

City of London Early Years Strategy 2015-2018



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1. Introduction

The Early Years Strategy 2015-2018 continues the work achieved in the previous strategy (2013-15) and the Childcare Strategy 2011-13 before that. It is an overarching strategy that encompasses the City of London’s statutory duties under the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Childcare Act 2006. It complements the City’s Early Help Strategy 2015 and supports the objectives in the Children and Young People’s Plan 2015-2018 and its vision for children and young people:

Every child and young person will have and enjoy a safe and healthy lifestyle. They will be able to access a high quality education provision to achieve their maximum potential in order to thrive in their community. They will be supported by a skilled and confident workforce.

The primary aim of the Early Years strategy is to improve outcomes for children in the City of London aged 0 to 5 years. It also includes objectives for children aged up to 10 and their families who use out of school childcare, and children and young people aged up to 25 who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The Early Years Strategy contains an action plan that sets out tasks through which the seven objectives of the strategy will be achieved.

During 2013-2014 two pieces of research were carried out with parents in the City. The first of these was the Under Fives Survey, based on consultation with 90 parents using childcare and/or informal services for children under five. A Childcare Sufficiency Assessment was also undertaken in 2014 providing new data about the sufficiency and affordability of childcare, and the balance of supply and demand in the market. Findings and recommendations from both these reports have informed the development of the Early Years Strategy.

The Early Years Strategy supports the overarching objectives of the City of London Children and Young People's Plan.

2. Aims of the strategy

The aim of the Strategy is to improve outcomes for all children and to narrow the gap in attainment between children born into relative disadvantage and those from more affluent families. This will primarily be achieved through the development of sustainable, high quality, inclusive, integrated early years services – services which are safe, accessible, affordable, and responsive to children and their parents' needs.

Local authorities have a key role in ensuring that childcare provision in their areas matches the needs of local parents, particularly those who need to work. The City recognises however that there are many families who do not – or cannot - access formal childcare, so we continue to provide a regular programme of drop-in activities where parents can access support as well as high quality early learning opportunities for their children. Building on the good practice already achieved in these areas forms a large part of the strategy's aims.

Early intervention and prevention continues to be an overarching theme in children and families services. An Early Help service was established in the City in 2014 to act as a triage and referral service that forms a link between universal and targeted support. An Early Help strategy has been developed that covers the service in detail, but the theme of early intervention and prevention remains of objectives of this strategy.

3. National context and legislative background

The Children and Families Act 2014 gained royal assent in March 2014, and includes several new duties for local authorities. In particular the act triggered a new code of practice for providing support to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The Early Years Strategy has been drafted in response to these duties and sets out how the City will meet them.

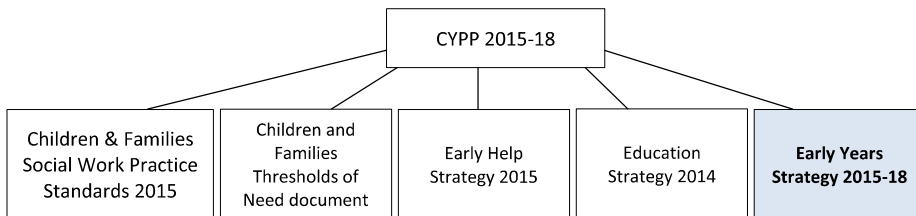
Another key national policy with relevance to this strategy is the provision of funded early years childcare places to two year olds from disadvantaged families. To date the City has been

able to provide a place for every eligible family that wants one, and we aim to maintain this record into the next three years.

In March 2015 the Association of Directors of Children’s Services published its policy position papers ahead of the forthcoming general election. It stressed the importance of high quality, affordable and suitable childcare, and how access to good early years provision can help to reduce the impact of social inequality. It also emphasised the importance of the home learning environment and family support services in ensuring good outcomes for under fives who don’t attend childcare.

4. Local planning context

The Early Years Strategy is one of several strategies and policy documents being produced or updated in 2015 that support the Children and Young People’s Plan, as shown in the diagram below.



5. The seven objectives of the Early Years Strategy

Six of the objectives of the Early Years Strategy 2013-18 have been carried over from the outgoing strategy, more or less unchanged. A new seventh objective has been added for this strategy: to review and strengthen the City’s Sure Start Children’s Centre offer. The objectives have been set out in the action plan in Section 6, but the key points from each are summarised below.

5.1 Improving information, advice and guidance to families

- Build on the City’s achievements under the statutory duty of Section 12 of the Childcare Act 2006.
- Continuing to develop the FYi service as the central hub for family information and ensure it has strong links with other information, advice and guidance services in the City.

