.7
Dudley	↑	2,675	66.6
Herefordshire	↑	1,475	74.1
Sandwell	↑	3,315	66.4
Shropshire	↑	2,084	69.9
Solihull	↑	2,044	72.7
Staffordshire	↑	7,146	75.0
Stoke-on-Trent	↑	2,197	65.9
Telford and Wrekin	↑	1,663	70.9
Walsall	↑	2,619	68.1
Warwickshire	↑	4,720	72.3
Wolverhampton	↑	2,312	68.7
Worcestershire	↑	4,605	71.2

10. There is wide variation in the proportion of children who are school ready across Dudley (57.5 % - 83.5% -2018). Table 2 ranks the wards in order of GLD % achieved. This shows that in a third of Dudley wards more than one in three children are not ready for school. St James has the lowest proportion of children achieving a good GLD (57.5%), with Halesowen South amongst the highest (83.5%).

11. **Table 2 School Readiness - Dudley wards**

GDL %	
Resident Ward Name	2018
St Thomas	57.5%
St James	60.0%
Castle and Priory	60.5%
Coseley East	60.6%
Brockmoor and Pensnett	60.6%
Netherton, Woodside and St Andrews	60.7%
Cradley and Wollescote	62.2%
Brierley Hill	62.6%
Gornal	64.1%
Upper Gornal and Woodsetton	67.3%
Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood	67.4%
Unknown	68.0%
Lye and Stourbridge North	68.0%
Norton	68.4%
Sedgley	69.3%
Kingswinford South	69.4%
Belle Vale	69.7%
Halesowen North	70.1%
Amblecote	72.1%
Pedmore and Stourbridge East	72.7%
Wollaston and Stourbridge Town	73.8%
Hayley Green and Cradley South	74.2%
Kingswinford North and Wall Heath	74.8%
Wordsley	76.8%
Halesowen South	83.5%
Dudley	66.7%

12. Table 3 shows school readiness in Dudley has been steadily improving. In 2016 64.4% of children achieved a good GDL, which rose to 66.7% achieving a good GDL in 2018.

However the improvement varies across the wards. For example data for Sedgley shows a decline in numbers being school ready. 77.6% achieved a good level of GDL in 2016 which dropped to 69.3% in 2018 – a reduction of 8.3%.

13. **Table 3 School Readiness in Dudley by Ward**

EYFSP Resident Ward Name	Eligible Pupils - #			Good Level Development - %		
	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018
Amblecote	130	153	140	67.7%	75.8%	72.1%
Belle Vale	165	160	165	69.1%	66.3%	69.7%
Brierley Hill	211	198	214	55.5%	64.1%	62.6%
Brockmoor and Pensnett	201	218	216	63.2%	63.8%	60.6%
Castle and Priory	264	245	253	61.4%	60.4%	60.5%
Coseley East	119	138	137	53.8%	53.6%	60.6%
Cradley and Wollescote	174	192	164	58.0%	65.6%	62.2%
Gornal	124	167	153	58.1%	54.5%	64.1%
Halesowen North	120	120	144	70.8%	65.0%	70.1%
Halesowen South	101	113	97	84.2%	81.4%	83.5%
Hayley Green and Cradley South	133	163	159	78.2%	77.9%	74.2%
Kingswinford North & Wall Heath	101	111	107	72.3%	69.4%	74.8%
Kingswinford South	129	115	134	69.8%	70.4%	69.4%
Lye and Stourbridge North	154	165	150	61.7%	61.8%	68.0%
Netherton Woodside & St Andrews	209	200	191	57.9%	55.5%	60.7%
Norton	100	117	117	74.0%	76.9%	68.4%
Pedmore and Stourbridge East	120	113	132	69.2%	69.0%	72.7%
Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood	159	162	193	67.3%	61.7%	67.4%
Sedgley	107	104	101	77.6%	71.2%	69.3%
St Jamess	151	174	155	49.7%	61.5%	60.0%
St Thomass	217	230	240	56.7%	49.6%	57.5%
Unknown	257	254	256	70.0%	68.9%	68.0%
Upper Gornal and Woodsetton	149	146	150	55.0%	67.1%	67.3%
Wollaston and Stourbridge Town	140	141	122	69.3%	74.5%	73.8%
Wordsley	131	146	125	67.2%	74.7%	76.8%
Dudley LA	3866	4045	4015	64.4%	65.4%	66.7%

The importance of school readiness

14. School readiness starts at birth with the support of parents and caregivers, when young children acquire the social and emotional skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for success in school and life.
15. Children who don't achieve a good level of development aged 5 years struggle with:
 - Social skills
 - Reading
 - Maths

- Physical Skills

This then impacts on childhood and later life;

- Educational outcomes
- Crime
- Health
- Death

Impact on Educational Performance in Dudley Schools

16. Local authority school improvement support tends to address gaps between pupils' performance and the expected level for that age group. The School Readiness Strategy is different, and will hopefully be more successful, because it will focus on avoiding the gap in the first place. There are examples of best practice available for Dudley to learn from and include in the strategy.
17. The strategy is expected to have more impact in more disadvantaged areas. The government published Social Mobility Index for 2017 ranks 324 local authorities on the prospects for young people qualifying for Free School Meals against a range of indicators from early years to adulthood. This data shows that all Black Country local authorities are performing well below the national average for pupils qualifying for Free School Meals achieving a Good Level of Development at the end of the EYFS.
18. Support for pre-school pupils will also allow earlier identification of young people with special educational needs. This will also allow support to be offered earlier which is likely to have more impact and increase their long term outcomes.