5.2 Managing the supply and sufficiency of provision

- Continue to seek ways of enabling access to affordable childcare for middle and low income families who live or work in the City.
- Support the continued development of the local childcare sector; in particular childminders, home childcarers and nannies.

- Explore opportunities to increase the provision of out of school childcare.

5.3 Improving access to services for parents of children who are vulnerable or have additional needs disabilities

- Continue to deliver the SEND reforms in line with the revised Code of Practice 2014.
- Maintain close links between DCCS teams to ensure that families receive a seamless offer of services.

5.4 Supporting parents and carers to achieve the benefits of early education

- Continue to deliver the entitlement to funded early years places for 3 and 4 year olds, and the offer of places to eligible 2 year olds .
- Increase participation by City families in Sure Start activities for under fives.

5.5 Supporting all childcare providers to raise standards and offer the highest quality services

- Support the City's early years providers in maintaining their Ofsted rating of good or outstanding.
- Continue to provide an Early Years Advisory Teacher to work with providers and help them raise the quality of their provision.
- Continue to provide a programme of training for early years providers.

5.6 Early Help (Early intervention, prevention and enabling resilience)

- Develop skills among early years practitioners to identify children at risk and refer accordingly
- Promote the online FYi Directory and printed Resource Guide to children and families practitioners.
- Continue to embed the Solihull Approach as a single methodology for working with families in the City.

5.7 Review and strengthen the City of London Children's Centre service offer

- Conduct a full review of the current offer
- Consultation with eligible parents who are not using services
- Produce a Children's Centre improvement strategy designed to enhance the offer and increase the reach of service to City families.

6. Key findings from research

6.1 Childcare sufficiency assessment 2014

The Children and Families Act repealed Section 11 of the Childcare Act 2006 - the duty for local authorities to conduct three-yearly Childcare Sufficiency Assessments. However, the City did undertake a full Childcare Sufficiency Assessment in 2014, and the findings have informed many of the actions in Objective 2 of the strategy action plan.

The assessment included a survey conducted face to face with 140 parents. About half of these parents were using formal childcare at the time..

Some of the key findings from the research are listed below:

- Levels of satisfaction among parents using childcare were high. 73% of childcare users described themselves as 'very satisfied' with their current arrangements.
- 90% of parents stated that their current childcare arrangements suited their family's needs.
- The most frequent reason given by parents for using formal childcare was so that they can remain in work. The second most frequent reason was to prepare children for school.
- Parents using formal childcare were paying an average weekly cost of £250
- Data provided by nurseries for the 2014 CSA suggest that the average daily cost of a full time place in a private sector day nursery in the City is on average £64. This is more than twice the national average.
- Muslim and Bangladeshi families were more likely to say that they preferred to look after their children themselves. Over 90% of families from this community said they would want to use any childcare.
- Figures suggest that the free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds is being taken up by 84% of eligible children in the City.
- On average, approximately 50% of the places at the five nurseries consulted for the CSA were being taken up by City-resident families.
- According to projections from the GLA, the population of 5-14 year olds in the City is projected to increase by approximately 10% over the next three years.

6.2 The City of London Under Fives Survey 2014

Another piece of research that has informed the Early Year Strategy was the Under Fives Survey. This was conducted by paper and online questionnaire. It received responses from 90 City-resident parents, all of whom were either accessing formal childcare or another service for under fives, such as a stay and play.

Key findings included:

- Parents reported a lack of knowledge about how to access information on help with childcare costs.
- Location and trust are the two biggest factors when choosing childcare.
- Evidence of pressure on the availability and affordability of childcare in the City.

- Demand for more services during the weekends and school holidays

7. Monitoring and review

The Early Years Strategy and its action plan will be monitored by the FYi Manager in the Education and Early Years Service. Progress against planning milestones will be reported regularly to service team meetings.

The strategy will be reviewed and updated at least every three years. The action plan will be updated on a rolling basis as tasks are completed.