Why invest in School Readiness?

19. Failing to invest sufficiently in quality early care and education is a cost in the long term because the return on investment is greater than many other economic development options
 - In the UK every **£1** invested in quality early care and education saves taxpayers up to **£13** in future costs
 - For every **£1** spent on early years education in the UK, **£7** has to be spent to have the same impact in adolescence
 - The benefits associated with the introduction of the literacy hour in the UK outstrip the costs by a ratio of between **27:1** and **70:1**
 - Targeted parenting programmes to prevent conduct disorders pay back **£8** over six years for every **£1** invested with savings to the NHS, education and criminal justice system
20. Early years interventions have been shown to have a higher rate of return per investment than later interventions. The costs of delivery per child are outweighed by the benefits to the individual, taxpayers and others through improved educational outcomes, reduced healthcare costs, reduced crime and increased taxes paid due to increased earnings in adults.

Inequalities in school readiness

21. We know that a range of factors can contribute to school readiness.
- **Special Educational Need (SEN)** - Pupils without a SEN are **3.8x more** likely to have a GLD compared to those with a SEN
 - **Free school meals** - Pupils who are not eligible for FSM are **1.4x more** likely to have a GLD compared to those who are eligible for FSM
 - **Ethnicity**- Pupils of a Mixed ethnicity are **1.3x more** likely to have a GLD compared to pupils of a Black ethnicity
 - **Gender** - Girls are **1.25x more** likely to have a GLD compared to boys
 - **First Language** Pupils whose first language is English are **1.2x more** likely to have a GLD compared to those whose first language isn't English

Contributors to low school readiness in Dudley

22. School readiness is a complex issue and is influenced by a child's individual, family, community and economic circumstances, the availability of pre-school education and the ability for the school to meet a child's needs.

In Dudley there is a strong correlation between poverty and readiness for school. The most deprived 10% of children and children with free school meal status have significantly lower proportions of children achieving GLD both locally and nationally.

Other indicators associated with school readiness include:

- Family Homelessness
- Overcrowding
- Teenage pregnancy
- Low birth weight
- Lack of early years education (pre-school)

Improving school readiness outcomes for Dudley children

23. Improving School readiness is a priority for the Children and Young People's Alliance Board.
24. It is also a key priority for a national programme that Dudley have been selected to participate in. Dudley has been successful in a bid for a national programme being run by the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) – a national organisation that helps local areas identify what programmes will work for their children and young people.
25. In March 2019 Dudley, alongside 4 other areas (Barking and Dagenham, Norfolk, Sandwell and Westminster/Kensington & Chelsea) were selected to partner the EIF Academy in a 12 month system transformation programme.
26. EIF Academy will work with key children's leads in Dudley from across maternity, NHS, voluntary sector and Dudley Council to develop a transformation plan to improve the early years and maternity system so that it meets the needs of the local population and improves outcomes. It will help local areas to focus on what

families and communities do for themselves alongside a shared responsibility across health.

27. Each area in the region will utilise the support to develop their own programme, focusing on local outcomes.

Our aspirations for this transformation work are:

- I. Every woman experiences a healthy pregnancy and is supported to give her child the best start in life by investing in the first 1000 critical days. We will change how services are commissioned and delivered, using more evidence based approaches to target vulnerable families by delivering preventative interventions and connecting parents to support.
- II. To improve levels of school readiness for all Dudley children but with the greatest improvement in the most disadvantaged families with a specific focus on speech, language and communication needs. We commit to empowering families and hearing the child's voice.
- III. To reduce the impact that poverty has on the health, wellbeing and development of young children by having an early years offer (including a range of services in different /appropriate settings) that we know work and meet the needs of our most vulnerable children and families.

28. We will measure this by:

- Reduce the % of women that are smoking at the time their baby is delivered
- increased initiation and continuation of breastfeeding
- Every child has a secure attachment to a primary carer and is ready to learn by the age of 2
- **School readiness**
- A year on year % reduction in obesity in reception aged children
- Reduced inequalities in oral health.

29. We know that the following works to improve school readiness

- Good mental health of pregnant women and new mothers
- Learning activities, including speaking to your baby and reading to your child
- Enhancing physical activity
- Parenting support programmes
- High-quality early education

30. Therefore the transformation plan will start with understanding what we currently do well in these areas and where the gaps are. This will help us develop a clear strategy on what we need to do to improve school readiness for our children in Dudley.

Governance

31. The transformation work of the Academy will report to the Children and Young People's Alliance Board through the Early Help Strategic Group.

Finance

32. There are no direct costs attached to this report – any costs relating to improving School Readiness will be detailed in future reports. In 2018/19 Dudley Council spent just under £6 million on early years public health services including healthy pregnancy and health visiting.

Law

33. The Council is mandated to commission Health Visitor services through its Public Health Grant

Equality Impact

34. The report identifies areas of inequality and there is recognition that any work undertaken in this area will attempt to reduce inequalities in the health and wellbeing of children and young people. If required an equality impact assessment will be undertaken on the transformation plan.

Human Resources/Transformation

35. There are no Human Resource/Transformation Implications arising from the contents of this report.

Commercial Implications

36. No commercial opportunities have been identified at this stage, although they may be considered through the work of the Early Years Transformation Academy.
37. As school readiness is a key challenge in Dudley impacting on education outcomes and the local economy partners may want to consider contribution to school readiness a priority for social value.

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