8. Early Years Strategy Action Plan 2015-18



Objective 1: Improving information, advice and guidance to families					
Actions	Outcomes	Timescale	Lead	Partners/Link strategies	Notes/update
Work closely with the Commissioning and Performance directorate on the re-tender of the City Advice contract and ensure strong links between FYi and the new supplier from the outset of the contract.	Effective partnership of IAG services in the City with no overlap of provision.	April to September 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FYi • Commissioning & Performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Advice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Launch of mobile optimised version of the FYi Directory so that it works effectively on all phones and tablets.	Development of FYi Directory keeps up with the growing trend for mobile web access	Launched Spring 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FYi Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Objects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Produce targeted information to promote services to families who have higher levels of need but who do not engage with services.	Increased take up and understanding of early years and childcare services by families who are isolated, on low incomes, and disengaged from mainstream services.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FYi Manager • Outreach and Info Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCFC • Libraries Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Develop and improve the capacity of FYi service and practitioners to provide specialist information, advice and guidance.	Increase in understanding, awareness and take up of services to improve resilience of families.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FYi Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCFC • Libraries Service • City Advice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Actions	Outcomes	Timescale	• Lead	• Partners/Link strategies	• Notes/update
Increase participation in family learning activities.	Parents and carers develop their skills both as parents and learners.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FYi Manager • ASCL Curriculum Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCFC • Golden Lane Children's Centre 	•
Publish a printed resource directory of family services for practitioners. This will not just list services but include information about how to refer.	Professionals can find the services they need and swiftly refer clients to specialist support.	Spring 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FYi Manager • FYi Info Dev Officer 	•	•
Ensure FYi is integral to the DCCS IAG strategy and is closely involved in its production.	FYi is embedded in the departmental strategy for IAG and links with partner agencies are strengthened.	2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FYi • Commissioning & Partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Advice • IAG Forum 	•
Set up systems for regular reporting of family contact data.	A 'master' report each month showing the reach of the information service.	September 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FYi Manager 	•	•
Lead on the planning and delivery of the 2015 Community Fair	A repeat of the successful family festival in Guildhall Yard, providing opportunities to engage with families and obtain their contact details.		•	•	•

Objective 2: Managing the supply and sufficiency of provision					
Actions	Outcomes	Timescale	Lead	Partners/Link strategies	Notes/update
Conduct a review of charging bands and admissions policy in children's centre nurseries and adjust if necessary.	Continued increase of take up of childcare places by low income families who would otherwise not have access.	March 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education and Early Years Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CCFC Golden Lane Children's Centre/LBI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Increase access to affordable childcare for City workers and residents on low-middle incomes through the S106 scheme and/or other new initiatives	Low-middle income City workers and residents are able to access affordable childcare in or near the City.	March 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education and Early Years Manager FYi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PVI nurseries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Review of S106 scheme to date, with case study interviews of recipients	Evidence is obtained of the impact of the scheme. This can be used for future planning.	Summer 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FYi Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> S106 Scheme nurseries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Conduct research into nanny (home childcarer) use in the City. Investigating the scale of usage, types of employment, prevalence of agencies, extent of voluntary Ofsted registration etc.	Intelligence is gathered about the nanny sector. This is one of the largest sectors of childcare provision in the City but is currently beyond the influence of EEYS. Once identified nannies can be encouraged to register and given access to QA training and CPD.	2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FYi Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nanny agencies Parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish nanny group at children's centre
Explore options for new out of school childcare provision in the City, especially holiday play schemes	Greater choice for working families with 5-10s during out of school hours.	Spring 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education and Early Years Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PVI providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

Actions	Outcomes	Timescale	• Lead	• Partners/Link strategies	• Notes/update
Devise and launch a campaign to develop the childminding sector in the City of London.	Numbers of childminders in the City is increased and understanding of the benefits of childminding is raised among local families.	Summer – Autumn 2015	• FYi Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other comms agencies • Parent champions 	•

Objective 3: Improving access to services for parents of children who are vulnerable or have additional needs disabilities					
Actions	Outcomes	Timescale	Lead	Partners/Link strategies	Notes/update
Deliver a training programme covering the areas of inclusion and special needs to early years staff working in the City's PVI and maintained childcare settings.	To increase the levels of confidence practitioners have in taking on children with SEN/disabilities to give parents more choice on where they can send their children.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEND Project Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Years Advisory Teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Continue the development of the SEND Local Offer, in partnership with families.	The Local Offer continues to be more useful to families with SEND.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FYI Manager SEND Project Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Provide advice and practical support for the identification, assessment and intervention within the SEND Code of Practice, supporting the development and disseminate good practice.	Provision of day to day support for setting-based SENCOs in drawing up and implementing a SEND policy covering identification and assessment, and admissions and inclusion of children with special educational needs	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education and Early Years Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LB Islington SENCO Area Forum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area SENCO in place to support practitioners in PVI settings to set targets, and strategies for achieving these targets, for children with additional needs. Termly training in place for PVI SENCOs through the Islington SENCO Forum.
Continue to offer a Short Breaks Programme within the City of London, offering families with disabled children a range of short breaks services including overnight respite and day care provision.	To enable the child to participate in fun, interesting and safe activities; and to provide respite for the parents	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and Families Team Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LB Tower Hamlets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

Objective 4: Supporting parents and carers to achieve the benefits of early education					
Actions	Outcomes	Timescale	Lead	Partners/Link strategies	Notes/update
Promote the take up of the 2 year old offer of free childcare for eligible low income families.	Eligible 2 year olds take up 15 hours free entitlement early education offer	Termly and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of CCFC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and Early Years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online eligibility checker to be launched in Early 2015
Increase participation of parents/carers who do not use formal childcare at informal Sure Start activities. Such as those in libraries, children's centres and the home	All 0-5s are given opportunities to become school-ready	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of CCFC • Education and Early Years Service Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Continue to embed the flexible entitlement to 15 hours childcare, free at the point of access for 3 and 4 year olds.	A range of flexible childcare opportunities to meet the needs of working families	Termly and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and Early Years Service Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PVI providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Objective 5: Supporting all childcare providers to raise standards and offer the highest quality services					
Actions	Outcomes	Time scale	Lead	Partners/ Link strategies	Notes/update
Support all early years settings in the City to maintain their Good or Outstanding Ofsted inspection ratings.	All settings in the City are judged Good or Outstanding in Ofsted inspections. Improved outcomes for children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education and Early Years Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Years Advisory Teacher Providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new early years setting is scheduled to open in April/May 2015. This will be first new nursery to open in the City for 4 years
Provide Early Years Advisory Teacher support to the City's PVI childcare settings.	Contribute to creating a lasting improvement in the quality of early years education and care provision for children from birth to the end of their reception year, across all sectors, raising standards and improving outcomes for children	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education and Early Years Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core Monitoring Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Support and training provided to existing and potential workforce to ensure they meet qualification and other Ofsted requirements.	Improve the quality of provision to ensure all settings in the City are judged as either 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education and Early Years Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Years Advisory Teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of apprenticeships to support new entrants into childcare work? Measure the impact of the training

Objective 6: Early Help (Early intervention, prevention and enabling resilience)					
Actions	Outcomes	Time scale	Lead	Partners/ Link strategies	Notes/update
Develop early years practitioners' skills in identifying vulnerable children, at risk of underachievement	Practitioners trained to recognise children with additional needs and in the use of the Pre CAF Checklist	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Years Advisory Teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EIP Sub-group and partners 	
Concerted promotion of the FYi Directory to all public-facing service providers in the City. Methods to include face to face meetings and roadshow demonstrations.	All agencies who work with families are using the FYi Directory to find services for their clients.	Launched 2015 then ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FYi Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Promote swift identification of children with additional needs using the Pre CAF Checklist and follow up intervention	Referrals for families needed additional targeted support are referred in a timely manner to CF team.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Intervention Coordinator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EIP Sub-group and partners 	
Provide family support and outreach work including through universal and targeted parenting activities	Parents have access to a range of activities to support their parenting.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCFC • FYi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EIP Sub-group and partners 	
Continue to embed the Solihull Approach as the methodology used across services when working with families in the City to provide targeted support.	Solihull Approach is the methodology used across services when working with families.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and Early Years Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EIP Sub-group and partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Objective 7. Review and strengthen the City of London Children’s Centre service offer

Actions	Outcomes	Timescale	Lead	Partners/Link strategies	Notes/update
Review the current Service Level Agreement between the City of London Corporation and Sir John Cass Primary for the provision of children’s centre services.	SLA is reviewed and, if necessary, updated to reflect current position.	April-May 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and Early Years Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCFC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Conduct detailed statistical analysis of reach figures for SSCC services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take up of sessions • Attendance at different venues • Proportion of City parents at sessions and venues • Turnover: new versus returning users 	A detailed snapshot of the current use of services across the City’s SSCC offer.	May 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and Early Years Manager • FYi Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCFC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Undertake a formal consultation with parents in the City who are eligible to access SSCC services but who have either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ceased to do so • have never started The survey will seek to find out why parents are to using services and ask them to specify what services they would be likely to access.	Intelligence is gathered on the reasons why families are not accessing services. If necessary the current service offer can then be redesigned to better meet the needs of local families.	May-July 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and Early Years Manager • FYi Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCFC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Produce a Children’s Centre improvement strategy. This will look at any apparent gaps or shortcomings identified through the research and propose ways that these can be addressed. The feasibility and value of these methods will be properly assessed and put forward in a series of recommendations.	Properly evidenced recommendations are set out for how the SCC offer in the City can be developed, and where necessary improved.	July-August 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and Early Years Manager • FYi Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCFC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
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Glossary

FYi	Family and Young People’s Information Service	S106	Section 106
CCFC	Cass Child and Family Centre	SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
LB	London Borough	SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education	SSCC	Sure Start Children’s Centre
PVI	Private, Voluntary, and Independent		